A NEW PARADIGM IN MUSIC EDUCATION: THE MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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I certify that this thesis is my own work and that all sources used have been acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

This thesis describes a qualitative action research process undertaken 'in the field' over approximately eight years of the development of an alternative paradigm for music education. This new paradigm evolved from a simple, practical approach that was not, in the first instance, designed to be transformational, but which quickly showed itself to have potential for providing a different model for conceptualising musical engagement.

It is argued that the standard and widely accepted approach to music education has aspects that does not encourage on-going music making. This study conceptualises that 'traditional' Western approach in terms of a 'virtuosic mountain' that prioritises and rewards technical achievement. The concept of the virtuosic mountain is developed in terms of three 'P's': Perfection, Practice and Performance. The concept was developed by not just reviewing current literature but also by analysing that literature in light of the developing new paradigm as a means of comparing and contrasting the approaches.

Called 'The Music Education Program', this new paradigm is based on a practical approach to the sharing of music making beyond institutional boundaries like the school gate. Children do not 'perform' in the community but seek to engage others in making music with them without reference to age, disability or skill level. The focus is on the social outcomes that derive from music making rather than the improvement of skills, which develop as a natural part of community engagement. In this respect, the approach has roots in community enculturation processes that are no longer prominent in Western society.

The new paradigm is presented with a contrasting set of 'three I's': Intent, Identity and Involvement, which are designed to illustrate how the community 'outreach' of the Music Education Program provides a model for consciously reconceptualising our approach to music education through re-visiting what might be regarded as 'old' practices in a 'new' guise. The three 'I's' are illustrated through a series of critical incidents that highlight the necessary change in

theoretical underpinnings that the practical application of the Program demands. This includes a particular focus on the Intent behind our music making, rather than the 'quality' in terms of techno-musical outcomes; stress on the individual and group choices that develop musical Identity; and demonstration of the ways in which this paradigm may contribute to voluntary, rather than enforced, Involvement.

The critical incident data is supplemented by some survey and evaluation data which supports the view that the social component of musical engagement provides an alternate focus to musical development than does an achievement paradigm. The range of data collected shows that classroom teachers can take a significant role in the encouragement of music making in the primary school without relying solely on the expertise of those with specific musical training; and that overcoming negative attitudes and experiences can transform not only the teacher's relationship with music but produce a positive effect on her students.

The model described here has evolved through a longitudinal process that constantly maintains the centrality of the practical operation of the program. In so doing, it moves away from theoretical constructs that often do not seem to relate directly to practitioners but, at the same time, it avoids prescriptive methodology. Theory is elucidated through practice in a way that encourages teachers to develop their own practices that are consistent with underlying principles. This model is transformative in nature, having first a transformative effect on the principal researcher and thence on those teachers engaging in professional development with the Program.

Since the Music Education Program does not yet have students who have exited the school system, this study does not attempt to claim success in the long-term in terms of promoting on-going engagement through life. Data suggest, however, that it has had an impact in encouraging teachers to reconnect with music making and enables them to share that music making with their students, thereby helping to develop more school-based musical engagement that is also affecting the broader community in the Australian Capital Territory.

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To my mother Kathleen,

where the songs began

and my father, David,

with love and thanks.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **iii**

SECTION ONE: SETTING THE SCENE 1

CHAPTER 1: THE MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: A BRIEF HISTORY **4**
1.1 Beginnings 4
1.2 Salem School and Music Education Program Model 1 7
1.3 The Pearce Report (1994) 11
1.4 The road to a new paradigm 14

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY **20**
2.1 Introduction 20
2.2 Action Research and Practitioner Research 20
2.3 Transformative Learning 24
2.4 Action Learning 27
2.5 Presentation of the research in this thesis 28
2.5.1 Literature Analysis: reconceptualising the traditional paradigm 28
2.5.2 Data as Critical Incidents 30
2.6 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis 34
2.7 Ethics Approval 41
2.8 Flow Chart of the Development of the Music Education Program 41

SECTION TWO: THE TRADITIONAL PARADIGM 42

CHAPTER 3: PERFECTION **48**
3.1 Introduction 48
3.2 Musical 'Talent' 49
3.2.1 Nature and nurture 49
3.2.2 'Talent' and music education 51
3.2.3 The strength of the existing model: being 'unmusical' 53
3.3 Passing Judgment 55
3.3.1 Recognition of the judgment problem 55
3.3.2 The acceptance of judgments passed 56
3.3.3 Internalisation of imprecise judgments on musicianship 57
3.3.4 Judging singing 60
3.4 Technique 62
3.4.1 'First come the fingers' 62
3.4.2 The importance of the right notes 65
3.4.3 And then the expression… 67
3.5 Standards 68
3.5.1 Standards for the students' benefit 68
3.5.2 Attitudes to standards 70
3.5.3 Alternatives to the standards 72
3.6 Magic and Mystique 75
3.6.1 Expertise as magic 75
3.6.2 The primacy of the expert 77
3.7 Conclusion 81

CHAPTER 4: PRACTICE **82**
4.1 Introduction 82
4.2 Music in Education 83
4.3 Achievement and Motivation 85
4.3.1 The interest in achievement and motivation 85
4.3.2 Perceptions of success 87
4.3.3 Self-efficacy 89
4.3.4 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage 91

4.3.5 Focus on the successful ... 93
4.4 Practice as Work ... 94
4.4.1 Practice is never enjoyable ... 94
4.4.2 Practice and parental support ... 95
4.4.3 Practice often happens alone ... 97
4.4.4 Does it have to be 'work'? ... 98
4.4.5 How well does practice achieve achievement? ... 100
4.5 Practice and Personal Choice ... 102
4.5.1 Exercising personal choice ... 102
4.5.2 Closed and regimented systems ... 103
4.5.3 Asking the child ... 105
4.6 Conclusion ... 107

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE ... 108
5.1 Introduction ... 108
5.2 Performance and the Virtuosic Mountain ... 109
5.3 Western Enculturation ... 111
5.3.1 Differences in our approach to music and sport ... 111
5.3.2 Music as passive consumption ... 112
5.3.3 Differences in other cultures ... 113
5.4 Competitions and Examinations as Performance ... 115
5.4.1 Competition ... 115
5.4.2 Opinions on the success of competition as a strategy in music performance ... 117
5.4.3 The reliability of competition judging ... 120
5.4.4 Performance as examination ... 122
5.5 Music Performance Anxiety ... 124
5.5.1 Music Performance Anxiety defined ... 124
5.5.2 Music Performance Anxiety at all levels ... 125
5.5.3 Research on incidence of Music Performance Anxiety amongst professional musicians ... 127
5.5.4 Usefulness or otherwise of Music Performance Anxiety ... 129
5.5.5 Types of solutions suggested ... 131
5.6 Conclusion ... 134

SECTION THREE: A NEW PARADIGM ... 136

CHAPTER 6: INTENT – SOCIAL MUSIC-MAKING FOR AND WITH OTHERS ... 144
6.1 Intent in Outreach ... 144
6.1.1 General attitudes to outreach from the student perspective ... 144
6.1.2 Thinking of 'the other' ... 146
6.2 Intent in Performance ... 147
6.2.1 Joshua: "you can feel their spirit" ... 147
6.2.2 Transferral: thinking of the 'other' during performance ... 148
6.2.3 Anxiety and language ... 149
6.2.4 Attitudes towards a different social intent ... 150
6.3 Intent with Other Students ... 151
6.3.1 Alysha and taking the intent seriously ... 151
6.3.2 Mentoring younger students ... 152
6.4 Intent with and for 'At Risk' and Special Education Students ... 153
6.4.1 Luke ... 153
6.4.2 Garber and John from Brindabella special school ... 154
6.5 Teacher Intent ... 156
6.5.1 Approaching young students differently ... 156
6.5.2 Beth: transforming herself and then her community ... 157
6.5.3 Angela and approaching difficulties ... 158
6.5.4 Jessica and Peer Gynt: making the difficult easy ... 160
6.6 Parental Intent ... 160
6.6.1 Different beginnings ... 161
6.6.2 Family music ... 162
6.7 Critical Concerns with Exercising Social Intent ... 163
6.7.1 The child in the nursing home ... 164
6.7.2 The voluntary nature of outreach ... 167
6.7.3 Conclusion ... 169

CHAPTER 7: IDENTITY – PERSONAL MUSIC DEVELOPMENT AND CHOICE 170
7.1 Identity and Adults 170
7.1.1 Rania overcoming musical paralysis 171
7.1.2 Maintaining negative beliefs 172
7.1.3 Beth: not singing because she believed she wasn't 'musical' 173
7.1.4 Pamela: reinforcement from the internal judge 174
7.1.5 David: finding one's voice 176
7.2 Identity and the Child 177
7.2.1 Angela: growing into her voice 177
7.3 Identity and the Individual/Studio Lesson 178
7.3.1 Angela: playing the dilettante 179
7.3.2 Angela and expressing her own opinions 180
7.3.3 Georgina: refusing to choose 181
7.4 Identity and School Classroom Music 182
7.4.1 Student opinion on repertoire 183
7.4.2 Student reaction to one child's choices 183
7.4.3 Students exercising opinion 184
7.4.4 Adolescents: maintaining and extending the group 185
7.4.5 Individual songs choices: 'Yesterday' 187
7.4.6 The teacher as adjudicator 188
7.4.7 Responsibility: the other side of choice 188
7.5 Critical Concerns in Identity 190
7.5.1 Introduction 190
7.5.2 Adults and challenge 191
7.5.3 Is it 'just' about singing? 193
7.5.4 Achievement A: the development of empathetic skills first 194
7.5.5 Achievement B: developing skills in a choice model 197
7.5.6 Achievement C: refinement and discernment 201
7.5.7 Reporting skills in the Music Education Program model 202
7.6 Conclusion 203

CHAPTER 8: INVOLVEMENT – RETHINKING A PARADIGM BASED ON PASSING JUDGMENT 204
8.1 Involvement and the Effect of Judgment 204
8.1.1 Beth: the end of involvement 205
8.1.2 Jo: the negatives reinforced 206
8.1.3 Deidre: the effect of 'expert' judgment 206
8.1.4 Instantaneous judgements about musicality 207
8.1.5 Gay and on-going judgment 208
8.1.6 Stopping a musical judgment as it happens 209
8.2 Involvement and Self Judgment 210
8.2.1 Angela and Leanne: highlighting the underlying judgment of self in adults 211
8.3 Involvement and 'Expert' Judgment of Ability 213
8.3.1 Competitions 214
8.3.2 Maxine: learning scales 215
8.3.3 Helen: ignoring judgments about performance 216
8.4 Involvement and Everyday 'Magic' 219
8.4.1 Social music-making and 'magic' 219
8.4.2 Chantelle and 'magic' 220
8.5 Critical Concerns in Involvement 223
8.5.1 Avoiding passing judgement: what question is the child answering? 224
8.5.2 From shouting to singing 225
8.5.3 Highlighting 'fun' and removing practice 226
8.5.4 The expertise of the teacher 227
8.5.5 'Expert' judgment passed on one teacher's efforts: the case of Bettye 228
8.6 Conclusion 230

SECTION FOUR: THE WAY FORWARD 231

CHAPTER 9: ATTITUDES TO THE MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM 232
9.1 Introduction 232
9.2 Numerical Data on Participation in the MEP 232
9.3 Feedback from Participants 237

9.3.1 Types of teacher feedback 237
9.3.2 Course evaluations 238
9.3.3 Survey of all teachers 247
9.3.4 Advanced teacher discussion 254
9.3.5 Unsolicited feedback 259

CHAPTER 10: FUTURE DIRECTIONS 264
10.1 Introduction 264
10.2 Sharing the Ground 264
10.3 A 'Personality Driven' Approach 267
10.3.1 From teacher to student 268
10.3.2 From teacher to teacher 269
10.4 Future Research 270

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION 276
11.1 The Future for the Music Education Program 276
11.2 And finally… 281

APPENDIX I: MUSIC-MAKING AND THE ADULT POPULATION 283
I.I Introduction 283
I.II Music-Makers versus Music-Consumers 283
I.III Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities (ABS 2004a) 286
I.IV Work in Selected Cultural and Leisure Activities (ABS, 2004b) 289
I.V Australians and the Arts (Costantoura et al, 2001) 295
I.VI Australian Attitudes towards Music (2001) 298
I.VII The USA 299
I.VIII The UK 304
I.IX Conclusion 305

APPENDIX II: THE ACT PRE-TERTIARY SCHOOL SYSTEM 306

APPENDIX III: ETHICS INFORMATION 307

APPENDIX IV: EVALUATIONS 310

BIBLIOGRAPHY 322

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: ……..…43
The Virtuosic Mountain

FIGURE 2: ……...200
Man Goin' Round as given to students

FIGURE 3: ……...back cover
Music Education Program: Diagram of growth of Program from Model 1 to Model 2*

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1:……233
Summary of participants in courses

TABLE 2:…….239
Evaluation data from one-day participants

***Readers are encouraged to remove this detached chart from the envelope and keep it alongside them as they read.**

Note re gender: I have used an alternating pattern for male and female personal pronouns except in incidents where the gender of the participant/s is known.