

Guest Reflection: Randall Allsup

This past Saturday we were visited by Randall Allsup to hear him talk about an open philosophy towards music education. The morning started with the group listening to a song then talking to others about what we heard. When we regrouped for discussion, I noticed that he really wanted us to explain what we were thinking and delve deeper than the surface. After discussing the piece and discovering that it was comprised of a series of different ostinatos, we were told to come with our own. The favourites were then put together to create a group piece, and I really liked how Allsup emphasized that each person is unique and another group could come together and sound completely different, but still just as good. This activity and the one afterwards when we were put into groups to combine ostinatos pushed me out of my comfort zone. I really enjoyed working with different people with different experiences on different instruments. I think my group worked very well together, and all the groups came up with interesting pieces that were unique in their own ways. The final activity of the day was my favourite, in which Allsup introduced the group to a Mongolian folksong. I really enjoyed how Allsup had the group close our eyes and imagine a scene to put the song into context. It was a very relaxing moment that allowed us to picture where the song was coming from. It was notated in a manner that I am not used to and so it fun to figure out how the melody went with the people around me. We were then put back into smaller groups, each with a responsibility that would contribute to the final product. Again this allowed me to experiment and try things I normally would not have. When we put the song together, I think the final product was really beautiful and was something we were all proud to have been a part of. Ultimately I found this workshop to be very enjoyable. I enjoyed how Allsup strayed away from the typical classroom setting where the teacher simply

stands at the front of the room and lectures the students. He allowed us to have freedom and pushed us to try new things, however there was still structure which led us to the final product. As Allsup said, we need to stray away from binaries that constrict us and use activities such as these to teach our students in way where they can still be their expressive selves.