Paper

Who Am I? Cultural Diversity in Elementary School Music

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This presentation illustrates the inclusion of culturally relevant material in a teaching program. The materials collected over 30 years are now available on a free website, with teacher guides and power point presentations for use in the classroom

[www.biui-music.org.il](http://www.biui-music.org.il). These songs and musical works have influenced the integration of children in the classroom and given parents a feeling of belonging to a new culture. The presentation will share examples of study materials and short videos, including one story:

Five new immigrants from Ethiopia, sit shyly together. The boy nods off, the girls watch as other children participate in the music lesson. After the lesson, they go out to the yard together, whispering and making sand castles, day after day.

One week later the music teacher, an immigrant from Russia, tells the class: The children from Ethiopia are trying to learn Hebrew. Let us try to learn words in Amharic. She asks Selam: how do you say “hello” in Amharic? And how do you say “bread”? “Injera”, answers Selam, covering her mouth with her hand and smiling shyly.
“I have a children’s song” says Ludmilla: “Seni, Seni, savat lomi…” Selam, Makeda and Beniam mouth the familiar words. “Can you dance for us?” Reluctantly, the girls come to the center of the circle, moving their shoulders. Other children join the dance – Makeda in the center. Within a week, Makeda, tall and confident, becomes a sought-after partner and Beniam is awake and eager to participate in the music lesson.

What magic wand transformed a small, introverted group of children into accepted participants and happy children? - the song, which is one of many, recorded by Sara in 1984 in a hotel passage in Jerusalem. The children who sang for her had just arrived in a major air lift called “Mivtza Moshe” bringing some 8,000 immigrants into Israel in one day. She spoke no Amharic; they spoke no Hebrew, but they could sing to each other.

From Sara's recordings, two songs were chosen for an early grades’ music education program called “Musical Minds”. The program also includes teaching materials from other cultures: Russian, French, Arab, Japanese, Indonesian and European classical masterpieces. The materials are in the process of being translated into English, Arabic and other languages with the help of volunteer music teachers who wish to make them available to their students.

Music has the power to exclude and the power to include. We can choose. The presentation will share teaching materials for music of different cultures in basic curriculum materials.