

BULLETIN: ASME VICTORIA

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Volume 29, No. 2 – June 2020

Australian Society for Music Education,

Victoria Chapter Registration Number A0013254W



Left: Thomas teaching his Year 7s an African song – Soualle – through pitch recognition.

Above: Mick shows his Preps how to 'draw' pitch from high to low.

Below: Emily greeting her Early Childhood teacher trainees.

Below left: Lucy's desk ready for a day's classes with her primary students.



**Encouraging the use of emerging technologies in music education
– a major goal of ASME**

Chairperson's message

Fiona King

It has been an incredible time for music educators through the transition into online spaces and, since then, the gradual easing back into regular classrooms. To honour and acknowledge the rocky yet rewarding experience of the past two months, this Bulletin is dedicated to the sharing of the lockdown experience of our own ASME Victoria Council music educators, including the cover photos. ASME Victoria continued to be active throughout the lockdown, through advocacy and by increasing communication with you and other music educators through social media channels. We campaigned to support instrumental music teachers, collected stories and accounts of music educators at the 'chalk face' to inform our continued support of your work, wrote letters on behalf of members and most importantly, we kept communication alive and strong. Reflecting on the bigger picture of who we are and what we do is important during such times.

ASME Victoria is part of a nationwide organisation that has, for more than 50 years, worked on behalf of its members for the betterment of music education across our nation.

- ASME provides a platform for the dissemination of the latest research in music education through the *Australian Journal of Music Education* and our Chapter's *Victorian Journal of Music Education*.



- Upcoming Australian composers are supported and encouraged by ASME to create new works through the National Young Composers Project.
- We provide avenues for professional development and the sharing of latest research and teaching developments through the ASME National Conference - our 23rd National Conference occurring next year in Tasmania. The Conference attracts international speakers and delegates flock to these events from across Australia.
- Each year ASME presents an Indigenous Music Educator Award, a series of ASME Music Educating for Life Awards, the Callaway Doctoral Award, the Lady Callaway Award (to recognise accompanists) and numerous Graduate Teaching Excellence awards.
- The ASME Fellowship Award recognises members who have made outstanding and distinctive contributions to the advancement of music education.
- ASME actively advocates for music at the national level and is a member of the National Advocates for Arts Education (NAAE) and the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE).
- We are strengthened globally through our affiliation with the International Society of Music Education (ISME).

All in all, ASME is a force to be reckoned with! You are part of a lasting, enduring organisation that places the improvement of music education first. Through lockdown we continued to stand strong as a professional music education society. We urge you to be proud to be a member and continue to stand with us through renewing your membership as well as celebrating our continuation and endeavours towards a strong voice for music education in Australia.

Editorial

Ros McMillan

In the first Bulletin for 2020 there were notices of various workshops and presentations planned for the year by the ASME (Victoria) Council. There was a warning that some of these might not take place but I doubt that any of us thought that the first half of this year would be so extraordinarily different from anything we have experienced in the past.

Now, as we near the end of Semester 1, our lives are gradually



returning to some semblance of normality, particularly with students returning to schools.

The experience for music teachers has been mixed. A large number of instrumental teachers have lost their positions but others, supported by their school principals, have found positive aspects in a new form of teaching. The reflections from several in the latter category form the major article in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

This issue's research article is written by Mandy Stefanakis, a leading music educator. Over four decades, Mandy has taught music at all levels and contributed to the development and implementation of curriculum both in Victoria and nationally. Her article on how composers approach the compositional task provides a fascinating insight into the processes involved and will be of particular interest to music teachers for whom composition is a major component of their curriculum.

“One of the joys of the teaching profession: always adapting and trying out new ideas!”

Possibly the greatest challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic to music educators has been the need to teach students online. This has meant a whole new world, something that only a couple of months ago most were facing with trepidation. Yet, there have been surprising results and the heading of this article is one teacher’s summation of her situation. Perhaps it might be regarded as a tongue-in-cheek comment but the resilience and ‘can-do’ spirit of music teachers is well illustrated in the following reflections.

Lucy Lennox - primary classroom

If someone had told me last year that in 2020 I would be delivering a music curriculum to more than 650 students online and running two choirs via Zoom I would never have believed them!

Now I have learnt that teachers are seriously superheroes. When told at short notice to reinvent our entire music programs we just got on with it and demonstrated our flexibility, knowledge and experience.

I have learnt that our students are technology whizzes with most adapting to online learning very well. I have loved watching them responding and seeing their creativity – chair drumming, creating instruments out of recycled materials, making basketball music, using cups or tables to compose rhythmic pieces and finding sounds in their backyards.

I have learnt that teaching online is exhausting and involves hours spent planning lessons, correcting, assessing and giving student feedback. However, most importantly, I have learnt that music gives joy! Teaching music online during this time has been a privilege and I have loved connecting with the kids and seeing videos of them singing and making music in their homes. A highlight of each week is running my choir ‘sing along’ sessions and seeing so many smiling faces. I have received emails of gratitude from parents on how online choir has improved students’ mood.

I feel incredibly supported by my teaching team with so much sharing of resources and care for each other. I feel the gratitude of parents and students with their emails of thanks and encouragement.

I really miss the interaction with the kids and the excitement (and unpredictability) of music lessons. I miss the challenge

of thinking ‘on the spot’ and quickly altering lessons and I even think I miss the challenge of dealing with those high energy students. The online teaching journey has been an adventure for sure!

Michael Travers - primary classroom

At first it was stressful learning to use online platforms including Seesaw and Google Classroom almost overnight and then trying to devise effective strategies to deliver content. I tried to set ‘hands on’ activities such as pen tapping, beat boxing and cup rhythms for the middle and senior grades, and action songs and chants for the junior grades.

Juniors love a story connected to a song or activity so I made videos where I told a story then taught the song or activity. Examples included students drawing graphic notation or humming like bees following pitch shapes. These vocal sounds were delivered on Seesaw, a means of recording student responses. Senior primary classes would work through a Google form which had YouTube tutorials of practical musical activities using materials at hand. Students were also encouraged to create their own musical patterns and rhythms.

Overall, I found the whole experience hard work but very rewarding. I noticed that students looked forward to music and often expressed how much fun it was compared to other online school activities. They were also eager to hear my recorded comments congratulating them on their singing, buzzing, chanting etc. As a music educator in such a ‘quantified’ new online environment it was made clear to me, many times, that music is enjoyed immensely by students and is an essential component of their education.

Leon de Bruin - secondary instrumental

After initial novelty and preoccupation with the technology, most of my students have found instrumental music engagement a welcome respite from the larger class activities offered in other subjects. The opportunity to talk, discuss and connect at length with a teacher is a simple yet under-emphasised aspect of what face-to-face teaching brings to students, that is, connectivity, meaning and identity.

The teaching is more direct, explicit and focused. Little things matter more and the dialogue between teacher and student is fixated on specific detail - smaller accomplishments but a bigger celebration of those accomplishments. Removing that 'being there' experience has made us crave all the more what is currently forbidden. And so, as with our timbre, our efforts, feedback and encouragements are compressed - we exaggerate to make our point.

And our students endure. Despite the upbeat banter and chivvy, they miss their friends, the routine of moving through their school, its sights, sounds, rules and freedoms. I think they miss making music with each other and feeling the sound of an instrument strike their ears purely and not from a speaker. They long for that communal experience of trying, thinking and creating together. Not long now!

Kathryn Cooper - secondary classroom and instrumental

As an instrumental and classroom music teacher working at Camberwell High School [Victoria] I feel very fortunate to be part of a close-knit music staff, well supported by our Principal Jill Laughlin and the leadership team at this time. Having an administrative team that supports the hiring of fully qualified instrumental teachers on salary, meant that the support mechanisms for the music program were already in place long before COVID-19.

An example of this support is demonstrated in the language surrounding the inclusion of music as an integral part of the school curriculum. When the initial bulletin went out to all families regarding moving to online learning, they were reminded of the expectation that attendance would be required at all lessons, with instrumental music included as a matter of course, NOT as an added extra.

We have a large crossover of instrumental and classroom music at CHS. There are no dedicated classroom teachers but rather several teachers who have a split instrumental/classroom load that helps to integrate the instrumental program with the general classroom music setting. We have instrumental staff writing curriculum, attending staff meetings and incorporating literacy strategies into their teaching as well as documenting learning sequences, which makes the entire music department highly involved with the rest of the school staff.

While we have not been able to run ensembles yet, the conversations between the leadership team and our Director of Music have already shown a willingness to be flexible on both sides. This will ensure that we will attain the best possible educational outcomes for students under the current conditions. We have a large music program with four concert bands, three string ensembles and four jazz bands, all of whom are longing to get back to playing in the same room as each other.

During this crisis, I have been enjoying upskilling my teaching incorporating technology but I am really looking forward to seeing the students face-to-face. Over this term our connection with them has not diminished greatly and I can see that they enjoy quality time with teachers. They are also receiving a great deal of individual attention, something that can be difficult in a classroom of 26 students.

We are immensely grateful to our principal and the administration team for showing such great leadership during this crisis and for supporting us with so much flexibility and calmness.

Dimitri Iannou - primary instrumental (piano)

Initially, the idea of moving to online teaching felt a bit daunting and for the first week it felt so strange! It was almost as if I wasn't teaching 'properly,' for want of a better word. However, slowly but surely I began to find my own methods and gradually fine-tuned them. I realised how important it was to be clear when explaining how to play a melody correctly as I could not physically assist the students.

I used some of the features of the Zoom application including backdrops such as a sunny beach scene or the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco to add some interest to the lesson. I also used the emoticons, such as the smiley face or hands clapping to encourage the students when they played something correctly, rather than the usual 'Well done' or 'Great.'

There were some aspects of teaching that were impossible to do, including playing in time with the students due to the time lag. Instead, I suggested that should try playing with a metronome - a new experience for some - or I would play sections of a piece and ask the students to copy me several times.

For some students it was hard for them to concentrate online, but the majority seemed to be more focused than usual. This was possibly due to the need to listen really carefully to the information coming from a screen but it certainly helped when parents were present with their children. In regard to parents, online teaching provided a fantastic opportunity to meet some of them and build a rapport through us working together to assist their children.

Elizabeth Mitchell - tertiary instrumental (piano)

Teaching an instrument remotely has presented numerous challenges. There have been positive outcomes, however, including an increase in my levels of resourcefulness in communicating musical concepts. Discussions with fellow tertiary instrumental teachers indicates this advantage to be widely experienced.

The difficulties of using a metronome during Zoom lessons has resulted in a level of ingenuity and imagination with regard to practice methods that would probably not have occurred without the restrictions.

As my in-person teaching slowly resumes, I am newly energised - and infinitely more imaginative and resourceful in my teaching. While I much prefer in-person teaching, there have been unexpected advantages to my teaching which will, I hope, remain with me for the rest of my teaching career.

Thank your principal

There is no doubt that music teachers have gone to extraordinary lengths over recent months to deliver a subject that arguably relies on practical, interactive and ensemble experiences in a newly designed remote, online and often asynchronous mode. At the beginning of March we would not have thought it possible, but when we look at what was achieved it is remarkable.

We all have stories of students engaging with practical music-making tasks in a raft of ways during this time, and the powerful impact this has made on parents as they have watched their children become immersed and moved by their experiences with music. Parents have developed a new understanding of what happens in music lessons and have experienced first-hand the thinking, focus, engagement, willingness to learn from mistakes and 'keep trying' displayed by their children, alongside the delight and enjoyment experienced through listening to, creating and performing music. Online instrumental music lessons have occurred in family loungerooms, parents have supported the completion of composition tasks using found sounds and whole families have become involved in the recording of various performance activities . . . and more!

This presents a perfect opportunity to enlist parents in our ongoing advocacy of music programs in schools.

In May, ASME (Vic) began a low-level social media campaign titled *#thankyourprincipal* where parents are encouraged to write a short note of thanks to their school principal for their ongoing support of music lessons throughout the school closures. In most schools, the principal and the leadership team have been responsible for the decisions as to how and if classroom music and instrumental music lessons should continue in the remote environment. While most were fully supportive of this vital area of the curriculum, some schools have reported that music lessons were only offered asynchronously, as an option or not at all.

For this reason, we encourage all parents who have witnessed the excellent work of music teachers and the benefits to students over the past few months to write a 'thank you' to their principal for supporting the ongoing delivery of music lessons. This small effort of gratitude – delivered through an email or hand-written note – will highlight how much parents value music, not just as part of a well-balanced curriculum but in the lives of their children.

So come and join ASME (Vic) in promoting our *#thankyourprincipal* campaign by sharing our Facebook posts and/or prompting parents through your own communication opportunities.

ASME (Vic) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ASMEVictoria/>

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My Research

The research report in this issue of the Bulletin is written by Mandy Stefanakis, who is completing a PhD in the University of Newcastle.

My current research, titled *Composer Self*, may appear to have little to do with education, but it was certainly inspired by music educators and, I hope, will be helpful for music education in some way.

I began composing when I was about seven, at much the same time as I started writing stories. Both writing and composing remain important aspects of my life. For many years I have been interested in what it is about composers' attraction to sound that offers a particular way in which to express 'self' and communicate with others. After all it is just sound. So how does music have such a massive impact on so many people? Why do composers choose some sounds over others? What makes their music a unique expression of them? How can sound possibly shape a concept of self? These are the questions that really interest me.

One of the things I found in my teaching was that no matter the amount of exposure to music that students had encountered in their lives – and we have all taught classes where students have a massive range of musical understandings and experiences – all loved to explore sound through composition. Not only is composing fun, and not only do students learn a great deal about all the intricate details of sound and how different sounds might go together, but they also always show great pride in their compositions when they have worked hard to achieve the outcome they are seeking. Composition is its own reward. That is partially because it becomes a part of who students are. From my study across a range of disciplines, music is unique in that regard.

For my study I've composed a portfolio of works and reflected on the process I have gone through in the development of each piece. But I am not one to have a map or a specific structure of where a composition might go. Rather, it is usually based on something that has happened in the world, or in my life, or in the way the two collide. So my reflections often provide a context for the works as much as a reason for choosing one chord over another. Others compose in very different ways so I have interviewed composers who are often both improvisers and 'extended' composers, those who often reflect on and record their work in some way. The interviewees represent varying genres, from progressive metal to art song to 'noise' and jazz. I have asked them a range of questions attempting to get to the heart of why they compose and what it is that contributes to their particular composer self.

An important point is that many composers have hit

roadblocks along the way, something I guess could be seen as simply a part of life. This would be acceptable, except that many of those roadblocks have occurred through composers' experiences with music education. This is something I find deeply disturbing because these are people who are truly obsessed with music. They are all performers. They are all keen listeners too, and it is the immersion in all aspects of musicking that contributes to their composer selves. However, if these people hit roadblocks in music education – and those roadblocks include the terror of being judged in music examinations, having an instrument they have no desire to play thrust upon them, the fear of making a fool of themselves when performing solo (in particular) or being told by a music educator that they'll never cut it as a composer – what hope is there for someone who is not immediately drawn to music?

Perhaps the most deflating part of a dialogue that I had was from an improviser who commented that the only access she had been given to create music was through one of her instrumental teachers who encouraged her to improvise as part of a jazz ensemble in her senior years. She expressed her disappointment that composition was not in the music curriculum, to which I replied: "It's been there for more than 40 years".

I have also found that it is often a pivotal moment or event, usually during childhood or adolescence, that has had a profound impact on the direction a composer has taken. It could be the discovery of a particular CD, a random sentence spoken by someone that has sparked motivation or being part of a band with friends - all positive experiences. And since this usually occurs in the timeframe of people's school lives, undoubtedly there are major implications for music education.



Resources

Great listening ideas for the classroom

This page contains ideas for listening to music with a purposeful outcome. Playing music to students and expecting them to “sit in mute subservience before it”; to quote Murray Schafer, is unlikely to result in an appreciation for the art-form.

Sue Arney

An approach to listening that I have found works effectively in building the connections between the classroom, instrumental and ensemble programs, is to use ensemble repertoire as the basis for listening activities in class.

Ensemble repertoire – wind band, string ensemble, choral, jazz group, other specific groups - often includes a range of original compositions, transcriptions, simplified settings of well-known pieces and ‘cover versions’ of well-known songs. At all levels this repertoire can be used in the following ways:

- identify elements of music, e.g. tempo, dynamics, timbre (instrumentation)
- compare and contrast with other versions, e.g. the original orchestral composition or performances by other artists
- develop/deepen knowledge and understanding of musical language and terminology, and be able to use this orally and in written form
- analyse keys, texture, timbre, form/structure, interpretation, phrasing and so on
- introduce score reading
- create own version by taking the melody or chord progression and composing own piece
- create own version within a small group for performance.

Within the music program, the benefits of bringing the ensemble repertoire into the classroom include:

- strengthening the connections between these areas of the music program
- providing connections for instrumental/ensemble students and the classroom program – something that is often seen as quite separate
- developing a deeper appreciation of and respect for what happens in the ensemble program for those who are not involved
- developing a deeper appreciation of and respect for the music being played for those who *are* involved.

Ros McMillan

An example that always excited my Year 9s and 10s when I was a classroom teacher was the opening track of the CD *Country Preacher* featuring Julian (Cannonball) Adderley (alto saxophone) and his Quintet including his brother Nat (trumpet) and Joe Zawinul (piano).

The album, recorded in 1969 at the height of the civil rights movement in the USA, is introduced by the Rev Jesse Jackson calling on the audience to ‘Walk tall!’ In support of ‘Operation Breadbasket’.

Operation Breadbasket used the persuasive power of black ministers and the organising strength of the churches to create economic opportunities in black communities. This was a time when <white> businesses would exploit black communities through denying workers equal rights.

Apart from wonderful playing, for me the strength of the album, described by discographer and Adderley biographer Chris Sheridan as “an audible sociological record”, was an occasion to show my privileged white students the strength of African-American music in attempting to achieve social justice.

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