

1109/17

19 February, 1982

Ms Sandra McComb
Publisher-Social Science
Nelson Education
480 La Trobe Street
MELBOURNE 3000

Dear Ms McComb,

Re: Classroom Studies in Aboriginal Music and Dance

I have been very interested to read your letter of 4 February and also the enclosed report. As promised in our telephone conversation last week, I now send you my reply.

I note that you have received favourable reactions to the contents of the Studies but that there are some doubts in your mind about the way these contents have been presented. You also say that you are not sure whether the Studies are 'basically music or basically Social studies'.

My answer to this is that the work represents an attempt to present music in culture i.e. it represents an ethnomusicological approach to the teaching of Aboriginal music and dance. To my knowledge nothing quite like this has been done before in Australia.

I was particularly interested to note the following comment in the enclosed report: 'The scope of the material confuses me. I could happily use this text as the basis of a first year elective with teachers. But the author says in her ASME article that it is for 9-13 year olds!'

The reviewer hits the nail on the head. This is precisely what was intended. The text is for teachers and children in primary school. The 50 'topics' included in the book have been written especially for teachers. Most of them, including those exceptionally interested in the subject, will need all the assistance they can get if they are to present this material in its own terms. The book gives teacher-guidelines all the way. And, in addition to these guidelines, the teachers are provided with a substantial amount of audio-visual material with which they will need to become reasonably familiar. Incidentally, this material was collected in parts of north Australia, practically all of it by myself, as part of a musical survey (over a period of 10 years) for the AIAS with funds from the Australian Government.

To meet classroom needs, each topic includes a lesson outline. The outlines consist of a discussion relevant to the topic; a selection from the audio-visual materials made for the purpose of increasing perception (especially aural perception); and carefully identified songs and dance steps for class practice. These lesson outlines are directed towards the development of an appreciation of the performing arts of the various groups of Aboriginal people to whom they belong. Course A3 (i.e. Section 3: Lessons 31-50) is full of musical (and movements) activity and contains an

entirely new approach to musical literacy using, not the now fashionable Kodály method, but basic elements of the traditional music of the Australian Aborigines. I am surprised, therefore, to find the view expressed in your letter that the Studies seem to fall short on activities.

As you have already anticipated, I would not be willing to have the integrated components of my manuscript pulled apart. To be frank, I would regard a proposal of this kind as showing a lack of understanding of what this teaching package is all about.

Although I believe that primary school children will show the greatest interest in the materials, and will enjoy themselves most of all with the practical work, I see no reason why the complete package should not be recommended as an elective in teacher training courses as well as for use, to some extent, in secondary schools.

In the Introduction to the teachers handbook, one reads that the material can be used in a variety of ways and can be adapted to courses in social studies as well as to whatever curriculum time is set aside for music.

As I indicated to you over the phone, I would agree to a minimum of editorial changes to some of the Lesson activities but would want to see the material remain in its present form and sequence.

I have a very full year ahead, with conferences to attend overseas in July and August. Any changes made will require my presence and co-operation. You will understand therefore that I am anxious for these to be completed at the earliest.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alice Moyle