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Student-as-master? Reflections on a learning innovation in popular music pedagogy.

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Abstract

If the modern conservatorium is to prosper in a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape, it will need to provide a learning experience that produces multi-skilled and adaptable graduates who are self-monitoring and self-directing. By implication, teaching practices that have dominated in the past will need to be re-thought, and alternatives considered that are likely to produce graduates with the abilities and attributes necessary to adapt readily to a changing environment. As a response to this imperative, one conservatorium has developed a pedagogical approach based on the creation of a scaffolded self-directed learning community, a master-less studio. It is embedded in a popular music program that explicitly values the development of learning characteristics that will help graduates deal with an unpredictable future. Student feedback on the impact of these practices has been gathered during the evolution of this process. It includes survey data, formal and informal student feedback, and a number of interviews in which students describe how aspects of this learning-centred approach have interacted with their music making and their career expectations. From this feedback, it is evident that greater student autonomy and self-efficacy result from the a-synchronous reflection on performance that is enabled through recording, the self-reflection that is required by self-assessing, and the reflections on the work of others that peer-based assessment demands.

Keywords

Autonomy, community of learning, informal learning, peer assessment, popular music learning, self-assessment.

Introduction

The traditional perception of conservatoires as places where people are prepared for a life in professional music is being expanded. Established conservatorium teaching practices have demonstrated an ability to provide training in a range of relatively stable musical styles including western classical music, jazz, and world music. When the culture of music changes slowly, a pedagogy based on the experiences of the teacher will inculcate valuable skills in the student who will be able to make small adaptations to the practices that served the teacher a generation before. Transferring the benefits of the teachers' experience to the student makes sense in these circumstances because it will enable the student to progress towards knowledge of the existing style more efficiently.

But if the modern conservatorium is to prosper in a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape, it will need to provide a learning experience that is musically inclusive and likely to produce multi-skilled and adaptable graduates who are self-monitoring and self-directing in their learning, able to function across a range of activities that can constitute portfolio career (Burt & Mills, 2005; Johnson & Homan, 2003; Mills, 2006). Even if the traditional outcomes of elite concert performance or secure orchestral positions might be possible for only a small proportion of graduates, an education in music need not be a lost cause. It can prepare students for whatever their futures may hold by developing positive

learning attributes as well as providing training in the professional practice of music.

In parallel with other social shifts, there has been increasingly rapid change in the ways people engage with and consume music (Lessig, 2005). The audience for music is turning increasingly to digitised forms of transmission via the Internet and *co-creating* content rather than attending the concert hall to satisfy their desire for music. In the digital era, consumers are able to exercise influence over their engagement with recorded music through such activities as purchasing individual tracks digitally and compiling their own play lists or CDs rather than being confined to the purchase of music pre-packaged by publishers. They can be both producers and users of the product at the same time, 'prod-users' as Lessig (2001) calls them. In education they become the co-creators of learning, taking an active role in much of what only teachers have done in the past. The pedagogy shifts from the provision of expert mentor services to the design of a learning experience within which students and teachers co-produce learning.

The kinds of outcomes that once could have been expected for music graduates are becoming less common as the consumption patterns of music change to reflect the 'prod-user/consumer' possibilities of the digital age. Given all this, conservatoires all over the world are re-examining their educational role in this changing cultural and economic context, including re-evaluating their function as locations of relevant learning (Burt & Mills, 2006; Burwell, 2005; Wrigley, 2005; Young, Burwell, & Pickup, 2003). This paper contributes to this re-examination and re-evaluation through three key tasks. First, it explores the context driving pedagogical change. Next, it provides evidence of the usefulness of an alternative approach to the master/apprentice model in one Australian conservatorium. Finally it draws on data about this program to elicit principles that can inform others seeking to adapt their approach to music pedagogy.

The contemporary context

Artists can now use inexpensive software and hardware to produce publishable recordings that can be commercialised as physical products like CDs and DVDs as well as being made available for downloading either free of charge or commercially through the Internet, an alternative to the more traditional pathways of publishers and recording companies who previously dominated distribution. Practitioners of music in this context will find the ability to participate appropriately in changing technologies to be an almost essential skill. Therefore, an educational experience for such people should be based on the acceptance of inevitable rapid change and needs to focus on the development of a range of learning abilities that students will find useful no matter what their future holds rather than being limited to the transmission of skills that were useful in the past. As Boud (1995) avers:

In a world where there are question marks over everything, students must have the skills necessary to research new knowledge for themselves. Being able to access data and organise them, critically evaluate them and so on, becomes more important than being able to regurgitate a set of facts. Being

flexible enough to leave behind ideas as they are replaced is also a useful ability (p. 57).

By implication, teaching practices that have dominated in the past will need to be re-thought, and alternatives considered that are likely to produce graduates with the abilities and attributes necessary to adapt readily to a rapidly changing environment (Claxton, 2002; McWilliam, 2005). Put bluntly, the shift is from content delivery to capacity building via more 'prod-user' friendly pedagogical strategies. This is not to say that teachers have no role to play as instructors. In areas of study that involve training in a particular set of skills or the acquisition of knowledge, an essentially transmissional approach may be appropriate. But when the development of self-directed learning ability is an explicit goal, it is necessary for students to do much that has previously been teachers' business, setting the direction of work and at least participating in its assessment (see, for example, Abdullah, 2001; Andrews, 2004; Biggs, 1999; Green, 2006; McLaughlin & Simpson, 2004; Purchase, 2000; Searby & Ewers, 1997). The student must act as a master.

Even when the development of learning ability is a goal, it cannot be assumed that students will be properly prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and development, particularly if they have a history of learning through practices where the teacher has complete control of everything (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). They will need guidance from teachers who have a very important role but one that is quite different from the traditional role of performance expert and mentor. Teachers will need to demonstrate commitment to a learning-centred approach. They will need to provide students with evidence of the benefits for them in engaging with the work of the master while still a student (Rust, O'Donovan, & Price, 2005).

Assessment practices influence the nature of student learning (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005) and students should be actively involved in it rather than only being those on whom assessment is conducted (see, for example, Blom & Poole, 2004; Daniel, 2004; Gijbelsa, Wateringb, & Dochy, 2005; Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Liu, Lin, & Yuan, 2002; McLaughlin & Simpson, 2004; Sadler, 2005). Teachers will need to involve students as assessors, developing the ability to be self-monitoring, a characteristic of professional practice. Thus, for the modern conservatorium, the creation and maintenance of a community of learning and structures through which self-directed learning and interdependent activities are encouraged becomes a focus along with the development of musical excellence (Westerlund, 2006).

As a response to this imperative for a more proactive student engagement in the pedagogical processes of music education, one Australian conservatorium has developed a pedagogical approach based on the creation of a self-directed learning community, a master-less studio. It is embedded in a bachelor of popular music program that explicitly values the development of learning characteristics that will help graduates deal with an unpredictable future. A key element of the pedagogical approach is that the student experience of the program's innovative learning practices reflects popular music making practices

outside structured learning environments. The goal is the enhancement of independent learning ability, the acquisition of knowledge and the development of a broad skills base that incorporates emergent technologies and business practices.

The students

The paper now turns to consider the student experience of innovative learning practices that reflect popular music making practices outside structured learning environments. In particular, it focuses on participation and learning in a Bachelor of Popular Music program's 26 semester-long courses, and how that impacts on the major study, Popular Music Production. Given the importance of the students' role in this environment, some understanding of their learning history before entering the program provides a helpful context. In contrast with students in other areas of conservatorium study, students in this program have learned most of their music independently rather than as part of a formal lesson structure. That is, they have learned through informal means and peer-based experiences rather than under the tuition of a personal expert mentor, and their intention has been to learn to perform rather than learn how to perform (Folkestad, 2006). A survey, conducted in March 2005, asked students enrolled in the program about their engagement with private lessons and which of 10 other ways of learning music had contributed to their musical development. The survey listed eleven categories of popular music making activities and students were able to select all the activities with which they had engaged as part of their learning of popular music. It also asked about the sources of feedback that had been used. Sixty-eight students were enrolled when the survey was conducted and all were invited to participate in the survey. Only three students did not respond.

It is interesting to note that the development of student musical abilities does not appear to have been stunted by lack of formal tuition. Figure 1 shows a majority had taken fewer than 50 private lessons and more than a quarter had taken fewer than ten. More than three quarters of students sang and almost as many played guitar, with other common popular music instruments (including music-making using computers) also well represented as shown in Figure 2. Less than one tenth of students reported being active in only one of the categories of music making activities listed in the survey, and almost three quarters were active in three or more areas as shown in Figure 3.

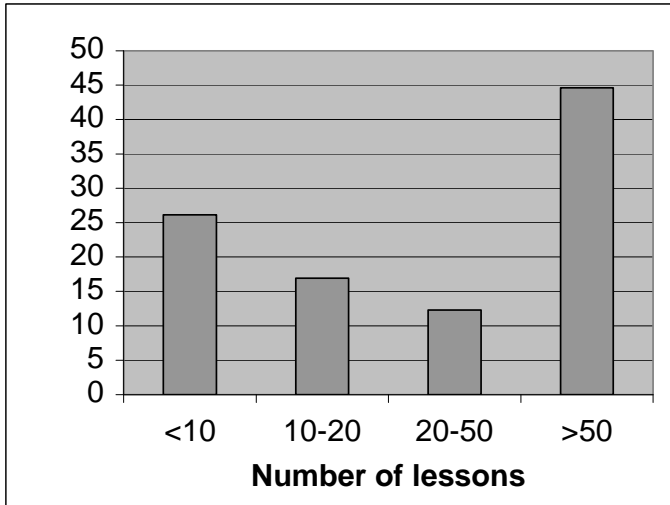


Figure 1: Engagement with private lessons

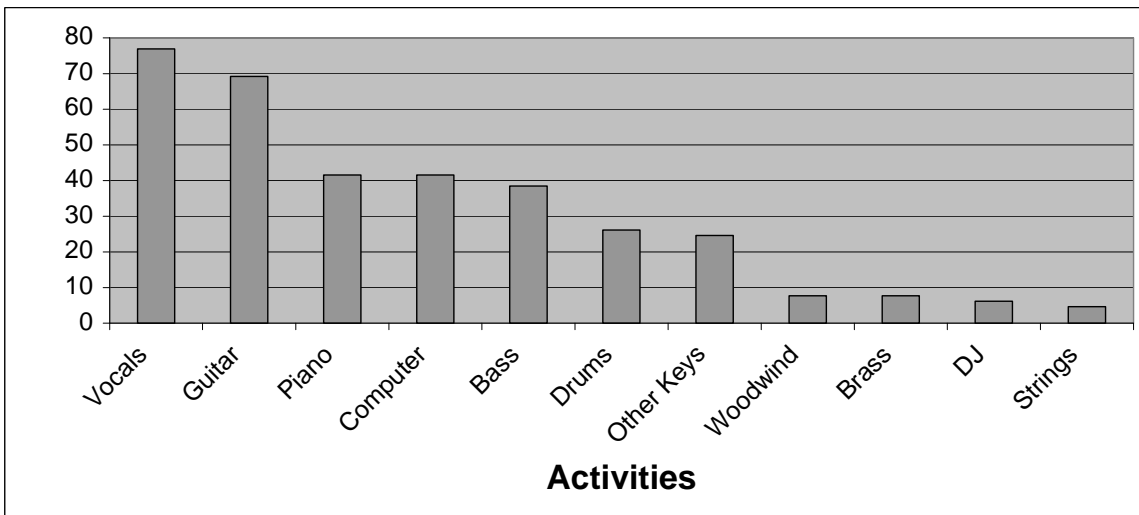
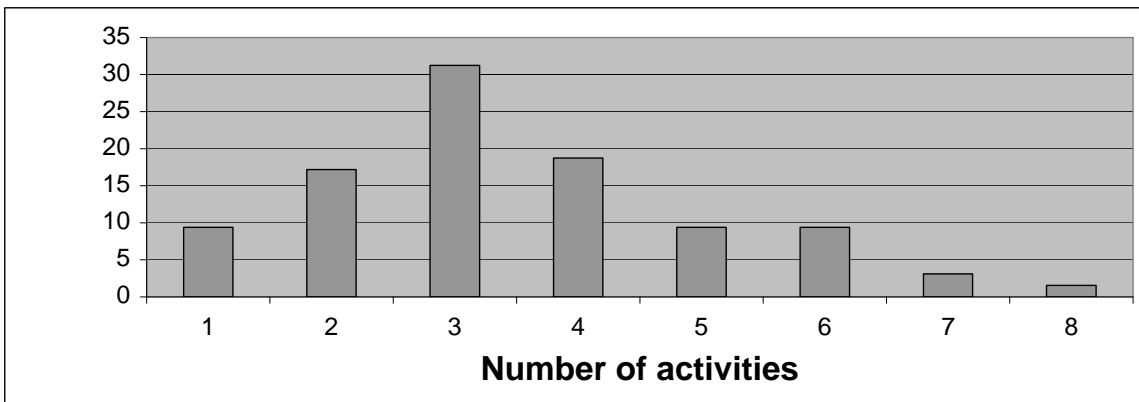


Figure 2: Musical activities

Figure 3: Multidisciplinarity



The self-monitoring nature of popular music learning practices is demonstrated by the finding that almost all students saw their own opinions as the most often used source of feedback. By comparison, feedback from bandmates, audiences, friends and audio recording all outranked teacher feedback as something students relied on. Over three quarters of students reported that being in bands outside school had played a part in their musical development. The prior learning of these students provides good preparation for people entering a program in which self-directed learning replaces the transmissional teaching practices normally found at the centre of conservatorium processes. A program in which self-directed learning is critical to their engagement would seem to provide an optimal opportunity to extend the capacities that these students bring to the conservatorium.

Program context and structure

The program was established in 1999 and now operates from a purpose-built facility that includes a range of recording studios and control rooms along with a computer lab that is fitted out with a wide selection of music applications. Drumkits, keyboards, amplifiers and guitars are also provided, and the facility is available to students 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students are able to book rooms and equipment through an on-line booking system. All of the software and equipment in these facilities is of a professional standard and is typical of that used in the music industry.

The host conservatorium is part of a University that conducts degree programs comprised of courses of study. Semester one usually commences in the last week of February following a week of orientation for commencing students. There are 13 teaching weeks per semester with a mid-semester break of one week. A week designated as a study week followed by two weeks reserved for examinations and assessments. This semester structure is repeated for semester two, usually commencing in the last week of July. There are four streams of study in the program and all students undertake a predetermined set of courses with no capacity for elective courses to contribute to the degree. The program structure repeats for each of the six semesters of the program. The semester structure is graphically represented in Figure 4.

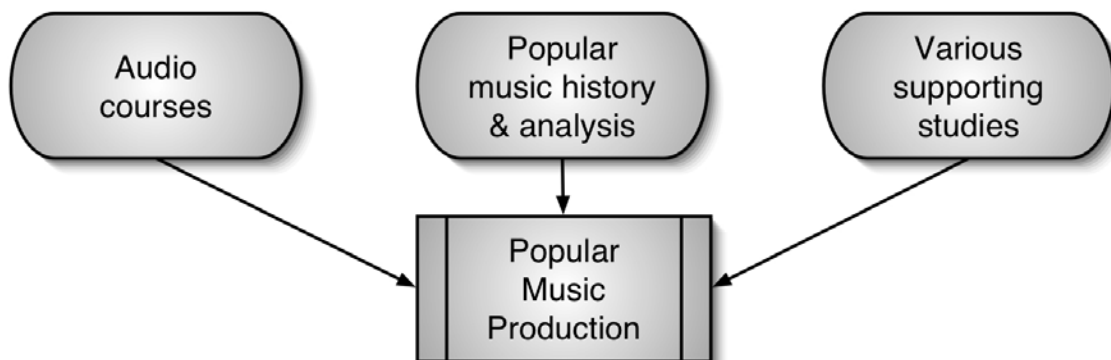


Figure 4: Program structure for each of six semesters

Students undertake an audio course each semester, starting with basic instruction in the operation of the program's studio and live sound equipment, progressing to more advanced audio engineering and production courses. They also undertake a course in the history and analysis of popular music each semester along with a sequence of supporting studies dealing with

- composing and arranging with a focus on music for advertising and moving image,
- information technologies so that students can engage with emerging technologies more easily,
- computer music applications to take advantage of the enormous potential of computer-based music technologies,
- rhythm, and
- the business aspects of the music industry.

All of these courses inform Popular Music Production, the program's major study. This major deals with the production of popular music in a broad sense, including composition, performance and all aspects of the recording process.

Popular Music Production

Popular Music Production is undertaken as six one-semester courses, and unlike most major studies in a conservatorium environment, there are no individual lessons included. Engagement with self-assessment and a range of sources of feedback in addition to that generated by teachers is a feature of popular music practice that is incorporated into learning and assessment practices within the course. The approach draws on an extensive literature on learning and assessment that advocates the usefulness of adding a layer of knowledge to existing know-how (see, for example, Boud, 1981, 1995; Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999; Claxton, 1999, 2000, 2002; Leadbeater, 2000; Schön, 1983). The argument is that student engagement with setting the direction of their own learning and such reflective activities as self-assessment and assessing peers produces increased awareness of the learning process and enhanced transferability of skills.

In the master-less studio, students' abilities are developed through interaction within the community of practitioners who have been selected on the basis of their strengths in a range of popular music-making activities. This has provided a peer-learning environment in which the rich resource of student abilities and expertise is readily accessed; collaboration is rewarded and formally recognized rather than being penalised as a form of cheating. All assessment is standards and criteria-referenced so that helping a colleague to succeed will not impact negatively on any individual as would be the case if norm-referenced assessment was used (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999). The distinctive feature of this design is that it is self-directed and self-monitored rather than being under the specific direction of a teacher, particularly in terms of deciding the direction and content of creative work, and with whom it will be done.

This is not to say that teachers are absent from the process. The involvement of teachers in a range of assessment activities enables them to provide feedback and guidance, sometimes alone and sometimes as a member of a broader

community. The role of the course convenor is significant because in addition to participating in the same way as other teachers involved in the course, the convenor is also concerned with the maintenance of the learning systems through which students' abilities are enhanced, available to students as needed to assist in their achieving the goals of the course rather than routine one-to-one transmission of knowledge or direct individual skills training.

Students are encouraged to develop both their compositions and performances through a cycle of recording performances, critical reflection on the outcomes, peer feedback, modification, then recording again. The implicit know-how that students develop through making music is converted to conscious knowledge through reflective practices, including frequent opportunities to hear recordings of their performances and to engage actively in assessment tasks, including self-assessment and peer assessment. The assessment and engagement process is represented in Figures 5 and 6 and discussed below.

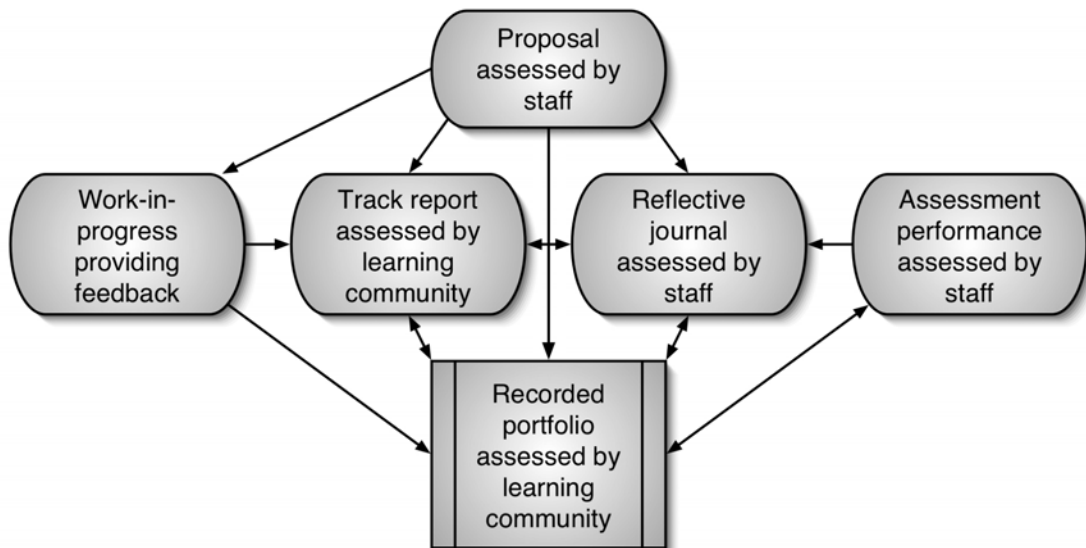


Figure 5: Popular Music Production assessment and engagement structure

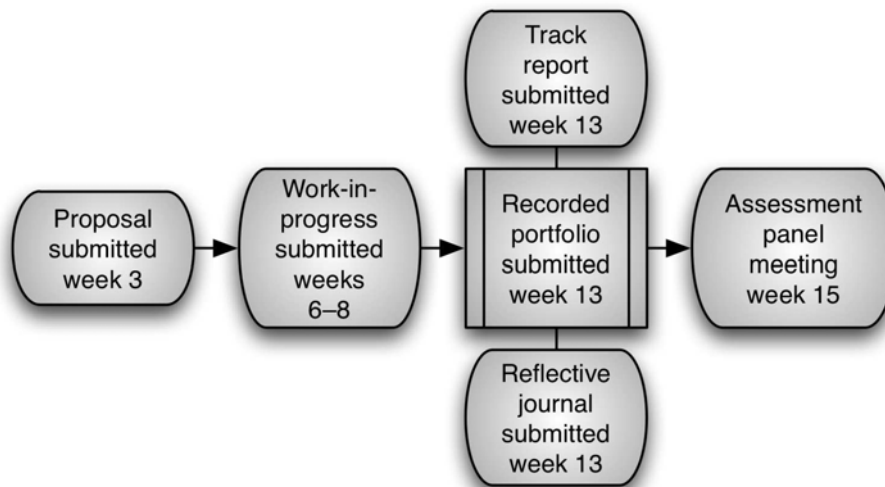


Figure 6: Popular Music Production submission timeline

Each student submits a proposal by the end of the third week of semester that outlines plans for the self-directed creative work to be undertaken as part of the course. The creative work is expected to be original material and usually takes the form of a CD, although alternative forms of submission can be negotiated with the course convenor, often taking the form of a video presentation in which the student might create the music and/or sound or be responsible for visual content as well.

Students present work to their peers at work-in-progress sessions that are part of the course lecture series. The feedback generated from this process in semester two 2006 can be summarised as follows. Forty-nine recorded songs were presented over a three-week period representing the usually collaborative work of 58 students from a total enrolment of 75. There were 287 responses posted, an average of six per song, with a maximum of 16 and a minimum of one. Three or more responses were posted for more than 80% of the songs presented. Forty-two students provided a total of 16,878 words of feedback, averaging 57 words per response, with 90% of responses longer than 20 words and almost 70% longer than 40 words. There were a few instances of very brief comments and occasional use of an authoritarian tone, but almost all the feedback conformed to the principles for good feedback developed by Boud (1995) and provided to students in the course web site, framed with positive comments at the start, making observations on possible areas for further attention, and finishing on a positive or encouraging note, always with benefits for the receiver being the objective.

Creative work is assessed at the end of each semester by one of a number of panels comprising about seven students from all year levels and one member of staff, who provide feedback and contribute equally to the calculation of the marks, assessed against criteria and the standards of releasable material in the same style as the submission. The only difference between expectations of various year levels is the minimum duration of submissions; 10 minutes is expected each semester in first year, 15 minutes each semester in second year and 20 minutes each semester in third year.

It is worth noting that, in purely quantitative terms, the volume of feedback available to each student in the formal panel assessment process conducted at the end of the semester is impressive – indeed, individual teachers would find it difficult to match this quantity of assessment output. In semester two 2006, 73 students presented 292 recorded tracks that were assessed by 11 panels consisting of six or seven students and one teacher. Feedback generated by this process amounted to 182,025 words averaging 623 words per track. These figures also include the feedback provided by the teacher member of each panel. In addition, teachers provided an average of 197 words of feedback to each student on their performance in this assessment process. Each panel member provides marks and feedback in an excel workbook. Feedback is expected to comply with guidelines based on the work of Boud (1995). It should be realistic, specific and sensitive to the goals of the person being assessed, descriptive,

non-judgemental, non-comparative, direct and positive. This feedback is collated and returned to the submitting student as an excel worksheet.

Staff marking is often regarded as a benchmark for validity of student-generated marks. The course convenor would be the sole evaluator in most traditional settings. A comparison of the course convenor's personal marks and those generated by the assessment panels of which the course convenor was a member has been conducted. It examined the assessment of the submissions of 138 students over four semesters. In addition to the provision of feedback, this process marks the recorded folio out of a possible maximum of 60 marks. The study revealed that almost all the marks awarded by the panels fell within four marks of the course convenor's mark and all but one was within five marks, demonstrating that the impact of this assessment practice on the marks awarded is minimal if marking by staff is used as a benchmark (Lebler, 2006). This assessment practice can consequently be regarded as validated.

A track-by-track report details the student's intentions for each track included in the creative submission, identifies the contributions of others who might be involved, comments on the outcome, and contains marks in the same format as will be used by the panel. This self-marking does not contribute directly to the course mark but the track-by-track report is assessed by members of the panel for the report's effectiveness in helping panel members to form judgments on the work.

All students participate as panel members and are assessed by staff for the quality of the feedback they provide. Students reflect in writing on the process of their creative work and the learning they have experienced as a result. The marks awarded for each of these activities is listed in Table 1.

Table 1: marks allocation

Proposal	Work-in-progress	Track report	Reflective journal	Assessment performance	Recorded folio
3%	N/a	10%	17%	20%	50%

All of these processes require students to reflect meaningfully on both the work of their peers in relation to established criteria and standards and their own work in the same way, making intuitive music making more explicit. The benefits for students in such activities has been well researched, with such scholars as David Boud arguing strongly and convincingly for the inclusion of self-assessment and peer assessment in education because of the learning enhancements it produces (see, for example, Boud, 1981, 1995; Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999).

Overall, what the study demonstrates in terms of the teacher role is that there is value in changing the function of the teacher to one of co-creating and co-assessing rather than as instructor and final arbiter of the quality of the learning products. It is not that the teacher no longer has a role, but the role is more complex and nuanced than transmission and credentialing.

The student view:

Student feedback on the impact of these practices has been gathered during the evolution of this process. It includes survey data, formal and informal student feedback, and a number of interviews in which students describe how aspects of this learning-centred approach have interacted with their music making.

The survey

Forty-one students of seventy-five enrolled in the program in 2006 (17 year one, 15 year two and nine year three) responded when invited to rank how various aspects of their musical activities had impacted on their music making. Some students also offered comments on how each aspect had worked for them. Many students expressed the view that it was difficult to separate the impact of the activities listed because they regarded them as parts of an integrated whole. Figure 7 represents these responses. As one third-year student wrote:

In my opinion, potential success in the music industry is not only about multi-skilling, but also to realise the common relationship within all of these skills. I think this then allows one to identify (with more confidence and understanding) with any new developments within the music industry that may arise in the future. The Bachelor of Popular Music has certainly contributed in a significant way in preparing me for this.

First year students regarded collaboration and studio access as equally important followed by external activities and the reflective practices associated with the assessment activities in major study. As they progress through the program, students attributed increasing importance to studio access. This would be expected because developing skills in the operation of recording equipment and increased familiarity with the studio as a performance location improves productivity in this environment, resulting in enhanced benefits for learning. The changes in importance attributed to analysis skills and reflection by students in their third year as opposed to the earlier stages of the program are a striking feature of these findings. Students have had substantial exposure to semiotic analysis by this stage in their studies, and this has become a technique they apply to their own work as recounted in the interview and journal extracts that follow. There is a corresponding decrease in the importance attributed to reflective practice and this may be due to self-analysis partly replacing self-reflection as the way students think about their work, along with the embedding of reflection into recording studio practice, a consequence of increased functionality in the recording environment.

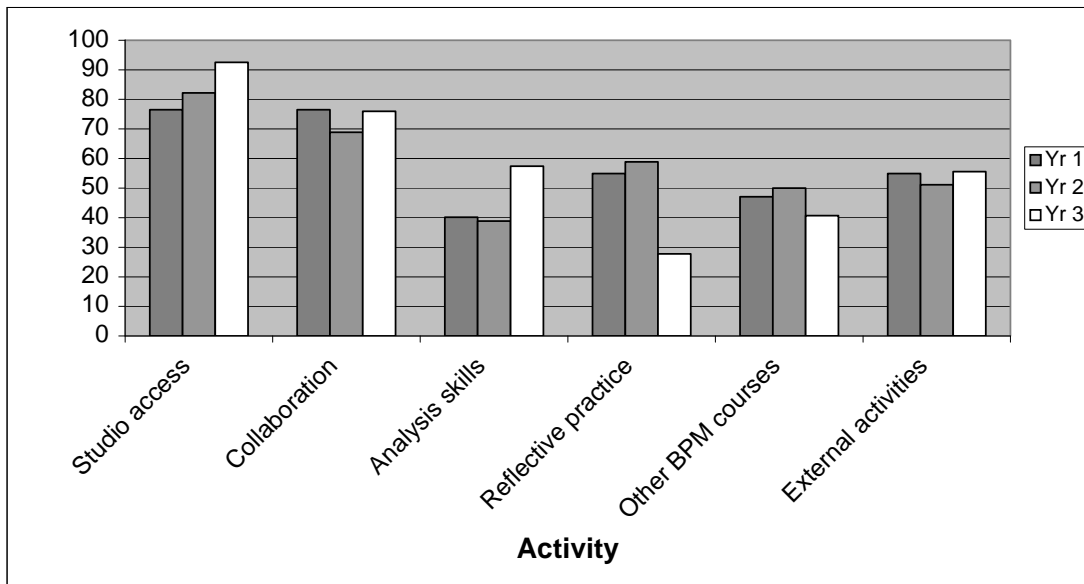


Figure 7: Years 1, 2 and 3

The reflections

The reflective journals submitted each semester are a rich source of information on the process of student learning. The course journal guidelines describe excellence as a detailed description of the learning experience with particular reference to the creative process, which demonstrates a clear understanding of how this process has worked personally. Some students who responded to the 2006 survey ranking aspects of musical activity also offered comments about each area and interviews with two graduates and five current students were also undertaken. These sources provide an insight into the student experience of the program. The following student reflections are extracted from survey comments and interviews as well as reflective journals submitted in semester one 2006.

Studio access

Access to the recording process enables students to critique work after it has been performed and to do this repeatedly. It also provides an opportunity to initiate and receive feedback from peers whose experiences in active assessment have developed their ability to provide well-framed feedback and take feedback from others on board positively, with good grace but still critically.

The studios have given me a space - a safe, musical environment where I can explore and change, and listen back to what I have achieved. (Survey comment)

The most important thing for us was access to the recording studio, hearing yourself back off tape . . . You don't really know what you are doing when you are playing. I think it's the absolute best thing you can do for your personal development, far better than having [a teacher] telling me, 'yes that was good'. (Graduate interview)

When I'm playing, I'm not really listening to what I'm doing, but when I play it back I hear everything I do right and everything that I do wrong, everything I need to improve. (Student interview)

I've started to find a certain headspace when I'm singing in the studios. I relax into this same groove, where I'm not thinking, I'm just listening, and singing. (Reflective journal extract)

Students regard the studio as a place where it is safe to fail, to try things out and make independent decisions on a recording's strengths and weaknesses. Studio access becomes increasingly important as students progress through the program, and no other aspect of the program is regarded more highly.

Collaboration

The rich resource provided by the skills and abilities of all the participants in this process forms the basis for much of the learning in this course. Students are aware of this and value it highly.

I've had the pleasure of performing on numerous other artists' tracks . . . Every time I play with a different artist I treat it as a learning experience. Collaboration has been a large part in making this an enjoyable experience for me. I found that working with other people has not only sharpened me as a musician but it has also helped me as a person.

Another thing that I really enjoyed this semester was how the teachers really help you out when you have a question and help you reflect on your own work so that you can go on to make it even better. And also of course the continuous support and help that I got from fellow students who surprisingly aren't competing with me but are trying to help and collaborate, which is something completely foreign for me. (Reflective journal extracts)

Students find both professional and personal benefit in their interactions with fellow students and staff who constitute their learning community. They find inspiration in each other. The opportunity to collaborate is regarded as being very important at all stages of the program.

Analysis

The analysis skills developed through engagement with the history and analysis courses can be directed to the students' own work.

When you've studied semiotics as well, you've got a completely different approach. It's a tool, but it has to be able to be put away. (Graduate interview)

Theory and Analysis of Popular music has also benefited my development as an artist, particularly one involved in the creative process of writing music. I have now begun to understand aspects of music I had only previously been aware of subconsciously. (Reflective journal extract)

Students regard the ability to think critically about their own work and their musical and cultural context as an additional tool they can use to develop their work. This becomes more important in third year as students develop skill in analysis and realise its potential for the continuing development of their work.

Reflection/assessment

Learning strategies used in this course include self-assessment and the experience of being both a provider and recipient of peer assessment and feedback along with feedback and assessment from staff. It gives students the experience of assessment from the assessors' point of view and enhances ability to make professional judgments through reflective practice.

I really enjoy hearing what other people like and dislike about my music, it helps me to listen more critically and gives me ideas and inspiration. (Survey comment)

So when I began to record myself I just felt great. It's very good to have your own feedback and to keep your own track of things. (Reflective journal extract)

It doesn't matter if the opinion is positive or not, it just has to have justification. It genuinely didn't feel like people were just trying to rip into me. (Student interviews)

Students generally value self-assessment and the formal opportunity to provide feedback to their peers through assessment, and are appreciative of the feedback they receive. The enthusiasm with which the work-in-progress activity was embraced is a demonstration of student acceptance of active assessment, with all but eight students participating in some way. As indicated in Figure 7, reflective practice is not regarded as being as important as a separate activity in third year as it is in earlier stages of the program. However, reflection is an integral part of recording and the decrease in the importance rating for reflection is balanced by a corresponding increase in the importance attributed to studio access and analysis skills, suggesting a change of location for reflection as a possible explanation.

Course integration

All of the courses in this program are intended to be mutually relevant and supportive. The assertion is that if students find application for course content in meaningful combination with learning from other courses, they are likely to experience more useful learning. Some students indicated a profound sense of integration beyond what they had previously understood or experienced as a learner.

[The history and analysis course] has been so largely responsible for the way I have approached this entire portfolio that I know I would never have created these songs the way I have without the incorporation of that class.

It happened approximately around about week 9, when I started mixing my songs, this weird feeling that I already had achieved that sound I was looking for . . . In a split second, all the engineering classes from the first year onwards, all those books I have been reading made sense.

Over the semester with more and more studio knowledge I started hearing things I had never heard before in songs, like the EQ [equalisation] on the kick drum, or the unusual ways some pop songs are arranged, which changed the way I listen to music and gave me a new passion for it. These

technical aspects have impacted on my songwriting. (Reflective journal extracts)

The comments indicate that students have adopted an integrated approach to their studies and that learning experienced in one context is applied in another context. The performative nature of the major study assessment encourages this kind of integration.

Implications

The combination of learning activities, reflective practice enhanced by recording and the range of assessment activities used in this program contribute to the development of musical skill and also the ability to learn independently. Much of the musical development is achieved indirectly, through the study of popular music style and context that informs current original work, and through the provision of ready access to recording technology and a substantial pool of people with conspicuous ability in a number of areas of popular music practice. This work is largely self-directed within a structure provided by the program, with appropriate support from staff and fellow students. As one graduate commented:

You are using all your skills in the one go, you are in the studio, you're listening to yourself, you're using the semiotic thing and you're also using the reflective thing at the same time, and someone comes in and you listen to what they have to say. (Graduate interview)

The ability to learn in a self-directed way is developed by course activities including a variety of reflective practices. Students are required to consider both the product and the process of their creative work and reflect about this in writing.

Forcing me to talk about it [making music] when I would normally just think about it keep it to myself and then just get in and do it . . . it's not in language at all when I think about it. (Student interview)

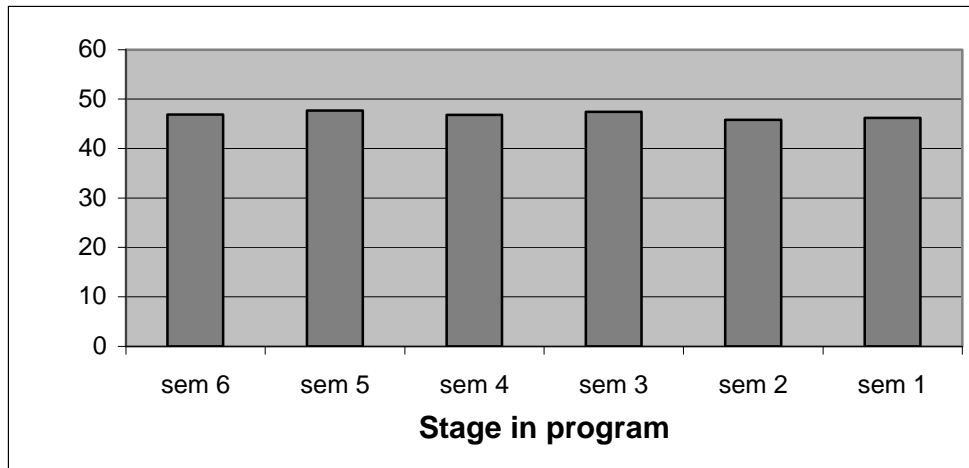
An analysis of the processes outlined above reveals a number of generic principles that underpin this pedagogy. They can be characterized at a meta-level as respectful engagement *with* students rather than doing work *on* them, and they include

- genuine recognition of the students' expertise as demonstrated by attributing students with the abilities to direct their own work and participate fully in assessment right from the start, and illustrated by the students' consistently high importance ratings for collaboration and the quality of their engagement with the work-in-progress process,
- acknowledgment of the influence assessment has on learning, demonstrated by the use of a range of assessment practices adopted for their learning benefits and supported by positive student feedback on the value of both active assessment (peer and self-assessment) and assessment by staff,
- respect for the range of preferred approaches to learning expressed through flexibility in activities and the self-directed nature of creative work, particularly at the micro level, and the multifaceted character of student engagement with this work,

- expectation of autonomous learning and self-directed activity, made explicit as early as the audition and interview, and demonstrated by the absence of individual lessons and high levels of direction by teachers,
- the use of reflection to add a layer of explicit knowledge to the implicit music-making know-how that students bring to the program, most important for students as formal reflective practices in the early stages of the program but taking the form of self-analysis and becoming embedded in studio practice later in the program (see Figure 7),
- the use of recording to enable reflection on creative work to occur after the act, allowing students to make considered judgments on their own work thereby reducing their dependence on teachers for feedback, and
- monitoring capacity building through creating opportunity for constructive criticism in a scaffolded self-directed learning environment.

The horizontal rather than vertical feedback mechanisms encouraged by this pedagogy mean that students are not reliant on a teacher for judgments or advice before going on with their work. Indeed, avoiding the temptation to offer solutions too soon, allowing students to experience safe failure and develop appropriate coping mechanisms, is a benefit of this pedagogy. The theory here is aligned with Füredi's claim that 'people can live with disappointment if they have the cultural resources that allow them to make sense of the world' (2004, p. 22).

The quantification of enhancement of musical ability is a difficult issue. Improvement in grades for a student's recital performances in traditional settings can be argued to demonstrate the effectiveness of that instructional process, but in the BPM program, musical ability is regarded as more than simply the ability to sing or play a musical instrument. Such abilities as songwriting, arranging, musical computer skills and audio engineering and production also come into play, reflecting the range of skills that are valuable in the popular music industry.



The recorded work submitted by students each semester can be regarded as one of the products of this learning system and results for the recorded folio of students is one way to track changes. Although the average results for the recorded folio of a single cohort of students represented below in Figure 8 appear to be relatively constant from semester to semester as students progress through the program, this actually represents an increase in ability because students are required to submit more substantial folios each year, 10 to 15 minutes in year one, 15 to 20 minutes in year two and 20 to 30 minutes in year three. All year levels are assessed using the same criteria and standards and the mark is out of a possible 60.

Figure 8: Folio marks students graduating 2006

Graduate outcomes are another way to gauge the effectiveness of a learning system. The program provides students with the theoretical and practical training required for careers in various sectors of the popular music and related industries and graduates find employment in large music organisations, the entertainment industry, and also the education sector. Many graduates establish their own small to medium business enterprises such as recording studios, teaching studios, music aggregation and distribution, and artist and repertoire companies. The program has also served as a first step for graduates wishing to develop careers in music research and higher education.

Extensive live performances by graduates include a wide range of Australian venues and such varied international locations as USA, Dubai, Solomon Islands, UK, Europe and South-East Asia. Recent graduates have secured recording and/or publishing deals with Boomerang Records (Australia), Serotonin

(Australia), Sony (Japan), Pyropit Records (Japan), Oliver Music (Europe and USA), Digisoul Recordings (UK and USA), Astral Music (Netherlands), Drum Mode (Netherlands), and Aenaria Records (Italy). In addition, graduates have released a substantial catalogue of recorded work independently, frequently using Internet distribution and promotion through sites like MySpace, YouTube, CD Baby, iTunes Store and MP3.com. A number of graduates have specialised in audio engineering and production and work both independently and as salaried employees in this area.

From the feedback included in this paper, it is evident that greater student autonomy and self-efficacy result from the a-synchronous reflection on performance that is enabled through recording, the self-reflection that is required by self-assessing, and the reflections on the work of others that peer-based assessment demands.

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