A CULTURAL STUDY OF `UKULELE IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The ‘ukulele has deep roots in Hawaiian history and culture. This study is the start of a conversation about how to incorporate this culture and history when teaching the instrument in the music classroom. The first two chapters contain the reasons this study was completed and the third contains background information and a review of literature pertinent to this endeavor. The final chapters examine the teaching of ‘ukulele in Hawaii based on observations, interviews and discussions and provide plans for representing the ‘ukulele and Hawaiian culture in an authentic light within the music classroom.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Rationale</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Literature Review</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Research Questions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Methodology</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Results</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7 Conclusion</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A  'Ulili E Lyric Sheet and Score ........................................... 30  
Appendix B  Ka Lei Ho’ohie Lyric Sheet and Score ................................... 33  
Appendix C  A Kona Hema Lyric Sheet and Score ........................................ 35  
REFERENCES .................................................................................................... 37
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1........................................................................................................................................7
Figure 2........................................................................................................................................19
Figure 3........................................................................................................................................20
Figure 4........................................................................................................................................20
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Chapter 1

Introduction

As a future music educator I am always looking for ways to enhance my classroom. I came across an article in Teaching Music by Adam Perlmutter that discussed using the `ukulele in the music classroom as a melodic and harmonic instrument in solo and ensemble settings. Perlmutter pointed out some of the `ukulele ’s beneficial aspects as part of a music program- it is portable, inexpensive, easy for beginners, and an adult instrument that is not reduced in size to enhance playability for children- and made several recommendations about how to use the instrument in the classroom (Perlmutter, 2011). As a `ukulele player myself, I was intrigued. However, after a second read I realized Perlmutter did not reference Hawaii. Hawaiian culture is rich with musical tradition- including the ‘ukulele- and has a place in the endeavor to teach the instrument. In my own ‘ukelele study I have made an effort to learn Hawaiian songs and more about the instrument, but I know that by itself that is not enough to prepare me to bring a culturally authentic experience to my future students.
Chapter 2

Rationale

My interest in the `ukulele specifically came from the instrument’s attributes that make it perfect to teach young children. Not only is its size appropriate for small hands, but also a decent `ukulele can be purchased for about $50, making it more affordable than many other classroom instruments. After reading Perlmutter’s (2011) article I realized that the `ukulele has great potential for the music classroom. It is so convenient and easy for children to learn, I decided to seek to understand how and why other educators were using the instrument in the music classroom.

In music education settings it is important to consider music as a part of culture and, when teaching music from another culture, authentically recreate and experience that musical culture as accurately as possible. As Dr. Patricia Shehan Campbell says in her book *Teaching Music Globally*, “To know music is to also know about music, and to study it in as thorough and comprehensive a manner as possible.” (216)

Unfortunately, very few scholarly articles involved the use of the `ukulele in the music classroom and, overall, those that do lack reference to Hawaiian culture. Instead I found a heavy focus on popular music (Greenberg, 1992; Thibeault & Evoy, 2011; Perlmutter, 2011). One article suggested giving a little bit of the historical background of the instrument and then jumping in to learn “Merrily We Roll Along” and “Hot Cross Buns” (Greenberg, 1992). Yet another suggested allowing students to choose their own repertoire and have included The Rolling Stones’ “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” as well as songs by Miley Cirus and Buddy Holly (Thibeault & Evoy, 2011).
While the `ukulele is becoming more widely used in popular music thanks to artists such as Train and Never Shout Never, it is so much more than an instrument used to harmonically accompany singing. The `ukulele is an important part of Hawaiian culture and I believe it has the potential to help students understand Hawaiian culture and provide them with an authentic cultural experience. Thus, the question I am addressing through this thesis is: How can the `ukulele be taught with cultural significance and sensitivity in the classroom? As a music educator with a strong interest in general music education, I believe the study of music with a global and cultural perspective is extremely important in today’s globally-minded society.

This project will address this issue with a narrow focus on one area of a specific culture, but much of the information gained will be transferrable to teach other musical cultures and create and awareness of world culture. Through this document I hope to create a means to teach the `ukulele as an extension of Hawaiian culture and provide resources to assist teachers in this endeavor.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

As mentioned previously, there are few studies examining the role of the `ukulele in the music classroom. The literature discussed below will examine the history and construction of the instrument, as well as representative literature regarding the `ukulele in the music classroom.

History of the Instrument

The `ukulele is the adopted instrument of the Hawaiian people and is significant to the culture (Harden & Brinkman, 1999). The instrument was first brought to Hawaii from Portugal in 1879 and was shaped by the culture to become the instrument we know today.

The `ukulele’s story begins in 1879 when more than 400 Portuguese men from Madeira arrived on a ship in Hawaii to work in the sugar industry (Creamer & Burris, 2011). These immigrants brought with them two folk instruments, the machete and the rajão, instruments that would be fused together to create the `ukulele (King & Tranquada, 2007).

The machete was a guitar-like instrument with four catgut stings. The body was about eight inches long and made of European wood. The rajão is slightly larger than the machete and has five strings. Manuel Nunes, a Portuguese cabinet-maker is credited with making the changes to these instruments that formed the `ukulele. He adjusted the size of the body and altered the shape slightly. He kept the catgut strings from the machete but used the tuning of the first four stings of the rajão. This made an instrument that was easy to play and very accessible (King & Tranquada, 2007). The `ukulele was quickly adopted by the Hawaiians.
The `ukulele got its name from the style with which the Hawaiians played it. The name, `ukulele, is a combination of two Hawaiian words- “uku” meaning “jumping” or “bouncing” and “lele” meaning flea. The Hawaiians had a way of playing over all the stings at once with their fingers jumping effortlessly from one side to the other like a “jumping flea” (Kaai, 1906).

In 1890 Hawaiian Royalty deemed it “the people’s instrument” making it a popular instrument to accompany hula and an instrument that was to be taught to and played by all Hawaiians (Greenberg, 1992). Hawaiians used the instrument every day to accompany singing and hula as well as a solo instrument. It became so popular on the island that by 1915 the world took notice. The `ukulele was presented at the Hawaiian pavilion of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and was such a hit that by 1920 most college students in the United States had one. Tin Pan Alley began printing popular songs in `ukulele tablature and guitar makers began making `ukulele. However, by 1960 the instrument’s popularity began to fade in the rising popularity of the electric guitar brought on by popular artists such as Jimi Hendrix (Creamer & Burris, 2011).

This was not the case in Hawaii. The instrument was still so close to Hawaiian hearts that it remained dominant in the musical culture. The 1970’s became a time of musical renaissance in Hawaii with the strengthening of the Hawaiian record industry and the creation of several Hawaiian popular music groups. The `ukulele’s place in the Hawaiian popular music scene was exemplified by the foundation of Maestro Roy Sakuma’s `Ukulele Festival in 1971- a festival that is still going strong (Creamer & Burris, 2011). The `ukulele was still used to accompany hula and traditional Hawaiian songs, but with a growing popular music scene, the `ukulele gained even more use in the Hawaiian culture. That culture once again reached out to the world when Israel Kamakawiwooole released his `ukulele accompanied version of “Over the Rainbow” in 1993, which so popular on an international level that the world once again began to take notice of the little Hawaiian instrument.
The `ukulele has such a strong place in Hawaiian culture. The `ukulele is still played everywhere in Hawaii and is still an instrument that most Hawaiians learn. It is still used to accompany hula and singing for both traditional and recreational purposes. In schools, students begin to learn the instrument in third or fourth grade as a required part of the curriculum (Greenberg, 1992). The Hawaiian State Department of Education also has a collection of educational songs, *Na Mele Ho Ona Auao*, to be used in classrooms along with the `ukulele to teach everything from Hawaiian cultural history to the alphabet. The collection also includes several traditional Hawaiian songs.

When asking Hawaiian elders about the instrument, some call it, “our adopted instrument” and others, “the gift that came here” (Harden & Brinkman, 1999). No matter what terminology Hawaiians use to describe their jumping flea it is evident that it is near and dear to the heart of the people and the culture.

**The Instrument**

The `ukulele is very similar to the guitar in its construction. It has very similar parts. The body, neck, head, tuning pegs, sound board, strings and bridge are all very similar at first glance, however there are differences that make the `ukulele totally unique.

The first difference is the size. The `ukulele is much smaller than a guitar and comes in four different sizes: Standard (soprano), Concert (alto), Tenor and Baritone. The traditional `ukulele is the standard (soprano) size, which measures about 21 inches in length. The following chart (figure 1) gives rounded dimensions of each of the different `ukulele sizes at their widest point (“Sizes”, 2012).
With so many different sizes, the instrument is accessible for a variety of hand sizes.

**Body**

`Ukuleles do not always look like miniature guitars. The body of the instrument is made in many shapes as well as different sizes. Three common shapes in addition to the guitar-type (standard) body are vita, pineapple, and bell. The vita body shape looks much like a pear and is reminiscent of a miniature mandolin. The vita shape, however, is not a Hawaiian invention and was first developed in Chicago. The pineapple shape originated in Hawaii in the early 20th century and is the tall oval shape of a pineapple. It has a more resonant and mellow sound compared to the bright, plucky sound of the standard shape. The bell shape is rounded at the top of the body with the bottom edges flared out, like a bell. It is not a traditional shape by any means and has much more bass in the sound.

The body of the `ukulele was traditionally made of kou or koa, a rare wood of great value to the Hawaiian people (Kaai, 1906). Today, it is common to use woods indigenous to the area in which a `ukulele is made. Kou and koa are still used in Hawaii, with some imports such as acacia (a form of koa). Other woods used in `ukuleles around the world include: maple, mahogany,
myrtlewood, and pine. Many modern `ukulele makers will only make the instruments from solid wood and do not use laminates (Creamer & Burris, 2011).

**Strings**

Traditionally, `ukulele strings were made of catgut, but today the majority are made of nylon (although gut strings are still available) (King & Tranquada, 2007).

The most common `ukulele tuning is G4, C4, E4, A4 for the soprano, alto, and tenor `ukulele, often called C-tuning (for the baritone `ukulele strings are tuned to D3, G3, B3, E3). Traditionally, however, the `ukulele was tuned a step up to A4, D4, F#4, B4 (d-tuning) which is evident in sheet music from the early 20th century and is said to bring out some of the sweeter tones of the instrument (King & Tranquada, 2007). C tuning is popularly known by the melodic phrase “my dog has fleas” which is sung to the notes of the open strings from the 4th to the 1st string.

**Why It is Great For the Classroom**

The `ukulele is learned at an early age in Hawaii, which is a testament to the possibilities for successful use in the general music classroom with students of any age (Greenberg, 1992). It is a full sized instrument, which is not scaled down for children and is small enough for children to comfortably play (Perlmutter, 2011). It can be used as a melodic or a harmonic instrument and the chords are simple and accessible for small hands. In addition, a decent `ukulele can be purchased for about $50, making it a feasible addition to a music education program. As stated in *Hawaii Business* magazine, “[`Ukuleles] got more popular the worse the economy got. It could be that people are spending less money on expensive toys…and doing things that are more engaging and less costly. It doesn’t cost much to play the `ukulele” (Creamer & Burris, 2011).
Current Uses In Music Education

I fear that when the `ukulele is used in music classrooms it is often misused from an authentic cultural perspective. In the programs I read about, the significance to the culture, as described above, is almost entirely ignored and American pop music takes its place. Greenberg, (1992) suggests giving a little bit of the historical background of the instrument and then jumping in to learn “Merrily We Roll Along” and “Hot Cross Buns”. Thibeault and Evoy (2011) suggest allowing students to choose their own repertoire and have included The Rolling Stones’ “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” as well as songs by Miley Cirus and Buddy Holly. While the `ukulele is becoming more widely used in popular music thanks to artists such as Train and Never Shout Never, it is so much more than an instrument used to harmonically accompany singing. The `ukulele is an important part of Hawaiian culture and needs to be treated as such and explored within the context of Hawaiian culture and music.

Summary

The adopted instrument of the Hawaiian people maintains a historic and cultural presence on the islands (Harden & Brinkman, 1999). The “jumping flea” (earning it’s nickname from the style with which it is played) is used all over the islands to accompany hula and singing, during ‘ukulele festivals and in many styles of Hawaiian pop music (Creamer & Burris; Greenberg, 2011; Kaai, 1906).

‘Ukuleles come in many shapes and sizes. They range from soprano to bass in size and are available in shapes similar to the guitar, pineapples and triangles (“Sizes”, 2012). As a full size instrument with nylon strings, the ‘ukulele is perfect for use with young children and at $50
for a decent instrument it is great for a music program’s budget (Creamer & Burris, 2011; Perlmutter, 2011)

Often, the ‘ukulele is used in the music classroom with a lack of cultural perspective and instead for pop music and nursery rhymes (Greenberg, 1992; Perlmutter, 2011; Thibeault & Evoy, 2011). The next section of the paper will discuss how we can bring Hawaiian culture into the classroom along with the ‘ukulele.
Chapter 4

Research Questions

The following questions guided the current investigation:

- How are students introduced to the instrument in Hawaii?
- What types/ styles of playing are traditionally used in Hawaiian culture?
- What type of repertoire is used to teach `ukulele in Hawaii?
- What is the significance of this repertoire?
- What is the `ukulele’s place in current Hawaiian culture and social life?
- Is the significance of playing the `ukulele tied to singing the mele?
Chapter 5
Methodology

In this qualitative single case study, I visited a classroom in Hawaii to observe how the `ukulele was taught in the setting. The chosen site of the case study was the Kamehameha School Kapalama campus on Oahu. The school was selected because it is a school for students of Hawaiian ancestry where Hawaiian culture and tradition is a large part of the curriculum. The specific program I visited was the Summer Arts program where students learned to play guitar, `ukulele and upright bass in Hawaiian style. Over the period of three days, over 24 hours of observational notes were taken, videos were made and interviews with teachers occurred. There were two classroom teachers, Mandy Lyman and Charlie Regua who shared their knowledge with me.

I observed both teachers team teaching two different classes. The first was called Hawaiian Ensemble and consisted of students learning `ukulele, guitar or upright bass. The class broke apart into individual instrument groups to learn technique and music. During these times I stayed with the `ukulele group. The students enrolled in this class were in it for the entire summer session and the class took up two thirds of the school day. The second class was called the Exploratory period, where a new group of students would come in to experiment with the guitars and `ukuleles. The students chose several different Exploratory classes throughout the summer and rotated every few weeks. I observed each class three times over three full school days during the course of my stay.
On June 27th an interview was conducted via Skype with `ukulele teacher and founder of Akuamele (a music school), Alan Akaka. Mr. Akaka was chosen because of his Hawaiian heritage, expertise and reputation within the Honolulu music community.
Chapter 6

Results

The following results were created from analyzing field notes, interviews, conversations, and videos of classes. Through a review of the collected information, several themes important to this investigation were identified:

- Use with singing and accompanying songs/ mele
- The ‘ukulele’s role in the community
- Techniques
  - Chords
  - Vamps
  - Strumming styles
- Transmission through aural learning
- Current trends and the value of those trends

These themes are expanded upon and explored in the following section.

Singing and Mele

Of paramount importance, for authentic, cultural presentation of the `ukulele, this research highlights that the appropriate place to begin teaching the `ukulele is through mele (Hawaiian songs). It is not simply about learning the “proper” or “traditional” method to playing the instrument; it is also about the singing that is at the heart of all mele. In our interview, Alan Akaka made the statement, “The `ukulele is used mostly to accompany the mele.” This makes one thing clear: the mele should be our starting point.
However, mele is not simply something to be accompanied by the ’ukulele, it is a jumping off point for exploring the culture. “A lot of our culture is collected into song. We use the Hawaiian music because of the stories and because it’s our cultural heritage,” Alan said. He always starts his students with Hawaiian mele because it is not just a way to teach a few common chords, but because it helps his students delve into the history, stories and culture of the Hawaiian people at the same time. “It gives us a means to teach culture and history and share our stories with deep understanding. Its one thing to say words, its another, entirely, to sing them.”

In addition to the stories and history that are imbedded within the mele it is important to teach the ’ukulele with singing because singing itself is important to the Hawaiian culture. During our discussion, Alan pointed out that, “Singing is a big part.” Outside of the islands, I’ve noticed that many people insist that they “can’t sing” or are too embarrassed to sing in front of others. There is no such barrier in Honolulu. Singing is essentially Hawaiian in nature, at the very heart of Hawaiian culture. There is no fear, nor reservation to sing and it is just what people, of all ages, do. Steaming from pre-colonization, when songs were the primary means in which history, lineage, and culturally significant stories and mythology were delivered from one generation to the next, it continues to be the expectation of what young Hawaiians are expected to learn and do. The students in class sang fully, without holding back, and volunteered to share their songs with me without hesitation. I was amazed with the openness with which they sing and the overall quality of each singer in the class.

The singing also appears to help students with aural training. “They learn to hear the notes and where they fit in harmonically,” said Alan. Students in the class were required to sing first, before getting to play anything on the ’ukulele. They had to have the melody down pat before picking up the instruments. Even then the chords were withheld until they could demonstrate clarity of the sung line. At that point, the students had work hard to hear the chords,
where the transitions were, and how the vocal and instrumental parts all fit together, all without the use of a written score. It helped to build their independent musicianship.

To these teachers, teaching the `ukulele isn’t about just teaching strumming and chords, it’s about learning about the culture transmitted through singing Hawaiian mele. As Alan said, “through teaching these mele and their stories kids learn so much about their own culture.”

Playing Together

A great deal of culture resides in the musical interactions of friends and family. Every teacher I spoke with learned the `ukulele through interacting with their family in a variety of settings. The teachers I worked with shared their stories of family learning with me.

Charlie, a teacher who had been at the summer program for 18 years, had a mixture of experiences between home and school. He learned a bit about the instrument in his music class in elementary school but his greatest amount of experience came from within his own home. “I learned a little in the 4th grade, but I mostly learned the `ukulele by watching my brothers and sisters play and playing with my family,” he told me. He would come home from school to his brothers and sisters playing and would join in. They taught him chords, mele, how to strum and a few popular songs. This connection with his family helped to foster his love for the instrument.

Alan had a similar experience. “Most of what I learned to start out with, I learned from watching my brothers and other kids at school play.” He would come home after school and play with his brothers before even thinking about homework. Much of what he learned in the beginning was through their guidance. In addition to his brothers, many of the students at his school would carry their instruments with them and play in between classes, during lunch and on breaks, while sharing more knowledge with him. “It’s odd not to see students carrying around ‘ukuleles here,” he informed me. I noticed this on the Kamehameha campus. There was often
music in the air while classes were on breaks or transitioning and students were not shy to share a new chord or song with others.

Mandy, who also teaches at the school, had one of the strongest experiences with the family learning setting. Many people in her family played the instrument in addition to several others such as guitar and upright bass. Her uncle took her under his wing when he saw the interest in the `ukulele and taught her much of what she knows through a show and then do style of teaching. “I learned from watching uncle play.” She said. “We also had, and still have, these back-yard-jam-type bonfires and everyone would come over and play (sic.) and teach each other.” These bonfires occur in multiple family and friend groups all over the islands and are a weekend staple. The music is improvisatory and spontaneous. Often the music created at these back-yard jams become mash-ups of different songs similar to Israel Kamakawiwo’ole’s “Somewhere Over the Rainbow/ What a Wonderful World” arrangement- a style known as kanikapila (kani meaning sound and pila meaning string).

While we cannot perfectly emulate the family or community unit in our classrooms some of the same principals can be applied. Listening to, sharing with and playing for each other are all activities students can actively participate in within a safe classroom environment. Students can watch videos of professionals or ensembles playing and glean techniques, sounds and ideas from those videos.

Perhaps the easiest way to accomplish the task of community learning in the classroom environment is to re-create one of the back-yard jam sessions. Mandy described these back-yard jams as bonfires where family and friends all get together to eat and play/sing music. “People become known by what song they usually play or teach others to play, as in ‘oh, that’s Uncle David’s song!’” Everyone brings the instruments they play. The Jams can go all night and happen very frequently. People are not shy about sharing what they have to offer.”
This became very evident on the first day I was with the students at the Kamehameha School. They simulated what might happen at one of these jams for me. It began with students who wanted to share individual favorite songs, several by Bruno Mars, and others joining in to play and harmonize. Then it moved to the students sharing their own creations. One girl sang a song she wrote about the people of Hawaii living Aloha. Another danced a hula while the teachers and her classmates played and sang a traditional Mele. Then, one boy started singing a beautiful chant. One by one the rest of the students joined in his beautiful melody. The class sang in perfect unison and when they stopped silence rang more profoundly than I had ever heard in my life. They were singing a Mahalo chant, a thank you chant for the time we were spending and the music we were sharing. I have never before taken part in such a profound musical experience and I cannot begin to put its value into words. To recreate an experience like this for my students would be the most valuable thing I could ever give them.

**Technique**

Hawaiian mele is a great place to start for the technique of a beginning 'ukulele player. Mandy very succinctly informed me as to why this is the case. “Hawaiian songs are important to use because they are such a strong part of our culture but I also think they are the easiest to start with. They usually only have a few simple chords and use the traditional vamps and simple strumming patterns.” Below, I outline some of these techniques, vamps and strum patterns gathered over the course of this experience.

**Vamps/ chords**

According to Charlie, vamps are used at the beginning of songs and sometimes in between the verse and the hui (chorus of the song) so that everyone knows when to start singing.
They often follow the chord pattern V7/V, V7, I in the key of the mele. In the key of C the vamp would be D7/G7/C. A vamp will include 2 beats of the v7/v, 2 beats of the v7 and four of the I chord, for a complete two measure vamp. See figure 2 for a list of common Hawaiian music vamps provided by Charlie.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>V7/V</th>
<th>V7</th>
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<td>G7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>A7</td>
<td>D7</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

**Strumming Styles**

There are two strumming styles typically used to accompany Hawaiian music. Mandy demonstrated both. The first is 8\(^{th}\) notes alternating strumming up and down (Figure 3). The player uses the nails of the four fingers in a spread out, flamenco-like fashion to strum down and the nail of the thumb to strum upward. The second strum is a more complex gallop (Figure 4). The same fingering is used for each direction of strum however, the down strum is elongated creating the rhythm of 16\(^{th}\),16\(^{th}\), 8\(^{th}\) with the fingers and is followed by an upward 8\(^{th}\) note strum and a regular downward 8\(^{th}\) note strum. The pattern is then repeated. The diagrams below visually represent the two strumming patterns.
Transmission

Learning the ‘ukulele is traditionally an aural skill as evidenced above, and a lot of this learning stems from family interaction and aural learning practice. When it comes to the classroom setting aural learning is still dominant. Teachers may hand out lead sheets or packets to help students remember what they’ve learned, but not until they’ve already experienced what they are learning by listening, watching and trying. According to Alan, “a lot of the way people usually learn is to watch and imitate. We may hand out lyrics or lead sheets but usually we have students listen and echo. That’s how most people before us learned the Mele and so we continue that tradition.” A lot of cultures throughout the world have similar traditions of aural learning. The aural passing of songs and stories from one generation to the next as valuable items of cultural and family tradition is a meaningful practice of honoring and keeping in touch with one’s roots.
The amazing thing about this style of learning is that it reaches all types of learners. Visual learners get the opportunity to see what they are learning by teacher demonstration. Auditory learners get to hear what sounds they are supposed to be creating before having to create them themselves. Kinesthetic learners have the opportunity to try things out under their fingers before they have to rely on visually distracting charts.

One class I visited, called an exploratory period, was intended for students with little to no experience on the instrument to simply play. In this class, the students were sent into small groups with a few chord charts and told to arrange a song of their choice. They were entrusted to teach each other songs, chords, progressions and harmony and encouraged to discover the instruments potential on their own. Students had to rely on their ears and their peers to make a final product. This process is similar to the “back yard jams” discussed earlier. The students taught each other aurally and the final products were polished and well thought out. So, not only did students learn a lot from their teachers, but also learned a lot from each other.

In the Hawaiian Ensemble classroom, which was comprised of students with intermediate playing abilities, Mandy and Charlie used a sequence of aural activities to teach the song “‘Ulili E”. They handed out the lyric sheet first and had the students put down their instruments. Mandy discussed with them that ‘Ulili E was about birds and birdcalls, specifically the sandpiper that comes from Alaska in the winter. Mandy then sung the hui while playing. When she finished, she then had the students echo her phrase by phrase and then sing the whole hui twice. The hui is the verse of the song. Students were then asked to pick up their ‘ukuleles and sing through the melody and determine where the chords changed. As the students had already had the opportunity to see and hear their teacher play, along with the added advantage of having their instruments there to experiment with different chords, they worked rather quickly. After the class had worked through where the C’s, G’s and F’s belonged she had them accompany her singing of the hui.
When she felt like the students had a strong grasp of where their fingers should go, the students were then asked to begin singing while they played.

Again, the students had to learn to sing the song before they were allowed to play along so that the integrity of the mele was maintained. They were asked to use their ears to determine chord changes. While they had lyrics in front of them to help speed the process of learning the song and wrote down chord changes to help them maintain what they learned a little better, the students had to rely entirely on rote learning to figure out the melody, the chords and how it all fit together.

‘Ulili E

Here is a sample of a lesson plan that might be used to accomplish the aural learning of ‘Ulili E. In the following plan, the sequence Mandy used above is written out in a format more familiar to mainland music educators with Mandy’s intentions kept in mind, to provide a skeletal framework for music teachers to apply the lesson within the classroom setting.

I. Materials
   a. ‘Ukulele
   b. Lyric sheets to hand out
   c. Pencils

II. Objectives
   a. Students will sing ‘Uili E with accurate pitch and rhythm, proper breathing and good technique
   b. Students will be able to tell the story behind the song
   c. Students will be able to correctly identify and notate the chord changes

III. Assessment
   a. Teacher will listen to the students’ final performance and evaluate the students’ progress
   b. Teacher will ask the students questions pertaining to the song content and have them re-tell what they learned
   c. Teacher will look over students lyric sheets to make sure they are getting the chords correct.
IV. Procedure

a. Introduce the song
   i. Section is from an old Mele (Hawaiian song or chant) About birds that migrate to Hawaii and their calls. The ‘ulili, wandering tattler or sandpiper, breeds in Alaska and the Yukon and migrates to Hawaii in the winter.
   ii. Share translation
   iii. Share lyrics. Discuss: how do the lyrics reflect the sounds birds might make?

b. Teach hui
   i. Sing and play the hui for the students
   ii. Have students echo your singing one line at a time
      1. Teach “‘ulili e” first- teacher sings “ahahana...” after students have a firm grasp, then teaches them “ahahana...”
   iii. Have class sing all 4 lines together
   iv. Sing and play the hui for students one more time and ask them to figure out the chords (give them what key you are hin)
   v. Sing hui while students accompany.- fix any chord errors you may hear
   vi. Have students play and sing together

c. Repeat process for each of the verses

d. Have the students figure out the chords for the hui independently

e. Teacher sings hui while students accompany, work together to fix chord errors

f. Repeat process for the chords on the verse

g. Students play through whole song while teacher sings until students are proficient with chords

h. Students play and sing at the same time

Note that the teacher never specifically has to tell the students what chords to use at first, never just gives them the chords and does not give them any notation for the melody. Students are learning entirely on a listen- watch- do basis.

From the experiences provided during observations, I want to provide mainland teachers with a few more lesson plans. These skeletal frameworks will provide material used in a thoughtful and culturally representative way, according to the experiences I had in class and the interviews with the professional teachers outside of class.
Lesson plan for *Ka Lei Ho’ohie*

*Ka Lei Ho’ohie* is a traditional Hawaiian Mele about the traditions and sentiments surrounding leis. Many students may already know a bit about leis and have probably seen them. One can show the students videos of leis being presented so that they understand the meaning. *Ka Lei Ho’ohie* is a perfect example of mele keeping and teaching, cultural traditions.

1) Materials  
   a. `Ukuleles  
   b. Lyric Sheets to hand out  
   c. Pencils

2) Objectives  
   a. Students will sing “Ka Lei Ho’ohie” with accurate pitch and rhythm, proper breathing and good technique  
   b. Students will be able to tell the story behind the song  
   c. Students will be able to correctly identify and notate the chord changes

3) Assessment  
   a. Teacher will listen to the students’ final performance and evaluate the students’ progress  
   b. Teacher will ask the students questions pertaining to the song content and have them re-tell what they learned  
   c. Teacher will look over students’ lyric sheets to make sure they are getting the chords correct.

4) Procedure  
   a. Intro  
      i. Leis are wreaths of flowers draped around the neck presented when arriving or leaving as a sign of affection. They are usually made of natural materials (plumerias, tubrose, orchids, leaves, shells feathers, etc.).  
      ii. Discuss what students already know about leis  
          1. Where have they seen them?  
          2. Has anyone ever been given one?  
      iii. A lei should never be thrown away. Traditionally they should be returned to the earth by hanging it on a tree, burying it or burning it as throwing it away represents throwing away the love of the person that presented the lei.
iv. Sing and play the mele for the students (gallop strum)

b. Body
   i. Hand out lyric sheets
   ii. Discuss translation
      1. What is each verse talking about?
         a. The traditions and sentiments associated with leis
   iii. Teach the melody (there is no recurring hui)
      1. Sing short phrases of the first verse and have students echo
      2. Sing longer phrases and have the students echo
      3. Students sing whole verse
      4. Repeat with remaining verses
   iv. Teach the chords
      1. Give students time to write out what they think the chords are for the verses
      2. Sing the melody while the students accompany
      3. Fix any errors heard
         a. May have to take time to re-teach or review the gallop strum
      4. Students play while teacher sings until students are proficient with chords

c. Conclusion
   i. Students sing and play all together and in small groups

Lesson plan for *A Kona Hema*

*A Kona Hema* is a mele that represents a little bit of the islands’ history and scenery. This is a perfect example of mele being used to remember historic events and people and pass on that information.

1) Materials
   a. ʻUkuleles
   b. Lyric Sheets to hand out
   c. Pencils

2) Objectives
   a. Students will sing “A Kona Hema” with accurate pitch and rhythm, proper breathing and good technique
   b. Students will be able to tell the story behind the song
   c. Students will be able to correctly identify and notate the chord changes
3) Assessment
   a. Teacher will listen to the students’ final performance and evaluate the students’ progress
   b. Teacher will ask the students questions pertaining to the song content and have them re-tell what they learned
   c. Teacher will look over students’ lyric sheets to make sure they are getting the chords correct.

4) Procedure
   a. Intro
      i. Mele is an ancient chant praising the Kona (south) and Kohala (northwest) districts of the island of Hawaii and dedicated to king Kalakaua.
      ii. Sing and play the mele for the students (8th note strum)
   b. Body
      i. Hand out lyric sheets
      ii. Words the students should know:
         1. `Ehu: a chief famous for his peaceful reign.
         2. Ka`awaloa: village in Honaunau
         3. Kawaihae: village in Kohala
         4. Mahukona: village in Kohala
         5. ‘Apa`apa`a: a strong wind from Kohala
      iii. Discuss translation
         1. What is each verse talking about?
            a. Mostly the scenery and climate
         2. Discuss last verse- from a military report to a Maui leader, Kamalalawalu, who tried to invade Hawaii. The people of Kohala crowded at the harbor, leaving the island open to attack, but were able to fight off the invasion. (a little bit of history preserved in song!)
      iv. Teach the melody (there is no recurring hui)
         1. Sing short phrases of the first verse and have students echo
         2. Sing longer phrases and have the students echo
         3. Students sing whole verse
         4. Repeat with remaining verses
      v. Teach the chords
         1. Give students time to write out what they think the chords are for the verses
         2. Sing the melody while the students accompany
         3. Fix any errors heard
         4. Students play while teacher sings until students are proficient with chords
c. Conclusion
   i. Students sing and play all together and in small groups

**Embracing the Change**

While the traditional Hawaiian mele is at the core of the `ukulele repertoire, history and culture are important to teach for authenticity in the classroom, we can no longer ignore the modern trends for the instrument. “Anymore it’s very hard to ignore what’s going on all over the world.” Says Alan, “`Ukulele is such an accessible instrument that it’s showing up everywhere. It’s all over pop music with Bruno Mars and Jason Mraz. We now have `ukulele choruses in Canada, the UK and Japan. I just got back from traveling to Japan to have a concert with Japanese musicians. It’s showing up at folk festivals all over the Mainland. And you can’t ignore what Jake Shimabukuro has done to bring back its popularity. Yes, it’s a Hawaiian instrument but it means so much to all sorts of people.”

There are several opportunities to explore the many uses of the `ukulele today. The examples given in the introduction to this paper can serve as part of this experience, provided they are not the only experiences the students have with the instrument in class. Popular music artists such as Bruno Mars (a particular favorite with the students at the Kamehameha school during my visit), Jason Mraz, Never Shout Never and Ingrid Michaelson are just a few stepping off points into the use of the `ukulele in popular music. Many websites are available for tablature and chords to make the search for material even easier. Some examples are:

- Ukulelehunt.com
- Ukulele-tabs.com
- Ukuleletab.net
- Musicnotes.com/ukulele
Several countries even have their own `ukulele choruses. According to Alan, Canada, Japan and the UK have some of the strongest. These ensembles play classical music arranged for an ensemble of `ukuleles ranging from soprano to bass sizes. Students can watch videos and listen to examples of these ensembles in class. Possible activities could involve arranging a piece for `ukulele chorus as a class as part of this experience.

In addition to these mediums, the `ukulele is also cropping up in American folk music festivals all over the mainland United States. It can be found being played along side mountain dulcimers, mandolins, fiddles and banjos. There are folk festivals set up for the `ukulele alone in places all over the country from Philadelphia to the Midwest to California.

Students also should take an opportunity to see Jake Shimabukuro perform and speak about the `ukulele. A native Hawaiian, he began playing the traditional mele. However, his fingers, ears and interests allowed him to take the `ukulele to new places. He performs everything from finger-style arrangements of the Beatles to flamenco and funk. Hearing the young man talk and play can be very inspiring for secondary students as they see someone close to their age doing such remarkable work. He has given several TED talks that would be of benefit to every student as he promotes the idea of healthy living through music. In a May 2010 TEDx talk in Tokyo, he calls the `ukulele the “instrument of peace,” saying that if everyone in the world played the `ukulele there would be more joy and togetherness; something that is solidly expressed in the traditional Hawaiian values surrounding the instrument and a message that students can cling to and experience through the `ukuleles island sound (Shimabukuro, 2010).
Chapter 7

Conclusion

The `ukulele is an instrument that comes from Hawaiian culture and should be presented in the music classroom with cultural sensitivity. This will not only accomplish the ninth National Standard of music (Understanding music in relation to history and culture) but respect the traditions from which the instrument grew. The authentic re-creation of the learning process and playing of the instrument is a key part of representing the culture surrounding the instrument. As it is used to accompany Hawaiian mele, the mele should be the main source of material for classroom study. However, the social role of the `ukulele should not be ignored. The kanikapila can be a wonderful way to represent how music brings people together in Hawaii and can help students bond in music class.

While the Hawaiian roots of the `ukulele are important to learn, one cannot ignore the impact it has had upon the world. The study of popular and folk music can also be accomplished in the classroom effectively using the instrument so long as students understand the roots. The visible public performance of `ukulele can be a very powerful experience for students as they watch professionals make music with the little instrument they hold in their hands. The `ukulele has a rich cultural history in Hawaii, but it has touched the entire world. The complete study of the `ukulele should accomplish both of these aspects for a greater understanding of music’s role in culture and throughout the world.
Appendix A

'Ulili E Lyric Sheet and Score

‘Ulili E
(The Sandpiper)

Hawaiian:

\(Hui-\)

`Ulili ē
(ahahana `ulili ehehene `ulili ahahana)
`Ulili ho`i
(ehehene `ulili ahahana `ulili ehehene)
`Ulili holoholo kahakai ē
O ia kai ua lana mālie

\(Hone ana ko leo e `ulili ē\)
O kahi manu noho `ae kai
Kia`i ma ka lae a`o kekaha
O ia kai ua lana mālie

\(Hone ana ko leo kōleā ē\)
Pehea `o Kahiki? Maika`i nō
`O ia `āina `uluwahiwehi
I hui pū `ia me ke onaona

Translation:

\(Chorus-\)

The sandpiper

The sandpiper returns

Sandpiper runs along the beach
Where the sea is peaceful and calm

The voice of the sandpiper is soft and sweet
Little bird who lives by the sea
Ever watchful on the beaches
Where the sea is calm

The voice of the ‘ulili is soft and sweet
How are you, stranger? Very well
You grace our land
Where the sea is always calm
Appendix B

*Ka Lei Hoʻohie Lyric Sheet and Score*

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**Ka Lei Hoʻohie**  
(The Delightful Lei)

**Hawaiian:**

No ka lei ho ʻohie  
N wai o pua  
He makana na kāua  
Kū kalahale

Ai no la na kamaka  
O nā malihini  
No no ʻāina  
Hoʻo pua kea ili

Nohea ke ala  
Nā pua like ʻole  
I lawe ia mai la  
Pili kāua po

Ua mana ko leo  
Malu I ke ʻala  
Kulana holomua  
No Hawaiʻi

Haʻina e ka wehi  
I lohe ia  
Ka lei hoʻohie  
ʻAe ou mai

**Translation:**

Delightful lei for you  
For whom is this flower  
A gift for you and me  
Famous wind and rain of Honolulu

And it is the desire  
Of the visitors  
For these islands  
To see fair blossoms upon landing

Beautiful is the smell  
Various flowers  
That was brought  
Close to you and me last night

The spirit of your voice  
Shaded in the fragrance  
Pulls me closer  
To Hawaiʻi

The precious refrain  
That was heard  
The delightful lei  
For me
1. No kāle i ho'ohi'e
   Nā wai o pu'a
   He ma-

   F
   Bb
   F
   C

   ka-nā
   na
   ka-ua

   Ku
   ka-la-le
Appendix C

* A Kona Hema Lyric Sheet and Score *

**A Kona Hema**
*(The King at South Kona)*

**Hawaiian:**
A Kona Hema ʻo ka la ni
Nānā ʻiā Kaʻawaloa
ʻIke i ka la`i a ʻEhu
Ehuehu ʻo e e ka la ni.

Ka helena aʻo Hawaiʻi
Mālamalama nā moku
Ahuwale nā kualono
ʻIke ʻia pae ʻōpua

E kukū ana i ke kai
I ke kai hāwanawana
ʻŌlelo o Kawaihae
Hae ana e ka naulu

Ka makani hele uluulu
Kū ka eʻa i ka moana
Ka moana o Māhukona
Ka makani ʻĀpaʻapaʻa

Lēʻi mai ʻo Kohala
I ka nuku nā kanaka
Haʻina mai ka puana
O ka lani Kaulilua

**Translation:**
At South Kona, the kin
Observes Kaʻawaloa
Knows the peace of ʻEhu
Majestic are you, o king

Going to Hawaiʻi
To take care of the districts
In plain view of the mountaintops
Seen are the cloud banks

At mid-tide on the sea
On the whispering sea
Speaking of Kawaihae
Stirred by the sudden shower

The wind increases
The sea rises
The sea of Māhukona
The wind named ʻĀpaʻapaʻa

Crowded is Kohala
To the mouth with people
Tell the theme
The royal Kaulilua
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