

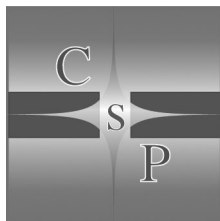
# Music, Meaning and Transformation



# Music, Meaning and Transformation

By

Steve Dillon



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

Music, Meaning and Transformation, by Steve Dillon  
Series: Meaningful Music Making for Life

This book first published 2007 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2007 by Steve Dillon

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 1-84718-213-5; ISBN 13: 9781847182135

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Elizabeth Mackinlay	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgements	xiv
<b>Part I: Position</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Designing and managing the cultural lives of children</b>	<b>2</b>
Some key concepts in this book	3
Modelling the development of a personal philosophy of music education: A teacher's journey	7
What we can do	9
<b>Chapter Two: Locating myself in the discourse</b>	<b>11</b>
The big picture issues	11
Culture, technology and popular music	13
Emerging cultural understanding	14
The benefits of an Australian position	16
What technology reveals	18
<b>Chapter Three: Putting the meat on the bones of theory</b>	<b>20</b>
Project 1: Researching the meaning of music to students in a school context	20
Project 2: Researching meaningful engagement with music technology	40
Project 3: Indigenising the curriculum and community music research	41
<b>Part II: Theoretical</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Music making and flow</b>	<b>46</b>
About Csikszentmihalyi and "flow"	46
Four areas of meaning	50
Autotelic behaviour and personalities	51
Early childhood music experience	52

Institutional music learning	63
The location of musical meaning: Where is it?	68
<b>Chapter Five: Designing meaningful and engaging environments</b>	71
The intrinsic nature of music experience	71
Meaning and experience design	72
Experience design and culture	73
Problematizing music technology in experience and curriculum design	80
A context analysis framework	80
Observing meaningful engagement: A matrix	84
<b>Chapter Six: The student as maker</b>	88
The relationship of theory to the idea of “student as maker”	88
What we can do	92
The student as maker: A definition	93
Dewey and art as experience	95
“Student as maker”: The student–teacher relationship and the environment	97
The “student as maker” and the postmodern condition	99
The “student as maker” and culture	101
The “student as maker” and technology	102
<b>Chapter Seven: The teacher as builder – the making of meaning</b>	105
Teaching and embodied relationships in the instrumental studio	106
Studio teaching and meaning	109
Classroom music	113
Performance	127
Building context, embodying understanding	133
Teacher as builder and the concept of culture	137
Teacher as builder and technology	141
What we can do	143
<b>Part III: Practical</b>	145

<b>Chapter Eight: Meaningful engagement with music and personal meaning</b>	146
Defining personal meaning	147
What is a music teacher?	156
Personal meaning and culture	160
Personal meaning and technology	162
What we can do	164
<b>Chapter Nine: Social meaning and meaningful engagement with music</b>	165
Relational knowledge and common ground	165
Building of a sense of unity	170
Teacher qualities, organisational principles and processes	171
Social meaning and culture	172
Social meaning and music technology	173
What we can do	175
<b>Chapter Ten: Meaningful engagement with music and cultural meaning</b>	176
A projection of self	176
The power of music in cultural identity	177
Case study	178
What are the characteristics of the teacher?	181
Cultural meaning and “other” cultures	183
Cultural meaning and technology	186
What we can do	188
<b>Chapter Eleven: The school as village</b>	189
A philosophical basis for the school as village	191
The physical environment	192
The social environment	193
The psychological environment	195
The institutional environment	196
The educational environment: Classroom and curriculum	198
The school environment	202
The world beyond school	203
A changing environment: Tasks for the new millennium	207
The school as village and technology	209

Building community with technology	211
The school as village and culture	212
What we can do	215
<b>Chapter Twelve: Meaningful music making for life</b>	216
A summary of the journey	216
A summary of insights	219
Knowing where we need to go next	229
<b>Appendix A: Meaningful engagement matrix</b>	231
<b>Appendix B: Philosophical Checklist</b>	233
References	237

# FOREWORD

How many of us experienced music lessons in primary school where the music teacher shook her recorder at us like a dark sword when we could not play in tune, in time and together? Do you have memories of sitting at a rickety desk, painstakingly copying notes onto a music stave until your hand hurt, and you no longer knew what you were doing or why? Perhaps, like me, however, you have other memories of music education, which bring a smile to your face rather than a frown. I cannot recall many moments of pleasure in my formal music lessons with a specialist music teacher at primary school but I do remember the joy of making music in school with generalist teachers who loved music, could play a musical instrument and were passionate about using music as a vehicle for giving, sharing, teaching, learning and ultimately, making meaning. My grade 4 teacher brought his guitar into class every day and we began our lessons with a song—my favourite was “All day all night Miss MaryAnne”. He would smile at us as he sang and I would watch him intently, trying to mirror the sound of his voice in my own song. My specialist music teachers at high school brought me the same sense of pleasure, passion and engagement.

It is this sense of engagement with meaningful music making that this series of books on music education in Australia explores. What types of teaching and learning process in music education bring to students and teachers alike not only knowledge of music per se, but also an understanding of self, others and the worlds we live in? Is this what we mean by meaningful engagement in music making? What are the ways that music educators—specialist and generalist—bring to their classrooms a meaningful engagement with music? What is that “magic” ingredient that “liven up” music classrooms and restores their “groove” capacity?

In this first book of this series, Steve Dillon shares with his audience his own love of music and his passion as a music educator for making music meaningful and transforming. Through personal reflection, in depth critique of relevant literature, and dialogues with teachers and students involved in music education classes in a diverse range of ways, Steve considers what meaningful engagement with music means in educational contexts. In this intimate sharing of insights, Steve also asks the reader to take a personal, professional and musical journey with him—a crossing over and into our memories and experiences as learners, teachers, and/or performers of music—to think deeply about what music means in our lives, and how we can enact a

pedagogical process which passes on and sustains that kind of passion for music making and education. The conversation that Steve begins here in *Music, meaning and transformation*, opens doorways to create, as bell hooks (1994) urges, a music classroom bursting with possibility. As part of this dialogic process, we encourage readers to interact with the authors of each book in the series via a research BLOG that can be accessed at <http://www.savetodisc.net/>. Here readers can see media examples referenced in specific book chapters, participate in discussions about their experiences with music education as students and teachers, and in this way create a critical, engaged and transformative community of practice.

Elizabeth Mackinlay  
Series Editor

# PREFACE

For most of my life, I have been a singer, composer and teacher of music. My musical background is eclectic, for me “music is music” and whether I am singing bass in a world music a Capella group, fronting a punk band or “scatting” in a jazz ensemble, I count them all as worthwhile music experiences. As a composer, I have published rock music, jazz and music theatre and music resources for education. The distinction between style and complexity has never been an issue—I have come to see them all as musical experience. The line between teacher and musician is also a blurred one; what I have learned about musical knowledge from teaching is complemented by what I have learned about education from being a musician. All of these experiences are, as Csikszentmihalyi (1994) describes, “flow” activities. I draw upon this construction of teacher as artist in my approach to research in music education. I hope to bring an openness that flows from the eclecticism of these experiences and seek to contribute a sense of unity of purpose that can be drawn from my experience as a teacher and musician.

This book is the result of many years of academic study beginning with the development of a conceptual framework for a pragmatist approach to music education. I was fortunate to be in a position to apply these theoretical tenets to practice and through observing theory in practice completed a doctoral study, which forms the basis for the book. During that process, I gained a real passion for qualitative research and a thirst for understanding the role of the arts in community and curriculum. Like many teachers of the arts, I began with the anecdotes from my teaching experience that questioned the ways in which arts education was taught in schools and the ways in which curriculum was interpreted. I wondered why music making was not intrinsically motivated in schools, why the interpretation of curriculum ignored much of the music that children were passionately involved with, why good musicians were often not good teachers of music. I also asked why the students did not see the role of music as relevant to the school as a community, why school administrations did not appear to value music whilst simultaneously using music as a way to promote their school image.

As a teacher and head of a performing arts faculty I also saw the arts segmented and separated from one another—a notion that ignored the conception of integrated arts curriculum advocated in curriculum documents. Through these experiences I began to see the idea that curriculum is a dynamic process, which in part embodies the teachers, themselves and their ability to build and interpret the environment.

## **From little things big things grow**

The above title comes from a song written by Australian Indigenous songwriter Uncle Kev Carmody and singer songwriter Paul Kelly. The title further describes what has happened to the ideas that emerged from my doctoral study, which was further amplified through academic research and teaching of pre service teachers at Griffith University and at Queensland University of Technology where I was able to see first hand the formation of music teachers and general primary/elementary school teachers. This position enabled me to apply the emergent theory of meaningful engagement to new contexts and with new teachers. From this interaction it became clear that there was a need for an infra structure for a more coordinated research agenda which has led to the formation of a research network that focuses upon meaningful engagement and the qualities of good practice in music teaching. save to DISC (Documenting Innovation in Sound Communities/Curriculum) was conceived to provide a framework for a dynamic network of passionate and committed researchers, music teachers, graduate students, music industry professionals, health researchers and community members with a focus upon documenting innovation and access to shared knowledge and hybrid methodology. From humble beginnings, this network has grown both in numbers and research projects to span six European countries, China, Australia, New Zealand and has growing representation in North America and Canada.

Philosophically, the position I have taken embraces what could be described as a “pragmatist aesthetic” (Schusterman 1992). This idea has been drawn initially from John Dewey’s instrumentalism/pragmatism (Dewey 1970) and an existential philosophy of relationships from Martin Buber (1969, 1975). The notion of unifying the practical and pragmatic and aesthetic, or the reunion of “praxis and poesis” holds the key to understanding how I have used the term “pragmatist aesthetic”. The work of these philosophers most clearly influences my approach to curriculum and to teaching and learning in the arts. The emphasis here is upon unifying these ideas rather than perceiving them as being exclusive or opposing.

I spent a total of seven years both working at the case study site discussed in this research and as a researcher/participant observer. The first of these years was spent redesigning the curriculum and the next five involved the introduction and implementation theoretical research to the curriculum and school community. Throughout that time, I documented the process and kept records in diary and journal form, collected video and audiotapes of music within the school and documents describing the curriculum and process of music education. I collected these records to document the effect of the ideas drawn

from the research and as example and evidence of the interaction of policy, theory and practice that occurred within the case study school.

In the fourth year, I began doctoral research using participant observation case study methodology. I focused this research upon examining what it is about music and music experience that children find meaningful in a school context. It is my hope that this knowledge will reveal ways to provide access to that meaning for students. I hope this research will have implications for the interpretation of curriculum, the clarification of the role of the music teacher and the structure of learning experiences. This book embodies both this long-term study that examines theory in practice and subsequent iterations of research published in scholarly journals.

I began this research with these kinds of thoughts, experiences and questions in my mind. Like most teacher/researchers, I hoped that there would be some kind of reasonable explanation for my perception that music education practice often fails to engage and be relevant to students. I also hoped research would reveal some useful ideas for teaching and learning in music.

In this preface, I simply seek to place myself in this research and display my role, preconceptions and influences in an open and informative way. I hope that the commitment, energy and enthusiasm I have for music making in education and the community at large comes through in this research. I wish to make it known that I sought to undertake this research in a balanced, trustworthy but uninhibited way and hope that the results of this study contribute to the knowledge in the field of music and arts education. It is my sincere belief that all humanity needs access to meaningful music making for life and the understanding of where music is in their lives, where it is in the lives of children and where it is in the life of a community. It is especially important in the twenty first century that how we express ourselves in sound and creative production in sound is acknowledged as a way of knowing. Creative sound pervades every aspect of our lives and communities and meaningful music making for life proposes a way of engaging with the tensions at the interfaces between cultures and times and a way of making sense of it all that effects transformation of consciousness and self. The book is titled *Music, meaning and transformation* because it simply provides a journey from the music makers perspective of how they construct meaning in their lives from musical experience and how that meaning leads to a transformation of self. The questions of how we facilitate and design experiences, which have this effect I hope flows naturally from this understanding.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a different and very personal experience spanning 14 years. I have many people to thank. In the first stage of this project I wish to acknowledge the wise counsel, encouragement and support given to me by my academic supervisor Professor Lyn Yates now at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, whose scholarship serves as a model for supervision and whose interest and faith in my research was an inspiration. I would like to thank the school and principal of my research site for giving me the opportunity to conduct this process and the privilege of sharing in their love of music. Eternal thanks to the following academics and friends who typed, read, offered criticism, argued, listened and encouraged me in the process of this research: Dr Andrew Brown, Dr Alan Cunningham, Dr Phillip Taylor, Dr Darrell Caulley, Dr Ramon Lewis, Jennifer and Jill Thornton, Lorraine Fulton, Georgina Barton and the collegial support of La Trobe and Griffith University staff and students.

When this project moved from a doctoral study to a book, I was supported and encouraged by the staff and students of Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Faculty of Creative Industries Music and Sound. The music students who helped me test theories and philosophy in practice are now wonderful teachers of music have been an inspiration to continue. At QUT in particular Associate Professor Andrew Brown has contributed a whole universe of new intellectual support for new musicianship and understanding of music technology and I am thankful for the privilege of being involved with this research as it unfolds through the Australasian Collaborative Research Centre for Interaction design (ACID). Professor Richard Vella has exposed me to a range of new philosophical and creative practice perspectives as well as great musical insights through his work “Sounds in time, sounds in space” and his creative work in composition. His personal assistance in the long journey of writing this book is greatly appreciated. Thanks also to Professor Andy Arthurs for his support and encouragement as head of the innovative music departments that I am fortunate to be a part of. I am extremely grateful to the insights and incredible knowledge about culture contributed by my editor Elizabeth Mackinlay it is a rare honour to work with such a culturally aware music educator and she has encouraged me to confront problems that many avoid in this work.

I would particularly like to thank my Indigenous friends and colleagues whose patience and generosity of spirit has inspired me on this teacher’s journey of understanding in particular: Victor Hart, Gordon Chalmers, Auntie Delmae

Barton, William Barton, Robert Barton, Christine Peacock, Martin Nakata and Craig Ackland. I hope this book begins a process of modelling engagement with Indigenous knowledge from the position of an inquiring and open whitefella.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife Angela, for her understanding, love and support over along period of time. To my daughter Bridie, for teaching me more about how children learn than I could ever learn from books.

Finally, I would like to thank the global music education community for their encouragement. ISME has provided an amazing forum for interchange of ideas about how music is made and what it means. In particular my European colleagues: Pamela Burnard, Gabriel Rusinek, Frits Evelein, Eva Sather and Bo Wah Lueng in Hong Kong for the opportunity to discuss the issues raised in this book on a global level. Lastly, I would like to thank all of those who believed with me that documenting is the best form of advocacy and participate in the save to DISC (Documenting Innovation in Sound Communities) Research network, in particular Professor Don Stewart, Greg Dodge, Daniel Spirovski, Rachel Templeton and John Ong for his diagram designs and all the graduate students who have gathered around this unique and energetic community.



Part I

Position

# CHAPTER ONE

## DESIGNING AND MANAGING THE CULTURAL LIVES OF CHILDREN

I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual, and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from the society we are left with an inert and lifeless mass. Education must therefore begin with a psychological insight into the child's capacities, interests and habits. It must be controlled at every point by reference to these same considerations. These powers, interests and habits must be continually interpreted—we must know what they mean. They must be translated into terms of their social equivalents—into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service (Dewey in Eisner 1994, v).

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this book is to examine what interests and motivates children about music and what they find meaningful. This quest is bounded and focussed by the terms of their “social equivalence”. It is contained by the notion that education in music is personal and individual, and simultaneously cultural and social. Meaningful music education contributes towards the education of character (Buber 1969). This book explicitly examines how curriculum and experience might be designed so that it provides access to meaningful music making as a lifetime pursuit. It is not simply a sociological or qualitative piece of research about what is happening in a single participant observation site. Rather, I focus upon what is happening in conjunction with an ongoing body of theorising about music education and explores the ideas and insights gleaned from this long term study and applies them to new contexts where music and meaning are the focus. I seek to explore how those theories should be understood, applied, and dynamically respond to the needs of practice. Furthermore, this book searches for, explores and identifies the dimensions of good practice, and in doing so, my intention is both to elaborate the meaning of music to young people in a school or community context and its relationship to music teaching.

## **Some key concepts in this book**

### **The education of character**

Philosopher Martin Buber, in his discussion about the inclusive relationship between teachers and students proposed that education worthy of bearing the name is the education of character (Buber 1969, 104). It is this notion of education as being transformative, which is the focus of this discussion about music making and meaning. This philosophical position, which describes learning relationships, forms part of a holistic approach to philosophy in music education. Rather than ascribe to a “one size fits all” philosophy I have blended the notions of an aesthetic education (Reimer 1989), an education of perception (Gardner 1993b), music education as initiation into a discourse (Swanwick 1994) and a praxial music education (Elliott 1995). These views of arts, and specifically music education, capture the essence of what is being educated. I find merit in each argument and even in each philosopher’s criticism of the other. My pragmatist leanings clarify this ideological position.

Art, according to Dewey, is “what the product does in and with experience” (Dewey 1989, 3). Whether what is being educated is the aesthetic, the perception, an initiation into a discourse or through a process of praxial education, there is no doubt that ultimately what is being educated is “the live creature” (Dewey 1989). The live creature is simultaneously a social being, an individual in relation, and a person whose consciousness may be changed through experience. Certainly, critical philosophical discussion about the precise nature of the psychological aspects of learning is a necessary and important pursuit, but it is not necessary here to choose a preferred position, or construct a set of binary oppositions. Rather, I believe that each philosophical position provides a particular “lens” upon the understanding of how we think and how art affects our feelings and intellect. Each argument is also profoundly limited, filtered and shaped by the context in which it was conceived and most importantly seems to focus upon music as a cultural object or an act of participating in culturally bounded experience.

Despite the now hackneyed and misunderstood concept of child centred approaches, music education—and indeed those that discuss philosophy of music education—always begin with a cultural framing (Bernstein 2000) of music as an object or “musicing” as an experience which frames the perceived value of sound in that community. In this discussion I will explore an approach that whilst acknowledging the influence of the cultural framing of musical experience focuses more clearly on the student’s experience as he or she moves between cultural experiences and how this influences their development. The

education of character always involves some kind of change in the way we think, act or know. Sometimes these changes are incremental and within the domain and other times, they have transferable qualities and are able to be conceptualised and reapplied in new domains, cultures and contexts.

## **From transfer to transformation**

David Perkins (1988) discusses the concept of teaching for transfer—that is, the ability for a concept in education to be transferred to another context or domain. Reflecting on my observations of children growing up, and through a tacit awareness of my own life, I have become aware that the way I think “musically” has affected the way that I do things and solve problems, beyond the process of making music, in fact my music making experiences have had generic consequences. The processes and interactions involved in music making have educated my character; I have been able to transfer the skills and knowledge gained in making music to other domains. Indeed, I believe this research to be heavily influenced by such thinking. Through the process of making and thinking about music, I have also been “made” by it. For example, the idea of student as maker described in Chapter 6 is primarily about the role that music education can play in the education of character: identifying and defining the processes that refine, reify and make music experience meaningful. This refers to music making as a transformative experience. At every point in this book I have tried to refer to the child’s capacities, interests and habits (Dewey 1989) and bound these within a context that refers to the social, and that contributes a benefit to society.

Music making has a powerful influence on emotions and can contribute to our identity and its formation. Musical experiences can help us know ourselves, communicate with others in wordless ways and contribute to our understanding of our place in our own distinctive culture. These experiences in these locations have the capacity to be meaningful and lead to transformation of self.

## **The phenomenon of meaning in music**

As I described in the preface to this research, I have had a deep association with the phenomenon of the meaning of music as a music teacher in a school. I wanted to utilise this association to advantage to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of meaning and the processes that facilitated or gave access to that meaning from the inside. In this process, I became the instrument of

measurement, reflection and analysis, conflict and argument, and eventually understanding. In doing so, I was able to take fundamental values, philosophical principles and practices, and test them rigorously within a unique school environment. The opportunity to observe theoretical concepts in action and gain an insight into the logistical and educational affects of this “theory in action” presented to me an opportunity for fascinating ethnographic research. Further to the case study, which forms the major part of this book, I have been able to apply and test many of the findings from that earlier study in new contexts. I have since observed the relationships between meaning and contexts, and the characteristics of student experience and teachers practice in detail, as part of ongoing and comparative research with colleagues in Europe, the USA and Asia. The process of putting the meat on the bones of theory and developing an appropriate methodology for research that allows students to speak through me as a researcher is discussed in Chapter 3.

While this book is principally intended as a philosophical study I do not directly pursue the philosophical debates that are the concern of music education globally. These debates have informed the study and my practice but because of the contextual limitations of the discussion, I would argue they tend not to have solutions for three major issues confronting music education internationally. The issues of technology, culture and the value of popular music still seem to be peripheral to the culturally framed philosophical positions. They are still “problems” for music educators whose principle position is a colonial “Western art music” one. While it may appear cowardly for me not to evidence this grand critical statement immediately, I will say that this book proposes to demonstrate how it is possible to confront these issues by shifting the focus of music education from a cultural framing to the child’s experience of meaningful music making. In Chapter 2, I will outline my position and experience with research particularly focusing upon music technology and cultural understanding. The role of popular music in music education is interwoven throughout the case study and research contexts here and is in no need of separate treatment. In each chapter, I will discuss the issues of technology and cultural understanding against the theoretical focus of the chapter. As a further measure to expose music education theory to practice and critical review, I will also draw upon current research findings that examine and problematise these issues to extend the debate.

## **Music, meaning and transformation**

The purpose of this book is to examine how meaningful music making can lead to transformative experience and a sustained interaction with music making

for life. In this respect, the ideals or areas of social formation are important because they seek to address the aspects of the post-modern condition that have an effect upon self-formation and social life. I define these experiences as “aesthetic grounding”, which suggests that the activities and associated reflective practice are those which ground students in present relationships with others and develop and increase the store of social capital within a community (Cox 1997). They are able to contribute both to self-development and self and community. Throughout exploration of the case study data and subsequent iterations of research into music and meaning I was able to support and evidence the idea that the ability to be critical, reflective, and perceptive is an essential skill that counteracts the advance of homogenised meaning. The ability to be creative and to use lateral thinking skills becomes a mandatory vocational and life skill for survival in our society (Burnaford, Aprill and Weiss 2004, Robinson, 2001). It is a realisation of humanity’s needs to be expressive, and communicate through all media—verbal, written visual and aural. I would suggest that it is essential in aesthetic education for us to learn in these kinds of ways and with these kinds of foci and hope to provide evidence from practice that amplifies these ideas as ways of being and acting for music teachers and coaches working in contemporary communities and schools.

## **Decolonisation and music education**

Recognising that music making has the potential to facilitate social and personal transformation is an important insight, as is acknowledgement of the embodied nature of music learning, the pervasiveness of music across cultures and the potential to harness music experience to affect changes in values and attitudes across cultures as well as inside them. In a global context—or indeed in the multi-cultural contexts where we live and learn—mono-cultural perspectives and cultural framings that colonise expression in sound are at risk of diluting their own importance as cultural knowledge and miss an opportunity to gather on common ground at the intersections between cultures. In this kind of approach there is a risk of mono-cultural framings taking on neo-colonial positions—one of the issues with a colonial approach is that it refuses to see the damage it is doing and it’s power as a political dominating force—this kind of position is dangerous, even more so, for Indigenous cultures or the “others”. Perhaps the most cogent position in this kind of realisation of an approach to music education practice is to be continuously conscious of the power differential my white, European position affords me. Indigenous scholars notions of acting at the borderlands or engaging with the tensions at the interfaces between cultures (Nakata 2002), suggests that this is not a tension that

leads to resolution but of continuous engagement. It is fundamentally a politically activity and is enacted through the struggle and a relationship that is open and seeking criticism. Music making however can afford us a relationship between cultures that has potential to foster understanding.

Music making has the power to connect people in non-verbal ways. It has a potential to convey something of “others” through embodied understandings and unify people in shared time and space. More importantly than this clichéd insight, music making has the potential to engage people across cultures in ways that can be themselves transformative because they challenge our colonial position and introduce the concept of the other in musical ways. So while I am at the early stages of this understanding I have chosen to examine the idea of music making as a decolonisation process as a part of transformation of self through the deeply political notion of decolonisation.

## **Modelling the development of a personal philosophy of music education: A teacher’s journey**

The tone of this book I hope is one that describes my own personal journey as a music teacher. What I hope to do is to amplify the voices of children, teachers and parents I met along the way. The aim is that through observing how I have undertaken this process and by trying to apply some of the analytical tools and philosophical principles described here that the reader could undertake the development of their own continuous and dynamic development of philosophy in practice. I have been fortunate enough to guide many pre-service music teachers through this process and some of the tools and processes have been developed specifically to assist pre service music teachers to develop their own music education philosophy. The feedback from them is that it works and so in each Chapter I summarise what we can do in each context to provoke discussion and understanding of the ideas in the Chapter and seek to encourage their application to your context and culture.

The book is laid out in three parts. Part 1 positions and locates me as a teacher and as a researcher. It provides detail about the important issues that have emerged from data and my interaction with practice. In this Part I discuss their pertinence, their origin and outline my experience with them both empirically and from the perception of a music teacher in a school and a university. Following on from this, I then outline my approach to methodology and research design examining in detail the principle case study site and the subsequent research about music and meaning in the context of music technology and cultural understanding.

Part 2 provides a theoretical perspective but not one that simply speaks of philosophy. Rather it demonstrates how philosophy can engage dynamically with practice and can provide new understandings about how theory might be refocused to draw upon the students' experience of meaning in context. I begin with a discussion of the concept of "flow" and its connection to the intrinsic nature of music making. I then examine the practical concerns of teachers in designing meaningful and engaging environments. I discuss the central idea of the student as maker not only of music but as a self-formative activity. The conclusion to this section examines the idea of the teacher as builder of context where students encounter meaning through music making which is transformative.

Part 3 examines "practice" through the voices of those who are making music in practice. Here I focus upon the personal, social and cultural locations of meaning and then examine a unique reinterpretation of Rousseau's theory in an examination of a real school as a village where music making provided access to meaning and engagement with expressiveness, social inclusion and feelings of belonging and most of all the education of character.

Appendix B refers to a set of fundamental philosophical ideas, which seem to have a large basis of support amongst philosophers, curriculum designers and practitioners. It is useful to consider these against the ideas raised in each chapter and undertake a personal reflection on what issues are raised in relation to the assumptions that surround these ideas. These constitute ideas that I took into the field to examine in practice and in subsequent iterations of research about music and meaning. They describe the relationship of the chapters to the ongoing body of thought and provide criticism of them also that suggest a need for new principles or expansion of existing values and assumptions.

## **Conclusion**

In this book, I have applied the concept of the "student as maker" as a tool for analysis in music education research that allows us to refocus upon the students' experience of meaningful engagement with music making. Philosophically I am able to draw some fundamental pointers that suggest that the adoption of a particular approach to curriculum and practice would lead to educational or social transformation. I suggest that students who experience this approach might gain a particular kind of social formation as an outcome that is more responsive to contemporary conditions and needs. Put simply, this book seeks to reinterpret the Deweyan approach to experiential learning in a way that enables students to respond to arts education in the twenty-first century in a way that would enhance their understanding and provide experience and tools for

critical analysis that are relevant to twenty-first century constructions of how music is perceived and interpreted.

The model discussed in this book was used in the design of curriculum, philosophy and practice at a case study school and in subsequent research contexts both live and virtual. The ways in which these ideas were “worked out” in these contexts form the basis of the empirical study detailed here. This research is intended as an expansion, empirical investigation and further conceptual elaboration of the ideas of the student as maker and the implications of this for the interpretation of curriculum, the design of experience and the approach taken by teachers and coaches to provide access to meaningful music making for life. The idea here is to provide an opportunity for music teachers and coaches to manage the cultural lives of children (Dillon 2005a) and design experiences that take a full account of the affordances of the environment and the need for students to express themselves in sound within that context in a way that is both relevant and reverent to the communities values.



### ***What we can do***

*Much of how we teach music comes from our embodied understanding of music making. Before you can understand the meaning of music and its effects on students, it is therefore important for you to understand what music means to you. For you to begin, continue or restart your reflective journey as a music educators, at the end of each chapter in this book I have included a set of reflective questions and exercises—those included here are preliminary and will be asked again many times throughout this book in the light of new information. My wish is that as you respond to each question, your answers to them will evolve and your understandings grow.*



*Where is music in your life?*

*Where it is in the life of a child?*

*Where it is in your context /community and what do you perceive it to mean?*

*Using the answers to these questions begin to construct your music life story and focus on moments when you felt that you underwent a significant shift in your understanding.*

## CHAPTER TWO

### LOCATING MYSELF IN THE DISCOURSE

#### **Introduction**

Since 1989, I have taught pre-service music teachers and general primary music education. Each year I am away from the school music classroom I am self-conscious that my credibility as a practitioner might wane with these students—I ask myself, am I still a “real music teacher”? What is my relationship to practice? How would I respond to the new contexts I encounter in this state? Do I really understand what it is like to be a music teacher in this place and with these people? How does my theory and values fair here and now? As I ask these questions, I realise that the fact I am asking questions is part of the continuous evolution of my position as a music educator and as a reflective practitioner and critical researcher. I now have the privileged position to observe theory in practice made by other teachers and pre-service teachers—to hear their stories, their successes and failures, to see them develop as music teachers and develop their own personal and dynamic philosophies of music education and value systems. Here, I want to step back to better understand my own positioning within the many different discourses that underpin, drive and sustain music education. I feel that it is important to share this more evolutionary approach of a music teacher’s critical practice as well as positioning myself as both a teacher and researcher.

#### **The big picture issues**

From these interactions and from ongoing research projects about music and meaning, issues arise constantly for me, gather voracity, and elevate in importance. The issue of the value of popular music has been one of those and as I am from a professional popular music performance and song writing background, my embodied understanding of how popular musicians learn has been useful in the structure of a curriculum that is inclusive of musical forms as a source of musical knowledge (Green 2001). The other issues that arise consistently are those of music technology and cross-cultural music studies.

All three of these issues can be confronting for those whose backgrounds as musicians are grounded in live, Western art music performance. It is rare indeed to find students who have genuine embodied understanding of “other” culture’s music, knowledge of popular genres and styles, and a genuine working understanding of how music technology might be used to enhance and engage learning in music education. Fear of non-Western music, fear of technology and fear of popular music was and still is common amongst pre-service teachers of music. I came to realise that this was because of how they constituted themselves as musicians, how they constructed their identity as musicians and their whole sense of self. So when I proposed assignments that involved resource production, peer performance in multiple genres and cultures that were to be developed, presented and produced using technology for many I threatened their very identity as musicians. Nevertheless, this process has been a provocative one that has led to success. Students were able to share their understandings and resources for use in their first year of teaching and the process of interacting with a range of musical styles did have an affect on their understanding of musical style and cultural framing of music.

The idea that I could create a classroom environment that would challenge student’s sense of self and identity and provoke self-critical awareness about “otherness” in music education was appealing and seemed to be successful. What I did not realise at the time was my “elemental” approach to music education was still framed by Western art music theory and pedagogy—asking students to notate embodied cultural materials using a notation program on a computer, for example, hardly challenged their Western art music values. Others students when completing this task appropriated cultural materials or presented them in ways that made me cringe. I wondered at the ethical considerations underlying these experiences and why students were not engaging with them. I wondered too how working with a common practice notation program on a computer enhanced their contemporary musicianship in a world where digital recording is the dominant representation system and CPN filters the essence of groove from popular and cross-cultural music. At international forums and in music education journals these issues still arise consistently yet popular music and its appropriateness for the classroom has been debated regularly for the entire 30 years I have taught. Music technology seems to have earned itself an entire subject or course status in many Universities, while cross-cultural understandings have been offered through ethno-musicological studies for many years.

When interviewing music teachers for a study about the qualities of good practice in music teaching I discovered a profound insight. Every one of the teachers I had interviewed who was considered a “good/successful teacher” had “embodied” experiences with cross-cultural musicianship and popular music,

and used music technology effectively integrated in their practice. Similarly, of the pre-service teachers who achieved high standards in the “resource-making” assignments all had embodied experience in cross-cultural musicianship, popular music and used music technology as a normal part of their music performance and production processes. What this says to me is two things. First, that these qualities of good practice are “teachable”—they are not simply a personality trait or as result of an individual teacher’s charisma. Second, these issues signify something quite important about the kind of musicianship required for the twenty first century.

## **Culture, technology and popular music**

In international forums, I have repeatedly observed that it is the issues of culture, technology and popular music, which problematise contemporary discussions of music education. In an attempt to engage with these issues I have included in each Chapter a brief discussion of the relationship that culture and technology have to each chapter foci, the effects of culture and technology on the case study school discussed, and draw upon subsequent research contexts to explore these issues in more detail. It is intriguing to me that the issues of the value and appropriateness of popular music in music curriculum are still being argued some 50 years after the beginnings of what can be referred to as “youth music” (see for example, Agardy 1985, Gans 1975, Green 1988, 2001, Swanwick 1984a, 1984b, Vulliamy 1981, Vulliamy and Lee 1976, 1982, Vulliamy and Shepherd 1984, 1985). What this suggests is that this issue is not one which is simply about musical knowledge or relevance, but that the perspective which is culturally framed forbids its inclusion in the curriculum without discussion. In recent times Lucy Green’s work in particular has established the values and musicianship associated with popular music as important aspects of music education in contemporary life (Green, 1988, 2001). In this book I will not directly deal with this idea but you will find that integrated throughout in what participants in the research call the “music is music” approach you will I hope see how Green’s and Swanwick’s theories function in practice.

Technology however has also become a problem for music educators whose eyes glaze over at its mention and try to dismiss it at “just a tool” or dedicate whole sections of curriculum time in reifying it to a level of essential technical competency. The position adopted in this book is to examine technology as it refers to the students’ experience of creative production. Hence, every chapter will have a section dedicated to discussing technology in relation to the focus of the chapter. Primarily these sections ask Heidegger’s question about what

technology reveals and what it conceals (Heidegger 1977), and further whether what technology conceals functions as a pedagogical device for focusing learning. In this sense in each chapter, I will examine recent research in music technology practice and thought, which works through contemporary practice and examines the new forms of musicianship that are associated with twenty-first century music making.

Culture, cross-cultural music and its teaching in ethical ways is a concern also in music education. It is becoming even more apparent that our frameworks for music education and our philosophy are West centric and European in origin and this context serves as a colonial framework for how musical otherness is perceived. Globalisation and appropriation of music from across cultures and times is expanding at a great rate and I have examined the idea of music education and culture from the perspective of research I have undertaken into Indigenous standpoint theory and knowledge which problematises the notions of existing cultural framings. Each chapter will examine the themes in relation to Indigenous knowledge from the point of view of a teachers experience with engaging with tensions between cultures as a conscious political act rather than a colonial perspective. While this is perhaps under developed at this stage, as research it does however present the issues and some potential solutions, which have been applied in my own context and found to be effective.

## **Emerging cultural understanding**

I will interrogate the ideas of culture, appropriation, representation and ethics in each chapter of the book in relation to the students experience of meaningful engagement with music. Now I would like to provide a positioning that explains why these issues are of importance to me as a music teacher and what I need to do to engage effectively with the problems that have arisen from this practice. I am convinced of the worth of engaging with the inherent politics of culture and of the potential for such activity to be transformative. What concerns me is how this can be done ethically and how we can construct embodied understandings rather than filtered and watered down experiences.

At this point, I feel I need to define what it is I mean by culture, popular music and music technology and how this affects my practice. The concept of “culture” as described by the Encarta World dictionary is an interesting and revealing description: