Chapter 1

Local Fieldwork
In the city where students reside, have students identify religious institutions
/shrines/worship spaces. They can be guided in making a list of religious institutions
/shrines/worship spaces and can then be asked to choose one (preferably not their own
religious tradition) in which music and/or music making can be seen/heard coming from
within. Encourage students to write field notes to describe the religious
institution/shrine/worship space and its surroundings. If possible, make an audio/visual
recording of the music making and comment in detail on the musical components that are
involved to produce the music.

Students can observe the music-making activities in these spaces based on the following
questions:
Who are the music makers?
What is the social/cultural makeup of these musicians?
   What is the age of the musicians?
   What is the gender of the musicians?
   Do the musicians appear to have a leader? How do you know?
What is the purpose of the music?
What type of music is being played?
Do the musicians use any instruments?
What musical skills are required by the musicians? Are they professionals or amateurs?
Is there an audience? If so, how does the audience relate to the musicians?

Based on the field notes obtained from the observation, assign students to write a short
vignette of their experience as listeners and visitors to the musical space. Students can be
encouraged to discuss and explain the similarities and differences between their vignettes
and the opening vignette in Chapter 1.

Cambodian Flute Player
Listen to CD track 2 three or four times to discern the components of the track with an
intent to transcribe it. Then transcribe the main melody in its fundamental form (without
the quick ornamental notes). Play the transcribed melody on an available melodic
instrument (such as flute, violin, clarinet, trumpet). Determine the scale notes of the
melody (DFGAB).

Nat Pwe, Spirit Propitiation Ceremony
Locate an Internet video clip of the Nat Pwe (e.g., http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cxJnMMwRMY). Watch the video clip and write down initial impressions of what is seen and felt. Describe the dancers, the saing waing troupe, and the devotees’ reactions. Listen to CD track 3 and compare the saing waing troupe’s playing with that from the video clip.

Discuss the similarities and differences between the CD track and the video clip. Challenge students to develop research on similar spirit propitiation ceremonies in other parts of the world (for example, China, Indonesia, Tibet). Discuss whether music is used and under what circumstances and describe it relative to instruments used as well as melodic and rhythmic components that are apparent.

**Traditional Music in Modern Context**

Note the following comment (p. ?): “Each [vignette] portrays the presence of traditional music in a modern context. In each of these contexts the music helps the participants connect to traditional values and to a sense of cultural identity in the face of the quickly changing modernized world.”

Tapping into prior experiences and cultural knowledge of the students’ own heritage, ask students to reflect on the author’s statement and to comment on the presence of traditional music(s) in their lives. Encourage students to comment based on the following questions:

- How does traditional music play a part in your daily life?
- What does “traditional” mean to you?
- Are you an active or passive consumer of this music?
- Do your parents/grandparents listen to these traditional music(s)?
- What role does this music play in your parents’/grandparents’ lives, and is that different from or similar to the role it plays in your life?

**Media Portrayal of Mainland Southeast Asia**

Encourage students to think and write about common media portrayals of Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Students may divide media portrayals as presented in the table that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA PORTRAYAL</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Internet Sources (Youtube, etc.)</th>
<th>Popular Culture (food, clothes, entertainment, film, music, sports, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burma/Myanmar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students should share and discuss their individually prepared tables, examining the commonalities and differences between and among them. Have them take note of any stereotypes that may be present and have an open discussion about how the stereotypes came about.

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**Buddhist Chants**

Note the following comment (p. ?): “Theravada chant, in comparison to many Chinese, Japanese or Tibetan Buddhist chants, is quite conservative in its expression.”

Have students locate examples of Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan Buddhist chants on the Internet (such as [http://www.buddhanet.net/audio.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/audio.htm) suggested in Activity 1.7) or audio/video recordings.

Develop a comparison of the texts (if you can find translations) and a musical analysis of these chants (pitch range, ornamentation, singing of text, tempo, texture, use of instrumentation, etc.) and compare them with the Theravada chant on CD track 4.

Pick out the similarities and differences between and among these chants.

Challenge students to sing (or hum) along with each type of chant in order to discover the contour of the melody, its rhythmic features, and even its formal elements of repetition, development, or progression of musical ideas.

**Chants**

There are many types of chants coming out of different religious institutions. Students can choose one type of chant (Gregorian chant, Muslim call to prayer, Tibetan Buddhist chant, Vietnamese Buddhist chant, etc.) and locate a clear audio example either from the Internet or CD recordings. One can refer to (1) *Music in Egypt* in the Oxford University Press series for an example of the Muslim call to prayer, (2) [http://www.music.princeton.edu/chant.html](http://www.music.princeton.edu/chant.html) for information on Gregorian chants, and (3) [http://www.buddhanet.net/audio-chant.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/audio-chant.htm) for different types of Buddhist chants.

Challenge students to find out the meaning of the chant and write its translation side-by-side with the original words.

Have students describe the chant in terms of melody, pitch, rhythm, and instrumentation. With knowledge of the meaning of the chant, discuss how the musical elements may help to underscore or convey the message.

Encourage students to try to learn the chant (or part of the chant) by singing it repetitively with the recording. Ask them to count how many repetitions it takes to learn the chant and then discuss the difficulties in matching rhythm and pitch with the recording. After ample time singing with the recording get students to try singing the chant without the audio recording.