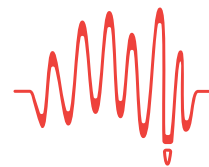


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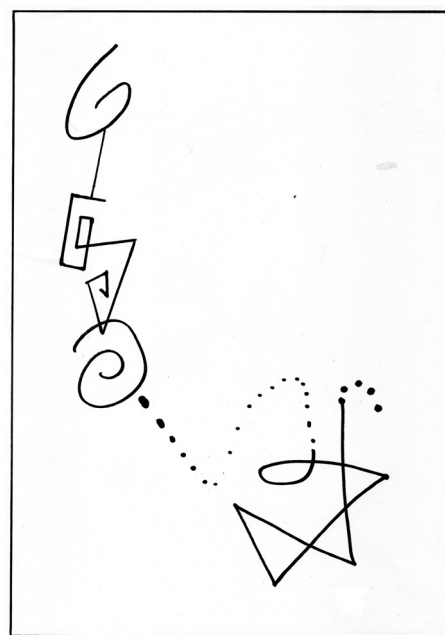
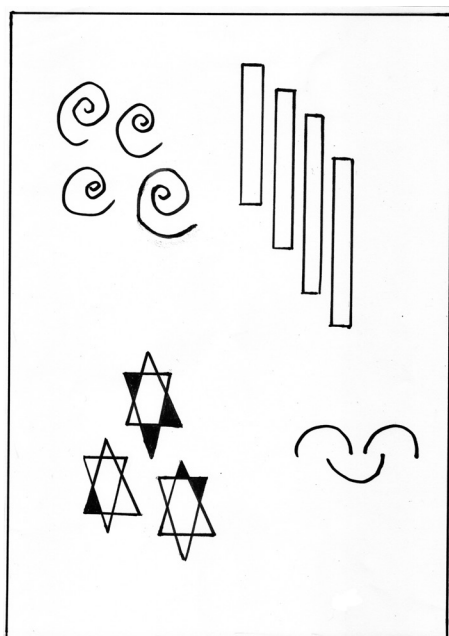
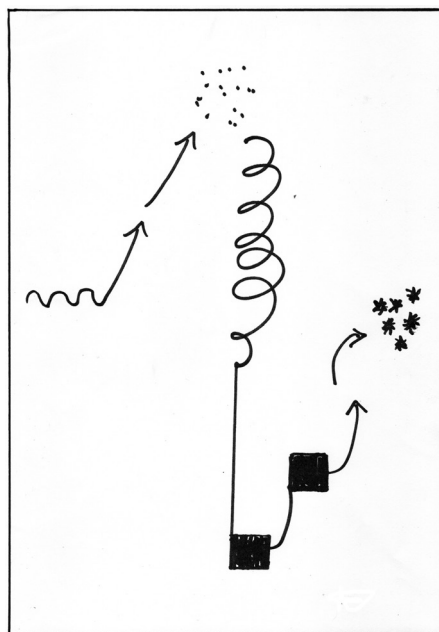
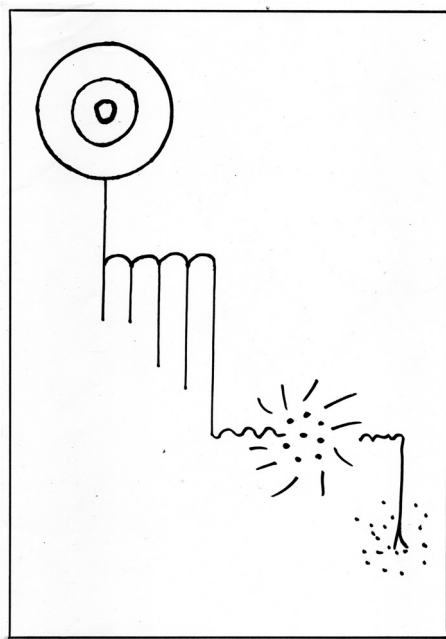


ASME

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Australian Society for Music Education,

Victoria Chapter Registration Number A0013254W



***Recognising and encouraging innovative pedagogies
in music education
– a major goal of ASME***

Chair's message

Sue Arney

Since my last Chair's Report, the ASME (Vic) Chapter has had much to celebrate, with enthusiastic engagement from members at all our events, and the welcoming of graduates into the music teaching profession. Last month it was noted that our State membership has doubled in the last four years, something that has provided much joy for the Chapter Council. Some highlights of our year-to-date follow.



First Nations Music

Our **First Nations Music with Jessie Lloyd** workshop attracted more than 130 registrants from all over Australia. Notably, 80 were ASME members who were able to join for free. Our blended face-to-face and online mode made it possible for people to join from all parts of the country, including an entire class of Master of Teaching students from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Huge thanks go to Emily Wilson for arranging Jessie's presentation, and to all involved in the partnership between ASME (Vic) and Melbourne University's Faculty of Education in presenting this valuable and worthwhile event.

Graduate Teacher Awards

Over the past month we have been delighted to celebrate the achievements of outstanding graduates in music education through our Graduate Teacher Awards. This ASME Award is made to Victorian preservice secondary music specialists who have distinguished themselves in their initial teacher education program. They achieved a high academic standard across their music subjects and demonstrated engagement and commitment to music education, both within the university and the broader professional community.

The Award recipients for the 2023 are as follows:

- Ben Taylor, Deakin University
- Marie Kyriakoudis, Melbourne University Faculty of Education
- Ally Dunk, Monash University
- Jesika Clark, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music

Information on these newly minted music teachers can be found through our posts on the ASME website <https://asme.edu.au/chapter/victoria/> and the ASME (Vic) Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ASMEVictoria>

Winter Power Surge

A splendid opportunity has arisen for ASME Victoria to partner with VOSA – the Victorian Orff-Schulwerk Association – to present a two-day mini-conference in the July school holidays we have titled **Winter Power Surge**. This will be a series of

practical workshops presented by leading VOSA and ASME presenters focussing on music teaching in the primary school. The workshops will encompass approaches and resources for singing, creating, performing and planning for music classes as well as reinvigorating your own energy and passion for teaching. Presenters include Katie Hull-Brown, Susie Davies-Splitter, Christoph Maubach, Sarah Brooke, Mick Travers, Jesus Iglesias, Sue Arney, Heather Morcom, Felicity O'Halloran and Matt Roche. The second day will culminate in a panel discussion focussed on tips for building strong primary music programs.

For details and to register visit the ASME website, Facebook page or click here: <https://asme.edu.au/event/vosa-asme-vic-winter-power-surge/>

Graham Bartle

Earlier this year, we were saddened to learn of the death of Graham Bartle OAM, Honorary Life Member of both ASME Victoria and ISME – our international counterpart. A great supporter of ASME, Graham was farewelled at an honouring of his life on 20 May 2024 in a service that contained moving eulogies and celebratory music. A tribute to Graham, written by ASME member, Elizabeth Mitchell, can be found on pages 10-11.

More detail on Graham's remarkable life can be heard in a one-hour interview recorded last year. As part of our *Capturing Voices* project, he was interviewed by Elizabeth Mitchell and Ros McMillan who guided the conversation. Importantly, a biography of Graham, written by Elizabeth, will be published within the coming months, with the likely title of *Ventures and Adventures of an Itinerant Musician*.

The recorded interview can be heard through the ASME Vic Resource Hub: <https://asme.edu.au/chapter/victoria/#resource-hub>

Editors' notes

This issue of the Bulletin has a focus on creativity in music education. Seven articles contain the thoughts of a diverse group of people involved in creative music-making, ranging from students to teachers to composers. The first national arts curriculum, *The arts – a curriculum profile for Australian schools*, was published 30 years ago with Creating, Making and Presenting one of the three strand organisers for every artform. Yet, since then, the adoption of creativity in school music programs has been patchy at best and, in many cases, non-existent. It is bewildering that this is the situation in the third decade of the 21st century, thus ASME Victoria is endeavouring to bring the subject of creativity into a greater spotlight through a range of activities. This Bulletin edition is an important contribution to the Society's efforts.

– Ros McMillan and Pip Robinson, Co-Editors

Cover: *Four Sketches: for Classroom Music-making*, Ros McMillan © 1981.

'Feeding the Muse'

A composer talks to other composers

Mandy Stefanakis completed a PhD in 2022* in which she interviewed practising composers on the factors that define themselves through their works. This article discusses some of their views.

As a composer, I need to be inspired to create. Most composers need such inspiration. However, we can forget that students need it too. Some students will want to enhance a technical skill or explore a previously unknown instrument, but most are as interested in the world around them as are adults, and most derive their inspiration from contemplations on their own lives, or their observations of what is going on around them.

In my study on 'composer self' the first question I asked was why composers began composing; the second, why they continued.

More than half started experimenting with sounds and melodies of their own accord when they were children, between the ages of five and seven. Largely they did not consider this experimentation as composing, but rather, something they did as part of their music practices. They did not consider these tinkering as composition until they were in their teens or older.

The composers I interviewed all had distinctively creative personalities, something that is not the situation for all school students. However, such motivation is not confined to those with creative personalities. Everyone has latent creativity but this is not always nurtured. Partially this is because our society does not value creativity and it falls off students' radars if they are not provided with the incentive to be creative.

One of the ways I understood that the participants in my study were inherently creative was the lack of access for many to any creative music opportunities in their education. Indeed, for some who did have this, their creative endeavours were scorned but all persevered despite this.

A third of interviewees veered towards composing partially because of their boredom with the repetitiveness of practising other people's works. Although all began through learning classical repertoire, many ended up composing in varying genres and on different instruments to those they had first learned.

One respondent said: "I have always been convinced that content makers were more creative than interpreters". As a highly regarded pianist, he became disenchanted with what he described as "feats that glorify the interpreter rather than the composer. After this, playing classical covers seemed tediously repetitious" (Interviewee 1).

This is understandable in the context of a creative mind and became even clearer when interviewees were asked why they continue to compose. From my perspective, all these reasons

are linked, and again heighten the sense of creativity being partially something that a person *is*, in addition to what they do.

The reasons were:

- it provides an emotional outlet
- it is a way to 'get through life'
- it is an imperative.

For example, Interviewee 2 contemplated "whether I *am* my music or not. Because this music thing is a vocation, isn't it? It's not a job, it's never been a job. So *am* I? We become so immersed in it that there's no way to separate the music from the essence of our being."

More pragmatically, another composer said: "I can't help it because it doesn't actually pay any bills" (Interviewee 3).

A similar response was that:

- it provides a medium for the authentic expression of self.
As one composer said: "I think the thing I'm *trying* to work on at the moment is just being really honest in my writing" (Interviewee 4).

Additionally, responses were:

- it is akin to bringing new life into the world
- it is a vehicle for collaborating musically with others.

Interviewee 5 told me: "I wrote because people *asked* me to. Eventually I started a string ensemble and that's when I started writing because I *wanted* to. And then I wrote because I *liked* it and because I *needed* to and I had purpose."

Part of the allure of collaborating with others was the positive feedback composers received from both fellow musicians and audiences, a positivity that all found really motivating.

It is interesting as a teacher to watch the foci students have in their lives. I have always felt that young children are generally self and family absorbed. You watch as they open up to the outside world from the age of about seven to 12 and then become re-absorbed in self as they hit adolescence, emerging in about Year 9 or 10 to look both inwards and outwards.

As teachers, we can sculpt creative tasks for students based on these changing perspectives, even encouraging the self-absorbed to look up, down, out and around.

Despite these ever-expanding horizons of knowledge, fostering students to be who they are in their personal expressions is essential. For most composers, their music is so personal that it is similar to comedy where the talk is all about 'living' or 'dying' with a performance. We need to cherish the value of each student's musical expression, because it is a piece of them and they feel it deeply, whether they show it or not.

* See reference, page 9

Irish views on creativity

For the past three years, Lucy Lennox has been living and teaching in Dublin, with her 'Letter from Ireland' a regular feature of ASME Bulletins. She is the leader of a performance-based after-school music school and in this 'Letter' she asks some students and teachers for their views on creativity.

Finnán, age 6

"Creativity is being able to use your imagination. It's making your own music". His eyes widen as he thinks more, then says: "it means you could play anything you want!"

Jess, age 7

"It means you could play music in different ways. You could also play instruments in a different way, like using a ukulele as a drum." She turns over the ukulele she is holding and starts tapping the back, adding: "Being creative is trying new instruments and trying new things".

Ethan, age 9

"It (creativity) lets you have a good and fun time. You can change things up and make them different and more fun."

Avah, age 10

"Being creative is being able to make up your own songs. You can just go a bit crazy and run wild. I love playing different rhythms and playing solos."

Ezra, age 13

"Creativity opens perspectives. Being creative means you can learn what you want and get what you want out of your music."

Josie, age 16

"Open to interpretation... I mean, everyone listens to music differently. It is good that we all have a different opinion. Spotify (popular music streaming platform) would be so small if there was no difference in taste.

To be able to create new songs and music feels really good. It is cool to be able to make something new and to take control of your own music."

Ryan & Charlie (Adults)

Ryan: "It's the 'why' - why I got into it. I play drums to BE creative. It's why I work hard at it. Executing and playing drums to a high level requires creativity."

Charlie: "My motivation has always been having creative choice. Playing what matters to me and playing my own music for myself"

Ryan: "Regardless of what's going on, your instrument is always there for you. On my happiest days, I play drums. On my saddest days, I play drums."

Charlie: "I guess creativity is fundamental to what music is. Especially in the execution of playing an instrument, there is always creative scope there."

Ryan: "There is always more to learn and new ways to express yourself. Music is malleable and always changing. But that is the joy - it is never the same. It is always fresh. It is not like sport where you win the top level and it's over."

In regard to their teaching...

Charlie: "Creativity in teaching is the internal motivation. You have to instill in your students that if you aren't playing for yourself, you aren't going to like it."

Ryan: "The best way to teach technical prowess is to teach creativity - through creative demonstrations and exploration of the instrument."

Charlie: "I really enjoy dissecting musicians' decisions - why people make certain creative choices. It is a great teaching point."

Ryan: "Playing music with creativity at the core removes the pressure to conform to a certain level."

Ryan is the drummer in 'Sky Atlas' and Charlie is the bassist in 'Gurriers', two notable Irish bands. They are both teachers in the music school.

ASME publications

More than 2000 ASME publications are searchable on the INFORMIT database (<https://search.informit.org/>). They include journal articles, refereed conference papers and reviews published by ASME over more than 50 years.

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Creativity in instrumental learning and teaching: (still) missing in action!

Ros McMillan has been teaching for over 60 years at every level from 3-year-olds to adults. She taught Classroom Music Method to primary and secondary teacher trainees at the University of Melbourne where she was Head of Music Education 1995-2004.

Fifteen years ago, an article I wrote on this subject was published in the *Victorian Journal of Music Education*. I read it the other day and was shocked to realise that in the intervening decade and a half, very little has changed in regard to the instrumental learning that most students experience. The 'new' VCE Music subjects are a welcome change and there has certainly been a greater focus on creative activities in classroom music in recent years. However, there is no doubt that, for a large proportion of students learning an instrument, any form of composing or improvising is non-existent within their study.

Some of the reasons for this are as they were all those years ago:

1. A lack of creative work in teacher training.
2. A belief that creativity has no place in the mastery of an instrument.
3. A conviction that creative work should only take place **after** a student has learnt the 'rules', including reading notation.

However, today there is a fourth reason, one that has been especially pervasive in the last few years. This is the emphasis on results at all costs, driven particularly by parents and consequently by schools reacting to their fee-paying parents.

It is extraordinary to realise that it is approximately 60 years since Ronald B Thomas first developed the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project, a teaching and learning program where creativity, particularly improvisation, was central.

Thomas described improvisation as valuable for its ability to help develop cognitive skills such as deductive, inductive and intuitive musical thought, while Patricia Shehan Campbell, one of the most influential music educators internationally, pointed out three decades ago that the ability to improvise signifies the mastery of performance and aural skills, as well as an understanding of musical style.

Instrumental teachers will be quick to point out that in a typical 30 minute lesson there is little time for creative work. Yet in as little as five minutes, students can experience activities that make their instrumental learning a pleasure.

Arguably, the simplest way to experience creative work is through investigating the musical elements. Playing a note of **their** choice as loudly as possible, as softly as possible, from soft to loud and the reverse, not only gives students a morsel of autonomy but frees them from the tyranny of the printed page.

That most students begin their instrumental lessons learning what that black dot on the page refers to is, I maintain, the least interesting way to discover the pleasure of music-making. With dynamics to begin, it is a simple step to ask a student to play a chosen note as many times as possible, then play it over and over very slowly, then slowly to very fast and the reverse. Thus, tempo is experienced without the need for a lengthy explanation, followed by notes held for shorter and longer lengths where the concept of duration is discovered. Other elements, such as pitch, texture and timbre, can be similarly experienced, enabling students to create their own one-minute piece within the first few lessons.

A useful way to extend creative work can occur when a new concept is learned. Some years ago, my 6 year old niece, Stella, came to me fortnightly for lessons. (At that time, Stella was insisting on being called 'Natasha', something that lasted for about a year!) Our time together was simply called 'music', because each session was an exploration of sound using both the piano and a Roland keyboard capable of hundreds of sounds.

One day I offered Stella/Natasha a new piano piece titled *Bicycle Bill*, the first time she had encountered music in 3/4 and which was set to words describing Bill riding too fast down a hill. I suggested that she use the piece as inspiration for a composition of her own in 3/4 but it didn't occur to me to mention words. In retrospect, *Bicycle Bill* was a nasty little morality tale with Bill being warned that by riding so fast he was "due for a spill", but I was duly paid back. The new piece, in 3/4 as requested, was titled *Scooter Natasha* with words that included Natasha declaring that everyone should "get out of her way, or she'll run you over", ending with: "She rocks"!

I've been teaching for decades, yet I am reminded with every encounter with students that one never stops learning. I learnt two lessons from *Scooter Natasha*. The first was Stella's none-too-subtle repudiation of the message in the words to the music, a clear hint at the need to consider the content of pieces we choose for our students. The second was more of a reminder: acknowledging the importance of students being free to express their 'voice'.

The late Jeff Pressing, former head of music at La Trobe University, believed improvisation was important for its "magical and self-liberating" qualities. Clearly Stella felt free to express an empathy for Bill being told off for riding his bike too fast, an admirable attribute for a 6yo. Indeed, it is to be hoped that allowing students to experience similar self-liberating moments becomes a goal for all forward-thinking teachers, thus providing both satisfying learning **and** teaching.

A student perspective on the new VCE Music Studies

Sage Ryan is a student at Northcote High School. Last year they represented Victoria in Sydney at the 24th Biennial ASME National Conference's Young Composer Project with their composition *Chimaera*.

As a Year 12 student immersed in the new VCE music program, my journey through the trio of subjects, Music Composition, Music Inquiry and Music Contemporary Performance, has been a harmonious blend of creativity, analysis and performance. Each subject demands a unique approach, challenging me to develop a comprehensive understanding of music from multiple perspectives.

Music Composition

In this subject, creativity is at the forefront. My approach begins with exploring diverse musical styles and genres to spark inspiration. I spend time listening to a variety of music, from classical symphonies to modern electronic pieces, to understand different compositional techniques and how they evoke emotions.

Once I have a conceptual idea, I sketch out the basic structure of my composition, deciding on the form, such as ABA or Sonata-Allegro, and the instrumentation. I use digital audio workstations to experiment with sounds and arrangements, allowing me to hear my ideas come to life in real-time. This technology enables me to tweak and refine my composition. Collaboration is also key. I seek feedback from my peers and teachers, often gaining new insights and ideas that I might not have considered. This collaborative environment is invaluable in pushing my compositions to higher levels of sophistication: something I'm super privileged to have in huge amounts with a composition class of 14 students.

Music Inquiry

This subject involves a deep dive into the cultural, historical and theoretical contexts of music. My approach is grounded in thorough research and critical analysis. We begin by selecting a topic that resonates with me, such as the influence of jazz on contemporary music or the evolution of film scores.

Research is multi-faceted. I utilise various resources, including academic journals, books and online databases, to gather information. I also attend live performances and engage with musicians whenever possible to gain first-hand insights.

Critical analysis is at the heart of Music Inquiry. I dissect pieces of music to understand their structure, harmony and thematic elements. Writing essays and presenting findings require clear articulation of my thoughts. I ensure that my arguments are well-supported by evidence and that I draw connections

between different musical works and their broader cultural significance.

Music Contemporary Performance

This is where my skills as a performer are honed and showcased. Preparation is crucial. I dedicate substantial time to practice, focusing on technique, expression and stage presence. My practice-sessions are structured and goal-oriented, often starting with warm-up exercises and progressing to more challenging pieces.

Interpretation plays a significant role in contemporary performance. I strive to bring my own voice to the music, interpreting pieces in a way that reflects my personal style while staying true to the composer's intentions. This involves a deep emotional connection with the music and an understanding of its nuances.

Performances are both exhilarating and nerve-wracking. To manage performance anxiety, I practise with regular mock performances in front of friends and family to help build my confidence.

Integrating the three subjects

Balancing the demands of all three subjects requires effective time management and a holistic approach. I often find that the skills and insights gained in one area enhance my understanding and performance in another. For example, the analytical skills developed in Music Inquiry inform my compositional decisions, while the technical proficiency gained in Music Contemporary Performance influences how I write and arrange music.

Reflection on creative tasks is integral. Being critical of your own performances, compositions, essays, etc. is super important to help me track my progress, identify areas for improvement and develop a deeper self-awareness as a musician.

The new VCE music program is a rigorous but rewarding journey. It fosters a multifaceted understanding of music that extends beyond mere performance or composition. By immersing myself in Music Composition, Music Inquiry and Music Contemporary Performance, I am cultivating a rich and diverse musical skill set that will serve as a strong foundation for my future endeavours in the world of music. The program's emphasis on creativity, critical thinking and technical proficiency ensures that I am well-prepared to navigate and contribute to the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary music.

Creating and creativity in senior secondary music

Pip Robinson is a lecturer in the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Education. She is a Senior Music Examiner for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program (DP) and also assesses VCE Music Composition.

Most schools in Victoria that include music as a subject at Year 11 and 12 teach the VCE. One of the program's aims is for students to "use imagination and creativity, and personal and social skills in music making" (2022, p. 8) through creating. In the VCE Study Design we read that:

Creating may refer to stages such as generation of ideas, development of music ideas within the work, shaping of the music to meet the demands of a performance context, and refining the music ideas to ensure that they can be realised by particular instrumental, vocal and/or music-making technology combinations. It also encompasses improvisation within performance. (p.12)

While students engage in creative music-making as part of their school-based studies for Units 1 and 2, in Units 3 and 4 (the second year of the course) students choose one or more specialisations, one of these being Music Composition. In this subject they explore creating exercises and engage in analysis of musical works to see how they are developed and to learn about compositional processes, alongside developing skills to enable them to create their own musical works.

For the final assessment, students compose either a short work or a group of shorter works, for which they provide an explanation of the impetus and processes of their creation, a recording and a musical representation of the work/s. The representation can be through a traditional or non-traditional score, annotated screenshots or a video explanation of the processes. In their work/s students must demonstrate specified compositional devices - repetition, transition, variation and contrast - through the manipulation of musical elements (duration, pitch, harmony, tonality, tone colour, texture, structure, dynamics and articulation) (VCAA, 2022, pp. 15-19). Music technology can be incorporated through creating music using a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) or similar.

The other most common curriculum taught in Victoria is the IB. DP Music has a similar requirement to the VCE, but rather than having a specific subject for creating/composing, the current Diploma Program Music Guide (2022) requires the student to take different musical roles as researchers, creators and presenters in four separate areas: Exploring Music in Context, Experimenting with Music, Presenting Music and, for Higher Level students, the Contemporary Music Maker.

The initial thinking behind this combining of roles in different areas of musical study was to develop a holistic approach to

musical practice. As stated in the IB Music Guide: "As students develop as young musicians, the course challenges them to engage practically with music as researchers, performers and creators, and to be driven by their unique passions and interests while also broadening their musical and artistic perspectives" (2020, p. 7). Through 'student as researcher', students are encouraged to know about musical analysis and related background issues to develop understanding of where music comes from, how it is developed and created by different composers, in different styles, genres and cultures across time. Through 'student as creator', students make music through composing, improvising and arranging, and as 'performers', they develop practical music-making skills including interpreting, expression and technical proficiency.

As a subject based in inquiry, one of the Aims in the IB Music Guide is to enable students to "acquire, develop and experiment with musical competencies through a range of musical practices, conventions and forms of expression, both individually and in collaboration with others" (2020, p. 18). This means that students are required to create music in every area of the course, rather than choosing creating/composing as a siloed option. Also embedded is the inclusion of creating music technology, most commonly seen through composing using a DAW or similar.

This brief overview of curricular content in the two programs offered most commonly in Victoria shows the acknowledged importance of musical creativity and creating in music, and the creative knowledges that music students at senior secondary level are encouraged to develop through their musical studies, in a range of creating modalities. As Ros McMillan and I identified in 2017: "Creative learning must be embedded into the [music] curriculum and everyday practice of music education, so that all students develop their own musical ideas, expression and collaboration skills" (Robinson and McMillan, 2017, p. 149).

There is often an emphasis in schools on solo performance and ensemble work, but with senior secondary music curricula emphasising musical creativity, we have a challenge. This is to ensure that these fundamental musical aspects are embedded from early learning right through Primary and Secondary music curricula.

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“Music like Mozart is wallpaper for princes”

Michael Travers teaches music at St Matthew’s Primary School, Fawkner North. He has written several musicals for performance by his students and he also composed the regularly performed song *The Last Anzac*.

The quotation in the title of this article was made by Joni Mitchell in a 2013 interview with Canadian musician and broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi. It’s hardly a compliment, or is it? Can it mean that Mozart created a vocabulary and style which was meaningful to the culture of his world?

Would Mozart’s right of reply been something such as: “Joni, music is therapy for hippies”? Both Mozart and Joni Mitchell were immersed in the culture of their time and developed expressions which were organic yet worlds apart. As with any great art, honesty and conviction in expression allowed their music to resonate and have meaning to much broader audiences. So, both voices are unique and emerged organically from a setting, a time and a place.

I once heard Bach’s music described as though each piece emerged from a different rock pond, a contrasting ecosystem. Each pond has its own unique way of interacting with the other sounds in that pond. This seems possible and plausible but it could also be suggested that every piece Bach wrote sounds like the movement of kittens playing with balls of wool on the floor. Sometimes their play is slow and measured and other times it is cheerful and conversational, but always unpredictable.

Whatever we think about these quotations, all three musicians mentioned above developed their own individual styles and voice and all have enriched our lives. So, how can we encourage students to nurture their own unique voice? I suggest that a creative music classroom can do much in this regard.

Firstly, we immerse students in activities that explore worlds of sound. In multiple interactions we encourage innovation and risk taking while aiming to build self-belief. Drama activities can help students to explore sounds without, initially, needing to think too much. Interaction between each other and between sound and motion create an energy which enables students to explore.

In Chicago in the 1950s, Viola Spolin developed a series of theatre games and exercises designed to help children build confidence, express themselves and develop social skills. They became known as Improvisational Theatre Games and were further expanded to include directorial techniques to help actors make creative choices through improvisation.

The idea of being immersed in a situation which requires immediate responses can be used in a music class setting as well. I like to think of this as ‘Creativity enabling systems’ rather than ‘Classroom management’, a term that we regularly hear but which can stifle creativity. Exploration of sounds can be energetic and raucous at times, yet showcasing, reflecting and discussing compositions is calm and centring. Students investigate and reflect on the elements of music and we encourage them to ask questions about how these can be arranged to develop compositions. Thus, different stages of the creative process are used to structure music lesson-time and when this is structured well, the old ‘Structure versus Freedom’ duel is eliminated. There is no duel but a positive interplay supporting creative exploration.

Some of the points discussed above can be heard in the reflections of Guy Warren, the Australian artist who recently passed away at the age of 103. Interviewed on his 100th birthday, Warren argues that “logic frequently gets in the way of painting good paintings” and that allowing oneself to be intuitive is essential for an artist.

One of the great advantages of computers is that they have an enormous capacity to capture and store sounds and ideas ready for editing. They also allow individual development of ideas which have been generated from the real world. In summary, we need a variety of approaches to encourage freedom, build belief and develop skills in composition. Our classrooms can produce voices which bring our world together.

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(Re)valuing contemporary musicianship in the VCE

Tim Nikolsky teaches music at Virtual School Victoria, the largest state government school in the State. He created and compiled the Australian Jazz Real Book.

For the first time in the 30 years of the Victorian Certificate of Education, it feels as though creativity is explicitly valued in Music subjects and meaningfully included in assessment. To this end, improvisation is the second musical word in the Music Contemporary Performance Study Design and 'Demonstration of Personal Voice' is a criterion in the performance exam. (Who would have thought? Has the war on improvisation ended?) Being able to express oneself, take command of musical elements and 'play' with them, make unique personal decisions and express the unique way an individual values music is quite revolutionary. At the very least it is a meaningful step in the right direction.

Now seems a good time to (re)remind ourselves involved in educational circles that creativity in music (and its immeasurable contribution to society) is absolutely integral and should be at the heart of our curricula.

There exists a friction however: assessment mechanisms are always going to lean towards the specific, (easily) measurable, binary (yes/no and right/wrong answers): in other words, quantifiable. It seems that we need to specifically measure students so that they can be allocated a discrete number to be used to identify their self-worth in society; to rank them against each other so they can be shipped off efficiently to tertiary institutions who, increasingly, no longer use these outdated and discriminatory methods. Maybe adherence to a 19th-century industrial era model of education is no longer appropriate?

In contrast, Qualitative assessment is costly and requires specific expertise and appropriate context. It is often 'fuzzy', not as specific, and often accused as being more along the lines of Dennis Denuto's "The Vibe of the Thing". It is, however, critically important because it is 'human'. Broadly speaking, quantitative assessment is what machines can be automated to do while qualitative is what makes us human. In the age of AI and Machine Learning, we need to focus on being human more than ever before.

Contrary to some persistent voices in Music Education, improvisation *can* be taught. It is a valuable skill with many advantages including its ability to be assessed. Tertiary music institutions have been doing this successfully for decades, so why is this not embedded as an essential form of Contemporary Musicianship?

Contemporary Musicianship encourages articulation of unique, distinct voices. It requires skill in being able to command

musical elements and bending them to a person's musical will. With the blindingly fast development of AI tools (Suno, Udio, etc) being integrated into 'content', it has become rapidly apparent that music creators need to value (and be in control of) process and creation, rather than output. (Please check out Adam Neely's "Why AI is doomed to fail the musical Turing Test")

Contemporary Musicianship asks: "What can you create in real time? How well can you respond to musical cues instantaneously? What can you create that hasn't been created before? In a supportive capacity, can you elevate the efforts of those playing with you and can they do the same for you? How can you 'bend' time in creating a musical moment that is engaging? How can you bring something new, fresh and interesting to an existing musical environment?" In other words, it encourages a student to "Show me what you've got".

Now I fully recognise that the development of a well-stocked musician's 'toolkit' is the result of a lifetime of diverse experiences; but this is the most valuable opportunity we can offer as educators. We are asking developing musicians to extend themselves a little further, no matter where they start. We are asking them to engage in things they cannot yet do in a meaningful way. It is the most human of pursuits. The struggle and the process towards getting there is important.

From my own experience, I have found much inspiration from the recommendations of my own students. I try to understand what they're into musically and build upon this to send them (hopefully) further 'down the path' with additional building blocks, tools and understandings. It's an exchange. As I'm a little further down that path, I hope that their toolkit is better stocked after we work together. But more importantly, I hope that the emphasis I place on creativity, thinking differently, 'improving' ears, building knowledge and understanding, listening and responding in real time and articulating a unique personal voice will make them better human beings. This is whether they pursue music in the future or not because I believe that learning music is the best pathway for becoming a better human being. Is it not?

Reference from page 3

* *Revelations of Composer Self: A Hermeneutic Study of Fifteen Australian Composers*. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). https://ogma.newcastle.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/uon:48146;jsessionid=392CFBF134205940F3CF178D793CC115?view=list&f0=sm_subject%3A%22phenomenology%22&f1=bs_metadata.fulltext%3A%22true%22&sort=null&f2=sm_date%3A%222022%22

Vale Graham Bartle

6 November 1928 – 28 April 2024

ASME Member Elizabeth Mitchell was a close friend of Graham and is currently completing his biography. This is an edited version of the tribute she gave at his memorial service on 20 May this year.

Graham Bartle was active for so long that it's hard to know where to start. There are those who knew him through the University of Melbourne, where he lectured in an array of subjects from 1966 to 1993. Others remember him as an examiner for the AMEB. And what about the large contingent who knew Graham through Conferences of the International Society for Music Education – ISME – and his work with ASME, its domestic equivalent?



The Victorian Music Teachers' Association was also important. Graham was a Council member for decades, and he and his wife Ruth frequently hosted the Annual Garden parties. And who could forget the quizzes that Graham devised for each VMTA Summer School – imaginatively designed to bring delegates together. Graham became President of the VMTA a few years after his retirement from the University and was made an Honorary Life Member of the association in 2003.

Graham's first teaching post was as a teaching assistant at MacArthur Street School in Ballarat – helping out in the classroom and learning about teaching by 'doing'. This was followed by a year at the Ballarat Teachers' College where he impressed the redoubtable Doris Irwin – the formidable Supervisor of School Music in Victoria – who visited Ballarat to test the students. As a result of her visit, Graham received one of the few coveted scholarships to the University of Melbourne.

After gaining his Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Education, he took up a position at Yallourn High School. While resources were limited, he established a tradition of annual Gilbert and Sullivan performances that made a lasting impression. It seemed that every student wanted to be part of each production.

Perhaps Graham's most memorable performance in Yallourn, however, was as conductor of the massed singing at his third Speech Night. He changed into his dinner suit only to find that he didn't have the requisite black socks, so he borrowed socks from the Methodist minister. They were, however, riddled with holes but a tin of black shoe polish came to the rescue. The

ever-resourceful Graham set about applying a thick layer to his lower legs – a generous application to allow for the shifting of the socks during the conducting process.

Three years at University High School, opposite the Conservatorium on Royal Parade, Parkville, brought completely different teaching experiences. At this time Graham decided to begin a music degree and delve into this music business even more fully. He wasn't bothered by the idea of working full-time and studying part-time. As it turned out, Doris Irwin, from his Ballarat days, persuaded the University High principal to allow Graham time off to attend lectures. While completing his Bachelor of Music he was appointed to the staff of the newly opened Secondary Teachers College, finding himself in the unusual position of being Graham, student, in one tertiary institution and Mr Bartle, lecturer, in another.

A few years after graduation, Graham was approached by one of his former lecturers, Dr Basil Deane, who was returning to his native England, leaving a vacant full-time position at the Conservatorium. "You could do my job", he told Graham, but Graham was not confident. He recalled: "Lots of important people had applied; I didn't like my chances." He got the job!

Before he could begin, however, he needed to honour a six-month secondment to the Australian Council for Educational Research – travelling around Australia gathering information about different approaches to music teaching in schools. The result was the landmark book, *Music in Australian Schools*. Published by ACER in 1968 it was the first comprehensive account of Australian music education and became an invaluable resource for researchers. It was this work that fueled Graham's desire to document the offerings of thousands of music and music education institutions world-wide. This in turn led to the *International Directory of Music and Music Education Institutions* ('the Directory'), the preparation of which took Graham all over the world. It is highly regarded as an invaluable source of information for students wanting to study music and/or music education anywhere on the planet.

His travel was often organised to fit in with ISME Conferences and University holidays, and he made lifelong friends through his travels. He achieved much through his efforts on behalf of ISME, but it was the Sponsorship Scheme that gave him the greatest satisfaction. This scheme allowed teachers, who would otherwise be unable to attend an ISME Conference, to experience the joy of coming together with like-minded and supportive music educators from all over the world. Some of the sponsored delegates went on to achieve great things in their home countries, such as the first music therapy program in Romania which was set up by a sponsored teacher. The effects of this and other ventures made possible by Graham's scheme were far-reaching and continue today.

Graham loved the travelling that he undertook for both the Directory and ISME, and he visited England many times to

update the Directory. On one of these occasions, he found himself in the Royal Albert Hall during rehearsals for an 'Instant Messiah' performance. As the promotion for the event stated: 'Bring a score and experience the exhilaration of a musical event like no other.'

Graham saw this as a wonderful opportunity to bring people together and took the idea with him back to Australia. He conducted performances of several major choral works that were, in his own words, "rather rough around the edges but with moments of magic". He undertook the organization of these community events as well as writing the program notes. He wrote glowingly of his fellow musicians – some of whom were post graduate students – but his description of himself was typically humble: 'Graham Bartle is a music teacher. He is Deputy Dean of the University of Melbourne Conservatorium.'

Graham never stopped sharing his love of music. He gained immense pleasure from teaching the several students who had weekly or fortnightly lessons with him right to the end. Even on his very last day, he taught a student. I used to hear all about his musical choices for those lessons – the discussions of word-painting and chromatic harmony, and the new ideas he was hatching for lessons, which were described by Graham as Music Information.

Graham Bartle was that rare mix – an exceptional and dignified man who was witty, approachable, inspiring and so much more. He had a passion for teaching, and the lives of countless people – not only professional musicians – are all the richer for that passion. There will never be another like him and we will miss him more than we can say.



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