

BULLETIN: ASME VICTORIA

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Volume 31, No. 2 – June/July 2022

Australian Society for Music Education,

Victoria Chapter Registration Number A0013254W



Supporting the right of every person in Australia to access a quality music education – a major goal of ASME

Chair's message

Sue Arney

I would like to share some of the recent work of the fabulous ASME (Vic) Chapter Council. This robust and vibrant group of 14 inspirational music educators continue to share their passion for and dedication to supporting music educators and music education in the State. In preparing our report to the ASME National Council I was proud to highlight some of our projects and achievements that reflect our focus areas for 2022:



Our focus on supporting Early Career teachers resulted in a workshop for teachers of VCE Music Study Design hosted by Sue Arney and Emily Wilson, with guests Ros McMillan, Pip Robinson, Anna Van Veldhuisen (Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar) and Scott Mangos (Mt Clear College). The tips, advice and ideas were uploaded to a Padlet that is now available in the 'Teaching Resources' tab on our website.

Our focus on building music education networks was reflected in our 'SongSwap' hosted by Katie Hull-Brown, with participants online from across Victoria, including those in primary, secondary and community settings. Resources for the songs shared were added to another Padlet and also uploaded to our growing 'Teaching Resources' page. Research has also begun to 'map' existing music teacher networks and

hubs across the State. If you are part of an active geographic network, we are keen to hear from you.

Our focus on capturing the voices of significant music educators began with Ros McMillan's UNESCO Arts Education Week: ASME (Vic) Music Education Address. Details of the address, including the video recording, are now on our website.

Our focus on celebrating those in the profession was highlighted when we presented the ASME Victoria Graduate Teacher Award to Matthew Roche (Melbourne Graduate School of Education), Nicole Ng (Melbourne Conservatorium of Music) and Caitlin Kerr (Deakin University).

Our focus on supporting creativity in the schools continues with work on developing resources, tips and advice for teachers which will be added to our website in the future, and will also support the ASME National Young Composers' Project as part of the 2023 ASME National Conference.

Our focus on discussing, supporting and highlighting new research in music education will form part of a podcast series being developed by our Research and Resources sub-committee. To assist in providing a nucleus of ideas for the committee, please take a moment to complete the 5-minute survey: <https://forms.gle/HQ8Laf7g4DhVn75d8>

To access resources via our website visit www.asme.edu.au and select 'Victoria' from the blue strip at the top of the page.

Again, my sincere thanks to every member of the Victorian Chapter Council for their continued hard work, and to our members for your ongoing support for our work.

Editorial

Ros McMillan

This issue of the *Bulletin* has a focus on a world still coping with a pandemic. At the beginning of 2022 we all thought that life would gradually return to normal after two years of disruption but alas, it has been anything but normal. A research article and reports from a secondary school teacher and Year 12 student highlight some of the impacts the pandemic has wrought on teachers and students. The situation is not helped by what medical authorities say is the likelihood of a severe influenza season.



On a 'warmer' note, enjoying the Irish Summer is Lucy Lennox, writing her regular 'Letter from Ireland'. The former Deputy

Chair of the Victorian Chapter Council, Lucy has been living and working in Ireland for the past year. Her letters have been a highlight of the *Bulletin* with their insight into the Irish education system as well as engaging anecdotes from an Australian experiencing life overseas for the first time.

An article by the 2021 Deakin University Graduate Teacher Awardee, Caitlin Kerr, will give readers some idea of the quality of those whom ASME recognises through these awards. Presented annually to the most outstanding graduating music education student at each of Victoria's tertiary institutions, it is encouraging to read Caitlin's hopes for her teaching career.

Mandy Stefanakis has had a long career as an educator, writer, composer and staunch advocate for music education. She has recently submitted her PhD and some of the findings of her thesis are discussed in an article on page 7.

Cover: Photograph by Chris Riordan

Award celebrates top postgraduate teacher

The ASME (Vic) Graduate Teacher Awards are presented to the highest achieving postgraduate music education student enrolled at each of Victoria's universities. In 2021 the Deakin University Award was presented to Caitlin Kerr, to whom we express our warmest congratulations and welcome her thoughts on music education.

Music has always been my greatest passion. It is of no surprise to anyone who knows me personally that I ended up studying music and music education at university. My tertiary learning journey began with a Bachelor of Music, specialising in Music Performance at Victoria University. I was fortunate to be a recipient of the George Alexander Foundation Scholarship, which recognised strong academic results, leadership potential and active interest in the community. On graduating I was named as the highest achieving student in the course through the 'Most Outstanding Student' award.

Wanting to further develop my learning about vocal pedagogy and develop my teaching practice, I began studying a Master of Music (Performance Teaching) at the University of Melbourne. As part of this course, I completed placements teaching singing in instrumental music programs at a variety of schools in Melbourne. Throughout these placements I gained an insight into classroom music teaching that inspired a desire to further my skills. I then undertook a Master of Teaching (Primary and Secondary), specialising in Music Education, at Deakin University.

While studying this course, all learning went online. In a large course that was now less personal, and mostly 'faceless', I was incredibly grateful for my music education seminars. These seminars were a collaborative environment that facilitated regular in-depth discussions of everything music, music education and teaching, between myself, my teachers and peers. What I valued most was the exploration beyond curriculum and teaching approaches that involved questions about why we teach music, why our students learn music and the role of music in our lives and the education system.

This year I accepted a generalist Year 5 classroom teaching position at a P-9 school in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Whilst I am not currently teaching music, there are so many things that I have learned, skills I have developed and experiences that I consistently draw upon in my current teaching practice. I am so grateful for my experiences so far, as they have not only developed my teaching but also



contributed to my development as a person. I know my learning journey is only just beginning, but I am looking forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The following is a snippet from my teaching philosophy that encapsulates my learning journey so far and where I see my place in the world of music education:

My goal in the classroom and beyond is not only to teach music but inspire confident and creative individuals who feel empowered and capable to express themselves as well as engaging as active members of their community.

ASME (Vic) Chapter Council – 2021-2022

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Swimming against the COVID-19 tide in Australia: staying afloat while teaching music

Dawn Joseph (Deakin University) and Brad Merrick (The University of Melbourne)

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted teaching and learning from March 2020, thousands of students across the globe experienced significant disruption to their studies.

Among the difficulties experienced by music educators was the need to adapt to forced remote online teaching.

After ethical approval from Deakin University in 2021, we invited music educators to participate in our wider study *Re-imagining the future: Music teaching and learning, and ICT in blended environments in Australia*.

The study investigated the impact that the move to remote (online) learning had on teachers and students during the pandemic. We explored the types of pedagogies, technologies and strategy used across blended teaching and learning environments as Information Communication and Technology (ICT) became the conduit during the pandemic.

By inviting Australian national music professional associations to recruit potential members across Australian states and territories, 105 music educators (early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary) participated in an anonymous Qualtrics survey data in March-April 2021 as part of the first phase of the study. We then thematically analysed and coded our data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings identified how remote education challenged the learning process, pedagogy, assessments and interactions that took place between students and their teachers, offering new opportunities to re-think what is taught and how it is taught. As students were unable to meet face-to-face, teachers experienced new opportunities using ICT.

Problems were compounded by the reliability of the technology and inequity challenges occurred, particularly in low socioeconomic areas. It was apparent that music teachers' confidence increased as they used technology to adapt and develop their approaches to teaching.

While employing diverse software and devices to enable online delivery, teachers relied heavily on portable technologies as their 'go to survival tool', which was similar to learners in blended learning situations. Teachers preferred using GarageBand, Finale and Sibelius for music-specific tasks, while adopting communication software technology (Zoom and Teams) for delivery, social connection and collaboration. YouTube-Vimeo, Twitch and Netflix were used for sharing resources, with many identifying Midnight Music and YouTube

as popular default locations. Online podcast-streaming resources such as Spotify, YouTube Music and Apple Music were easily accessed and utilised. Many teachers commented on their ability to adapt their practice by uploading and compiling resources in Drive and Google Classroom to enable self-reflection. This shift to blended learning enabled many respondents to attend a range of professional learning workshops because they were accessible and affordable, sometimes free.

All respondents commented on the added workload and how it impacted their sense of wellbeing (Beames et al., 2021). While respondents engaged with remote delivery and blended modes, many teachers identified as being burnt out with the increased workload and heightened stress levels, which impacted their mental health (Carroll et al., 2021). At the same time, they noted that by providing fun and interesting interactions with students, parents, colleagues and family, they were more able to maintain a sense of balance in regard to their mental health and to be in a good space.

From the first phase of the study, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic provided a starting point to better understand and prepare educators for an unforeseeable future, having adopted and embedded new digital competencies and pedagogies into music teaching during this time. The findings raise questions and identify challenges:

- support structures for student learning
- students' preparation in initial teacher education programs
- opportunities to enable and develop purposeful professional learning
- the collegial sharing of resources and practice
- the digital divide that exists across different systems, geographical locations and demographics.

The study illustrates a range of challenges and opportunities that emerged in relation to music educators as they swam against the changing tide of the pandemic (see Joseph & Merrick 2021, and Merrick & Joseph, 2022). Despite the restrictions and lockdowns across the country since 2020, music has "provide[d] a remarkably effective means of social connection in a time of social distancing, and in some contexts, it may allow our brains to feel connected even without traditional face-to-face interactions" (Greenberg, Decety, & Gorgon, 2021, p.1180). The diverse teaching practice of music teachers that emerged reinforced how online delivery is a complex process that is continually 'moving, blurring and shifting' (Ling, 2017, p.562). Through the

exposition of innovative practice, respondents demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness while using digital technology and ICT to 'stay afloat' during this unprecedented time.

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Jariyan Patel, Year 12 student

For more than two years now, it has certainly been a challenging time for secondary school music students. We have missed so many opportunities to take part in choirs, chamber music ensembles, larger orchestras and even major school productions.

There is the added pressure of being in Year 12 and only now being able to return to school for face-to-face instrumental lessons. Studying three VCE Music subjects with school closures and teachers being absent has meant we cannot maximise our learning and progress, although attending a specialist music school has allowed the many musically talented and devoted staff to fill in when needed.

With only one full term of study to go before revision, final performances and university auditions, my friends and I are more worried than ever at being infected with COVID. Although SACs and SATs can be sat and handed in after recovering, the large numbers of students becoming sick and isolating is a very real worry and we are all waiting until it's our (inevitable) turn!

But young people tend to look ahead to the bright side. I'm excited to be soon going to my one and only school formal, taking part in a school ensembles concert and performing with the Melbourne Youth Orchestra. There is certainly light at the end of the tunnel and we are all making a bee line towards it!

Jake Muir, Head of Performing Arts, Government Secondary School

Prior to COVID I am certain that most teachers would agree that school life was like a rollercoaster. However, in this epoch amusingly called 'post-COVID'; even this analogy does not seem to capture the frantic nature of teaching in 2022.

Staff shortages caused by COVID illness and flu (and general winter sickness), in combination with extreme student absenteeism, has meant that the unpredictability of the school term has reached a critical mass. For example, while the end of the semester has been full of assessments and reports, since I began writing this I have never had more than half of the class attending at any one time. This, of course, causes stress for students and teachers. Students have shown hesitancy in committing to the extracurricular performing arts because they feel as though they need to be frugal with their time, often repeating terms found in the media about being "behind" and needing to "catch up".

However, the gloomy nature of these affairs has been a complete contrast to the utter joy of finally being able to have 'live' performances within the performing arts again. At my school, we recently staged our very first school musical as, being a new school, the students had not had the opportunity to present a musical before the years of remote learning. It was one of the highlights of my career to watch, over the week of dress rehearsals and performances, these students finally "get it", to catch the performing bug. Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students became theatre people before my eyes but there is one moment that will stay with me forever. After taking bows on the opening night, the students rushed from backstage to just outside the theatre. The screams and squeals, I'm sure, could be heard well beyond the school gates. Then suddenly they all stopped celebrating, and began sobbing, knowing that soon this experience would be over, then came together for a giant group hug.

Even writing this now I can't stop the tears pouring down my face.

After everything these students went through to put the show together, including but not limited to learning choreography, vocal harmonies and lines - all through remote learning – it must have been indescribably cathartic to finally come together and celebrate live theatre, live music and community.

What I've tried to convey here is the utter incommensurability in the highs and lows of school life in 2022: extremely high levels of stress and workload for students and teachers, in comparison to the unadulterated joy of finally being about to sing, dance and play together again, with more support from the broader school community than we have ever experienced before.

Letter from Ireland

Lucy Lennox

Summertime in Dublin is a beautiful sight. After months of bare branches, trees are filled with bright green leaves, so heavy that branches hang down across the roads and lanes. Perennial flowers bloom and village shop fronts are brightened by their colour. The grass grows faster than it can be cut and days stretch longer with sunset at around 10pm. People's spirits are high as there is more sunshine and warmth. When the temperature reaches 18 degrees, people don their shorts and T-shirts to make the most of their summer wardrobe. Sea swimming is very popular here, in fact, some people swim all year round!

The summer months also mean long school holidays on this side of the world. Schools break from June until September, so many children enrol in summer camp programs and play outside until dusk. Many families travel abroad for the summer months, making the most of being on Europe's doorstep. Spain's islands for Irish holidaymakers are the Aussie equivalent of Queensland or Bali.

Something that I am still learning about is the difference in Irish accents. It astounds me how, for such a small country, each county has its own distinct twang. In the north, the Donegal accent is more like a Scottish accent, so after ordering a coffee there you are likely to hear 'would you like a wee bun with that?' The Cork accent from down south has a sing-song sound with a very musical intonation. However, the accents in Dublin City are a different kettle of fish with different variations from suburb to suburb. It is astonishing, because as I have previously mentioned, Ireland has a population of only 5 million and the land size can fit into Australia 110 times over.

While in Northern Ireland recently I encountered a unique live music happening. When exploring the country's northern coastline we checked out the ruins of an 18th century house called 'Downhill Demense'. A focal point of the grounds was a beautiful Roman-inspired temple called Mussenden Temple. When we walked closer, we discovered a free music event inside sponsored by the National Trust. A group was performing called 'The Stunt Double Collective', that included a circle of singers, a double bass, a guitar, a drum kit and a newly invented sewing machine stringed instrument (pictured at right). This instrument provided a drone sound and was played with a slack string bow, the speed controlled by the pedal mechanism of the sewing machine.

The group had been commissioned especially for the Temple with a music project called 'The Cave Sessions', performing songs on the fragility of joy after troubled times - to which

everyone could relate after previous years. We were told that the Cave Sessions project started as an experimental program based on the acoustics in caves along the northern coastline. According to Andy Rogers, who led the project, the songs were 'rediscovered' in a cave where they had been "written by a Middle Eastern musician some 3000 years previously, on the run from his powerful but insecure father-in-law due to political shenanigans". Hearing the music performed inside the temple was electrifying. ('Cave Sessions Vol 1' by Andy Rogers can be heard online.)

Another highlight of the past few months was finding a jar of Vegemite and a packet of Tim Tams in a small shop in County Cavan. As nice as a new adventure is, there is nothing quite like home.

Slanté (To health!)



The centrality of creativity to music curriculum

Mandy Stefanakis recently submitted her PhD with a thesis investigating the concept of composer self and its contributing factors.

I have always been interested in the contributing factors to the identifiable voices of composers. How do we know that this piece is by Miles Davis or that one by Holly Harrison? I looked at the distinguishing features of a composer's 'self': what facets of a person are poured into her or his compositions, how a composer's sound might alter in various contexts and what leads to composers' sound choices. I also sought to understand whether there are commonalities in addition to idiosyncrasies in the selves of composers. And this is where music education offers a context.

Part of the reason I was able to determine that the composers in the study were inherently creative, was because the vast majority had not experienced musical creativity in their primary and secondary education. Indeed, there was only one interviewee for whom composing was a requisite part of her music learning throughout her schooling. Even for this interviewee, who wrote numerous songs and instrumental pieces before commencing a tertiary composing degree, it was at *this* point that she was suddenly pulled up for her seeming lack of motivation for the course, which *excluded* her already establishing composer voice. Another, as a child, was chastised in his piano lessons for re-arranging aspects of classical pieces when he did not like the sound of the original. He could not understand why what he was doing was considered wrong. There was a fascinating array of such stories.

Most of those I interviewed started putting sounds together in various ways when they were very young, and this was another flag to the fact that interviewees were inherently creative. Additionally, many dabbled creatively in other pursuits, from filmmaking to theatre to graphic design. Equally important in all interviewee profiles was their heightened sensitivity to sound. This often correlated with an overall sensitivity in perceiving and responding to life! Interviewed composers were also curious about everything, not just music. Music was the medium for their curiosity's exploration.

At the pivotal time of adolescence, many interviewees had specific sound worlds to which they were drawn; for example the sound of one instrument model, a love of bass sounds, specific tones in a vocal range, or an acoustic rather than electronic sonority. Interviewees were captivated by other composers who shared aspects of the sounds they sought in their own output, and many pushed through a range of obstacles to achieve their own sound. The reason they did, and continue to do so, is, of course, because for them, composing is an imperative expression of who they are.

What is the relevance of these findings for music education? It became abundantly clear that the very people who had an inherent creative musicality were often let down by those who

have a 'one-size fits all' approach to music education. If this is the case for those with a leaning towards music and creativity, what awaits those for whom music in their lives requires greater nurturing, those who are not immediately captivated by music?

It is possible to shape music curricula to meet the diverse needs of individuals in all aspects of music learning. One of the aims of the recently released *Australian Curriculum, The Arts, Version 9*, is 'to develop students' knowledge and skills to imagine, observe, express, respond to and communicate ideas and perspectives in meaningful ways'. But that can only happen if there is a student-centred approach that facilitates such learning; an approach that demonstrates teacher empathy for student needs.

In my study, another interviewee, now teaching improvisation in tertiary institutes, decried the lack of reference to composing in school music curricula, having only been introduced to improvisation in her senior school years by an ensemble teacher. I said, 'It's actually there. And it's been there for forty years.' She was gobsmacked. It isn't that composing hasn't graced every curriculum document in Victoria since *A Guide to Music in the Primary School* was published in 1981. It is simply that state and federal curricula are still not being actualised in many music education settings.

In Ros McMillan's recent UNESCO address, she spoke of her teaching of musical creativity over many decades and how she had never encountered students who did not enjoy this process. My experience is the same. And it is because students can navigate *themselves* and *their* world through the unique medium of sound. Pivotaly, they can also connect with others through sharing sound constructs. Students are suddenly entrusted with their own musical agency. Music is such a powerful and accessible mode for them. The outcomes of students' creative endeavours are always full of wonder, as exciting for teachers to apprehend as for students to make.

The first central 'big idea' in the latest Arts curriculum, is that 'all students have creative and expressive potential'. We really must provide students with music opportunities to foster this basic tenet.

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Artful Ways for Early Years



WEEKEND CONFERENCE

AUGUST 27 & 28, 2022

**ST MATTHEWS PS
FAWKNER, MELBOURNE**

A professional development conference weekend for anyone working with children from birth to 8 years with guest presenters Tanya Batt from New Zealand and Terry Cole Australia, supported by a team of experienced local early years arts practitioners.

What to expect:

- **the EYLF, VEYLDF outcomes and the strands of the Victorian Curriculum**
- **the arts as central to learning for all of life**
 - physical - dance and embodiment
 - social/emotional - drama
 - cognitive - music
 - literacy - visual arts
- **collaboration and integration**
- **theory to practice and practice to theory; teachers are being faced with new theories all the time and we need to show we know how to adapt to change**
- **Indigenous ways of knowing**
- **Inclusion and catering for diversity**

Registration: Events – The Victorian Orff Schulwerk Association (vosa.org)



Tanya Batt (NZ)



Terry Cole