



Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:  
de Bruin, L

Title:  
The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in Teacher-Practitioner  
Formation: An auto-ethnography

Date:  
2016

Citation:  
de Bruin, L. (2016). The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in  
Teacher-Practitioner Formation: An auto-ethnography. *The Qualitative Report*, 21 (2),  
pp.407-427. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2253>.

Persistent Link:  
<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/355662>

License:  
[CC BY-NC-SA](#)

2-29-2016

## The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in Teacher-Practitioner Formation: An Autoethnography

Leon R. de Bruin

Monash University, lrde2@student.monash.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended APA Citation

de Bruin, L. R. (2016). The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in Teacher-Practitioner Formation: An Autoethnography. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(2), 407-427. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2253>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).



## The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in Teacher-Practitioner Formation: An Autoethnography

### Abstract

This study explores how my musical background, teaching and performance skills, understandings, and knowledge acquired from both formal and informal influence has shaped myself as musician, teacher and researcher. The study reveals various learning cultures and social networks that frame my multiple professional identities that have themselves developed from my understandings of being a performer, an educator and researcher. This study explores three aspects to my being: personal identity, professional identity and my perception of the impact this has on my students through my teaching and performing. An autoethnographical method is used to investigate my background that is initially formed by the different modes of music education I received. The study reveals significant influences and formative experiences that impact knowledge and skill accumulation, shaping what informs my own practice as a musician, teacher and researcher. It reveals ongoing exploration, reflection and personal negotiations in maintaining ones' development of performance and personal creative processes, whilst functioning as a facilitator and educator to others. This study offers insights into how cultural backgrounds, social contexts, teachers and peers influence others.

### Keywords

Formal and Informal Music Education, Situated Learning, Jazz, Improvised Music, Identity

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

## The Influence of Situated and Experiential Music Education in Teacher-Practitioner Formation: An Autoethnography

Leon R. de Bruin

Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

---

*This study explores how my musical background, teaching and performance skills, understandings, and knowledge acquired from both formal and informal influence has shaped myself as musician, teacher and researcher. The study reveals various learning cultures and social networks that frame my multiple professional identities that have themselves developed from my understandings of being a performer, an educator and researcher. This study explores three aspects to my being: personal identity, professional identity and my perception of the impact this has on my students through my teaching and performing. An autoethnographical method is used to investigate my background that is initially formed by the different modes of music education I received. The study reveals significant influences and formative experiences that impact knowledge and skill accumulation, shaping what informs my own practice as a musician, teacher and researcher. It reveals ongoing exploration, reflection and personal negotiations in maintaining ones' development of performance and personal creative processes, whilst functioning as a facilitator and educator to others. This study offers insights into how cultural backgrounds, social contexts, teachers and peers influence others. Keywords: Formal and Informal Music Education, Situated Learning, Jazz, Improvised Music, Identity*

---

I am a doctoral candidate in music education, a secondary school instrumental teacher, director of concert, stage, and jazz ensembles, as well as a trumpet player and performer of jazz, improvised music and performer of traditional *classical* and contemporary works for trumpet. I have led a successful performance life, playing, recording and touring in a wide range of styles of music. My passion for jazz and improvised music has driven my desire to teach and inspire others in the joys of embarking on the journey of acquiring improvisational ability. Reflecting upon creative jazz education as an expert practitioner/teacher with decades of experience and knowledge, my teaching encounters in the field have viewed the excellent, the mediocre, and the misinformed, myopic educational misrepresentations evident in some jazz and improvisational teaching. The need to remedy this distortion and lack of quality in collaborative, creative music making is one that drove me to begin PhD studies in the domain. My PhD study has enquired into the learning and teaching of numerous prominent Australian improvisers, to better understanding the vast experiential and situated influences that shape expert improvisation and my creative, personal voice. Learning from others and observing the way their experiences have shaped their music life, this autoethnographical study explores three aspects to my being: personal identity, professional identity and my perception of the impact this has on my students through my teaching.

### Investigation Begins with an "I"

Commencing PhD studies has had a profound effect on me; to the way that I reflect on my past learning experiences, the way I continue to teach today, and to the possibilities available in the future through further education and opportunity. Higher education has facilitated an intense immersion in knowledge; educational theorizing, the multi-faceted

aspects to understanding teaching and learning, and a reconnection with University friendships and communities that has rejuvenated and rekindled my interest not only in creative music making, but a thirst for knowledge in more effective teaching, learning and critical thinking in general education. Reconnection with a research community has made me aware of the importance of wider and deeper understandings of the ways and reasons behind my teaching, and of being a reflective practitioner/educator (Schön, 1983). A University learning environment has made me question and bring into focus lived experiences that shaped my cultural, social and political understandings, placing myself within a social context (Bartleet & Ellis, 2009; Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Examining myself rigorously continues to provide a greater understanding about the development of myself as a more informed researcher and as a critical-reflexive practitioner (Cunningham & Jones, 2005; de F. Afonso, & Taylor, 2009; Quicke, 2010).

My PhD study has initiated a journey of learning, self-discovery and reflection. If I am to better understanding others' learning and experiences, I must gain a thorough understanding of my own learning. Hanks posits that, "Learning is a way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 24). Learners, like observers are engaged both in the contexts of their learning and in the broader social world within which these contexts realize. The first step in my long road of critical self-reflection began with remitting to myself the question "Who am I? Who and what have influenced me to become who I am?" This compels an investigation into multiple influences of my peers, teachers, musical collaborators, mentors, and co-conspirators in musical discovery. Willingham (2009) asserts that "we teach who we are" (p. 59) so it is necessary to investigate my roots to understand and give a clear picture of who I am as a teacher and musician, what I represent, and how these facets of my life interconnect. The studying of myself allows me to discover the reasons underpinning my personal experience, professional practice and the educational beliefs and values I hold (Tenni, Smythe, & Boucher (2003).

The revealing of my life experiences, the meaning making and understandings that have shaped my life offer much more than a starting point in my doctoral journey. Socrates' proclamation that "the unexamined life is one not worth living" (Navia, 2007) offers me justification to search for the essence of my being, and value my philosophical journey, animated and structured in all my activities. An investigation and disclosure of my experiences can inform those who work with students of any level of the experiences we gain shaping and educating others. In knowing ones' self better, we understand more deeply we are individual and unique; that our students are not like us, their experiences are different and that the informed and thoughtful educator is mindful of this. This study can inform the thoughtful educator in adopting the phenomenological reduction of suspending assumptions (*epoché*/bracketing). By establishing a hermeneutic articulated by Gadamer whereby "prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter's consciousness are not at his free disposal" (Moran & Mooney, 2002, p. 327), educators can operate unencumbered by distraction and misdirection of their own preconceptions. Educators who focus on the essence of students learning experiences may be more insightful to the variances of ability, knowledge and creativity that can be intrinsically represented in students. Teachers who know students as an individual may be the more effective educators. The study can also inform teachers and those who create curricula and educational courses of the need to know and understand the student's perspective in order to form effective teaching and learning.

### **The Study**

The study investigates what informs my own practice as a musician, teacher and researcher, and also offers insights into how cultural backgrounds, contexts, teachers and peers

influence others. The study highlights significant influences that have shaped the tide of knowledge I have ridden on; my history, teachers, formative experiences and cultures that meld knowledge accumulation and define my present, and shapes my future courses.

The *investigation of* experiences of formal, informal, institutional and community learning reveals a diversity of influence from practice, performance and collaboration that shape attitudes and dispositions to music making and teaching. This study delves into the complex and nuanced sense of self as an improviser. Traversing through various musics shape my identity construction, the pursuit of creative expression, and *self-reflection on* the competing careers and inherent tensions as an improviser, performing musician and educator. Observing that "an individual is constantly in the process of becoming" (Kierkegaard, 1974, p.79), those things that are absent are as important as those that are present in defining who we are and how we see the world. Events and people that shape music making decisions, activities and convictions throughout my life are reflectively examined and meanings concluded. My phenomenological drive to explore my lived experience and the various significant moments and people in it facilitates understanding better who I am, what I am, and who am I becoming.

Many practicing musicians do more than just perform. Bennett (2012) asserts that "two-thirds of musicians work both within and outside of music" and that "we know that over 80% of musicians teach" (p. 63), and develop a portfolio of musical capacities. Rodriguez (2009) delves further into the world of the musician and remarks, "how one conceptualizes musicality shapes everything else one does in the profession" (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 37). It is asserted that music learning and identity construction "encompasses a broad range of traditional and emergent skills and sensitivities" (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 37). Understanding the influences of music making in my life reveals personal motivations as performer and as educator, underscored by my desire to investigate jazz and improvisation; particularly in the way musicians learn and are taught this skill.

The doctoral project I have started is in response to what I have experienced and observed in my and others' teaching and performing over the past 30 years. This teaching and learning experience has necessitated reflection on the teaching of jazz and improvisation; on my perceived shortcomings to certain pedagogical applications, and my exploration of novel ways of transmitting and inculcating knowledge. My accumulation of thoughts and experience in the field, such as observing students struggle with traditional methods has ignited a desire to investigate more effective ways of developing improvisational practice. My quest for seeking answers to learning and teaching improvisation more effectively has compelled me to a doctoral study. I hope my investigations in experiential learning, strategic processes, and reflective practices elite improvisers utilize, can reveal a way of better constructing pedagogical methods for beginner improvisers and their teachers.

Contemplating the investigation of elite improvisers as a doctoral study, I was first compelled to clearly establish my beliefs as a professional musician, improviser and educator. By interrogating myself, my learning, processes, and understandings, I am better informed in the analysis and interpretation of data acquired from my participants. As a researcher and educator I felt it important to explore my multi-faceted musical life in my cultural context, noting its influences and experiences, allowing this knowledge and reflection to better inform my encounters with other learners, teachers, performers and researchers. It is my lived experience that informs me and remains my first reference as a teacher, performer, and researcher.

Embarking on a literature review, I quickly discovered eminent scholars had already visited my chosen territory. Prevailing discourse on improvisation argues the diverse ways of learning. In particular, the problematic nature of formal instruction and the paradoxical relationship between accommodating stylistic parameters that inhibit vocabularies and structures (De Veaux, 1992; Prouty, 2008, Louth, 2012), and the freedom of musical expression

that remains ever-present in the act. Criticism directed to formalized jazz pedagogy's anchoring to hegemonic conformity (Borgo, 2005; Prouty, 2008) and the standardization of outcomes and accreditation imperatives (Ake, 2002) resounded with elements of teaching that was thrust upon me as a student. It was the assertion made by Lewis (1996) that improvisers "are now able to reference an intercultural establishment of techniques, styles, aesthetic attitudes, antecedents and networks of cultural and social practice" (p. 234) that captured elements of my past experience and current endeavors. Encountering Lewis' remark was both a touchstone to my experience of musical emancipation and the broadening of horizons from institutional learning, to the exciting musical environments that were forthcoming beyond university, as well as a liberating vision of the possibilities conspicuous in exciting, innovative teaching of the genre.

The situated learning, social networks and musically cultural environments that I sought to collaborate with were and continue to be a significant influence that shape my understandings, learning, teaching, and knowing of who I am in my musical world. It is from these intrinsically meshed modes of expression that my identity formation and personal voice has emerged (Smilde, 2009).

Interviewing expert improvisers can reveal authentic learning practices, and shed light on particular strategies and provide significant insight into what experts think and how they devise expert ways of learning. Investigating experts' learning and social cultures; their *lived experiences*, my doctoral study will reveal the way elite improvising musicians acquire, utilize, and manipulate knowledge and skill. By interrogating my own learning experiences, I can better understand and articulate the self-regulatory, collaborative and reflective practice that cultivates expert learning and personal voice.

My research and educational experiences as a doctoral student has, and continues to be a consuming aspect of my life. The first two years of this journey were filled with reading and the assemblage of a literature review. The demands of this doctoral experience whilst working as an educator and performer have provided unexpected twists and frustrations in my life. I am now removed from much of the collaborative music making that once was an intrinsic and everyday aspect of my existence. Exiled to the demands of academia (not so much an ivory tower as a paper strewn den), my collaborative and performance opportunities, like the close-knit friendships and camaraderie I once enjoyed, have waned from neglect due to the demands in pursuing higher education. I now endure the very bittersweet experience of largely talking about music, talking of improvising at various conferences about my past musical co-conspirators than actively creating. Circumstances of work, family, and onerous study now preclude me from the once emancipatory, creative, joyous act of doing. What fresh hell can this be?

This autoethnographic study is thus a therapeutic self-analysis; it is both a re-evaluation of what has been, and what now is, it is of understanding myself personally and professionally as I negotiate drastic musical changes in my life. This study explores how such lived experiences reflect on the "social and cultural aspects of the personal" (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008, p. 24). I can only hope it is a cathartic re-imagining of myself, utilized as a self-educational process that informs, directs and improves my own knowledge and understandings about who I am and my negotiation of different priorities. I hope these findings provide insight into my personal and professional identities, and by sharing and disseminating these experiences, they may help others contemplating a similar experience to understand more about who they are or expose them to qualitative methodologies that they can use to prepare and examine themselves.

## Research Approach and Methodology

In this autoethnographic study I *explore* the influences that have shaped my musicality, the educator I am, and the teacher-educator I hope to become. This study reveals my acquisition of skills and attributes via situated learning that established multiple professional identities in varied learning cultures that have developed my understandings as a performer, an educator and researcher. Autoethnography is an effective qualitative research method that gives the subject a unique voice to their personal lived experiences (Heewon, 2008; Morse, 1994; van Manen, 1997). Autoethnography as a method of self-study is a form of autobiographical personal narrative that explores the author's experience of life (Mallet, 2011). Bochner (2000) defines autoethnography as "autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic explanation" (p. 742). Autoethnographic study places the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997) that reveals understandings of personal identity, self-image and history (Antikainen, Houtsonen, Huotelin, & Kauppila, 1996). By reflecting on one's own experiences autoethnography can offer understanding of self and others (Chang, 2007; Karpiak, 2010) prompting a critical meta-awareness of the self (Souto-Manning, 2006). The notion of meta-awareness describes the revisiting of one's story, and asking questions that initially were not considered (Ellis, 2009). Ellis notes an important aspect of conducting autoethnographic research is oscillating between multiple variations of our current and former selves. From our experiences and reflecting on these experience we derive meaning making and purpose. New experiences become juxtaposed with, beneath, beside and amongst old experiences in an experiential layering (Sutton-Brown, 2010, p. 1307) which influences the ways in which we remember and re-tell our stories.

Autoethnography has been successfully used in many music studies (de Vries, 2010; Mercer & Zhegin, 2011; Nethsinghe, 2012). In the book *Music Autoethnographies*, Bartlett and Ellis (2009) provide examples of autoethnographic narratives written by researchers in the field of music regarding their personal experiences of composing, improvising, interpreting, performing, learning, teaching and researching music and musicianship. The most potent method of entering a discussion of my own identity formation is thus an autoethnographic one.

In this study I relied on self-reflection and self-interrogation, and to assist this process I occasionally referred to old events diaries, photographs, performance recordings (CDs) and concert programs as *aide memoirs*. A reflective journal for a Philosophy unit compiled during my student days at University provided insights into my notions of self, community and identity that was reconciled with my current memories of past events and feelings. Information that spanned my lifetime was collected from family, colleagues, fellow musicians and friends. First person accounts were listened to, verified, and reflected on (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Photographs were used to re-assemble communities visually, recall places, people and events, and put face to a voice. Brettell (1997) asserts that photographic images can "provide visual support to the written word" (p. 230), and that an autoethnographer can be "struck by the power of these images ... as both record and representation of a life" (p. 230). Events and memories were compiled in a chronological list, analysed and thematically organized. Events were written and re-written. Upholding "truth" rather than "fiction" (Webster, 1982), I told a story that cohered with the details of personal experience, my notes, and recollections of others (Krieger, 1984). Remaining "faithful to the facts," I stayed as close as possible to what I recall happening (Richardson, 1992). I found that experiences put into words became shaped by language, a socio-cultural orientation. My experiences seemed more than can be put into text (Denzin, 1991) yet less than the text tries to tell (Goodman, 1994). I accurately try to capture the essence of incidents and events and define their meaning in my life.

As is the responsibility of a writer employing autoethnography, I charged myself with working to connect experiences with my feelings within the larger social context. As Merriam asserts, "the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or *subjectivities* it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation" of data (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Autoethnographers realize the inner self is implicated in the research process and of the necessity to approach such a process writing responsibly, truthfully and analytically to avoid placing myself as the author and research subject beyond the written piece (Atkinson, 2006). In understanding the pre-existing world of people, objects language and culture in which we cannot meaningfully become detached, the researcher acknowledges ones' specific perceptions, awareness and consciousness – one's "Dasein" (Heidegger, 1962/1927) with their existentialist being. Whilst bias may be impossible to negate in autoethnographic enquiry, further rigor is asserted through an intersubjectivity whereby our experiences are realized as contextual and social, and our relatedness to the world is a fundamental part of our constitution (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

Writing this autoethnography was at times a very difficult and confronting self-analysis. Many may find the situation trite, or culturally foreign in discussing and elaborating on personal achievements. Others may resonate with the difficulties in discussing conflicts, and stress within personal motivations. There are times when we delve into experiences that we prefer not to write about (Tenni, Smith, & Boucher, 2003). The findings of this study however reveal valuable insights about what shaped my beliefs and my professional practice.

### **Roots, Beginnings and the Sound of Home**

Music was always a central part of our household. Both parents worked long hours to keep the house afloat. My elder sister also worked, and amid this maelstrom of activity was the sound of music. Rarely was there a time in my childhood household that a radio was not on or music was being played. In fact, quite often two or three radios were on at the same time throughout the house. Names unbeknown to me at the time radiated throughout the house; Harry James, Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berigan, Kenny Ball, Bob Barnard, Glenn Miller, and Artie Shaw to name a few. An obvious jazz air filled my ears, but it was the trumpet that I found an attraction to. I grew tired of the sanitized versions of songs *with strings*, and one day moved the dial on the radio to a jazz station. I suddenly heard something incredibly strong, pulsating, and energetic. Sounds of Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, and Freddie Hubbard captivated me – I didn't know a trumpet could be played like that, and that sound made me excited by music, and wanting to be a part of making it.

My father usually returned from work late, but once a week he came home earlier - around the same time I came home from school, as well as weekends he would play piano and guitar for hours. It was an acoustic guitar that he brought from Holland. He played in various bands there - regularly at home he would break out into an energetic song, re-enacting the days he played in a Hawaiian style band in between jazz gigs. Incredulous at this scenario, he produced shellate 78's (records) of such bands as well as Django Reinhardt, Dutch Swing College, Charlie Christian<sup>1</sup> and demonstrated how he learnt by ear.

---

<sup>1</sup> Django Reinhardt (1910-1953) was a Belgian-born French guitarist and composer. Regarded as one of the greatest guitar players of all time and was the first important European jazz musician to make major contributions to the development of the genre. A burns accident rendered the use of only the index and middle fingers of his left hand. His solos thus displayed a newly invented and entirely new style of jazz guitar technique (sometimes called *hot jazz guitar*) that remains highly popular within French culture. With violinist Stéphane Grappelli, he co-founded the *Quintette du Hot Club de France*.

My young mind struggled to reconcile the sounds I was hearing. American jazz, Hawaiian vocal popular music and an occasional Dutch traditional song seemed incredibly disparate. My parents had emigrated from the Netherlands after World War 11, their homeland destroyed, along with the dreams and aspirations for a life of adventure. Growing up, I regularly contemplated my existence in a displaced homeland, and sensed the yearning from their personal stories and memories. On my 12th birthday, I received a cassette player. So, as an inquisitive child, I pressed record on the machine, and asked my father, "So why did you and mum come here, to Australia?" He replied:

With a sense of adventure we wanted to go some place else, anywhere so long as it was warm and had lots of space. We went to the travel agents to see what was available, and they said South Africa, an island in the South Pacific, or Australia. We went home and talked amongst ourselves, we didn't tell our parents because we were thinking of just running off and doing it - eloping, whatever you call it. Well, we didn't want to go to South Africa, the thought of having a servant, and the tension there [apartheid]...we just couldn't live that way. And the Pacific Island, well, I quite liked that, your Mother not so much, but a cyclone came through and tore it to pieces...they said it went under water! So, Australia it was. We got married and told them we had bought the tickets. Her parents were very upset, I think they tried to talk her out of it a few times. So, I came out in 1951, and sent money back and your Mother came out in 1955. (private recording)

Little was I to know that here was the beginning of my interest in ethnography, and that my inquisitiveness and disposition to record would be an invaluable artifact decades later in my self-study, and my further education; my father would have been happy. His immediate influence to me in my childhood was in the fascination for making music, self-taught, self-motivated and self-styled. His sense of adventure and travel seemed exciting and exotic. This too, was to have a lasting impact.

### School and Formal Music Education

"I'm sorry, we've run out of clarinets - there's trombones, or you can pick the last trumpet," declared the instrumental music teacher, amidst the renovated bike shed that had with carpet and *fibro*<sup>2</sup> sheeting become the home of instrumental music at my new high school. My enrollment into instrumental music lessons at school had a story attached, once again from my father.

I remember when I was 14... 15 years old, hearing Benny Goodman on the radio, I loved that sound, and it made me want to play it. There was a pawnshop around the corner from where I lived, and there was an old clarinet in there. I saved for 6 months and then went down and bought it, went straight to my

---

The Dutch Swing College Band is an ensemble emanating from the Netherlands, founded in 1945 and have recorded and toured extensively, playing a Dixieland style of jazz.

Charlie Christian (1916-1942) was an important early performer on the electric guitar, and a key figure in the development of bebop and cool jazz. He gained international exposure performing with the Benny Goodman Sextet and Orchestra from August 1939 to June 1941. His single-string technique, combined with amplification, helped establish the guitar as a solo instrument.

<sup>2</sup> The name fibro is short for fibrous (or fibre) cement sheet more commonly called cement sheet or AC sheet. It is a building material in which fibres are used to reinforce thin rigid cement sheets, used as cladding for walls and roofs.

bedroom and tried to play it. Well, the squeaks and racket made my mother come up, and when she realized, she marched me down to the shop and demanded the money back.

Trumpet it was then, and regular attendance to lessons and band rehearsal encouraged some development of the basics. My second year of trumpeting was encouraged by the additional activity of joining the local brass band, availing additional help and wise words from excellent players as well as a social collective.

My relationship with my school trumpet teacher engendered profound awakenings in my musical outlook. Details learnt in beginning music notation studies in class music seemed at odds with my notational representation of *Mack the Knife*, which I transcribed by ear (and trumpet). Such wanton waste of time spent on frivolities such as this when first and foremost a steely focus on technique and sound seemed to send my teacher into orbit. His apoplexy directed at me for such shortcomings in my outlook hit a mark that perhaps still resounds, and despite initial melancholy from the ensuing countermand, I assembled a practice regime that I steadfastly dared not ignore.

A move to a selective entry boys' high school in year 9 revealed the true meaning of small fish in a big pond. A multitude of ensembles, choral and chamber groups and the expectation to meet their demands gave significant cause for an industrious work ethic. Now one of 12 trumpets in the school, the expectation to follow suit worked with me. A natural competitiveness developed from soccer and *cul de sac* cricket set me in good stead. The symphonic wind bands, military ensembles and big band developed a rounded experience of music styles, and ready usage of the burgeoning trumpeting techniques I had at my disposal. Band camps, bivouacs, extended rehearsals, competitions and gigs cemented a strong community of music making.

The annual school production with the *sister school* brought a rare flurry of activity with the opposite sex. Indeed, such experiences propagated an at times madly disparate group of young men into cohesive, passionate, and gregarious ensembles capable of at times outrageous antics. Such camaraderie made some at times bleak hail-driven moments seem all the more bearable. The notion of music being a social practice is strong, and Green asserts (2008, p. 156) "we form our allegiances to it in relation to our social and personal identity." What's more, this learning environment resounded with both formal and informal learning discussed by Green (2002). She explains, "these informal practices continue to form the essential core of most popular musicians learning" (Green, 2008, p. 5), acknowledging "pupils unconsciously or semiconsciously pick up skills and knowledge through watching, imitating and listening to each other" (p. 126).

The value of informal learning is asserted by Rodriguez (2009), noting that "the more familiar I become with informal learning, the more I see formal qualities in it" (p. 37). Many researchers consider the value of informal learning to be in engendering music transformation (Folkestad, 2006; Smilde, 2009). Green (2008) noted the effectiveness of learning by engagement, copying, playing music by ear and experimentation within informal settings emphasizing the value of enculturation in learning practices. The significance of learning through participation outside of formal institutions such as bands, choirs and orchestras is also asserted (Bartolome & Campbell, 2009). Importantly, Paul and Ballantine (2002) argued, "much of an individual's music education is informal in nature" (p. 566). My own learning experiences led me to concur with this, noting the significant contribution and influence made by the home musical environment.

Students can and do conceal their own tastes and allegiances and join with mainstream mass-mediated music (Green, 2004). The power of attraction in engaging students can be at times fickle, and at others extremely powerful, and music education is no different. I recall

memories and incidents that amaze me to what is possible in a vibrant school. The cultural norm of weekly exploring and performing of Western art music - 16th century madrigals, works for jazz bands, orchestra, and inspired teachers driving student achievement significantly molded my musically inclined mind. The normalization and everyday occurrence of this music making created a "phenomenology of enjoyment" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 46), a flow of enjoyment derived from both the activity of music making and the individuals' attitudinal state. Whilst Csikszentmihalyi laments the rarity of schools to create such environments (1996), I remain thankful for being engaged this very way. I reflect on the profound impact this influential learning environment affected me, both in enjoying music making, and the possibility of considering a future career, within music performance and music education.

### A University Education

The decision to pursue further music study was one I heavily deliberated. The opinions of friends and teachers were divided. Would I seek happiness, creativity, or submit to the crude realities of seeking substantial, sustained employment with a career in music. After the rounds of final year exams, recitals and auditions, I placed my destiny like many others do, at the fateful hands of university administration. When I was accepted to university music, I felt *music picked me*. University allowed me to continue performing a range of styles garnered from high school. Enjoying the classical concertos and French recital pieces, I pursued a desire for further exploration of 20<sup>th</sup> century works, as well as playing and understanding jazz and improvised music. The course also provided a strong pedagogical curriculum in classroom and instrumental music.

The learning at university was received both through a mix of formal lessons and class directives, and informal methods out of class time. I responded to this balance by enhancing learnt theoretical concepts with a refining of personal and collaborative skills and musicianship. Whilst I honed my control of music materials in the practice room, the application of these skills rehearsing and performing in music ensembles provided for me the best and most appropriate means of testing oneself in the act.

The music department was its own world of musicians and groups, a "social world having a variety of pushes and pulls, a variety of actors, a variety of settings, a variety of outcomes"(Roberts, 2004, p. 10). These musical groups were many, diverse, dialogic and informal. Peer influenced learning in social groups and networks occurred through watching and imitating, as well as talking about music during and outside of rehearsals. The involvement of not only fellow musicians but also listeners and friends (Finnegan, 1989), whose critical input assisted the enculturation of specific music styles through the regular exchange of opinions, advice and encouragement. This pre-internet era saw the absorbing of an aural tradition through recordings, records, and a sharing of resources amongst this peer group.

Performing in professional level bands spanning an array of music styles was the most exciting and vivid of learning situations. Bands played 3 to 4 times a week. Each band had its raconteurs, its wallflowers and moments of scintillating conversation. As an *up and coming* trumpeter, I would experience jazz, big band, soul and funk bands within the course of a week, as a fill-in for regular players who wanted a night off.

This was a vibrant, exciting time. Many of these people made a living by balancing performance with teaching. I absorbed a range of opinions to the teaching of music. Some were passionate, whilst some were ambivalent about their effectiveness as a teacher and their sense of worth teaching music. Many worked as an itinerant, or peripatetic instrumental teacher, travelling to a different school each day. They often reflected on their initial enthusiasms to teaching evaporating, or being *ground out* by poor conditions and treated as an under respected resource. This I took as a warning, a portent of what might happen upon entering teaching. I

recall this time clearly, and reflect on my hesitations to teach. I felt jaded without even having got my teaching feet wet.

An affirmation from music making was felt every time I got in the car on the way to a *gig*. The overwhelming sense of camaraderie and friendship felt from these musicians was a unifying and positive influence. Some great player was often *down from Sydney*, or *just in from New York*, and an always interesting collection of musicians would be in attendance watching, socializing, and learning. It was a time for eating, breathing and sleeping music. Reflecting upon this period in time, I feel these halcyon days for music performance in Melbourne was adorned with a plethora of venues and opportunities to perform. I felt in the thick of it.

Being a part of these musical communities allowed me to finesse professional musicianship and skills, and offered valuable opportunities to perform with outstanding musicians in the entertainment industry. Observing a number of touring jazz artists - Dizzy Gillespie, Johnny Griffin, Miles Davis and others, and talking to some of these very friendly and generous people elicited a wealth of information. Their wisdom referred not just to making music, but also about music shaping life, and managing oneself through life's musical experiences. During a tour, the North Texas One O'clock Stage Band<sup>3</sup> came to Melbourne briefly. They were billeted with my family and provided me with practical insights regarding specific details in jazz trumpet teaching and learning.

My final two years were a fine balance of meeting the requirements of the course, and performing, composing and recording several nights a week in soul, funk, blues, reggae, jazz, original rock bands, and big bands, as well as recording sessions and television sessions. I absorbed much of how to run, organize, record and rehearse bands - and how to tease the best music out of sometimes trying personalities.

My passion for new repertoire for trumpet emerged. No-one else seemed interested, and this ambivalence on the part of my peers made it all the more apparent to me that this was interesting, exciting music. It demanded different sounds and techniques that challenged the performer and the listener. Its composers were still alive, and contactable. In short, I loved it and its effect on people. A similar affinity for jazz and improvised music took hold, and much of my personal exploration, performance and practice was absorbed in trying to understand this genre of music.

### **A Professional Musician: A Rolling Stone Gathers No Moss**

The completion of a Bachelor degree in Music Education in 1987 prepared my entry to the classroom well, but a wealth of local performing opportunities hindered my enthusiasm to leap into the classroom. I picked up a part-time teaching position at an outer suburban K-12 private school. I taught brass instruments, and was told by the Music Administrator to "help out with the jazz band, they will be expecting you." I walked down to the music hall, and it was here that I met the wonderful, inimitable Gil Askey.

"Hey Leon, how you doin'," Gil said in his long Texan drawl. Gil was an American trumpet player. At the end of class, we talked for hours, and could have talked for many more. He detailed a career playing with Dizzy Gillespie, Lucky Thompson, Diana Ross and the many artists as staff arranger at Motown Records. He said he had retired and moved to Australia to "get away from it all," He handed me his card. It read, *Gil Askey, Beach Bum*.

---

<sup>3</sup> The One O'Clock Lab Band for 66 years has been the premier ensemble of the Jazz Studies Division at the University of North Texas' College of Music. The band has performed and toured worldwide. The One O'Clock Band is the highest of nine peer lab bands at the college, each named for its hour of rehearsal and each a standard 19-piece big band instrumentation — five saxophones, five trombones, five trumpets, piano, guitar, bass and drums. The One O'Clock evolved from an extracurricular stage band founded in 1927 into a curricular laboratory dance band in 1947 when North Texas launched the first jazz degree program in the world.

Gil didn't retire for long. Within a month most of the jazz fraternity in Melbourne had this beach bum's number, and he really was blowing a storm. Gracious and kind, he regularly encouraged my presence at gigs, and I obliged by sitting in with a number of other younger players, accepting of his wonderful words and acts of encouragement. However, it was his words, and an experience we had in the high school band room that changed my perspectives to what I thought I was capable of. Our school jazz band was an enthusiastic cross-age collection of students. If they wanted to take part, they could. So what did start as a five-piece group soon grew to an ensemble of 20 or so members. We would play big band classics like *Woodchoppers Ball* and *Satin Doll*. Gil would love to talk and play solos, enthusiastically regaling past incidents with Count Basie's band. He would play the original recorded solos to the students, whilst I helped encapsulate these weekly *living legend* sessions within a pedagogical framework. I would help them work out specific notes and strategies to accomplish a basic improvisation process, and focus the student's motivations toward specific practice and performance goals. I thought the students were slightly pleased with my input in the shadow of Gils band leading. One afternoon after the students had packed up and left, he said, " Leon, you gotta keep doing this ... you're good at it, you can play, and you can teach it. They listen to you, and respect you." Gil's comments didn't weigh heavily on my mind, at the time. Humbled by his words, I didn't see myself ready to settle into teaching yet. I was still intoxicated with performance, and I wanted more of it. I had just received a phone call that significantly repositioned my musical compass. An offer to tour Australia as lead trumpet with The Great Moscow Circus was an exciting proposition, and it was one I enthusiastically accepted.

This circus big band gave an immersive experience of living and touring with many passionate people - musicians, gymnasts, and acrobats living a true *performing* life. This introduced me very quickly to the *show* aspect of music performance. Seven to ten shows a week, and Mondays off. To say I became an honorary Soviet citizen is in the extreme, but the day-to-day living within this community was an exciting, intense and intellectual experience.

Of the musicians I worked with, they were passionate, articulate jazz lovers. Any opportunity within the show to include jazz or improvisation within the show was heartily agreed to. I jumped at the opportunity and wrote several arrangements for a number of the acts. The musicians displayed an ethic of discipline and hard work, and we rehearsed and tried out new music throughout the week. They expressed much of their experiences of learning involving listening to recorded radio broadcasts, handwritten resources handed from teacher to student, and informal playing outside of regimented classical studies at University. I reveled in this music making, I felt comfortable, confident, equipped with the appropriate disciplined attitude and lifestyle it demanded. I decided to pursue further study, and set my sights on New York.

A significant benefit from this tour was for the first time in my life, a financial one. I decided to invest in myself, and this money allowed further study at Manhattan School of Music, New York, U.S.A. The learning and experiences available within this institution with musicians of outstanding caliber was breathtaking. Learning from Clark Terry, Phil Woods, Harold Danko, Red Rodney, and performing in one of several Big Bands and jazz ensembles was an excitement only surpassed by attending and participating in nightly performances and jam sessions throughout Manhattan. As great as this environment was, the financial demands were too great, necessitating my return home.

A further yearlong Circus tour whetted my appetite for more jazz related travel, and within two weeks of arriving in Amsterdam, Holland I was performing in a jazz quintet. This was music that I missed. The friendships and camaraderie in the circus was heartening, but with playing, talking, and living jazz came the feeling of happiness, belonging, of meeting the demands of intellectually intense music. I joined a band, and we played every day, composing,

writing and organizing. We embarked on a successful tour of Holland, Belgium and Germany. I met many jazz and improvising musicians throughout Europe – both homegrown and expatriate U.S. artists, finding fertile ground in the topics of improvisation.

A number of U.S. musicians were friendly, knowledgeable, and willing to express their experiences and thoughts on significant issues of the genre. Discussing about dominant players and major movements in improvised music first hand was an exciting and revelatory experience. Better understanding the socio-political and cultural implications to free jazz, various jazz communities and creativity within improvisation was a fascinating experience that was to shape my thoughts in personal expression and education.

Returning to touring with the Circus orchestra established a financial security. I could no longer face performing in a *show* again. Throughout the last two tours, a lingering resentment toward this limiting musical situation started to take hold. The show had a number of improvisatory and jazz elements to the musical score. Every show was a little different, pending the outcomes of various tricks. But performing the same show, the same songs eight shows a week for 40 weeks eroded my enjoyment. I did not fit in – could not, refused to fit that mold any more. In fact, I have never committed to a show since. I have deputized one-off shows; the thrill of the single performance has a palpable attraction to me, but this experience has re-calibrated my need for more creatively demanding circumstances in my performance activities.

I re-established myself amongst the Melbourne music scene. I began performing improvised music in Melbourne again. The re-acquaintance with old friends, the thrill of improvised music making and the being part of an improvising community felt a spiritual homecoming as well as a physical one. The music scene had evolved. To me the beauty of improvised music is that it never stands still. My musician friends had moved on, and so did I. How and where did I fit in?

A new aspect to the Melbourne music scene had developed. Latin music had taken off in Australia, and with it I established myself within this community of musicians and the wider music groups performing this style. I returned to regular work in these bands. I established performing and recording opportunities with more mainstream music activities; rock, pop, but diversified by engaging in further explorations into freer forms of improvisation, collaborating with inventors, sound-scapers and acoustic-electro musicians.

The urge to experience and be part of a more *avant-garde* community was a revelatory experience. This more abstract and exploratory music making was a joy in its difference, its exploratory nature, its collaboration and its own sense of community. All at once, my musical philosophy was turned around. I decided the juggling of various styles of music was a musical lifestyle I was willing to forgo. I had become tired of travelling, and playing so many styles of music. I contemplated just focusing on one area of performance, and this seemed a welcome relief. I reflected on what I really wanted to play. This was a cadence in my life where I could contemplate myself Janus-like; both looking back at the music made and experiences had, but now also looking forward, to the future possibilities of my music, of challenging, creative, artful music.

What would make me happiest in a musical sense, forgoing monetary award? I decided I would play the music that I felt most satisfaction from, and this was improvised music, with improvising communities. Being a part of this creative community allowed me the time to breathe, both physically and mentally, and play my music. This change in perspective crystalized to my mind what I wanted to investigate in music. The intimate, collaborative music making, the development of my personal voice was something that I felt a compulsion to pursue. A similar restlessness was aroused in my willingness to take on teaching. The need to develop more refined creative skills in myself, and espouse the virtues and values in others' music making was a significant clarity of thought. To say it was an epiphany is perhaps too

dramatic a description, but a seed had been planted, and I urged myself to match this new chapter in performance with that of teaching.

### **The (not so) Small Matter of Teaching**

Teaching, mentoring and facilitating music learning in others had been a very part time aspect to my existence. The life of an itinerant or peripatetic instrumental brass teacher was not one that I had enthusiastically ascribed to before. I had some idea of the demands placed upon the majority of such teachers within the profession, travelling to a number of schools each week, casting but a fleeting impression on students and administrators, yet being issued an edict from each school that *their end of year concert is the most important* and shall therefore take precedence. The instrumental music teachers lot is at times not a happy one and with a certain amount of trepidation I arrived at the 1995 Instrumental teachers network meeting. The coordinators beckoning "anyone looking for additional days teaching, come forward" was my cue to put my case. "Ahh, Leon, you're back in Australia, so you're looking for brass time. Here, meet Peter, his brass teacher just died." Such inauspicious circumstances revealed my entrée to Frankston High School. This incident remains vivid in both my colleague Peter, and my own mind. It remains the beginning of a strong and enduring friendship, of collaboration, teamwork, sacrifice, and an insouciant segue to the next chapter in my life.

I began teaching two days per week, as well as performing, but a seismic event was to change my perspectives regarding my career, my identity and my involvement to teaching and learning. That event occurred one early November day, a small meeting of Principal, Peter and myself, and began with the words, "I've got some money, give me a plan for a music department." Like a gun-shot, these words immediately transported me back to my final year music education course. I remember the final assignment requiring students to organize and design an instrumental music department. The unicorn of educational infrastructure is seldom seen, occasionally promised, and one is perceived as having special powers if one is in the possession of one, even by today's standards. I felt that my voice had been considered, valued, and that my input was considered to be a significant part of school life. The beginning of the next school year opened with a purpose built auditorium, and the beginning of my passion for teaching music in a school that valued music education and what I brought to the school learning environment.

The Secondary High School I teach at now has four concert bands, four stage bands, choirs, and various smaller ensembles. Its bands consistently rate as outstanding at State festivals, and the stage bands perform exceptionally at the national level, tour internationally and are constantly feeding University Jazz faculties and classical conservatories throughout Australia with exceptional young improvising musicians. It is truly, as the Principal remarks, "the jewel in the crown of the School."

I've been at Frankston High School for twenty years now – Peter my woodwind colleague remains as well. Both of us have been smitten by offers to go elsewhere but we remain, shunning million dollar fountains and forecourts for the satisfaction of our own empire. Our Music Department has transformed the school. While we educators transform our students from meek beginners to intelligent lifelong learners and music lovers, they have transformed me. I began as first and foremost a performer and reluctant teacher, but now I conduct concert bands, direct stage bands, present to State educator conferences and State Jazz workshops, I assess senior students' recitals and mentor younger teachers. My first students to leave high school and enter music teacher training courses now work alongside us and undergraduates clamor to visit the school. The satisfaction derived from the musical experiences delivered to the thousands of students is a huge one, often reminded by the reliving of experiences - special

performances, or memorable classroom soundscapes (de Bruin, 2015), or by past students visiting to reminisce.

I still perform and play every day, working hard to maintain an excellence that allows me to set performance goals, and inspire those students around me. I continue to play jazz and improvised music, but continue to balance this with conventional recital repertoire and maintain a more selective approach, and be very passionate about those musical environments I choose to participate in. Enjoying both sides of the divide, I cannot stray too far from one without feeling the gravitational pull and the nourishment the other music gives.

Fuelled by a concern for the quality and quantity of classroom and instrumental music in Australian schools, I chose to understand more deeply the effects of creative music making in schools and the powerful ways teaching and learning can effect this particular educational landscape. In late 2012 I began reading for a doctorate that further explored effective and authentic creative music making and teaching in Victorian schools using the knowledge I had gained from my formal, informal and encultured musical experiences. The reasons and motivations for selecting this aspect of study is based on my past learning and teaching experiences, my background, my aural tradition, and the pedagogical knowledge that I have accumulated throughout my lifetime, performing, travelling, teaching, listening, musicking<sup>4</sup>.

This awareness of my own background serves to inform and guide my research, teaching, and continued learning of both improvised and notated works. I now see myself as a performer, educator, researcher and academic, ascending an extended path in music education. The simile to an improviser acquiring knowledge, skill and strategies in problem-solving musical outcomes (de Bruin, 2015) is not lost on me. I contemplate this learning journey with amazement at the courses upon which my life's decisions and events have negotiated. I look upon my multiple identities with wonder and self-satisfaction. I reflect as a performer of various genres of music, as an educator who begins instrumental musical tuition with school children and changes the course of lives, if not attitudes to music. I enjoy the challenge of my newest endeavor in contributing knowledge and understanding of improvisation through academic research.

I hope to continue to contribute my knowledge, skills, teaching and research to improve and promote improvisational music making as an essential aspect of school learning, and an integral aspect of meaningful arts education. Joseph inspiringly (2007) argues, "meaningful arts education practices in schools can enrich the cultural variety of contemporary and future society" (p. 28). Gould asserts, "music education is an important space for social change" (Gould, 2009, xi). My ambition is to contribute my knowledge and skills as a music teacher, and as a teacher-researcher-performer, to improve and promote music and arts education meaningfully.

This autoethnographic exploration not only informs my own practice as a musician, teacher, and researcher but also offers insights into how situated learning, contexts, and experiences influence others. Without significant teachers and learning experiences, I would not be who I am today. Without the cultural enculturation experienced in various musical communities, I would not have benefited from the opportunities that I have taken. The significance of teachers and musical cultures in the formation of future musicians, teachers, and researchers cannot be overstated.

---

<sup>4</sup> Musicking: Musicking is the *verb to music*, and is a conceptual tool created by Christopher Small to denote the taking part in music, by performing, listening, rehearsing, composing or dancing. See (Small, 1998).

## Findings and Continuation

The writing of this autoethnography has revealed that my professional identity and my personal identity cannot be separated from each other. The knowledge that I have acquired as a multi-dimensional performer, collaborator and improviser is informed by decades of learning and experience. What I bring to my students is a complex and deep understanding of this knowledge, synthesized with the ability and teaching craft to inculcate, develop and motivate learning in others. Autoethnographic analysis has been an empowering experience for me and I have learned much as a writer, an interpreter/phenomenologist, and as an educator/practitioner/researcher making meaning from lived experiences of my former and current self. My identities remain fluid; I revisit past feelings and relive situations in my mind, and these experiences continue to shape who I am and will be the foundation of what I become. There is no definite end, no last word; and I am excited for what professional and personal experiences lay ahead. An unexamined life may not be worth living, but an examined life full of celebration, in its unplanned, unthought, serendipitous happenings in life's ebb and flow.

Retrospectively assessing my life story, my inquisitiveness to music is significantly influenced from my Father. His informal processes and experientially guided content to music enquiry exudes a lived experience in investigating, playing, and above all enjoying the journey in music, that shapes my attitudes and dispositions to creative music making. Were it not for his love of music and jazz, I would not have begun lessons let alone share the same feelings to music. The deprivation of a music education in his youth paved a resolute attitude that his children would be able to enjoy such an education. My fathers exciting young adulthood and adventures during the war provoke searching for an exciting, adventurous life in my endeavors. Analysis of my life balancing educator, musician and researcher explains my need to be busy, adventurous, and somehow a mirror of my Father's lifestyle.

Connecting ones' story with social processes can impact others who have similar experiences balancing a teaching/performance/researcher role in life. Ellis suggests "at all times until death, we are in the middle of our stories, with new elements constantly being added" (2009, p. 166). Research asserts that human beings constantly restory their lives so to present these lives as changing, yet continuous and coherent (Baerger & McAdams, 1999; Bochner, 1997; Smith & Sparkes, 2006).

As I performer I harbor latent frustrations from inactivity. The responsibilities and impact of doctoral studies preclude almost any collaborative music making. Yet, I am content. Though my musical output is limited, it is enriched by the quality of collaboration. My musical experiences are now rare, yet they are the most exciting affairs I can imagine, and involve collaborating with an inventor-musician. Our music is challenging, in that we aim to blur the line between reflexive response and spontaneous improvisation. Ours is a pursuit of abstraction, a process aimed at producing music and dialogue that is devoid of quote, cliché, or remembrance. A musical end game of sorts, it is a personally reflective process of searching for sounds not heard before, stretching one's music materials to the furthest extreme. It's a musical searching that for me is a truth in my music. That is, searching for an always-evolving personal voice. I derive pleasure, intrigue, exploration, and fun in a similar way that my students obtain from their first forays into conventional improvisation.

This relatively new musical experience allows me to understand and empathize with the grappling, the anxiety and risk-taking sense of improvising that beginners feel. I feel this experience enhances my understandings as a teacher. This playfulness of creating *on the edge* influences my teaching experience, invigorating my thoughts and dispositions to creative music making in others. I have come to realize what I value most in my music making, and why I value it so. I feel the playing of ones' own music with respected musical collaborators can be the most elusive yet fulfilling of musical outcomes.

How does this manifest in my teaching, and how does this journey manifest in my teaching practice? I realize I have spent nearly two decades developing the use of creativity and imaginative processes in music making with my students. I am now a more holistically inclined teacher. As an experienced teacher, I can as Bowman (1998) suggests, not only teach *in* music education, but also *through* music education. This doctoral study has illuminated many processes involved in learning, and I can better help students with strategies with which to improve their learning.

I am personally enriched from encouraging and empowering students to discover new music, and new ways of making and thinking about music. I know what to say to establish investigative, thoughtful playing in developing students. It is also the knowing of what *not* to say, that frees students from the codified and hegemonic constraints that I believe stifles creative and freethinking thought in students. My breadth of experience can motivate and inspire this creative thought in students. It is these students who are sought after by numerous University Music faculties for this openness of musical possibilities in their playing. Their successful auditions are what continue to empower and fulfill me. The possibility in passing this knowledge, attitudes, enthusiasms, and creative thought in teaching is a significant reason in embarking on this doctoral journey.

### Reflection and Conclusion

The study of self through a socio-cultural context has allowed reflection of my identity, and its layers and complexities. I consider myself lucky to have found music, to have negotiated the many personal and professional changes, developments and experiences and use them as sources of strength and growth. My musical ability has, and continues to evolve, as does my willingness and skill and responsibility to help others grow. The influence and guidance of many professional musicians, educators, friends and mentors is of great significance in shaping my musical, educational and research output. The co-construction of my musical knowledge underpins all of my shared music engagement.

Far from worrying about being defined by others, I continue to revel in the territories I inhabit as teacher, performer and researcher. I take Kushner, Walker, and Tarr's (2001) notion of a *boundary-walker* that captures the spirit of my autoethnographic story. My personal and professional life is intertwined, musically traversing the margins, borders, limitations and understanding of structures and going beyond. To me these qualities are some of the most important things a musician can challenge, especially a creative, improvising one. I feel they offer significant challenges to music education as well.

My perspectives to teaching have completely changed. I greatly valued the teaching I received as a student, but I reticently valued my input and entry into teaching. I was sure I didn't wish to enter into teaching immediately after my University studies. Perhaps I didn't think I would be a good teacher. I recall the cry from University acquaintances that "if you can't do, then teach." Studying within the community of an education faculty, I became increasingly aware, in fact a little intimidated by the caring, intelligent and educationally committed cohort that I was a part of and continue to meet at music education conferences.

As an educator one discovers the complexities to the profession beyond teaching. My experiences with Gil Askey, though not immediately forthcoming in my teaching practice, taught me how lucky we are making a living playing and teaching music. His always smiling, patient and appreciative disposition are traits of character I try to bring to my classes. Reflecting on my career passage, this study has revealed that becoming an educator was more than a simple choice for me. It was an evolving aspect of my personal growth that gave assertion and opportunity to make positive and lasting change in an aspect of music education I felt

passionate about. It continues to fire my desire, perseverance and work ethic in continuing to grow as a learner and scholar.

This autoethnographic journey has enabled me to see more clearly who I am, and how this is represented in my musical understandings, and my aspects of musical output. I Autoethnographic study is a transformative experience, allowing us to better understand and reflect on our participation in the world around ourselves. By interrogating the meanings of my stories as described by my current self, I not only gained greater understanding of my developing self, but I am able to find ways to better understand my situations, as well as bringing a new light into the interpretation of my past. The autoethnographic process enables me to now truly value my teaching career. I am more aware of the way of past impulses and desires to perform and collaborate, and the intensity with which they shape my endeavours. Part of my renewal in learning has been to sever this umbilical primal desire to make music, and feed other aspects of my being. Performance becomes an insidious, primal need, and only after two years of doctoral study have the pains of guilt subsided - but they are still there. I gain fulfilment in the knowledge, the published articles and the accomplishments that come with intense high-level study. I now value teaching as a powerful performative experience that changes lives immeasurably, and that my abilities as an educator can change many lives for the better through this aspect of my musical intellect. The autoethnographic process has played a major part in affirming this.

Who I am is deeply interconnected with the musical knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and desires I have experienced, and the learning and performing communities with which I have collaborated. Boyle and Parry (2007) propose that autoethnography holds promise for observing organizational culture, given its introspective and retrospective lenses and its potential for enhancing understandings of links that exist between individuals and the organizations with which they work. This self-study can illuminate similar experiences in other arts based careers. Whilst Kihlstrom (2013) and Deau (2001) have remarked that social identity goes beyond categorization, carrying with it implications for behavior that include ones' beliefs, dispositions and motivational considerations. Social identity is an inherently social phenomenon best understood as a product of individual and historical-contextual experiences. Autoethnography reveals the way we negotiate our identities, and how we are influenced by others' actions in various ways.

By unraveling one's own contextual knot, we are able to open a wider lens to our existence in our world. The autoethnographic process enables the opportunity to study how we are and how we perceive ourselves to be an influence, and are influenced by our professional practices (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010). Within a musical context Smilde (2008), suggests that "significant parts of a life story actually form a musician's (professional) identity, within the concept of lifelong learning, personal and professional development is closely interconnected" (p. 224). As is evidenced by my personal reflective narrative, my "traversing a continuum of immersion" (Joseph & Southcott, 2010, p. 76) has provided a wealth of knowledge and experiences, contributing to a fulfilling, eventful, and *boundary-riding* career. This myriad of musical experiences and progression from student to performer, to educator and researcher continues to be exciting in ways unimagined.

Improvised music and jazz education gives democracy to student voices, enabling creativity, freedom of expression and teamwork to flourish amidst a music-making environment. This study highlights the greater understanding one can derive from being a reflective teacher and practitioner, informing oneself of the fertile connections apparent through such reflexive practices. It informs the educator who seeks to carve a career by traversing between performance, education and research, revealing challenges, triumphs, achievements and epiphanies.

This study provided important insights into the way I experienced music and the way music has impacted my life from my own point of view. It is necessary to reiterate the foundation beneath my self-discipline emanating from my home (musical) environment, my own interests, explorations and influences of a diverse range of people and experiences. Beholden to such an enriched musical course, I feel it is incumbent upon me as an educator, musician and researcher in continuing to fulfill my personal and professional obligation "to provide students with music programs that are intellectually honest, personally enriching and communally compelling" (Countryman, 2008, p. 24). I believe learning is an ongoing lifelong process, enriched by our past, fulfilled by the present and inspired by the future.

### References

- Ake, D. (2002). *Jazz cultures*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Antikainen, A., Houtsonen, J., Huotelin, H., & Kauppila, J. (1996). *Living in a learning society: Life-stories, identities and education*. London, UK: Falmer.
- Atkinson, P. (2006). Rescuing autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 400-404.
- Bartolome, J. B., & Campbell, P. S. (2009). John Langstaff: Community musician and reveler. *International Journal of Community Music*, 2(2-3), 157-167.
- Baerger, D., & McAdams, D. (1999). Life story coherence and its relation to psychological well-being. *Narrative Inquiry*, 9, 69-96.
- Bochner, A. P. (1997). It's about time: Narrative and the divided self. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 418-438.
- Borgo, D. (2005). *Sync or swarm. Improvising music in a complex age*. New York, NY: Continuum.
- Bowman, W. D. (1998). *Philosophical perspectives on music*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- Boyle, M., & Parry, K. (2007). Telling the whole story: The case for organizational autoethnography. *Culture and Organization*, 13(3), 185-190.
- Brettell, C. B. (1997). Blurred genres and blended voices: Life history, biography, autobiography, and the auto/ethnography of women's lives. In D. E. Reed-Danahay (Ed.), *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social* (pp. 223-246). New York, NY: Berg.
- Chang, H. (2007). Autoethnography: Raising cultural awareness of self and others. In G. Walford (Ed.), *Methodological developments in ethnography, studies in educational ethnography* (Vol. 12, pp. 207-221). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Group.
- Countryman, J. (1990). Stumbling towards clarity: Practical issues in teaching global musics. In E. Gould, J. Countryman, C. Morton, & L. Stewart Rose (Eds.), *Exploring social justice: How music might matter* (Vol. 4, pp. 23-37). Toronto, CA: Canadian Music Educators Association.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*, New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- Cunningham, S. J., & Jones, M. (2005, July). Autoethnography: A tool for practice and education. In *Proceedings of the 6th ACM SIGCHI New Zealand chapter's international conference on Computer-human interaction: making CHI natural* (pp. 1-8). ACM.
- Deau, K. (2001). Social identity. In J. Worrell (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of women and gender* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Vol. 1, pp. 1-9). Retrieved from

- [http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b\\_files/ARTICLES?identity.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b_files/ARTICLES?identity.pdf)  
de Bruin, L. R. (2015). Theory and practice in idea generation and creativity in Jazz improvisation. *Australian Journal of Music Education*, 2, 91-106.
- De, F., Afonso, E. Z., & Taylor, P. C. (2009). Critical autoethnographic inquiry for culture sensitive professional development. *Reflective Practice*, 10(2), 273-283.
- De Veaux, S. (1991). Constructing the jazz tradition: Jazz historiography. *Black American Literature Forum*, 25(3), 525-560.
- De Vries, P. (2010). The return: A music teacher educator goes back to the elementary music classroom. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 9(2), 33-47. Retrieved from [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/deVries9\\_2.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/deVries9_2.pdf)
- Denzin, N. K. (1991). On understanding emotion: The interpretive-cultural agenda. In T. Kemper (Ed.), *Research agendas in the sociology of emotions* (pp. 85-116). Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Ellis, C. (2009). *Revision: Autoethnographic reflections on life and work*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2010). Autoethnography: An overview. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10. Retrieved from <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1101108>
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Finnegan, R. (1989). *The hidden musicians: Music-making in an English town*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Folkestad, G. (2006). Formal and informal learning situations or practices vs formal and informal ways of learning. *British Journal of Music Education*, 23(2), 135-145.
- Goodman, W. (1994). Television, meet life. Life, meet TV. *New York Times*, 4, 1-6.
- Gould, E. (2009). Exploring social justice: How music education might matter. In E. Gould, J. Countryman, C. Morton, & L. Stewart Rose (Eds.), *Exploring social justice: How music might matter* (Vol. IV, pp. xi-xvi). Toronto, CA: Canadian Music Educators' Association.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Green, L. (2004). What can music educators learn from popular musicians? In C. Rodriguez (Ed.), *Bridging the gap: Popular music and music education* (pp. 225-240). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. London, UK: Ashgate Publishing.
- Hamilton, M., Smith, L., & Worthington, K. (2008). Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and autoethnography. *Studying Teacher Education*, 4(1), 17-28.
- Heewon, C. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast.
- Joseph, D. (2007). Music education in Australia: Valuing cultural diversity. *Victorian Journal of Music Education* 10(1), 27-38.
- Joseph, D., & Southcott, J. (2010). Different sounds, different musics, different teaching: An Australian case study in multicultural teaching and learning. In P. Dunbar-Hall (Ed.), *Cultural diversity in music education. Tenth international conference on cultural diversity in music education* (pp. 76-81). Sydney, Australia: University of Sydney.
- Karpiak, I. (2010). After life review: Autobiography as "art of the future." *Studies in Continuing Education*, 32(1), 47-60.

- Kierkegaard, S. (1974). *Concluding unscientific postscript* (D. F. Swenson & W. Lowrie, Trans.). Princeton, MA: Princeton University Press.
- Kihlstrom, J. F. (2013). *Social categorization* [Lecture supplement]. Retrieved from [https://bpace.berkeley.edu/access/content/group/cf3d9c57-a0ab-4f22-b55f-4d8b59a1c15e/Lecture%20Supplements/SocCateg\\_Supp.htm](https://bpace.berkeley.edu/access/content/group/cf3d9c57-a0ab-4f22-b55f-4d8b59a1c15e/Lecture%20Supplements/SocCateg_Supp.htm)
- Krieger, S. (1984). Fiction and social science. In N. Denzin (Ed.), *Studies in symbolic interaction* (Vol. 5, pp. 269-286). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Kushner, S., Walker, B., & Tarr, J. (2001), *Case studies and issues in community music*. Bristol, UK: University of the West of England.
- Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 102-120.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991), *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Louth, P. J. (2012). An approach to improvisation in post-secondary jazz programmes based on negative dialectics. *Journal of Music Education Research*, 14(1), 9-24.
- Mallet, D. (2001). Walking a mile in their shoes: Non-native English speakers' difficulties in English language mathematics classrooms. *Journal of Learning Design*, 4(3), 28-34.
- Mercer, J., & Zhegin, A. (2011). Developing a postgraduate dual-award in educational leadership: A Russian pelican meets an English rose. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 109-117.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Introduction to qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moran, D., & Mooney, T. (2002). *The phenomenology reader*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 220-235). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Navia, L. E. (2007). *Socrates: A life examined*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books
- Paul, S., & Ballantine, J. H. (2002). The sociology of education and connections to music education research. In R. Colwell & C. Richardson (Eds.), *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning: A project of the music educators national conference* (pp. 566-583). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Prouty, K. E. (2008). The "finite" art of improvisation: Pedagogy and power in jazz education. *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*, 4(1), 1-15.
- Quicke, J. (2010). Narrative strategies in educational research: Reflections on a critical autoethnography. *Educational Action Research*, 18(2), 239-254.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/ethnography*. New York, NY: Berg.
- Richardson, L. (1992). The consequences of poetic representation: Writing the other, rewriting the self. In C. Ellis & M. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 125-137). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roberts, B. (2004). Who's in the mirror? Issues surrounding the identity construction of music educators. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 3(2), 1-42. Retrieved from [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Roberts3\\_2.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Roberts3_2.pdf)
- Rodriguez, C. (2009). Informal learning in music: Emerging roles of teachers and students. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 8(2), 35-45. Retrieved from [http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Rodriguez8\\_2.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Rodriguez8_2.pdf)
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner. How professionals think in action*. London, UK: Temple Smith.
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Smilde, R. (2008). Lifelong learners in music: Research into musicians' biographical learning. *International Journal of Community Music*, 1(2), 243-252.
- Smilde, R. (2009). *Musicians as lifelong learners: Discovery through biography*. Delft, The Netherlands: Eburon Academic Publishers.

- Smith, B., & Sparkes, A. (2006). Narrative inquiry in psychology: Exploring the tensions within. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 169-192.
- Souto-Manning, M. (2006). A critical look at bilingualism discourse: Autoethnographic reflections of a vulnerable observer. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 30(2), 559-577.
- Sutton-Brown, C. (2010). Review of Carolyn Ellis' book, *revision: Autoethnographic reflections of life and work*. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(5), 1306-1308. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol15/iss5/21/>
- Tenni, C., Smyth, A., & Boucher, C. (2003). The researcher as biographer: Analyzing data written about oneself. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(1), 1-12. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol8/iss1/1/>
- Van Manen, M. (2006). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, UK: The Althouse Press.
- Webster, S. (1982). Dialogue and fiction in ethnography. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 7, 91-114.
- Willingham, L. (2009). Educating for the greater good: Music flame of hope. In E. Gould, J. Countryman, C. Morton, & L. S. Rose (Eds.), *Exploring social justice: How music education might matter* (pp. 55-65). Winnipeg, Canada: Canadian Music Educators Association.

### Author Note

Leon R. de Bruin is an educator, performer and researcher in improvised and composed music. He has presented papers and clinics throughout Australasia, Europe and South America and performs a wide-ranging repertoire of music for trumpet, in both collaborative ensemble and solo recital platforms. He is a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia and his dissertation studies include the teaching and learning of improvisation, creativity and collaborative learning processes and techniques for improvisers, and musician identity. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: Leon R. de Bruin at, [leon.debruin@monash.edu](mailto:leon.debruin@monash.edu).

Copyright 2016: Leon R. de Bruin and Nova Southeastern University.

### Article Citation

de Bruin, L. R. (2016). The influence of situated and experiential music education in teacher-practitioner formation: An autoethnography. *The Qualitative Report*, 21(2), 407-427. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol21/iss2/13>

---