

ACCESS, BELONGING, AND JUSTICE: LESSONS FROM THE WHEEL-HARMONY ORCHESTRA IN SOUTH KOREA FOR INCLUSIVE MUSIC PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

Inclusive music education is often assessed with developmental, therapeutic, or access-based metrics, yet these frameworks frequently overlook deeper questions of power, recognition, and cultural legitimacy. This article examines how inclusive ensemble practice can serve as a site of epistemic justice rather than mere accommodation, drawing on a qualitative case study of the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra, a community-based ensemble for children with disabilities in South Korea. Through analysis of student and parent narratives, the study shows that the most consequential outcomes of participation were not technical gains but shifts in belonging, authorship, and social visibility. Situating

these findings within disability studies, community music, and critical pedagogy, the article identifies embodied pedagogy, digital mediation, and sonic diversity as structural conditions that determine whether inclusion remains symbolic or becomes transformative. The article argues that inclusive music education must be reconceptualized as a practice of cultural authorship, in which marginalized learners actively reshape what music education recognizes as legitimate knowledge, participation, and excellence.

Keywords: epistemic justice, belonging, inclusive music pedagogy, cultural authorship

Introduction: Why Access Alone Cannot Produce Justice

Inclusive education has become a dominant normative framework in global education policy, often articulated in terms of access, accommodation, and participation. International organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank have emphasized physical accessibility, assistive technologies, and differentiated instruction as cornerstones of inclusive schooling (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2025). These developments have undeniably expanded educational participation for students with disabilities, challenging earlier exclusionary practices and affirming education as a universal right. Yet, when inclusion is framed primarily as access, it often fails to interrogate the deeper structures of power, recognition, and legitimacy that determine whose knowledge, bodies, and cultural expressions are valued within educational systems.

Music education reveals these limitations with particular clarity. Unlike many academic subjects, music functions simultaneously as a pedagogical practice, a cultural hierarchy, and a symbolic marker of excellence and identity. Musical participation is never neutral; it is embedded in traditions, evaluative norms, and aesthetic values that shape who is recognized as a “musician” and on what terms. Western art music traditions, which continue to dominate formal music education in many contexts, have historically privileged narrow bodily norms, technical speed, precision, endurance, and stylistic conformity (Green, 2003). These criteria are often treated as objective indicators of merit, yet they remain deeply entangled with ableist assumptions about capacity, control, and worth.

When students with disabilities are included in such systems without interrogating the underlying norms, inclusion risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. Disabled learners may be physically present in ensembles, classrooms, or performances yet remain peripheral to musical meaning-making, leadership, and authorship. In these cases, participation does not necessarily translate into agency. Critical music education scholars have long warned against equating participation with empowerment. Abramo (2011) argues that disability inclusion often positions disabled students as objects of care, therapy, or inspiration rather than as musical agents capable of shaping artistic outcomes. Similarly, Benedict et al. (2015) state that social justice in music education needs structural transformation of pedagogical values and evaluative frameworks. It is not enough to simply extend the existing practices to marginalized populations.

These critiques reveal a fundamental problem: inclusion initiatives often focus on who is allowed in without adequately addressing who is authorized to matter. From this perspective, inclusion is not only a logistical or pedagogical challenge but also an epistemic one. Decisions about repertoire, technique, assessment, and ensemble organization reflect assumptions about what counts as legitimate musical knowledge and who is recognized as capable of producing it. For students with disabilities, exclusion often operates at this epistemic level, through diminished credibility, limited authorship, and constrained opportunities to shape collective musical meaning.

This article reframes inclusive music education as a matter of epistemic justice—the right to be recognized as a knower, creator, and cultural contributor within musical communities. Rather than asking how children with disabilities can be included in existing musical structures, the study asks how inclusive practices redistribute authority, cultivate belonging, and reshape cultural legitimacy. Drawing on a qualitative case study of the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra in South Korea, the article examines how collective music-making reconfigures recognition, legitimacy, and social positioning for children with disabilities.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

This study examines how inclusive ensemble practice serves as a site of

epistemic justice in music education. Guided by the central research question — How does inclusive ensemble practice redistribute epistemic authority and cultivate structural belonging for children with disabilities? — The study explores the relationship among participation, recognition, and cultural authorship within the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra.

To address this inquiry, the article advances four objectives:

1. To examine how belonging is constructed in inclusive ensemble practice.
2. To analyze how power and authorship are negotiated in musical participation.
3. To identify the structural conditions that shape whether inclusion becomes transformative.

4. To develop a justice-oriented framework for inclusive music pedagogy.

By addressing these objectives, the article extends current debates in music education beyond access to a deeper interrogation of legitimacy, value, and participation. Drawing on qualitative data from student and parent narratives, the study argues that belonging is a developmental, cultural, and political outcome—one that reshapes what music education recognizes as legitimate participation.

In doing so, the article offers both an empirically grounded case analysis and a transferable conceptual model for justice-oriented, inclusive music pedagogy. When inclusion is framed as epistemic justice rather than accommodation, music education becomes a site of cultural transformation, where difference is not merely managed but generative, capable of reshaping pedagogical values, cultural hierarchies, and collective imagination.

Literature Review: Inclusion, Disability, and Music Education

From Access to Participation: The Limits of Inclusive Education Frameworks

Inclusive education has become a dominant paradigm in global education policy, grounded in human rights frameworks that emphasize access, accommodation, and participation (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2025). Within this paradigm, disability is often addressed through physical accessibility, assistive technologies, and individualized instructional supports. While these measures have significantly expanded educational access, critics argue that access-based

inclusion often fails to interrogate the epistemological foundations of schooling, namely, which forms of knowledge are valued, how learning is evaluated, and whose voices are recognized as authoritative (Florian, 2014).

This critique is especially salient in arts education. Unlike many academic disciplines, music education is deeply entangled with cultural hierarchies, aesthetic norms, and embodied expectations. Framing inclusion narrowly as access risks positioning disabled learners as guests in preexisting systems rather than as participants with the power to reshape them. As Slee (2011) argues, inclusive education that does not confront normative assumptions about ability often reproduces exclusion in more subtle forms.

In music education, access-based inclusion has often taken the form of adapted instruments, simplified parts, or parallel ensembles. While these strategies may enable participation, they can also reinforce deficit narratives by framing disability as a problem to be managed rather than a source of pedagogical transformation (Abramo, 2011). This tension has prompted scholars to call for a shift from access-oriented inclusion to justice-oriented frameworks that foreground power, recognition, and participation in knowledge production (Benedict et al., 2015).

Disability Studies and Epistemic Exclusion in the Arts

Disability studies provide a critical lens for understanding why inclusion often stalls at the level of access. Central to this field is the argument that disability is not merely a medical or functional condition but a social and cultural phenomenon shaped by norms, institutions, and systems of meaning (Garland-Thomson, 2009). Exclusion, from this perspective, operates not only through physical barriers but through epistemic mechanisms that deny disabled individuals recognition as knowers and creators.

Fricker's (2007) concept of epistemic injustice is particularly relevant to music education. Testimonial injustice occurs when individuals are denied credibility because of prejudice, and hermeneutical injustice arises when social frameworks lack the conceptual resources to interpret marginalized experiences. Disabled

musicians frequently encounter both forms. Their musical judgments may be discounted, and their embodied modes of musicking may fall outside dominant conceptions of musical competence.

Disability arts scholars argue that these epistemic exclusions are particularly pronounced in artistic domains, where disabled performers are often framed through therapeutic, inspirational, or charitable narratives (Kuppers, 2017). Such framings strip artistic work of its aesthetic autonomy and reduce cultural production to a form of personal rehabilitation. In educational contexts, similar dynamics arise when disabled students' musical participation is justified primarily based on emotional regulation or developmental benefit rather than artistic contribution.

This literature suggests that inclusive music education must address not only who participates but also how musical knowledge is defined. Without challenging the epistemic foundations of music education, inclusion risks reproducing the very hierarchies it seeks to dismantle.

Music Education, Virtuosity, and Bodily Normativity

Music education has historically privileged specific bodily norms and performance ideals, especially in Western classical traditions. Technical precision, speed, endurance, accuracy, and fine motor control are often treated as objective measures of musical excellence. Yet these standards often rest on implicit assumptions about normative bodies and modes of performance, privileging certain forms of physical ability while marginalizing others (Kuppers 2017; de Bruin and Skinner, 2026). Consequently, students whose bodies diverge from established performance expectations may be viewed as deficient or limited, regardless of their musical insight, creativity, or expressive capacity.

Recent scholarship increasingly challenges the assumption that virtuosity is a universal measure of musicianship. Rather than treating technique as a fixed set of bodily requirements, researchers advocate more inclusive understandings of musical participation that recognize diverse embodied experiences and multiple pathways to artistic expression (de Bruin and Skinner, 2026). From this perspective, musical excellence is not reducible to speed, endurance, or technical uniformity

but emerges from adaptable forms of engagement that accommodate diverse physical capacities.

Research on musicians' health further exposes the limitations of traditional performance-centered pedagogies. Studies continue to show that playing-related musculoskeletal disorders remain prevalent among professional and student musicians, suggesting that conventional instructional approaches have often prioritized technical achievement and performance outcomes over bodily sustainability, injury prevention, and long-term well-being (Yang et al., 2021; Bruyneel et al., 2024). These findings challenge the assumption that prevailing pedagogical models are universally beneficial and instead point to the need for more holistic, health-conscious approaches to music learning.

For students with disabilities, such norms may not merely be restrictive but actively exclusionary. Inclusive pedagogy that merely adapts existing techniques without interrogating the assumptions embedded in them risks reinforcing rather than transforming bodily normativity. By contrast, disability-informed and embodied approaches encourage educators to reconceptualize technique as relational, adaptable, and responsive to diverse bodies and ways of knowing (Kuppers, 2017; de Bruin and Skinner, 2026). Within this framework, disability is understood not as a deficit requiring accommodation but as a source of pedagogical insight that can expand the possibilities of music teaching and learning for all participants.

Community Music as an Alternative Value System

Community music scholarship offers an alternative framework for understanding musical participation beyond conservatory-based hierarchies. Higgins (2012) defines community music as a practice grounded in participation, relationships, and negotiated value, emphasizing process over product and collective meaning over individual virtuosity. Rather than ranking participants by technical proficiency, community music foregrounds inclusion, agency, and social connection.

Veblen et al. (2013) position community music as a socially embedded form of civic and participatory practice that fosters collaboration, mutual responsibility, and democratic engagement. Within this framework, musical value emerges from shared participation and relational listening rather than from competitive distinction.

Community music approaches can offer disabled learners opportunities for participation that do not rely on conventional ideas of bodily performance or standardized musical skills. Recent research shows that inclusive ensemble settings can promote agency, a sense of belonging, collaborative creativity, and participatory access through adaptable teaching methods and flexible musicking practices (de Bruin, 2026; Bartleet & Heard, 2024). However, scholars warn that community music alone does not guarantee equity or justice. If issues of power, representation, authorship, and institutional authority are not explicitly addressed, participatory music initiatives may still inadvertently uphold subtle hierarchies of legitimacy and inclusion (Mommo et al., 2025; Suwanpakdee and Jitduangprem, 2025).

Digital Technologies, Inclusion, and New Inequalities

The expansion of digital technologies in music education has introduced both new possibilities and new tensions for inclusion. Online platforms, asynchronous learning environments, and digital composition tools may reduce certain physical barriers while supporting diverse learning modalities and flexible participation (Dammers, 2019; Ruthmann, 2017). During the COVID-19 pandemic, such technologies became essential infrastructures for sustaining musical participation and continuity of learning (Biasutti et al., 2022).

At the same time, digital mediation can intensify inequities related to embodiment, accessibility, and sensory interaction. Latency, reduced audio fidelity, and limited multimodal feedback often undermine ensemble synchrony and embodied forms of musical communication, particularly for learners who rely on tactile, visual, or spatial cues (Biasutti et al., 2022). Moreover, digital platforms frequently embed normative assumptions about interaction, pace, attention, and communication that may marginalize disabled users.

Recent scholarship increasingly frames digital inclusion as a pedagogical and relational challenge rather than a purely technological one (Fawns, 2022). Justice-oriented digital pedagogy, therefore, requires intentionally designed learning environments that prioritize accessibility, co-creation, flexibility, and multiple forms of expression rather than merely reproducing face-to-face instructional norms in online spaces. Without such intentionality, digital inclusion risks becoming another site of epistemic exclusion.

Toward a Justice-Oriented Synthesis

Taken together, the literature reviewed here reveals a persistent gap between inclusive intent and epistemic transformation. Access-based frameworks expand participation but often leave intact the cultural and epistemological hierarchies that marginalize disabled learners. Disability studies expose how exclusion operates through failures of recognition, while community music scholarship offers alternative value systems that challenge hierarchical norms. Yet neither field alone fully addresses the question of authorship, specifically who holds the power to shape musical meaning and educational values.

This study builds on this literature by examining inclusive ensemble practice as a site of epistemic justice. By focusing on belonging, recognition, and authorship within the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra, it aims to contribute a justice-oriented framework that moves beyond accommodation toward cultural transformation.

Theoretical Framework: Belonging, Power, and Epistemic Justice

Belonging as a Structural Condition

Belonging is often treated in educational research as a psychological state linked to motivation and well-being. While important, such framings risk depoliticizing belonging by reducing it to an individual feeling rather than a structural condition. In music education, belonging is inseparable from recognition: who is recognized as a musician, whose contributions matter, and who occupies central rather than marginal positions in musical life.

Recent scholarship on music and social cohesion suggests that participatory music-making can foster interpersonal trust, intercultural understanding, collaborative responsibility, and forms of civic belonging through shared musical engagement (Crooke et al. 2024). Within such frameworks, musical participation is not understood merely as artistic production but as a relational and social practice through which individuals negotiate identity, recognition, and collective presence. For disabled learners, this sense of belonging carries particular significance because exclusion often emerges not from a lack of interest or ability, but from failures of recognition, accessibility, and social acknowledgment within normative educational structures (Kuppers, 2017).

Cultural Authorship and Power

This study frames belonging as a form of cultural authorship. To belong is not merely to be present but to participate in shaping musical meaning. Authorship entails power: the ability to influence repertoire, interpretation, pacing, and collective norms. Inclusive music education that fails to redistribute this power risks reproducing existing hierarchies under the banner of equity.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine how inclusive music education serves as a site of belonging and epistemic justice. Case studies enable in-depth examination of practices embedded in specific cultural and institutional contexts, yielding theoretically rich insights rather than generalizable claims.

Site and Participants

The Wheel-Harmony Orchestra is a community-based ensemble in Seoul that serves children with physical disabilities. Participants included students ages 9–16 and their parents. Many students were homeschooled or excluded from mainstream music programs because of mobility constraints or health conditions.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data sources included semi-structured interviews, rehearsal observations, performance field notes, and informal digital reflections. Data were analyzed thematically, focusing on patterns of belonging, recognition, agency, and constraint. The analysis was informed by disability studies, community music theory, and critical pedagogy.

Findings: Belonging, Recognition, and the Redistribution of Musical Power

Analysis of interviews and field observations revealed that participants consistently described the value of the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra not in terms

of technical improvement but in terms of recognition, responsibility, and social change. Three themes emerged: (1) being musically necessary, (2) re-narrating disability through performance, and (3) expanding social worlds.

Being Musically Necessary

Students often described moments in rehearsal when their role affected the entire ensemble. Several participants noted maintaining tempo, holding rhythmic patterns, or sustaining long tones that supported other sections. One student explained, “If I stop, everyone feels it.” Another described counting entrances for peers who relied on auditory cues.

Teachers structured rehearsals so each student had a distinct musical role. During sectional practice, parts were redistributed to ensure no role was merely symbolic. Observations showed that students waited for one another’s cues and collectively adjusted the dynamics. In these moments, multiple students shared tempo and cueing responsibilities, and no single individual appeared to control the ensemble’s coordination.

Parents noted that this sense of responsibility differed from their children’s experiences in school, where they were often assisted rather than relied upon.

Re-narrating Disability Through Performance

Parents emphasized that public performances changed how their children were perceived. Rather than focusing on medical conditions or limitations, audiences responded to musical coordination, tone quality, and ensemble cohesion. One parent remarked, “They saw musicians first.”

During concerts, students entered the stage in coordinated formation, including those using mobility devices. Applause followed musical passages rather than individual diagnoses. Field notes recorded audience members commenting on musical balance and interpretation rather than on disability.

Students also described personal shifts. Several expressed pride in wearing performance attire and performing on large stages. One participant said, “On stage, I feel equal.”

Expansion of Social Worlds

Participation in the orchestra led to relational changes beyond rehearsals. Parents reported increased peer interaction and independent communication.

Students arranged informal practice sessions and exchanged messages about musical passages outside scheduled sessions.

Observations showed students assisting one another with instrument setup, page turning, and timing cues. Over time, participants appeared more comfortable initiating conversations and occupying shared spaces.

Public performances further extended these interactions. Students greeted audience members, posed for photographs, and stayed after concerts. Parents described these events as moments when their children were visibly included in community life.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the rehearsal collaboration and public performance contexts referenced in these findings.



Figure 1. Ensemble Rehearsal and Peer Interaction

The rehearsal environment functions as a relational space rather than merely a technical training site. Students, including those using mobility devices, are arranged in a collaborative formation, engaging in shared listening and coordinated performance. The open configuration supports eye contact, peer responsiveness, and distributed musical responsibility. This spatial and pedagogical design fosters social confidence and mutual recognition, reinforcing belonging as a lived, embodied condition.



Figure 2. Public Performance and Civic Presence

This outdoor concert scene illustrates the orchestra's movement into civic cultural space. Performing before a broad public audience, students assume visible roles as contributing artists rather than recipients of accommodations. Professional staging and collective presentation signal legitimacy and shared cultural authorship. Public performance extends relational interaction beyond rehearsal settings, positioning students visibly within community events.

Discussion: Inclusion, Power, and the Conditions of Epistemic Justice

The findings suggest that inclusive music education becomes transformative not only through expanded access but also through the redistribution of responsibility in ensemble practice. Students' accounts of tempo anchoring, cue responsibility, and ensemble balance show how participation shifted from assisted presence to necessary contribution.

From Access to Authority

Access-based inclusion eliminates physical and procedural barriers; however, the Wheel-Harmony data show that access alone did not foster a sense of belonging. Transformation occurred when students' contributions shaped collective outcomes. This distinction supports broader critiques in inclusive education scholarship, which argue that accommodation without epistemic change may perpetuate marginalization (Florian, 2014). In this context, belonging resulted not solely from support structures but from structural shifts in authority within rehearsal dynamics.

Belonging as Epistemic Recognition

Students' accounts of being relied upon indicate that belonging functioned as recognition rather than mere affective comfort. When participants described feeling "needed" for ensemble balance or continuity of timing, they reported a shift from assisted participation to contributory status. This aligns with Fricker's (2007) notion of epistemic recognition, in which individuals are treated as credible contributors to shared meaning-making practices. Rather than being positioned as therapeutic beneficiaries, students occupied roles that required judgment, consistency, and interpretive responsiveness.

Redistribution of Power Through Design

Power redistribution in the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra was implemented through concrete structural mechanisms embedded in rehearsal and pedagogical design:

- Rotational leadership in rhythm sections, where students took turns setting tempo and signaling entrances, reduced exclusive reliance on conductor cues and enriched distributed decision-making.
- Adaptive positioning within embodied pedagogy, in which teachers adjusted seating, instrument supports, and posture collaboratively with students, treating bodily variation as a legitimate starting point rather than correcting toward a single normative technique.
- Peer cue systems, where eye contact, subtle gestures, and shared counting replaced centralized conductor control during sectional work, thereby increasing horizontal coordination among students.
- Digital reflection practices, in which students reviewed rehearsal recordings and offered observations before receiving instructor feedback, created space for self-assessment and shared evaluative authority.

These structures altered how authority circulated within the ensemble. Power was not removed but redistributed across multiple nodes of musical responsibility, enabling students to exercise judgment, take action, and influence collective outcomes.

Structural Fragility and Its Limits

Despite these strengths, inclusion remained structurally fragile. Three constraints emerged: embodiment, digital mediation, and sonic hierarchy.

Embodiment. Although adaptive adjustments were present, systematic somatic integration remained uneven. Research on musicians' health indicates that pedagogical models that ignore bodily diversity risk reinforcing exclusionary norms (Guptill, 2011; Ryan & Seddon, 2021). Justice-oriented inclusion requires proactive design rather than reactive accommodation.

Digital mediation. Hybrid rehearsal formats introduced latency and reduced sensory feedback, complicating ensemble synchrony (Biasutti et al., 2022; Dammers, 2019). However, asynchronous video reflection and written feedback created alternative spaces for student agency (Fawns, 2022). Thus, digital inclusion functioned ambivalently—both constraining and enabling the redistribution of authority.

Sonic hierarchy. The dominance of Western string instruments reflected broader aesthetic hierarchies. When percussion and adaptive instruments assumed rhythmic leadership, authority shifted perceptibly. This supports Schippers's (2010) argument that sonic diversity reconfigures musical value structures.

Toward a Justice-Oriented Design Framework for Inclusive Music Education

Drawing on the findings, this study proposes a justice-oriented design framework comprising five interrelated commitments. These are not programmatic add-ons but structural principles that shape inclusive pedagogy.

Embodied Pedagogy as Core Practice

This rehearsal scene [Figure 3] illustrates the spatial and relational dynamics of embodied pedagogy in practice. Students with diverse physical needs are positioned within a shared ensemble environment that accommodates varied postures, mobility devices, and instrumental adaptations. Rather than treating bodily difference as an exception requiring remediation, the pedagogical design foregrounds accessibility through spatial arrangement, adaptive supports, and proximity to teachers. This structuring reflects justice-oriented inclusion by

normalizing bodily diversity as a foundational condition of music-making. Consistent with Universal Design for Learning approaches that promote inclusive participation, learner variability, and accessible educational design (Sewell et al. 2022), and with recent scholarship on embodied and accessible music pedagogy (Suwanpakdee and Jitduangprem, 2025; de Bruin and Skinner, 2026), the ensemble environment prioritizes alignment, sustainability, and mutual responsiveness, reducing the risk of injury while affirming each musician's physical agency (Bruyneel et al. 2024).



Figure 3. Embodied Pedagogy as Core Practice

Digital Intentionality

Digital tools must be treated as expressive infrastructures rather than substitutes for in-person norms. Asynchronous feedback, multimodal reflection, and collaborative composition platforms can support agency when intentionally designed (Cheng et al., 2024). Without such intentionality, digital inclusion risks reproducing exclusion.

Sonic Pluralism

Instrumental and repertoire diversity are important dimensions of justice-oriented music education. Including percussion traditions, adaptive instruments, alternative interfaces, and culturally diverse sound worlds can expand opportunities for musical participation while challenging normative assumptions about virtuosity, technique, and aesthetic legitimacy (de Bruin and Skinner 2026). Within this framework, sonic pluralism recognizes that inclusion concerns not only who is permitted to participate but also which sounds, musical practices, and expressive forms are institutionally valued and culturally recognized.

Peer-Centered Authority

Peer collaboration redistributes authority and fosters empathy, leadership, and shared responsibility. Research on collaborative creativity underscores the importance of peer-led learning in inclusive contexts (Biasutti, 2015). Justice-oriented ensembles should incorporate peer mentoring and student-led decision-making.

Teacher Education in Justice Literacies

Many musicians trained in conservatories have limited formal education in areas such as disability studies, inclusive teaching methods, somatic awareness, and accessible learning design. Recent research on inclusive education highlights the need for teacher training programs to incorporate these skills as core professional competencies, rather than treating them as optional or specialized topics (Kim et al., 2024). This issue is particularly relevant in music education, where traditional teaching models often emphasize normative performance standards at the expense of accessibility, participation, and the ability to meet diverse student needs. Without comprehensive training in justice-focused and inclusive teaching approaches, efforts toward educational inclusion risk being inconsistent, reactive, and reliant on individual initiative rather than on ongoing institutional support.

Conclusion: From Inclusion to Cultural Transformation

This article has argued that inclusive music education must move beyond access toward epistemic justice and cultural authorship. The Wheel-Harmony Orchestra shows that when belonging is treated as a foundational outcome, music education becomes a site where marginalized learners not only participate but also reshape musical meaning and social imagination.

Belonging, in this context, is developmental, cultural, and political. It scaffolds confidence and agency while challenging dominant narratives of disability and musical value. Inclusive ensembles function as counter-publics, generating alternative standards of legitimacy that extend beyond rehearsal rooms into broader civic life (Fraser, 2009).

The central question, therefore, is not how children with disabilities can join existing musical structures, but how those structures must change when their presence is taken seriously. When inclusion is framed as authorship rather than accommodation, music education moves from permission to participation and from access to justice.



Figure 4. Inclusion as Cultural Transformation in Civic Space

This stadium performance situates the orchestra in a large-scale public arena, symbolically extending inclusive musical practice into civic and institutional spaces. Students using mobility devices perform on the field as visible cultural contributors rather than as accommodated participants. The venue's scale, professional staging, and public spectatorship signal a redistribution of legitimacy: musical presence becomes civic presence. In this setting, belonging serves not only as relational affirmation but also as cultural authorship, challenging dominant narratives about disability and musical value. The ensemble operates as a counter-public, generating alternative standards of excellence that advance inclusion from access toward epistemic justice and structural transformation.

Implications for Future Research

This study offers an empirically grounded account of inclusive ensemble practice as a site of epistemic justice; however, several avenues for future research remain open.

First, comparative studies across diverse cultural and institutional contexts would deepen understanding of how justice-oriented inclusive pedagogy operates beyond the Wheel-Harmony Orchestra. The present study is situated within a South Korean community-based ensemble. Future research could examine how similar principles operate in public school systems, conservatory environments, or community music programs in other national contexts. Such comparative inquiry would clarify which elements of power redistribution are context-specific and which are transferable across educational settings.

Second, longitudinal research is needed to examine the durability of

belonging and authorship over time. While this study identifies shifts in recognition, responsibility, and social participation, extended follow-up could explore whether these transformations persist beyond ensemble participation and influence educational trajectories, employment pathways, or civic engagement in adulthood. Third, further investigation of embodied pedagogy in inclusive music settings is warranted. While this study identified adaptive positioning and somatic awareness as mechanisms for redistributing authority, systematic research on integrating approaches such as the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais, and body mapping into disability-inclusive ensembles could clarify how bodily variation reshapes technical norms and evaluative standards in music education.

Fourth, the role of digital design in the redistribution of authority warrants deeper analytical scrutiny. Hybrid rehearsal formats, asynchronous feedback systems, and student-led digital reflection practices may create new forms of participatory agency. Future research could employ design-based or experimental methodologies to examine how specific digital infrastructures reshape power dynamics in ensemble learning.

Finally, future scholarship should continue interrogating sonic hierarchies and repertoire selection in inclusive contexts. Expanding instrumental diversity and culturally plural repertoires may further challenge entrenched norms of musical excellence. Research examining how repertoire choices shape the distribution of authority, aesthetic legitimacy, and peer recognition would contribute to a more comprehensive, justice-oriented pedagogy.

By extending inquiry across cultural settings, time scales, pedagogical methods, digital infrastructures, and sonic frameworks, future research can further clarify the relationship between inclusion and epistemic justice. Such work will help determine whether justice-oriented inclusive music education is a localized innovation or a broader reconfiguration of musical authority and cultural participation.

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