

New Frameworks for Tertiary Music Education – A Holistic Approach for Many Pyramids of Excellence

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Recent research demonstrates that keyboard students, like other instrumentalists at tertiary level, often become dissatisfied with the limitations of their courses. This appears to be due mainly to a reliance on one instructor, for a limited amount of time, to attain high levels of technical and performance skills. With the traditional master-apprentice model undergoing global examination concerning its effectiveness in training musicians now and for the future, tertiary music institutions could learn from the field of sport performance, where education of elite sport athletes focuses on holistic training programs with a diverse range of professionals. Present challenges in the world of keyboard art highlight the need for holistic educational approaches in areas of teaching, learning and performance, to bridge the gap between what is happening inside institutions, and what is being experienced outside institutions. With a new pedagogical emphasis on learning how to learn and lifelong learning using multi-modal frameworks, keyboard players along with other instrumentalists can be trained to become well-rounded self-reliant musicians, flexible and entrepreneurial, thereby enabling graduates to manage ever-changing professional environments.

Introduction

Training musicians for a sustainable future in diverse and changing working environments has become a pressing challenge for Australian tertiary music institutions, as students increasingly seek a learning environment that matches their needs and expectations, not only for their training, but for their gainful employment. The master-apprentice model, as the basis of the traditional model of excellence for training musicians is being questioned, and shows signs of undergoing revision.

This paper reports briefly on recent research developments across the areas of teaching, learning and performance in Australian tertiary music settings, and views four European conservatoires, that as members of cross-institutional research groups have been leading the way with their practice-based research to establish change in the training of musicians for the 21st century. The paper aims to show that Australian tertiary performance students' dissatisfaction with course limitations, along with present challenges in the world of keyboard art can best be understood and addressed, by taking a broader view of the main issues presently confronting musicians, music educators, and tertiary music institutions. Living in a global village, it is important to see ourselves not as isolated piano teachers, but as members of the wider community of musicians and teachers; indeed, part of many connecting communities having to answer to society's changing needs. Music education research has been responding to changing needs by advocating more holistic approaches to teaching, learning and performance, resulting in new frameworks for these areas. The frameworks referred to in this paper are opening up new directions for tertiary music programmes, for piano pedagogy, and for music educationalists everywhere.

Challenges for Australian tertiary music performance training

With continued debate about the effectiveness of performance-based education and training in music (Bennett 2005, 74), the major challenges presently confronting Australian tertiary music institutions appear to be:

- The need to create an effective performance-based curriculum, to serve the musician's various career requirements, and reflect outside practices in an ever-changing society
- The need to revise the traditional style master-apprentice mode of teaching, in ways that reflect the pluralistic values of the 21st century

The presenting picture is this: a widening gap exists between what is happening inside music institutions and what is happening in society. Bennett's (2005) dissertation on *Classical Instrumental Musicians: Educating for Sustainable Professional Practice*, states that there has been no formal identification of the skills and objectives required by musicians to sustain present day professional practice (Bennett 2005, 88). Few Australian music degree courses offer career planning or business units for freelance, entrepreneurial or business skills. Pedagogy is still not always a compulsory subject, despite the large number of tertiary music students engaging in instrument teaching at some time during their lifetime. Finally, although musical artists have been described as the foremost advocates of creating and performing, it appears that most are not trained to communicate the process to others (Rogers in Bennett 2005, 90).

Music as an art form and industry exists *outside* of institutions, and will continue to do so, but if tertiary music institutions fail to address current demands of music outside of institutions, then they themselves will fail (Marcellino and Cunningham in Bennett 2005, 73). Bennett's (2005) analysis concludes that 'musicians in the 21st century require a broad and evolving base of skills and knowledge to sustain their careers as cultural arts practitioners' based on a 'a practitioner-focussed Arts Cultural Practice framework' (p. ii).

Research shows that Australian tertiary music performance students often become dissatisfied with their courses (Schaupp 1997; Liertz 2002; Carey 2005). Students refer to their limited tuition time with one teacher (Schaupp 1997; Liertz 2002; Carey 2005) and say they are 'left to fend for themselves' (Schaupp 1997), and that they feel 'let down' because their expectations are not being met (Liertz 2002; Carey 2005). Dissatisfaction relates to their learning needs, lack of management strategies in how to perform, lack of career advice, and lack of employment, despite further study and performance ability. Material abounds demonstrating that innovation in performance-based education is necessary; not only to assist musicians gain confidence to perform at their optimal best during training, but to prepare them as independent, confident musicians to command multiple roles in professional practice (Renshaw 1986; Roland 1994; Liertz 1995, 2002; Schaupp 1997; Daniel 2001, 2006; Schippers 2003; Smit 2003; Smilde 2004; Bennett 2005; Carey 2005; Gaunt 2006; Lebler 2006; Mak, Kors and Renshaw 2007).

The ‘master-apprentice model’, the archetype of arts education in institutions since the 19th Century, has been under examination for its non-transparency and student dependency. It seems that one-to-one teaching may hinder the very attributes that teachers value in students – the development of both self-responsibility and an individual artistic voice (Gaunt 2006, 46). This situation is creating a total re-evaluation of what it means to educate musicians who now require artistic qualities combined with a portfolio of skills for composite careers in a fast-changing society. The challenge for music teachers and students is to engage in new styles of learning; allowing keyboard students, along with other instrumentalists and singers, to gain confidence from the self-actualisation process and become musicians of the 21st century, which is according to Smilde (2004, 7) well-trained, able to reflect on their abilities in order to know their strengths and weaknesses, and able to adapt to changing professional contexts.

Recent Australian research developments – creating new frameworks

The following alternative and complementary learning designs have been trialed and evaluated in Australian tertiary music education settings:

- Lebler’s (2006) ‘community of practice model’, incorporating the collective abilities of students and staff to develop the creative practice of popular music, largely through recording facilities – demonstrating self-assessment and peer-assessment, with applicability for all creative practice environments
- Daniel’s (2004) ‘small group model’ for piano pedagogy, with three to five advanced students – demonstrating shared learning
- Daniel’s (2004) ‘peer assessment in musical performance methodology’ – demonstrating shared learning and self-directed learning skills
- Liertz’s (2002) ‘a holistic training strategies framework’ to develop performance confidence, (also providing a wellness framework) through effective self-management of practice and performance – demonstrating self-directed learning skills

Borrowing from the success of sport psychology

Along with the need to develop musicians’ skills in *communication* of their art of creating and performing, music performance education needs to address *performance confidence* and learn from sport performance’s success in this area, using sport psychology principles. Performance confidence is based on ‘self-efficacy’ (the personal perception of self-confidence) from Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy (1977), which has effectively been applied to sport performance. Over the last thirty-five years, sport performance has recognised the importance of mind-body connections for the development of the aspiring elite athlete’s performance confidence. At least four specialist mentors are made available to assist with an individualised holistic training programme – a coach, sport psychologist, nutritionist and physiotherapist. In music performance, the aspiring musician has to rely on his/her main instrument teacher, who concentrates generally on technical and musical skills, believing that performance skills and performance confidence will come from performing experience. However, musicians can develop performance confidence along the learning path, as

athletes do, with a strategies framework, (learning independently, or with a performance coach) to assist them in their personal, musical, and performance skills development.

Sport psychologists and elite athletes have demonstrated that self-confidence / self-efficacy is a learnable skill supporting performance skills. Bandura emphasises the fact that 'higher levels of perceived self-efficacy are accompanied by higher performance attainments' (Bandura 1992, 4) and that a lack of self-efficacy hinders the proficient use of one's developed skills (Bandura 1997, 3) demonstrating that one's mental state (perceived self-confidence) plays an important role in the execution of one's developed performance skills.

Liertz's (2002) case studies' research with tertiary performance students, *Developing Performance Confidence: A Holistic Training Strategies Program to Manage Practice and Performance in Music*, applies sport psychology's mental and physical training strategies to musicians' needs, in order to develop performance confidence. The five-week self-directed 'training program' promotes the four psychological skills areas required in performance (Mahoney 1977), and the ideal mind-body states for peak performance experiences (Garfield and Bennett 1984), while assisting musicians to manage their individual practice and performance effectively. (A comprehensive, updated version of this training program entitled, *Performance Confidence: A Training Program for Musicians* will be published in 2008).

New directions from European tertiary music institutions

Examples are now drawn from four European conservatoires that have been driving change in curriculum revision and development, by establishing collaborative partnerships for practice-based research within and between their institutions, and connecting with community needs. These institutions are London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama, The Royale Conservatoire The Hague, Prince Claus Conservatorium in Groningen, the Netherlands, and The Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Finland. Some significant developments have been the following:

Around 2000, Guildhall's School of Music noted that the performing side of the school appeared quite disconnected from teaching programmes (the teaching module having been compulsory for performance students since 1990). With all heads of departments and students enthusiastically involved to connect the two aspects, it was demonstrated to students that learning to teach is not just peripheral to a performer's development, but can grow from one's instrumental development and be central to it. Then as students start to think like teachers they are better equipped to answer issues emerging in future performance situations, and those related to teaching (Lanskey, 2001, 9).

The Connect Project grew out of the innovative programme in Performance and Communication Skills pioneered by Peter Renshaw while Head of Research and Development at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (1984-2001). This project is committed to fostering informal ways of learning, using a variety of approaches for acquiring musical skills and knowledge in a non-formal musical context outside the walls of the established system. This music outreach programme continues to develop creativity and connections between schools,

cultures, and community organizations. More recently this project has been awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education, and become a model for other institutions with Renshaw's (2005) publication, *Simply Connect: Best Musical Practice in Non-Formal Learning Contexts*.

In 2002, Nico Smit from the Royal Conservatoire The Hague instigated the research project, *The Teacher of the 21st Century*, by first envisaging the artist's needs and societal role in 2015 with respect to present social trends (Smit 2003, 2-5). In 2005, other institutions were invited to collaborate, this developing into the research group for *Instrumental Learning and Teaching*, linking the Royal Conservatoire The Hague; The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London; The Institute of Education, London; The Norwegian Academy of Music, Oslo; The Sibelius Academy, Finland, and the Royal Academy and Malmo Academy of Sweden. This inter-conservatoria research team has as its main aim, to enhance instrumental and vocal teaching. With its regular meetings and open discussions it is also a working group of the Association of European Conservatoires.

Chairing this research team is Helena Gaunt (from Guildhall), who submitted her 2006 doctoral research entitled *One-To-One Tuition in a Conservatoire: The Perceptions of Instrumental and Vocal Teachers*, highlighting teaching areas needing attention. Her dissertation concludes that:

In the light of these findings, further research needs to be undertaken to establish the particular strategies and ways of structuring instrumental/vocal tuition in a conservatoire, which most support the development of self-confidence and autonomy in learning, and the ways in which these may be affected by the particular dynamics of one-to-one teaching/learning. The professional isolation of one-to-one instrumental/vocal teachers in a conservatoire also needs to be addressed, through opportunities for sharing practice, and for professional development particularly in generic areas of teaching (Gaunt 2007, 46).

Acting on these research findings, this European research group conducted a pilot three-day teacher development programme in Helsinki, Finland in April 2007, allowing teachers to have an impact on their workplace curricula, by being involved in the research and development of master classes and pilot projects in group teaching, with reduced one-to-one tuition. The following meeting two months later focused on how each institution could incorporate this teacher development programme into their existing teachers' professional development and accreditation framework (Gaunt's email, 2007).

Another collaborative research group between The Royal Conservatoire The Hague, and Prince Claus Conservatoire in the Netherlands conducts practice-based research for *The Lifelong Learning Project* (a four year project begun in 2004), with the aim to create adaptive learning environments for changing professional practice. Their focus is on 'How do musicians learn?' and 'What skills and attitudes are necessary to function creatively in an ever-changing cultural environment?' (Smilde in Mak, Kors and Renshaw 2007, 5). Their website www.lifelonglearninginmusic.org shows current and recent projects. Both of these collaborative research groups demonstrate dynamic laboratories of analysis in the midst of the institution, with subsequent pilot programmes being tested, and effective outcomes being applied to curricula in a smooth process.

Two important findings have emerged from these research groups' activities:

- 1) The development of meta skills such as *flexibility*, *creativity* and *autonomy* in students, alongside the shared experiences provided by *community*, can only take place in the context of a holistic approach to music education. This is not possible in a one-to-one learning situation (Smit, 2007).
- 2) The pedagogical emphasis has shifted from teaching to *learning*, *learning how to learn*, and *lifelong learning*.

The Director of the Sibelius Academy draws attention to this shift in emphasis in his article from January 2007 in the Finnish Music Quarterly magazine:

The times are ripe for a new musician profile and one marked by pluralism, personal initiative and interactive skills. The master-apprentice model at conservatoriums has proved surprisingly persistent in the training of musicians. But it is no longer enough for the new job profiles (Djupsjobacka in Kuusisaari 2007, 8).

The Sibelius Academy's Director explains that the future musician will be multi-skilled, capable of communicating, of commanding different musical styles, of combining art with scholarship and of mastering new media and technologies. He adds that, 'as there will be no further expansion in this sector, institutions have to get musicians used to the idea that they are going to have to strike off on their own.' Therefore this Academy assists students to select modules from different departments to build up a portfolio of skills. Ways of intensifying the *learning process* are being sought, with increased research into learning, along with expertise in technology, instrument teaching and improvisation (Kuusisaari 2007, 8). With boundaries in music collapsing outside of music institutions, *world music* since the 1980s an accepted genre in USA and European conservatories, and crossovers of influence and cultural diversity bringing about new insights, Schippers (2003) emphasizes the need for a new style curricula to reflect cultural diversity, and express greater flexibility for music transmission and learning.

Many pyramids of excellence for the 21st century

As the only constant factor in society is change, a more responsive educational paradigm and music curriculum is needed to cater for all types of music students from a broad cultural mix seeking knowledge and a variety of skills. Solbu, the specialist educational advisor for the project 'Accreditation in European Professional Music Training' (undertaken by the Association of European Conservatoires) argues in his paper *What is Excellence in Higher Music Education?* (2007, 3) that excellence in the conservatoire context is dependent on three categories of quality in the individual musician – artistic qualities, professional qualities and personal qualities. He believes a conservatoire aiming to serve today's and tomorrow's society needs to get away from the 'one-pyramid' excellence model where everything is more or less excellent relative to *one* standard set by the soloist type of performer. This traditional hierarchical 'one pyramid of excellence' model with the conductor and soloists at the top, music educationalists lower, and the community music worker at the bottom does not acknowledge the varied ways artistic qualities can be displayed in myriad musical situations, and expanding professional contexts. He explains that dividing the

student population into such categories as conductors, composers, performers, and music educators simply cannot cater to all the needs of today's multi-faceted music life, where musicians require a range of different combinations of expertise.

For the conservatoire to be a proactive agent in the cultural environment of which it is a part, he believes it needs to develop a complex model of many pyramids of excellence (this consisting of a variety of equally important qualities and standards). A complex model would value individual differences and different capacities in different areas, and assist to create 'a transparent wall between the inner and the outer musical life ... making the traffic between the two sides of the wall easy' (Solbu 2007, 3-4).

Multi-modal frameworks for a 'many pyramids of excellence' model

For Solbu's 'many pyramids of excellence' to take hold and replace the 19th century 'soloist' pyramid of excellence, a broad spectrum of frameworks for teaching, learning, and performance seems appropriate. The following diverse frameworks for teaching, learning and performance have been identified in the Australian and European tertiary music settings mentioned in this paper. Featuring non-hierarchical characteristics, and fitting within a holistic approach to tertiary music education, they appear to be contributing to Solbu's advocated 'many pyramids of excellence' model.

- Mentoring (Hanley 1996; Treston 1999; Renshaw 2007)
- Team teaching (van Zelm 2005; Smit 2005)
- Lifelong learning (Jarvis 2002; Fragoulis 2002; Rogers 2004; Smilde 2006, 2007; Mak, Kors, Renshaw 2007)
- Self-assessment (Dochy, Segers, and Sluijsmans 1999; Daniel 2001; Lebler 2005; Mak, Kors, and Renshaw (2007, 41)
- Peer assessment (Searby and Ewers 1997; Hunter 1999; Daniel 2004; Lebler 2006)
- Small group teaching (Daniel 2004; Gaunt 2007)
- Performance confidence / performance wellness strategies framework (Liertz 2002)
- Self-directed learning (Boyatzis 2001; Liertz 2002; Lebler)
- Community partnerships (Renshaw 1984, 2007; Odam and Bannan 2005)
- Shared learning / collaborative learning / co-operative learning (Fisher 2007; Ryan 2004)
- Formal, non-formal and informal learning styles (Bjornavold 2002; Green 2002; Colley, Hodgkinson and Malcolm 2002; Rogers 2004; Kors 2005; Mak 2004; Folkestad 2006; Mak, Kors and Renshaw, 2007).

The creation of quality learning environments using such frameworks to stimulate creative 'thinking' and 'doing' may prove to be the most effective way to generate and maintain the characteristics for individual excellence that is so desired by all. However, this can only happen as institutions grasp the importance of connections with outside communities, connections between departments, between psychological stress and the mental or physical environment, and the mind-body connections involved in both learning and performing.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the various research findings and developments in the areas of teaching, learning and performance demonstrated in the aforementioned Australian tertiary settings and four European institutions, Australian tertiary music institutions could consider the following recommendations:

- 1) Multi-modal frameworks for teaching, learning and performance, with a new pedagogical emphasis on self-directed learning and lifelong learning; reflecting a more holistic educational approach to develop independent, confident, entrepreneurial musicians with a portfolio of skills for changing professional environments
- 2) Creative learning environments to enhance the musician's self-actualisation process
- 3) Connections with the community and outside organizations to bridge the gap between musical life inside institutions and musical engagement outside institutions
- 4) Provision for teacher development programmes with recognition of innovative teaching practices, and a sharing of the masters' individual strengths to provide effective mentoring to students (a broad range of masters for all the apprentices)
- 5) Cross-fertilisation between departments to facilitate cross-disciplinary programmes for a portfolio of mixed skills
- 6) Practice-based research and project collaboration between institutions

This paper has attempted to outline the broader context of main issues, changes and developments confronting musicians, music educators and tertiary music institutions, to better understand Australian music students' dissatisfaction with course limitations and present challenges in keyboard art. It appears that the reported multi-modal frameworks for learning, teaching and performance could address these perceived limitations and keyboard challenges, whilst providing necessary solutions to societal and educational pressures. In so doing, new paths to excellence could be paved, in order to train Australian musicians for sustainable futures.

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