Prologue

I began this research journey at the conclusion of two years as Director of Music in an Australian school for boys. In addition to twenty-five hours of classroom teaching, the busy weekly schedule had included the conducting of three separate after-school band rehearsals. Additional duties included the daily administration of the music department which included organising the private tutoring program, four band schedules, and carrying out daily instrument maintenance. There were regular band excursions to eisteddfodds and competitions on weekends and I would conduct the choir and band at Mass in the local church one Sunday in every month. This full schedule had meant only moment-to-moment solutions to the educational problems I encountered in the music department and the deeper nature of most issues was often left undefined. Resolutions to problems had been mainly temporary for they required more time for thoughtful inquiry and planning than I was capable of giving. When deciding to take up full-time research I was able to retreat to a more reflective distance where, disengaged from a hectic schedule, I could more easily reflect on and review some of the teaching problems I had encountered in the school music department. The topic of this thesis evolved as an outcome of the opportunity to more clearly define the nature of some of the problematic ‘issues’. My main concern was about my effectiveness as a teacher operating in a complex learning climate that was reluctant ‘to let go of standardised and normative thinking’ or ‘tailor-make dynamic curricula to students rather than espousing a one-size-fits-all curricular approach’ (Jorgensen, 2003, p. 27). This concern led to thoughts about the effect this
climate had upon my former students and then to reflections on my part in their musical lives. If ‘teaching requires a phenomenological sensitivity to students’ realities and their lifeworlds’ (Bresler, 1996, p. 12) I believe that to some degree the system, and I had failed. I began considering how I could be more effective and ‘in tune’ with the musical ‘realities’ of future students. This led to a consideration of more appropriate ways of building on the prior musical experience of students and additional ways of helping to enhance and support their existing musical identities. As most music students are already enculturated into music in some form or other prior to formal education (Green, 2001) I wanted to explore how I could more clearly “know where they are coming from” in order to build on the start they have gained (Gammon, 1996; Green, 2001). A study of this nature, I assumed could indicate ways that teachers may develop an enhanced awareness of and sensitivity to the music experience and lived musical worlds of their students.

I took note of Van Manen’s (1991) comments about the ‘essentials of good pedagogy’ particularly where he states that tactfulness is revealed as being ‘attuned to subjectivity’ (p. 154). The direction of my explorations then turned into an interest in a particular aspect of teaching – the part where we are required to engage in ‘pedagogical tact’ (Van Manen, 1991). In this discussion Van Manen supports the case that the educator ‘has to cross the street in order to go to the child’s side’ and ‘has to know ‘where the child is’ and ‘how the child sees things’. He calls for sensitivity to subjectivity where we ‘try to treat the other as a subject rather than an object’ (p. 154). I reflected on the importance of ‘pedagogical tact’ in the art and science of music teaching and how it requires the teacher to ‘cross the street’ to the musical lifeworlds of students. Van Manen’s comments led me to consider the ontological and epistemological implications of what it means to ‘cross the street’, both in the broad sense of human experience and in respect to music teaching. With these interests and beginnings the design of this study gradually emerged and I planned an investigation of individual musical lifeworlds. I began constructing
an investigative approach that would help me to ‘cross the street in order to see how the music student sees things’. I sought research techniques that would lead to insights and understandings that I could share in the research writing. The task of illuminating musical lifeworlds, I hypothesised, could reveal how empathy and concern for the idiosyncratic perspectives and musical identities of students may enhance a teacher’s strengths in meeting the challenges and possibilities of each instructional situation (see Jorgensen, 2003, p. 132). The study evolved from these emerging ideas.

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On gaining access to schools, I was fortunate to meet Polly, Mario, Janice, Kristin and Jeremiah¹, five highly motivated and dedicated young musicians who volunteered to participate in the study. In semi-structured interviews, I listened to their stories, later observed and video or audio taped them in music performance and interviewed their parents and music teachers. From this data I ‘painted’ a broad narrative portrait of their individual musical lifeworlds.

The metaphorical connection with the visual arts is useful for when we examine a painting there is a sense of ambiguity where we have interpretive options. We may attempt to see what the painter was ‘getting at’ or construct our own interpretations independent of the aims of the painter. Alternatively we may do both. Similarly, the interpretive options of these narrative portraits are left open in order that readers may make further interpretations. In the same way that a painted portrait is an interpretation that is open to further interpretations, my portraits are ‘re-presentations’ allowing readers to ‘make their own critical insights’ (Alvermann, 2000, p. 1).

Just as a painter may accentuate specific features, I have focused on two specific lifeworld realms of meaning. The first is the realm of meaning

¹ Throughout the thesis pseudonyms are used for all participants and schools.
structures generated from musical experiences that are described as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic. Interpretations of these experiences offer insight into the ways that each participant had become attracted to music and the value and significance that they ascribe to it. The second lifeworld realm is the participant’s encounters with different types of music learning experiences. Foregrounding meaning structures from this realm draws attention to music teaching and learning processes from the perspective of each student. My interpretations and analyses of their perspectives aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue and discussion of music’s place in formal institutional settings and informal, student initiated communities of practice.

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While the study sets out to investigate the musical lifeworlds of students it is also concerned with a deeper understanding of the relationship between the teacher/researcher and the student/participant. It is concerned with teacher/researcher self-transformation through new visions and perspectives. I decided, at an early stage of the thesis, that an investigation of the lifeworlds of a sample of music students would be a research journey requiring new perspectives and new understandings of ‘self and other’. I could not investigate the lives of others without considering my relationship to them; to learn more about others would require that I learn more about myself. Jorgensen (2003) believes that transformation is necessary for the future success of formal music education in schools. She calls for a complete change stating that ‘…whether they realize it or not, music teachers are engaged in the process of musical transformation’ (p. 78). However, her prescription for effective transformation and the re-evaluation of practice does not suggest that teachers themselves may assist through the transformation of their own relationships to music and music students. Hence, I began with the proposition that change is possible when
music teachers *themselves are transformed through interactions with the musical lifeworlds of others.*

My own ‘transformation’ began in this study by exploring alternative perspectives of music and the musical lifeworlds of others. I saw possibilities and new ‘realities’ opening through a systematic study and application of Jerome Bruner’s (1986) theories of different ‘ways of thinking’ or ‘ways of construing reality’ through ‘narrative and paradigmatic modes of cognition’ (p. 11). Additionally, I sought a transformed perspective by adopting a phenomenological stance to the experience of others. Van Manen’s (1990) phenomenological approach to lived experience held possibilities for a new ‘action sensitive pedagogy’.

Importantly, with this thesis I was not content to simply operate from objective descriptions and the application of paradigmatic theory. My initial explorations of narrative and phenomenological theory felt like studying a map of the terrain, whereas I sought the need, through self-transformation, to ‘tread the ground’. I planned to *become* a narrative and a phenomenological thinker - to develop new ‘ways of construing reality’ (Bruner, 1986). Rather than simply *understanding* - I sought to *live* the modes. This would mean viewing the research process, music and the experiences of others from a newly constructed narrative ‘self’. Through this pragmatic approach, applied during the study, I sought to ground myself in practice. Operating in this manner I strove not simply to theorise but to model the pragmatist recognition of ‘embodied situated experience rather than relying on a priori principles’ (Shusterman, 2000, p. 97). An ‘embodied situated experience’ of narrative research processes, I hypothesised, would entail *becoming* a narrative thinker rather than operating solely from abstract theoretical, technically-rational and objectively distanced experience (Schön, 1987, p. 36). In similar fashion with phenomenology – again I was not content to operate with theoretical understanding alone. I sought to practice and operate with a phenomenological attitude. This meant I would inquire with a direct connection to ‘the lifeworld’, the ‘world of immediate
experience’, the world as ‘pregiven’ and ‘already there’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 182 – see also Husserl, 1970, pp. 103-186). Van Manen (1990) highlights this point by stating that we need to go beyond an intellectual understanding to ‘get inside’ phenomenology. He notes that ‘We tend to get a certain satisfaction out of grasping at a conceptual or “theoretical” level the basic ideas of phenomenology, even though a real understanding of phenomenology can only be accomplished by ‘actively doing it’ (p. 8). Adopting this pragmatist approach I believe was vital because I wanted to see a corresponding pragmatic (in the sense of useful) transformation in my own thinking and a developing ‘action sensitivity’ in my own teaching and researching of other lives. To make visible and monitor my ‘transformation’ to ‘new ways of thinking’ I have inserted vignettes at specific moments in the research text where I switch from a paradigmatically orientated discussion to offer a view of the ‘situation’ from a narrative or phenomenological perspective. This juxtaposing process of ‘switching modes’ has forged an active dialogue between my paradigmatic, narrative and phenomenological ‘selves’. Importantly it has helped me to pragmatically test the proposition – that narrative and phenomenological ways of looking can enhance awareness of and sensitivity to the musical lifeworlds of students.

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Research is not helped by making it appear value free. It is better to give the reader a good look at the researcher.

(Stake, 1995, p. 95)

From the outset I planned to avoid an objectivist, ‘god’s-eye-view’ approach to research (Johnson, 1987) where the ‘posture of the knower must be one of objective detachment or value freedom in order to be able to discover how
“things really are” and “how things really work” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The inclusion of my own experience reveals how preparatory arguments leading to the investigation of musical lifeworlds have a basis in the experiential, practical ‘real world’ of teaching situations. By removing the cloak of neutrality, this approach also offers readers insight into the biases that were developed in my prior experience as a teacher. The reader may then know something of “where I am coming from”.

The concept of ‘fidelity’ has been an underlying principle during the course of this study. This means that the main concern while studying others is not a process of looking for pre-existing truth - of ‘what happened in a situation’, but ‘what it means to the teller of the tale’ (Grumet, 1988, p. 66 – see also Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p. 26). This principle underpins my approach to the research of music experience where the purpose is not to uncover objective facts and truths about it but to investigate what it means to musicians. This idea of ‘fidelity’ is also the spirit behind narrative and phenomenological inquiry, both of which seek to investigate what the experience of phenomena means to others. In the same spirit, the reader may enter open dialogue with ‘what it means’ to the teller of these tales – the participants and the researcher.

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I have used a research format suggested by Crotty (1998). He proposes that the design and clarity of the research is enhanced when four ‘elements’ - epistemology/ontology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods are presented in a hierarchical framework where each element is shown to support the next (p. 2). The design structure of the elements takes the following form
According to Crotty (1998, pp. 8-11), epistemological and ontological orientations should be discussed as it is important to reveal the knowledge claims and ‘reality’ that form the foundation of a research project. Our epistemological and ontological positioning, he states, will justify and provide support for the theoretical perspectives we adopt and these will inform the methodologies, which in turn provide ‘a rationale for the methods used’ (p. 7). I have adopted this four-element strategy but as it was necessary to orientate the reader early to theoretical aspects of narrative ways of looking and phenomenology, their workings are discussed early in the thesis and a discussion of epistemology and ontology has been postponed until Chapter Four. Importantly as Crotty (1998, p. 70) describes methodologies as ‘research strategies’, I have divided narrative inquiry and phenomenology into their ‘theoretical principles’ (Chapter Two) and their structuring as methodologies or ‘research strategies’ (Chapter Five).

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In Chapter One I provide an autobiographical approach to the beginnings of this thesis. I commence by isolating and discussing specific problems
encountered within my school teaching experience. I then identify these not simply as “my problems” but ones that occur widely in Western formal music education. I argue that these are manifestations of the negative effects of a traditional and dominant objectivist focus in music education. I then argue for the need to research the musical lifeworlds of students because the traditional and dominant objectivist focus has masked important dimensions of individual musical experience. Despite alternative approaches suggested by postmodern and constructivist theory, little has changed and objectivism exists at the root level and still pervades our schooling (Small 1996). This critique of objectivism leads to a discussion of my emerging planning decisions and how I decided to combine a narrative and phenomenological approach. This leads to a presentation of the aims and objectives of the study, which are then framed as research questions.

In Chapter Two I present the theoretical aspects of narrative and phenomenology. While the main focus here is to describe narrative and phenomenological principles, I do so by exploring the concept that there are different ways of ‘construing reality’. I introduce the theories of Jerome Bruner, which highlight ‘narrative and paradigmatic ways of knowing’. Phenomenology is then presented through a discussion of its roots and its principles.

The aim of Chapter Three is to support the hypothesis that in formal music education we need to place more emphasis on the concept of ‘music as experience’. The thrust of the discussion is a critique of the Western epistemological quest for objectivity and how it has led to the ‘objectification’ of music. Issues surrounding the nature of both ‘music’ and ‘music meaning’, when viewed from objectivist and anti-objectivist perspectives are explored. Discussion of these issues is vital to the aim of the thesis as objectivism has tended to mask important dimensions of musical experience including the social, subjective and the idiosyncratic nature of personal musical relationships.

In Chapter Four I discuss the epistemological and ontological foundations of the thesis. I cover topics that are important to the ontological authenticity of my
approach and I include my understanding of constructivist and also pragmatist and postmodern perspectives.

In Chapter Five a preliminary discussion of narrative, phenomenological and case study methodology leads to the important logistical matters where the specific methods and procedures used to conduct the research are described. The individual phenomenological narrative portraits of the five participants are then presented as Chapter Six.

Finally the Epilogue concludes the thesis with a discussion of understandings and assertions and reflections on the completed study.

The Tasmanian school system

In Tasmania, where this study was conducted, students attend kindergarten and then primary school, which is completed at the end of Year 6. They then move to ‘the ‘junior secondary’ stage which lasts from Year 7 to Year 10. The final two years, which are pre-tertiary Years 11 and 12, are referred to as the ‘senior secondary’ stage.

In Australia there is a State government-funded public school system, and a ‘private’ or independent system. Private schools may be called ‘colleges’ or ‘collegiates’. The name ‘college’ is also used in the Tasmanian State system but it generally refers to specialist senior secondary schools.

The student participants in this research project attended two Tasmanian schools, a State senior secondary high school (Riverside College), and a private college (St. Catherine’s College). I refer to all the participants as senior secondary students as they were in Years 11 and 12.

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Chapter One

The Research Background

This thesis has its genesis in my school teaching experience and is part of a continuing journey of understanding about music, music teaching and the musical lives of students. This Chapter is presented as a ‘narrative of personal experience’ (Bochner, 1997, 2001) in order to show how my encounters with several music education issues in the field influenced the direction of the research. The story unfolds to a formulation of the purpose and nature of the study, its aims and objectives and the specific research questions that guide the investigation. I also connect ‘my educational issues’ to the experiences of others in the research literature and focus on the factors that have led to a narrative and phenomenological approach. The chapter also serves as a brief introduction to narrative and phenomenological ideas.

Music Teaching – Encountering ‘Issues’

One of the first ‘issues’ I encountered as a schoolteacher centred on the function of music, its place and value in education and society. In my undergraduate life I had been warned that it would confront me as soon as I entered professional teaching. In a unit entitled The Philosophy of Music Education student colleagues and I had received the following advice from the lecturer,

The music educators of the future will constantly need to justify the value of music and its place in the curriculum. Therefore, in order to defend music, our self-worth and our profession, while
bracing for the rigours ahead, we should prepare a defence in the form of a convincing philosophy and rationale for retaining music in schools.

The lecturer then added, “The ability to justify music in the curriculum must be part of the teacher’s professional equipment” (he was discussing and paraphrasing Gifford, 1988). We were warned that it was no longer suitable to promote music purely on its aesthetic merits for in the new age of utilitarianism, particularly in education, the aesthetic was being relegated to the backseat.

Later, as a graduate music teacher entering a professional career I quickly discovered that the suggestions were not cynical. Rather they offered practical advice. While I had been introduced theoretically, in lectures and research, to issues confronting the value of music in education, I soon encountered the ‘reality’ of practical experience. I had to rely on my “defensive rationale” sooner than expected.

One of my first public duties as Music Director was to speak at a Band and Music Elective Recruitment Evening held for new students and their parents. The Principal asked me to prepare a convincing speech and primed me with directives. “Tell them about the benefits of music” he said. “Really sell it. Describe how it assists many other areas of education and you could also mention how last year’s School Captain and the School Dux were both members of the Concert Band.” Although reluctant to promote the connection between being a musician and a ‘clever’ student, I complied by writing a speech that gave mention to topics such as ‘enhancing intelligence with music’ (see Raucher, Shaw and Ky, 1995) and other utilitarian benefits of music.

My “defensive rationale” was required again at parent-teacher meetings when I would often explain to parents the benefits of undertaking music electives. On several occasions I had encountered parents who were worried because their sons had elected to do music, were now devoted to it and had dreams of a career in the music profession. Again I could refer to my “defensive rationale” and explain the benefits of music. However, these parents were concerned because
they believed music was not useful enough to guarantee employment security. From this I learned that, for many, the utilitarian usefulness of music is confined to its contribution to education during school years only.

In these and similar situations, as a ‘greenhorn’ teacher I enjoyed the challenge of providing convincing discussions in support of music. However, it was not long before I began to experience a hollow feeling when having to defend music in utilitarian terms and when being confronted by utilitarian attitudes to it. Having to explain that music – “makes you better at something else”, “it is a socialising agent” or “it increases brain function”, for example, masked my underlying principles. I needed no such support for music for I believed I was deeply in touch with the intrinsic nature and beauty of music and its value as an important manifestation of human expression. I assumed that the utilitarian reasons to justify it were offshoots and incongruent when it was simply a matter of feeling its “power” and observing its ubiquitous nature and fundamental importance to human life in general.

A further ‘issue’ confronted me in my two years as a graduate music teacher. I soon felt trapped by the imposition of a constraining and contextually unsuitable music curriculum that I could see was not “working”. Through observations and discussions with students, I knew that many felt the same way. I thought about the geographical and political contexts of the school and the social, youth culture surrounding it. The school was located in a beachside suburb of Sydney and was permeated with the atmosphere of the local surfing culture (truancy was high when “surf was up”). I discovered that music theory sessions were like asking a surfer to remain on the beach in order to discuss the theory of wave motion. I knew that becoming “one with the board and the wave” is the satisfaction and pleasure of surfing and learning is achieved in the experiencing of it. As a new music teacher, I was discovering the importance of the contextual, the social and cultural relevance of curriculum content, and the need to ‘fit the right instructional approaches to a set of demands in some measure unique to a particular situation’ (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 92). Despite all my intentions to
strategically develop lesson plans based on research, reflection, and negotiation I could not move from a redundant and contextually mismatched curriculum content. An autocratic Principal retained strict control of the school-centred curriculum decision-making. He believed that accomplishment in classroom music (and also in satisfactory classroom management) was evidenced by a neatly written out exercise book full of music theory and notation. Other utilitarian off-shoots of music education were at the forefront of his mind - the literacy skills learnt while writing and copying out neatly, and the mathematical skills of computing note values, time signatures and scale relationships. He believed that the private tuition programs that catered for the select and talented few and also public performances of the Concert Band would always present the wonderful ‘musical face’ of the school.

In summary, the first issue of conflict was due to the complex nature of music, and varying opinions of its varied uses and functions at societal and individual levels. The second related to the way that it was structured in the curriculum. When able to stand back and explore the nature of these issues I recognised how they forged a rift between the values of the school, the administrators and parents, and those of the students.

Exploring the issues – finding a way in

When I commenced full-time research I began by locating the literature field that probed the issues I had encountered. I soon discovered that they were not just “my problems” but widespread and discussed within a vast pool of existing research and disseminated knowledge. The issues are connected to wider theories of music and music education philosophy, to aesthetic theory and discussions about music meaning, its benefits and role in society and education, why humans value it, and its part in the curriculum. I discovered that, from as long ago as Plato, the functions, benefits and purpose of music had been well argued and documented. Recently, the benefits of music have been theoretically ‘updated’,

As I continued to explore the literature I narrowed my focus to discussions that were closely related to the problems encountered in school and to those researchers who echoed my concerns about specific situations. I read about the concerns of researchers who express feelings of discontent about school music. Some focus on widening the appeal of music beyond any utilitarian purpose but also seek to expand appreciation of its value apart from aesthetic grounds alone (Coates, 1983, Phillips, 1993, Elliott, 1995, Stuber, 2000). Others promote the importance of music by explaining how it is embedded in human life, having developed as a natural process along with language, within the evolution of mind and consciousness (Tolbert, 2001, Cross, 2001). Looking closely into studies of music education and the contexts of learning, I saw how many writers paint a woeful picture. Discussions suggest that ‘there is something wrong with school music’ and students are dissatisfied and turning away in droves (Ross, 1995, Elliott, 1995). Also, music in schools has been deemed by some to be largely ineffective (Carlin, 1997, Spychiger, 2001). Many suggest that students are experiencing tension and conflict between the cultural worlds of pop music and school music and the contrasted processes of formal and informal learning (Zillmann and Gan, 1997, Green, 2001). Gammon (1996, p. 111) identifies this problem as a ‘cultural dissonance’ between music in school and music out of school. Durrant (2001) provides evidence of this situation by quoting a statement from a school music ‘drop-out’

I gave up music at school when I was thirteen; there didn't seem any point to it. It just didn't bear any relation to the music I was interested in. I played and listened to music outside school. The teacher didn't care about my music. I was there with my mates
drumming and mixing but it was totally unrelated to the music at school. So I gave it up at thirteen.

(p. 1)

The impact of this statement is increased when Durrant announces that it is the words of ‘someone who has, since his school days, been involved in making professional recordings of music, held a lecturing post in performing arts in higher education and is currently involved in instigating and supporting musical enterprises and links around the globe’ (2001, p. 1). In a recent study, Green (2001) also provides similar examples and testimonials from musicians who failed at school but, after following their own interests, had successful careers in music.

I realised from my literature survey that a broad expanse of knowledge and persuasive argument is needed in order to support claims that music is fundamental to human life and should be taught in schools. The range of issues confronting institutional music education continues despite many attempts to modernise and increase its effectiveness and relevancy. Historically, important reforms eventuated with the influence of constructivism. Musical knowledge was viewed as a personal construction developed from ‘within’ through experience and experimentation with activities such as composition and improvisation (Schafer, 1967; Paynter and Ashton, 1970). The influence included a more child-centred approach, and the imparting of critical thinking skills rather than information alone. The inclusion of ‘popular’ music into schools was a further radical reform (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976, 1982; Swanwick, 1979). Schools, it was decided should also reflect everyday life by bringing the outside culture of music in.

Later, some critics suggested that including popular music in the curriculum was purely patronising and an ‘if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em type of ‘strategic compromise’ (Ross, 1995, p. 188). If popular music forms were included alongside ‘classical’ music they were often ‘rendered implicitly inferior’ (Green, 2001, p. 142). There seemed to be an ingrained opinion that popular music and art were not aesthetically genuine. ‘The apparent gratifications, sensations, and experiences that popular art provides are dismissed as spurious and fraudulent,
while high art, in contrast, is held to supply something genuine” (Shusterman, 1992, pp. 177-178). Opinions remain divided as to the educational worth of vernacular or ‘common’ styles of music in schools.

An additional site of conflict developed from these issues for as music educators, we may recognise a duty not just to ‘give them what they want’ but to ‘extend horizons’ (Gammon, 1996, p. 111). Jorgensen (2003) for example, states that ‘education should be about that which students do not know rather than about what they already know’ and that as ‘students already know vernacular music, they ought to widen their musical perspectives in school by studying the elite music that they do not know. Sticking with vernacular music already known to students is a restrictive, non-educational approach.’ (p. 33). While we may focus on student interests and preferences, the role of music education, it is suggested, is also to contribute to the transformation of society. It ‘ought not to serve as an excuse for pandering to students’ present musical interests and capitulating to their immediate desires and preferences’ (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 80). On the other hand Ross (1995) has raised the point that the inclusion of ‘popular’ music styles will always pose problems as some pupils will see it as an ‘academic invasion of a highly personal musical space’ (p. 189) as it is often ‘a private passion’ and is ‘inflected with deep emotional identification or group politics’ (p. 190).

Despite these complexities and arguments, from my own experience, I had discovered that attempts to subtly and persuasively lead students to Beethoven (for example) from a staple diet of heavy metal, hip-hop and Eminem, was a process that required not just the development of an appreciation of another aesthetic world. It required students to transcend their cultural and social musical identities. In this regard I saw the issue not solely as a decision about which curriculum content was aesthetically suitable. Rather, the issue related to being appropriate to the contextual situation of the learner and having an understanding of existing cultural and social music identities and individual lifeworlds. With regard to curriculum appropriateness, Finney (2003) remarks that it should not be based on

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2 See also Frith, 1996, for a discussion of popular music and aesthetics.
official, non-negotiable knowledge’ but should ‘embrace existential concerns’, and insist on ‘personalising knowledge’ (p. 15). He reinforces this point stating that

Undue attention to what music is taught or even to how it is taught may be a misdirected enterprise, shrouding the complexity of how a climate of mutuality and reciprocity is achieved between teacher and learner, and where both the intentional and incidental flourish within the classroom.

(p. 15)

Gammon (1996) reminds us of the responsibility of music teachers in schools to be appropriate, to consider the musical background and identity of students. He sounds a warning stating that

Unless the school takes the child as presented, and builds from his or her experience as a starting point, a real point of contact, then the educational enterprise is likely to have very shaky foundations and the most probable outcome is the alienation of the child from the subject in particular and the educational experience in general.

(p. 111)

Appropriateness to background experience demands that music educators keep pace with the changing landscape where music identities are formed. Transformation in music education must be continual in order to match the dramatic social, cultural and technological changes taking place (Hargreaves, Marshall and North, 2003, p. 147). Located within an ‘evolve or die’ situation, school music education is always subject to new political and economic pressures. In order to understand how these complex forces effect students and teachers, a variety of research approaches must be adopted.

Taking into account the conclusion that music education needs to be appropriate to the contextual situation of the learner and the existing cultural and social music identities, I sought to more clearly understand how music is socially and subjectively significant in the lives of music students in the 21st Century. I
sought to explore how students themselves experience these social, cultural and technological effects and I began to gravitate toward a case study approach of individual musical lifeworlds. As my interest and research literature reading expanded I found support in the work of researchers who had investigated individual lives. I found rapport with Campbell (1998) who researched the nature of children’s music experience. She states that in her research

It is the individual person (rather than a sample of the population, a school, or a culture) that is the unit of analysis, and the lived experience of the individual as he or she tells it (that) is examined as much as a text or description might be analysed and interpreted.

(p. 73).

Campbell’s (1998) research develops insight into the experience of music in young peoples’ lives. Jorgensen (2003) suggests that Campbell’s research reveals insight into ‘what can be learned by listening to the young’ and ‘too often music education policy is derived in the absence of such listening, and I suggest that it would be helped by applying Campbell’s insight to include listening to other students, teachers, administrators, and the public at large’ (p. 164, n. 59).

Inspired toward the idiographic study of musical lives I sought recent research examples that have developed insight through observation and interpretation of individuals’ stories, experiences, opinions and perspectives. In addition to Campbell (1998) others have explored the ‘musical thinking and meaning-making’ of children (Barrett, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003; Burnard, 2000a, 2000b; Stálhammar, 2003; McGillen, 2000). DeNora (2000), with a socio-musical focus, explored how a group of women ‘use’ music in their ‘everyday lives’. The justification for her study included the assumption that we have an ‘opaque understanding of how music works’ and ‘little sense of how music features within social processes and next to no data on how real people actually press music into action in particular social spaces and temporal settings’ (p. x). In addition Green (2001) has focussed on the perspectives of a cross-section of musicians varying in age from adolescents to adults. Green’s participants relate and reflect on their

Despite the comprehensiveness of these studies I saw a gap in the research arena. I recognised the need for further exploration of the perspectives of music students in relations to their musical environments and to music learning, particularly the study of the ways their ‘musical lives are lived’. Research into musical lifeworlds contributes to the field of music education by developing understanding of what Van Manen (1991) calls ‘being attuned to the subjectivity of students’ (p. 154). This is important for Van Manen (1991) who recognises it as it is a requisite, an ‘essential of good pedagogy’ where educators ‘cross the street in order to go to the child’s side’, to know ‘where the child is’ and ‘how the child sees things’. There is a further need for research that focuses on musical worlds of ‘everyday meaning’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 11). While Fuller discusses ‘everyday meaning’ from the perspective of phenomenological psychology, I take his point that ‘everyday meaning and meaning oriented behaviour, to be understood, must be taken seriously just as they present themselves, in terms of their own requirements and not in terms of their prior projection in objective space’ (p. 21). I agreed with Fuller that objectivist approaches, rather than doing justice to everyday meaning, ‘level the self and its meanings to the objective common denominator supposed in advance’ (p. 21). Rather than turning observations of the everyday meanings of music students into objective fact I planned my investigation of musical lifeworlds to take everyday meanings as ‘the very point of departure’ (p. 21).

The need to focus on the experience of individuals

Concerned with the arena of student ‘landscapes’ Barone (2000, p. 20) suggests ‘that by directing our focus on student experiences, we may become aware of the intricate interplay between students and the features within their
environment’. We need to consider, he suggests, that their landscapes are a ‘changing and shifting environment’ (p. 20). Music educators have particular reason to be aware of the intricate interplay and rapid rate of change within the landscapes of their students. If we look closely at the environment of popular music culture, the socially constructed meanings of music are being dramatically and rapidly re-shaped by the technological and communications ‘revolution’. The ‘legitimating forces of digital and electronic media culture (are powerful in) shaping the ways in which children understand their worlds’ (Barrett, 2003, p. 196). Popular music culture has a wide range of associated effects upon musical identity formation and also youth issues such as class, sexuality, tradition and ‘city and space’ (McRobbie, 1999, p. 138). Popular culture and style, experienced through various media including audio and video recordings, computer games and the Internet, provide changing images and influential perspectives. According to Gee (2001) we need to consider ‘the fast pace of change, thanks to modern science and technology, that keeps outdating some identities and offering ever more opportunities for the creation of new ones’ (p. 114). Sensitive awareness of this shifting music and cultural landscape is the first step in grasping ‘where students are coming from’, how it plays upon identity construction, and how it potentially re-shapes attitudes and values, both consciously and unconsciously.

Listening to individual stories and reflections generates understanding of musical lives, relationships with music and features within ‘changing landscapes’. Evidence of this is demonstrated in a case study project by Green (2001). In this study, a group of ‘popular (music) musicians’ reveal how they were enculturated into music. Their reflections of music learning both ‘formally’ in school and ‘informally’ outside the school environment are explored. The study suggests that the informal vernacular types of learning techniques used by the participants, if included in schools, would enhance the dimensions of music teaching and learning. Green concludes that being aware of student landscapes, informal musical beginnings and everyday enculturation processes means that we are less likely to
‘bypass those children and young people who are (nonetheless) highly musically motivated and committed in their lives outside the classroom’ (2001, p. 17).

**Planning decisions – An introduction to the narrative and phenomenological approach**

My interest and intentions developed into a passionate ‘quest’ when I decided to investigate the individual musical worlds of students. I narrowed my focus on the idea of generating further understanding of the part music plays in students’ lives. I would do this by explicating the significant everyday meaning structures within their “musical ways of being”. This would require an *idiographic* study (Smith, Harré, and Van Langenhove, 1995) where with the help of a sample of volunteering, dedicated school music student participants, I could represent what is unique within their musical lifeworlds and research their *everyday musical lifeworld meanings*. The strategies I turned to, that would assist ‘crossing the street’ in order to grasp everyday meanings, were narrative inquiry and phenomenological research.

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My interest in narrative inquiry and phenomenology developed together after discovering both Jerome Bruner’s (1986) work on narrative as a way of understanding experience and Max van Manen’s (1990) descriptions of accessing ‘lived experience’ through phenomenological research. While reading these texts I was intrigued by the possibilities they presented for ‘new ways of looking’ and ‘understanding other lives’ (Bruner, 1986) and for exploring ‘the meaning structures of lived experience’ (Van Manen, 1990). With these influences I decided on an approach that would combine narrative and phenomenological observations and interpretive procedures. Together, they would form the basis of a research
approach to composing individual musical ‘portraits’ of the participants and each would be considered an intrinsic ‘case’ study (Stake, 1995, p. 3). By avoiding cross-case analysis and comparison this procedure would allow me to foreground individuality and uniqueness and to highlight what is musically personal, perspectival and idiosyncratic.

To support the narrative principles suggested by Bruner (1986), I turned to more recent contributors to narrative research. These include Polkinghorne (1988, 1995), Clandinin and Connelly (1990, 2000), Barone (2000, 2001a and 2001b) and Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001). Importantly, I learned that narrative inquiry ‘is the study of the ways humans experience the world’ and it recognises that ‘humans are storytelling organisms who individually and socially lead storied lives’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Following this tenet, I planned to collect narrative accounts in interviews and observations with the student participants, explicate meanings from the data and then ‘re-story’ (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002) my interpretations of their experiences. I planned to do this in a way that would highlight the individual and idiosyncratic nature of their relationships with music and also in a way that would avoid ‘disaggregating’ (Ezzy, 2002, p. 95) their musical lifeworlds. Using narrative methods I would focus on each participant’s story in order to bring out ‘significances’ or ‘potentialities of meaning’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 4) and ‘everyday meanings’ of their relationships with music. Also I would look for meaningful episodes that would present knowledge and understanding of lifeworld situations rather than knowledge and understanding of concepts and abstractions. Illumination of important meaning structures would reveal the ways that musical lives are ‘lived’ and the essential nature of each idiosyncratic and unique relationship with music. Narrative principles recognise that lived meanings are contained within storied accounts of experience and these meanings are available for interpretation by the researcher. The new interpretations may then be subjected to ‘restorying’ (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). Importantly, I would look for ‘significances’ in personal narratives of experience that would lead to insights into
the idiosyncratic formation of musical identities and ‘music’s role in the construction of the self’ (DeNora, 2000, p. xvi).

In order to broaden the interpretative approach, I decided to incorporate phenomenological research procedures (Van Manen, 1990; Moustakas, 1994) into the overall design. Phenomenological principles recognise the primacy of the lived world and through interpretations of lived experience we may arrive at ‘lived meaning’, which is ‘the way that a person experiences and understands his or her world as real and meaningful’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 183). I recognised that, as a researcher, interpreter and observer, by becoming sensitive to the phenomenological ‘lifeworld’ and ‘lived meaning’ I could be more attuned to the subjectivity of the ‘lived experience’ of both the participants and myself during field work observations and while working with the collected data. I recognised that phenomenological and narrative procedures, when combined together would compliment each other while forming a powerful research tool for looking into and investigating the meaning structures that accompany music relationships and life-world music experiences.

In Chapter Two I present my understanding of narrative and phenomenological principles in detail, explain the terminology of concepts (such as ‘essence’) and reveal how they are used and combined in order to ‘cross the street’ to the lifeworld of the participants in this study.

Moving into the present, my next step is to channel ideas of an initial conceptual structure into more clearly defined aims, objectives and research questions.

The Aims and Objectives of the Study

My first, broad aim seeks to contribute to our understanding of how dedicated senior secondary school music students use music and how they construct significant meanings within their musical lifeworlds. My area of interest has now narrowed to an investigation of the ways that ‘powerful’ individual
relationships with music are formed. I shall therefore target participants who have been captured by music, are committed to the practice of it and who can be described as musically enthusiastic and dedicated. Importantly, my aim is to avoid judging levels of musicianship, and categorisations such as gifted and talented simply in order to locate students with strong musical identities - who would be interested in participating in the study and sharing stories of their musical lifeworlds. With this objective, I shall purposefully target ‘information-rich cases’ and ‘critical case samples’ - what Hatch (2002) refers to as ‘individuals selected to represent dramatic examples of or are of critical importance to the phenomenon of interest’ (p. 98). I also plan to narrow the focus of the research to senior secondary school musicians. Teaching Year 11 and 12 students had been an area of personal educational interest.

While the first aim of the study will ‘paint a broad picture’ of musical lifeworlds and the way ‘musical lives are lived’, two further aims will have a more detailed and defined focus.

The second aim is to explicate structures of meaning from lived musical experiences described by the participants as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic. Interpretations of these experiences will provide insight into the meaningful ways that the participants had become attracted to music and the value and significance that they ascribe to it.

The third aim is to explicate the meaning structures of each participant’s encounters with different types of music learning experiences. This particular foregrounding is designed to draw attention to music teaching and learning processes from the perspective of each student. My aim is that interpretation and analyses of the participant’s perspectives will contribute to the ongoing dialogue and discussion of music’s place in formal institutional settings and informal, student initiated communities of practice. With this educational focus I shall seek understanding of student relationships to both formal and informal types of learning and explore how these different areas have contributed to musical development and attitudes to music.
A further aim will be explored throughout the thesis. This is to construct an argument that sets out to promote and model narrative and phenomenological ‘ways of thinking’ about music, music experience and processes of inquiry. This reflexive component (as I have mentioned in the Prologue) will include monitoring of my own thought processes and ‘transformation’ while becoming a narrative and phenomenological thinker - through a pragmatic, embodied and situated experience with narrative and phenomenological ‘ways of thinking’. This process will be made visible by the insertion of vignettes, at strategic points in the text, that reflect my own situated, lived experiences and learning processes with being a narrative and phenomenological thinker. These ‘ways of thinking’ are also used to construct an argument that counters the dominant Western tradition of ‘objectifying music’ - where it is viewed as an autonomous object independent of any experiencer. This process of objectification includes the tendency of many inquirers into music function, meaning and behaviour who seek to assess whether or not their interpretations correspond to or mirror ‘objective constructs’ (see Mishler, 2000, p. 128) of the nature of music. By ‘constructs’ I mean categories that as generalisations are presumed to be common to all music practitioners. While countering the objectivist stance I shall highlight a constructivist approach that is concerned with subjective and social aspects of music and the features of the power and effects of music within individual musical lifeworlds.

The aims of the study seek the meaning structures of experience and are concerned with description and interpretation rather than explanation. They seek insight into ‘the ‘what’ and ‘how’ rather than the ‘why’” (Karlsson, 1993, pp. 14-15) and do not problem-solve but aim to generate or enhance meaning (Van Manen, 1991, p. 23).

Summarised, the aims of that study are

1. To investigate the musical lifeworlds of a sample of musically dedicated senior secondary school students in order to illuminate their ‘musical
ways of being’ and the meaning and significance that they ascribe to these.

2. To identify and illuminate the meaningful experiences that led the participants to become attracted to music

3. To gain insight into the meaning structures of each participant’s encounters with different types of music learning experiences in order to draw attention to music teaching and learning processes from the perspective of each student.

4. To seek personal ‘transformation’ by becoming a narrative and phenomenological thinker and doer and gain experience with narrative and phenomenological ‘ways of thinking’ and embodied ‘ways of being’.

The Research Questions

The aims of the thesis are now formulated into research questions in order to guide and focus the investigation. In the following research questions, I use the words meaning and meaningful as Dissanayake (2000) states - in an ‘informal sense’ in the way that ‘most people use the words …to express personal feelings about the seriousness or importance something holds for them’ (p. 72). The first question guides the main aim of the thesis, which is to ‘paint’ a broad illuminated ‘picture’ of individual musical lifeworlds.

Question 1

How are the lives of a sample of musically dedicated senior secondary school students lived and what are the essential structures of their experiences?
The second question focuses the investigation toward meaningful experiences that the participants will describe as leading them to an attraction to music.

**Question 2**

What are the meaning structures of lived musical experiences that are described by the participants as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic?

The third research question seeks to uncover student relationships to both formal and informal types of learning and how these different areas have contributed to their musical development and attitudes to music.

**Question 3**

What are the meaning structures of each participant’s encounters with different types of music learning experiences and what are their perceptions of their relationship between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ music learning practices?

The fourth question will guide the reflexive component as I monitor and report my research relationship and understanding of narrative and phenomenological ‘ways of thinking’ and pragmatic, embodied ‘ways of being’.

**Question 4**

Can narrative and phenomenological ways of thinking and ways of being lead to a transformed understanding of self and music, the participants in the study and their relationships to music?

*
My first aim in positioning myself into the research story is to avoid an objectivist ‘view from nowhere’ or a ‘god’s-eye-view’ (Johnson, 1987) approach to research. On this point, Lather (1991) suggests that ‘the author/researcher does not exist in a transcendental realm but is embodied, desiring, and invested in contradictory privileges and struggles’ (quoted in Usher, 1997, p. 39). Embodied in the research, I have removed the imaginary cloak of neutrality, am ‘not embarrassed by my own subjectivity’ and include ‘lived experience and the physical, political, and historical context of (my) experience’ (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992, p. 1 and 5). My experiences show how the topic and aims of the research emerged from a practical teaching context (see Bresler, 1996, p. 12). Narratives of experience as a teacher, researcher and musician are included in order to support and ground my arguments in narrative, situational knowledge. These accounts provide a contrast and balance with the conceptual abstractions provided by paradigmatically formed discussions. Vignettes of personal experience, which are inserted at strategic points in the text, provide descriptions of impressions, realisations and emancipatory moments which reveal ideological biases and ‘the structural and historical forces that inform the social construction under study’ (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998, p. 6). Revelations of my own identity and experience also provide consideration for the reader who will have a clearer picture of what I ‘have on my mind’ and the ‘forestructure of understandings that form the basis for interpretation’ (Gergen, 1991, p. 104). Importantly, by including autobiographical and reflexive content in research, ‘the subjective positioning of character’ will reveal ‘who we are in our research and our writing’ (Goodall, 2000, pp. 131-136). Foley (1998, p. 110) sanctions ‘research as a critically reflexive tale’ and Denzin (1997) suggests that a reflexive approach will seek to ground the study in the process of self-formation and self-understanding (p. 267). I hold the view that this grounding is an important aim and acknowledge it as an underlying motivation within this thesis. Pinar (1988) has
supported this approach stating that ‘understanding of self is not narcissism; it is a precondition and concomitant condition to the understanding of others’ (p. 150).

Recently, academic writers have conducted research that includes ‘self-as-subject’ (for examples see, Ronai, 1992) and the inclusion of ‘personal narrative voice’ (Richardson, 1997, Barone, 2001a; Bochner, 1997, 2001). Bochner (1997) for example, believes that the inclusion of narratives of experience adds a personal voice to the academic ‘voice of reason, objectivity, and rigor’ (p. 433). In accepting a more personal narrative Bochner (2001) later challenges the paradigmatic regulations of social science that stress ‘rigor over imagination, intellect over feeling, theories over stories, lectures over conversations, (and) abstract ideas over concrete events’ (p. 134). Utilising this approach, I include vignettes at strategic points in order to allow narrative episodes of personal experience and voice to explore narrative thinking and to provide a balance, an alternative way of looking at the issue being discussed. In so doing I ‘resonate’ with the feelings of Bochner (1997) particularly when he states that

> The desire to bring the personal self into conversation with the academic self was the major inspiration for my turn toward a personal narrative approach to inquiry

(p. 433)

The inclusion of episodes of personal voice assists the foregrounding of the contrasting operations between narrative and paradigmatic ways of looking and serves to demonstrate the different types of knowledge and understanding arrived at with their use. Importantly, my commitment to, and highlighting of narrative thinking is designed to explore the hypothesis that the narrative ‘meaning generative process’ provides a different perspective of music and music meaning.

As a design feature, I incorporate the use of changing fonts. Barone (2001) uses this technique to ‘signal shifts across three distinct perspectives of events and sources of information.’ (p. 70). The shift I use represents an operational movement between the paradigmatic and narrative modes in order to highlight ‘distinctive ways of ordering experience, of construing reality’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 11).
The first font (Garamond - presently in use) is the ‘paradigmatic text’ that presents ‘a seamless, denotative, linear discourse that rearranges the relationship among complex phenomena into propositional form’ (Barone, 2000, p. 147). In this mode, thinking is deliberate and ideas are constantly refined and presented ‘logically’ formed into arguments which where possible, are supported by reference to other research literature. The purpose is to present, in a traditional academic format, the theory, procedures and methods of the study with as much clarity and as little ambiguity as possible. The second font (Arial) presents a transition to the narrative mode, where personal voice and autobiographical ‘story’ act as an expressive complement to the issue being discussed. These transitional sections are placed strategically in order to reveal a narrative dimension of understanding and to support the text with ‘worldly knowledge’ based on ‘lived experience’.

A further motive for the study

Thus far I have revealed some of the personal issues and experiences that motivated me toward illuminating the musical lifeworlds of students. However, while looking reflectively (and narratively) at my own experience I ‘uncovered’ an additional personal reason why I had selected this course of action among many possibilities. (Coincidentally, while looking for meaningful connections within the life stories of others, during the course of research, I often found meaningful connections in my own life that ‘surfaced’ to clarify what could be called personal ‘blind spots’ in self-understanding.) The following vignette is an example, ‘a conscious revelation of the role of beliefs and values held by the researcher in the selection of a methodology’ (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998, p. 7). The story accounts for my focus on ‘the power of music’ within individual lives and perhaps a reason for some of the passion behind my ‘quest’.

I suddenly realised, with a kind of intuitive flash that my interest in the ‘singular worlds of people’ reflects some subjective driving forces or hidden motivations and beliefs that I have held about music. The particular ‘realisation’ I
mention here is related to how music and its significance in my own life are grounded inextricably in my early history, my roots.

Born in Uganda, I grew up with African music and an immersion in its cultural sensibilities. Some of my earliest memories are of lullabies being sung to me, in Swahili and Batoro languages by Maria Nakaima, my gentle, nurturing ayah (nursemaid). When I reflect on these memories they are accompanied by strong feelings of warmth and also re-associated feelings of the protection of a motherly encompassing love. I remember as a crying child, waking in the night. Even now in my mind, is a distant picture of Maria, faintly lit by moonlight filtering through the window. She is napping, seated in a chair. But she sings my name gently, as a soft call to let me know she is there. “Da…vid” (two syllables as a descending minor third). I calm down and sing back to her, copying the melody, “Mari…a”. We repeat this several times and then with background noises of cicadas, frogs and night birds, I drift off to sleep knowing Maria maintains her vigil.

This I now believe, had been an important part of my enculturation into ‘music’ – where it was formatively a comforting communication echoing a closeness and bond between self and other. Many years later and exiled ‘out of Africa’ I became a musician and a teacher. I had remembered this past experience but did not make meaningful connections to its significance in my life. However, I found myself leaning towards particular ethnic music sensibilities and I gravitated toward a feeling that a primary function of music was to nurture the individual. Music experience, I concluded, not only contributes to an aesthetic and creative life but also importantly is a human activity that nurtures and sustains personal identity, being and the soul.

Later, entering academic life and research, I (theoretically) re-discovered evidence of this musical function when reading a description by Catherine Ellis (1985, p. 203). She acknowledges the developmental and nurturing function of music evident within Australian Aboriginal and other ethnic cultures, and suggests that it is a deprived value within Western music. Ellis continues by stating that the ethnic position is to see the playing of music as simply the ‘reflection’ while the person is the ‘substance’. She argues for the teacher to engage in a larger perspective of music where the focus is more to the ‘substance than the reflection’ - rather than the reverse, which has been largely the case in Western music pedagogy.
I wondered why all this made sense, and ‘resonated’ with what I felt to be valuable about music – then with the intuitive moment, the meaningful connection was made. I saw Maria and her contribution to my life, which was communicated to me through music. And now I made the epiphanic connection to what had been driving my particular quest – to find inner meanings, values and significances of music within people’s lives – how it had nurtured them in their past experiences and how it continues to sustain them in their lives.

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This life experience episode reveals an underlying motive for why I have gravitated to the research of individual perspectives and lived experiences of music. Importantly it is also included in order to serve as –

- A demonstration of my aim, which is to find ‘meaningful connections and hidden significances’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 193) embedded in life-stories and experience.
- A demonstration of a narrative way of knowing and its application to the exploration of idiosyncratic and personal musical meaning. Throughout the study I juxtapose further examples of this narrative approach to highlight differences with paradigmatic explanations which are suited to the discovery of objective, universal concepts of music meaning.
- Support for a story-telling approach to research that is embedded in an artistic rather than a scientific conception of method (‘Scientific work is not concerned with that cat, but with cats’ - Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 84).
- A demonstration of my research interest in narratives of deeply felt lived experiences - because they ‘recall a life’s self-defining moments, decisions, or turning points’ (Goodall, 2000, p. 133).
- An opportunity to include content that has emotional significance. This serves as a challenge to my own paternalist heritage that has tended to ‘privilege and separate the rational over the emotional’ (Foley, 1998, p. 123).
Summary

Stake (1995) has suggested that “issues’ are foci for our study” (p. 17). He believes that ‘issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical and especially personal contexts’ and (when studying cases) ‘issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out, the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, the complex backgrounds of human concern’ (p. 17).

I opened this chapter with a discussion of music education ‘issues’ experienced as a schoolteacher. These issues had been foreshadowed theoretically during undergraduate training, and then ‘faced’ in the ‘real world’ of senior secondary school classroom teaching. These issues include:

• Conflict with a utilitarian rationale for music education and a questioning of the need to adapt a personal philosophy to ‘the usefulness of music’ - where it is practised simply to make students ‘better at something else’.

• Observing the need for a contextually matched and culturally suitable music curriculum relevant to the needs of individuals in my classes - and experiencing tension while feeling unable to act upon observations.

I then described the move to research where I identified and related these issues to music education research. This led to planning decisions where I formulated an approach that would investigate the perspectives, experiences and musical lifeworlds of a sample of senior secondary school music students.

I justified the decision to focus on individual musical lifeworlds and presented the aims and objectives of the study. These aims, principally, are designed to generate understanding of the significance of music in individual lives and – as a contrasted reflexive component of the study – to generate understanding of narrative and paradigmatic ‘ways of thinking’. I then formulated the aims into guiding research questions.

A rationale for the style of the research was then presented. I accounted for the inclusion of self into the story, the use of personal experience and also the reasons for writing a reflexive narrative text. The section ‘planning decisions’ was
included to orientate the reader to a specific research structuring process. It served as a preliminary introduction to narrative and phenomenological procedures. These are combined to create a constructivist, interpretative approach to inquiry.

Finally, a vignette was presented in order to demonstrate and illuminate the process of inquiry that seeks personal meaning within narratives of experience. The purpose was also to highlight the inclusion of autobiography and reflexivity in my specific approach.

In summary, the research seeks to gain insight into the meanings implicit in musical life-worlds and personal stories of music experience and music relationships. Concurrently, while conducting the study a further aim of the research is to more fully understand the operations of narrative, paradigmatic and phenomenological ‘ways of knowing’.

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Chapter Two

Narrative Inquiry and Phenomenology

Introduction

In this Chapter I discuss the theoretical perspectives that have guided the thesis. I focus on the principles of the phenomenon of ‘narrative’ (the narrative in narrative inquiry) and ‘phenomenology’. Following the theories of Bruner (1986, p. 11) I consider narrative as a ‘way of looking’ or ‘construing reality’ and phenomenology as an ‘attitude’ to lived experience and a ‘philosophy of action’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 154). This presentation of theoretical aspects is preparatory to Chapter Five where I show how the theoretical principles of both domains are strategically applied as methodologies or ‘research strategies’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 70).

I have combined the complimentary aspects of narrative and phenomenology to form a useful ‘tool’ for the exploration of lived meaning and lived experience. Importantly both are grounded within constructivism (Murray, 1995, p. 181 and Hatch, 2002, p. 30), which is the epistemological foundation of the thesis. My decision to form a personal research design is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (1998). They state that the qualitative researcher-as-bricoleur will deploy strategies and methods at hand, and ‘if new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this’ (p. 3).

This Chapter, in addition to presenting the theoretical principles that support the research procedures (in Chapter Five), is also an exploration of narrative and phenomenological applications to alternative ‘ways of thinking’
about music, music teaching and learning. A detailed discussion of Jerome Bruner’s theory of ‘narrative and paradigmatic ways of construing reality’ and also the philosophical context of phenomenological theory is included. With this hybrid model I have developed a research design structure that seeks to develop an empathic approach to lived musical experience and the narrative musical identities of students.

**Narrative** may mean ‘any spoken or written presentation’ or ‘the process of making a story using a particular scheme that includes *plot*’ (Polkinghorne 1988, p. 13 and 18). In the context of social science research, with a more inclusive conception, **narrative** refers to ‘the storied nature of human conduct’ (Sarbin, 1986). We make sense of our experience by connecting meanings and events into coherent stories. The corollary therefore holds that as ‘stories make explicit the meaning that is implicit in life as it is lived’ (Widdershoven, 1993, p. 9) we are able to understand the experience and reality of others in their narrative accounts. However, in constructing life stories we are doing more than just reflecting on past events. Ellis (1998) suggests that

> The narrative accounts people generate should be understood, not as records of what happened but as current drafts of their own interpretative search for cause-and-effect or connections among self-relevant events. This reflective work is ongoing as, throughout their lives, people search for coherence, historical unity, and meaningful integration of their experiences.

(p. 44)

Importantly, narrative accounts provide more than the historical structure and descriptions of ‘what happened’. The accounts provide ‘current drafts’ of the meaningful integration of experience and offer insights into the way that we view the world.

While ‘integrating our experience’ through the construction of stories we also enhance self-understanding for the act of interpretation, made in the present, contains a new, ‘sharpened and changed’ meaning of the value that we hold for our experience (Widdershoven, 1993, p. 12). The process of interpreting events offers
opportunities for the construction of new or expanded self-definitions in
relationship to our lived experience.

*"Two Ways of Construing Reality"

There are two modes of knowing, through argument and experience. Argument brings conclusions and compels us to concede them, but does not cause certainty nor remove the doubts in order that the mind may remain at rest in truth, unless this is provided by experience.

(Roger Bacon, 1268, - quoted in Greenberg, 2002)

The idea that there are different ‘modes of knowing’ or ‘meaning-making’ has been with us for a long time. In the following section I explore recent variations of past themes. I demonstrate how the type of meaning generated using the narrative mode of thinking is of a different nature to that generated with the paradigmatic mode and that while the two modes are distinct, each can compliment the other.

The narrative and paradigmatic modes

Jerome Bruner (1986) identified two contrasting universal human cognitive modes, the logico-scientific or paradigmatic mode and the narrative mode. He described these as ‘meaning-bearing forms of communication’, ‘modes of reasoning, knowing and understanding’ and also as ‘ways of construing reality’. He added that although the modes are contrasted and distinct, they are also ‘complimentary but irreducible to one another’ (p. 11).
While both the narrative and the paradigmatic are meaning-making modes, as processes of reasoning and inquiry they are functionally different. The paradigmatic mode produces knowledge of concepts while the narrative mode produces knowledge of particular situations (Polkinghorne, 1995, Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001). While the paradigmatic mode is concerned with ‘truth-finding’ and is ‘the prerogative of science and logic’ (Bruner, 1996, p. 148), narrative reasoning is directed to the situated and contextual ways that humans experience the world. Paradigmatic reasoning is aligned with scientific explanation and inductivism while narrative thought ‘attempts to maintain a subjective perspective on the world it represents, incorporating aims and fears into the picture’ (Murray, 1995, p. 188).

Paradigmatic thinking, through its more abstract conceptual nature remains detached from emotion and subjective experience. Richardson (1997) highlights this position of detachment stating that ‘explanation in the narrative mode is contextually embedded, whereas logico-scientific explanation is abstracted from spatial and temporal contexts’ (p. 28). An example of this detachment is seen in paradigmatic, positivist and post-positivist research texts that take a pejorative view of subjectivity and are presented from a ‘hidden’ researcher or ‘gods-eye-view’ position (Johnson, 1987).

While in the paradigmatic mode, we think in constructed conceptual frameworks and search for concepts, categories and relationships between categories in order to explain ‘universal truth conditions’ (Bruner 1986, p. 12; also Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001, p. 76). In this manner the paradigmatic is aligned with inductivism, formal logic and scientific explanation (Murray, 1995, p. 188), is used for ‘the realistic stuff of science’, and is suited for generating ‘the empiricist’s tested knowledge’ and ‘the rationalist’s self-evident truths’ (Bruner, 1996, p. 130). As a natural science tool its logical procedures are geared toward the reduction of uncertainty (Barone, 2001a, p. 152).

In contrast to the paradigmatic, the narrative mode is used by individuals to construct ‘cause-and-effect connections among self-relevant events’ and ‘search for coherence, historical unity, and meaningful integration of their experiences’
This mode, Bruner explains, is the way in which ‘ordinary people go about making sense of their experience’ (1996, p. 130). We relate our experience by chaining together events and meanings in temporal sequence. This process – *storying*, is where ‘something happens because of something else’. Importantly, rather than generating conceptually based meaning it is the ‘connections between the events (which) constitutes meaning’ (Richardson, 1997, p. 28). The importance of story as a major meaning making strategy has caused Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to refer to humans as ‘storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives’ (p. 2).

Gudmundsdóttir (2001) believes that the narration of experience comes naturally and is a process learnt in childhood while mastering language and thinking. She goes on to describe narrative as a ‘cultural scaffold’, a link between experience, language and thinking, and the ordering and sorting out of our social worlds (p. 231). Earlier, Bruner had declared the narrative mode to be a ‘wired in cognitive property’ and ‘a primitive category system in terms of which experience is organised’ (1986, p. 18).

The narrative process is also linked to memory function and Lyle (2000) assumes that ‘memory *is* narrative reconstruction’ (p. 52, my italics). Lyle notes how Bruner (1986) points to a constraining biological limit on immediate memory – humans cannot generally remember more than seven digits, plus or minus two. However when chains of meaningful events are linked together (for example in memorising vast passages of the Koran) it is a different operative process entirely.

The two cognitive forms, narrative and paradigmatic are modes of reasoning and representation. We both ‘apprehend’ the world and ‘tell’ about it narratively and paradigmatically. With narrative reasoning we attempt to understand ‘the whole by integration of its parts’, whilst with the paradigmatic we empirically or conceptually try to ‘prove statements’ (Richardson, 1997, p. 28). In this way the modes function differently, using contrasting types of causality to connect events. ‘The paradigmatic mode searches for universal truth conditions,
whereas the narrative mode looks for particular connections between events’ (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 17).

Following this description narrative reasoning may be viewed more as a process of synthesis where meaningful events are linked while paradigmatic reasoning is a process of abstractive analysis that seeks to find the essential single units of conceptual meaning – the meaning that is relevant for all people at all times. With the more abstract nature of paradigmatic reasoning, events are interpreted as instances of generalised concepts and categories. With narrative reasoning, events are interpreted or structured as meaningful in a more personal relationship to the narrator. Using narrative, the narrator elicits connections between events and specifically how these events bring about changes that are meaningful in relation to the past and future (Nash, 1994, p. 55).

While segregating the modes for the purpose of discussion, it is also important to note that they are closely related. Paradigmatic explanations are often infused into narrative structures (Richardson, 1997, p. 28) and narrative structures are often incorporated into the logico-scientific mode (Berger, 1997, p. 10).

My interest in pursuing the contrast between the two modes is fuelled by the need to more deeply consider a narrative way of looking. I hypothesise that the narrative lens can help to ground music teaching and learning in a contextually embedded focus where music is not separated from the experiencing musician, his or her narrative identity and historical and social context. Later I shall argue that the ‘objectivist’ tendency in Western music education manifests in paradigmatic thinking and is limited, for its operational focus is conceptual and abstracted from the spatial and temporal nature of musical experience. The effect of a paradigmatically driven practice distances the teacher and the theory of music from student experience (I expand on this in Chapter Three in a discussion of ‘the masking of musical experience’).
A narrative ‘way of knowing’ about narrative

Murray (1995) critically observes that Bruner *paradigmatically confirmed the importance of the narrative mode* by returning ‘to the laboratory to look for narrative inside the head of an individual, (he) thus rejoins the stream from which he seemed to be so creatively diverging’ (p. 188). Despite this criticism - of using the paradigmatic to justify the narrative - Bruner did explain that while the two modes may be distinct, they are also complimentary and ‘both can be used as means for convincing the other’ (1986, p. 11).

A narrative ‘telling’ of narrative thinking

At the Australian Society for Music Education National Conference, in Adelaide, July 2001, I witness Bennett Reimer delivering the plenary address. From where I sit at the back, the expansive stage and the high ceiling dwarf him. On the huge stage there are two lecterns facing the audience – one on the far left, and the other on the far right. As Professor Reimer begins to talk his warmth and presence fill the room. His stature grows as we listen to *Musical Disenchantment and Re-enchantment: The Challenge for Music Education* (see Reimer, 2001). He begins his talk positioned at the lectern placed on the left side of the stage. We hear of the difficulties facing music educators and how “at this time in history, the notion that music, and all the arts, have anything to do with loving, meaning, joy, soulfulness, delight; in short, with enchantment, has been called seriously into question” (pp. 5-18). Two hundred music educators listen intently – he is talking about our personal experience. We strain – there is a problem with the sound system. He continues…

“Around the world music educators are becoming more and more cognisant that music and the arts exist on a different plane outside the schools from inside the schools. The disjunction between how we conceive an effective music education and what our students want from it, we are realising, has become – perhaps has always been – problematical” (p. 6).
These words strike directly at me. “Yes!” I think to myself. “The narrative and phenomenological direction is about helping to bridge the disjunction – to become more sensitive to student musical lifeworlds and narrative identities”.

Reimer pauses, takes a sip from a glass of water and then calmly walks over to the other lectern on the right-hand side of the stage. As he speaks from this position and perspective, he talks about personal experience. “On a street corner in Brooklyn, New York, where my youth was spent or misspent, fighting, smoking, cursing, and endlessly talking, the conversation turned toward what instrument we were interested in taking up. I gave it a lot of thought…”

During the address he moves several times, back and forth between lecterns. Always the right-hand side presented a contrasting personal narrative, a story or the recitation of a poem.

Later, reflecting on the address, I recognise that Professor Reimer’s effective attention-gaining strategy was also a spatio-temporal representation of a shift between two different attitudinal and cognitive realms. The movement on stage was a representation, through the physical, bodily dimension, of Bruner’s ‘two distinctive ways of ordering experience’ (1986) and a reflection of Roger Bacon’s modes of argument and experience. The use of the two contrasted forms of knowing, with accompanying bodily movement had enhanced the presentation.

* *

There are cases of criticism of the dominance of paradigmatic thinking in education and social science research. For example, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) while avoiding any reference to Bruner’s theories, object to what they call the grand narrative of educational research. This, they suggest, is formalistic and reductionist (p. xxxi and 34) as it is bounded by ‘technical rationality’ (see also Schön, 1983, 1987) and ‘objectivism’ (see also Johnson, 1987). Clandinin and Connelly then promote narrative thinking as an alternative to the exclusivity of the technically rational grand narrative of educational research that I suggest emerges from a paradigmatic ‘way of thinking’.
Narrative thinking has infiltrated and influenced the direction of ethnography and anthropology. For example, Foley (1998) criticises ‘classical scientific realist narratives’ (p. 110). He explains that in these ‘the positionality and tone of the author is designed to evoke an authoritative voice, the author must speak in the third person and be physically, psychologically, and ideologically absent from the text’. This ‘lends the text an aura of omniscience’ and ‘the all-knowing interpretive voice speaks from a distant, privileged vantage point in a detached, measured tone’ (p. 110). Foley sums up the paradigmatic nature of scientific realism when he states that ‘the extensive use of conceptual language helps create a common denominator people of social archetypes and roles rather than complex, idiosyncratic individuals’ (p. 110).

Others too have objected to the paradigmatic propensity to bypass the personal and contextual content that forms the basis of a narrative perspective. Traditionally the narrative voice had been kept separate from academic texts because avoiding it ‘helps us maintain the illusion that the academic self hasn’t been prejudiced by the interests of the ordinary, personal self’ (Bochner, 1997, p. 433). Bochner again is critical. He explains that our inquiry is rarely unconnected to our personal history, so we have had to learn how to ‘hide our personal self behind a veneer of academic and theoretical detachment, fostering the misconception that it has no influence, no place, no significance in our work’ (1997, p. 433).

* 

The principles of narrative theory arise from within constructivist principles because ‘the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality’ and the narrative inquirer assumes that ‘multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage point’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 15).

As a form of qualitative social science inquiry, the overarching aim of the narrative approach is the enhancement of meaning. In contrast, positivist and post-
positivist programs seek the reduction of uncertainty (see Barone, 2001a, pp. 152-3). With the former task, we integrate our experience meaningfully and with the latter we are more directed toward seeking ‘the truth’, ‘the facts’ and that which may be easily generalised. Barone (2000) states that the configuration of meanings into paradigmatic texts has ‘a paradigmatic mandate’ (which is) ‘to accumulate ‘objective’ knowledge and to use it for prediction and control’ (p. 149). On the other hand, narrative forms of knowledge serve a function with a ‘qualitative mandate’, which is ‘not necessarily to map and conquer the world but to sophisticate the beholding of it’ (Stake, 1995, p. 43).

Understanding individuals and their social worlds through the stories they construct while describing their experience has become a recognised form of qualitative research (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, 2000; Lyle, 2000; Barone, 2001a; Hatch, 2002, p. 28). The process has provided ‘a distinctive contribution to the study of lives’ (Mishler, 1999, p. 50).

Narrative and ‘arts-based research’ - a foil for the paradigmatic mandate!

The poem in its own right can tell us much about the nature of mind, even if it fails to yield up the secret of its creation.

Bruner, 1986, p. 3

Recently, forms of social science research have been influenced by design elements that are considered more ‘artistic than scientific’ (Barone, 2001b, p. 735; Barone and Eisner, 1997). The inclusion of aesthetic and literary forms of expression within narrative research texts has served to enhance the ‘re-creation of lived experience’ (see Richardson, 2000, p. 931; also Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 71, and Barone and Eisner, 1997). Rorty (1983) had sanctioned the blending of literary style into social science research. He stated that ‘if we get rid of traditional notions of ‘objectivity’ and ‘scientific method’ we shall be able to see the social sciences as continuous with literature – as interpreting other people to us, and thus enlarging
and deepening our sense of community’ (p. 203 - cited in Cherryholmes 1988, p. 179)

Richardson, (2000 p. 926) gives a historical account of the introduction of literary forms into social science research. She describes how since the 17th century literary and scientific forms of writing were of two separate kinds. Scientific writing was unambiguous, about objectivity, truth and ‘the real’. Literary writing was about subjectivity and when associated with fiction, was ‘false’ and ambiguous. The literary involved ‘imaginary’ writing, which produced a different telling about society. However, as the 20th century unfolded ‘the relationship between social scientific writing and literary writing grew in complexity and the boundaries blurred particularly those between fact and fiction’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 926).

There was an ‘increasingly greater acceptance of inquiry approaches with features that were more naturalistic, interpretive, personal, literary and artistic’ (Barone, 2001b, p. 735). This transition grew from a broadening of epistemological and ontological perspectives, and the sanctioning and valorization of narrative, storied knowledge and different ways of construing reality. We have, according to Lincoln (1997) ‘changed the kinds of texts we hope to have represent us to ourselves’ (p. 37).

According to Barone and Eisner (1997), the infusion of aesthetic qualities into social science writing includes: the presence of expressive, contextualised, and vernacular forms of language; the creation of a virtual reality; the presence of the author’s personal signature; the use of fiction; and a degree of textual ambiguity (Barone and Eisner, p. 73-78). The meanings within narrative texts (or literary text – see Barone, 2000, p. 138) are often ambiguous but are designed to invite reader response, ‘raise fresh questions and deepen the conversation’ (Barone 2001a, p. 170 and Eisner, 1991, p. 95). In this regard, literary and ‘arts-based’ forms of research seek to invite further interpretation and criticism.

‘Arts-based’ research texts, written in a literary style have, until recent times been considered outside the bounds of ‘legitimate academic research’. However, support for the amalgamation of academic and literary reporting styles has warranted
the inclusion of the narrative knowledge that is embedded in stories and novels. This knowledge provides potentially different and valuable kinds of understanding and meanings to those generated by paradigmatic analysis (Polkinghorne, 1988, Barone, 2000 and Kilbourne, 2001).

In this thesis, I have woven arts-based design features into the writing protocol. This weaving process is part of the plan to explore and move between a factual and paradigmatic mode of description and explanation, while also placing important music educational issues within narratives of ‘lived experience’.

* 

**Phenomenology, Theory, Assumptions and Attitude**

Phenomenology does not problem solve… Phenomenological questions are meaning questions. They ask for the meaning and significance of certain phenomena.

Van Manen, 1990, p. 23

My aim in this section is to present a brief historical background of phenomenology and then explain how I ‘use’ it in the research of other lives.

**The roots of phenomenology**

Stewart and Mickunas, (1974) explain that the word phenomenology is derived from the Greek words *phainomenon* (an appearance) and *logos* (reason or word). The combination indicates a reasoned inquiry, which aims to discover the ‘inherent essence of appearances’ - an ‘appearance’ being anything of which one is conscious (p. 3). While Hegel (1770-1831) had used the word ‘phenomenology’ to describe ‘the coming to absolute self-awareness of mind or spirit’, Husserl (1859 - 1938) developed phenomenology as a new ‘human science’. This science sought to solve
Cartesian dualism – the ‘unbridgeable ontological chasm between ‘objects,’ which are ‘out there’ and subjectivity which is ‘in here’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 93). Also Husserl wished to dispel ‘Kant’s two world metaphysics that banished ‘true reality’ to some unknowable, ‘noumenal’ realm beyond the reach of consciousness’ (Kearney and Rainwater, 1996, p. 4). Husserl saw the solution as a need to re-establish connection to the lifeworld of direct experience. The life-world (Lebenswelt) is a combination of consciousness and experiential phenomena and constitutes the lived-experience of every person.

With the Cartesian ‘bifurcation of the mind and matter/body’, the ‘internal world and the natural world were forever separate and one could never be shown to be a form of the other’ (Kincheloe 1991, p. 27). The ontological bridge suggested by phenomenology was formed in Husserl’s central theory of intentionality. This maintains that, ‘the most basic character of consciousness is that it is always consciousness of something; it is always directed toward something, and in turn is determined by the intentional object whereof it is a consciousness’ (Schutz, 1970, p. 318). As consciousness is always a consciousness of something the theory of intentionality reminds us of the ‘inseparable connectedness of the human being to the world’ (Van Manen, 1991, p. 181 and 184 - also Crotty, 1998, p. 79). It suggests that mind is not empty or closed in on itself and points to ‘the absurdity of dividing up reality into such mutually exclusive categories as minds and bodies, subjects and objects, and so forth’ (Stewart and Mickunas, 1974, p. 9). Intentional objects or ‘phenomena’ as Husserl called them are not only ‘external objects’ for they include perceptual and cognitive objects - ‘for I may perceive a tiger, imagine a tiger, remember a tiger and so forth’ (Kearney and Rainwater, 1996, p. 4). With awareness of intentionality we are connected back to lived experience and ‘the things themselves’ and avoid the need to make a distinction ‘between the ‘objective’, material world and its manifestation in subjective experience’ (Bowman, 1998, p. 254). With this recognition, phenomenology ‘leaves the question of objective reality or of real content aside in order to turn its attention solely and simply on the reality in consciousness, on the objects insofar as they are intended by
and in consciousness, in short on what Husserl calls ‘ideal essences’ (Thévenaz, 1963, p. 43). Importantly, understanding the theory of intentionality means to grasp that the existential nature of Being is not opposed to the world but involved and connected meaningfully to it. Although I am a ‘being-in-the-world’ my meaningful relationship and interaction with the world means that I am not in it in the same way as ‘a stone is in a wall, a broom in a closet, or a vegetable in a freezer’ (van Kaam, 1969, p. 22). Bowman’s understanding is that from the phenomenological perspective, ‘there is no gulf that requires a metaphysical bridge, no mutually exclusive relationship between knower and known’ (1998, p. 255). To enter into the specific ‘phenomenological attitude’ we should disregard the dualistic notion of an opposition between phenomena in a ‘real objective world’ and the way they appear in consciousness for this classifies experience and perception as merely secondary subjective representation.

Phenomenology, due to its concern with consciousness and the experiencer, has been accused of being overly subjective. However, in striving to cancel out issues of subjectivity versus objectivity, its original purpose was simply to show how the world is constituted and experienced through immediate consciousness and conscious acts before theoretical abstraction takes place. For Husserl and his successors, phenomenology came to mean the study of things as they appear directly to us in our immediate conscious attention (Stewart and Mickunas, 1974, p. 6).

While the foundations of phenomenology are attributed to Husserl early traces may be found in the existentialist thought of Sören Kierkegaard (1813 - 1855) and also in the ideas of William James (1842 - 1910). Both ‘emphasised the passionate immediacy of experience’ (May, 1969, p. 6) and both philosophers sought a humanistic version of psychology that would counter the analytical, positivist trend in the developing discipline. To explain this, May (1969, p. 2) uses the study of anxiety as an example. He describes how Freud wrote on a technical level, presenting formulations of the psychic mechanisms by which anxiety comes about, while on the other hand, Kierkegaard portrayed what is immediately
experienced. He wrote on an existential, ontological level about the experience of anxiety. May adds that Kierkegaard and Freud do not ‘represent a value dichotomy; both approaches are obviously necessary’ (p. 2) but Freud’s concern is with the emphasis on technical and objectified explanations and this is different from a direct understanding of experience – ‘the awareness of being’ (1969, pp. 2 - 3). Kierkegaard chose to speak from his personal experience of anxiety rather than basing his knowledge on abstract, conceptual ideas of it.

While focussing on direct awareness of ‘what is immediately presented to conscious experience’ rather than conceptualisations of experience, Husserl placed a ‘shift of attention away from the foundations of knowledge to the foundations of human action’ and also ‘philosophical attention upon the experiencing subject’ (Solomon, 2001, p. 1). Husserl questioned the rationality and reason perpetuated by the Enlightenment thinking and saw the need for a return to experience and ‘the things themselves’, where life-world experience had been neglected. This neglect had come about through the domination of a science ‘meta-narrative’.

**Phenomenology and the science ‘meta-narrative’**

Sokolowski (2000) explains how the ‘Galilean-Cartesian split’ forced the denial of the experiential life world by a domination of reason and the application of natural science methods to the human sciences and psychology:

The highly mathematical form of science that was introduced by Galileo, Descartes, and Newton led people to think that the world in which we live, the world of colours, sounds, trees, rivers, and rocks, the world that came to be called ‘secondary qualities’, was not the real world; instead, the world described by the exact sciences was said to be the true one, and it was quite different from the world we directly experience. What looks like a table is really a conglomeration of atoms, fields of force, and empty spaces. Atoms and molecules, and the forces, fields and laws described by science, are said to be the true reality of things. The world we live in and directly perceive is only a construct made by our minds responding to the input from our senses. The world we live in is ultimately unreal as we
experience it, but the world reached by mathematical science, the world that causes this merely apparent world, is real

(p. 146)

From this Sokolowski suggests that we ‘have two worlds, the world in which we live and the world described by the mathematical sciences’ (p. 147). He goes on to explain that phenomenology tackles this apparent difference between the scientific viewpoint and the lived world by declaring that the mathematical sciences take their origin from and arise out of the lived world. He continues:

...the exact sciences merely increase the knowledge we have of the world in which we live; they provide a greater precision in our dealings with things, but they never abandon or discard the world that is their basis. Such sciences are nested within the life world; they do not enter into competition with it.

(p. 147)

The important point is that the ‘real’ world of direct experience is immediately perceived and the theoretical world derived by science follows. The mathematical sciences take their origin from the lived world so that lived experience may be metaphorically viewed as the frame and canvas for the theoretical constructs of science that are found within the picture. The overarching point is that the lived world of immediate personal experience of phenomena exists before abstraction takes place. However, this lived world has been reduced in importance and historically placed as secondary to the conceptual world that is constructed with paradigmatic thinking.

Phenomenological ‘essence’ and ‘bracketing’

*Essence* is an important concept to phenomenology. My initial, uninformed understanding clashed with my constructivist perspectives. I assumed that in phenomenological terms, ‘the essence of a phenomenon’ indicated the existence of an objective universal principal. If that were the case, then with a correct process of
interpretation both you and I could arrive at the same answer – the correct essence. I later determined essence in a more constructivist light to mean ‘an internal meaning structure of phenomenon and lived experience’ or what Kvale (1996) refers to as a ‘significance’ or a ‘potentiality of meaning’ (p. 4 and p. 193). Moreover, as Van Manen (1990) states, essence is a meaning structure of a specific kind – one ‘that makes some ‘thing’ what it is - and without which it could not be what it is’ (p. 10). As an example, I may determine that love and compassion are the essence of parenthood – the meaning structures behind why people may wish to nurture a child. While you may determine a different essence, (for example ‘genetically encoded patterns that ensure the survival of the species’), what is important is that we each assume our meaning structures to make parenthood ‘what it is’.

When I state that my aim is to ‘explicate the significant meaning structures within ‘musical ways of being’”, I am also referring to the phenomenological essence of musical lifeworlds. Discovering essence is the goal of phenomenological research. Van Manen (1990), when describing the centrality of essence to phenomenology in fact describes, what is for him, its essence. He states that

*Phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures of lived experience.* (p. 10)

*Bracketing* is also central to phenomenological research. It is a specific way of looking and inquiring where we suspend our everyday assumptions and associations in order to focus directly on experience as it is lived. Bowman (1998) describes the process stating that it ‘involves the temporary abstention from judgement in order to allow total attention to the objects and processes of consciousness as they exist in and of themselves’ (p. 257). If we consider that with bracketing one should ‘overcome one’s subjective or private feelings, preferences, inclinations, or expectations’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 185) the process may seem

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3 I later discuss a further perspective of ‘essence’ by including Wittgenstein’s description (see Chapter Four). In *Philosophical Investigations* (1968) he describes it not as something existing in a ‘behind-the-world-reality’ and not something that analysis ‘digs out’. It already ‘lies open to view’ and becomes ‘surveyable by a rearrangement of our understanding’ (p. 43).
quite difficult to say the least. As an example I shall return to my interpretation of the essence of parenthood as ‘love and compassion’. If while phenomenologically researching the meaning of parenthood for another, in order to explicate the essence of parenthood in the experience of that person – what it means to them - I would have to bracket my notions of love and compassion in order to see their experience more clearly. In a similar way, I must bracket my own assumptions and judgements of what I consider music to be, whilst explicating the essence of the lived experience of the participants in the study.

**Interpretivism and Phenomenology**

Interpretivism in the social sciences developed alongside phenomenology as it too was also born from the need for a more qualitative form of human science. The writings of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Max Weber (1864-1920) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) attacked the supremacy of the science meta-narrative suggesting that human science required more than just the discovery of laws by which the workings of the universe may be explained. Interpretivists challenged the application of scientific methods to the qualitative aspects of the human lifeworld and legitimised ‘ways to sophisticate the beholding’ of human nature (Stake, 1995, p. 43). Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) then extended phenomenological theory by adding an interpretivist or hermeneutic perspective to Husserl’s phenomenological beginnings. The interpretivist version, hermeneutic phenomenology, focuses on two parts. It is descriptive of phenomena because ‘it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves’ and it is also interpretative ‘because it claims that there is no such thing as uninterpreted phenomena’ (Van Manen, 1991, p. 180). The hermeneutic basis states that meanings are not constructed at the moment of lived experience, but in the process of reflection upon experience. Cohering with this point, van Kaam (1969) has described how our primary awareness of ‘meaning-giving experience’ is pre-reflective. Pre-reflective knowledge is a straightforward, familiar kind related to
spontaneous experience – like recognising a neighbour. Then a deeper ‘reflective knowledge arises from a consideration of, or bending-back upon, (my) experience’ (p. 46). Van Kaam continues stating, ‘in this reflection I become more fully present to the meaning of the reality which is revealed to me in my experience. Only now I am able to express to myself and to others the meaning which I unveiled in my meeting with reality’ (pp. 46-47).

Shusterman (1992) identifies as ‘hermeneutic universalists’ those who believe in ‘the ubiquity of interpretation’ (p. 115 and p. 129). Stake (1995) for example assumes that ‘all research is interpretation’ (p. 40). Denzin (1998) agrees that ‘in the social sciences, there is only interpretation’ (p. 313) and Van Manen (1990) believes that ‘there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena’ (p. 180). However, interpretation is used in different forms. For example, positivist and quantitative paradigms place priority on the interpretation of measurement data while those of the qualitative paradigm prioritise the direct interpretation of events (Stake 1995, p. 40 – my italics). The Interpretivist movement is thus associated with a rise of the value placed on interpreting events and experiences, where we construct meaning by ‘seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships’ (Stake, 1995, p. 40).

With the phenomenological approach to research my focus is directed to the ‘musical lived experience’ of the participants and how music is used within the ‘social ecology’ of their lifeworlds. This ‘social ecology’, Shepherd and Wicke (1997) explain is the interconnection between musical experience, subjectivity and social mediations (pp. 13-14). This interconnected field is where personal musical meanings, identities and relationships are constructed and it is this area that I seek to understand further.

Summary and reflection

Within a paradigmatic ‘attitude’ I operate from the standpoint of professional musical knowledge that is objective, conceptually based and a-
contextual. With this position, I focus on music as an objective and ‘autonomous form’ where the meanings may be discovered and viewed as immanent within it (see Bowman, 1998, p. 133 and further description in Chapter Three). However, incorporating a narrative and phenomenological attitude I operate from a feeling for music as ‘experience’ and notions of it as a socially and subjectively constructed text. I am concerned with ‘music-as-experienced’ (Bowman, 1998, p. 254), music as a ‘social text’ (Shepherd, 1991) and as a ‘technology of self’ (DeNora, 2000). With this attitude the meanings of music are seen as ‘meaning-for-the-subject’ and a group identity ‘meaning-for-us’ (Koopman and Davies, 2001). With these constructed meanings my perception is of music as a situational, intersubjective whole that is not autonomous but ‘a consequence of an intense dialectical interaction between text, other adjacent texts (lyrics, images, movement) and social, cultural and biographical contexts’ (Shepherd, 1991, p 175). In the following chapter, I shall explore these musical ‘attitudes’ in more detail.

Finally, the dominance of a paradigmatic approach has promoted what Dewey (1960) called a spectator theory of knowledge, which Bochner and Waugh (1995) maintain, has historically separated ‘subject from object, observation from participation and reflection from direct experience’ (p. 224). These authors also declare their hopes for the future. They suggest that with a change of attitude

The vocabulary of facts, objectivity, neutrality, detachment, and correspondence to reality would give way to a terminology that focuses on meanings, subjectivity, emotional involvement, and coping with reality.

(p. 224)

According to Bruner (1990), we have experienced a ‘long cold winter of objectivism’ (p. 1). While he was referring to psychology and the effects of a dehumanising ‘wrong turn’ in the new ‘cognitive revolution’, his statement has wider relevance concerning the effects of the objectivist rationality of the scientific paradigm. These effects have permeated all areas of the social sciences, the way we
view human behaviour and experience and as Small (1996) suggests, every facet of education and schooling.

I suggest that a narrative and a phenomenological stance will help the arrival of a ‘new terminology’ in music teaching. The objectivist, cerebral approach that incorporates a disembodied, contextually detached perspective will give way to an embodied, situational concern for meanings, subjectivity and the ‘reality’ of the musical lives of others.

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Chapter Three

Unmasking Dimensions of Music Experience

The prime concern of the thesis is with the lived musical worlds and experiences of students. In this chapter I account for the historical processes that have led to inattention to these realms. I focus on the idea that Western concepts of music and music education are based in a tradition of objectivism or ‘Cartesian understanding’ (Woodford, 2001, p. 80) and the result of this legacy is the suppression or ‘masking’ of dimensions of musical experience. I argue that despite the introduction of recent reform, the masking process contributes to the perpetuation of several current problematic issues in music education.

I begin by describing the epistemological and ontological foundations of objectivism in Western thought and then show how these have been the foundation of a generalised conception of music as an independent structure located within a mind-independent-reality, and separate from the experiencer. I equate the paradigmatic mode of thought with the objectivist viewpoint and then introduce a narrative perspective that includes a closer focus on ‘music as experience’.

The Foundations and Influence of Objectivism

Bernstein (1983) defines objectivism as follows:—
‘Objectivism’ has frequently been used to designate metaphysical realism — the claim that there is a world of objective reality that exists independently of us and that has a determinate nature or essence that we can know. In modern times objectivism has been closely linked with an acceptance of a basic metaphysical or epistemological distinction between the subject and the object. What is ‘out there’ (objective) is presumed to be independent of us (subjects), and knowledge is achieved when a subject correctly mirrors or represents objective reality.

(p. 9)

The foundation of these perspectives may be traced to the dualistic thinking of Plato and Parmenides (Bernstein, 1983, p. 8 and Barone, 2000, p.162). However, the dualistic position was first logically stated by Descartes (1596-1650) and the concept became the cornerstone of modern philosophy, a footnote and starting point to all subsequent theories of the nature of consciousness, knowledge and human freedom (Bernstein, 1983, p. 17 and Solomon, 2001, p. x).

Radical objectivism recognises not only a split between subjective and objective realities, but also a split between mind and body. Johnson (1987) explains this dualism stating that

The Cartesian picture of mind, body, and knowledge creates two fundamental gaps or splits in human experience, one ontological, the other epistemological. First, on a Cartesian account, the body does not play a crucial role in human reasoning — rationality is essentially disembodied. Rationality may make use of material presented by the senses, but it is not itself an attribute of bodily substance. This gives rise to a basic ontological gulf between mind and body, reason and sensation.

(p. xxvi)

It is important to consider that while there are degrees of objectivism, it has pervaded our lives. Johnson (1987) explains this point stating that the

Objectivist orientation is rooted deeply in the Western philosophical and cultural tradition, and it has recently been
elaborated in highly sophisticated ways by philosophers, linguists, psychologists, and computer scientists generally. But Objectivism is not merely an abstruse philosopher's project; it plays an important role in all our lives. In its nonsophisticated manifestation, as a set of shared commonplaces in our culture, it takes the following general form: The world consists of objects that have properties that stand in various relationships independent of human understanding. The world is as it is, no matter what any person happens to believe about it, and there is one correct ‘God's-Eye-View’ about what the world really is like. In other words, there is a rational structure to reality, independent of the beliefs of any particular people, and correct reason mirrors this rational structure.

(p. x)

This description reveals the Western legacy of objectivism – the belief in a reality with a mind-independent structure and that there must be a ‘correct reason’ with which to mirror it. This ‘correct reason’ has developed into a particular kind of rational, scientific thinking that seeks ‘universal truths’ locatable within a mind-independent reality. Kincheloe (1991) refers to it as a ‘cause-effect, hypothetico-deductive system of reasoning’ (p. 44). This system, I suggest is manifestly the same as Bruner’s categorisation of the paradigmatic or logico-scientific ‘mode of reasoning’, or ‘method of construing reality’ (1986, p. 11) and Johnson’s ‘Objectivist view’ where rationality is essentially disembodied from experience (1987, p. xxiv – xxv). Using this mode of cognition the knower and the known (experiencer and music) are separated and any sense of ‘I’ is masked from inquiry. Johnson (1987) refers to this as the ‘God's-Eye-View’ whilst in criticisms of the positivist approach to inquiry in the social sciences it has been referred to as the ‘hidden researcher position’ (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000, p. 36). The result of this form of reasoning and inquiry is a ‘disembodied’ form of knowledge where understanding, intuition and imagination are unacknowledged as having significant bearing on the nature of meaning and rationality (Johnson, 1987, p. x). In this way ‘scientific’ (paradigmatic) knowledge of the world has come to the forefront and it has effectively masked the immediacy of our phenomenological ‘lived experience’ of the world. The effect has been to ignore phenomena ‘as they are experienced’
(i.e. music) in order to focus on a scientific and ‘cerebral picture’ of an ‘objective reality’. In Chapter Two this point was viewed from the perspective of the ‘science meta-narrative’ and it was described as the task of phenomenology to return us to awareness of the immediacy of lived experience.

*I

I left a graduate Honours program full of enthusiasm after exploring new research paradigms, philosophies of music and a constructivist approach to teaching. Commencing in my first school I was determined to fulfil my vision of music classes filled with students who would be actively engaged in music making. I would include interesting musical tasks and performances that would assist the construction of personal understandings and meanings through exploration and reflection on musical experience. I would be a facilitator of quality experiences, and I would guide students forward through developing skills and conceptual knowledge. “Sound before symbol” - “Practical experience before abstract concepts”, were my catch cries. I would help build musical imaginations and help enhance musical lives. I enthusiastically began constructing new classroom programs that would implement my ‘new’ strategies.

However, my resolve soon began to erode as my assumptions, ideologies and perspectives were challenged by a school system that was founded upon a reliance on examination and assessment of levels of music theory. Particularly with the Year 7 and 8 music classes, which were compulsory, I sought to ‘entice’ the students ‘into’ music primarily through enjoyment with courses that focussed on practical involvement. From a developing love for music, I assumed, the students would then make the personal choice and commitment to enter the more theoretical electives offered in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12. I was in conflict with the purpose of detailed theory exams in Years 7 and 8, but school curriculum policy demanded it. I wondered how widespread it might be for new teachers in schools to feel misunderstood - that their ideas, opinions and strategies may be shrugged off as “thoughtful but out-of-touch with the real world”. Or they might simply be classed as “inexperienced” and “well-meaning”. How often did this happen? I wondered how ‘constructivist’ teachers could ever ‘make it’ in those strong bastions of objectivism that they might be thrust into. In a so-called postmodern world, how much have things really
changed? Again I questioned whether this issue was just my problem, localised here in this school or ubiquitous? I searched for support in the wider community of researchers - or was it a defence?

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The dichotomy I was engaged in is reflected by Small (1996).

The idea of knowledge as an independent entity, that is, as existing outside the knower and regardless of whether anyone knows it or not, pervades our entire system of schooling from beginning to end. We have seen always how such a notion was essential before western science could begin its task of colonising the physical universe; we now see that it determines the whole nature of the schooling process. Just as, in science, the experiential factor is ignored, so in schooling; the teacher is obliged to transmit to his pupils as much as he can of this abstract body of information, regardless of the quality of the experience which in so doing he inflicts on the pupil. This is not to say that teachers are not in the main thoroughly humane people who would not wantonly inflict unpleasant experiences on their pupils; it is simply that when obliged to choose between the quality of their pupils’ present experience and the assimilation by those pupils of information which is believed to be necessary for their future benefit (i.e. their success in examinations), they will inevitably choose the latter, indeed, they have no option but to do so.

(p. 184)

I believed the approach in my school was a result of the objectivist views that as Small (1996) has suggested, ‘pervades our entire schooling system’. I felt the pressure of being in the predicament of having little option or personal control in ‘an overly theoretical approach’. The ‘future benefit’ of the pupils required achieving success in the set end-of-term theory examinations. My goals and the school’s were divergent and blending and balancing the two together was a difficult task. I concluded that objectivist views would continue to clash with constructivist and postmodern ‘ways of thinking’ about teaching and until widespread
transformation occurs an epistemological dichotomy would confront new teachers as they enter professional practice.

I shall now discuss the conception in Western societies where music has been afforded an independent status and perceived as a structure located within a mind-independent-reality and one that is separate from the experiencer. The process of discounting music ‘as experienced’ in order to focus on a disembodied concept has been described historically as the ‘objectification’ of music in Western thought (Rowell, 1983, pp. 34-36).

The ‘Objectification of Music’

There are many factors that have contributed to the ‘gradual objectification’ of music (Higgins, 1991, p. 21). According to Higgins (1991), some of the historical developments in Western music that led to the objectification process include the standardised use of notation from the time of Pope Gregory (AD 590-604); the development of printing in the Renaissance; the movement from an improvisatory tradition to a tradition based on composition, and the reification of pieces of music and ‘musical works’. The development of notation assisted the shift from improvisation to composition and as composers could indicate intricate structures to performers, precision in the interpretation of musical scores became a feature of musical practice. The printing and dissemination of multiple copies of scores helped to associate ‘music’ with an objective perception of ‘musical works’ (Higgins, 1991, pp 21-28).

Bowman (1998) recognises that an objectivist understanding of music places it ontologically ‘outside the mind’ and epistemologically as having meaning existing independently of any consciousness. He recognises that the ontological and epistemological gulf between mind and body leads to a detachment from music as it is ‘actually lived or experienced’ (p. 300). Based on this rationality, music is then ‘disembodied’ or conceived as ‘having a life of its own’ and given an independent status. Conceptualised as an autonomous form it is then considered
unconnected to the experiencing subject and ‘independent of any particular performance’ (Higgins, 1991, p. 21). The perception of music as an ‘independent structure’ has been the dominant view within nineteenth and twentieth-century Western music aesthetics (Higgins, 1991, p. 20).

When objectified, ‘musical meaning’ becomes a property residing in the ‘outer’ sonorial dimension of music rather than within the performer or listener’s experience or as arising from any specific experiential context (Higgins, 1997, p. 85; Woodford, 2001, p. 73). Philosophers and analysts with objectivist perspectives choose to observe music as though it had laws that are discovered in an external ‘mind-independent reality’ separate from the knower and experiencer. This stance has formed the basis of inquiry where individual, idiosyncratic and subjective experience is discounted in order to focus on the objective features of music and musical phenomena that are ‘scientifically’ verifiable. Jorgensen (2003) for example, is critical of the ‘image of music as experience’ as it is ‘difficult to observe and test reports of musical experience’ (p. 89). She also states that, ‘Phenomenological observations may be difficult to verify or refute because they are, by definition, inherently subjective’ (p. 90). In the objectivist vein, positivist and post-positivist forms of research rely on experimental, survey and scientifically based methods such as sampling, measurement and scaling, in order to discover the ingredients of music that are universal to all (e.g. see Rainbow and Froehlich, 1987). They seek to create generalisations ‘that presume to speak for everyone, everywhere, for all times’ (Bowman, 1998, p. 295).

In the ethnographic realm, ‘objectivist’ researchers have entered ‘the field’ in order to see how indigenous peoples and cultures ‘mirror’ their own pre-conceived objective notion of what music is. Ethnomusicological objectivists ‘have sought to understand and document musical systems and musical instruments as objects decontextualized from the social ecologies that sustain them’ (Shepherd, 1991, p. 102). Many socio-musicologists have criticised popular and ethnic musical forms as inferior as they do not meet the criteria and standards expected of their own objectivist version of music (Frith, 1996, p. 123).
Paradigmatic (objectivist) reasoning, by its very conceptual and rational nature, has tended to de-personalise music by splitting knowledge from experience, reason from sensation, and the ‘meaning of music’ from the ‘experience of music’.

This de-personalising process has had many implications. For example, rather than focussing on ‘the activity’ we call music, Small (1998) states that scholars in the Western tradition have equated the word music with ‘works of music’ (p. 3). Higgins (1991) has commented that ‘It is the score, not the performance, and certainly not the listening, that represents the reality of music’ and she mentions the theorist Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904) who had been ‘forthright in denying that performance is essential to a work of music’ (p. 20). Hanslick had stated that ‘philosophically speaking, the composed piece, regardless of whether it is performed or not, is the completed artwork’ (1854/1986, p. 48).

Goehr (1992) has also described in detail how Western cultural musical practices have placed an imaginary ontological status onto the concept of ‘the musical work’ (p. 2). So pervasive is this concept that it controls the ‘power relations’ in the tradition where performers are subservient to the composer and to ‘faithful performance and ‘correct interpretation’ (Goehr, 1992, p. 273 and p. 275). Sustained by the concept of ‘the musical work’ the classical forms of Western music have developed an air of cultural elitism having become the ‘ideal and autonomous form with immanent meanings that are impervious to the influence of cultural and social processes’ (Shepherd, 2002, p. 3).

In addition, the separation of the knower from the known and the experiencer from the experience has forged a dominant formalist conception of music where its meaning is discovered solely in its structural properties. The ‘meaning’ of music is seen as being ‘encoded’ within music and it must be ‘decoded’ by the receptive listener (see Scruton, 1987, p. 171). Again it was Hanslick who argued for the importance of the formalist approach believing in ‘a
hierarchy of the intellectual and ‘syntactic’ appreciation of music above the sensuous/associative and the physical/emotional levels’ (Higgins, 1997, p. 87). Hanslick rejected idiosyncratic and subjective responses to music and sought to ‘emancipate the appreciation of music from what he considered its primitive, vague and subjective condition, and – much in accordance with the spirit of his time – to establish it on a proper scientific basis’ (Martin, 1995, p. 43). Higgins (1997) describes how Hanslick assumed that ‘idiosyncratic responses were aesthetically insignificant’ and ‘he was scornful of those who listened ‘pathologically,’ enjoying their own sensations in response to music without focussing their intellect on tonal forms’ (p. 93). McClary (1990) has criticised this overly intellectual approach believing that it has resulted in a situation where ‘our music theories and notational systems do everything possible to mask those dimensions of music that are related to physical human experience and focus instead on the orderly, the rational, the cerebral’ (p. 14 – see also Shepherd, 2002, p. 6).

Reactions to musical objectivism

There has been opposition to musical objectivism and to the quest to locate absolute musical meaning in an objective ‘real’ world. Small (1998), for example, has attacked the objectification of music, referring to it as a process of ‘reification’ (p. 61). As Crotty (1998) explains, ‘to reify, or engage in reification, is to take as a thing (in Latin res) what is not a thing’ (p. 217). Small’s (1998) attack is based on what he calls ‘the trap of reification’ which he states is ‘a besetting fault of Western thinking’ and he blames Plato as ‘one of its earliest perpetrators’ (p. 2). Small explains that we reify an abstract concept of ‘music’ and then ‘we find ourselves coming to treat the abstractions as more real than the actions’ (p. 61). Elaborating the reification process he states that

Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing ‘music’ is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it
closely. This habit of thinking in abstractions, of taking from an action what appears to be its essence and of giving that essence a name, is probably as old as language; it is useful in the conceptualising of our world but it has its dangers. It is very easy to come to think of the abstraction as more real than the reality it represents, to think, for example, of those abstractions which we call love, hate, good and evil as having an existence apart from the acts of loving, hating, or performing good and evil deeds and even to think of them as being in some way more real than the acts themselves, a kind of universal or ideal lying behind and suffusing the actions.

(p. 2)

The answer to this dilemma, Small proposes, is to return music to its rightful place in our thinking, where ‘music’, viewed as an activity is satisfied by the verb ‘to music’ or as he suggests – *musicking* (1998, p. 9). Elliott (1995) had also proposed the same idea stating that ‘fundamentally, music is something people do’ (p. 39) and his terminology recognises *musicing* and people who engage in *musicing* as *musicers* (p. 40). This perspective has also been supported by Määttänen and Westerlund (2001) who view music not as an object but as lived action and experience, as activity, process and as a verb rather than an autonomous object and a noun.

Concerns about musical objectivism have also come from constructivists who prefer a socially based conception of music and its place in people’s lives. Woodford (2001) questions the objectivist rationality that socially isolates music from our perspective. He asks whether music ‘is the product of, and should be judged according to, an abstract, objective, universal, and ahistorical conception of reason, or whether it is socially and culturally grounded and thus relative.’ (p. 73). From a constructivist perspective musical meanings are viewed as intersubjectively and socially constructed rather than existing inherently in objective phenomena and waiting to be uncovered. Shepherd and Wicke (1997) promote a constructivist, intersubjective view of music that takes into account the interconnection between subjectivity and the ‘social mediations’ that accompany musical processes and insights. They comment that:
Musical processes and processes of subjectivity speak meaningfully to one another because they are grounded in, informed by, and constituted through similar sets of social mediations. The substance and logic of the inner life flow from these mediations rather than from 'psychological constants' presumed innate in people.

(pp. 13-14)

From this perspective, the need to understand what ‘music means’ has led researchers to look at the functions and uses that people put it to. Studying music as ‘relative’, researchers have sought its subjective effects in experiential contexts. Ethnomusicology became not simply the studying, transcribing, and analysing of music as a separate object from the people who compose and perform it, but observation of how it functions in their lives. John Blacking (1974) after studying with the Venda of South Africa, stated that ‘The Venda taught me that music can never be a thing in itself, and that all music is folk music in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people’ (p. x). He adds, ‘I am convinced that an anthropological approach to all musical systems makes more sense of them than analyses of the patterns of sound as things in themselves’ (xi). Reinforcing the importance of the social aspect of music inquiry Blacking (1974) states that

In order to find out what music is and how musical man is, we need to ask who listens and who plays and who sings in any given society, and why. This is a sociological question, and situations in different societies can be compared without any reference to the surface forms of music because we are concerned only with its function in social life.

(p. 10)

Arguing for a social-constructivist perspective, Martin (1995) states that ‘the meaning of music is neither inherent in it nor grasped intuitively by ‘the’ human mind; rather meaning is created in the process of social interaction which mediates all our experience of the world’ (p. 63). DeNora’s (2000) study of ‘music
in everyday life’ (2000) also promotes a sociological perspective. She states that ‘it is probably impossible to speak of music’s ‘powers’ abstracted from their context of use’ and calls for the fostering of ‘more critical recognition of music’s potency in everyday life’ (p. x). She suggests that in the West there has been a lack of focus on and understanding about ‘socio-musical meaning’ or the way ‘real people actually press music into action in particular social spaces and temporal settings’ (p. x).

The ‘objectivist’ focus has had a great impact on particular cultural and social traditions of Western music education. These traditions have been manifested as a focus on the objectified products and outcomes of teaching and learning rather than on the experiences of students and hence, professional teacher knowledge and teacher training have generally been geared towards the achievement of those outcomes. The traditional, objectivist value-system has been accompanied by a dominating, powerful meta-narrative which is based upon a reverence for, and belief in the superiority of the Western musical canon, which is seen as the benchmark for musical knowledge (Woodford, 2001). This meta-narrative, Woodford (2001) explains, by assuming music to be absolute and autonomous rather than socially and culturally grounded and thus relative, has generated elite power relations in Western music traditions. He states:

Absolutists such as Samuel Lipman contend that the Western musical canon, because it represents the best that has been thought and known musically, functions as an Archimedean point for grounding and judging musical knowledge. To these scholars, culture consists of the masterpieces of intellectual and aesthetic activity made transmissible in written words or images possessing corporeal existence and not the vulgar expressions and lived experiences of the common man or woman.

(p. 73).

Standing against the position taken by the ‘absolutists’, it is a central argument of this thesis that to ignore ‘expressions of lived experience’ will be to
the future detriment of music education as these expressions are in need of further study and understanding. The argument is not with the ‘masterpieces of intellectual and aesthetic activity’ but with the limited vision of culture. This vision must be extended to include the important function and meaning of music at the ‘common’ level of ‘the expressions and lived experiences of the common man or woman’.

* 

Concerned with the effects of formal music education, Green (2001) studied the values, attitudes and opinions of fourteen ‘popular’ musicians. Through an investigation of their perspectives, she concluded that formal music education ‘has tended to recognise and reward only certain aspects of musical ability, often in relation to certain styles of music, thus aiding the appearance that only a minority of human beings have musical ability’ (p. 210). A broader conception of musical identity is needed in order to include the idiosyncratic nature of approaches to music.

Q. Explain how you conceptualise the guitar neck.

*J. H. I've never really thought about it. Essentially, I keep it flat (on my lap), with all the six strings across, and I have my ideas of chord shapes, for the most part. When the hand lands on the neck, things go into action, and outside of that, take me away from the neck, and I really don't think about it too much.*

Jeff Healy (blind blues guitarist in Guitar Player Magazine, August, 1989)

Jeff Healy thrills many people with his performances, embarks on world concert tours and sells thousands of CDs. His professional success is bound together with his musical success, which includes the achievement of a virtuosic and highly unique style and a deeply personal relationship with music. However,
evaluating his ability from within specific formal educational definitions of assessment, he only achieved ‘grade three’ in school, and his playing style may be described as ‘unorthodox’ and his theoretical knowledge, ‘un-academic’.

Important to note with this example is the point that while many talented and dedicated young musicians like Jeff Healy succeed musically, despite their formal education, many are bypassed or ‘put off music’ due to the narrow definitions of music ability that are imposed by formal curriculum and assessment models (Durrant, 2001; Green, 2001; Ross, 1995).

Paradigmatic and narrative approaches to music, teaching and learning

Western music teaching and learning theory have developed primarily from the paradigmatic code (which I relate to formalism, reductionism and objectivism).

To illustrate this point I now present contrasting textual examples of narrative and paradigmatic ways of looking at the meaning and significance of music in educational contexts. The first, a paradigmatic example is analytical, conceptual, technical, formalist, unemotional and context-free. The narrative example that follows includes the social context where meaning takes place and the relation of embedded, personal experiences of music. The paradigmatic example is a quote from the philosopher Stephen Davies (1994). He states that ‘If music is organised sound, to hear music as music is to hear it as displaying organisation. To hear music as such is to hear it in terms of the principles of order that give it its identity as the music it is’ (p. 325). Davies continues stating that

A person who listens to Balinese Gender Wayang, neither knowing or caring why the sounds follow each other in the order they do, is someone who interests herself not in the music, but in the noise it makes. Her pleasure is like that of the person who likes eating chocolate. If she is unable to anticipate what might or should be played next, feels no sense of closure on the completion of the piece, is incapable of identifying recurrences of material or of recognising similarities and differences between parts of a work or between different works,
then she does not appreciate the music qua music, though the music causes her enjoyment.

(pp. 325-326)

In this explanation of ‘how to listen’, Davies creates a context-free, conceptual, universal vision of music listening. He presents a theory of music in its cognitive aspect where he suggests that the specific meaning is found within an understanding and appreciation of, and the listening to, its formal construction. As we listen we should follow the unfolding form. However, this I suggest is simply one way of listening. For example, do the Javanese listen this way? Traditionally a lengthy gamelan concert is often an event where food is served, guests are free to socialise, or ‘drift in and out’ of the music and even sleep (Titon, 2001, p. 189). Davies on the other hand assumes and constructs an archetypal common denominator theory of music. Instead of seeking idiosyncrasy and diversity the explanation seeks to find the cognitive aspect that is relevant to all people, and all music everywhere.

In contrast to the Davies example, I present a narrative of lived musical experience that may ‘guide us back from theoretical abstractions to the reality of lived experiences – the lived experience of the child’s world, the lived experience of school, curricula etc’ (Van Manen, 1982, p. 296). The paradigmatic example by Davies constructs a general rule of the meaning and significance of music. On the other hand the following narrative of experience reveals an individual’s practical experience with it.

The story of Lenny

As I stood facing the new class of thirty year seven students, there was an air of excitement - it was their first day in high school, and first music class. As the fresh-faced boys, resplendent in new uniforms sat, well behaved, I was looking forward to getting to know the intricacies of character and personality of each. Over the next few weeks as I got to know the boys, Lenny stood out. He was a good six inches shorter than the others and seemed very frail. Shy and quiet, he was always at the back of the queue at the Tuck Shop and was on the outer
perimeter of the groups engaged in playground fun. Most of the boys had immediate friendships for many had come from the same local primary schools. But Lenny hadn’t for his family had just arrived from New Zealand. The others didn’t bully him for fortunately he had an elder brother, a senior who was good at sport and immediately popular. The brother would keep a protective eye on him in the playground. Later at a staff meeting Lenny’s medical condition was discussed. In confidence we learned from his parents that he had spent much of his life in hospital. A heart condition had meant many operations and he was living on ‘borrowed time’.

In a music classroom session we had been getting to know each other’s skills. The boys could take turns in the limelight performing songs they knew. The extroverts were first and eventually most of the class had performed. Finally we looked at Lenny. “Come on Lenny, do you know any songs?” He went red and shook his head. All the class turned to him shouting, “Yeah come on Lenny! Come on!” He seemed buoyed by the support. Quietly he said, “I know how to do the Maori Haka sir!”

Lenny went to the front of the class. He suddenly appeared confident and assumed a ferocious pose. He performed the war dance - legs bent, slapping his thighs, his chest, clenching his fists, eyes wide and tongue protruding.

Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka_ora! Ka_ora!
Ka mate! Ka mate! Ka_ora!
Te ne-i-te ta-nga-ta, p’hu-ru – hu-ru!
Na-na nei ti-ki mai wha-ka whi-ti-te ra
Ka-u-pan! Ka-u-pan! Ka-u-pa-ne! U-pa-ne whi-ti te ra
Hee!

We were all transfixed. I glanced at the class. Most of the student’s mouths and eyes were wide in amazement.

While the Haka is designed to frighten the opponent it is also a challenge. The quality of performance, demonstrated through the dramatic gestures and intensity of emotion, is an indicator of the manhood of performers and a challenge to the manhood of the opponents. In recent years, away from the battlefront the Haka has become a powerful symbol of Maoridom, connecting men with pride to their heritage and to their warrior spirit. We were all moved at the rendition we had just witnessed. Before us Lenny became a powerful warrior.
From that day on, everyone approached him differently. There was an air of respect surrounding him and whenever I saw him in the playground, he was part of the ‘cool’ gang.

*  

Accepting the paradigmatic construct by Davies music educators might include within curricula objectives, the goal of assisting students toward an appreciation and understanding of some of the formal concepts he suggests - contrast, variation, repetition and closure within music compositions. Directing to these properties in music class will provide opportunities for deepening personal constructs and individual meanings of music. Assuming the generalisation that ‘human consciousness conceptualises sound patterns into forms’ (Palmer, 2000, p. 105) music teachers will recognise the importance of formalist understanding. However, formalism is only a part of the diverse realm of musical meaning and placing formalism as the central point of focus or as the ‘dominant reality’ of musical understanding has tended to exclude experiential context and idiosyncratic response (see Higgins 1991, p. 16 and 1997, p. 93). We may operate more democratically if the quest for objectivity, which has led to the search for what is universal about musical experience, is balanced with a view that acknowledges the unique and the individual. Higgins (1997) cautions us stating that

Although the Enlightenment idealised universality and thus directed attention to those features of experience that would be standard for all individuals, the experience of music is diminished when its many resonances with the particularities of its listeners’ lives are belittled and ignored (p. 83)

In addition, it is important to recognise that young music students do not have the ‘voice’ that their teachers and administrators possess and in the spirit of democracy, they need representation. The quality of student experience is important and is in prime need for consideration. Reflecting this spirit Schubert
(1992) states that ‘curriculum evolves from the experiences and concerns of students, not from ‘authorities’ in state departments or even central offices’ (p. 62). Through a narrative and phenomenological reflection on the lived musical experience of my students (such as Lenny) I am more able to focus on ‘meaning-for-the-subject’ which Koopman and Davies, (2001) describe as ‘the part music plays in the consciousness of the individual’ (p. 268).

Narrative and ‘lived musical experience’

An awareness of ‘meaning-for-the-subject’ creates an important pedagogical balance to the paradigmatic and technical focus of music teaching, which is often dominated by theory, planning and objectives. Van Manen (1982) when discussing a phenomenological approach to pedagogy states:

(Yet) in the field of curriculum we confidently talk about ‘selecting, planning or organising learning experiences.’ This confidence begs a question – the question whether we really know what it is like when a child ‘has an experience’ or when the child ‘comes to understand something.’ Husserl’s phrase ‘back to the things themselves’ means that the phenomenological attitude is mindful of the ease with which we tend to rely on a reconstructed logic in our professional endeavours.

(p. 296)

While students are directed to the technical and formal properties and concepts of music, it is the quality of their lived musical experience that will lead to a more meaningful and deepening personal relationship with it. This indicates, for teachers, that recognition of and sensitivity to ‘lived experience’ and ‘meaning-for-the-subject’ will help put our ‘reconstructed logic’ into perspective, allowing a situational sensitivity to social context and the musical lifeworlds of students, to come to the foreground.

*
The bodily experience of the two modes in music practice

Reflecting on my own experience, the cognitive movement between modes mostly goes un-noticed. However, I can identify my engagement in music performance and listening as taking on seemingly narrative / paradigmatic shifts. While I am not always in control of the shifts, often they are conscious acts.

On occasions I have a bodily sense of flowing ‘narratively’ with sounds as they unfold as I listen and as I create ‘musical ideas’. Sounds flow-connected as related events and episodes. I am not thinking or stepping ‘outside the music’ to find representative meanings for I trust my bodily, intuitive grasp of sound relationships and interconnections. There is no thought or hint of ‘explaining the music’. In this ‘narrative mode’ I am aware of a natural flow of experience, and whether spontaneously improvising or playing memorised repertoire, there is a sense of unification of mind, body instrument and sound. I call it a ‘body experience’ because the body is included in the experience and I can move easily from sensations to thoughts. I may have the feeling of watching myself but it is with passive acceptance of passing events. I call this the ‘narrative mode’ because self-awareness does not include emotional detachment, self-criticism or the process of comparing my experience to wider concepts or issues. My improvisations are story-like.

On the other hand, I sometimes ‘lock into’ a paradigmatic cognitive musical mode. Operating within this mode I am more deliberate – thinking conceptually and logically. I’m ‘in my head’ (with a ‘disembodied mind’ - See Johnson, 1987). A certain amount of critical reflection accompanies the process as I try to find the ‘truth’, the ‘right way to do it’. How would Segovia, Joe Pass or my old teacher do it? In this mode I operate tentatively and in that respect, for spontaneous, improvisation-type performances, the processes are not productive. However I productively and consciously use this mode to engage in the more ‘cognitive’ activities of thoughtful practice. In this mode I can utilise a metacognitive process where I watch myself figuring-out technical problems, theorising, making connections, understanding harmonic relationships. I am critical, comparing and judging my performance. I classify sections of my playing into neat concepts as I monitor things like ‘tone-production’, ‘phrasing’ and ‘intonation’. Perhaps we use both modes to various extents but with individual
uniqueness we may have a dominant ‘modality’ that we naturally resort to when constructing meanings, both linguistic and musical, about the world.

A narrative perspective helps me to balance my conceptual and abstract knowledge of music, its universal value and significance - with a more direct observation and understanding of its operations in contextual and experiential use. With the narrative mode I look at music functioning within narrative identities and focus on its part in the life histories and stories of my students and my research participants. It also reflects the personal voice of my lived experience and it connects me to the personal voice of others. While Lenny knew little ‘about' music, he used it to good effect in an important personal context. The worlds of musical identities exist outside any singular paradigmatic vision. The art of pedagogy requires that we become immersed in a much broader vision

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Even though Jorgensen (2003) calls for a ‘transformation of music education’, she believes that it must take place within an objectivist approach. While admitting to a ‘bias toward Western classical music’ and an acknowledgement that there are ‘fuzzy edges’ to our conceptions of what music is, she prefers to ignore Small’s (1998, p. 2) claim that ‘music is not a thing’, dismissing it as ‘philosophical nonsense’ (p. 101). On the other hand, the pragmatist consideration of music and music meaning as verbs rather than nouns and as processes, actions and experiences rather than autonomous objects requires a transformation of one’s conceptual views of phenomena. I regard it as a vital step so that in formal music education the dimensions of musical experience can become a central theme. Any shift from the objectivist perspective will require a philosophical self-transformation in order to ‘bridge the ontological chasm’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 93). This bridging process will be required to pedagogically ‘cross the street’ (Van Manen, 1991, p. 154) in order to be more empathically attuned to student subjectivity and experience. Concern for ‘idiosyncratic and perspectival approaches to music’ (Higgins, 1997), ‘vernacular, informal learning processes’ (Green, 2001) and ‘musical-meaning-for-the-subject’ (Koopman and
Davies, 2001) are just some of the ways that teachers can be drawn to empathic concern for musical lifeworlds. Exploring these dimensions can pave the way for a deeper understanding of the musical lifeworlds of students and also offer ways to adapt to the changing role of formal music education in the new cultural student ‘landscape’.

I found it a liberating feeling to take the leap to a view of ‘things’ as fleeting, fluid, supple and temporal rather than fixed, hard, inflexible and outside time and space.

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Chapter Four

Epistemological and Ontological Foundations

In this chapter I discuss the epistemological and ontological foundations of the thesis. The discussion takes the form of an exploration of my understanding of ‘constructivism’ and also ‘pragmatist’ and ‘postmodern’ perspectives of ontology. The purpose is to reveal my philosophical stance regarding truth, reality and representation and will help to establish ‘ontological authenticity’ and clarification of ‘research legitimacy’. This is a necessity and a hallmark of ‘trustworthiness’ in constructivist inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 180). I have included the section “Validating the Research” in this Chapter as it is linked to and follows on from ontological matters of truth and representation.

In order to include my own lived experience in the process of research construction I present this chapter in the form of phenomenological reflections of the ontological and epistemological implications of what it means to ‘cross the street to the participants’ side’ (Van Manen’s (1991, p. 154). In the spirit of ‘research story-sharing’ the discussion maps a philosophical ‘journey’ and encounter with the ‘Cartesian trap’ (Bernstein, 1983).

In this discussion, ontology and epistemology overlap and merge to some degree, for I acknowledge Crotty’s statement that, ‘to talk of the construction of meaning is to talk of the construction of a meaningful reality’ (1998, p. 10).

*
By rejecting ‘detachment’ and notions of ‘a singular and universal version of
truth’ (Tierney, 1993), I acknowledge that social reality and truths are invented
rather than discovered. With this perspective, ‘what matters about our discourse is
the degree to which we can reach intersubjective agreement about the world, rather
than questions as to the way things really are, apart from our discourse about them’

I began the thesis with an acknowledgement of this ‘intersubjective
agreements’ approach; I was sceptical about trying to discover the way things really
are. I soon experienced an unresolved tension, a nagging doubt about
philosophical counter attacks against objectivist ideals. By accepting one side of the
coin philosophical perspectives do not escape the presence of the other (see Finch
1995, p. 14). For a more complete resolution, I wanted to step outside the dualism
where one position was not a theoretical alternative or counter to the other. Quite
simply, I wanted a new start – to discover new meanings based on new beginnings.

The problem stemmed from within an unresolved ideological position. I
16). This was not just a simple theoretical tangle, an inability to solve a
philosophical problem initiated by Descartes - or a ‘textbook conundrum’ (Rorty,
1983, p. 21). It crystallised into a mental and emotional state bought on through
wrestling with a need to understand more clearly, self and its relationship to the
world. Resolving this issue became a point of focus during my research journey. I
recognised that - ‘to speak of the Cartesian Anxiety is to speak of a construct, (but)
one that is helpful for getting a grip on the primary issues’ (Bernstein, 1983, p. 16).
Importantly, getting a good ‘grip’ was important in order to clarify my position in
relation to those that I would research and also to sanction my approach. I felt the
need to settle my doubts in some form or other, for like Gordon (1998), I didn’t
wish to be ‘ideologically trapped’ and needed to ‘reflectively situate my ideologies’
during the research process (p. 60). Like Gordon I began to question whether I
would need ‘some form of psychoanalysis to determine and articulate exactly the
way in which each of my ideologies and autobiography (would) influence my observations and analysis of the social world’ (p. 59).

I recognised that the problem of trying to unravel the way things “really are” from within an objectivist /subjectivist argument means stepping on to a philosophical treadmill set in motion by the Cartesian dualistic trap. I agreed with Hornsby (1990) who says, ‘many of those who have fought against Cartesian dualism have failed to realise that the battles have always taken place on territory of the enemies making’ (p. 41). With this, I realised that freedom from dualistic positioning required an avoidance of the trap altogether. My excursions into this investigation sought to find new meanings and a personal understanding that did not have its basis ‘on the treadmill’.

In the following discussion of constructivism, pragmatism and postmodernism I attempt to unhook myself from the dualistic trap. However, the reader may note that in my discussion of these ideologies, a flavour of dualism is evident. This I believe is inescapable because they were founded as part of ‘the heavy artillery bought in to attack modernism and objectivism’ (see Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Later in the discussion I move to retreat from the ‘battlefield of the enemies making’ to forge another position.

**Constructivism**

Gergen (1991) explains the dualist Cartesian perspective of modernism stating that it ‘was deeply committed to the view that the facts of the world are essentially there for study. They exist independently of us as observers, and if we are rational we will come to know the facts as they are’ (p. 91). Schwandt (1998) relates this statement by Gergen and then counters the modernist position stating that ‘Constructivists are deeply committed to the contrary view that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind’ (p. 236). Constructivism is then an anti-objectivist paradigm that according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998) ‘assumes a
relativist ontology (there are multiple realities) and a subjectivist epistemology (knower and subject create understandings)” (p. 27). Constructivism links the knower and known by assuming meaning to be a personal, individual construct rather than external to the individual and part of a mind-independent reality (see Kincheloe, 1991, p. 27).

Historically, the Cartesian perspective, while dominant in Western thought, had not been totally exclusive for alternative ideas have run parallel with it. For example, Kincheloe (1991) points out that Giovanni Battista Vico (1668-1744) the Italian philosopher appears to have pre-empted constructivist thought by countering that humans were more than objects. He believed that ‘different conceptual apparatus was necessary for the analysis of social and cultural phenomena from that which might be used to study the structure of the physical world’ (p. 27). Vico’s ideas pre-empted constructivism and interpretivism. These both shared concern for the development of a ‘natural science of the social’ and an ‘emphasis on the world of experience as it is lived, felt, undergone by social actors’ (Schwandt, 1998, p. 236). I also identify early forms of constructivist thought, hidden under the guise of artistic licence within literature. For example when Hamlet announces that “there is nothing either good nor bad but thinking makes it so” (Wells et al p. 1136) Shakespeare makes the point that we take responsibility for constructing our values and judgements as they have nothing to do with objectivist notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’.

There are different types of constructivism but a social variant is often referred to as constructionism. As Crotty (1998) explains, constructionism is an epistemology founded upon knower and known relationships and it recognises that meanings are not subjective and personal but socially generated constructions within the interplay of consciousness and the object of experience (p. 42). This version of constructivism assumes that knowledge is not just created by the individual mind but is a process of social exchange. Lyle (2000) emphasises the nature of social constructivism pointing out that ‘all learning is located in a social, cultural and historical context’ and a social constructivist approach to research will
seek to avoid studying humans as though they were ‘isolated in a laboratory’ (p. 49). The link between the individual and society means that there are social patterns of meaning existing and shared within communities. My approach in this thesis takes into account the social version of constructivism by acknowledging the importance of considering the context of individual perspectives and how realities are specifically lived through (see Schwandt, 1998, p. 240). The ramifications are that the participants’ narratives and ‘lifeworld structures’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 183) of experience are not seen as emerging from a social and cultural vacuum. On this point I make a connection, recognising the compatibility of research paradigms. When considered from an ontological perspective, social constructivism acknowledges the transcendence of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ worlds and in so doing mirrors the phenomenological theory of intentionality where human consciousness is seen as actively constituting the objects of experience. As Crotty (1998) states, constructivism ‘mirrors the concept of intentionality’ (p. 44).

If we accept that the ‘universe can be viewed from multiple perspectives which are constructions of the human mind’ (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 136), the individual perspective becomes an important source of data. The motivation that drives the constructivist approach to research is the belief that understanding social phenomena from the actor’s perspective is a worthwhile epistemological pursuit. In this thesis, the subject of investigation is each individual participant’s ‘musical reality’ or their ‘constructs’ of ‘what music is’ and its meaning in their own lives.

Again, on the social variant of constructivism, Crotty (1998) states that

Because of the essential relationship that human experience bears to its object, no object can be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it, nor can any experience be adequately described in isolation from its object. Experiences do not constitute a sphere of subjective reality separate from, and in contrast to, the objective realm of the external world - as Descartes’ famous ‘split’ between mind and body, and thereby between mind and world, would lead us to imagine.

(p. 45)
Considering Crotty’s opening sentence and applying it to the experience of music - if we supplant the word ‘object’ with ‘music’, we get a social constructivist approach that assumes that ‘music cannot be adequately described in isolation from the conscious being experiencing it’. In the present study, rather than holding to any extreme form of subjectivism, I acknowledge the expanded, social form of constructivism. I am concerned with individual relationships with music and how they are constructed within, and not isolated from social contexts. I recognise that individuals are the constructors of knowledge and the creators of their own musical worlds. Accepting this approach (wholeheartedly) has required a corresponding transformation of my own perspective. Rather than commencing with an objectified, autonomous concept of music and then examining how that ‘object’ manifests in the lives of the participants, I investigate their lifeworld structures of music.

Subjectivity, consciousness and ideas of self are personal, often private and idiosyncratic, but not closed off, contained within isolated spheres. As Cummings, (2000) has explained, viewed constructively, selfhood ‘is not located in some ‘inner’ space, which is known through introspection alone’ (but is) ‘an intrinsically social, interactive, and mobile experience’ (p. 10). With this perspective, constructivist understandings reveal how the selves of the participants are manifested through socially interactive expressions with musical experiences, processes and through the medium of musical meanings. In this way, social constructivism fends off a solipsistic and radical subjectivism that tends to build an imaginary barrier that walls off the interconnection between the ‘inner’ person and ‘outer’ manifestations of the social world.

**Pragmatism**

Pragmatist theory, like that of phenomenology, connects me to ‘lived experience’. Shusterman (2000) also recognises the connection stating that
Pragmatism, as I practice it, is a philosophy of embodied, situated experience. Rather than relying on a priori principles or seeking necessary truths, the pragmatist works from experience, trying to clarify its meaning so that its present quality and its consequences for future experience might be improved.

(p. 97)

In this statement Shusterman questions the nature of ‘truth’ and the seeking of ‘necessary truths’ that are abstracted from experience. Adhering to this pragmatist view I recognise that the stories told by the five participants in interview are accounts of ‘embodied situated experience’ and I interpret them in order to clarify or enhance the meaning of that experience. Similarly, the inclusion of narratives of my own experience and personal voice in the research is intended to be a pragmatic case of ‘working from embodied situated experience’ and a pragmatic use of my own subjectivity and life stories.

The neo-pragmatist perspective (like constructivism) suggests that the concept of ‘truth’ is not a ‘correspondence to reality’ (Rorty, 1982, p. 162) because ‘reality’ is not a single, solid object. Rather ‘reality’ is an ongoing meaningful interaction between environment, mind and sense perceptions and occurs not ‘in the external world nor within the subjective mind of the knower, but within dynamic transactions between the two’ (Barone, 2000, p. 168). According to James (1970, p. 133) and Dewey (1980, p. 54) ideas such as ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ are best viewed as processes that are manifest in actions or experience rather than illusively thought of as autonomous objects. James (1970) suggests that the ‘truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea’ and ‘the great (misguided) assumption of the intellectualists is that truth means essentially an inert static relation’. Similarly, he suggests consciousness and knowledge also are not objects, material things or even ‘entities’ but knowing (p. 4). Polkinghorne (1988) also proposes the notion that verb forms rather than nouns may describe ideas and concepts. While discussing narrative theory, he says, ‘the realm of meaning is not a thing or a substance, but an activity’ (p. 4).

In addition to the writings of Small (1996, 1998) and Elliott (1995) the notion of music as an activity rather than an objective phenomenon has been
proposed from a pragmatist perspective. Määttänen and Westerlund (2001) have argued that to avoid an objectivist approach where knower and known are separated, music is best viewed not as an object but as lived action and experience, as activity, process and as a verb rather than an autonomous object and a noun.

**Postmodern research - ‘representation and the truth’**

Constructivists and pragmatists consider an obsession with ‘truth’ in the social sciences as an outmoded modernist agenda. However, Kvale (1996) suggests that qualitative researchers should continue to clarify their orientations to truth and knowledge claims in order to find a balance – ‘to get beyond the extremes of a subjective relativism where everything can mean everything, and an absolutist quest for the one and only true, objective meaning’ (p. 229). While this enterprise may keep us firmly on the Cartesian ‘treadmill’ it is important for the sake of ‘ontological authenticity’ for according to Bridges (1998), matters of ‘truth’, will not ‘go away’. Bridges raises a challenging issue claiming that questions of truth in research are unavoidable. He does not believe that researchers ever escape some sense of truth seeking or truth claim in their inquiries for as he says the very denial of any involvement with ‘the truth’ is in fact a truth assertion. Bridges goes on to suggest that researchers should acknowledge their complicity and ‘own up’ to the kinds of truth that they are associated with (p. 10). He gives an example of the authors Stronach and MacLure (1997) whose work he is dissecting for ‘truth claims’). He states that, ‘albeit that they are operating within a postmodernist mode, (they) are nevertheless attached to the kind of procedural principles…which operate in the service of establishing the warrant for and hence (as near as we shall ever get to) the truth of our proffered beliefs’ (p. 12). The conclusion that Bridges suggests is that only if we ‘sustain the speech forms of a mixture of command, invitation and question, can we escape without offering anything which resemble(s) a truth claim’ (p. 12). Bridges’ criticism is principally with researchers
who claim that they are not interested in proposing truths, but then proceed to make truth claims.

In answer, I believe the point overlooked by Bridges is that it is possible to accept the paradox of multiple vantage points and versions of ‘reality’ and truth. Importantly, postmodernists suspect and doubt all truth claims (Richardson, 1998). Barone (2001) explains the postmodern approach to research where some theorists no longer partake of the modernist belief that absolute knowledge of an objective reality can be achieved by researchers. These postmodernists even disagree that objectivity must stand as a kind of “regulative ideal” toward which social science must always strive.

( pp. 152-153 )

Postmodern theories provide alternatives to traditional notions of ontology and epistemology. Usher (1997), for example, states that postmodernism actually displaces older, modernist conceptions of epistemology because of its scepticism about the traditional aim of distinguishing true and certain knowledge. He also criticises the metaphoric notion of the modernist social science researcher as a ‘detective’ who ‘seeks the truth usually in the form a quest for a missing or hidden item of knowledge and does not rest until the hidden item of knowledge is found and the truth discovered’ (p. 30). Like narrative research and phenomenology, postmodernists do not seek a universal version of ‘the truth’ of situations. Some postmodern theorists, as Barone (2001a) states, are content to abandon ‘an obsessive quest for certain and total knowledge that transcends a fallible, human perspective’. They ‘opt for an epistemology of ambiguity that seeks out and celebrates meanings that are partial, tentative, incomplete, sometimes even contradictory, and originating from multiple vantage points’ (p. 152).

Postmodern principles influenced my approach to interviewing. I found a poignant explanation by Kvale, (1996) who contrasts the postmodern approach with the positivist, objectivist stance that assumes that nuggets of knowledge or pre-existing categories lie waiting to be discovered and are buried within the interview data. He states:
A postmodern approach forgoes the search of true fixed meanings and emphasises descriptive nuances, differences, and paradoxes. There is a change from a substantial to a relational concept of meaning, with a move from the modern search for the one true and real meaning to a relational unfolding of meanings. Different interpreters constructing different meanings of an interview story is then not a weakness, but a strength of the interview method. Meanings and numbers are constructions of social reality. The interview gives no direct access to unadulterated provinces of pure meanings, but is a social production of meanings through linguistic interaction. ... In this interrelational conception the interviewer does not uncover pre-existing meanings, but supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview.

(p. 226)

‘Validating’ the Research

Scientific truth tests are as relevant to testing fictional truth as knowledge of chemistry is relevant to making soufflés

(Eisner, 1991, p. 50)

In this section I explore matters of research legitimacy, knowledge claims and ‘representation’ to arrive at the concepts of ‘believability’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 53), ‘authenticity’ and ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 180; Mishler, 2000, p. 112). These displace positivist and postpositivist claims where concepts of validity and representation arise from the reification of ‘truth’ and objectivity.

I begin this discussion by presenting statements by Denzin (1997) that problematise the process of research, its purpose and ‘credibility’. He states that - ‘Language and speech do not mirror experience’ (p. 5) and it is ‘no longer possible to represent a life as it is actually lived or experienced’ (p. 61). If this is the case - in
what way then are the portraits in this study ‘valid’ if they do not reflect ‘the truth’ of situations?

Questions raised by traditional notions of legitimacy pose problems when applied to narrative, postmodern, constructivist forms of research for the concept of ‘validity’ relates to positivist and post-positivist ideas of the nature of truth and what counts as valid knowledge. The criterion - that a research account should tell us the truth about some objectively described state of affairs does not address the concerns of postmodern constructivist research (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990, p. 97). The paradigm problem arises because, as Eisner (1991) states, ‘there are no operationally defined truth tests to apply to qualitative research and evaluation’ (p. 53). He adds that we need to explore the issue of legitimisation because there are ‘questions to ask and features to look for and appraise’ (p. 53).

Schön (1991) recognises three truth criteria as representing the ‘traditional tests of validity’ and that relate to three areas of research adequacy or rigor. He states that the tests of research have been viewed as a concern for - ‘correspondence (does it fit the facts?), coherence (does it hang together in an internally consistent and compelling way?), and pragmatism (does it work?)’ (p. 348). Wolcott (1994) has also identified similar tests but refers to them as ‘ontological validity, overall validity and practical validity’ (p. 344). Kvale (1996) agrees, identifying the ‘three classical criteria’ of truth. He states that

The *correspondence* criterion of truth concerns whether a knowledge statement corresponds to the objective world. The *coherence* criterion refers to the consistency and internal logic of a statement. And the *pragmatic* criterion relates the truth of a knowledge statement to its practical consequences.

(p. 238)

Schön (1991) explains that these tests of validity are ‘vexing questions’ for

“Fitting the facts” may mean nothing more than fitting the facts one chooses to notice, the facts ignored being those least
compatible with the proposition in question. “Coherence” may be preferentially applied to the explanation most congenial to one's already accepted theoretical framework. And the inquirer who can derive a more or less effective intervention from any one of several explanations may simply choose to make work the one he or she already prefers.

(p. 348)

Demonstration of the flawed nature of these tests of validity has been regarded by objectivists as the fallibility of subjectivity and the self-as-instrument. It has prompted them to strive for procedural objectivity that involves ‘method that eliminates or aspires to eliminate, the scope for personal judgement in the description and appraisal of a state of affairs’ (Eisner, 1991, p. 44). Eisner counters this need for objective scientific rigor by stating that it goes against the grain of qualitative research that ‘depends on personal insight and interpretation, not simply upon the following of a set of replicable procedures’ (1991, p. 50).

While all three tests of validity, as Schön has suggested, have limitations, the coherence and pragmatic tests are frequently retained in qualitative research. The first, the test of correspondence, is suited only to objectivist approaches that are intent on discovering undistorted facts about the ‘one reality’. Mishler (2000) finds the correspondence test inappropriate to interpretive research. He states -

I do not rely on a correspondence model of truth, where the earlier “objective” reality serves as a validity criterion for what is being told now. This is not a weakness, but rather a hallmark of interpretive research in which the key problem is understanding how individuals interpret events and experiences, rather than assessing whether or not their interpretations correspond to or mirror the researchers’ interpretive construct of “objective” reality.

(p. 128)

Difficulties stem from the contrast between paradigms. On one hand there is research that seeks to mirror an ‘objective reality’ in order to predict and control by discovering ‘the one real meaning’ (see Kvale, 1996, p. 225). Here the
correspondence test of validity determines scientific accuracy in experiment, testing and hypothesis deduction. It pertains to the domain of measurement when we ask ourselves if we have measured what we set out to measure (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 175; Wolcott, 1994, p. 343). On the other hand there is research that generates understanding through interpreting and describing qualities, experience and ‘meaning events on their own lifeworld ground’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 59). These aim to describe qualities rather than seeking matters of fact. Mishler (2000) concurs stating that ‘the prevailing conception of and procedures for validation are based on an experimental model whereas our (qualitative) studies are designed explicitly as an alternative to that model, with features that differ markedly and in detail from those characteristic of experiments’ (p. 120). As qualitative studies may not utilise experiment-based criteria and methods they are often viewed as lacking in scientific rigor, and therefore have ‘failure built in from the start and (are) denied legitimacy’ (Mishler, 2000, p. 120).

The ‘vexing questions’ of validity have been a concern for Wolcott (1994, 1995) who is prepared to dismiss them (‘validity neither guides or informs my work’ – 1994, p. 356). However, he states that despite the dismissal, ‘it won’t go away’ (1995, p. 170). If we choose to confront the issue of validity, he says, it will be about ‘whether we are willing to accept the language of quantitative researchers as the language of all research, or whether different approaches, like different art forms, warrant different criteria for judging them’ (1995, p. 168). Recently, many theorists have refused to accept an ‘inappropriate language’ of validity and have set about re-formulating criteria for evaluating research.

Richardson (2000), for example, re-formulates the concept of validity as a process of ‘crystallisation’ She is not content with the narrow assumption that in postmodern research there is a ‘fixed point’ that can be triangulated and develops, through metaphor, a more detailed understanding of the complexity of qualitative research. The triangle, a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object is superseded by the more suitable metaphor of the crystal. This ‘combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and
angles of approach’ (p. 934). What we see through our inquiries depends ‘on our angle of repose’ and crystallisation allows us to ‘reflect or refract’ on the dimensions of the interpretations and create a ‘deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic’ (p. 934).

In this study, phenomenology and narrative interpretive procedures, acting like ‘the properties of the crystal-as-metaphor’ have assisted different ways of ‘reflecting and refracting multiple layers of meaning’ (see Lincoln and Guba, 2000, pp. 181-182). By using a composite research approach and also by using and exploring different ‘ways of knowing’ I view the data from different angles. I ‘metaphorically turn the crystal many ways (in order) to see the interweaving of processes in the research (the musical lifeworlds): discovery, seeing, telling, storying, re-presentation’ (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 182).

In this study data captured in the interviews are crystallised with meanings interpreted from close observations in the field and music performances.

‘Validation’ - through the discourse of the community

Eisner (1991), in rejecting the validity test of correspondence believes it to be problematic as it does not avoid ‘the pitfalls of objectivity’. He assumes that ‘mind and matter exist in a relationship of transaction’ (p. 50) and ‘ontological objectivity is not securable’ (p. 51). He recognises that because knowledge is socially constructed research validation is a matter of consensus of agreement by ‘competent others’ (p. 112). Both Eisner and Barone (1997) have reiterated that validation is inevitably a social affair where the value of research is its acknowledgement by a ‘competent critical community’ (p. 86).

Kvale (1996) also relinquishes the correspondence test of rigor and adds that the quest for an ‘absolute, certain knowledge is replaced by a conception of defensible knowledge claims’ (p. 240). Placing validity within a constructivist context, he states that
a modern belief in knowledge as a mirror of reality recedes and a
social construction of reality, with coherence and pragmatic
criteria of truth, comes to the foreground. Method as a
guarantee of truth dissolves; with a social construction of reality
the emphasis is on the discourse of the community.

(p. 240)

With this perspective qualitative research ‘validation’ is achieved not through
correspondence with ‘one objective reality’, but by defending our knowledge claims
through social discourse within the community. However, a degree of empathy and
like-mindedness is necessary. For example, the academic legitimacy of a
constructivist study would require an intersubjective and mutual recognition
between the researcher/writer and the reader/critic, of the social construction of
knowledge.

Authenticity, Believability and Trustworthiness

It is the responsibility of the researcher/writer to make the research methods
and procedures of the study ‘visible’ so that the reader/critic may ‘be able to make a
reasoned and informed assessment about whether or not (the) validity claims are
well warranted’ (Mishler, 2000, p. 130). The ‘visibility’ of methods and procedures
will enhance the authenticity of the research. With narrative and literary-based
research, the researcher/writer will also strive for compellingness and believability
and to create a text that ‘like good art possesses the capacity to pull the person who
experiences it into an alternative reality’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 72). Correspondingly, the reader/critic must construct the reality of the text for it ‘resides
neither in the literary work as object-in-the-world nor in the subjective ‘mind’ of the
reader, but within a continuous field of experience between the two’ (Barone, 2000,
p. 138).

Mishler (2000) sanctions the social construction of ‘trustworthiness’ in his
view of research legitimacy. He states…
I do not propose that my methods and procedures “validate” my findings and interpretations. That would be counter to my basic thesis that validation is the social construction through which the results of a study come to be viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their own work.

(p. 130)

Mishler sees trustworthiness arising not from ‘methodological validity’ but from the ‘transferability’ of his research. Polkinghorne (1988) on the other hand also holds to the notion of trustworthiness but believes it arises from the clarity of procedures and methods. He states that, ‘narrative studies do not have formal proofs of reliability’, they must rely instead ‘on the details of their procedures to evoke an acceptance of the trustworthiness of the data’ (p. 177).

Trustworthiness gained through the ‘clarity of the details’ relates to the coherence and ‘visibility’ of procedures. This is where it ‘hang(s) together in an internally consistent and compelling way’ (Schön, 1991 p. 348). Coherence will, according to Kvale (1996) depend on the quality of craftsmanship (p. 241).

According to Eisner (1991) structural corroboration is a criterion for assessing coherence. This is a qualitative alternative to ‘triangulation’. It differs from positivist research where the traditional concept is the ‘mustering of evidence’ in order to arrive at a strict, non-refutable coherence or correspondence with an objective ‘truth’. Within qualitative research, ‘structural corroboration (is) when multiple types of data are related to each other to support or contradict the interpretation and evaluation of a state of affairs’ (Eisner 1991, p. 110).

In this study I have used ‘multiple forms of data’ to ‘structurally corroborate’ interpretations. I did not ‘muster evidence’ to form an objective truth but sought to create a larger perspective through ‘multidimensionalities and angles of approach’. An example here is where a ‘story’ of a participant experience is developed not only from interpretations of his or her (narrative) account of it, but by including into the ‘story’, interpretations of the perspectives of either parents, music teachers or my
own observations of the experience. Often meaningful connections were made between my observations of participants in musical performance and the accounts they expressed about the performance during interviews. These corroborations assisted a broader interpretation of the musical lifeworld of each participant. On this issue, Eisner (1991) states that, ‘different kinds of data converge or support each other, the picture, like an image in a puzzle, becomes more distinct’ (p. 56). With this function multiple data sources are crystallised in order to help form interpretations from multiple viewpoints.

The usefulness of the research

Trust will be developed if the research is coherent and ‘usable’. Eisner (1991) declares that ‘the most important test of any (educational) qualitative study is its usefulness’ (p. 58) and that ultimately the test is the extent that it facilitates the formation of policy or improvement in practice (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 86). Instrumental utility or the pragmatics of the research is assisted with referential adequacy (Eisner, 1991, pp. 53-60 and pp. 110-114). On this point Eisner, while discussing the role of the researcher as critic states that,

Criticism is referentially adequate to the extent to which the reader is able to locate in its subject matter the qualities the critic addresses and the meanings he or she ascribes to them. In this sense criticism is utterly empirical; its referential adequacy is tested not in abstractions removed from qualities, but in the perception and interpretation of the qualities themselves

(p. 114)

This quote raises an important consideration. Research that explores the structures of meaning and the qualities of experience may be more akin to those works of literature that develop insight into the nature of human experience. Like works of art, these forms of research then warrant criticism or judgement from an aesthetic angle. The aesthetic qualities we evaluate may include whether the work is
compelling, plausible (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 185) having tight argument and rightness of fit (Eisner, 1991, p. 53 and p. 111), is persuasive, or even provocative (see Wolcott, 1994, p. 346).

*A philosophical ‘leap’*

Wittgenstein, Heidegger and William James, although on quite different philosophical pathways, made many similar observations and had ideas that on closer examination are related (see Okrent, 1988, p. 280). All three proposed a new direction for philosophy that would be achieved through a de-metaphysicalized view of the ‘inner world’. In the case of Wittgenstein, and Heidegger, these were ideas commenced in Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Being and Time respectively, and then proposed in detail in subsequent ‘turn-about’ or Khere in their later works. Finch (1995) describes Wittgenstein’s contribution. He states that

Wittgenstein's greatest achievement was that he overturned the assumption of two millennia of Western thought that an “inner world” of the subject has to be constructed on (and can be justified by) the model of the metaphysicalized objective world. An objectified “internality” has been taken for granted, particularly since the time of Saint Augustine; we have the same thing, merely secularised, in Descartes and, in another greatly changed form in the presuppositional “transcendental psychology” of Kant.

(p. 75)

While Husserl rejected the dualism between consciousness and nature, he accepted another – the dualism between consciousness and its intentional objects (On this issue, Gergen, 1991, p. 102, asks Why do we presume a real world on the one hand and an experienced world on the other?). Husserl was unable to let go of the Kantian notion of objects ‘in themselves’ (noumena) and objects, as they are cognitively experienced (phenomena). Heidegger, on the other hand, reacted to
Husserl and rejected this secondary dualism. Like Wittgenstein he recognised a demetaphysicalized or transcendent state believing that we begin with ‘Being-in-the-world’ - which is not separable into consciousness on one hand and objects on the other (Solomon, 2001, p. 34). As ‘Being-in-the-world’ I engage directly with the world, not with sensations of the world (Moran, 2000, p. 232). This argument is remarkably similar to that proposed by William James (1976) who believed in such a ‘pure diaphaneity’ of consciousness that he abandoned a notion of its existence altogether. We can only observe it, James stated, through its acts of ‘pure experience’ or the functioning of thinking by acts of knowing (p. 3).

In my philosophical journey I investigated (the surface) of Wittgensteinian ‘new philosophy’. I followed leads that explored his approach to ‘getting off the Cartesian treadmill or battleground’. Wittgenstein likened his earlier experience of the (Cartesian) dilemma to a man being trapped in a room facing a blank wall and imagining doors and windows through which he could try and escape. ‘He then suddenly realises that all the time a door behind him had been open. We cannot escape through the abstracted, metaphysical doors supposedly in front of us but there is no more prison when we find the door behind us’ (Finch, 1995, pp. 32-33). The illusion of a metaphysicalized inner being facing metaphysical ‘escape’ structures is the imprisoning factor.

According to Wittgenstein, the myth that the Self is private, isolated and opposed to an external world is dispelled with the acceptance of a demetaphysicalized inner being. Many philosophers since Descartes remained unavoidably trapped by acknowledging the very existence of a metaphysical ‘internal’ that opposes the physical ‘external’. From this position inside the ‘metaphysical room’ philosophy then becomes fixated on finding a way out. However, from the Wittgensteinian perspective, the ‘bifurcation of mind’ is not annulled by constructing an alternative to objectivism, a conceptual opposite, but by an ontological and epistemological ‘leap’. Armed with this information we can acknowledge that the subject/object dyad is indeed dead. Barone (2000) confirms
this while discussing the dyad. He reveals how subjectivity, which is often taken as the alternative to its dyadic partner objectivity, is now ‘a goner’ (see pp. 161-169).

Bernstein (1983) has suggested that the exorcising of Cartesian Anxiety is not just a theoretical problem, but also a practical task (p. 230). How does one proceed with an awareness of this exorcised position? Simply by acknowledging, in the words of Wittgenstein, that the fly is let out of the fly-bottle (1968, p. 103). Or put less metaphorically, to accept the situation where ‘the solipsistic subject is released from the trap in the human being’ (Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 309 - also commentary by Finch, 1995, pp. 24 and 84-88).

* 

How does this ‘new’ philosophical understanding change my perception and approach to explicating the structures of meaning in lived experience? From a Wittgensteinian perspective the search for ‘significances’ and ‘potentialities of meaning’ in data (Kvale, 1996, p. 4 and p. 193) becomes a language game that involves rearranging rather than a process of digging. Additionally the phenomenological ‘essence’ of something is not hidden but ‘already lies open to view’. Finch (1995) discusses Wittgenstein’s position and paraphrases the description of essence found in Philosophical Investigations (1968, p. 43, n. 92)

(Essence is) something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, (not) something that lies beneath the surface. (Not) something that lies within, which we see when we look into the thing, and which an analysis digs out.

(p. 157)

Finch (1995) then goes on to elaborate this process. He states

The imagery of rearranging instead of digging is vivid and to the point. The search for the “behind-the-world reality”, which Nietzsche so brilliantly exposed at the end of his life as the central idea in the history of Western metaphysics, here takes the form of a “below-the-world” foundation. It is much more
plausible to believe that *everything we need is already in plain view*. As Nietzsche thought too, we have been chasing phantasms, chimeras, and illusions in trying to find the super-real, and it is time now to open our eyes and look around.

(p. 158)

When I first read the above quotes I had a startling feeling of recognition of something amazingly simple within what before, had been the complex ideas of Wittgenstein. With the concept of *rearranging* I grasp a new perspective. I have the feeling of making a leap and a new beginning.

- I am
- I recognise a ‘non-self-conscious understanding’ that simply *allows* understanding. Zen also recognises the de-metaphysicalized operation of the *Unconscious* or ‘*everyday mind*’ where ‘there is no specific consciousness of its own workings’ (Suzuki, 1969, p. 106). Believing there is something extra, a ‘behind-the-world reality’, is like, to quote a Zen parable, ‘trying to add another head on the one I already have’.
- From the non-self conscious position I play *language games* in order to build up a picture of the world… and further pictures of the pictures.
- The construction of meaning is paradoxical. I see what Wittgenstein proposes – that there are two modes of thinking – using the first mode, abstraction piles up *picture upon picture of the world*. It feels as though knowledge grows as I *dig* into a ‘behind-the-world-reality’ in a process that is a kind of analysis of existence.
This ‘abstracting, analytical mode’ reflects the *picturing* character of language. What is important about this mode is its purpose, which is to always look for the ‘truth’ of the world and my position in relation to it.

What is wrong with this mode? According to Wittgenstein it is an Augustinian misuse of language, which illusively tries to solve the hidden issues of the world because language and philosophy are assumed to be representations of an external world. BUT, without the notion of an *external world*, words are simply components in ‘language games’. In fact ‘all the *functional language we learn is learned in language games.*’ That is, words are used to make things happen. The child says "cookie" not to name the cookie, but to *get a cookie* (Shawyer, 1996).

Heidegger also acknowledged the ‘abstracting mode’ believing that it operates within a metaphysical ontology rather than from the primary position of ‘Being-in-the-world’. From the metaphysical position it seeks knowledge of the *being of being*, rather than describing the *meaning of being*.

However, from a position in the ‘other’ mode (Wittgenstein’s *new mode*) meanings of experience are synthesised. In my inquiries I sift and sort in order to find the language constructions that satisfy the non-self conscious understanding or *knowing*. I am *re–searching*. Or as Wittgenstein says – *rearranging* what is already known for ‘everything lies open to view’ (1968, p. 50). The meaning constructions that *resonate* are retained. My search for meanings is in fact a searching for an erudite way (a suitable language game) of saying something that is *already open to view*.

This second, new Wittgensteinian mode represents the *manifestational, expressive and performative* character of language. Functionally, its task is not to seek ‘truth of an external world’. Emancipated from a metaphysical illusion of a private self, with this second mode ‘epistemology becomes redundant’ – for as Finch (1995) states, ‘we don’t have to *know* the meaning, we have to *do* the meaning’ (p. 12).

Although Wittgenstein *extracted himself*, Finch (1995) states that we are mostly still under the spell of abstraction (p. 172). However, the postmodern process of ‘*languaging* to enhance meaning’ (Usher, 1997) is an epistemological alternative to an older epistemology of ‘picturing’ in order to pile up abstractions.

*
A new dimension - a ‘rearranged’ vantage point

The Wittgensteinian theory of ‘two modes’ now sits comfortably in my way of ‘construing reality’ and it compliments the Brunerian version (a new, rearranged structure of my understanding!) I identify the similarity that exists between, on one hand, the Wittgensteinian abstract, picture-upon-picture mode and the Brunerian paradigmatic mode. Similarity also exists on the other hand between the rearranging, descriptive mode, and the narrative.

The narrative and rearranging modes function similarly. In these modes we are not involved in discovering the real picture of a one, real world, but are involved in rearranging understandings and meanings of experience and events - into organised patterns, structures and plots. My own propensity to look for similarities between ideas and concepts, is an example of the case in point – it is an example of rearranging - to generate understanding in order to make sense of our experience.

*

In this thesis my paradigmatic thinking is represented by sections of text that build up ‘picture upon picture’ while I am engaged in the process of ‘turning data into stories’ in the portraits. These ‘pictures’ are used to ‘to identify episodes as an instance of a general type, category or concept’ (Polkinghorne, 1995, pp. 9-10). But from the other vantage-point I use the narrative/Wittgensteinian, ‘newer’ mode for its suited purpose, which is the enhancement of the meaning of particular situations through a process of rearranging to make meaning visible. The narrative sections of text in the portraits portray phenomenological ‘essences’ within ‘lived experience material’ recognising that they are ‘open to view’ through rearrangement.

Representation in the narrative portraits

The representative function of the portraits of musical lifeworlds is, to use the words of MacLure and Stronach (1993), not to ‘tell it like it is’ but to ‘tell it as I
see it’ or to ‘tell it as it may possibly be’ (p. 379). As Clough (1992) states, ‘the world of real lived experience can still be captured, if only in the writer’s memoirs, fictional experimentation, or dramatic readings (p. 136 – quoted in Denzin, 1997, p. 18). By including the narrative and rearranging ‘modes of construing reality’, the task of the portraits’ is to ‘represent’ the participants in a double sense. The first is with an artistic meaning of ‘represent’, which is - to compose a new rearranged ‘picture of understanding’. The second is to act as an agent for the subject – to ‘represent his or her interests and to ensure that his or her “voice” is heard’ (MacLure and Stronach, 1993, p. 379).

Summary and reflection

In this chapter the epistemological and ontological foundations of the thesis were presented. The discussion sought to ‘make visible’ my philosophical stance regarding truth, reality and representation while seeking to establish ‘ontological authenticity’ and ‘research legitimacy’ for the thesis. ‘Writing’ was used as the means and method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000, p. 923) as I explored, clarified and deepened my understanding of constructivism and also pragmatist and postmodern perspectives of ontology (I expand the topic of ‘writing as research’ in detail on p. 134).

From this exploration I have come to recognise that emancipation from the Cartesian treadmill offers a new contact where we operate from an understanding where (again to reiterate the point) ‘we don’t have to know the meaning, (of meaning) we have to do the meaning’ (Finch 1995, p. 12). Also instead of questioning whether meanings are pre-existent and inherent in life’s experiences and texts, or constructed in individual minds, we may recognise simply ‘that everything already lies open to view and it becomes surveyable by a rearrangement’ (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 43, n. 92).
Chapter Five

Methodology, Methods and Procedures

Introduction

In Chapter Two I discussed narrative and phenomenological theoretical principles. In this chapter I now describe how the theoretical principles form the basis of specific methodologies. Narrative and phenomenological methodologies are strategies geared toward enhancing understanding of experience-for-the-other, emic perspectives and individual ‘realities’ and they seek the ‘situation-specific meanings that are constructed by social actors’ (Schwandt, 1998, p. 221). Research phenomenologists seek to understand phenomenal experience ‘as it is lived, not merely as it is theorised’ (Pinar, et al. 1995, p. 408), and narrative researchers collect stories of lives and re-write them as narratives of experience (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

Importantly, after the discussion of methodology, I explain the logistical procedures, methods and techniques used to conduct the study. This includes the recruitment of participants, gaining access to the contexts of their musical lifeworlds, the data generation processes used ‘in the field’, and the data interpretation processes used. In addition, ‘arts-based’ design elements and literary forms of expression (Barone and Eisner, 1997; Barone, 2000, 2001) are described as these are used to enhance the re-storying of data.
The ‘case study’ framework

The thesis is ‘a series of phenomenological narratives’ but it may also be defined as a collection of case studies. By following the directions of Stake (1995) each participant is considered an ‘intrinsic case’, a ‘bounded system and context’ where focus is placed on the ‘particularity and complexity of the single case’ (see Stake, 1995, p. x). Stake (1995) suggests that with case study, we also consider the *issues* within the ‘bounded system’. ‘Issues’, he states, when viewed as ‘conceptual structure’ help force attention to ‘complexity and contextuality’ and by identifying the *issues* we ‘become familiar with an entity, how it struggles and copes with problems’ (p. 16). The *issues* that I focus on in each case study include the relationship of each ‘case’ to specific realms of ‘lived experience with music teaching and learning’.

By avoiding cross-case analysis and comparisons my aim is to foreground individuality and uniqueness and to highlight what is musically personal, perspectival and idiosyncratic to each participant. Importantly this aim precludes the making of broad generalisations for as Stake (1995) suggests, ‘a single case or just a few cases are a poor basis for generalisation’ (p. 7).

Narrative Methodology

As a methodological approach to ‘knowing and structuring experience’ (Bruner, 1986, Polkinghorne, 1988) narrative inquiry is ‘sweeping a range of academic disciplines’ (Josselson, 1995, p. 31). As an approach to the idiographic study of lives it has flowered in many overlapping and related fields. These include psychology (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Sarbin, 1986; Mishler, 1986a; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995; Josselson and Lieblich, 1994; Murray, 1995), social science (Mishler, 1986b, 1999; Tierney, 1993; Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995; Richardson, 1997; Bochner, 2001), education (Egan, 1986; Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, 1994, 2000; Bruner,

The methodology of narrative inquiry is based on ‘intelligent applications of the use of narrative (theory) … for the understanding of human lives’ (Lieblich, 1994, p. x1). The methodology makes use of the personal accounts of informants as these contain descriptions and interpretations of the structures of experience, which are then available for further description and interpretation by the researcher. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the inquiry process as the capturing and reporting of storied knowledge and suggest that narrative inquirers ‘live, tell, retell and relive stories’ (p. 71). In a narrative approach data is ‘captured’ from any available form of descriptive record or social text. These may include interviews, field notes, autobiographical writing, journals, oral history, annals, chronicles, memory boxes, photographs and artefacts, letters and conversations, speeches, visual records such as film, videos and music (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, pp. 96-115; Denzin, 1997, p. 231, also Hatch 2002, p. 280).

As my focus was the phenomenon of lived musical experience, I chose to collect ‘field texts’ from ‘shared work in the field’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 265). This included – the conducting of semi-structured, in depth interviews with the five participants, videotaping or audio recording musical performances by them, conducting informal interviews with parents and teachers of the student participants, writing field notes of observations ‘in the field’ and keeping a reflective journal.

Narrative researchers see the data generation process as a joint living out of the narratives of both researcher and participants. This conjoining of lifeworld experience means that narrative inquiry is viewed as a collaboration and co-construction of data. Researchers ‘live in’ the participant’s storied accounts, and therefore include stories of their own experiences in their field observations and field notes (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 275).

In post-positive research designs, when the data generation processes have been conducted, the next phase would traditionally be the step of ‘interpreting data
and presenting findings’. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) however, refer to this phase as ‘making meaning out of experience by turning field texts into research texts’ (p. 119). This requires a detailed investigation and interpretation of the raw data or field texts in order to turn them into a meaningful and readable form. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) refer to this process as restorying or retelling. They describe it as follows –

Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analysing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then re-writing the story to place it within a chronological sequence. Often when individuals tell a story, this sequence may be missing or not logically developed, and by restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas.

(p. 332)

As Kvale (1996) concludes, the narrative researcher’s task is to answer the question ‘How can I reconstruct the original story told to me by the interviewee into a story I want to tell my audience?’ (p. 185). Thus, the term narrative inquiry refers to both that which is investigated (the stories and the meanings embedded within reflections of experience) and also the means by which the work is undertaken and presented (thinking narratively to synthesise and interpret the meanings inherent in the stories). The structuring of causal links into a new, readable story requires attention to scene and plot. Scene is the ‘place where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining roles’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). ‘Plot’ is the structure of the action of the story, or, as Clark (2004) suggests - ‘the series of events consisting of an outline of the action of a narrative or drama’ (p. 1).

My field notebook and reflective journal were important for recording observations and impressions. Importantly, interpretation did not commence when all the field research had been conducted. It took place concurrently with the data generation processes in ‘an ongoing fashion’ as I did not wish ‘to wait until I was
removed from the research context’ (see Hatch, 2002, p. 56). It was vital, in many cases to capture fleeting impressions and “on-the-spot” intuitive ideas

With narrative methods I ‘gained access’ to musical lifeworlds by ‘capturing’ and interpreting the participant’s stories. Additionally, I have utilised phenomenological methods to focus on the ‘primacy of lived experience’ and *phenomenological reflection* to capture the *essence* of musical lifeworld experience for the participants.

*Phenomenological Methodology*

Phenomenological methodology advanced primarily within the developing discipline of qualitative psychology (Gurwitsch, 1966; Giorgi, Fischer and Von Eckartsberg, 1971; Aanstoos, 1984; Giorgi, 1984; Wertz, 1984; Von Eckartsberg, 1986; Karlsson, 1993). The earliest of these writings have influenced other areas of research where further adaptations have been made, notably in education (Van Manen, 1990) and social science and health psychology (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 1996).

Phenomenological researchers are concerned with ‘the meaning of lived experience’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). They focus on phenomena as consciously experienced in everyday life and seek to understand the identified phenomena ‘as it is lived, not merely as it is theorised’ (Pinar, *et al* 1995, p. 408). A phenomenological researcher ‘studies the subjects’ perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects’ consciousness (and seeks) to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences (in order to) explicate their essential meanings’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 53). Another perspective is held by Fuller (1990) who links a theoretical principle of phenomenology to a methodological application where meaning is interpreted from experience. He states that
Phenomenology is the plea for a confrontation with “the things themselves”, phenomena on their own lifeworld ground. And phenomenology at the same time is a method for understanding these “things”, these everyday events of meaning, an interpretive describing of the invariant structure of meaning events.

(p. 43)

Again, as with the narrative schedule, the art of writing and rewriting is fundamental to phenomenological research. Moustakas (1994) describes the writing stage where lived meanings and interpretations are presented as a ‘composite textural-structural description’ of the essence of experience (pp. 121-122). Van Manen (1990) describes the important transferring of interpretations into research text. He states that

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.

(p. 36)

Informed by this description, in the musical lifeworld portraits, I have inserted interpretations of data that are designed to capture phenomenological expressions of the essence of lived experience. These sections are reflexive re-livings and reflective appropriations of meaningful musical experiences. Coupled with narrative interpretations, in addition to the concept of texts as re-livings, I consider the student portraits as phenomenological re-tellings of musical lifeworlds as told in narrative form (see Bruner, 1986, p. 6, also Denzin, 1997, p. 61).

In this study, the ‘contextual world’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 79) where data are collected includes the home, school and communities of musical practice. These physical spaces are the contexts of the inquiry. However, as the explicit intention of phenomenology is ‘to investigate meaning on its own lifeworld ground’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 25), I recognise that it is the music meaning structures generated within the physical spaces that are the contextual targets. The focus becomes – not only the spaces themselves but how they are existentially ‘lived in’. Van Manen (1990) refers
to this concept of space as *lived spatiality*, which is one of four *existential realms* or *lifeworld existentials* (p. 101 and 172). In addition to *spatiality* (lived space) the other existentials are ‘*temporality* (lived time), *corporeality* (lived body) and *sociality* (lived relationship to others)’ (p. 101 and 172). Importantly, these realms are contextual focal points where meanings are uncovered.

I follow Van Manen’s suggestion and reflect on the existential realms within the music lifeworld ground of each participant. These, I refer to as lived music-time, lived music-space, lived music-body and lived music-social relations.

**The contexts of lived music-space and lived music-time**

To consider space and time phenomenologically is to study how they are ‘lived in’ and ‘lived through’. Importantly, these existential realms are the foundations of our experience. For example, when discussing ‘lived space’ Fuller (1990) suggests that it is not grounded in physical, objective space. Rather, it is the other way around. He states that

> Objective space clearly is not, in phenomenology’s view, the one underlying space on the basis of which all other spaces are consequently built up. That prerogative belongs rather to lived spatiality.

(p. 71)

Also, according to Van Manen (1990) chronological or ‘clock time’ is different to ‘lived time’ (p. 104). For example, in each portrait, the chronological sequencing of musical events and episodes is the descriptive backdrop to the meanings constructed within existential lived music-time.

Lived music-time and space are more than the ‘when and where’ of the participant’s relationships with music. They are the ‘meaning dimensions’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 103) of time and the locations where the meanings occur. With
this guide, I focus on the spatial and temporal ‘lived’ meanings uncovered from the participants’ accounts of their lives, including

- school timetables, classes, private lessons, examinations, after-school rehearsals, school concerts and tours;
- community music events such as pantomimes, theatre productions and eisteddfodds;
- other performances such as band competitions, busking on weekends and holidays and also time spent “looking for gigs”;
- time spent on computers – composing and recording;
- attending concerts and festivals;
- private listening and relaxing to music;
- looking for “good CDs”, discussing music whilst “hanging out” with musician friends.

Additionally, all of the five participants spend time engaged with either one or more related performing arts and associated activities. Some of these include dance and drama and stage and lighting production.

The contexts of lived music-body and lived music-social-relations

Observations of participant musical performances offer opportunities for phenomenological reflection on the existential realm and experiential context of the lived music-body. To do this I suspend or ‘bracket’ (as far as possible) my array of music “teacher, performer, connoisseur, technician, assessor” selves where attention is directed toward the quality of sound and its production techniques. I am then able to focus on the lived music-body in action, and ask myself, “How is the participant bodily (living) in the music?” “How do the bodily gestures indicate meaningful structures within the performance experience?” Importantly, in addition to understanding the body’s relationship to music experience, by focussing on these questions I am able to make further interpretations based on
discovered connections between meanings expressed by the participants in interviews with the actions that I have observed in their musical performance. Here is an example of this interpretive process with the participant Jan –

Jan had mentioned, in interview, how she deliberately selects songs where the lyrics have meaningful ‘messages’ that express what she feels about her life. As I was transcribing this part of the interview, I began to think intently about her comments and wondered if this related to the song she sang at the performance I had witnessed. I decided to watch the videotape of her singing the song ‘Lion Tamer’. I made an important connection between what she had described and what she was now singing and expressing in the song. I realise how the performance is especially meaningful for her and how she is ‘bodily’ located in the music. The lyrics poetically and metaphorically reflect certain personal perceptions she harbours of self. They reflect a specific concern that she has in her life. From her performance, I learn how music is used as a form of expression of her personal life matters. (See page 206 for details)

The existential, phenomenological lifeworld realm of social musical relationships is an important contextual focal point within the study. As Van Manen (1990) states, ‘parent-child and teacher-child relationships… are charged with interpersonal significance’ (p. 106). In this study, significances are explored within the interpersonal musical relationships with family members, teachers, classmates and fellow musicians. They provide insight into the social and musical influences that shape musical identities.

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An Outline of Procedures, Techniques and Processes

The following table is a brief outline of the research design. The details of each stage will follow.
Research Procedures

• Ethical permission to conduct the study was sought and granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Tasmania.

• Contact was made with the appropriate authorities and governing bodies and permission was granted to conduct the research in a Tasmanian State school and a Private college.

• Contact was made with the Principals of the schools. Access was granted and music teachers agreed to participate and assist in the student recruitment process.

• Five music students were the principal participants in the study. Parent/s and music teachers of the students were important secondary participants.

• The students were self-selected – volunteering after attending the project information talk given by me as a guest speaker in their school music classes.

• All participants read study information sheets and signed participant consent forms. Participating parents read and signed parental consent forms and participating music teachers read and signed teacher consent forms.

Data Collection Procedures

• Three 30 minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each student participant. Single, informal interviews were conducted with the parent/s of each student participant 4 and also with their school music teachers. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

• Students were observed while in musical performance. These performances were either video or audio taped. My field and reflective journal notes formed an important source of narrative and phenomenological data.

Data Interpretation

• Data was interpreted using a) Narrative analytical procedures (Polkinghorne, 1995) and b) Phenomenological reflection and interpretation (Wertz, 1984 and Van Manen, 1990). This structure is designed to blend interpretations of lived experience with ‘storied knowledge’ and ‘paradigmatic, conceptual knowledge’.

• Composite portraits were narratively constructed using the data interpretations. Writing the research portraits was perceived as a method for further reflection and discovery of lived meanings – not only of musical lifeworlds, but also of different ‘ways of thinking’ about music and pedagogy and researcher/researched relationships. Arts-based and literary design elements were used as vehicles for presenting storied meanings and enhancing representations of lived meanings.

Table 1. The Research Design

To recruit music students I sought access, through the Tasmanian Department of Education, to a State senior secondary school and a private,

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4 There is one exception here. I later abided by Jeremiah’s request not to meet his parents.
independent college located in the Tasmanian capital city of Hobart. I specifically targeted these schools as they have strong musical reputations in the local community. The music department of each offers a variety of courses, band and ensemble programs, and private music tuition. Many students from both schools go on to undertake tertiary music study.

The public school, Riverside College is focussed on vocational training and the music course structures are centred on contemporary music forms such as rock and ‘pop’ styles, jazz and musical theatre. However, the school does have a traditional concert band and it caters for individual, enthusiastic Western art (classical) musicians. The contemporary outlook is emphasised with music technology, audio design and associated subjects such as media, video, sound and lighting courses. During my visits to Riverside I observed a strong ‘pop’ culture where musical rivalry between the College rock bands was a feature as each would strive each year to win the local ‘Battle of the Bands Competition’.

On the other hand the musical spirit of St. Catherine’s, the private, independent school is founded in its longstanding Western art tradition. The music program, with the inclusion of strings and a choral strand, features an orchestra and several choirs. The music courses do not feature the practice of rock and popular styles and whilst students may receive tuition in guitar the focus is on Western art repertoire. However, popular style is represented in a well-supported musical theatre program and large-scale productions are a regular feature of the college musical life.

The participant recruitment procedure

Permission was granted from the Tasmanian Department of Education to conduct the research and I proceeded to contact the schools. After a meeting and discussion with each principal I was introduced to music teachers who then arranged for me to present a short research recruitment talk to students before the commencement of music lessons.
"My research project aims to contribute to our understanding of the needs and changing nature of music education. In order to do this my plan is to hear the individual perspectives of enthusiastic and dedicated music students.

I am interested in learning about the ways you construct significant and meaningful relationships with music – hearing from you – about the specific ways you get ‘into it’, love it and spend long hours practising it. I would like to hear about your feelings and attitudes to music and the types of learning processes you use.

Most importantly I would like to hear about music’s part in your personal life histories – how you grew up with it and how it has become such an important part of your life.

I plan to write up individual, musically focussed stories so that administrators and teachers who read them may get a close look at the inside ‘nuts and bolts’ of individual musical lives”.

After this introduction, I briefly answered questions about the project and then waited for the conclusion of the music lessons when volunteers were invited to meet me in order to ‘sign up’ for the study.

Through this self-selection procedure, critical case samples surfaced as the participants who volunteered perceived themselves as enthusiastic and dedicated. I later recognised that the recruitment procedure had isolated participants who were ‘captured by music’ and all were highly motivated performers. I would later discover the extent of their enthusiasm and dedication. All were seeking music careers, either through further study at University, Performing Art Schools or by going straight into the music ‘business’. They enjoyed talking in detail about their musical lives and desires and plans for future success with music. Enthusiasm was evidenced in the commitment that all five participants made to the study. While I tried to minimise the intrusion on busy schedules all were willing to give up valuable time to be interviewed, and to be observed in musical performances.

With the selection process I could not control such variables as gender, age, type of instrument, socio-economic background or schooling (as I assumed
idiosyncratic, well-developed musical identities to be independent of those factors). Four participants, Polly, Mario, Jan and Kristin, were aged between sixteen and eighteen and in their last two years of school (Years 11 and 12). The exception, Jeremiah, was twenty-one years old. He had left school and “worked in mundane jobs” before deciding to return to “Year 13” specifically to study and complete the Higher School Certificate in music. Polly, Mario and Jeremiah were from Riverside and Jan and Kristin attended St. Catherine’s.

Collecting stories and ‘lived experience material’

In keeping with the spirit of qualitative research, I recognise data as ‘lived experience material’. Van Manen (1990) coined this term believing that the traditional meaning has ‘quantitative overtones associated with behavioural and more positivistic social science approaches’ and relating to measurement and discovery of facts (p. 53). For the sake of brevity, I use the word data but apply Van Manen’s definition. I also acknowledge Bochner’s (2001) approach and qualitative reflection of data. With a narrative perspective, he says ‘think of the life being expressed not merely as data to be analysed and categorised but as a story to be respected and engaged’ (p. 132). While transcribing interview recordings, I also heeded Kvale’s words to ‘beware of transcripts – the interviews are living conversations’ (1996, p. 182).

The principal strategies used to collect data were semi-structured and informal interviewing, video and audio taping of musical performances, participant observations and the writing of field and journal notes.

Semi-structured interviewing
A postmodern, constructivist stance to interviewing assumes the process to be ‘a social production and unfolding of relational meanings that are constructed through linguistic interaction’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 226). In this stance the relational meanings of personal accounts, statements, beliefs and narratives of experience are co-authored between the participant and interviewer. On this point Kvale (1996) states:

> The interview is an intersubjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest. The interviewer does not merely collect statements like gathering small stones on a beach. His or her questions lead up to what aspects of a topic the subject will address, and the interviewer's active listening and following up on the answers co-determines the course of the conversation.

(p. 183)

With this approach the interviews were viewed as guided conversations where my task was to encourage the participants to ‘follow streams of thought’ and assist the exploration of ‘in-depth experiences that (were) unformulated, yet powerful in their lives’ (Bresler, 1996, p. 12). My role was to elicit important life-history accounts and perceptions of life episodes and attached meanings.

Hatch (2002) makes a distinction between semi-structured and informal interviews. He believes that informal interviews are better suited as strategic parts of observation studies where they will not be the primary source of data (p. 92). I refer to my own design as semi-structured because the interviews were the major source of data and were informed by the observation data – not the other way around. In addition, I entered the interviews with important guiding questions and specific themes to cover. However, I also sought a degree of informality and flexibility, wanting to allow wider, less researcher-directed responses and stories to emerge. To do this I sought a relaxed atmosphere by trying not to project an air of ‘being in charge’. I introduced myself not as a teacher, but as a researcher from the university and presented myself in interview as a fellow practising musician engaging in a ‘conversation about a theme of mutual interest’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 125).
The guide questions on my notepad (see Appendix A) were not rigidly adhered to if the participant wanted to discuss musical issues, topics, events or life episodes that were deeply felt and hence important to them. However, every interview with each participant had a theme and any control I exerted on the direction was intended to stay reasonably close to the theme.

Importantly, my aim was to strive to be sensitive to individual forms of expression and articulation. In some cases descriptions of musical life events were accompanied with interpretations and explanations of the causes of situations and personal meanings of events. At other times there were laconic, one sentence answers. In both cases the guide questions on my notepad would act as a safety net, either with handy reference points to return to themes or as prompts to allow conversations and questions to probe issues more deeply.

Responses to interview questions were often elaborate and eloquent but I also recognised that meaning and profundity often came in short, sharp answers. For example –

**DAVID:** What is it about music that attracts you to it?
**A:** Just mainly the idea that – *(pause and with emotion)* I suppose it is something beautiful. It kind of brings me pleasure to be able to like sing or listen to music and I just…*(pause)* yes!

Often it was sufficient for me just to say “Tell me about…” and the participant would talk freely (in one case for nearly ten minutes without interruption from me). Some would focus meticulously on individual points while others would span a great range of life history in a few sentences. As each unique relationship with music unfolded I attempted to adjust my approach in order to pace and match interaction with the specific case. A challenge for me as an interviewer was to apply a situational appropriateness to the variety of temperament and personality of each participant. Some musical relationships were described emotionally and with intensity. For some, while there was a dedication to music,
the part it played was regarded as simply ‘matter-of-fact’ and a normal part of daily life.

On a number of occasions, several participants turned interview topics toward issues that were a cause of emotional conflict in their lives and they took the opportunity to ‘get something off their chest’. These discussions reminded me that music is not always happily enmeshed in the emotional life of the self. I was concerned and offered practical advice as best I could but my role as researcher was stretched to one of counsellor or support person. As a ‘confidant’ I believe these issues were not topics to expand upon, probe into or refer on. Importantly, I felt that more direct and personal assistance was the domain of their parents and teachers and it reinforced my concern that a multi-dimensional view of musical identity is required in order to include empathy toward the emotional aspects that occur in musical lifeworlds.

While my later data interpretation procedures would uncover the deeper layers of meaning from the transcripts, an important task in the interview setting was to pick up on immediate meanings as they presented themselves in order to build upon and explore responses to the questions.

The Three Interview Series

I undertook an interview schedule based on Seidman’s (1998) ‘structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing’. This involves a series of three interviews with each participant (p. 11). The purpose of this series is to get a broader exploration of context. Seidman (1998, p. 11) quotes Mishler (1986b) who states that, ‘Interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an “interviewee” whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice’. Seidman describes how his ‘three series plan’ takes context into consideration. He states that

The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows the participants to reconstruct
the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them.

(p. 11)

The interviews were kept to approximately thirty minutes each and the intention was to space them at two-week intervals. However the spacing varied considerably and became determined by the timetables and work commitments of each participant. I now describe the three separate interviews.

**Interview One: Focused Life History**

Seidman (1998) identifies the purpose of the first interview as one of putting ‘the participant’s experience into context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time’ (p. 11).

With this focus I sought to elicit stories that would illuminate how the participants had commenced their musical lives. Questions probed for descriptions of musical experiences - both within the family circle and also of early music activities and experiences that took place in and out of school. In addition to seeking information about important events, I sought perceptions of ‘significant others’ – those that had been influential in their musical lives.

Importantly, in order to answer the second research question, I sought descriptions of experiences that were remembered as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic.

**Interview Two: The Details of Experience**

In this interview, participants were asked to concentrate on the current details of their musical experiences. In bringing the focus into the present I asked questions that sought the physical details of current engagements with music. While Seidman suggests ‘we do not ask for opinions but rather the details of their experiences on which opinions may be built’ (p. 12) in the case of this study,
because my concern is with individual perceptions and ‘realities’, I specifically sought personal ‘opinions’ perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.

This interview was the opportunity to focus my inquiries on to the third aim of the study, which is to understand each participant’s encounters with different types of music learning experiences. I therefore asked questions about attitudes and perceptions to different learning processes both in and out of school and also about personal approaches to music practice sessions. The relationship with school music was discussed.

**Interview Three - Reflection on the Meaning.**

The third interview provided opportunities for the participants and I to reflect and discuss experiences portrayed in the other two interviews. Reflecting on the meanings of experiences I sought to uncover connections that would ‘establish reasons for what they are now doing in their lives’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 11). My strategy in this interview was to ask questions that would prompt the participants to reflect on their values of music, of ‘what it is’, and their relationship with school music.

In this interview I also asked each participant if they had an important musical ‘artefact’ or memento that had significant personal meaning for them. Discussion of such items, which ranged from CDs of “special songs” to an Aboriginal didgeridoo, provided data for interpretive insight into participants’ values. This ‘hermeneutical exercise’ helped to reveal the ‘the lived experience surrounding the material culture (which was) translated into a different context of interpretation’ (Hodder, 1998, p. 113).

In this interview I also asked the participants to look to the future and to talk about their hopes and aspirations for a future with music.

**Interviews with the parents and music teachers**
The interviews conducted with the parents and music teachers of each participant took the form of informal conversations. I was invited to family homes to talk to parents and to the schools to interview the teachers. As these interviews took place after the completion of the student interviews and musical performance sessions I had much background information about the participants. However, I attempted to use this information, not to dictate, but to steer conversations to the student participant’s musical lifeworlds. The parents and teachers were open and eager to discuss their son/daughter/pupil’s background in music. Again it was often sufficient for me to say “Tell me about…” or “How did … first become attracted to music?” By entering family homes I was placed into important contexts of participant musical spaces and ‘family musical scripts’. My experiences in these contexts also provided valuable observational data.

Interviews with parents and music teachers provided important perspectives and additional dimensions to the musical lifeworlds being investigated. By including interpretations of parent and teacher experiences and stories I could build a more dimensional or ‘crystallised’ (Richardson, 2000) picture of the participants’ musical lifeworlds and therefore more elaborate and composite portraits.

Participant observation and music performance sessions

When the opportunity arose, I made random notes of observations in order to generate further data. ‘Raw field notes’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 82) were written down in a field notebook whilst in settings such as the interview sessions, visits to homes and schools, whilst at musical performance sessions and on occasions, outside school staff rooms when waiting for participants to arrive. My notes often attempted to capture passing thoughts and fleeting impressions that would often surface at any time. When not ‘in the field’ I also recorded reflections and thoughts into a research journal.
The time engaged in participant observation was an important opportunity to ‘enter the lifeworlds’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 69) of the participants. I would attempt ‘to see the world through their eyes and make sense of social settings and how they make sense within that setting’ (Hatch 2002, pp. 72-73). I could also observe some of the things the participants took for granted – things that did not surface in the interviews (Hatch, 2002, p. 72). When I was with the participants in their ‘settings’, I attempted to engage in what Van Manen (1990) calls ‘close observation’ or a ‘hermeneutic alertness to situations’. This requires not only alertness, but also the process of ‘stepping back to reflect on the meaning of situations’ (p. 68).

Attending musical performances by each of the participants was an opportunity to assume a ‘hermeneutic alertness’ to the musical lifeworlds of the participants. The sessions were vital for my overall impression of the participants for while we had talked about and discussed music and their musical lives, I now had an opportunity to witness the existential realm and experiential context of the ‘lived music-body’ in action. The sessions were either video or audio taped and when I left the ‘field’, having ‘preserved documentary records’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 126) was important for reference, for later observation and reflection.

In the next section I present the phenomenological and the narrative interpretive and analytical procedures. These are discussed and related to the process of narrative construction.

Re-storying - turning data into narrative portraits

My first step in ‘systematically searching for meaning in the data’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 148) was to develop an overall scheme for the construction of narrative portraits. I began by setting up different ‘plot lines’ or ‘organising themes that identify the significance and the role of the individual events’ (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 18). These plot lines include interpretations and meanings of events and episodes that relate to the different research questions.
I now describe three individual interpretive tasks involved with writing each plot line. While isolated here for the sake of explanation, in the written portraits the lines are tightly woven together.

The First Interpretive Task

The first task was to construct a plot line that would map the musical life history of each participant. This plot line included significant, deeply felt lifeworld music experiences, events, and episodes. I selected these ‘happenings’ (Stake, 1995, p. 37) from the data as I recognised them as powerful, epiphanic or transformative – either as formative moments in musical life journeys or as ‘enhancers’ of musical identity. With this plot line I illuminated the meanings and qualities surrounding the significant experiences. To do this I followed the advice of Moustakas (1994) who states

> The qualities of the experience become the focus; the filling in or completion of the nature and meaning of the experience becomes the challenge. The task requires that I look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe; always with reference to textural qualities.

(p. 90)

Contained within this plot line are the interpersonal musical relationships, influence of family and teachers and accounts of everyday musical events. They form a narrative background for the more dramatic experiences, events and episodes within the plot line.

The Second Interpretive Task
My next task was to develop a plot line that presents the participant’s perspectives, opinions and attitudes toward issues of *formal and informal music learning*. To do this, where appropriate to the overall story, sections of raw data were selected and included as they directly express the personal opinions and perspectives of participants to particular educational issues. While raw data are framed by interpretation and comment I minimised these inclusions as Kvale (1996) advises against ‘butchering the subjects’ exciting stories into atomistic quotes and isolated variables’ (p. 254). Purposefully, from these sections of raw data, paradigmatic categories were developed and included into the overall narrative structure of each portrait.

Within this plot line I also include vignettes of autobiographical detail. These have a twofold purpose. Firstly, they ‘strive for honesty and revelation of a larger picture’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 931) by placing my researcher self, not in a transcendental realm but embodied in the research and educational issues and struggles (see Usher, 1997, p. 39). Including my practical life experience of the educational issues being portrayed provides the reader with a background of my contexts, biases and the lens through which I look. Secondly, the vignettes contain personal comment and criticism that is designed to add to the on-going educational dialogue and debate about the issues being portrayed. As Eisner (1991) reports, in qualitative research criticism provides a ‘social utility’ and more ‘public presence’ to the personal process of being a *connoisseur* or describer and relater of qualities (p. 85).

**The Third Interpretive Task**

My third interpretive task within the narrative scheme was to write both of the plot lines mentioned in a way that would highlight and contrast Bruner’s ‘two ways of looking’. With this plan I used the paradigmatic mode to construct *conceptual knowledge* about events and the narrative mode to construct *storied knowledge of particular situations*. To achieve this I am informed by Polkinghorne’s
(1995) adaptation of Brunerian theory where narrative construction is divided into two separate interpretive procedures that reflect the narrative and paradigmatic ‘ways of thinking’.

All the plot lines are both descriptive - ‘an accounting of’ - and also interpretive - ‘an accounting for’ the meaning structures that accompany experiences (Eisner, 1991, p. 95).

I use phenomenological and narrative interpretive procedures to capture the qualities and essences of experience (Van Manen, 1990, p. 77) and musical meaning-for-the-subject (Koopman and Davies, 2001). I shall now describe each of these interpretive processes in turn.

**Phenomenological methods**

Phenomenological methodological principles are structured into practical steps and guiding principles by Van Manen (1990). The following six steps are his suggestions for the conducting of pedagogical phenomenological research and inform my approach.

1. ‘turning to a phenomena that seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole’.

(p. 30)

The specific data collection procedures advocated by Van Manen (1990) and also Moustakas (1994) include interviewing informants and close observation
of lifeworlds. In these processes the researcher is not a distant observer of the observed. Van Manen (1990) states that ‘Rather than observing subjects through one-way windows, or by means of observational schemata and checklists the phenomenological researcher enters the experiential situation in order to study lived experience’ (pp. 68-69 and see also p. 166). The process of phenomenological reflection is designed to ‘transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Here essence does not refer to a single, objective truth or concrete fact existing independently of the phenomenon, but the structures of potential meaning available for interpretation. Importantly the textual expression we compose is ‘concerned with an individual’s personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself’ (Smith, 1996, p.263).

In addition to the work of Van Manen, I also adopt specific guidelines for phenomenological reflection and interpretation from the work of Wertz (1984) and Moustakas (1994) which are based on the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl. Wertz (1984) states that

With phenomenological reflection we magnify and amplify details, slow down, patiently dwell and linger in the described situation while attempting to maintain (as far as possible) an empathic presence to the described situation.

(p. 42)

Phenomenological reflection, according to Wertz, begins with ‘a bracketing or suspending of preconceptions and a fresh immersement in the lived reality to which the description refers’ (1984, p. 42). He advises the following steps and guidelines -

1. ‘Empathic presence to the described situation. The researcher uses the description to enter and immerse him/herself in the situation just as it was lived by the subject.
2. *Slowing down and patiently dwelling.* The researcher spends time lingering in the described situation.

3. *Magnification, amplification of details.* The researcher allows each detail of the situation to be fully contacted, to loom large for (his or her) consideration.

4. *Turning from objects to immanent meanings.* The researcher attunes him/herself particularly to the meaning of objects and events as they are lived by the subject.

5. *Suspending belief and employing intense interest.* The researcher extricates him/herself from the straightforward naïve absorption in and commitment to the veridicality of intended meanings and becomes interested in their genesis, relations and overall structure'.

This process of reflection or ‘dwelling’ on the ‘lived experience material’ may incorporate what Husserl called ‘imaginative variation’. With this we ‘seek possible meanings through utilisation of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions’ (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-100). By revolving descriptions in imagination we open up ways of considering lived time, space, body, causality and the relation of the phenomenon to the participant self (see Van Manen, 1990, p. 69; Burnard, 2000a, p. 231). An important ‘imaginative variation’ step that I utilised was to reflect on the ‘underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon’ (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). For example, reflection on the context and circumstances surrounding a participant’s particular musical experience opened up ‘hidden connections’ and ‘potentialities of meaning’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 4 and p. 193) and ‘causal links among ideas’ (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p. 332). With the process of phenomenological reflection, I recognise that there is ‘no single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of experiences’ (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99).
This stage of the thesis involved an amount of tension as I experimented with the phenomenological reflective process. At times, when sifting through the mass of data I would draw a blank. To assist difficult moments, and to help my focus, I would often remind myself to look closely in order to ‘bring out significances… not apparent in the data as such’ (Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001, p. 76). I also turned to self-questioning about the phenomenological task at hand. In difficult moments, I used ‘explicating guide questions’ for new directions that would allow ‘the life texts to reveal themselves’ (Wertz, 1984, p. 28 and also Van Manen, 1990, p. 79). When drawing a blank with the data I would ask myself the following -

“What does this tell me about the way the participant experiences music?”

And

“What is the meaning of this experience for the participant?”

At this stage my field, journal notes and the video and tape recordings were also ‘dwelt on’ for further essential lifeworld music meaning. Interpretations from these alternate sources of data formed a structural corroboration (Eisner, 1991, p. 110) and crystallisation of the lifeworld meanings uncovered in the interviews.

I shall now describe the additional, narrative interpretive procedures that help the turning of data into portraits.

Two types of narrative interpretation

Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) explains his perspective of story analysis. He states that we may consider stories as ‘stories with meaning’ or we may look at stories ‘in order to generate themes for further analysis’ (p. 25). From the perspective of Brunerian theory (1986), these two processes require two different forms of reasoning or cognition. The first uses narrative reasoning and the second, paradigmatic reasoning.
Polkinghorne (1995) elaborates the analysis of story as follows –

I find that there are two primary kinds of narrative inquiry that correspond to the two kinds of cognition - paradigmatic and narrative - described by Bruner (1986). I call the type that employs paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis, analysis of narratives, and the type that uses narrative reasoning, narrative analysis. In the first type, analysis of narratives, researchers collect stories as data and analyse them with paradigmatic processes. The paradigmatic analysis results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings. In the second type, narrative analysis, researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesise or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories (for example, a history, case study, or biographic episode). Thus, analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories.

(p. 12)

Importantly, the texts constructed from paradigmatic and narrative reasoning are distinct as they have different functions. Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001) describe the contrast stating that in paradigmatic text meaning is stored within concepts and narrative text meaning is stored within narrative (p. 76). Polkinghorne (1995) also distinguishes between the texts that are formed from the different modes. He states that a paradigmatic text will focus on ‘particulars as instances of general notions and concepts’ and ‘functions to generate general knowledge from a set of particular instances’ (pp. 14-15). On the other hand a narrative text ‘configures people’s accounts into stories’ and is ‘actually a synthesising of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts’ (pp. 14-15).

For the sake of clarity I re-configure Polkinghorne’s terminology and refer to the interpretive procedure that uses paradigmatic reasoning as paradigmatic analysis and the second, using narrative reasoning as narrative synthesis.

In the section that follows, I describe the two interpretive procedures in more detail and then explain how I have combined the two types into the narrative scheme of each portrait.


Constructing sections of the portraits using *narrative synthesis*

When using *narrative synthesis* I focussed solely on the particular and ‘connections among self-relevant events’ within the data in order to create a ‘coherent developmental account’ (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). ‘Potentialities of meaning’, significant lived experiences and episodes were sought within the data and then a shaping and storytelling process proceeded where the new meanings were textually developed into a more elaborate narrative (Kvale, 1996, p. 193). Conducting this process I specifically held in mind the musical lifeworld events that are unique to each participant and sought to construct a picture of the ‘whole person’ rather than construing codes or categories from the descriptions.

The benefits of *narrative synthesis* are explained in the following quote where Ezzy (2002) is contrasting it with the paradigmatic processes of coding, categorising and comparing in psychology.

In contrast to the qualitative sociology, mainstream academic psychology has rarely examined the person as a whole. Statistics disaggregate the individual into measurable attributes. Similarly, the traditions of grounded theory and thematic analysis, through the use of cross-case comparisons, tend to disaggregate individuals, focusing on codes and categories rather than people as the units of analysis. In contrast, narrative analysis refers to the whole of a person's account. The parts of the story become significant only as they are placed within the context of the whole narrative.

The emphasis on whole people and whole narratives represents a radical change of focus.

(p. 95)

I recognise the focus of narrative synthesis (analysis) and utilise it toward the goal of constructing portraits of ‘whole people’. A study based solely on a paradigmatic analysis would leave individuals disaggregated into categories with their behaviour and experience simply as recognised as examples of wider conceptualised phenomena.
Constructing sections of the portraits using *paradigmatic analysis*

In the paradigmatic sections of text storied accounts are configured into elements and instances of general notions or wider conceptual themes (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). Following Polkinghorne’s model, the wider conceptual themes are arrived at in two ways –

a) They are derived from previous theory. The researcher applies the concepts to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are to be found.

b) They are inductively derived from the data by the researcher.

I used both processes but placed more emphasis on b) because with the inductive process the themes are ‘empirically rather than theoretically derived’ (Mishler, 2000, p. 129). By deriving themes from ‘within’ the data I sought to move ‘outward’ from each participant’s experience to wider concepts. This contrasts with the process at a) that begins with themes and imposes them on the participant. The process at b), I assumed was more suited to the aim of the study, which sought to retain focus on the intrinsic idiosyncrasies of individual musical realities.

I notice these two processes occurring in my thinking about self-understanding.
In searching, for example, for ontological and epistemological clarity, I will conceptualise and categorise my own ideas and understandings of the nature of *being* and *knowledge*. These understandings seem to arrive from ‘within’ through intuition or systematic thought processes. They then lie in a dormant dimension of tacit knowing. Often these will then ‘resonate’ with concepts and descriptions that I read or hear about. The resonance seems to be a subtle recognition of a kind of intersubjective ‘truth’ – accompanied by an exclamation of “Yes! That’s it!” Alternatively, in a deductive process I may read or hear about concepts first. I then think, reflect and ruminate until a theoretical understanding is achieved. However, the feeling of ‘resonance’ in this case does not take place until I am able to match the ‘theoretically’ derived concepts to self-understandings of my own experience – those that are derived from ‘within’ in the first process described above.

The types of interpretation in the restorying process

In the early stages of planning the research my first inclination was to compose musical lifeworld portraits without any paradigmatic categorisation whatsoever. I eventually decided on a structure that would use a combination of narrative analysis and paradigmatic analysis. The reason for this is that, while I had been enticed by ‘novelistic modes of fiction’ (Barone, 2000), I believed an educationally critical thesis would be served better by ‘referring to qualities located within the research setting’ (see p. 151) and so decided not to abandon the use of the ‘paradigmatic text as an industrial tool’ (Barone, 2000, p. 146). As a result, in the five portraits, data that have been subjected to paradigmatic analysis form sections of text that are contrasted with those sections that have been subjected to narrative synthesis and phenomenological interpretation. Meaningful lived experience episodes are re-storied, and infused with sections of paradigmatic analysis where I relate lived experience and meanings to wider issues and concepts. The alternations represent the movement of my thinking between modes as I construct the
portraits. Mishler used a similar process in *Storylines: Craftartists’ Narratives of Identity* (1999) where he describes combining two types of analysis - although his terminology is different. Describing the ‘two mode approach’ he says

First, the aim is to develop an approach to the analysis of personal narratives that both works out from the respondents’ “ways of telling” and, at the same time, locates their representations within a broader cultural and social context. I refer to this as a critical analytical perspective. Second, the approach seeks to preserve the variability among identity trajectories rather than construct an idealised, abstract scheme of development.

(p. 51)

My blending of paradigmatic, narrative and phenomenological approaches within the musical portraits is similar in design to that used by Mishler and it functions in the following two ways.

a) Paradigmatic (‘critical analytic’) interpretations work out from the participants’ ‘tellings’ of their musical lifeworlds, to locate their representations within the broader cultural and social context of their musical landscapes – particularly the landscapes of music teaching and learning and educational ‘issues’ (both my ‘issues’ and those identified by other theorists).

b) Narrative and phenomenological interpretations work to ‘preserve the variability among identity trajectories rather than construct an idealised, abstract scheme of development’ (Mishler, 1999, p. 51). The participants’ ‘tellings’ are interpreted to form a further ‘telling’ of their individual musical ‘realities’ and the uniqueness of their lifeworlds.

Linking phenomenology and narrative in the textual structure
Narrative synthesis and phenomenological interpretation are unified in purpose and together they contrast with the paradigmatic approach. The former are complimentary as both are directed toward understanding the lived world as it is experienced. The purpose of phenomenological interpretation - ‘rather than fitting data into pre-existing categories… (aims) to reveal personal meaning’ (Bresler, 1996, p. 12) and the goal of narrative synthesis is to ‘explicate meanings and textually develop them into an elaborate narrative’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 193). Additionally, both are concerned with ‘an individual’s personal perception or account of an object rather than an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself’ (Smith, 1996, p. 263). These two approaches are unified into the portraits to form ‘meaning within stories’ as opposed to the ‘meaning within objective categories’ that result from paradigmatic analyses.

![The Data Restorying Process](image)

**Fig. 2. The Data Restorying Process**

A progression – from paradigmatic to narrative reasoning
While I blend and move between both ways of looking, the sequence of portraits becomes progressively less paradigmatically constructed and more and more narratively constructed. This design is intended to highlight an important aim of the study – which is to explore the contrast and promote the ‘narrative way of thinking’. The gradation effect through the sequence of five portraits is one of emphasis and degree –

While the final portrait Jeremiah was not constructed using paradigmatic analysis, all of the portraits are embedded with narrative ‘storied meaning’.

‘Writing’ as a mode of inquiry

The writing of a research report, in standard social science practice, has been seen as a ‘mopping-up’ activity after the data has been acquired – ‘a transparent report about the world studied’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). However, when the writing process is recognized as a vital part of the research practice and an integral part of the discovery process it may be considered a method of inquiry in its own right. It becomes a ‘way of knowing’ about the topic and our relationship to it (Richardson, 2000, p. 925). Thus from the outset of the thesis, I considered writing to be the backbone supporting the narrative and phenomenological
elements - for ‘wording the world’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923) went hand in hand with the development of understanding and the emergent discovery of the processes required to capture the studied phenomenon. I did not know and discover first, and then write. Writing was the discovery process and created the link between knowing and telling (see Richardson, 2000, p. 924).

Summary and reflection

The interpretative procedure used to construct the portraits involved looking for distinct ‘hidden significances’ or ‘potentialities of meaning’ in the lived experience material. The narrative approach is descriptive and also interpretive as ambiguous meanings, existing as essences that ‘already lie open to view’ (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 43, n. 92) within the narrative structures, are sought. While in the process of ‘looking’ and interpreting I moved between the two ‘modes of cognition’ or ‘ways of seeing’ (Bruner, 1986). The paradigmatic mode involved looking for episodes and significances and relating them to wider concepts. Its purpose was to create a critical dialogue within the ‘conceptual shared world of knowledge’. The narrative mode was used to focus on meanings, events and experiences that were idiosyncratic and unique to each individual participant.

I also adopted a phenomenological ‘attitude’ to my experiences in the field and while reflecting on the generated data in order to focus on the lifeworld of the participants and the essential structures of their experiences. Importantly I recognize that phenomenology is not purely a theoretical approach but is ‘above all a way of seeing, a way of grasping the world and of articulating experience’ (Natanson, 1966, p. 21). The case studies that now follow are my way of seeing and articulating the musical lifeworlds of the participants.

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Chapter Six
The Narrative Portraits

Polly Jameson
Polly and I searched the busy music department of Riverside College for a quiet interview setting. We had arranged to meet during lunchtime recess and we now negotiated our way down the corridor past concert band members who were transporting drums and instrument cases from one room to another. After stepping over random groups of acoustic guitarists sat practising in doorways we eventually bargained for the use of a rehearsal room.

As I set up the tape recorder on the lid of the piano, the strains of a violin filtered from the next room and mingled with a powerful rock riff from some other part of the building. In the heart of this thriving, active music centre I began to learn of the place that music takes in the life of Polly Jameson.

I began by asking Polly to talk about her background in music.

POLLY: I guess originally my great love of music came from my father. We used to live in the country and we had forests on both sides and he would make me sing into the forests to make my voice echo, so I could hear myself and… um… yeah. My father started me singing, definitely, and I never thought I was a good singer but people would just tell me “Oh you can sing!”

As Polly was speaking I sensed the power of individual and personal experiences like these when - as Maxine Greene (1995) has suggested - the imagination is released. As she reflected, Polly recognised her particular experience as an important moment and a departure point where she began her musical journey. As an active interpreter of her own experience she selected and confirmed this episode as the source of her love for music.

While listening to Polly recount this experience, I had a momentary visualisation. I saw a younger Polly standing by the side of a dirt road, in a high country rural setting in New South Wales, with her father beside her. Later, while
dwelling on this opening story I revisited earlier thoughts that I had about the power of her lived moment. As I looked for further ‘potentialities of meaning’ in her description I had a sense of the significance and value of music in action. While listening to the interview recording, I revisited the visualisation that I had earlier, allowing it to expand as I looked for a meaning of her experience. I wrote a phenomenological interpretation of my own ‘lived experience’ while reflecting on Polly’s experience.

A young girl, shock of red hair glowing in the sunlight, joy beaming across her face and with a sparkle in her eye, is launching her voice into a lush green forest. Her father is standing by watching. He is smiling; his face illuminated and proud, knowing that this is an important moment of self-discovery. The young girl is engaged in an act of discovery - of what the voice can do in the world. She is enjoying discovering the quality and musical potential of her voice through its echo.

However, it is not only the creation of the echo that sparks her imagination. As Polly turns sideways, she sees the look of approval from her father. The recognition of shared delight and approval in this moment supports the experience and provides additional confirmation of her being-in-the-world. Gratitude ("yeah, my father started me singing") and self-worth are other outcomes of the experience that have remained with Polly.

This formative lived experience of singing includes vocal experimentation and listening, interaction and communication with her father and her surroundings (‘Children often glance at their parents for cues about how to interpret what is happening’ – Byng-Hall, 1995, p. 27). Viewed in this social and interactive manner, ‘music’ is part of a Gestalt. It is not an isolated stimulus that works independently but may be considered ‘dynamic material of structuration’ (DeNora, 2000, p. x).
Following my reflection on Polly’s experience I felt a reinforcement of the value of exploring ‘music in action’ and the social and subjective mediations that accompany music engagement. Interpreting stories of musical experience provides opportunity for a particular type of understanding, where deeper meaning structures of its significance to the social actors may be recognised. Abstract theorising of music as an autonomous product is important but if the details within ‘everyday musical experience’ are bypassed we miss the opportunity to highlight the value or significance of such ‘moments’ to the individual. In Polly’s case, her opening story contains a phenomenological ‘essence’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10) of the meaning that accompanied her process of discovery, of experimenting with and ‘organising sound’.

Further interpretations of Polly’s stories of formative experience help to highlight how music contributes and directs the path of her life and locate the direction and development of her musical self.

After dwelling on further stories of Polly’s musical world, I see how facets of her musical identity have been formed and how that identity resonates across many areas of her life. Some of these musical ‘resonances’ contribute to her self-esteem, her motivation and aspirations and they are embedded in many of her social values and within her ‘family script’. Also within her stories lie revelations of how music engagement adds to her confidence as an adolescent in a difficult and competitive world and how it has contributed to her bright and cheerful personality.

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Prelude – Polly’s Musical Beginnings
Polly is from a rural town in New South Wales. Her parents Tony and Maureen have been adventurous, often embarking on new directions, careers and businesses. Maureen is an educator, a counsellor and a part-time sports coach. Tony has been a chef, a restaurateur and viticulturist. Together, as a co-operative team, they have farmed and grown grapes.

Moving home and family several times (on one occasion from an economically depressed area that could not sustain or suit their business aspirations) has meant that Polly has experienced a variety of homes and schools and therefore music environments and communities.

Based within the experiences of moving and changing direction for a better life, a strong family unity is evident within their individual stories. For Polly, music forms a constituent and important part of the unifying process. As an inspiring, fun and shared activity, it acts like a link, a consistent thread running through family events and connecting relationships. Both parents have been lovers of music and Polly recognises their influence and support in her musical experiences and endeavours. In addition to her opening story, she presents further examples of how music has been an important part of her family relationships, particularly with her father.

POLLY: My Dad and I when we worked in kitchens and stuff we would sing together and yeah my Dad was the one that started it off but my Mum was the one that got me into the lessons.

Polly would often help her father at work in restaurants. Singing together, while dishwashing, clearing-up and driving home was an important shared unwinding process at the end of the day. When I first met Polly she worked on Friday and Saturday nights as a waitress at the restaurant where her father was employed and so this family musical tradition was continuing.

Sharing music with Dad is thought of warmly, within some ‘difficult times’.
POLLY: So yeah, but with Dad... you know... we were... I never had that much music around me because we didn't have a TV or anything like that and we were very poor. In the beginning when we first lived on the farm, all we had was a radio and Dad used to put it onto an old FM station.

And birds used to sing in the morning and... then we got an old record player.

Maureen comments on Polly’s early love of music and dancing. She mentions her husbands’ influence on the developing musical identity.

MAUREEN: We always used to find Polly dancing in her room and singing at the same time. I also remember, driving on long trips with John... and Polly would just sing along with the radio and he would give her hints on how to really feel the music and on how to really get your voice ‘out there’. I’m sure that has a lot to do with the way she perceives herself and also how she perceives the music. It seems like music is an extension of herself.

The positive regard for music within the Jameson family can be traced to a transgenerational influence (Borthwick and Davidson, 2002, p. 64) where high esteem and value placed on music is passed on. This is evident in Polly’s discussion of the origins of her own love for music.

POLLY: My grandmother really wanted to be an opera singer and she had that opportunity yet she had to give it up to raise a family. And I think my father learnt a lot from her and so he was always singing.
However, Polly started with an interest in ballet. But she was always singing and her natural ability was soon discovered. Polly's mother, Maureen relates the incident when the formal singing lessons commenced.

MAUREEN: It was quite interesting actually the way it happened because Polly wanted to do ballet and I enrolled her in ballet classes. She went away to Ballet Camp and when I went back to pick her up, there was this elderly woman there – very proper and very ballerina – long neck and the hair up in the bun and the whole bit and she was very nice. When I was picking Polly up, she called me over and she said, 'oh, you are Polly's mother aren't you?' and I said 'yes'. And she said, "well, all I can say is that girl has the most glorious voice and it would be a crime if you did not get her singing lessons. As a ballerina, her talent is good but she will not be Dame Margot Fonteyn but she has this glorious singing voice and you would be remiss to not have her trained".

Forces and tensions are not uncommon, in different degrees, in most family relationships. According to Byng-Hall (1995), who discusses ‘family scripts’, if some role is not being performed emotional pressure, may be applied ‘using shaming or guilt-arousing techniques’ (p. 34). This situation may occur when parents, wanting the best for their children, have a role or ‘script’ prepared and children counter attack while striving to find their own way, their own individuality, likes and dislikes.

While she acknowledges the support of her parents a tension, though subtle, surfaces in the following account by Polly.

POLLY: I think (pause) ... (quietly) it sounds a bit horrible... a lot of my motivation comes from my parents. From the fact that I don't want to disappoint them... now that they have put so much energy and money into my voice I would feel, (pause)...ungrateful if I just said, “Oh no - I don't want to sing anymore.” I
love to sing, but that extra energy that it takes… Sometimes I think - If only I didn't have to do two to three hours singing practice each week - I could hang out with my friends. But in the long run, I know, it will benefit me and also… my father (pause) has been (pause) especially… But he never had the opportunity and I feel very privileged that I have had the opportunity to be tutored. Because I know it is expensive… it is twenty dollars for half-an-hour and so… yeah… but my motivation… a lot of the time is just to please other people. But I'm (pause)…

DAVID: But that's not a ...

POLLY: I don’t think that is a bad thing!

DAVID: ... and it's not a problem for you?

POLLY: No.

DAVID: Because you enjoy doing it.

POLLY: Yeah! I...

DAVID: It clashes with some people, but it doesn’t with you?

POLLY: Yeah! No! I… I enjoy it - if I didn’t - if I absolutely loathed it I would have to say to my parents (lowers voice) “Look I’m really sorry that you have wasted all this money, but I just hate singing” - but it is not true - I love to sing - I love to sing!

In addition to family support, others (including the ballet teacher) have also contributed to Polly’s musical direction. Stories of her primary school days include recognition of the support of teachers and friends.

POLLY: I think the very beginning for me would have to be when I was in primary school and singing the national anthem and we did that in every assembly and they always got the words wrong. I was boasting to a friend that I knew the words and I was so good - I knew the whole words and the teacher
was getting quite annoyed with my boasting, understandably - I always did it. So she propped me up on the table and made me sing the national anthem to the whole school. I mean it was a small primary school - there were only sixty students and I knew them all but um… that was definitely… and then after I sang that song the teachers kind of went “She can sing!” “Oh my gosh we didn’t know she could sing” - and they stuck me in the choir…

DAVID: So you did a good job of it?

POLLY: Apparently yes! (Laughing) and that would have to be my very first memory of an important musical experience.

Importantly, her ability in many of these musical situations and interactions provided Polly with positive feedback, which in turn has helped to raise her confidence and self-esteem. In situations that were considered awkward predicaments at the time, she soon discovered that she could elicit the appreciation of others. I continued the conversation about singing the national anthem.

DAVID: And how did you feel about doing it - did you feel good?

POLLY: No! I was packing it! I was so nervous. I thought “great you’ve done it again Polly - you’ve put yourself in it!” and I was really scared I would get the words wrong too - got them right though - no I didn’t think I was good at all. I’ve never actually thought I was good - people have always just told me I was and I’ve always thought “Oh yeah” - I just sing - I just do my thing you know, because I love it and so...

DAVID: But if people have said you were good - has that rubbed off do you think? Do you feel confident now?

POLLY: Well yes I feel more confident. I mean, I hear a lot of people say, “I can’t sing” and it is not that they can’t sing it is just that they have never been given
the chance to sing. I think the reason I sing now is because I was given the chance to and people told me I could sing. I never thought I could sing. If nobody had told me I don’t think I would be singing today because I wouldn’t have had the confidence. It definitely gave me confidence. It gave me the confidence to start singing in the restaurant (laughing). And then you know once my Dad heard me sing a lot more - because I was thinking “Oh I can sing” - he sort of went “Hey she can sing!” He then really encouraged me and then - you know – he told my Mum about it and my Mum said “All right we will send her off to singing lessons.” And that is where it all began… you know. Once I was in singing lessons that was it I thought “Oh yeah - I can sing!” Ha!

In addition to music, Polly is enthusiastic about acting and loves the drama course at her College. An option that she wants to consider in the future is to audition for NIDA (The National Institute of Dramatic Art), as she would love a career ‘on the stage’.

Polly considers it important to have a wide range of skills and she has another “main love” - the audio-visual course that she takes at Riverside College. She believes that audio engineering skills will boost her qualifications and prospects for the future.

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Musical values

I asked Polly how music affected her life. Her answer indicated an important social value and it reveals some of her feelings for her music teacher and how she values her friends.

Well! I think with music, I wouldn’t have as many friends as I do now. If I
didn’t sing! And my teacher… especially with my singing teacher. I think she is a marvellous woman. I would never have met her had I not… been singing. At school, I would never have met half of my friends… that I have met in the choir. And for my parents, if I didn’t have that musical interest, they would never have got into the whole scene of the eisteddfods and so forth and getting to know other parents whose children sing. And it is like an interest that holds us all together initially and that is what makes us have friendships. But then you learn other things about them and it broadens but I don’t think if I actually shared an interest in singing or any thing like that or music or bass guitar I would not have as many friends as I do now. Not at all! Not in the slightest.

DAVID: There are millions of ways that music is valued around the world. But how do you personally value it?

POLLY: (With a deliberate and serious tone) I hold high value for music. Huge! I mean around the world music is so different. You go to Africa and they use drums and rhythms – they love percussion. And you don’t usually find people there using violins or cellos or things like that… but they value their music just as much as I would value a piano piece or something like that. It all depends on what you have been bought up with. But for me music is just another aspect of my life that I don’t think I could live without because I have come to love it so much. It would be like taking oxygen away from me… and to a lot of other people as well.

DAVID:: What are some of the benefits that you - and people in general gain by being involved with music? How does it contribute to your life?

POLLY: It makes you appreciate so many things. I was listening to a very interesting program and they were saying that people don’t appreciate music as much these days because it surrounds them so much and they begin to take it for granted. But, I tend to disagree with that because even if it is there all the
time, it is always appreciated, and it is really important for everybody - I think. It just depends what you are into. But for all the different people... some people go for the boppier, basic tunes and other people go for classical - like my grandmother would have a completely different taste in music to me yet we both hold high appreciation for it.

Attitudes to different styles

Although stating that there is surprisingly little empirical research on the claim, Green (2001) says that ‘it is a common assumption that the musical tastes of adolescents tend to be narrower than those of young children and adults’ (p. 121, see also Zillmann and Gan, 1997). Counter to that assumption, Polly’s discussions exhibit a ‘taste’ for a wide-range of styles. She sings ‘classically’ for her examinations, having a liking, as she states, for the ‘soul of Schubert, Gershwin and folk songs’. Her liking for popular 1960’s and 1970’s styles echoes her father’s musical influence and her childhood listening.

POLLY: Dad had a couple of records - the Beatles, Cat Stevens, (laughs) - he’s the one I remember most - ‘I’m Being followed by a Moon Shadow.’ And the Beatles definitely - I still love them. And also ‘The Wall’ - Pink Floyd - that’s another one - (laughs) Yeah!

Importantly as she describes the artists she likes she reveals the variety of styles and something of the musical content that she finds attractive.

DAVID: OK, now you mentioned Cat Stevens and The Beatles, what other types of music are you ‘into’?

POLLY: The Whitlams - definitely They are a Melbourne band.

DAVID: Currently a popular band?

POLLY: Yes they are ‘big’ - I love them and also Tori Amos - she is American I
think and she has got this really original style. It is not quite so straightforward as
the rest - I really enjoy that. Um, but then with some of the older stuff - The
Beatles - I really love them. They are just… even though they are fun to 'bop
along to', they are so original. There are a lot of singers today trying to do the
same thing – but it doesn't work and I just cringe. Cat Stevens - he's wonderful
and also Pink Floyd and Queen - some of their stuff is great.
DAVID: It is melodic, with good harmonies!

POLLY: Yes that's it. Because I have sung in so many choirs I really enjoy
harmonies and things like that. They just appeal to me I guess. But also I just
love the sound of a simple piano and somebody's voice. That's why The
Whitlams appeal to me so much because sometimes it is just simple and things
don't need to be complex to work and just simple piano and acoustic guitar and
a person singing and it can be beautiful. Yeah, that's why I love The Whitlams so
much - I really love them.

DAVID: So you don’t necessarily break it down into different types or styles of
music? For example, I mean - would you say you like jazz?

POLLY: Well I do. I love jazz! Um - I've always wanted to sing in the kind of - big
band, bluesy type - Blues is something that definitely comes from my father. He
loves the Blues and used to just sit there singing away to his hearts content. I
have always wanted to sing… I see those women who stand in front of those
huge Jazz bands with their mikes and they (enthusiastically) have just got the
biggest strongest voices - yet you know they are not forcing it or anything and it
is just fantastic. I have always wanted to sing like that.

Polly’s range of musical taste and her attitude to different styles are a
reflection of the diversity of musical activities she has been engaged in. Her private
singing lessons are formal 'classical’ lessons with a focus on piano-accompanied
‘folk’ and Schubert songs. She has presented this type of material at local eisteddfods and at Australian Music Examination Board graded exams.

Later in a further discussion of musical taste Polly is apologetic for liking a particular artist. Perhaps she is accounting for an awareness of the perception among her peers that this is ‘uncool’ music. This reminded me of how I had previously questioned my own class of year nine music students whether they liked Kylie Minogue’s music and they had chorused that it was “teenybopper” and “bubblegum”, words they had used with negative connotations.

DAVID: Any other current things you are listening to?
POLLY: (Laughing) This is my sad point - Kylie Minogue - at the moment (laughs) and her boppy little songs.
DAVID: Her latest one is good isn’t it?
POLLY: Yeah it rocks! (Laughs).

I suggest that Polly’s admission for liking Kylie Minogue’s “boppy little songs” is a brave stand against peer pressure or what she believes are widely held negative opinions.

Polly’s taste for ‘pop’ styles is discriminating with respect to lyric and cultural content.

DAVID: What specifically do you like… currently… music… and some of those videos… different trends and styles going on at the moment?
POLLY: Well I don’t like that R and B stuff - that Rap, (sings in a Rap style) “Oh dah, yeah -down with the homies” - Don’t like that stuff - I can’t stand it. But Kylie Minogue - she’s rocking at the moment.
DAVID: Yeah! She’s very good - doing different things. So - Rap music - there is a whole culture with it, isn’t there?
POLLY: *Huge* culture. Huge, it’s outrageous! You know the big beanies and baggy trousers and the short tops.

DAVID: And the way you move.

POLLY: Yeah! And all those hand movements that have to go with it - you bend your knees and you (sings and moves) “Goin’ down, yeah man!”

DAVID: (Copies movement – elbows up, thumbs up and index fingers pointing into chest)

POLLY: Yeah that’s it - that’s it! And its huge - it is not just the music. If you actually listen to the music a lot of it is just so similar. It is just a basic beat underneath and then someone going (sings and moves in a Rap style) “And I went down, and I shot him in the head - yeah, yeah - then he died – Oh cool!”

DAVID: Some of it is very violent isn't it?

POLLY: It is! I… I really don’t like it… I think it is awful! Some people do it well. Some people do combinations that are more subtle… like they also add harmonies. And yeah that’s what they do… they have this little rap bit and then they will have a chorus. A lot of female bands are doing that these days – like ‘Pink’ –she does that a lot and just basically the girl bands. The guys don’t do it so much but Rap or R and B I think it is called nowadays – when they add harmonies – I like it. It appeals to me a bit more.

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**Contexts and communities of practice and learning**

Polly was ‘enculturated’ into music (Green, 2001, p. 22) in various social contexts and ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger, 1998). Family social music processes, particularly singing with her father, were important but Polly’s musical
identity also developed within various ‘communities of musical practice’ (see Barrett, 2004) other than the formality of the school environment.

POLLY: I’ve sung in a lot of choirs. I sang in a choir with the TSO (Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra) - that was fantastic. That was one of the best experiences I have ever had! Then there were musicals and auditions for musicals. I sang in the chorus of a big production of ‘Oliver’. And I’ve also sung at cabaret nights organised by my teacher. They were nights where people go out to dinner and you entertain them during the course of the evening.

In contrast, she also sang (and played bass guitar) in the Christian ‘pop’ band at her local church.

POLLY: But singing in the church band was wonderful. Just the whole experience of having all these musical instruments backing-up because, I have always just been used to having just a piano. That’s basically all I had ever sung with. But once you get the drums, the piano and the guitars and the bass - everything - it just makes it so much more up-beat - a complete new genre really instead of singing folk songs and Schubert and things like that.

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Music as a mood enhancer

DeNora (2000) points out that ‘music is appropriated by individuals as a resource for the ongoing constitution of themselves and their social psychological, physiological and emotional states’ (p. 47). Also according to DeNora (2000, p. 46) our ‘sense of self is locatable in music’ and ‘musical materials provide terms and templates for elaborating self-identity’. In the
following conversation Polly describes how similarly, she appropriates music in order to enhance her moods and we can also see how she ‘elaborates her self-identity’.

DAVID: Do you separate your music – playing and listening – into say music for fun and relaxation? And music for… any other specific purposes?

POLLY: Ah! (Pause) … because… I go for so many different genres, I think it’s because I know what appeals to me. But then I know what kind of music works to create an atmosphere or…you know… helps make emotions for people… enhance moods. For me, when I listen to music it is usually to make me relaxed or make me feel happy. Like… a lot of the time if I’m in a bad mood if, I put on ‘boppy’ music, you know… and it lifts my mood up and I feel like ‘boogying’. I feel really happy then – but if I’m in a really bad mood and decide – oh yeah I’m going to put on depressing music, I usually end up crying ‘cos it is not making me feel any better - you know (laughs). And so a lot of the time when I am listening to music it’s to make me feel better, to make me feel happier and when I am working with music it’s usually to try and get an effect from the audience.

DAVID: And do you listen to - or watch ‘Rage’ (a music video TV program)?

POLLY: Yeah! - Yeah!

DAVID: Do you get up early specifically to watch it?

POLLY: Usually I am too lazy because often I have been partying on Friday night. But sometimes I do get up and listen to Rage. It’s good because when you are just sitting at home and you don’t want to actually think, it is just nice to listen to some music but also be entertained by the people dancing around and having a bit of a ‘boogie’.
The mood enhancing property of music, for Polly is not just a private and personal matter but is one that spills over into social relationships.

POLLY: Also I have a friend, Andrea and when she is restless and she can’t sleep, she puts on Enya or ‘The Piano’ soundtrack … and I walked into her room one day as she was playing it and it just made me just go “Uh! (Laughs)... I melted, “I could go to sleep now I’m just so relaxed!” And I love that feeling when music just has the ability to completely relax you and make you go... “I could stay in this state forever.” Or it can totally hype you up and just make you feel so happy just like you could do anything you know... and it’s true I mean if you go to a party and there is no music playing, people sitting around and feeling like – “Yep!” (Polly feigns a bored look and taps fingers on desktop) ... “Lets have some conversation!” But when there is music going everyone is like “Yeahhhhhhh!” (Laughs) and they go off because ... I think it is a relief... that’s what it is. For me, in those social situations... it’s a relief.

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Music – “an addiction of emotion”

Polly continued to talk about the ways that she uses music as a regulator of her emotional states. In the next interview segment she mentions that the attraction of music is the emotional affect that she associates with it. Importantly, all the participants in the study, in answer to the question “what attracts you to music?” mentioned ‘emotion’ or ‘expression of emotion’ as part of their reply. In all cases, music acts as a vehicle and a tool for the exploration of emotions. Music acts as a structuring component for emotional identity. Polly’s interprets her emotional musical identity in the following segment.

DAVID: How would you describe your love of music and what attracts you to it?
POLLY: What attracts me to music? It would definitely have to be... it's like an addiction of emotion. It can create emotions for you and I find that very addictive in a lot of ways. Like I have said before, sometimes when you listen to music it already depends upon your emotional state but it can really enhance it. If you are sad and you put on really sad music you can just bawl your eyes out really and other times if you are not too happy and you put on funky music you sort of pep up... you are a bit happier. It's just... yeah it is definitely an addiction for me... (Laughs). I love the way music can do that.

DAVID: Could you be specific about the ways music affects you emotionally... your moods and feelings? Say... when you are listening or playing.

POLLY: I love that feeling when I am singing and know I am creating a beautiful sound. Sometimes I get really frustrated because I hear people being able to sit at a piano and just create this beautiful music and I long to be able to do the same thing. I know my gift is being able to sing and some people long to be able to sing and create a beautiful sound with their voice. But often when I hear my own voice I am pleased with the sound I create. Often when I have worked so hard on a piece... constantly striving to improve it... getting the timing, the pitch, the rhythm, diction, the words and the emotion just right... and finally got it all together and perfect and then sung it to an audience... there is a lot of satisfaction. And you can tell whether you have done it right. I love that feeling when you get up on stage and you perform it. And nobody knows all that hard work you have put into it and they forget about it and they just get taken away with the music and sounds and if you can do that...

But I have only probably done that – I would say twice, when it was really special and it was with one song. And I just love this song and when I sang it I felt like I had a beautiful voice and I felt very confident with this song and it is just such a satisfying feeling... so satisfying... it's great.
Polly: But when I’m listening to music you know… (Pause) … it depends what mood I’m in as to what I want to listen to. Sometimes, like I said if I am in a really bad mood I’ll put on happy music to help me pep-up, feel better because I may have had a really crap day but then if I hear something beautiful I think not everything out there is crap – you know (laughs). There are beautiful things in life and I love that feeling.

For Polly the pleasure of musical engagement is also contained within the social setting. Some of the emotional feelings that she enjoys are the consequences of having conducted a good performance and receiving acknowledgement and response from other people. Positive feedback is part of the emotional “addiction”.

David: That feeling is with you as you are performing and it persists afterwards?

Polly: Yeah! When you sit down and think… you know… and especially when people come up to you and say, “That was beautiful… that was so touching!” Because it was a sad song and they would be like … “It was really nice, it was beautiful”.

In a further interview segment, in response to an imaginative scenario that I had proposed, Polly provides a strong indication that music ‘meaning’, its importance and existence are principally to “evoke emotions”.

David: Pretend I am an alien – just landed on earth and I have no idea what this human activity ‘music’ is. Could you please explain it to me?

Polly: (laughs) Oh no!

David: Yes - I’m an alien – I don’t know what music is!

Polly: You don’t know what music is?
DAVID: We don’t have it where I come from.

POLLY: Are you an alien now?

D. (Nods).

POLLY: So you are no longer human! Oh Gosh! Do you speak English? OK, great! (Laughs). Oh this is hard. I think I would sing to you. I would sing something and then I would see what an impact it had.

DAVID: Go on, sing something!

POLLY: OK. (Sings in a sweet tone) “Dear mother mine in cottage low, who toils so hard and long”

(Asks) What was that? That was singing!

DAVID: The alien asks, “why do you do that?”

POLLY: (Laughs) Um! Did you enjoy it?

DAVID: Yes I did actually; I thought it was quite different. We’ve never had that on my planet before.

POLLY: How did it make you feel?

DAVID: Mm, ‘feel’?

POLLY: Yes, I’m asking you, when I sang to you – that’s what we call it – we call it ‘singing’. When I sang, how did it make you feel?

DAVID: I’m not sure, I want to know why you do that?

POLLY: (With a more serious tone). We do it to provoke emotions…I feel. I think what we do... we sing or play an instrument to create music in order to create emotion.

DAVID: So music… the emotional aspect of music is very important to you on Earth?

POLLY: (Emphatically) Oh yeah!
DAVID: But... OK! Good, I'm convinced because I'm not from the planet where Mr. Spock (from Star trek) is from - where they don't have emotions at all. We do...

POLLY: (Laughs).

DAVID: Yes I did feel emotion – I enjoyed it - it was very nice.

POLLY: (Laughs).

While Polly's musical world is strongly linked to her impressions of it as an emotional vehicle, she acknowledges a certain mystery about music and the emotions.

POLLY: Yeah – I really don't know what it is – I mean … I can't… I know that when you write a piece of music you can achieve different effects by say using different scales and tempos... say for instance, a minor key, but I don't actually know what it is that makes... that effects people. It's just the same with poetry or words you know... (D. Yes!) ...You can write this stuff and it can deeply affect people but... and you know what you are doing but you don't know why it does that to them.

* 

Attitude to classroom music

Polly's relationship with music developed through a variety of learning experiences, situations and social contexts. Seeking insight into more formal music experience, I ask her to discuss school music and to consider and evaluate the importance of different situations. She evaluates and grades, in order of importance - private lessons, rehearsals and then classroom music lessons.

POLLY: For me, I have always got the most benefit from my private lessons 'cos
I think that is when you can reach more of your potential because it is one-on-one where it is completely focused on you and improving... you know... your ability, your technique. So for me that is what it is all about - learning technique to create the best sound I can from my voice. And if you have got a private teacher you just... it, it helps so much. That would definitely be number one for me. And then rehearsing is important because without practice, even if you have got that individual helping hand, just focused on you and then if you don’t practice they can only help you to a certain level and you have got to go through it by yourself.

And I guess classroom music comes after that. I think in a classroom situation it's very difficult for a teacher because you always have a few students who really do want to learn but then you also have those students who just really couldn’t care less you know. They don’t think they have the potential and they would rather be doing something else. And they are there because they have to be. But fortunately, when you get to College, um, usually in the music classes, people are only there 'cos they want to be there and so I think from high school situations to College classroom situations it is very different.

DAVID: You are talking about the difference between elective rather than compulsory music class?

POLLY: Yeah because in College you know what you want to achieve and the teacher knows that you are there because you want to learn and so I think a lot more gets done... but in high school it is so different.

DAVID: So you wouldn’t want to become a music teacher, teaching years seven to ten?

POLLY: I mean... No! I don’t think I could do it. I would feel so depressed by those students who just didn’t want to put in that little bit of extra effort. And I still think it is really important because even if you are one of those children who
really doesn’t want to be in that class you still pick up things and you still can have an appreciation for music.

DAVID: The theory is that everybody deserves a broad look at music and has a variety of experiences with it. It is valuable…

POLLY: Yes. Because if you look at a lot of teenagers these days, when you ask them about music they go, “Oh yeah! Brittnay Spears! And - you know – they really only fit into one genre, they are not talking about classical music, piano music and that kind of thing. So I think music lessons and classes are a great way to expand their minds. As for learning, I don’t know. I wouldn’t like to be back in the class situation (non-elective, compulsory classes!) I prefer one-on-one.

DAVID: Are there any class music activities that you have a preference for? Looking at the classroom only.

POLLY: I remember a teacher, Mr. Madden, when I was in high school and he was the one that taught us guitar. What he would do, he would give us a pretty simple piece of music, but something that would allow you to experiment. Usually a twelve bar blues or something like that so when you know what your chords you could begin to get confidence to do your own thing. We could then go off and compose our own funky little things.

DAVID: Did he have you working in small groups or with the whole class?

POLLY: Because guitar was a very popular instrument there was about twenty of us in the class and he would go around individually trying to get to see all of us in the lesson. But in an hour lesson, it is not really very long and you only end up getting five minutes and your time is up. But I think I learnt the most when I was in…he put twenty of us in a big group - with him in the middle. And it started off and we would all strum and then he would go “Right!” and point to someone and it would be their turn to solo. Initially when we first did it everyone would go -
“Ugh!”- Because they were so nervous. But after a while you became more confident and I thought doing that in a classroom situation was fantastic – it gave me a lot of confidence.

*

Valuing technique

Polly values the benefits that come with having a good vocal technique and is thankful for having been ‘classically trained’. Often in our conversations the topic of ‘good technique would surface.

POLLY: It is like anybody can sing but unless you have proper training… know how to use your breath and you know how not to damage your vocal folds… If you know the correct techniques to use, then you can become a great singer. And that it is the difference between OK and beautiful - and that is what is important to me

Having a concern for the correct skills Polly values the idea of being able to sing many different styles while physically preserving her voice. The specific and ‘correct’ technique is also an influential factor in the styles she likes. For example, she is wary of styles that she believes can damage your voice.

DAVID: Is it important to have an adaptable vocal technique?

POLLY: Yeah that’s right - and that's because I think for anybody to just study classical music, and it doesn’t have to be opera or anything like that… it puts you in good stead for anything because you can use those techniques and adapt them to anything else. It also puts you in good stead for acting. It is important when on the stage and a lot of people don’t know how to use their breath and
their vocal cords effectively. You know – good voice production - and I hear a lot of people damaging their voices because they haven't had the right experience to learn. It's like - it puts you in good stead for the rest of your life. It's like ballet - children who have done ballet - I did ballet when I was younger - and it has always put me in good stead because my movement now has... my posture is a lot better than it used to be. It is the same for singing it just puts you in good stead for the rest of your life I think - even if you don't become a professional.

I think classical music puts you in good stead for anything. You just need to be able to adapt those techniques to the particular style and make sure you are taking care of your voice. Because if you get into jazz or rock bands you can damage your voice because you are trying to get that cool scratchy sound like Janis Joplin. For example a lot of people go “Wow her voice is awesome!” and then they try and force that scratchy sort of rusty sort of sound and although it was fine for her a lot of people can’t adapt to that.

DAVID: Yes, I don't know how some of those Heavy Metal singers survive!
POLLY: Exactly! I often listen to somebody and I just think “Ow” and I can feel ... the pain in my own throat - for what they must be doing and I just sometimes feel like going “Oh wait - how about using your breathing instead.” (Laughs).

When she was invited to sing in her Church ‘pop’ band, Polly had already commenced formal singing lessons and had developed the necessary ‘correct’ technique to be able to look after her voice.

POLLY: When I began singing in Church I was now singing these ‘pop’ tunes but I was always careful I did not damage my voice. Singing those kinds of songs... for a lot of people... that is how they damage their voices.

DAVID: By using incorrect technique?
POLLY: Misusing their breathing - they use their throats and they damage the vocal cords.

* 

“Plenty of strings to your bow”

Polly expresses a determination to have a career in the music industry. In addition to having a desire to sing professionally, she balances her aspirations with a pragmatic view of the difficulties ahead and so has planned several career options. This is why her energies are stretched across singing to acting and audio and visual engineering.

Part of the pragmatic view can be attributed to influence from her parents who both show interest in Polly having many options.

MAUREEN: Polly loves musicals and she also has a great love of acting. And so her singing - with a good classical training, plus the music theory, plus her talents in acting and drama and things like that leads her down the path where she has plenty of strings to her bow. She can sing classical songs... head off and do something at the Conservatorium with a group there, she can do a musical or she can do some singing that is more localised and contemporary. So it gives her a range of options rather than just saying that 'I am a classical opera singer and I can only sing in this particular mode'.

Toward the end of Year Twelve, Polly operated the lights for a stage production at College and thoroughly enjoyed the experience and challenge of “getting it right” – helping to generate mood and emotion through the subtle use of sound and lighting effects. She has become enthusiastic about the whole field of stage management.
POLLY: At College I’ve been learning about the importance of music in all the areas of the Arts. How you can use music and lighting to enhance the stage setting and even create more emotion in a scene. It has added another whole aspect onto my love of music … things that I didn’t think of before. I had always thought about my music… as just performing…singing in a choir or playing guitar or bass… being in a band. I never thought of it as sitting at a desk and fiddling with knobs. Never! I didn’t even know about that kind of stuff.

* 

I had spoken to Maureen Jameson about six months earlier. She had told me that Polly had graduated from College and was now living in Adelaide. She was staying with her grandmother.

I now dialled the Jameson’s’ number. I was wondering how Polly was getting on in the big wide competitive music industry and in a large ‘mainland’ city. How were her dreams and aspirations unfolding?

Maureen answered the phone. We greeted one another. She almost bubbled over with enthusiasm for the opportunities that had eventuated and was happy to talk about her daughters’ successes and new directions.

“Polly is living in a flat with her elder sister Sally. She is absolutely flat out all the time. So many things have happened. She is right into lighting and sound engineering. She is doing a two-year full-time Associate Diploma course in Stage Management at the Sanford College of Fine Arts. But not only that… she works in a bar quite a few evenings a week – a bar where there is a real music scene. And she is meeting all sorts of people and the manager of the pub is the
guitarist in a popular busy band. And guess what… Polly is singing with them.
Not only that… but she is in charge of handling the sound and lighting as well,
setting up the gear and everything."

"That’s great," I said "And how…"

Maureen continued. She had so much she wanted to say.

"The important thing for me is that – with an Associate Diploma, she can
easily get into NIDA. She agreed with me that that is an option open to her in the
future. But you know… apparently she has a real knack of handling… she just
seems to have a real talent for audio and lighting design. She’s met so many
contacts at the College and is so in demand to do the sound at different
functions. I spoke to her the day before yesterday and she told me that at the
college she has met a super-duper important guy who has promised her a job
next year in France, with the team of sound lighting technicians with ‘Cirque du
Soleil’. I said to her that she should stay and finish her Diploma and get to NIDA
– but you know what kids are like. She said that she would rather travel and not
miss the opportunity for such a fantastic offer. So who am I to get in the way of
her future. She said she could always pick up with NIDA later. They would value
her experience with ‘Cirque du Soleil’ anyway.

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Mario Micalizzi

Mario is seventeen and a student at Riverside College. He exudes energy and enthusiasm and whenever we meet for the interview sessions he is welcoming and appears eager to talk about his musical life. Mario is highly focused on a singing and song writing career and intends to ‘make it’ in a dynamic popular group. He has studied drama and dance and he deftly combines skills from these disciplines into theatrical performances. Jenny Roberts, Mario’s music teacher at Riverside, considers him to be a natural, a born performer saying, “he doesn’t just sing, it is the whole persona”. Later, when I have the opportunity to observe Mario performing at an open-air festival I witness an exuberant, whole-hearted ‘stage presence’ generated through naturalness with singing, moving and acting.

At the first interview, from the opening question, Mario talks about his background in music and his developing love for it. He speaks quickly, unfolding and interpreting his formative musical experiences with detail and often with humour whilst linking events into chronological order and a narrative ‘whole’.

DAVID: What was your musical background like?

MARIO: The first instrument I ever played was the cello. I started when I was 4 and it was twice the height of me, but I could still stand on a chair and play. I gave that up a couple of years later when I was in the middle of a Suzuki concert. I wanted to go to the toilet in the middle of the performance so my mother took me off stage and I never touched the cello again (a wry smile). After that I progressively moved through the usual primary school standard practice where you have guitar and recorder. But I never really got to be involved in
either guitar or recorder as I was always focussed on singing and dancing and drama and things like that. With my singing – I used to get up at about 6.30, 7 o'clock every Saturday morning to watch the 4 hours of 'Rage' video clips. When they came on I used to sing to all the cheesy songs that were on there - I became a big fan of Rage. I basically learnt to sing by doing that. After the Suzuki/cello thing I didn’t have any further formal music training, but I did go to a drama academy in Sydney where I was born. It was the Bob Drury Drama Academy, an academy for kids who want to audition for TV shows such as ‘Neighbours’ and ‘Home and Away’. I wasn’t really set for a career on a television soap show so I opted out of that and concentrated mainly on my music. But I kept drama on the backburner as I always knew I loved the whole spectrum of performing arts – dance included.

Looking closely at some of these specific incidents in Mario’s musical beginnings, I will begin by exploring them in light of different types of situational learning.

Informal, ‘vernacular’ music learning

Mario’s interest in music was evident from the age of four. His mother, wishing to encourage him, started him with formal ‘Suzuki method’ cello lessons. However, it was singing and dancing that he was really attracted to. Although he now relates the ‘cello incident’ with wry humour, the experience (perhaps traumatic for a six-year-old) of having to leave the stage to go to the toilet, is a moment that he now symbolises as a movement towards discovering music in his ‘own way’. From that moment, Mario was motivated towards more informal modes of music learning. Even primary school music activities, recorder and guitar, were rejected while he began to pursue his own musical and performing interests.
Mario’s idiosyncratic, personal form of musical discovery and informal learning practice commenced when he began watching the Saturday morning video program. At this formative time, he became excited not by the singular concept of ‘music’ as an aural activity but by the combined aural and visual impact of creative performance, music, singing, dancing and acting. The formality and singular focus that is necessary to learn the cello did not attract or satisfy him as much as the physical engagement of these other activities.

Mario watched, listened and imitated and through interaction began to acquire singing and aural skills, ‘informally’ by listening and copying. This process set a foundation, for he says he can now “easily pick up songs by ear.” When I later observed Mario performing, I assumed that much of his stage persona, confidence and skill could be attributed to early experiences in front of the television, absorbing and emulating stage actions, and copying popular dance movement and style.

The type of learning Mario has gravitated to is what Green (2001) refers to as a particular kind of ‘informal, vernacular music learning practice’ (p. 22). This, she states, is an ‘everyday’ music enculturation process where musical skills are ‘naturally’ acquired. Mario attributes importance to these early informal learning experiences, recognising them as the beginning of his commitment to singing and dancing and to popular styles of music.

In addition, Mario believes he ‘discovered music on his own’. In our third interview together he speaks slowly and thoughtfully about this process. The following statement is poignant and significant meaning becomes clear to me when I remember that he had told me he is an ‘only child’ and had experienced a lengthy estrangement from his father.

DAVID: How do you describe your love of music? What attracts you to it and what motivates you to play?

MARIO: (Slowly, deliberately) Most people, when they are born… I’m getting philosophical here… most people when they are… born… they experience a wide range of things when they are growing up. Like through the different
activities that their parents and brothers and sisters do. I myself when I'm in exploration, experiencing different activities... but I didn't really have any source to draw on, to be swayed between any sort of activity... I was able to inform myself about different things... by myself. I didn't have anyone to talk to about them. I had to discover music by myself. And I did... and the fact that it is such a complicated pastime... to some people... to play music and to sing, was something that interested me because I found that I could easily adapt to being able to do it. And I love the challenge of being able to play and sing. And that to me is just a very powerful thing... that I discovered all by myself.

Not having anyone to talk to about music, Mario went about discovering it on his own, ‘informing himself’ and interacting with ‘Rage’, the television music video program. Importantly, he took advantage of solitary experiences and developed strength and determination from them. Again, Green (2001) has referred to another common feature within the informal learning practices of ‘popular musicians’. She refers to the practice of ‘goal-directed solitary learning’ (p. 16). However, Mario’s preference for ‘solitary learning’ is not simply a ‘common practice’ for it is an outcome of, and strongly connected to childhood circumstance. As an ‘only child’ his initial, substantial music learning experiences were undertaken as solitary activities. In the process of watching and interacting imaginatively with the televised music videos, by himself, Mario was undisturbed, able to focus and intensify his relationship with music through a natural process of self-fulfilment. In this satisfying way music began powerfully acting in his life, as an agent, a mediator between social and subjective events and as DeNora (2000) says, as a ‘technology of self’. Later, I ask Mario what attracts him to being in a band.

To be in a band – it's sharing music, sharing a passion and love with other people that are like-minded and want to do the same thing. And to be able to do
that together, to experience such a great art form together is a wonderful thing to be able to do.

From this response, Mario reveals how he is attracted to and reaches out toward a communal, more social aspect of music sharing. There is also a clear indication of some of the motivation behind his desire to be successful as a ‘front man’ in a band. However, underlying this social ‘reaching out’ there is the self-dependent, private need to discover and succeed on his own. The ‘solitary learning practice’ turns out to be a ‘safety net’ - protection – wishing not to rely on others who may depart again. An ‘after-thought’ in our conversation indicates this self-dependence.

MARIO: But on the other hand… when you said (what is it like) to be in a band, I appreciate it a lot even though it may seem like attention seeking… I would appreciate it a lot more if it was just myself… being able to get my message across rather than a group.

DAVID: Do you mean you would really like to be a solo artist?

MARIO: Aspiring in the end to be a solo artist but at the moment I haven’t got the skill. I can sing – I know I can sing – but if you just sing up on stage - one person, without backing. And not really...

DAVID: It’s a double-edged sword...

MARIO: It is.

DAVID: … where you need to be… you need to express yourself, but you need other people to assist you.

MARIO: Help, express… so that is why I am learning to play other instruments so eventually when I have eventually gone through this band extravaganza and been famous (smiles) … touch wood… (knock) I am able to do it all by myself.
And get my message across… what I have been crafting myself into… since I was younger.

DAVID: I also had great feelings of that… now I’m talking quite a few years ago now… and part of that arose from disappointments with band situations – relying on people – putting a lot of eggs in one basket if you like. And then the only person in the end I could rely on was myself.

MARIO: ...was yourself.

DAVID: Does that ring a bell with you?

MARIO: A lot. I haven’t been able to experience that in the music side of things, but in general life you can really only rely on yourself. You can’t expect too many things of other people, because they don’t really understand what you want.

DAVID: We are talking about the social aspect of ensemble playing…

MARIO: An amazing thing to have to bridge.

DAVID: It is going to be an amazing journey for you.

MARIO: I can’t wait.

* 

Mario’s descriptions had led me to reflect on my own experience. I had ‘resonated’ with his situation and I confirm how music can ‘fill one’s life’, becoming a medium, interacting between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ experience. I recognise how music used in this way, is able to satisfy and fulfil specific personal needs, perhaps often helping to manage a feeling of isolation.

I re-affirm that the interpretive concern of the study is with the exploration and unfolding of social action and the way ‘ordinary people go about making sense of their experience’ (Bruner, 1996). This is not a case of psychoanalytical ‘digging’ or the overt search for ‘subjective driving forces’ (see Fornäs et. al.
1995, p. 173). My task is not to locate psychological factors while explaining the operation of hidden, underlying causes and then leave them ‘atomised’ (Ratner, 1997, p. 14) and separate from lived experience. Rather the interpretive process synthesises meanings in order to understand how music is used in the construction of a meaningful life.

Dwelling on our conversations, more detail emerges of how music contributes to the complexity of Mario’s musical character and identity. There is an ‘outward face of musical identity, a publicly observable thing’ (Cummings, 2000, p. 10). This particular self uses music outwardly as a tool that socially interacts and is a medium in relationships with others. Operating from this part Mario is outgoing and confident, often humorous and always popular with his peers.

However, an ‘inner musical face’, is connected to a more private self where music experience offers security, fulfilment and satisfaction. This self is happy to relate to music alone. This inner identity developed from a solitary and self-motivated music discovery and learning style.

Importantly, Mario distinguishes the ‘cello moment’ and the ‘learning from video clips’ as symbolically important events, for they were the time where he moved to take control of his own learning and direction. Since then he has identified positively with informal learning processes and solitary learning procedures.

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Music learning as discovery and ‘osmosis’

In a previous episode Mario’s early music skills had been conceptualised as ‘naturally acquired’ through ‘solitary learning practice’. His reflections indicated that
he values and defines these early experiences, not as learning processes but as the *discovery* and *exploration* of music (perhaps he is an instinctive or archetypal constructivist!). His descriptive, self-evaluative comments stated that, while acquiring skills, he was “in exploration” and that he “informed himself”. He had also added that

I had to *discover* music by myself.

Later Mario relates a moment that he again identifies as musical *discovery*. In the following episode he reveals how an informal interaction with a teacher was particularly meaningful. This episode is an example of how informal music learning experiences may not always be confined to ‘out-of-school’ situations. But here I focus on Mario’s preference for *discovering* music.

DAVID: OK now what about – during your education with music – are there any particular teachers – or anybody, who were inspirational – that you can recall?

MARIO: An Aboriginal teacher of mine – actually he was the physical education teacher - helped me. I never really liked sport and always used to ‘sit-out’. Anyway, I would sit-out and I used to sing songs and when the class was playing sport – he used to come over and sing songs with me off the radio. He was just really nice – he didn’t care that I didn’t want to do sport and he would just sit there and just sing with me.

Importantly, at a later interview we returned to talk about this episode and Mario described it saying that the physical education teacher –

helped me discover music. He didn’t teach me about music, he showed me music and there is a difference.
Reflecting phenomenologically on Mario’s experience and becoming ‘immersed in the lived experience to which the description refers’ (Wertz, 1984, p. 42), I generate the following meaning structure.

Mario identifies a difference between being shown and being taught. Being “shown” music is equated with “discovery” and preferred to the process of “being taught”. The physical education teacher made a connection to Mario’s inner musical identity, the essentially private part. This is the part that prefers to discover music rather than be taught, for discovery is the preferred routine for his inner musical ‘face’ for it suits his ‘solitary’ learning style and is how he began – “in exploration”.

The episode was impressionable for the young music enthusiast. An adult, a teacher (“he was really nice – he helped me”) was not trying to teach him but was happy to show or simply ‘music’ with him. And not only was the teacher allowing him to “sit-out” - to escape what he didn’t enjoy but was sanctioning and encouraged what was important.

The episode is an additional example of music skills being acquired ‘naturally’ in ‘everyday’ music enculturation processes. This ‘natural’ type of learning ‘occurs without any conscious application’ and has been described as a process of osmosis (Green, 2001, p. 100).

Osmotic music learning, Green (2001) points out, is often the way of ‘popular’, jazz, folk and ethnic musics. In these areas, she states, the ‘learning practices of the musicians are indeed more natural than many of those associated with formal education, more akin to the ways in which very young children pick up language, and draw more heavily on enculturation experiences’ (p. 100). Green goes on to discuss music learnt through ‘osmosis’ and those (classical, formal) styles that are learnt through ‘disciplined study’. She is critical of the dismissive attitude (and she is citing the philosopher, aesthetician and ‘anti-rock critic’ Roger Scruton) that
assumes one is the way of nature (‘inevitable, therefore amoral’) and the other of culture (‘worthwhile and ethical’). Unacceptable to Green is the ‘crude opposition of ‘discipline’ and ‘osmosis’, (and) the notion that skills and knowledge which are acquired by ‘osmosis’ are for that reason, unworthy of inclusion in or recognition by the processes of formal education’ (p. 100). Fortunately, as Green discusses (p. 151), ‘the new classroom music education’ (compared with ‘traditional classroom music education’ - p. 127) that commenced in the 1980’s, is more likely to cater for ‘popular’ musicians and osmotic, natural learning.

Solitary, osmotic, discovery and exploratory learning practices (rather than formal, disciplined teaching) have formed the basis of Mario’s individual and unique musical identity. It is fortunate that throughout his formal education he has had inspiring moments that have supported his individual approach. Riverside College could be classed as incorporating ‘the new music education’ and so he is ‘at home’ with his present course of study. However, Mario’s storied musical education is bound together with his inner life. It is not as though music was simply an ‘addition’ that had been superimposed on his life through formal teaching – as a sort of ‘transference from without’. It is more that music has become imbedded in the inner, private self and is used as a tool, moving ‘outward’ in a process of self-discovery and exploration of possibilities and social mediations.

In the following interview extract we can see how music, as a tool and mediator, has further assisted social and self-discovery.

*Mario had experienced Aboriginal culture in his primary school. Music bridged his relationships and was instrumental in helping construct an attitude of positive and sensitive cultural respect.

DAVID: Is there a personal artefact that is really important to you? Its representation in music means a lot to you – such as a certificate, a recording,
an instrument or even a memory… Could we discuss that now or next time we meet…

MARIO: No! I know what it is! A didgeridoo that was given to me by one of my friends at La Perouse public school in grade two. He lived next door to me and he was in – I don’t know – his thirties or forties when he made this didgeridoo from his native tribe – out of this gum tree that he had in his back yard. He gave it to me and I have still got it today. I play it almost every day. I love the didgeridoo.

DAVID: How is it special to you? MARIO: Because… it is the same thing that my PE teacher in La Perouse when I was younger – and my aboriginal friends that I made there – the sort of people I grew up with. Although I am not greatly involved with Aboriginal culture it is a special thing because they are Australian people and we are not … (inaudible). I like strange instruments and I like the way the didgeridoo sounds – even though I can’t play it properly – do circular breathing – I can still play the didgeridoo. It is just a very special thing to me with the fact that it was given to me by Aboriginal people – I didn’t have to buy it at the shop – at some ‘cheapo touristy’ price.

DAVID: Was it a token…?

MARIO: An acceptance gift.

DAVID: Aboriginal music goes beyond…

MARIO: It is spirituality. It is because all countries and races – you can always communicate through music. Just anything – even banging on a lid or something – is still musical. You can’t not play music – even by accident. It is cross-cultural – a no boundaries language sort of thing … fascinating!

*
In Mario’s present experiences, informal and solitary learning practices continue alongside the formal practices in College. While Mario attends a Year Eleven contemporary music course he is highly motivated outside the classroom and is presently teaching himself to play the guitar and keyboard.

And at the moment I’ve gone back to learning guitar – I’m teaching myself and I have also got a keyboard at home. I am not playing clarinet or saxophone anymore because I didn’t think I would really get anywhere with that.

However, despite the private, ‘inner face of musical identity’ that prefers solitary practice, Mario is not a ‘loner’. He balances the private with a robust social identity where the ‘outward face’ is shared with friends and classmates at College.

Within Riverside there is a significant popular music sub-culture or ‘scene’. I became aware of this ‘scene’ while visiting the College over a period of six months. It consists of a large community of popular music peers who are centred on both the contemporary music course and around two ‘high profile’ College rock bands. These bands are popular both within the College and the outside community. They have appeared at several large festivals and achieved successes at local ‘Battle of the Bands’ competitions. They have also recorded CDs of their own compositions.

Mario is part of this scene. Although not in either of the bands he regularly plays with the musicians and occasionally busks with one of the guitarists. Fortunately, Mario has been able to build on his informal beginnings with music as the popular music course he is engaged in at Riverside supports and encourages some of the more ‘vernacular’ forms mentioned by Green. These include song writing and composing in ‘group effort’ sessions (Green 2001, pp. 80-82) and also a community style of band rehearsal and performance that includes ‘jamming’.

Despite an apparent preference for informal learning, Mario makes the most of musical situations and reflects positively about many school experiences.
School and formal learning

Although Mario had said that he “*didn’t have any further formal music training after the Suzuki/cello thing*” of course this is not the case as classroom music lessons have been ongoing and he describes how at a later phase, he had clarinet and saxophone lessons. Also he currently has a 45-minute singing lesson each week at College. The apparent contradiction, a Freudian slip perhaps, may be an indication of the value he holds for informal and solitary learning practices, which are at the forefront of his thinking.

While Mario lives a kind of ‘double musical life’, with outer and inner faces of musical identity, the solitary practices have been balanced by social, community and school music engagement. A number of school and ‘formal’ experiences have afforded Mario opportunities for confidence building and the construction of a ‘performing identity’.

I used to love singing in Primary grades 1 and 2. Before I moved to Tasmania I was at La Perouse Public School in Sydney – which was probably 75% Aboriginal so I was in a minority there. But that was important for music and performing. I was in one of the groups that used to tour around primary schools and do shows. I remember reciting a poem about the famous Aboriginal Albert Namatjira - my first experience of performing in front of a large audience. I was five and there were about 1200 people in the auditorium – so from a very early age I have been used to big audiences. I am comfortable with big audiences especially in music because with stage lights, you can’t see the audience – you can just focus on the darkness. So, I have always felt confident when I have been performing. Since those days I have always been in choirs - in and outside of school. I also had this music group with some kids in my street – we got together and we wanted to make it big like some of the big pop-star acts of the time but we never got off the ground. In primary school I was - right from grade
three until grade six - I was in the choir every year. In grade 7 I joined the junior choir and then moved up to the senior choir. Then I wanted to join the concert band so I played clarinet for all four years of high school until grade 10. But in year 9 and 10 I started playing saxophone. My mother encouraged me with that - I think because she thought that it would be a good instrument for me to play to entice the female of the species (smiles). But I didn't really mind what I played and gave up both at the end of grade 10 as I was still focussed on my singing.

A formal and informal learning gestalt

I returned to explore the topic of ‘types of learning’ and knowledge acquisition at a later interview. I was interested in how Mario experienced and contrasted his theoretical, formal knowledge with the more intuitive ‘folk knowledge’ achieved through ‘vernacular everyday practice’. Also, how he had bridged formal and informal learning patterns and how these contributed to his musical knowledge as a whole.

DAVID: With your formal music education – how much of that has rubbed off into your skill as a musician and songwriter – for instance do you use your formal knowledge of music in you composition style?

MARIO: I do. Not so much this year but in grade 10 when I had my solid theory training I used it and also in '99 early 2000 (when) I was involved in a music theatre group. That was with ...(name inaudible) who is Greek and he taught us lots of Orthodox Greek Church music and we learnt all these weird harmonies. I have always loved harmonies so I like to learn how to do proper harmonies and sing harmonies in music. But with my theory like – we had a solid theory unit with that as well, so as well as doing western culture I have also learnt strange
European music like that, and African and whatever – I have learned about that through my theory work.

DAVID: When you compose, do you think intuitively or do you actually think of theory you know like – writing two different melodies at specific intervals apart – or do you just hear it and feel it and write it?

MARIO: I hear it and feel it and write it but essentially like - I know that that is what two different parts – that is what I am hearing but I don’t – when I first hear it, I think isn’t that a fabulous melody or a fabulous piece. I don’t say “Oh he is playing C, D, E, F, or G with chords 1, 4 and 5 underneath it, I just appreciate the music for what it is and try and emulate that. I don’t… (pause)

DAVID: Hear it in your head and…?

MARIO: I hear it in my head and write it down. I don’t say what... I just try and figure it out.

We return to this issue at a later conversation. Again discovery becomes an important issue.

DAVID: My point is that you have taken control of your own learning. Importantly now, how do you reconcile or see school music in relation to how you have taken control of your own learning? People often learn a lot – sometimes more – in their own space than in the classroom situation. How do you see those two things?

MARIO: You do learn a lot more by yourself because you can exercise your own limits, whereas in a school situation it is catered on one level – to give you a particular range of knowledge. But by yourself, you are left to discover your own things which of course when you get the school foundation you can then expand your knowledge but… I don’t think that… unless in the beginning when you are first discovering… about your love for music and your love for anything really…
that if you don’t know that you can go outside what you have been taught and
discovered for yourself, you won’t do it when you get the opportunity. I really do
appreciate what I have learnt in the school system, especially since my
beginnings and in recent years at high school

Entering a ‘virtual world’

I return to Mario’s musical beginnings for there is another important
transformative experience that plays a part in his relationship with music.

After Mario had introduced his musical background, I asked him to recall
further important musical events in his life. Without hesitation he related an
experience that I assumed to be powerful and important for as he recalled this
experience he became animated. As we revive the past in the present context we
often become re-associated and re-connected to the original emotions and images.

I can remember to this day what turned me on to music. It also happens
to be my very earliest prominent memory. It was 1988 and the Bicentennial
celebrations were taking place. I was living in Botany Bay at the time. They had
bands playing and fireworks. It was HUGE! That was my very first memory of
hearing people singing. They had Aboriginal music, singing and dancing
demonstrations and it was like – with so many people playing on the beach –
bloody great! I was very impressed! I loved it! About a fortnight before that, if
someone had asked me what I wanted to be, I would have said “Prime Minister”.
After the Botany Bay celebrations if the same person had asked me again –
“What do you want to be now?” I would have said, “I want to be a performer.”
That was when I was four years old and ever since then I’ve stuck to trying to be
the very best I can be as a singer.
I later reflect on the power of moments like these when consciousness, reaching out, becomes unselfconsciously absorbed in the moment.

* 

It is interesting to watch children unselfconsciously absorbed in private, ‘virtual worlds’ of fantasy and imagination, where self is merged or captured. We can become transfixed, drawn into a virtual world, often when reading a book or when engaged in the song, dance and dramatic play of others. Perhaps this was the experience of four-year-old Mario as he faced a group of painted, stamping Aboriginal dancers. He became absorbed in the lived experience of colour and movement, the sounds of singing, clapping sticks, and didgeridoo, magically enhanced within his own excitement with the fireworks and the fun and laughter.

* 

‘Virtual worlds’ are the blending of self and phenomena – or to put it another way, the barrier between self and other disintegrates. More than simply a high degree of concentration, this state involves a forgetfulness of self where we leave chronological time and space and enter ‘lived time and space’. Metaphorically, we may express this by saying we get “lost in a book” or “time stood still”. This ‘state’ is often desirable in musical performance and has been described as ‘loss of ego’ and ‘elimination of self’ (Green and Gallwey, 1986, p. 95, who quote Leonard Bernstein, and Kató Havas). This self forgetfulness, viewed as a result of the ‘intentional’ function of consciousness is what prompted Clifton, with his phenomenological theory of ‘music as experience’, to say, ‘Music is what I am when I experience it’ (1983). Moreover, this experience described by Csikszentmihalyi as
‘flow’ becomes attractive and motivational as it is ‘autotelic’ or rewarding in and of itself (1988, p. 8).

On returning from these ‘virtual worlds’ according to Maxine Greene (1995) we are ‘placed into new contexts with new sets of meanings and values (which) suddenly adhere to objects and practices previously taken for granted’ (p. 74). These new meanings, values and contexts are life enriching, contributing to our growth – they are some of the non-easily-measurable outcomes of arts education.

Mario emerged from his Botany Bay experience ‘turned on to music.’ His re-telling of the story reveals the implicit meaning that it had for him. In the next section I explore the experience for further implicit phenomenological meanings.

A co-conspiracy of phenomenological meaning

Between the first and second interview with Mario I took time to reflect on his ‘Botany Bay experience’. Reading through the transcript and making a connection to Maxine Greene’s conception of meaning and imagination, I assumed that coming out of the transfixed moment Mario ‘returned from a virtual world and was placed into a new context with new sets of meanings and values’. Wishing to share my observation with Mario, I simplified and re-conceptualised that statement (for the sake of conversational convenience) as ‘Mario experienced transformation’. At our next conversation I seek his comments and further reflection (wishing for a co-conspiracy of meaning construction - see Barone, 2001a, p. 178 and also Mishler 1986b, p. 52). I suggested to Mario that his experience was ‘transforming’.

DAVID: I was really interested in an experience you had. You mentioned the Bicentennial celebrations. It seems that it was quite transforming for you?

MARIO: It definitely was transforming. It was more of a thing to see people acting, dancing and singing and everything and to want to be able to do that too and to know that I could do that. And what did it mean to me? Well, growing up I
suppose – I mean I was only 4 years old but I somehow became older than I was. It was a maturing sort of thing.

By acknowledging and re-formulating the past experience as ‘transformative’, Mario’s new account of the experience creates, through a different light and reflection, new meanings of the value of the moment and the importance of music in his life. These are implicit in his new narrative account. Later, while reflecting on his response, I write random notes in my research journal as I attempt to ‘magnify and amplify details, slow down, patiently dwell and linger in the described situation while attempting to maintain (as far as possible) an empathic presence to the described situation’ (Wertz, 1984, p. 42). Scribbling down notes and writing ideas helps me ‘dwell’ on Mario’s reflections on his reactions to ‘people acting, dancing and singing’.

What phenomenological or ‘lived’ meanings are implicit in Mario’s account? I think of Kvale’s (1996, pp. 3-4) qualitative researcher metaphors and acknowledge that while often I assume the role of ‘travelling reporter’ who ‘describes qualitatively as stories the potentialities of meaning that he hears and sees’, in this case I am a ‘miner.’ Here I am digging for nuggets of meaning – what van Manen (1991, p. 10) refers to as phenomenological essences.

Importantly, Mario re-confirms the original lived experience as powerful for as he says, it helped create a ‘maturing experience’ and motivated a significant navigational turn in the course his life – away from becoming ‘Prime Minister to Performing Artist’.

I search for an essence of Mario’s experience.

I use what Husserl called ‘imaginative variation’. I seek possible structural meanings and also vary meanings through the utilisation of imagination, considering lived time, space, body, and the relation of the phenomenon to self, to being (to Mario’s experience). I think of the importance of imagination in this interpretative process and how Johnson (1987) sanctions it, believing that it is an unacknowledged component of rationality. And Maxine Greene (1995) suggests
that imagination should be released from its confines and in so doing it will release us from ours.

I also have an intuitive feeling about the events in Mario’s narrative (Husserl emphasised intuition in opposition to Descartes who emphasised deduction - see Moustakas, 1994, p. 33).

I attempt to extract an essence, a ‘moment of experience’ from Mario’s formulation that constitutes the experience of ‘being transformed by music, singing and dancing’. In the process I must not ‘violate the formulation’ by Mario (See van Kaam, 1969, p. 334)

I persist with the magnification of details. Answers do not come easily but I linger and dwell until intuition surfaces and I begin to focus and resonate with a sentence uttered by Mario that defines an important transitional moment, the lived moment when potential was activated –

MARIO: It was more of a thing to see people acting, dancing and singing and everything and to want to be able to do that too and to know that ‘I could do that’.

I repeat the phrase I could do that to myself four times, each time with emphasis on succeeding words. I write in my journal –

\[
\text{I could do that} \\
\text{I could do that} \\
\text{I could do that} \\
\text{I could do that}
\]

The same order of words, read aloud again, each time with different emphasis, creates four different meanings (Imaginative Variations!) I repeat the complete sentence four times, each time changing the word emphasis. The
experience of emphasising each word in turn and reflecting on each context has the effect of generating an overall structure of lived meaning. In order to clarify this I ascribe concepts of lived time, space, body, causality and the relation of the phenomenon to self - to each word in the phrase.

I – Being, Self (subject, ego, me)

Could – Potential (imagination, time, becoming)

Do – Experience (action, possibility, and skill)

That – Being, Phenomena (object, music, singing, dancing)

I (Self) and phenomena (That) are both included as Being as they are fused in the virtual world. Moustakas (1994 p. 100) now suggests creating a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience into a statement. This will include an 'intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the (transformative) experience as a whole'.

Here it is -

Mario interprets this moment as instrumental in directing certain powerful changes in his life. As a transformative moment of lived experience it has extended out from an experience absorbed in music singing and dancing. Consciousness had ‘thrust’ out toward phenomenon (Greene, 1995). An important force behind that movement is the ingredient ‘imagination’. The Self, (including the body and feelings) has been captured through imagination, by aural and visual impressions. This mind/body state is accompanied by feelings that inspire a further reaching-out – to motivation and potential, to actions and skills. Mario’s imagination leads him to test his ability to become, to move from “I could do that” to “I will be that”. There is a self-fulfilling need. But in this case, a lived moment with music has inspired a particular personal path to self-achievement. As a four-year-old child Mario made a
commitment to becoming a performer on the strength of powerful impressions and ‘new sets of meanings and values.’

Mario made a strong commitment at that time and now, aged seventeen, he has subsequently stuck to his plan. He is part of a theatre troupe that regularly performs, entertaining children. I was invited to observe the show.

* 
“Brown Snake Transmits the Force”

I load the car with video camera, tripod, film and notebook and set off down the Southern Highway. The windows are down and warm air gusts in bringing aromas of wattle and eucalyptus mixed with the smell of hot tar-seal. This is the hottest day of the summer and above the sky is a brilliant azure that blends into a milky pastel smoky heat haze at the horizon. Soon out of town I turn left toward the coastline. The quiet side road dips toward the glistening D’Entrecasteaux Channel and sailing boats are visible against the backdrop of Bruny Island, which is a burnt, golden hue. I drive through apple and cherry orchards, past tractors, shacks, newly-mown grass verges with wooden stalls laden with bags of tomatoes, ‘honesty’ boxes and signs saying “$1 a bag”. This is a quiet part of the world – even on a normal hot summer Sunday afternoon there is very little traffic. I used to wonder if the farmers ever sold anything at the gate. But today is different. After half-an-hour of driving the density of cars going my way has gradually built up. Soon, a line of cars laden with families and children are all crawling bumper-to-bumper toward the local event of the year – The ‘Taste of the Huon’. This festival of food – fruit, cheeses, sea-fare, wines, jams and pickles - woodcarvings, leather belts with silver-smithed buckles and a
myriad of other handcrafted products, is also a great venue for music, singing and dancing.

Once into the Showground, I notice that there are several performing stages. The sounds of African djembe drums swirl around the show-ground blending with folk styles, fiddle-tunes, Turkish belly dancing music and blaring public address announcements. Although I may have time to sample the fare, I am here to see and hear Mario performing in ‘Theatre Alfresco’.

I push through the crowd with the camera equipment and bags. In an open grassed area, Brown Snake and Crow, a short pantomime is in progress. Mario (Brown Snake) is dressed in a straw hat and baggy clothes singing and clowning in front of forty or fifty children seated on the grass. The children are actively engaged, laughing, shouting and clapping.

Mario’s enthusiasm for music, singing and dancing is infectious and through his public performances he helps to ignite the imaginations of others. Just as he was moved and inspired, so he now moves and inspires others.

Mario’s transformative experience, where he had initially been “turned on to music”, was at an open-air celebration. It was perhaps coincidental that as I observe him, he is now performing at a similar function. He had described how, as a child, the festive atmosphere, the singing and dancing had inspired him to become a performer. And now as I watch him, the children seated before him are entranced. Some may be absorbed in virtual worlds and perhaps the new meanings and values they create as they reflect on their experience - will inspire them into music.

Mario perhaps unwittingly is a cultural ambassador, a mediator adding to the conversation between music and the subjective processes of others. But perhaps not so unwittingly, for he does have awareness, a personal vision of his role as a socio-musical conversationalist. For while searching through the interview transcripts for reflective comments about musical identity, I find something significant. It occurs in
our conversation when I ask him what it is he is doing with *this thing called music*. He says -

I'm bridging a gap that exists between people... communicating in a common language and feeling.

***
Jan Peterson

Don't try to get rid of your motivating force when you find it, but use it to study yourself.

G. I. Gurdjieff
(quoted in Anderson, 1962, p. 62)

“Music is my life.”

“What would you do if you couldn’t do music?”

“I wouldn’t want to be without the thing that keeps me going a lot of the time.”

“When do you get time to do homework?”

“I don’t. I just try and find minutes that aren’t there and squish it all in.”

*

I sense an air of tension as everyone assembles into the room. The formal atmosphere is intended to simulate that of a professional concert. As the students move to their seats they are hushed although an occasional whisper and nervous giggle echoes around the auditorium.

Eight of the students are about to take their turn performing in this assessment concert, which is part of a pre-tertiary music course. When everyone is seated introductions are made, there is loud applause - the students are sympathetic to each other’s nervousness and hence are supportive of each other. Everyone wants everyone to do well. I have set up the video camera on one side of the auditorium at St Catherine’s College. Jan Peterson is about to sing, performing for her peers,
guests and class teacher. Pressing the record button on the camera I move back to my seat – to listen and watch.

Jan, being slight of build looks vulnerable and nervous as she prepares to sing. She straightens the music on the stand, pushes up the sleeve of her cardigan as if to say "I mean business" – the piano introduction starts. Soon the room warms - her tone has a charming quality and she sings tentatively at first with care and attention, but soon relaxes as the song unfolds. We are drawn in, captivated.

*

Jan Peterson, singer, pianist, flautist, actor, dancer and self-confessed musical “perfectionist” attends St. Catherine’s College for girls. She is in Year Eleven having entered the college in the previous year - enticed by its renowned arts program and a scholarship. Her parents and music teacher describe her as “very strong” academically, and “having many roads she could go down”. However, music has come to the forefront and she plans to study music at tertiary level and then make it her career. Jan’s parents support and encourage her musical direction and goals.

Jan sings soprano and prefers classical music to pop and jazz but at present it is the music theatre repertoire that fires her imagination. Despite articulating clear preferences about musical styles, there is an element of doubt about the future and which genre to pursue.

JAN: I don’t know what direction to get into – whether to go to musical theatre, like I am at the moment or whether I want to get into professional opera. It sort of depends on how my voice develops.
The last two years have been very busy. Participation in music and dramatic stage productions, pantomimes and eisteddfods, programs both in and out of school, have provided a variety of performing experiences and stage roles.

Jan’s piano playing is at the same examination grade level as her singing. However, her mother says she is “more comfortable singing and it is her primary aim”. Jan agrees saying “I think of myself as a singer more than anything else. That’s basically what I excel at more.” As a flautist she is primarily self-taught. “I picked it up in primary school, know the notes and because I can read music from playing the piano, I just teach myself and pick up whatever I can from orchestra tutorials”.

Versatility is a feature of Jan’s involvement in the college arts programs for in her various roles, she is always in demand, always occupied. Her timetable includes choir, vocal ensemble, orchestra, and personal preparation for vocal and piano assessment and there are often rehearsals underway for music and drama productions, which are regularly staged. Jan’s college timetable is full and music structures and fills her ‘lifeworld’.

Jan’s musical identity has been constructed and nurtured within family relationships and home-space. This became evident in the first few minutes of my arrival at the family home when her parents, Joanne and Brian had agreed to talk to me about their eldest daughter’s life in music.

* 

The Petkersons live in a northern suburb that is located on a hillside, overlooking the Derwent estuary and facing across the water to the city of Hobart.

I had arranged to meet at the family home and it was dark and raining hard as I drove across the bridge. Looking back across the water, the city lights were barely visible through the mist and sea spray. Eventually, after having peered past the slapping, sloshing windscreen wipers for the street names and the house
numbers I finally pulled up outside the home - the glow from lights in the house looked warm and inviting.

Jan opened the door and greeted me. Recorded orchestral music sounded in the upstairs living area but we by-passed that room and Jan ushered me down the stairs through a large family room and into an office.

“Have a seat, Mum won’t be a moment; she’s in there,” she said pointing to a door at the other end of the room. “She’ll only be a moment – she’s just finishing teaching.” I heard the faint sound of a piano and voices from behind the door. I thanked Jan and she left to go back to whatever she had been doing. I sat down in the chair and was left to reflect. I imagined she was in the process of “squishing” in some homework.

The house was set-up for music. The piano-room had a solid door that I could see had been especially built for soundproofing. The music emanating was quiet and muffled.

Soon Joanne Peterson emerged from the music room and we made introductions – to Corinne also, the youngest member of the family.

“I was just helping Corinne with some music that is coming up for her exams soon” she explained. I later discovered that Joanne a competent pianist, regularly guided both of her daughters as they played through their repertoire and prepared for exams.

We begin our interview and shortly, Brian Peterson entered the room and joined the conversation. Their stories paint a picture of Jan’s musical family life, but first I will tell of Jan’s perspective of family and music.

*

At the first interview with Jan at college, I had asked what it was that attracts her to music. Her family surfaced immediately to the forefront of her thinking.
JAN: I think the general attraction to music is... it has been in my family for a long time so it’s something I have been brought up on.

The connection of music to family and family history was quick. I recognize a significant and influential contribution to Jan’s musical world.

Lived musical space, relationships and the family ‘script’

Borthwick and Davidson (2002) suggest that there are many influencing factors within family life that contribute towards a musical identity and immediate family members often play a shaping role. Particularly from parents, there may be a ‘parenting script’ that is a blueprint of musical values and expectations for development. These are passed on and are external factors influencing children (p. 76).

Joanne Peterson has been the primary musical influence in her daughter’s life.

JAN: My mother has been the one who has basically brought me up with the musical background. She helped develop an appreciation of music from quite a young age.

DAVID: So basically you can remember listening to her play?

JAN: Ah, well she has started playing again in the last five or six years because my sister and I take piano lessons. She began playing again to bring herself back up to scratch so she can help us – recognize our mistakes and call them out. I think she did up to grade 8 in the Trinity examinations. And it was just too much work with the family so she ended up letting it go. But she is a very musical person herself and she has got a very broad range of knowledge. She is really helpful.

DAVID: And she has been encouraging?
JAN: Very much!

Extended family - and maternal and paternal grandmothers were also pianists. Brian Peterson (father) is not a musician (“I used to learn as a kid and can read music but I have trouble making two hands co-ordinate!”) but within the extended family there have been other singers and pianists. A great-aunt, “heavily involved in the arts” is acknowledged as recognizing Jan’s “natural ability” and it was she who suggested formal training. From that moment encouragement and music lessons began.

Talking with Joanne and Brian Peterson, it becomes clear that Jan’s individual musical identity is an extension of a larger family musical identity sustained through a ‘family script’ and ‘transgenerational plot’ (Byng-Hall, 1995 and Borthwick and Davidson, 2002). From the following conversation, a co-construction of the family script emerges revealing its contribution to Jan’s musical life.

BRIAN: (father): My mother plays the piano and her sisters do - and my grandmother, on my Mum’s side, used to. And I’ve got a funny feeling that my grandmother on my Dad’s side – yes she did too.

Even before Jan was born there was a piano here. She would have heard Joanne playing. (To Joanne) You always reckon she used to jive to music when you were carrying her.

JOANNE: Yes, she has had music since before she was born if you think about it. If she was particularly restless, I would go and play the piano and she would calm down. When she was young, I would always play the piano – I would sit her on my knees and sing songs to her; she used to pick things out on the piano and fiddle around. As a baby and when she got to be, not much past twelve months old, she would climb up on the piano stool and have a poke around. She was a
very advanced child. We were hearing her first words at ten months. By twelve months we were getting sentences. By about twelve months old she was fiddling around on the piano by herself but she never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight.

Borthwick and Davidson, (2002) state that within the ‘transgenerational plot’, ‘parents see their own parents as key players in their children’s current musical identity’ and often ‘musicianship (is) an inevitable part of continuing the family identity across the generations’ (p. 63). A love of music, its high status and role, is seen as an inheritance passed on through family and extended family members, a musical legacy passed down through generations. Relating this concept to ‘script theory’ (Byng-Hall, 1995), Borthwick and Davidson show how family musical involvement and values are passed on. However, Borthwick and Davidson also state that often parents, possibly due to negative experiences within the family, might be cautious of ‘scripting their own children’s futures.’ (p. 63). Joanne’s caution is expressed as a pragmatic interest and concern that her daughter’s own script would be allowed to unfold without pressure.

JOANNE: Jan never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight. I wasn't a firm believer in starting them young - before she was ready - and said she really wanted to learn. At about nine years of age she joined a small entertainment group – singing at old people's homes and she joined that because she couldn't do gymnastics or sport or anything like that. She had bad ankles and she wanted something more than the piano so she went in that direction and just wanted to do it for a bit of fun.

*
I reflect on the uniqueness of family musical ‘scripts’ and ‘plots’ and conclude that they are as individual as the people immersed in them. As a teacher, I was introduced to a great variety and diversity of these whilst talking to parents at ‘Parent-Teacher’ evenings. I would hear and discuss parents’ stories of their child’s’ musical past and about aspirations, expectations, hopes and fears for their musical futures.

Most people have interesting stories about family and the music that filled childhood. I thought I would randomly test this statement by asking some of those close to me.

I talk to my wife, Eilish nee McCarthy who hails from Count Cork in Ireland, about her memories of music in the home – of her family musical legacy. In the Irish tradition, the stories are easily at hand.

“I remember Granny Mac - playing old 78 records - of John McCormac singing ‘Marble Halls’, ‘The Moon behind the Hill’. Mum - singing ‘Silence is Golden’, understandable - with eight kids in the house it was always bedlam. Also, ‘We’re all going on a Summer Holiday’ - while slaving over a hot stove or doing the housework and great piles of laundry. And Dad – he would often sit at the bottom of the stairs late at night after coming home - “full up”. Sitting there he would sing ‘rebel songs’ – ‘Patriot Game’ and ‘Foggy Dew’. More bedlam if Gran Howard was over from England. The next morning she would counter attack by singing ‘Jerusalem’, ‘Lambeth Walk’ at the top of her voice and she would play Elgar and Vaughan Williams records.”

Eilish and I joked about this family knack of communicating and passing on messages through the selection of songs. The lyrics would often cleverly reflect the expression of feeling at the time and also communicate a distinct, often cryptic message to other family members.
A friend, Sean Donahue, says his memories of family musical ‘scripts’ are more about talk of music rather than actual music itself. His parents didn’t sing or play but seemed constantly lost in reverie and reminiscence of music in their childhood. Although a legacy did come, he says, in the form of an artifact – his grandfather’s ancient mandolin. It was his father’s keepsake and seemed to contain “locked up” memories. Sean’s father would talk fondly of his father sitting in a huge armchair and gently strumming the mandolin, entertaining the family seated on the floor around him. It was Sean’s Dad’s nostalgic and fleeting childhood memory of music in the home.

Sean’s mother would also tell stories of music in her young life – about her piano lessons and the grumpy, strict teacher who would rap your knuckles when you got it wrong. She would talk about her mother and brother’s love of music. These stories too were always accompanied by nostalgia for the music she had “given up” or had to give up because of circumstances - “moving overseas and the war”. The first time Sean heard her play was the first time she had played in twenty years. They were at a friend’s house. He remembers how his mother looked nervously at the friend’s piano and after being prompted to play, said, “Oh, I’ve forgotten everything”. Tentatively though, as though drawn to it like a moth to a flame, she sat down, thought for a moment and then began Chopin’s Prelude, Opus 28, number 7. She played the first four bars perfectly but the memories came flooding back, tears welled in her eyes, she stood up, closed the lid of the piano and walked out of the room.

*

The Peterson family musical relationships appear to take place in a positive atmosphere that includes musical nurturing, support, and
encouragement. According to Joanne, no ‘hot-housing’ techniques or pressure takes place. When I ask if Jan was naturally motivated toward music, she says –

Yes, there has never been any pushing from our point of view. Encouragement and a bit of harassment when exams are due and you are not ready, Jan – but apart from that, she sets her own goals and off she goes.

The Peterson’s home environment had always been saturated with music and it had been a familiar experience for Jan, even prior to birth. Always surrounded by music, her self-identity was forming with it as she played at the piano with her mother and sang with her aunts. I envisage Jan as a toddler, where activities such as poking around on the piano and hearing and seeing family musical play are an integral part of a ‘non-dualistic’ childhood consciousness. What I mean by a ‘non-dualistic childhood consciousness’ relates to William James’ theory of the two components of identity, the ‘I’ and the ‘me’. ‘The ‘me’ is the part of our identity that can be observed and known, whilst the ‘I’ is the part that is able to reflect on the ‘me’, i.e. which has subjectivity and is the knower’ (Hargreaves et al. 2002, p. 9). Before these processes of self-definition and self-concept are formed no boundary exists between self and other; there is only one component. Jan’s developing self-awareness and self-concepts have formed alongside growing awareness of self in relation to music. Reflecting on Bruner’s theory that, ‘meanings of self grow out of contexts of practice’ (1990, p. 118) I see how, for Jan music is a meaningful part of Self. Music and ‘growing up’ are integrated. For Jan, as a toddler, there was an ‘I’ apprehending ‘music’ but no ‘me’ separate from ‘music’ - just music experienced pre-conceptually and pre-reflexively as sounds, sights, and sensations.

As identity formation relies on the developing sense of a ‘balance between self and other’ (Kroger, 1989, p. 5) Jan’s musical identity is closely related with and balanced through interaction with the musical identity of her mother.
Importantly, when a child’s life has been infused with music from birth a sense of naturalness with music occurs. Howe and Sloboda, (1991), in a study of the influence of family upon musical background present a quote by a parent talking about her son’s natural acceptance of music as part of life. Initially, Howe and Sloboda say:

In a number of instances it was clear that although music undoubtedly formed an important element of the child's early childhood, the child was not at the time aware that a family background in which music played a role was in any sense unusual. Music as an element of home life was simply taken for granted.

(The parent states) It never occurred to him (the child) that it wasn’t part of our natural world. The doctor came one day with a black case and he said, “What does the doctor play?”

(p. 43)

While some participants in this study have interpreted their commitment to music as having begun from a particular inspirational moment or defining transformative experience, for Jan, the decision to dedicate her life to music may be described as a dawning. Music didn’t arrive dramatically later in life; it was always there. There was no fanfare or fired-up single imaginative moment of delight that started the ball rolling. There was just a steadily growing self-confidence in ability and love for music involvement. Music doesn’t simply surround Jan; it is infused into her life to the extent that she says

**Music has become my life – it is what I do.**

However, there is an acknowledged important moment for the gradual transition into awareness of the importance of music was ‘triggered’ by growing self-confidence from a particular experience. It grew with continued success at events and competitions.
By the time she had reached Year Ten, Jan had sung in the chorus of a professional production of ‘Oliver’, performed in several pantomimes and played an extensive summer season as a lead in ‘Aspects of Love’. These experiences were positive and the success helped to promote the move from the thought “maybe I can” have a career in music to the firm conviction “I can.”

JAN: Right up through primary school until grade eight I had always wanted to be a teacher. Music was just something I did outside of school and it wasn’t something I ever thought of moving into. It wasn’t until grade nine really when I got into the chorus of ‘Oliver.’ And that was the trigger. And I decided well maybe I can – I want to do something more. And so at the end of grade nine I was offered a scholarship here and I think by that time I had decided. Also I had won a lot of prizes at the eisteddfods during that year as well and I thought well if I could do this I can keep going. Now music has become my life – it is what I do. So it was probably getting into the ensemble chorus of ‘Oliver’ that triggered it the most. To say “OK well I can do this!” That was probably it.

Successful performance experiences have triggered positive feelings, a growing sense of achievement and self-confidence. These factors are tied to self-belief and self-esteem and as an important part of her musical identity we will later see how she monitors these through music and musical performances.

*

I am reminded again of Jerome Bruner’s assertion that ‘meanings of self grow out of contexts of practice’ (1990). His description points to how our sense of self and self-identity develop as a result of what we do and our contexts of experience. This perhaps could be simply put as ‘we are what we do’. An example also comes to mind.
There is a scene in ‘Rumpole of the Bailey’ where Rumpole, (the actor Leo McKern) is alone in his office, sitting at the desk, perusing a complicated legal document. He is thinking aloud. He is suddenly distracted by an intruding thought. He looks up, pauses and his mouth opens. He appears aghast as he asks himself, “Who am I?” He is dumbfounded by his own question. He looks vacant and is suddenly rather anxious at not finding an answer. Then he looks down at the legal document and then with a relaxing feeling of recognition says, “Oh yes.” He carries on working.

*

The ‘me’ in music

Jan is serious about her music and school life. This is evident not only in her vocal tone and demeanor when in conversation, but also in the particular descriptions of her experiences and her critical reflections of her own musical performance and behavior. I proceed by following the theme of Jan’s characterization of herself as a ‘perfectionist’ and how a degree of self-criticism assists her in the achievement of high standards.

Davidson (2002) comments on the personality of solo performers who engage themselves in many long hours of lonely practice. Helpful, she says, is a degree of introspection, self-containment and ‘an ability to be self-critical as well as the ability to take criticism in order to conquer the challenges of learning’ (pp. 101-102). However, the attributes of introspection and self-criticism may be developed, not solely to ‘conquer learning’ but exist prior to learning and music is used as an agent to sustain these attributes. DeNora (2000) concurs with this by stating that music may be ‘appropriated by individuals as a resource for the ongoing constitution of themselves and their social psychological, physiological and emotional states’ (p. 47). From my informal conversations with Jan, her
mother, father and music teacher, I discover how music is the agent in the ongoing constitution of a critical self. Music engagement provides Jan with a way to closely monitor self-worth and self-image.

As we are talking about her broad range of skills, as a singer, pianist, flautist, actor and dancer, I ask which of these are most important to her. Jan answers the question but an admission that she is self-critical is offered ‘out of the blue’.

JAN: I suppose I think of myself as a singer more than anything else. That is basically what I excel at more. Although I don’t go around saying I am a pianist and singer and I play the flute as well. I guess it’s because as a classical singer – with people my age – there are not many of them and so rather than being a pianist – which there are millions – being a classical singer when you are younger isn’t so much of an obvious choice. So basically I call myself a singer. I must admit I am my own critic.

DAVID: Are you?

JAN: Yes, I am my own worst critic. I have really high expectations of myself and I don’t always meet them so I go through stages of depression – every now and then when I don’t do as well as I think I should have.

Kathleen Cooper, Jan’s classroom music teacher, recognizes this specific tendency. In conversation, she describes it in the following way:

KATHLEEN: Jan puts incredibly high expectations on herself and then assumes that everyone else has got them of her too.

I continue this point with her parents.

DAVID: Would you describe Jan as being self-critical?
JOANNE: Too much sometimes.

DAVID: Positively, you can be your own best teacher really.

JOANNE: Yes, but sometimes she doesn’t give herself credit for her ability. She is telling herself that she can do better and better rather than saying ‘I think that was pretty good and I am happy with my performance - but next time I could do this and this’, she tends to go ‘That wasn’t good enough’. Well, being artistic, she tends to sort of be that way – it is one of those things. But we try to temper her emotions and say ‘look, Jan, try and give yourself credit’.

DAVID: Or perhaps be just a little more content with results. Maybe it is quite common with artists – to be perfectionists.

JOANNE: But I think there is equilibrium somewhere.

BRIAN: She is too much of a perfectionist.

JOANNE: Actually one of her former teachers – a grade six teacher she was talking to in the school holidays asked Jan “are you a fully fledged perfectionist now or are you still in training?” So right back – even in grade six when she was only eleven years old it was evident.

Jan’s self-criticism extends over to analysis of her performances and she may often become disappointed when she does not meet her own expectations. But she also declares that she is trying not to ‘hang on to disappointment’ after performances that do not go so well.

JAN: I have tried to learn from experience - not to let performances get me down because I did that last year and I was a mess.

Jan and I continue discussing this issue and she ascribes some of the specific emotional issues attached to performing to the sensitivity and difficulty of ‘being a singer’. 
As a singer you are emotionally involved with the piece because the instrument is inside you. If you are a pianist – I know if I stuff it up – I can actually forget about it and leave the instrument behind. But being a singer it is in your head, it is - what you perform is actually you, so if you are disappointed with the performance you are more disappointed with yourself. And the disappointment lasts longer.

DAVID: So, is performing a bit of a roller-coaster ride?
JAN: It is, very much.

DAVID: Although you have to take the good with the bad.
JAN: You do.

DAVID: I guess you have to learn to move on from bad experiences.
JAN: Yeah, it is still... I haven’t been performing long enough probably to be able to get over it quickly.

DAVID: You may find that many musicians are like that... are self-critical. You are like that?
JAN: Yes.

DAVID: You really want to do your best?
JAN: Yes, I am probably a lot harsher on myself than anyone else is. My teachers know it; my mother knows it especially. Most of my good friends are really good musicians. One of them is my accompanist and he knows that I pick myself to bits. And so he is very reluctant to point out anything that - unless it is terribly wrong he won’t point anything out because he is afraid I will start criticizing that point and take it too far. I am getting a lot better and I am a lot more confident with it but it is still... I don’t show it as much but there are still things that really irk me that I have done wrong. And so I will criticize myself
about it until I can try and fix it… or until I make it really worse and then I get really angry and it comes right out.

Jan’s tendency to be self-critical has been part of a high achievement strategy and part of the reason for her success with music and high academic level in general. Of concern to her self, parents and teacher is the resulting depression and dissatisfaction that often accompanies a post-performance analysis. Jan however has a coping strategy, for she has another way to use music.

“The Lion Tamer”

From the first interview with Jan, I went away with an impression of a young girl with a rather intense, stoical composure. She seemed very serious and resolute about everything she did. I heard purposeful and precise explanations of music, her family, school and lifestyle. I reflect on Jan’s criticisms of her musical performances and behavior, and of admission and characterization of herself as a ‘perfectionist’. Subsequent interviews and observations point to the fact that she is perhaps a little too “hard on herself”.

Later, I listen to the recording of Jan singing at her exam assessment. The song, ‘I'd like to be a Lion Tamer’ is built around metaphor and irony. It is melancholic, a poetic expression of adolescent angst, of not accepting how one is and also the fantasy and need to be different. Jan sang the song appropriately, reflecting the sentiment with a clear, pure and delicate tone and with a rather sad expression. I wondered whether the irony was not only within the song but that there was a poignant reflection of the song to her life and how she was expressing herself through it. While I reflected, I returned to the interview transcripts and there I believed was a key to the way Jan ‘locates her
self in music’. I read and re-read her response to my opening question - “What attracts you to music?”

JAN: It’s the opportunity music provides to be able to express personal opinions and feelings through a different form without having to say to somebody, “I feel very strongly about this.” You can find repertoire that expresses exactly how you feel without... and you can put your own interpretation into it. It’s a very... although it is appreciated by so many people... it’s a very personal thing. It’s a good way of being able to release tension.

As I listen again more intently to the song, focusing on the lyrics I make a connection, a discovery of her purposeful selection of repertoire. I believe that the song reflects an expressive need – a chance to ‘feel through a different form’, an opportunity in the midst of a busy daily life, with associated tension and occasional depression caused through self-critical perfectionism - to let go, to relax and to dream a little.

I’d like to be a Lion Tamer, sequins and tights and silk top hats.

I know I could be a lion tamer, I’ve always gotten along with cats.

I’d have a whip but never use it; I’d simply hold it in my hand.

I’d like to be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer

I would be someone grand.

I couldn’t be a ballerina; I never could stand on my toes.

I couldn’t be a Spanish dancer, I’d look ridiculous with a rose.

But everyone has a special calling, something that only she can do.

I could be such a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer

I would be special too.
I could begin with baby leopards, move on to tiger cubs and then,
After I learn to handle lions, maybe I could work up to men.
I never wanted fancy mansions, butlers and footmen liveried,
I never wanted lots of money; money can’t buy what you really need.
I never prayed for any favors, but here I am on knobby knee.

Please let me be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
Wouldn’t he have to finally notice me?

(The Magic Show – Stephen Schwartz, 1973)

Jan counters the perfectionist and critical self by selecting repertoire to support, and give credence to the self that perhaps is ‘softer’ and needs to have a voice. She prefers to give vent to certain emotions through this self, using music to expresses some of the more ‘hidden’ feelings. The particular self that Jan ‘locates in the music’ is a private ‘hidden self’ that she reveals to the world in her own particular form and process. Importantly that self is an antidote to the critical self that is focused on perfection.

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For my wife’s family, expressing sentiment or communicating messages to others through song lyrics is an overt, often humorous musical peculiarity. Jan’s expressing personal opinions and feelings through a different form is a more hidden process of expression, an example of music as a ‘technology of self’ – where it is used for the ‘emotional and personal constitution of self’. (DeNora,
DeNora goes on to explain what she calls ‘musically composed identities’:

The sense of ‘self’ is locatable in music. Musical materials provide terms and templates for elaborating self-identity - for identity's identification. Looking more closely at this process highlights the ways in which musical materials are active ingredients in identity work, how respondents 'find themselves' in musical structures. It also highlights some of the ways that music is attended to by its recipients, how music reception and the units of meaning that listeners find within music differ dramatically from musicological and music-psychological models of music reception and their emphasis on the perception of musical structures.

(2000, p. 68)

DeNora describes how with this particular use of music, we ‘can follow music as it comes to be converted or transposed – in and through interpretative appropriation – into something extra-musical, something social, [a] registration of self-identity. Music is a “mirror” that allows one to “see one’s self” (p. 70). Jan, like the participant’s in DeNora’s study is engaged in the process of seeing herself, composing her identity through music and ‘locating within its structures the ‘me in life.”

I wondered about Jan’s self-reflections – how she saw herself as self-critical and a perfectionist.

DAVID: Have you ever thought where that pattern (self-criticism) comes from?

JAN: Um, I think it is just... It hasn't really come from anywhere I think it is just something that I have. It is just part of me. I'm very much a perfectionist. I try to be very much... a perfectionist and I have for quite a long time. A lot of my teachers have noticed it because I try and do the
best the whole time and if it is not to my standard then it should be better. Even if I can’t get it any better. But it is something I am working on. ... Which I why I have to try and sort of fix myself up and find my standards because I was making myself very unhappy. I have never been optimistic. I always had a pessimistic attitude towards it even if I couldn’t do any better. I wanted to do better and I told myself I could.

Using music as a ‘mirror of the self’ Jan is undergoing a process of self-discovery. (In postmodern terms, this amounts to the creation of a new self with which to view the old one. In narrative terms, it amounts to creating a new story of self.) Projected into the future, Jan will continue a process of self-understanding as she explores her musical identities. In her own words and interpretation she is ‘working on’ or ‘fixing’ her tendency to perhaps be overly self-critical as it often leads to disappointment and depression. This ‘studying her motivating force’ need not mean analysis or introspective dissection of self. Perhaps through reflection with music as a mirror for self-perception, Jan will be able to create a balance of selves or write a new story.

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‘Lived musical time’

Jan structures music listening into her daily routine and divides its use into different social and personal functions. While she will often listen, with serious intent, to a recording of a song in order to learn it for a performance, an exam, a show or an eisteddfod, music is often used in ‘guiding, shaping and facilitating functions’ (Shepherd, 2002, p. 9). For example, when she is not in the ‘learning mode’ Jan will put on CDs or tapes of her favourite music theatre pieces simply
“for fun”. However she also qualifies this by saying that just recently, she has been too busy, or “not at home long enough” for much “fun” listening.

Jan uses music as a study aid and will often play background music while doing homework. Specifically it has to be ‘classical’ music, and she will put on the local ‘Classic FM’ station. Importantly it has to be music that she doesn’t ‘know’ for problematically, if she knows the music it draws her attention away from the study. This is specifically why she will not listen to theatre music or music she knows well, for “I will be waiting for a song the whole time and get nothing done”. Additionally music is used for relaxation and as an aid to sleep.

JAN: A friend lent me a tape of some theatre music that I now listen to at night because... I know it so well that I fall asleep listening to it. Because I know what is coming next and my brain is going – OK this is coming next and I just go to sleep. Which is... I have found is the easiest way of getting to sleep when I am so tired.

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At the appointed time for the next interview, Jan walks into the classroom looking quite stressed. We exchange greetings and settle down at the desk where I have positioned the recorder and microphone.

DAVID: What has happened this week?

JAN: Well, I have been at school every evening again for drama and that is just starting to get rather stressful. I have a lot of homework to do that I haven’t got time to do because I don’t go home in the evenings.

DAVID: My, it is a full life, isn’t it? So the drama performance is on Thursday evening?
JAN: Yes

DAVID: Then things will level out a bit.

JAN: Hopefully, but then the musical starts so –

DAVID: It is back into it?

JAN: Yes.

DAVID: When do the holidays begin?

JAN: In three weeks.

DAVID: In three weeks time! So you start the musical before then?

JAN: Yes, we’ve started rehearsals already. But we don’t have one this week because we have drama until late tonight, tomorrow and Wednesday and we start again next week and we will go right through until the holidays. And then get right back into it as soon as we come back.

DAVID: In the holidays, do you actually get time off?

JAN: No.

DAVID: You try to catch up with things?

JAN: I try and get everything done that I haven’t got done and there is a dance Eisteddfod from 31 May to 10 June and I am there every night. I am either dancing or my sister is dancing or I have friends who are dancing. I have got two nights, my sister has about six and the rest we are just going to see so we are there, basically every day.

DAVID: When do you get time to do homework?

JAN: I don’t. I just try and find minutes that aren’t there and squish it all in.

DAVID: Is it music and drama that are taking all your time? It is not anything else?

JAN: No
DAVID: It's a full life but do you enjoy it? Do you love it?

JAN: I do. It is just drama at the moment, more than anything because it is production week and so everything is just so stressful and being here every day is getting a little bit wearing.

*

Jan’s musical lifeworld is caught up in a web of passion and angst. I sense the simultaneous forces of both a pushing and pulling in her relationship with music. On one hand music, as she had stated, is her life, the very thing that keeps her going, but on the other, she uses it (according to her music teacher) “to beat herself up”. These complex and opposing functions serve to fuel different parts of her personality. As a perfectionist, music causes her tension and worry as she strives for distinct goals. It is also used as a medium, a way of voicing thoughts that cannot be voiced in any other way. There is self-concealment when she first creates a musical mask and then expresses herself from behind it.

Jan is living life from within these musical complexities and I wonder how she will resolve the tension created by the forces that motivate her – where she both loves music and uses it as an intimate form of self-expression and where she challenges herself with it. She believes that music is her life; but she uses her musical experience as a mirror of self and it is through the reflection that she critically studies herself and her life.

***
The young girl was rummaging through the stereo cabinet in the corner of the lounge room. Her father, Jim Greenhill, sitting in the easy chair, peered over the top of the newspaper to check what she was doing.

“What are you up to Krissy?” he said, with mock sternness, knowing full well that she was again looking for something to play on the new cassette player in her bedroom. He glanced across at Janet sitting on the other easy chair across from him. She was reading, holding the book above the small dog on her lap. They looked at each other, smiling.

Kristin heard her father but ignored him. She pulled out a cassette case from the rack and read aloud.

“Les Miserables!” She exclaimed, looking puzzled. The English pronunciation caused her Mum and Dad to chuckle to one-another.

“Lay Mizzer-rab-blur! It’s French dear.” Janet said but Kristin, staring at the cover didn’t hear.

“I don’t want to listen to this. It will make me sad. Miserable music!” She said in a complaining tone.

“Just try it dear – there are some lovely songs there you might like,” Janet suggested. Kristin slowly ambled off to her room, looking at the cassette and mumbling something about being miserable.

* 

“I metta - gin-soaked ballroom queen in Memphis - - dah da da!”
Jim Greenhill, seated on the sofa was singing and strumming his favourite acoustic guitar. He was getting in some quick practice for the gig at the Nag’s Head in Newtown on Saturday night. Gerry and the Hat Tricks only played out about four times a year – a long time between gigs - but when they did it was something special. He knew all the old songs off by heart having played them for years – just had to brush-up a little. These days the main challenge was to learn guitar parts for all the new songs that Kristin came up with and pestered him to play for her. At that moment Janet interrupted.

"While we’re in Melbourne next week let’s take Krissy to see ‘Phantom of the Opera’- I see that it’s on at the Apollo Theatre” she said while looking at the entertainment section of the newspaper that was covering the dog on her lap.

“Yeah, good idea” Jim replied. He stopped what he was doing and pondered his daughter’s obsession with music and specifically theatre music.

“Yeah, she would love it,” he said. “You know it must be about six months since the night she discovered the ‘Lay Mizz’ cassette and she hasn’t stopped playing it and singing ‘Castles in the Clouds’ - or whatever that song is called. It’s amazing how she has taken to that sort of music.”

“And as for the cartoon video version – she’s just about worn it out” Janet added.

They both were thinking and there was quiet for a while - just the crackling of the log fire, a breathy snore from the sleeping dog and music drifting from Kristin’s bedroom upstairs.

“You know that she’s put all that pop girl band music to one side – ‘The Spice Girls’ and the teeny stuff – she just doesn’t play it anymore. I don’t know what her friends think. They must think she is different or something.” Janet spoke as she stroked the dog.
“Well the amazing thing is that she just loves that music. Ever since last year when she sang ‘Lillie Marlene’ at the school concert and blew every one away – she just won’t stop thinking about music. And she is just so keen at her dancing classes.”

“I think, when we come back from Melbourne, we should find her a good singing teacher. And hey! Guess what! Miss Baker at school told me that in a few months they will be auditioning for an up coming huge production of ‘Les Mizz’ – right here in Hobart.”

Again they looked at one another and smiled. They fell silent as they turned to gaze at the log fire. But they didn’t see the flames; they were looking into the future and the possibilities for their daughter. Kristin’s voice quietly drifted down from the bedroom upstairs –

In my life there are questions and answers that somehow seem wrong
A heart full of love, a heart full of song
In my life, I’m no longer a child and I yearn for the truth that you know of the years...years ago
There is a castle on a cloud. I like to go there in my sleep.

(Schönberg and Kretzmer, 1980)

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The bedroom was suffused in a pink glow. It emanated from reflections of soft light from the pink lampshade onto the myriad of scattered pink soft toys. Mobiles of all shapes and sizes were hanging from the ceiling and the small dressing table and desk were covered with books, dolls and toys. A row of cassette tapes and CDs emerged
from behind the lace curtains and all along the windowsill. On the bedside table with the lamp, there was a cassette/CD player, and more tapes and books. The walls were covered with posters – ‘Les Miserables’, ‘Phantom of the Opera’, ‘Secret Garden’ and ‘Cats’.

Nine-year old Kristin was lying on the bed looking at a glossy program. She saw the small photograph of herself as the young Cosette and the larger one of the whole cast. There she was, dwarfed at the front but in the full of the spotlight. She almost squirmed as she relived the excitement of that moment, feeling again the atmosphere, the smell of the make-up, the hot lights and the costumes. She could feel the blackness out there in front of her and from the dark, the hundreds of eyes upon her.

The audition for ‘Les Mizz” had been pretty easy really. She hadn’t been a bit nervous for she had lived the life of young Cosette many times while engrossed in the video. Before she got there she knew the story line and the song off-by-heart. She had once even dreamed that she was Cosette and at the audition it felt like it was Cosette, not Kristin who had been singing. And even before ‘Les Mizz’, ever since the trip to Melbourne and the magic of ‘Phantom of the Opera’, she had known what she wanted to do with her life. It was a magic life of music, singing and dancing and the stage.

She turned over and put a cassette into the machine and turned it on.

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Kristin found a seat at the back of the bus. Today she was feeling pretty misunderstood and didn’t feel like talking to the other St Catherine’s College girls who went on the same route. They weren’t close friends anyway, only acquaintances. They were maths, science or sports freaks – nobody was from Performing Arts.
I just want to be alone, and hide among the other passengers. Year Twelve is nearly over and things are hotting up with the Big Questions, like “what am I gonna do with my life after college”. And there are just too many big issues coming up at once. Why all at once? For a start there’s Mr. Randall. I would dearly love to give up drama. Not just because of him, but there are not enough hours in the day to get it all done. And I just don’t understand why he doesn’t like me. We just don’t click. And gosh! It’s a pain for drama especially – that’s where you’ve just got to get along with your teacher. It’s so important and I don’t. It’s not through lack of trying – I haven’t been rude or disrespectful or anything to him but we just don’t get along. I suppose our personalities don’t match – because I guess, it’s just the fact that I am used to rehearsals being run as a serious rehearsal. That’s just what I’ve become accustomed to and Mr Randall doesn’t run rehearsals like that. For goodness sake, we had to be there at ten yesterday morning and he was there at ten to eleven. We were supposed to start a run for back stage crew to watch at twelve and we didn’t start until twenty to one. He knew I had permission to leave at one because I had to go and sing at the fashion parade. Things like that just grate on me and I guess its just what I have become accustomed to. I really would give it away if I could. I can’t understand why we are not allowed to drop out of subjects at the moment.

Oh why can’t I just focus on music? It’s just such a huge part of my life. It makes up just about everything I do – or want to do. It’s in everything I think about, what I hear and what I see in everything - especially in people. It’s how I establish connections with people. It’s how I meet them. And I’m always flicking on the radio to listen to some music or a CD or going to a music rehearsal or learning music or going to lessons or… even going to dancing and stuff… that’s all listening to music… and even drama – I find it
difficult to… It really upsets me when people think – oh, yeah, she does music. They just don’t realise what it entails. There is nothing more rewarding than going to a concert and seeing how hard someone has worked on something and… And that’s another thing. The scaling system that they’ve come up with in Tasmania – like with the pre-tertiary scores and stuff. They have…who is to say that Maths stage 2 takes… It probably works out some mathematical way but it just annoys me that they can decide that Music is not as hard as Maths stage 2 courses. I mean you have to be a talented mathematician to do Maths stage 2 but you also have to be a talented musician to do Music and that annoys me that it’s not given the same credibility.

I can’t wait for the ‘West Side Story’ rehearsals to begin. That’s what it is all about… where the magic is… and that is what I want to do with my life.

Kristin’s head was up against the window of the bus. She alternated between looking at her own reflection and then through it to the outside world, the town passing by. She wanted to know how she would fit into the scheme of things. How the future would turn out. She saw how, to get work in music theatre she would have to leave this place – go to the ‘mainland’ for further study, it was where the auditions and big productions were.

There is going to be a bit of a wrangle ahead with Mum and Dad. I know they’re worried about me leaving. They have been such an amazing support for me - all through the busy times – with all the running around and making the costumes and everything. It just… it has just taken so much out
of Mum and Dad but they haven’t seemed to mind… well, I know they mind but they don’t say that they mind, kind of thing.

In some ways it would be easier to stay here. I know this place and all my supportive friends are here. I could get a job in any production here… perhaps continue with my teaching. Oh why can’t things be simple? It is all right for those Maths, Science and IT girls. They will all simply breeze into Uni and then breeze into a job and you can bet your life their parents are all happy with what they are doing.

Making plans – it is all so scary. It’s baffling that 90% of actors are unemployed. I don’t want to be one of those people. I must get my application into performing arts school – possibly NIDA or the Western Australian Academy or – but it is just hard – I love music and I desperately want to do it and I must strive for it. Like, I am not going to be – even though those statistics say – I am still going to try and do it because that’s what I love. I know Mum and Dad don’t really want me to pursue it as a career because I guess they just don’t see it as something that is going to be… Well, I suppose they are scared as well. They are probably even more scared than I am. They would love me to say – I want to go to university and do this so I can go out and get that job. I think that is what they want me to say but when your heart is not in it – you can’t. I just can’t say it. I can’t say to them that I am going to go and be a lawyer. I am going to go to university and I need to get this score to get these… my heart is just not in it and I don’t…

I know they say that you have to follow your heart in some ways.

Yeah… but its difficult because I really don’t want to disappoint them either. I would desperately love to be able to say to them that I want to go and do this and this and then this but I can’t … I would love to but I can’t.
The bus pulled up sharply. Kristin jumped into the moment, leapt up and struggled with her school bag as she manoeuvred past the other passengers and alighted out of the rear door. She crossed the busy street over to the McDonald’s restaurant. She would be working there until at least 10.30 tonight - things were already looking busy. Up at 7.30 in the morning for her dance teaching class – but tomorrow is another day.

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“Busy life and busy days”

It is early, Monday morning and Kathleen Cooper, the Head of Music, greets me and opens up the music room. We chat pleasantly and I express my gratitude for being allowed into the school at “this busy time of year”. She reminds me that she and all the girls had been at school all day yesterday as it had been the College annual ‘Open Day’. Also it was approaching exam time, drama and music rehearsals were in full swing. There was little free time in the lives of music teachers and students – for example a week ago last Saturday, many from Performing Arts had spent the day grape picking in order to raise money for the Department.

I set up my tape recorder and prepared myself for the interview. I had arranged to meet Kristin. She had a free moment before classes.

“Hi Kristin, how are you?” I say as we settle down in the chairs in front of the microphone. “Have you had a busy week. Tell me what has happened.”

“Hi - yes I have had a busy week. Oh gosh, what have I been doing? Well let me tell you my timetable. On Monday, I am here at College until 5.00 for drama and then I have got dancing from 6.30 to 8.30. Tuesdays, I am here again for drama until 5.00 and then again I have dancing from 6.30 to 7.30 so that is kind of my night where I can do stuff after 7.30 and that’s good. Wednesdays – I
am here for drama until 6.00 and then I have to go to dancing to teach from 6.30 until…”

“You teach?” I ask, amazed that she would find the time.

“Yes – from 6.30 – 9.00 p.m. I teach on Wednesdays. Thursday I am here until 5.30 for The College Singers and that is like a nice night off as well and then Friday nights I work at McDonalds. Saturdays I teach dancing until 1.00 and then work after that and Sundays, I also work.”

“Yesterday, Sunday was Open Day here at College. Were you involved?” I said, remembering my earlier conversation with Kathleen Cooper.

“Yes. Yes, yesterday I had to cut work short to be here. I am a deputy house captain and I have to show people around the school.”

“It is a busy life, isn’t it?”

“Busy life and busy days.”

*

The following week Kristin and I meet again for another interview. The ‘busy schedule’ topic arises again.

“I just see the workload getting way worse”, she says. “With West Side Story coming up and my end of year theatre performance stuff and my exams and just everything is just – it is just going to snowball.”

“Does this sometimes get to you?”

“It does and I get really stressed and really upset about it.”

“When do you get time for homework?”

“Well, I don’t.”

“Do you stay up late?”

“Well, I do – I stay up very late doing homework. I become accustomed to doing homework very late at night – after rehearsals, on weekends after I have finished work and…”

“There is a holiday coming up – do you get a holiday?”
“No. There is an Eisteddfod for the first week and a half. Then I am probably most likely going to be working pretty much solid for the rest of that otherwise… because our drama play will be over by then which will be excellent – I just can't wait until it is over – I really can't. I just… I mean, I have been so bad with rehearsals lately. I have missed a few rehearsals and I have been leaving early and coming late and…”

Something flashes into my mind as we are speaking – a recent newspaper story. It was discussing a survey that concluded that forty-five percent of Australians worked more than five days a week. This was in spite of promises that the technological revolution - particularly computer technology - would provide us with more leisure time. I wondered if anyone had surveyed the increased workload of school students.

Then I also remember a conversation with my wife. We were driving in the downtown area, stopped at traffic lights, when we observed about twenty college uniformed girls walking past. What was unusual was when my wife and I looked at each other and in unison said – “Look at their back-packs!” The size and obvious weight of each bag was enormous. Many seemed to be hunched forward in order to counter the weight and several smaller girls were straggling behind the main group, seemingly trying to keep up. A cumbersome gait was even more noticeable when several tried to run, while hurrying across the road at the pedestrian crossing. The burden was increased for the few who were carrying musical instruments.

“It's probably sports day” Eilish suggests, “They not only have books, but all their sports gear in those bags.”

“That reminds me” she continues, “of a chiropractor speaking in Sydney about having concern for the effect of the weight of backpacks on growing adolescent frames. And also – remember the Grammar School where they
changed hundreds of the laptop computers supplied to students because a new
model had come out that was nearly a kilogram lighter. They were trying to save
the kids that extra kilo”.

I returned to our conversation. Kristin was speaking about her busy life and the burden of her day.

“Even from when I was about 10 - when Les Mis finished, my life was starting to get busy. I started to realise the dedication that it would take and because I had got used to it from an early age, I can cope with it now. Like I find it is really easy to kind of… put it this way, I am used to having to practice and having the dedication to turn up to lessons and working my life around my music commitments.”

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Kristin’s life in music, up until now, had been a pretty straightforward journey. From the age of six, when she had seen ‘Phantom of the Opera’ she had decided what she loved most and what she would be. There hadn’t been any indecision about her direction and the only moments of stress had been while auditioning – wondering how she had done and would she get the part. Mostly, there had been successes with auditions. In fact she could not think of one part that she had auditioned for that she did not get. And all the shows had been amazing successes – not one flop. There were a few disappointing eisteddfods where things hadn’t turned out well – but they were usually minor, fun things – not exactly career dependent events. Incredibly, she just used to get on with life, with the joy of preparing for the next pantomime and show. Even with some of the stress of rehearsals – there was always one panic or another – from having to learn songs and routines in a hurry to preparing or altering costumes – that was all part of the game that she loved – she wouldn’t have changed anything.
But now with the future looming large Kristin realized she needed to start making decisions that before had been made for her. What with exams and job-hunting at the end of this year – she started to feel differently about life, herself and how to approach some of these issues. She hadn’t had time to reflect on what it was she was doing with music. She just got on with the business of it all. There hadn’t been any need because things were going so well and she felt lucky to be involved with music – to be so totally immersed in it - without question. But now specific events were asking her to reflect. She thought and looked into her life to see what it was in relation to music. She reflected in order to determine what it meant to her.

I’ve never thought much about what music actually is because it is hard to explain. You can’t explain what it is or why you do it. I mean in some ways it is like asking, “why do birds sing?” I don’t know. I guess it is just some peoples’ way of expressing themselves. A lot of people play it to please others – to give enjoyment to other people – but often, amongst musicians, it’s for themselves. Often it’s an expression of how they are feeling at the time.

That reminds me - it’s kind of like - the other day, Mrs. Cooper was saying that she and Mrs. Reeve were really stressed one day - just pulling their hair out so they took time out, just sat down at the piano and played a piece together. And they just felt so much better afterwards – just from playing a piece of music together. I mean, for composers, they can write down what they are feeling in music but for people playing, they can interpret it however they feel like – it’s personal.
That's what it is – I think it's about personal expression. Because, I suppose, it's... because music allows us to bring out this need for expression that we have. You can take somebody else's words and melody and put your own expression into it. And you can kind of... you can express things that words alone can't because it is not just... you can experiment with vocal tone and body language in communication but music brings a whole new element into that.

And I guess I'm lucky because I find it is easy to express myself through music. It is part of my personality to be able to put expression into my singing. Because if I am feeling lonely, I can just pick up a piece that makes me feel good or one that makes me smile and I can just sing it and feel... I don't know... just feel better just for thinking... ah, there is something I can do like... all is not lost because I can think of this and it doesn't make me... Gosh this is corny... but it's like that song from 'The Sound of Music' – 'My Favourite Things' or something. It's kind of a bit like that though. You can just pick it up and... it is there at your disposal sort of thing.

I really love getting into the part. I guess that's why I like drama also and particularly music theatre. It's so important for singing and it is part of the expression thing.

Imagine expressionless music! That completely ruins a performance – I don't know if it is just me or – but I would not be able to just stand there and just sing a song because songs have words, even if they are in another language. They are words with meaning and there is nothing more frustrating than to watch a singer just standing there and singing a song as if the words were just vowel sounds. Like... even the simplest phrase can have the most amazing meaning and it is sad if an audience does not get that.
And the phrasing... surely the phrasing is an important part of music meaning. Everything that you play has a meaning. It is about something or it is inspired by something. And a good instrumentalist can show that through the feeling that you give out. It does not only come through spoken word but just through tonality and, you know, just how they play it... it just... it is someone getting into a piece and just...

Everything has a meaning in music and you have to create it or find it. You can't expect your audience to connect with what you are doing unless you understand what you are doing and how you are trying to convey it to them. That kind of thing, I suppose, takes a lot of work but the most dedicated and the most successful kind of musicians can do that.

And another thing - I guess I'm glad I am a singer. Thankfully I don't have to cart around a huge instrument to be able to do it. I can lock myself in a room with a piano and just sit there and just, you know...

Part of what I like about music is that it really challenges me.

I guess the challenge is all linked to trying to find meaning in everything especially some of my more vocally demanding and less familiar repertoire. Like my classical pieces and that... trying to learn the words and then conveying a meaning to an audience who don't necessarily speak the language I am trying to speak. I guess that is a challenge but it is also the greatest joy as well so I guess that is what drives that challenge – like trying to find what it's all about.

*
“Studying is a bridge”

As Kristin reflects on her life at St. Catherine’s she feels emotional about some of the issues that are confronting her.

*Even though I am incredibly busy, I love my music… and that’s what tears me… like I love it so much and I just want to do it and get somewhere with it – learn new skills and do what you are supposed to learn. But it is just not really happening at the moment – unfortunately.*

*

A trail of meaningful connections in Kristin’s musical life leads me to important issues that have arisen. These are the several issues that seem like wedges placed between the demands of the school, the curriculum and Kristin’s wishes and expectations. I make connections to the different schools that she has attended and their specific part in her story and how impressions of these have influenced her thinking about St. Catherine’s. At her previous school Kristin blossomed in the supportive musical atmosphere and freedom to pursue her chosen field. When she first came to St Catherine’s, she compared the complexity of her new life with her former school and was disappointed. Now she “had to do everything” and could not focus solely on music. This situation improved during the last year but problems continue to account somewhat for why – “it is not really happening at the moment.”

Soon after meeting Kristin, I had a strong impression of the depth of love and commitment that she has for music. From the age of six, she had become ‘hooked’ on singing and performing. The discovery of music soon became accompanied by success – singing ‘Lillie Marlene’ in primary school and then the various important roles
in large stage productions. Re-assured that she had the creativity, good voice, and attributes that would help her to succeed in the music business, she went from strength to strength and deepened her commitment to singing and stage performing.

But contrasted with the deep love and commitment is an uncomplicated approach to the art of singing and the technicalities of music. Kristin has constructed her own personal 'meaning of music', feeling confident about her ability and having no doubts about its function and significance in her life. She has nurtured a strong relationship with it and while she still wishes to "keep on learning new skills", a paramount reason for studying it is that because doing so will more likely help her to secure a music career.

My opening question sought insight into her attraction for music.

"Kristin, please tell me, what is it about music that attracts you to it?"

"It's the prospect of being able to do something with it in the future because that idea is really what I have always wanted to do so I suppose that studying music – I see that as a bridge helping me to obtain that goal”.

Kristin hasn't chosen to articulate what music means to her - other than stating how studying it will help achieve her goal, which is to continue living it. Her reflection of ‘what is attractive about music’ echoes the attitude that - because she has had success and enjoyment with music in the past, she would very much like to continue doing it in the future. I view the nature of Kristin’s response, as a reflection of her straightforward attitude to her music and goals, for the attraction of music is to just keep doing it.

I reflect for a moment on Kristin’s reply and her ‘uncomplicated’ approach. It reminds me of the diversity of musical identities that I had come across as a classroom teacher.

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Whilst teaching classroom music, I had developed a personal philosophy that included amongst other ideas, the concept that the *purpose of studying music theory and technique is to deepen our relationship with it*. I assumed that it is the interaction and sensitivity between the person and musical processes that creates meaningful performances. Imparting this philosophy, I discovered, was perhaps helpful to those students who were interested but needed encouragement and ‘a reason’ to take up theoretical study. But I was also aware of many students who were already immersed in highly personal and committed relationships with music and who had perhaps learned ‘by ear’ or ‘vernacular’ processes, and who had little theoretical background. For many of these students - whose musical identities had already been formed and structured in a way that was not deeply grounded in abstract musical concepts - attempts to become more technically or theoretically involved often served to confuse and block that existing relationship. While I saw all students as holding the potential for more musical discovery I was aware that musical inhibitions are often a reflection of social and psychological inhibitions. Breaking free is not achieved by pushing on the part of the school, the curriculum, parents or teachers. The complexity and diversity of personal musical identities includes those who have a love and commitment to music and who understand that it is how you use music that is significant – not necessarily the technical depth involved. While technical proficiency and virtuosity are desirable goals, they are the by-products of music study and are the results of a deepening relationship with music. In my experience, sought as ends in themselves, these musical attributes will often lead to dazzling but ‘cold’ or ‘empty’ performances. I would consider old blues singers as examples of simplicity and directness and contrast
them to 'mechanical' renditions of Bach or to the many technical, virtuosic, guitar 'speed merchants' who used to leave me impressed but cold.

Prior to arriving at St. Catherine’s Kristin had already developed a sensitive relationship with music. She had worked hard at school and was determined to succeed at the ‘academics of music’. However, a certain amount of friction has occurred in Year Eleven and Twelve at St. Catherine’s College because, in a highly academically based curriculum, she has found theory a problem. She attributes this to her early days and beginnings – where she started as an ‘ear’ musician.

While discussing classroom music we approached these issues and Kristin revealed the story of her non-technical background and some of the friction this causes. The following episode began with a question that sought to look at issues of music theory.

“Kristin, what about the academic side of music?”

“The academic side of music… I am not very good at theory. I am terrible at it actually. I mean… I am not terrible. I understand the concepts and stuff but I just find it hard to apply them. I find it pretty hard to apply them and I guess it goes all the way back to my childhood and learning from the tape. I don’t claim to be very good at theory… because… I am not. I never had to do theory to learn my instrument. I never had to know all the notes and scales in order to begin singing and most of my learning has been 'by ear'”.

“And is it lack of interest or is it that it just doesn't seem to click with you?” I asked tentatively, trying to go deeper into the issue but concerned that I would, in her eyes, become a judgmental teacher discussing a ‘failing’.

“It is probably a bit of both,” she said, seemingly happy to discuss the matter further. “I guess because it was not essential for my instrument when I
started… like I know the basics and that is pretty much all that I have needed to learn for the voice. If I played another instrument, it would be a lot more valid but I suppose… it is a bit of both because it is not that I don't try but it is just some of the stuff doesn't click. I am not sure why. But I can sight read and I can sight sing. Yes, and I can work stuff out… bash something out on the piano but I am not by any means, a pianist. I can't play for myself. I find it very difficult to practice on my own which makes practising difficult. And I guess it just comes back to the fact that I didn't need to learn the basics of music theory to be able to learn my instrument because whereas if I picked… you know… I used to play the flute. In fact I played the flute from year 5 to year 9. But to pick up an oboe or a trumpet or sax or whatever, you have to be able to know the basics of theory and be able to apply it to your instrument and I guess that with singing, well for me… in the beginning, it was not so important.

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It's difficult to be analytical about music because I probably listen for – just the entire package. It's the overall beauty of the music that I am attracted to. I mean if a singer has been recorded then someone must have seen something there good enough in their voice to be recorded, therefore I just always judge music by the way that I feel after I have heard a song. Or even during a song. Like if I listen to something and I go, gee that was beautiful then I think, why was it a beautiful song? It might have had beautiful lyrics or it might have had a beautiful melody; it might have had beautiful harmonies; it might have beautiful accompaniment.

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In addition to admitting to stress with her workload and experiencing some conflict in drama where she had felt misunderstood, Kristin indicates that the transition from school to college had not been easy.
Kristin’s schools prior to St Catherine’s College included Swindon Primary and then Argyle Secondary School. At Argyle, music had been ‘smooth-sailing’. We discussed these transitions. They arose while talking of musical experiences and ‘turning points’.

“A turning point was probably going to Argyle. My transition from grade 6 to grade 7… just that initial transition was a turning point. I was transiting schools and… from Swindon primary to Argyle which really… it was like so different. At Swindon they had no focus on the arts at all and then at Argyle it was just all there for me to do and I was… and that is when I started having this hugely busy schedule because I found out that I could do interesting stuff. I could do whatever I wanted to do… pretty much.”

“It sounds like your experience at Argyle was great.”

“It was. It’s an awesome school and I enjoyed every second I was there. Like I love the arts and I was sometimes… even in my early years in primary school… ridiculed for loving choir and you know… like I used to skip sport lessons because… I mean this is what it came down to… like at Argyle you could do everything. You could do your sport if you wanted to and you could do your music and everything. But at Swindon Primary… because it was a primary school I suppose… so to do choir it was during sport lessons so as you can imagine… well ninety percent of the class went to sport lessons and then just a couple of us went to choir. We were different and ridiculed for liking choir and liking music. I wasn’t a loser or anything but it just kind of… it was strange and I only had one other friend who liked music at my primary school. And it was just us two. And we only sort of got together because we were the only two that were into music and we could do that together. Yes, but that was really hard. So you kind of had to decide between music and sport. Yes and then I went to Argyle which was a really good experience and where I really got into music. It was probably the place where I decided that music was the direction where I wanted to go because I just loved every second that I was at Argyle. I loved it. I completely loved it because they let you relish in who you were and who you wanted to be and what
you wanted to do. There were so many opportunities to do every single thing that you wanted to do. The teachers in general were great and the feeling of the school was brilliant. The teachers were amazingly supportive… even my other subject teachers… you know, they would let me do things in their class time and then let me… you know. I still had a balanced time at school because I have always worked really hard but I was allowed to grow in the area that I wanted to grow in and become… yes… I was allowed to find out exactly what I wanted to do within music. It was really, really important… those four years at Argyle were just the most… they were the defining years of what I wanted to do and that is when I knew that I wanted to do music.

“Yes and then what happened when you arrived here?”

“Well we made the decision to come to St. Catherine’s because… well, I am here on a scholarship for the school of performing arts. Like for dancing and drama but I was a little disappointed in the music department here… just general organisational things. Like you just… I guess I came from Argyle, which is a State School, and they had done workshops and master classes and things and always managed to be able to send us along to them for free. We didn’t have to pay for anything because, I suppose they assumed that it was a State school and probably none of us could afford it - which in fact we actually couldn’t. But I suppose coming here, it kind of…I don't know. There is more of a pressure to be in everything rather than… like to do your sport and your music and your academic stuff and you are not just allowed to do one - which is hard. Hard for me because I sort of knew which direction I wanted to go into. And I was under a lot false impressions of what was going to be happening when I came here, so I was a little disappointed to start with. At first I absolutely hated St. Catherine’s when I came here… absolutely hated it but Mrs Jones has been really good and last year was awesome. I had a really good year and I got into it - last year with my music and stuff. I was just disappointed that they didn't do a musical last year. Well, anyway, I got really good marks last year. I was really happy and I worked really hard for my exams. I got OAs and HAs and everything and this year I am doing
fine. And I love doing drama but the way they have arranged the class this year is terrible. It is absolutely catastrophic and it is not working at all but I guess it is just the politics of the school that can't be changed.”

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Kristin prepares to sing. With determined movements she removes her school blazer and places it over a spare music stand behind her and loosens her tie. She thinks to herself, quickly reflecting on the situation that is about to happen.

*I feel good… I’m a confident person. There is not a lot that worries me about performing now… like… I can get scared in certain social situations but with music and acting I can walk straight into the part - just go on the stage and sing to people. I can sing to anyone. I mean, I sing to people just sitting closely in front of me and yes, some social situations do frighten me. But I am good at debating and am a pretty confident public speaker. I feel pretty much at home here.

Kristin moves toward the piano to organize the music scores for Mrs. Cooper and then finds her performing space to the side. She is aware of her posture and how it reflects her confidence. There is the familiar feeling of excitement that always arises at this time – the time she looks forward to most. The problematic issues in her life melt away. She feels at home now fully believing that this is what she is meant to do with her life. All other events, like studying theory, working at McDonald’s, teaching on the weekends – are simply means to this end, processes that support and allow her to do this. Appearances in ‘Les Miserables’, ‘Oliver’, ‘Secret Garden’, ‘My Fair Lady’ and countless Eisteddfods and public performances – both with singing and dancing, have
assisted the development of self-assurance and belief in her ability and a knowledge in the fact that she is good at this.

She is also confident because the songs are well prepared. But this time there is also a slight nervousness that she recognizes is due to the assessment procedure about to take place. She will not be able to just ‘charm’ the audience in this case. Mrs. Cooper and others will listen critically and react to her performance not only from an emotional perspective but also with a focus on technical and theoretical issues such as intonation and timing. If it were only about audience response she knew she would ‘pass’ but criticism of this nature is always a bit daunting.

Importantly, the strategies she has learnt put her into a performing mode. She has decided that you need a sort of psychic boost and preparation that will firstly get you into a confident frame of mind but also prepare you for the role you are about to slot into. After all, the drama and singing teachers had reinforced that enough.

Kathleen Cooper, the music teacher presses a crease down the centre of the music score. With arms poised ready above the keys she takes sideways glance at Kristin and begins the short introduction.

Sssh
It's, oh, so quiet
Ssshhhhhh
Ssshhhhhh
It's, oh, so still
You're all alone
And so peaceful until…

You fall in love
Zing boom
The sky up above
Zing boom
Is caving in
Wow bam

You've never been so nuts about a guy
You wanna laugh you wanna cry
You cross your heart and hope to die
’Til it's over, and then…
It's nice and quiet
But soon again
Starts another big riot

You blow a fuse
Zing boom
The devil cuts loose
Zing boom
So what's the use
Wow bam
Of falling in love

Sssh
It's, oh, so quiet
It's, oh, so still
You're all alone
And so peaceful until...
You blow a fuse
Zing boom
The devil cuts loose
Zing boom
So what's the use
Wow bam
Of falling in love

The sky caves in
The devil cuts loose
You blow blow blow blow blow a fuse
The song is a good vehicle for Kristin’s sense of drama and theatrics. The performance is animated. The Wow Bams and Owwwws are in fact screams where Kristin’s hands are up to her face. Each Ssshh is accompanied with a silencing index finger up to her lips. Upon singing the second line Kristin is distracted – we are all distracted by the appearance of the College principal and several guests. They enter from the mezzanine floor and walk down the stairs behind the performers. Kristin glances sideways, wondering what is happening - but is unfazed – the interruption is minimal and she does not miss a beat. She is professional, an experienced trouper, and I can’t help thinking that she even rises, just a little more, to the occasion, appreciating celebrity additions to her audience. The principal and guests move quietly to the side where they can observe the performance.

They too, like us become captivated.

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Postscript

Mrs Greenhill, on the other end of the phone, greets me warmly despite being ‘puffed’ from a dash in from the garden to get the phone. It is nearly nine months since we met to discuss Kristin’s musical world. She is interested to know how the musical story of Kristin is coming along. I am interested to know how Kristin is since graduating from St. Catherine’s.
I learn that Kristin is now at University. She did well academically in Year Twelve and is now studying Information Technology. She is very busy because evenings and weekends she continues to teach singing and dancing.

Kristin’s musical dreams and aspirations are still alive although Mrs. Greenhill comments on the lack of opportunity for her in Hobart. We both agree on the difficulty and competitive nature of the industry everywhere. Kristin did get into the chorus of ‘Oklahoma’ but was too busy to audition for any of the available parts. She is “saving up”, perhaps to go to the “mainland” after graduating. She has friends in the Theatre there.

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Jeremiah and I found a table in the corner of the Student Unions' cavernous glass-walled cafeteria. On the other side of the room a television was relaying a cricket match. A few students sat watching it and apart from the commentator's voice, the place was fairly quiet. The coffee wasn't good but the sun streaming through the window onto our table, helped to warm the atmosphere. As I set up the tape recorder I reflected on Jeremiah's offer to participate in the study. At one point I had doubted his suitability for the study for at twenty-one, he was not a 'regular' school student having spent two years in the work force. But he posed an interesting 'case' because although he lived in a flat and had left school at eighteen to work in various jobs, he had decided to return and complete a music course at Riverside College. Interestingly, although 'at school' he classed himself as a professional musician, and as the singer, songwriter and guitarist in a working band, he was actively engaged in either playing 'gigs' around town or at least always hunting for them.

I began by asking Jeremiah how he saw his musical world.

"Well I think of myself as a musician but what that really means is that I just play music and get paid very poorly... Ha! But basically music is what my life centres around. I love it - I love all aspects of it. It's an amazing thing you know - it really is. Ah... not sure really where to go from there. Strange really because I had all these good ideas when we were walking across the car park."
I remembered some of Jeremiah’s earlier spontaneous remarks as we walked to the cafe.

“You said it gets into your blood and...”

“Yeah... it does,” he said suddenly picking up the train of thought. “It gets into your blood... it’s ... well look, I have been involved in heaps of jobs. When I first left school, in the few years before going back to complete Year 13 at Riverside, I got into all sorts of things like office admin and all those sorts of boring jobs where you sit behind a desk and type things into a computer all day. But the whole time this music I was getting into... studying, it just got bigger and bigger.”

He thought for a moment and backtracked through his life.

“I started when I was eighteen - when my Mum bought me a guitar and it sort of went from there. It was just in my blood... it was starting to slowly take over everything, I mean...”

“It consumes a lot of your...” I interjected but he bubbled over.

“It consumes everything. As I was saying to you earlier, in the car park, that when it is in your blood it courses through your veins and gives you an almost a... divine sort of ... an idea that there is something bigger out there. It’s like the music that I create, or the music I play that other musicians have created ... makes me feel that there is a bigger world out there and it sort of... it calls out ... it becomes something that consumes you. It’s a big deal!” He said, concluding with great emphasis.

This time I was reluctant to interrupt his train of thought but he paused and drank from his bottle of Coke. I continued.

“Music has a lot of meaning for you... in terms of commitment to it and to personal expression? Do you want to express yourself through music? Is that important?” Suddenly I felt concerned that I was sounding too intellectual, too academic. But he straightened up, paused and looked at me with eyebrows raised.
“Yes! It is... what is the point if it is not personal? I mean if you are up on stage or even in your bedroom or a backyard somewhere, and you just strum along and go through the motions then it's not music. Other people may hear it as music but to you it's not – to you it's just an action you are going through. It is like... breathing and blinking – something you just do. So you have got to feel it, you have got to...”

He paused, sat back in the chair and thought. Immediately he bounced forward again, hands and elbows flat on the table, continuing with intensity.

“...It comes down to the dynamics of the music. If you are just strumming through it the same - every bar - then it becomes bland and boring. You can be there just doing the simplest task like being on stage playing rhythm guitar in a band. But you need to make it come alive. You are not just playing rhythm guitar to yourself - you are playing in a band. Not just strumming along. Playing in a band means you are contributing to a greater thing than you alone could do in music. It is not just about getting the most air-time or getting on with bands or getting people to say “Wow what a fantastic musician!” but just contributing to something that is bigger... and sometimes that means less of you and more of them.”

His eyes sparkled and he broke into a smile as he added –

“But sometimes you are the star. It is a matter of give and take.” As he looked at me the smile turned to a wry grin.

At that point I began to feel more relaxed (or perhaps it was relief) knowing that sitting before me was someone who had plenty to talk about. Little direction or prompting would be needed from me for Jeremiah has an open attitude, a detailed music story and a willingness to describe it. He had constructed a well defined ‘musician identity’ and had feelings, ideas and perspective about music and his role as a musician. However, I was still getting to know him and felt a certain reserve - of “treading on toes” - and my questions proceeded cautiously, attempting to probe carefully.
“So, spiritually music is important to you?” I asked.

“That is the biggest part. That is my job! I feel for me at least… I feel it is like a divine call almost. It is something I have to do. If I don’t do it… then I know I am going to be lost.”

The notion of music as a divine call and again his exhibition of a passionate approach intrigued me.

“Could we look at that… I mean we can question or analyse ourselves to a point where it becomes unproductive… but do you actually really question that in order to find where that drive comes from? It’s great to think that it’s divine, lovely, and spiritual, but…”

“Yeah, yeah! I think about it all the time! Sometimes I am forced to do that. I’m sure all creative people do that. They think, “I have got this, where does it come from?” You know… it is a basic human need to know and I believe it comes from God. I believe that God is very much involved with music. Perhaps not all music but most music. He couldn’t have… I think He just doesn’t want the kudos for some…” He cut himself off with a spontaneous laugh.

“So you have a faith… music comes from a spiritual place?”

“It does. It has to… I mean… for me God created music…and it is a beautiful… most fantastic art-form… it’s wonderful. My basic outlook on it is… I have written songs. They are good songs; they are songs that have mattered to people. And my basic philosophy behind recording an album is, well I have got these songs – let’s record them – not just for the sake of recording, but because well why else would I have the songs – why else would I write them? Unless they were going to be recorded – unless they were meant to be… almost… you know what I mean? It is like musicians who write songs and don’t perform them – you think, “Why did you write them?” Did you write them for yourself? That’s great but you wrote a song that is meant to be ‘out there’ for people to hear.”
We continued, expanding Jeremiah’s notion of the divine in music and the “job” that had been “assigned to him”. Souls were touched by music and it was important for him to reach out to them through his songs. A zealous approach to music and an appreciation for the divine in it, had begun three years earlier when he had been invited to be the lead singer in the band at the Stillwater Christian Centre. There he had his first “taste” for sharing music and “reaching out” with it. It was also there that he recognised that he could use his good singing voice and where he became serious about music, singing and guitar playing. It was then no coincidence that while singing in church that the quality of his voice and good musical ability were viewed as blessings – as gifts from God.

“So you really see it as a gift” I said, wishing to hear more.

“Yes, it is a gift. I feel blessed and extraordinarily lucky to be able to sing. From my perspective I have met so many people who have wanted to sing and it is all they want to do and … so I see it as my obligation to sing. It is now my job because I have been given something that these other people who want to do it can’t do, but I have got this thing so, it is like… well if you have got it then use it. If you don’t use it then why have you got it?”

“Have you had to work at it?” I asked. The teacher-self came to the fore seeking to know about developmental matters

“No - I have always been able to sing. That is why all my friends have called me a bastard - for so many years because I have always been able to sing. My voice has got richer and better and fuller in tone now and it sounds a lot better than the early days. It was always something I could do.”
Jeremiah Jones stopped writing in the little exercise book on the coffee table, put the pencil behind his ear and leaned back on the couch. He reached for the guitar lying next to him. As he played a familiar chord, he thought, “I love this guitar.” He listened to the crisp resonance, feeling the vibrations in his chest.

He returned to the song he was working on. It wasn’t coming together. He began to feel tense. “Damn it – come on, you have got to change this. Chuck it away -start again” he thought. “You have got to get personal! I mean... you can write songs about ‘yellow submarines’ or something - songs that are just going to make someone smile but you still won’t have touched them. People are just going to walk away thinking, “what a quirky song!”

He questioned how he wanted to write and to sing. He started to feel agitated and demanded that this issue be solved. He thought about what it meant to wear your heart on your sleeve and to put yourself on the line. It’s like playing on stage. Pretty much putting yourself on the line up there so you may as well go the rest of the way. Make it personal, about real things - about things that matter… about questions of life… about pain… about… not just, “Oh I broke up with my girlfriend and I’m really blue!” That just doesn’t feel creative. Yeah! I am an intense person – I can’t help it. He laughed to himself. That’s great! Probably why I am gonna be a good songwriter! I am a good songwriter! But it is like... you can’t write a song about pain unless you are in pain. But God knows I’ve been there… really felt it. I’m not just an observer. I know what it’s like to hurt, love and I’ve had my share of confusion… Have I been confused? Been lost too. I know my songs won’t come off as being childish or naïve. I am not going to write about being flowery and happy and all that simple rhyming stuff. Yeah, that’s the problem. At the moment you are not being honest with it, you are being an observer and an onlooker and it is just not right. It doesn’t make sense. Come on! You want to be able to touch another human being. It doesn’t
matter how - in any way, shape or form. I don’t care whether they say “Oh I bloody hate that song! That is a piece of shit!” I just want to move them – to get a reaction.

Jeremiah played the D chord again. Now something was happening. This time he had to move rapidly between singing, writing and strumming the guitar because a flow began that he couldn’t stop. He started to sing the words “I am afraid...” over a simple three-chord pattern and he could see the form developing before him. The moment was powerful for he knew what he wanted to say and he knew how he wanted it to sound. In the early hours of the morning the song was complete. “I am now a real songwriter!” he thought as he sank back on the sofa. He was tired, drained but content knowing that he had not only written the song he wanted, but had discovered a direction with which to take his song writing.

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The Student Union café was filling up. Someone dropped a plate at the checkout. The clatter was accompanied by loud cheering. At that point Jeremiah was confirming the power of music in his life.

“It dominates you – it gets in your blood and it calls out. You can ignore it but it just keeps calling and from a muso’s perspective you just feel you have to follow because if you don’t you are just going to drive yourself crazy till you do and if you don’t you will be bored brainless.” He laughed loudly, sat back and took a swig of Coke.

I thought about Jeremiah’s passion for music and had a stabbing moment of reflection of my earlier musical life. I saw my own intensity while seeking to grasp some of the opportunity music could offer. I had passionately connected my life and the guitar together, seeing learning and discovery stretching like a long road over the horizon.
There had been the creation of an emotionally based musical identity and matching personal 'story'. These manifested outwardly as a striving, a need to share what was inside – through music. Additionally, I momentarily recalled the social and professional challenges that I had confronted and the decisions I had faced, and saw how similar ones were relevant to Jeremiah’s life now. Also, an important, transformative moment in my musical life suddenly came to mind and I projected this train of thought into the present. I asked Jeremiah to describe an experience that may have been transformative - a musical turning point for him.

“I wrote a song called “I am Afraid.” It was the most intensely personal song I had ever written. Simple… three or four chords in the whole thing… it was just a very simple thing. It penetrated something in me that just… and something in me just wrote it… or to put it another way, it just came out and sang itself. I wrote that three or four years ago and I still sing it now. It was a huge change of direction! That’s when I suddenly realised what I wanted to do with music. And that was to touch people. I wanted to get inside their lives… even if just for a moment… even for a few minutes… for them to hear a song and to touch their pain and say, “You are not alone!” That was the point of it all. I mean it is a horrible feeling in the world, to be alone. There is an avenue there to help someone feel just a little bit better, I guess. To hear on a personal level… to hear that something you have written has made someone break down and cry. Or to hear that somebody has been helped. Or that they feel that they are not alone anymore. Or that, in some way their life has been enriched by something that I have done. It boggles my mind. I mean some of the songs I have written I have got testimonials back from people saying that if they hadn’t heard that song then they didn’t know what they were going to do with their life. Suddenly it turned their life around. A guy I knew was going to commit suicide then he heard a song I had written and he said it changed that.”
I sensed pride and satisfaction emanating from Jeremiah as he spoke. He had been buoyed by achievement. The goal had been to "reach" people with his music and he had had dramatic confirmation of success. Not only was he reaching people, he was effecting positive changes, giving meaning to lives. This was spurring him on to greater things.

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Jeremiah had always believed he was destined to be an artist in some form or other and his life had taken a few twists and turns. At one stage, comic book art was the main focus as he had an extraordinary ability to draw cartoon-style. He was also interested in drama. Interestingly the comic art and drama were linked through one point of contact – a teacher who promoted both. This point now surfaces when I ask Jeremiah about important influences in his life.

"One of my biggest influences wasn't a musician it was Sam Peters – my drama teacher. He had the biggest influence upon me that anyone ever did. He taught me to dream – and to think outside the square that I live in… to think about bigger things and more important things in life.

"How specifically did he do that?"

"He just did! It is not like he said, "This is how you do it! Gave me the twelve-step program… but he just did… he inspired the socks off me. Taught me to be better than myself or to… to… he really encouraged me in everything I did."

"That was your drama teacher..." I began, but Jeremiah continued, anticipating my interest in the issue.

"Ah, he gave me a comic book ... actually he gave me about 2,000 comic books! But that is what really started me off. It was comics. That is what started me
being creative. Until then I was rather boring and bland. But um...” he broke off into a laugh.

“So you are into art as well?” I asked.

“Comics are great!” He replied. “They are another source of inspiration. And movies - I knock off lines from everywhere. It's like... I'm very creative and original with my lyrics but sometimes I can get an idea from anything”.

But eventually it was music that took the predominant place in Jeremiah’s life. His creativity is now channelled into song writing, recording, and performing at local venues and the inevitable ‘hassle for gigs’.

A broad picture of his musical identity was forming as he had given a detailed and passionate introduction to his musical world, and how he saw himself. He had included thoughts of his own creativity, which had included his interest in comic art, and the important inspiration and influence of his drama teacher. We would eventually move on to talk about his earliest memories, his school music experiences and the influence of his family. But for a moment we paused while Jeremiah took the wrapper off a round of sandwiches and tucked in and I turned the tape over and checked the recorder. It gave me a moment to reflect on the rather unusual set of events that occurred when I had driven earlier that morning, to the outer suburbs to meet Jeremiah at his house.

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I turned into the cul-de-sac. It was a small street of suburban red brick bungalows with low fences, mostly with ragged un-cut grass squares in front, and straggly bushes around borders. The post boxes were makeshift and many of the front gates either had paint peeling off them or were unhinged. I proceeded, driving slowly as children were running up and down the street, throwing ball or skipping rope and I was looking for
number 24. I rounded the turning circle at the end of the street, pulled up and parked in front of the house. There was an old car in the driveway so I figured someone was at home. But then I saw the front end was up on blocks - no wheels. I was ten minutes early so I sat in the car, opened my brief case and proceeded to read my notes in order to run through my mind some of the questions I was going to ask Jeremiah. It started to rain and the children ran past. Some looked in the car window, jeered and then ran on their way home. Someone was home. I was being watched. I looked up to see the curtain falling back into place. I thought it better to make my presence known.

I knocked on the door. It opened slowly. A tall man with long hair and clad in denim peered at me, squinting as though the light now coming into the house was painful.

"Yeah" He said.

"Hi, I am here to see Jeremiah – we had an appointment at 11. I'm a bit early so…"

He brushed me aside to look out of the open door. He looked both ways up and down the street.

"Come in" he said, "I'll see if he's in his room". He knocked on a door adjacent to the hallway we were standing in.

"Jay!" He called out.

There was silence

"Jay – someone here". This time there was a grunt from the room. We waited for a few moments uncomfortably looking at each other. The man in denim smiled.

"I think he's had a late one," he said.

The door opened and Jeremiah, holding a towel around his waist, looked at me. There was a moment of non-recognition as he peered through half-closed, sleepy eyes.

"Shit" he exclaimed.
“Hi” I said, “It looks like a bad moment. I could go out and get a coffee and come back later if you…”

“Ah… just give me a few minutes,” he said.

I couldn’t help a glance past him through into his room. You could not see the floor for magazines, comics, cassettes, CDs and clothes. There was a stereo and guitars were lined up against the wall. I nodded and backed away.

The man in denim spoke, “Hi my name is Stu – are you here about music?”

I introduced myself and we shook hands. I mentioned the nature of my business and Jeremiah’s agreement to be interviewed.

While rolling a cigarette Stu began to sing Jeremiah’s praises.

“He’s great isn’t he? Always playing that guitar and now getting some good gigs around town. That’s where he was last night I think.”

Stu said I could wait in the front room if I liked. He ushered me through, saying ‘Scuse the mess”, and left to go to the kitchen to make coffee. The front room, the lounge or drawing room of any normal house was in this case a rehearsal pad. A drum kit was set up and dominated the floor space. The open fireplace was packed full of what looked like unburned fish and chip papers and remnants. There were beer cans lying around the room and the smell of the smoke of a thousand cigarettes permeated the carpet and curtains.

I was surveying this scene and imagining a rock band rehearsal in this small room with guitar amplifiers and the drum kit in full flight when Stu put his head around the door.

“Er, could you do me a favour.” His face was screwed up in an apologetic grin. “Do you mind just moving your car a little way down the street? It’s just that the neighbours and the landlord…”

I obliged, not wishing to seem surprised but also not wanting him to feel the need for further explanation. As I walked out of the front door I saw my dark green Ford
Falcon and suddenly it took on a rather ominous look standing there in the empty street.

When I returned to the house I could hear Jeremiah singing in the shower. Stu and I chatted. We drank coffee as he told me the story of the break down of his marriage, how his wife took off with the kids, wouldn't let him have access to them and how he subsequently went down hill.

When Jeremiah surfaced we made plans to drive to the university campus and conduct the interview in the Student Union café where he could also get some breakfast.

As we drove off down the road Jeremiah said, “Gotta move! I hate living there. It's not inspiring, not good for my creative juices.”

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The sun had now moved away from the table and the students watching the cricket match got up to leave, clattering chairs, cups and plates. But others replaced them and a queue was forming at the counter as it was turning to lunchtime. I had changed the tape in the machine and Jeremiah, happy to eat and talk was set to continue his musical life-story.

I had been intrigued by his bravura, his sureness of purpose and his evangelical desire to move people and to comfort the lost and lonely with his music. He had shaped his musical life into a kind of vehicle through which the power of music would flow. He saw himself as a music conduit, channelling what was good in this life and exuding it to others and fulfilling the purpose that had been bestowed upon him.

I then thought about Jeremiah’s musical journey and how he had arrived at this moment and how he had constructed such perspectives.

“What are your earliest memories of music?” I asked.
"Earliest memories of music – Oh crikey! That’s going back a while! It has always been music for me… I have always loved music. I was born in the eighties so I didn’t really have much good music to listen to” He laughed, took another bite of his sandwich and paused to both chew and think.

"I think one of my earliest memories of music is of songs like "Get out of My Dreams and Into My Car" - that was an awful song but – more to the point – sixties music had the biggest influence on me from a early age. There was a radio program called ‘Six O’clock Rock” on a popular FM station and Mum introduced it to me when I was 10. I thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. It sort of shaped my love for music from an early start. It got me really sucked in and it wasn't till I was about 16 or 17 that I got interested in other types of music.”

“What was the role of music in your early family life? You said your mother introduced you…"

“Ah! Yes - she just loved sixties music and she wanted me to like sixties music too because my brother liked Heavy Metal.” He laughed. The laugh was like a playful mocking of his judgement. But then suddenly he became more serious.

"The family hasn’t really played a big role – you know – we haven’t been the sort of family that sang carols round the piano at Christmas time. But we’ve all got a love for music- everyone in my immediate family loves it. My older brother is a fantastic guitarist. He is about twenty times the guitarist I am – but he seems to think I am better than he is so…but I don’t think so.” He laughed again.

"Are any other family members musicians?"

“Ah no! My older brother Ben sort of is but he doesn’t get a chance to much these days – he is married with a full time job… sort of… didn’t keep the faith.”

“Your parents weren’t musicians?”

“No.” He said. There was a pause. I reflected for a moment but wanted to know more about his family influence.
“Please talk about your early influences… probably… sounds like your mother was an early influence…”

“Yes she was but importantly so was Ben, my brother.”

“He played guitar before you?”

“He played guitar years before me. I didn’t even pick it up until I finished college the first time. I mean, I was eighteen – the first time I picked up a guitar – ever!”

“What stopped you getting into it before?”

“I don’t know! I had always wanted to but I was lazy – you know I was an artist. That’s another thing! I write – not just songs but I am a writer and an actor, an artist. I am into all that sort of stuff. I just didn’t really have time to seriously get into music before then. I thought I wanted to be a comic book artist back then and I was drawing comics with my best mate. Basically, I didn’t really give the music a look until I got… because I have always been able to sing and that is one thing that has just remained the same ever since I was young. I was singing in plays or singing everywhere and it was something that was very big in my life.”

“How do you describe your singing voice?”

“I love it. It’s something I get a lot of confidence about. I think it’s pretty rusty and probably has a long way to go.”

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We then moved on to talk about Jeremiah’s education and school music associations. The discussion evolved into other areas that I considered important providing insight into his musical world. His impressions of self were revelations of his character and showed how music was used to reinforce self-confidence.
“Well from about kindergarten to grade three I banged sticks against things. And that was fun! But my big breakthrough came when I played Oliver in the school production. And also in primary grade five I sang in another production.”

“Is this where you discovered you had a ‘voice’?”

“No. I always knew I had a voice’.” He said confidently and broke into a mock child’s voice “‘I can sing! I can sing!” And as I would sing they would all go. “Wow, he can sing” and I thought I was king…”

“You were not shy as a child?” I said, perhaps stating something that was now becoming obvious.

“No” he said laughing aloud, as if it too should have been obvious. “God no! Probably it is why I am at where I am at now.”

“You started early…”

“Not really it is just that I’m confident - I get in people’s faces and they hear me whether they want me or not. Oh gosh!” He laughed again. “I was very precocious as a kid. I was in a production in grade Five … again in grade Seven… I was in a couple… I could always act and sing and always be cute enough for the directors to like me. It was great. Musically I started out playing clarinet in grade Seven. I went on to saxophone in grade Eight.”

“You did formal study like, sight-reading and…”

“Yeah! This was in the music classes. But I was bloody good at it. I got upgraded to 1st Saxophonist in the band - in grade Nine. Started doing it in grade Ten until… they tried and make me 2nd Saxophonist in the band and I kicked up a stink because I was much better than the other person was. And it pissed me off – as it would. It wasn’t about being a prima donna it was just about – the other saxophonist was not as good. And I wanted to be 1st Saxophonist because the music was better.”

“Do you still play saxophone?”
“No! But I wish I still did because it is a brilliant instrument. I like clarinet more though now. I wish I had stuck with that because it is a beautiful instrument. I dropped out of school bands in grade Ten. That was the turning point where I stopped doing music till after college. So there were three years of not doing music but then I could still always sing. That was when I got involved with the band out in church and stuff…”

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“Jeremiah, have you enjoyed the theoretical aspect of music?”

“No!”

“No! So for instance… with classroom music… the theory sessions… you haven’t enjoyed that?”

“I have been good at it. I understood it. It was easy for me to understand it… I don’t know why. It just came very easily.”

“But what don’t you like about it?”

“Restricting!” Jeremiah countered in an emphatic tone. “You play a piece of music, paying attention to dynamics and timing but essentially… I am always thinking of something deeper… what was involved when Mozart or Beethoven wrote pieces of music… or … and they had to write them down. And we see how they wrote them down. But essentially in doing so… or when they died, the magic part of the music was lost because it would never be played the same… or right ever again.”

“So you are talking about the limitations of notation?”

“Exactly! It is like when you go to the movies and you see this fantastic movie with special effects that make you shiver but then you see the documentary about the making of the film and it loses the magic. It is like the theory sucks the joy out of the music in a way. Because before then it was just some cool triplet but now it has got a name and now it has a whole bunch of theory behind it. It’s like whoa! It is not fun any
more. Before it was something that happened accidentally, something that someone
did one day that made something magical happen."

"Would you describe yourself as an intuitive musician?" I asked, having
searched my own feeling of popular music learning styles and also something of the
difference between ‘folk’ knowledge and ‘theoretical’ knowledge.

"Yeah! But I see theory’s place. It’s a definite place but having said that, I am
glad I’ve done it."

"How much has the formal aspect of school music helped or impacted upon
your…"

"Not hugely! I mean – I have notated one of my guitar pieces, which was
actually a satisfying job. Something I had fun doing – trying to put the feeling I felt when
I played it… onto the page… it was difficult – because you never play it the same way
twice any way. For a start, it’s not meant to be."

"Overall, how do you see school music… classroom music? And your class
friends, what do you think is the general impression of it?"

"I know musos who enjoy it and I know musos who hate it. I’m a sort of a fence
sitter with it. Because I can see its place but I can also wish it wasn’t there because –
like I say – it sucks the fun out of it. If you know all the secrets it’s no longer the
mystical thing. It’s no longer mysterious because you know exactly how it works, you
know why. It was like the other day – a friend of mine, Jonathon, he wrote a song and it
had this really nice twist in it because it was in 4/4 but the chorus was in 6/8. And the
thing with it was that I understood how it worked. It wasn’t like, “Oh that is a cool thing,
how did you do that?” It was, “Oh I can see that you have got it in blocks” It went 1234
123 123. And I could understand how it fitted the music still. And I wished I didn’t.
Because I don’t want to be thinking about that while I am listening to this music. I want
to be hearing…it was overtaking… do you know what I mean? Do you understand what
I am getting at?"
“You want to keep that side separate!” I said, not wishing to side step his question, but wanting to keep his perspectives coming.

“Yeah, I want to keep it separate. I wish I could just keep it over there” He said, pointing to some imaginary place. “Visit it when I need to go there. But otherwise keep myself separate from it because I just want to feel it. If you can’t feel it, it’s not music. It’s just not!”

“So of all your classroom music – what would you have changed?”

“Funny thing - after all that I have just said – probably nothing. I enjoyed the classes. Kathy the teacher made it fun – she didn’t make too big a deal out of the theory – she didn’t drill it into us. We could learn it if we wanted to. She was there basically teaching it to us - if we wanted to take it in we were welcome to, if we wanted to discard it – then… we would fail! Our choice!”

“Well did you have a goal to reach a specific theoretical level?”

“No!”

“So you have been able to follow your heart in your school music?”

“Well I graduated top of the class so I was happy. It was a good experience.”

“Did your performance mark lift your grade?”

“I think so… yeah! I just know I graduated on the top level. There were other people there too. I am not saying I am the best and the brightest because I am not. There were some fantastic musicians in that class… like Aaron… fantastic guitarist. I have a lot of respect for him. He can kick ass! But no, I wouldn’t change anything – it was good… it was fun.”

We concluded our meeting and while walking back across the car park made arrangements to meet in a month for a further interview. Jeremiah gave me his mobile phone number and advised me to keep in touch because he would “definitely be looking for a new place to live in the next few days.” I was anxious to complete interviews and observations with him for the year was drawing to a close; he would be
graduating from College in a few months. He had also suggested that he might head
off to Sydney in the New Year.

Jeremiah wanted to go into town so I dropped him off in the High Street.

*

The Three-Interview plan with Jeremiah was going astray. Our next interview
appointment turned out to be a disaster. I had phoned him and we arranged to meet on
the following Thursday at eleven in the morning. As I parked in front his new
accommodation, a small redbrick house on a sunny sloping street near Hobart City
centre, things didn’t look good. I noticed all the curtains were drawn. I knocked, waited
and knocked again – harder this time. No sound. I stepped off the small wooden
veranda and was walking through the small iron gate back to my car when the door
creaked opened. Jeremiah stood there, again with a towel around his waist. He
squinted in the sunlight as he looked at me.

“Oh... Hey man, I forgot! I’m sorry but it’s just not a good time right now.”

“Right, OK”, I said, trying not to let my disappointment show. I cursed myself for
not ringing first – to remind him.

“Call me soon – we’ll do that interview. Sorry!”

“Are you OK? Have you settled in here?”

“No man, it's not working out – I'm gonna have to move again – but it's cool
because I think I've found somewhere better. Ring my mobile OK”.

*

Jeremiah opened the door and smiled at me. This time he was dressed and
ready for the interview. It was late in the afternoon. It had been a month since the last
missed appointment and I was getting concerned about completing the interviews. I had, however learned news of him through an article in the local newspaper where he featured in a ‘band profile’ segment. He was doing well with a percussionist friend and together they were playing plenty of gigs and had plans to record a CD. As we spoke now, I discovered that there had been a few difficulties in moving into the new house. Finally, a friend with a van had helped him move the bed, guitars, stereo, CDs and comics.

As we went into the lounge area, Jeremiah introduced me to two house-sharing friends. They were just on their way out and their parting words to Jeremiah were a reminder for “the two hundred bucks needed for the house bond”. He reassured them that the money was “on its way” because he was soon to collect the money owed to him from the sale of a guitar. We settled down for the interview. As Jeremiah had “plenty of time and wasn’t going anywhere” I saw a window of opportunity and he was happy to complete “two interviews in one shot”. I recorded ninety minutes of tape while Jeremiah answered my questions and importantly, played the guitar and sang. He described how he had “got into song writing” and demonstrated how he composed. He played fragments of ideas and riffs and showed how they had developed into songs. Finally Jeremiah performed some current songs that were destined for the new CD that he would soon be recording. I left the house with the important tape and my observer mind reeling with thoughts and perceptions of the ‘lived experience material’ that I needed to write down.

*

I lost track of Jeremiah as his mobile phone number was soon disconnected. However, I later caught an unusual set of fleeting glimpses of him. From the corner of my eye, while driving in a busy street, I saw him ‘flying’ down the pavement on a
skateboard; the tails of a great black overcoat were billowing behind him. The next
glimpse was while I was performing at the local ‘folk festival’. From the stage, I looked
up from my guitar, glanced through the window at the end of the hall to see Jeremiah
with a group of musician friends. They were at the signing up point; where musicians
put their names down to perform on the ‘open house’ stage. Jeremiah was ‘hassling for
gigs’.

* 

God and music feature together in Jeremiah’s sense of self and they combine
together to fashion out his life’s purpose. He had been “blessed” with music and natural
talent and was now musically ‘being in the world’ in order to fulfil this blessing. I
reflected on his evangelical connection to musical performance and expression and
remembered how it had been nurtured at the Stillwater Christian Centre. At our first
interview, I had asked Jeremiah to select a pseudonym for the study. He unhesitatingly
selected Jeremiah explaining that he had always liked the song Jeremiah was a
Bullfrog. However, despite the decision for his choice, the biblical reference now strikes
me as also relevant for there is a prophetic approach to his musical zeal. He had
already comforted the needy and was aware of the power of music to reach people and
as a prophet he would continue to help people by leading them from catastrophe to
themselves.

Jeremiah is also sacrificing much in order to fulfil his prophetic, musical purpose.
Comfort, security and a steady income do not feature in the musical journey to get his
songs heard. Where and when will I catch another glimpse of Jeremiah? Perhaps, it
will be on a Rage music video clip because sacrifice, self-confidence, determination
and a degree of bravado are positive steps to “making it in the popular music
business”.

***
Epilogue

While engaged in searching the data for ‘potentialities of meaning’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 4) and the ‘essence’ of individual experiences, I developed a metaphorical sense of the research process. I saw myself more like a bloodhound on a trail than an eagle sitting at a high point with clear vision and an intuitive perception for the slightest meaningful movement. With nose down to the ground and after having headed up numerous garden paths and blind alleys, I ‘sniffed-out’ specific meanings and understandings. However, the trail does not lead to any sort of closure because exploring musical lifeworlds leads to further questions and the need to find new trails toward new meanings. There isn’t a destination to this metaphorical research journey but only meanings to be discovered ‘on the way’. The thesis does not develop truths, as the portraits, (like art works) are ‘snapshot’ images, frozen in time - of partial understandings of what music means to ‘the tellers of the tales’. With the difficulties involved when striving to capture transient meanings, I have felt, to borrow the words of Denzin (1997), like ‘a postmodern cultural phenomenologist with a mobile, moving mind (attempting) to record an unstable world’ (p. 139 and p. 161, n. 16). Viewed from this perspective of instability, in addition to being interpretations of musical lifeworld meanings, the portraits are phenomenological and narrative explorations of ways of thinking and being a teacher and researcher while seeking to interact effectively with students who live musical ‘ways of being’.
The function of arts-based research texts is different from those of a scientific character. They operate in a Bakhtinian spirit of *novelness*, where they may ‘inspire readers to enter into dialogue with them’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75). The importance of this sense of *novelness* is not ‘single, closed, convergent readings’ but the situation where readers ‘may contribute answers to the dilemmas posed within the texts’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75). This function of *novelness* seeks to avoid that of *epic* texts where the purpose is ‘to impart the final word, to shut out other voices, to close down interpretive options’ (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 75).

My hope for the portraits is that they meet the criteria of *novelness* by offering interpretive options that encourage divergent perspectives about music and educational dilemmas and that they may inspire further dialogue about the subjective and the social nature of music and music teaching and learning. Conversation and research on these matters should continue in order to generate further dialogue, meanings and understandings. While ‘case study seems a poor basis for generalization’ (Stake, 1995, p. 7) there are further interpretive options for a case study with ‘a constructivist view’ may provide good raw material for readers to make their own generalizations (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Importantly, the portraits do not ‘seek to impart the final word’ - allowing the thesis to resolve in what Tanaka (1997) calls a postmodern spirit of ‘unfinalizability’ (p. 290; see also Moss, 2004, p. 328). This inconclusive sense also coheres with Tanaka’s (1997) assertion (based on his own study) where, rather than conclusions, ‘what mattered more was the dialogue between characters’ (p. 290).

Stake (1995) has argued that intrinsic case studies lead to ‘understandings’ (p. 4) and ‘not so much (to) findings as assertions’ (p. 42). Following this viewpoint, in this section I shall make several assertions and also present unfinalized, convergent understandings rather than a set of finalized statements and divergent findings (that would be more at home in a scientific and truth-seeking study). My aim then is to resolve the thesis without diverging toward conclusive statements - a process that would require a return to a technical-rational
perspective, which would tend to close further interpretive options and also disaggregate the images I have built. Commenting further, therefore, is a delicate task as the portraits, to a large degree, “speak for themselves”. They are my understandings and the outcome of exploring the first research question (which sought to “explicate the essential meaning structures of how the lives of a sample of musically dedicated senior secondary school students are lived”). In this regard the portraits serve the case study ‘obligation’ which is to ‘share the burden of clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations’ (Stake, 1995, p. 102). Also, while discussing how ‘case study seems a poor basis for generalization’, Stake (1995) mentions that from a collection of case studies we may make ‘petite generalizations’ (p. 7). In addition to assertions I shall make several ‘petite generalizations’.

*

O’Neil (2002) has suggested that ‘there is increasing evidence to suggest that a gulf in meaning exists between ourselves as researchers and the young people we study when considering what it is to be a ‘musician’ (and) this is an area certainly worthy of further attention’ (p. 93). Included within the broad aim of this thesis I have sought to close the ‘gulf of meaning’ while exploring what it might mean to be a senior secondary school music student in the 21st century climate of a Western cultural and social environment. Importantly, the inquiry has not sought to provide solutions to the complex issues of music education by uncovering ‘the truth about music’. Rather its purpose has been to describe the qualities and meanings of experience in order to enhance understanding and contribute to the on-going discourse and dialogue about the effectiveness of music teaching.

The Western tradition in education has emphasised a conception of music as an objective, autonomous form. As a consequence of this process of reification, the effect has been a tendency to bypass individual experience, idiosyncratic musical perspectives, informal, vernacular learning processes and the social and
subjective nature of individual musical lifeworlds. This process of objectification is an echo of the Western epistemological and ontological quest for objectivity where the ‘lifeworld’ and ‘everyday meaning’ have been either forgotten or ‘reduced to another order of things’ (Fuller 1990, p. 240). If, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) has suggested - that the ‘objective’ and subjective’ are ‘two orders hastily constructed within a total experience’ (p. 20), then we have leaned and still lean heavily toward objective constructs of the totality of experience. Sokolowski (2000) confirms the pervasiveness of objectivism. He states that the idea of an isolated consciousness ‘still holds many of us captive, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to dislodge people from this way of thinking once it has taken root, once they have become used to a certain set of problems and a certain way of reasoning’ (p. 227).

As a teacher, I had felt the effect of an objectivist attitude within the school system and saw this research study as a pragmatic, reflexive opportunity to explore an alternative to an objectivist way of looking at music, music teaching and learning. I sought to take responsibility for my own part in “constructing an objective world” by seeking personal transformation to new ways of looking and being.

It has been the task of phenomenology to attempt to restore balance – to ‘remember the lifeworld’ and to take meanings ‘just as they present themselves in everyday life’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 24). In the sphere of phenomenological research, Van Manen’s (1990) plan has been ‘to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures of lived experience’ (p. 10). Following this lead, I have ‘returned to the lifeworld’ to explore the lived experience and everyday meaning of being a secondary school music student. The journey began with the need to become more pedagogically ‘attuned to subjectivity’ (Van Manen, 1991, p. 154). Whilst in the process of considering the subjective I sought to avoid the assumption that consciousness is isolated, ‘a closed sphere of interiority completely cut off from everything belonging to the objective world external to it’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 19). To do this I explored ‘bridging the ontological chasm’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 93) with a phenomenological and constructivist stance that
assumes we are more than isolated entities with a consciousness that simply represents an objective world. The intentional and social nature of consciousness means that ‘we are in direct contact with the world (and) living our conscious life, we are ‘at’ the world, ‘at’ the things encountered in that world’ (Gurwitsch, 1974, p. 236, quoted in Fuller, 1990, p. 37). With this perspective in mind I have thought of subjectivity as a constructivist, non-solipsistic concept – one that simply refers to the features that are unique and idiosyncratic to each individual.

I ‘attuned’ to this constructivist concept of subjectivity by approaching the lived musical worlds of the participants with a focus on narrative life history and with a phenomenological ‘attitude’ to musical experience. With this approach I sought to ‘defuse the dualism’ (Bowman, 1998, p. 301) between music and musician. With phenomenological and narrative ways of thinking I set out to understand the musical lifeworlds of Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah. I listened to their stories and observed them in lifeworld contexts and then connected life events into narrative sequences. By looking for the essence of specific experiences, both formative and in their learning situations, I sought to interpret and illuminate how individual experiences were meaningful in their lives. The process of explicating meanings and restorying the data has revealed the intense and intimate nature of the personal relationship that each participant has forged with music, the individual and complex ways that musical identities were formed and the way they have evolved. The explicated meanings reveal how Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah each have developed a ‘profoundly intimate and inherently complex relationship between music and sense of self’ (Bowman, 2003, p. 2). With each participant, to use the words of Regelski (1986), ‘musical functioning…has become an inherent and intrinsic part of their total human functioning’ (p. 214). These assertions affirm an important implication for music educators. While the ‘outer’ function of music teaching is to present an organised curriculum, for musically enthusiastic and dedicated students, music will be much more than subject material to be learned. Their identities and music (concept of self and musicking) will be ‘joined at the hip’ (Bowman, 2003, p. 3). Awareness of
and empathy with the nature of individual musical identity is a requisite to effective teaching. In our interactions with individual students we should strive, as far as possible, to be phenomenologically ‘present’ to the nature of each individual musical lifeworld and identity, in order to understand the contextual effect that organised, formal musical experiences may have. As Van Manen (1982) reminds us, we should also be ‘mindful of the ease with which we tend to rely on a reconstructed logic in our professional endeavours’ (p. 296), in order to remain phenomenologically attuned.

*  

The portraits reveal each participant’s preferences - for vernacular, informal or formal music learning styles and also the contexts and circumstances that led to different musical paths and choices. The musical identities and lifeworlds of the participants began with different types of enculturation processes. In most cases, a love for music did not commence from formally structured experiences but as an integral part of informal, everyday, meaningful musical interactions - like singing with Dad, watching music videos, singing to cassette tapes and ‘poking around on the piano’. Important formative experiences were varied and complex, sometimes social and sometimes private in essence. Specific interactive musical experiences during the childhood of each participant have been demonstrations of how an instant, powerful, phenomenologically intentional attraction to music experience occurs. From these initial experiences, it appears as though a phenomenological attraction gathers momentum and personal concepts of self become bound with concepts of music to form a large proportion of developing self-identity.

While the research questions focussed on these specific realms of the musical lifeworlds, other issues and dilemmas ‘surfaced’. The reader may interpret the ‘effects’ and differences between the cultures experienced in private compared with those of public schooling. Comment and dialogue may also be opened about the levels of stress and the workloads that students are placed under. ‘High
achieving’ students are often left to their own devices as we concentrate on those with learning difficulties. However, ‘high achievers’ and ‘perfectionists’ should not simply be categorised as ‘gifted and talented’ but monitored closely, cared for and supported. The drive to achieve may be based in difficult emotional situations and may be a ‘cry for help’. In the portraits the complexity of living a musical life is revealed when music engagement is seen as both cause and effect of life’s dilemmas. Positively viewed, music is a source of joy, comfort and a necessary outlet for expressing inner meanings that need to surface in an alternative form.

* 

In this study I have also explored possibilities for the music educator/researcher to utilise narrative and phenomenological frameworks and modes of thought. I took the opportunity to pragmatically explore the self-transformability that these particular ‘ways of thinking’ present. As a pragmatic exercise, I explored my own lived experience of both narrative and phenomenological thinking while conducting the research, and sought a transformation of my own perspectives, values and relationship to music and most importantly to those I teach/research. The task required a connected and more grounded Kierkegaardian familiarity with ‘what is immediately experienced’ rather than attempting to formulate an objective ‘Freudian technical formulation’ of theoretical processes (May, 1969). Additionally my aim has been ‘to capture the rich diversity of thought’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 11) by demonstrating the different ways that we construct meaning with narrative and paradigmatic modes. My own ‘transformation’ during the study has involved a challenge to commit to a reflexive engagement with a constructivist and pragmatist approach. The constructivist approach has challenged me to uphold the subjective and social aspects of music engagement – above recognition of it as an autonomous, objective form. The pragmatist approach has required a pursuit of ‘embodied’ meanings rather than facts.
that attempt to state ‘what the world, the one universal truth is really like’. With a pragmatist perspective I have sought to consider music ‘as a process not an object - a ‘thing’ but, indeed, a set of processes, and a set of processes that inevitably involves people’ (Shepherd and Wicke, 1997, p. 95).

However, the thesis has not predominantly focussed on ‘a sociology of music’. I have avoided reifying the social aspects of music, for like Shepherd and Wicke, I have not ‘conceptualised music’s social condition in terms of extrinsic forces which ‘determine’ music and thus render it as little more than an expression of ‘the social’’ (p. 95). By including social aspects, but not reifying them, I ‘have assumed that music’s social condition is intrinsically musical and thus not reducible to other forms of sociality’ (Shepherd and Wicke, 1997, p. 95).

While developing new personal perceptions of the research process I resolved some of my own epistemological and ontological tensions. The incorporation of the Wittgensteinian concept, where ‘essence’ is uncovered metaphorically through a process of rearranging rather than digging, assisted further insights into interpretive procedures. I recognised how natural science ‘digs’ in order to seek the laws that determine the functioning of the physical universe and to ‘verbally replicate structures of the real world’ (Barone, 2001a, p. 174). In contrast, by ‘rearranging’ understandings and meanings I recognise how we may locate ‘essences’. These are not in some ‘beneath the world reality’ but (if we choose to look) are ‘already open to view’ (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 43, n. 92).

* 

Narrative and phenomenological approaches hold many possibilities for future research into music education. In addition to developing insight into the perspectives and experiences of musicians and students, the approaches, when engaged pragmatically, also challenge researchers and educators to explore their own ideological positioning in relationship to music and music students. Moreover, these research processes will help to promote a constructivist balance
to the dominance of objectivist perspectives. As Van Manen has stated, the phenomenological attitude helps us ‘attune to subjectivity’ (1991, p. 154). By developing more empathy to student musical lifeworlds and identities we may continue to challenge the dominant approach to curriculum that begins with objective and theoretical abstractions of music’s inherent qualities, and then demands that teachers lead students towards these objective constructs. Alternatives are needed to this modernist view of curriculum, which seeks to discover a ‘pre-existent world, not a method for dealing with an emergent evolutionary one’ (Doll, 1993, p. 32). Additionally, the constructivist approach can help us to be more socially and contextually appropriate. As Elliot (1995) suggests, ‘the best curricula arise when teachers focus on their own circumstance, rather than on the generic scripts of theorists and publishers who tend to see similarities across teaching situations that cannot be grouped together defensibly in reality’ (p. 254).

Giroux and Simon (1989) have stated that ‘...the relationship between pedagogy and popular culture needs to be made theoretically visible and pedagogically operative in the language of schooling’ (p. 221). I assert that the relationship between pedagogy and popular culture may be further understood by adopting phenomenological and narrative approaches, where these methods will help to illuminate the perspectives of the ‘actors’ in and of the culture. However, there is a mistrust of the perspectives of young students – evidenced in the following statement by Zillmann and Gan (1997), who researched ‘adolescent musical taste’, but who are sceptical of relying on personal reports from the adolescents themselves. They state:

The analysis of the exploration of the influence of adolescent music on adolescents’ beliefs and dispositions, by openly asking adolescents about the possibility of such influence, reveals the limitations of this procedure. Clearly, what adolescents can report are their perceptions or opinions. These opinions are based on presumption rather than careful observation of causal connections between exposure to music and resultant behaviours. They are, additionally, subject to self-serving distortion. Moreover, the
potential influence of familiarity with prevalent, mostly mediadisseminated views about the issues cannot be ignored. All this is to say that adolescents’ perception may be insightful on occasion, but cannot possibly be accepted as actual influences.

(p. 168)

The purpose of the research by Zillmann and Gan was to discover adolescent musical taste. However, while they have attempted a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of emic issues, by mistrusting subjectivity they end up with ‘complexities objectively described’ rather than discovering ‘the particular perceptions of the actors’ (Stake, 1995, p. 42). Additionally, by seeking the objective facts of ‘what happens in situations’ they avoid any notion of ‘fidelity’ where we seek to understand what music may mean ‘to the teller of the tale’ (Grumet, 1988). The assumption that music is an object apart from the people who create and have an opinion about it - and the need to find evidence of the object apart from those people is, I believe, ‘barking up the wrong tree’. It distances the practices of music pedagogy and research away from students and informants. Distance is created when the teacher and research academic is assumed to be a privileged expert rather than simply having expertise. As experts, we may feel justified in reporting our perceptions and opinions because we have based them on ‘careful observation of causal connections’ rather than on ‘presumption’. However, I suggest that when we adopt a narrative and phenomenological perspective of the lifeworlds of our students and research participants we may find several limitations in our observations. For example, by categorising the adolescent musicians as having ‘self-distorted opinions’ Zillmann and Gan do not ‘orientate to the subjectivity of the lifeworld’ and avoid ‘the intelligible forms they (the musicians) treat as real’ (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998, p. 139). A move away from this objectivist approach means to explore, not what ‘music means’ but what ‘music means to people’.

*
I would like to acknowledge the openness of Polly, Mario, Jan, Kristin and Jeremiah to share their stories. Their musical lives contain the seeds and the fruit of music teaching and learning. Through their ‘tellings’ they have invited us to listen and to understand – but in a way that is different from looking into a ‘one-way-mirror’ of inquiry. They have revealed how stories of experience contain more than self-serving distortions and ill-considered presumptions. ‘Open to view’ are gems of understanding that suggest the way forward for music education. I shall leave with a ‘gem’ offered by Mario, who while explaining the effect of a teacher on his musical lifeworld announced an important constructivist message. He described how, inadvertently his physical education teacher was a positive force because he

helped me to discover music. He didn’t teach me about music, he showed me music and there is a difference.

*

Back in the classroom
I will test the ‘usefulness’
Of my research journey.
I won’t objectify my understanding -
But continue to look,
To find new meanings and understandings
Of what new experiences and contexts
Mean to ‘The Teller of the Tale’.

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Appendix

The Interview Schedule

Interview One: Focused Life History
Interview Two: The Details of Experience
Interview Three: ‘Value’ and ‘Meaning’ questions.

(Seidman, 1998)

Interview One: Focused Life History

‘The purpose here is to put the participant’s experience into context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time.’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 11)

Preliminary ‘Icebreaking’ questions
* What styles of music are you ‘into’.
* Is the music you play different from the music you listen to?
* Name some current music artists, bands and videos that you enjoy?
* What attracts you to your favourite style, artists/bands etc.?

Background, family and ‘idioculture’
* What are your earliest memories of music?
* Name examples of music or songs you remember from early childhood?
* What role did music play in your early family life?
* Describe the music activity that took place in your family circle?
* Describe how other members of your family were/are involved with listening to, or playing music?
* Describe any family influences that may have contributed to your interest in music.

Transformative experiences
* Are there any music experiences that are important – that stand out as really significant and perhaps led to your attraction to music? What other early factors contributed to your attraction to music?

‘Your personal life story -in music engagement’
* Describe your school music history, the beginning and transition through school-based music.
* Describe your history of music involvement outside of any school-based activities?
* Relate how you came to choose your particular instrument(s) - or to be a singer or composer.
* Describe your reflections of your first teacher and also any subsequent teachers that have been important to you?
* Which musicians, recordings and artists have influenced/inspired you?
* Are any of your friends musicians - how do they inspire you?

**Interview Two: The Details of Experience**

In this interview, ‘participants are asked to concentrate on concrete details of experience’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 11). Seidman suggests - ‘we do not ask for opinions but rather the details of their experiences on which opinions may be built.’ However, in the case of this study, I sought opinions, as I believed they would reflect and express matters of ‘music value’. With this in mind several questions directly concerned with ‘opinion’ have been included. The ‘details experience’ also refers to current perceptions as well as physical engagements and activities.

**Physical activity**
* When and where do you listen to music outside of school? Describe your listening activities over the last week.
* What music rehearsals, activities and experiences are you presently engaged in?
  - (inside, outside school?)

**Perceptions, attitudes, beliefs - approach to music.**
* Do you separate music playing and listening into - ‘music for fun and relaxation’ and ‘music for other specific purposes’? Describe the differences.
* Can you describe some recent experiences in any music activity that made you feel good and also any that were ‘tricky’ or difficult experiences.
* What are some of the ways that music affects you emotionally, your mood or feelings - either through listening or playing?

**Perceptions, attitudes, beliefs - approach to school music.**
* Describe your relationship with school music.
* How does this relationship differ from your engagement with music outside school?
* Imagine! - If you were in charge of music in your school, what would you change or include?
* Describe the school music experiences (class, private lessons, rehearsals etc.) in order of importance for you? - Explain your preferences.
* Describe the school music class experiences that you enjoy most? (Programs, topic areas etc.)
* What types of music are you listening to and performing in class? Which type do you prefer/Why?
* What is it about ...‘popular music’, ‘classical music’, ‘jazz’ ‘punk’ etc. that you like?

Perceptions, attitudes, beliefs - application, self-direction etc. Informal learning
* How do you decide when and what to practice?
* Describe your practice (composing!) schedule over the last week
* What is a typical practice (composing!) session? - describe what you do.
* How do you transfer some of the skills and knowledge learnt in school to your music engagement outside of school?
* Can you describe the ways that you ‘teach yourself’
* Are any particular areas of music study difficult and any easy?
* In what ways does music affect your life - in terms of your relationships with friends and family?

Interview Three - Reflection on ‘Value’ and ‘Meaning’.

In this interview participants are asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. In this case meaning is not just of satisfaction and reward but that intellectual and emotional connections will establish reasons for what they are now doing in their lives (Seidman, 1998, p. 11).

Personal constructs of the meaning and value of music. Formal music learning
* Pretend I am an alien - just landed on Earth! I have absolutely no idea what music is and I have just watched you in music performance - I ask - ‘Why do you do that?’
* How would you describe your love of music? What attracts you to it and what motivates you to play it?
* How does music challenge you?
* There are many ways that music is valued around the world - but how do you personally value it?
* What are some of the benefits you and people in general gain by being involved in music? How does it contribute to your life?
* What do you listen for in music? Think of a current favourite piece - what is important in it?
* There is a whole world of ‘popular culture’ attached to the world of young people and music - style, trend, fashion, media, technology and communication etc. How do you see the relationship between this culture and school?
* How does formal music learning in school vary from music learning in other areas.
* ‘Express yourself through music’. What does that phrase mean to you?
* What is the role of music in your life and how has it evolved in the last year?
* Describe some of the feelings you experience when you are playing/listening to music?
* ‘What is it like to be a music student?’
* Is there an artefact, memento or something connected to music that you treasure? What does it mean to you?
* Where do you want to go with music? What are your dreams, aspirations?

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