Critical Approaches to Arts-based Research

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Critical Approaches to Arts-Based Research

Guest Editors Anne Harris
Mary Ann Hunter
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THEME

Arts based research (ABR), its products, processes and critical theorising have come a long way in recent times. Nuanced distinctions indicate the development of the field, as arts-informed research, arts-based research, practice-led research, applied research, and creative participatory action research all claim different relationships with the art and criticality present in such innovative scholarship. Finally, it seems, we are moving away from a defensive stance regarding arts based research and its 'validity', and toward a celebration of this proliferation of diverse ways of knowing, theorising and doing research. This 'coming of age' is evident in this special issue, which urges readers to move beyond binarised notions of scientific 'versus' arts based research that still at times dominates academic research environments and conversations, and outmoded practice/theory divides. For we co-editors and for the authors here, theorising is indeed a creative practice, and goes hand-in-hand with the epistemological and ontological potential of arts-making methods. This issue celebrates the opening of new doors in theorising innovative arts based research from a range of global contexts, theoretical and epistemological frameworks, and inter/disciplines. We avoid any attempt to codify or limit the parameters of what contemporary arts based research is or can be. Indeed, we seek the opposite: to highlight its ever-expanding possibilities.

The essays here aim to encourage critical analysis and dialogue about the objects and subjects of arts based research for contemporary times, poststructuralist, posthuman and other critical approaches to arts based research, and the interdisciplinary application of performative and practice-led research in transferable methodological models. We are pleased to be able to include digital assets with many of the articles in this special issue. Indeed, the layered and multimodal complexity of arts based 'outputs' or artefacts is one of its rich distinguishing features, and it requires commitment from editors and publishers to not always demand a 'reduction' back into text-based forms, a diminishment of many forms of ABR. For this we thank the UNESCO editorial and production team, and hope you enjoy this contribution to the critical development of the arts based research field.

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Doing sociology with musical narratives

AUTHOR **Clare Hall**

ABSTRACT This article explores the productive intersection between arts-based research and the sociology of music education. The field of music education has been influenced in various ways by arts-based and arts-informed methodologies and methods; however, music-based methods are slow to be taken up by scholarship in general. As an attempt to redress this, I explore how creative music-making—primarily musical composition—can be deployed as an (auto)ethnographic method when conceptualised as a critical and multilayered form of narrative. I describe how I examine my pre-service primary school teachers' musical identities and tease out some of their taken-for-granted notions about musicality by analysing the self-making performances in one student's digital music composing. This discussion of her experiences raise fresh questions about how notions of musical creativity relate to our subjectivities and supports the broader argument that doing sociology with music has much to offer performance-based methods.

KEYWORDS sociology, music, ethnography, performance, composition

MUSIC–BASED RESEARCH METHODS

Music continues to be one of the least adopted methods of arts-based research, whether as a form of data generation or representation. Notwithstanding the work of a handful of musician-educator-scholars (e.g. Baykan 2013; Bresler 2009; Gouzouasis 2006, 2008; Mio 2005; Riddle 2012, 2013), music-based research seems to be less self-consciously and innovatively adopted in fields outside of education (Daykin 2004; Liu, Lapum, Fredericks, Yau, & Micevski, 2013). The use of arts-based methods in the study of issues in music education has, however, developed in interesting and diverse directions in recent years, although is mostly focussed on non-musical methods of data representation. For example, Adler (2012) works with music teachers' visual illustrations to analyse their professional identities, de Vries (2006, 2007) works with creative writing to explore music in early childhood among other things, Roulton, Legette, DeLoach, & Buckhalter (2008) use readers' theatre techniques to communicate issues about mentoring of beginning music teachers and I have experimented with 3D installation to analyse and represent the intersubjectivity inherent in musical life stories (see Fig. 1) [1].

1
This hanging mobile, in the style of Alexander Calder, was a poster presentation for the *Approaches to Narrative Methods Research Symposium*, 2007, convened by the Narrative Network Australia at Victoria University, Melbourne. It aimed to communicate the complexity of analysing and re-representing the multiple parts of an interviewee's life-story, in this case the musical life-story of Sebastian a 10 year old choirboy, symbolised here as a balancing

act. Several mirrors hang from the mobile symbolising that this balancing act includes the co-construction of a life narrative between the researcher and participant. In order to read text printed on the mirror the viewer must go close enough to the object at which point they see a reflection of themselves in the object. By reflecting on narrative methods through the art-making process I came to a new appreciation of the research process I was embarking on.

Figure 1 Sebastian's musical life story hanging mobile

DIGITAL ASSET

Arguably, it is the narrative turn in education that has had the greatest influence on music research in regards to arts-based methods and methodologies (Barrett & Stauffer 2012). This body of scholarship, however, seems reluctant to discuss music and music-making as a research process and form of representation. While others outside of education are pushing the boundaries of music-based research, with music being the method by which research is conducted and communicated (Harrison 2013), within music education the field continues to be preoccupied with the 'textual' as opposed to performative, embodied methodologies, what Bresler (2006) refers to as the 'textural'. New transdisciplinary fusions continue to trouble and expand music's ontology (Crone 2012; Pedelty 2012; *SoundEffects Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience; Sound Studies*) and arts-based theory and methodology has much more to learn from such experimentations with music-based processes, aurality and sonic ways of knowing as mediating other forms of knowledge.

There is of course a considerable tradition of musician-scholars conducting participatory research whereby the researchers' and/or the research participants' aesthetic experiences and musicianship are central to the generation of meaning (Bartleet & Ellis 2009). While some might argue all music research is 'music-based' in some way, what seems to be important is not the nomenclature used to describe such work, as many researchers do indeed conduct arts- and music-based research without naming it as such, but rather the identification with arts-based methodology and an emphasis placed on the affordance of other modes of knowing beyond the textual. I perceive distinctions between research that is conducted in music (making/performing in action), on music (as an object or text), about music (the conditions that contexutalise/ produce music) and through music (lived musical experiences that generate affordances other than musical). Contiguous relationships exist between these distinctions and research may

well involve all four foci, however, I argue that music-based researchers' primary methodological position is to foreground the relationship between research and thinking in music as an under-represented dimension of knowledge production and representation. I aim to accomplish this in a study of musical creativity with pre-service primary school teachers and this article explains how I have gone about some of this work by bringing together music-based methods, music education sociology and critical performance ethnography.

PERFORMANCE ETHNOGRAPHY AND MUSICAL NARRATIVES

I have enfolded a critical sociological agenda into my work with pre-service primary and early childhood teachers through the ways my students experience creative music-making, curriculum concepts and self-reflections on their emerging professional identities. The discussion that follows and the accompanying digital asset relates to a small-scale ethnography of the musical experiences of these university students engaged in an undergraduate degree course. These pre-service primary generalist teachers participated in a single unit of music education (24 contact hours) that I designed and delivered. This is not a music teaching methods unit per se, but an introduction to the issues and practices relevant to the inclusion of music in the generalist primary classroom. Regardless of students' artistic and educational backgrounds, I position them as musician-researcher-educators with the aim of them questioning what is musicality, and what does it mean to be a musician, to do research and to educate musically? The students' experiences culminate in a group performance of an ethnodrama that problematises and attempts to resolve issues relating to the teaching and learning of music in childhood that the students are most passionate about.

The unit has an autoethnographic focus whereby the students construct and interrogate their personal musical life narratives in relation to music and education discourses through writing and discussion groups. This work is enriched by weekly research literature reading and workshops and forms the basis of an ethnodrama. These readings and workshops are intended to prompt a critical perspective and reflexive vocabulary with which to examine the intersections between music and gender, class, race, indigeneity, sexuality, disability and creativity in regards to schooling and education. One task the students complete is a music composition which they digitally record. They are free to create music in any form and we workshop examples to inspire them: song, beatboxing, mash-up, remix, soundscape, DJing. This forms part of the students' assessment for the unit. The creative process, which the students critically reflect on through a process journal, is of equal importance in the evaluation as the final musical product. For the majority of the students, this is the first time they will have produced their own music and, depending on the form their music will take, they are required to research how to work effectively and experimentally within this genre.

The unit is inspired by a performance-based methodology and methods "as vehicles for enacting a performative cultural politics of hope" (Denzin 2003, p.24). An overarching goal for my music teaching in higher education is to foster an emancipatory discourse in view of the pedagogical as always being political. While the students I teach might not be considered particularly 'muted' or marginalised voices, their experiences of learning to teach musically speak back in interesting ways to some of the discourses of derision (Burnard 2003) that continue to be reproduced in music education, a point which I will return to later. The promise of critical performance ethnography is the use of performance as a method of representation and for understanding the ways people create and recreate themselves through "communicative action" (Denzin 2003, p. 7). For me,

this communication includes music-making as a performative action and I am fascinated by the possible discursive interventions musical performance offers. When music research speaks of 'performance', however, it is often in the conventional sense of a staged musical event. But in the critical ethnographic sense, performance is a self-making presentation. Musical performance/s are important ways "that we come to simultaneously recognize, substantiate, and (re)create ourselves as well as Others through performance" (Madison 2005, p. 150).

Performance-based methods have historically referred to the dramaturgical arts, and to a lesser degree the kinaesthetic arts (Haseman 2009; Leavy 2008). I argue for an attentiveness to music, in its many forms, in the conversations about how this performative approach can "put culture in motion" (Denzin 2003, p. 7). Leavy (2008) describes dance as a possible performance-based method which can add "new dimensions" to research, by adding "texture and tonality to the insights produced from traditional qualitative research" (p. 356). These comments are in relation to dance as a form of data re-representation; however, not considered here are the new understandings that emerge in dancing and music-making that may not occur through conventional language-based methods. I agree with Graham (2009) who argues, "music and dance did not merely reflect or reiterate other realities, but created them" (p. 101). I hope to show how my students' reflexivity is made possible because of their musical narratives. Their textual narratives are constituted through musical performances—the textural—and not merely informed by them.

While the relationship to music and performance may appear obvious, and notwithstanding the performative turn evident in much music education scholarship in feminist and queer music education studies for instance (see Gould 2007; Lamb, Dolloff & Weiland Howe, 2002), music studies in general continues to struggle to shake off the traditional preoccupation with the analysis of musical scores and recordings (Born 2010; McCormick

2006). But if we take a sociological view that acknowledges music involves the mediation of musical sounds and social practices (Born 2010; Prior 2011), and that "performances are embedded in language" (Denzin 2003, p. 9), can one's 'voice' be in the form of music? If so, then what does one 'speak' through music? It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage with the complicated territory of music, language and performativity but if music is social practice and narrative is a fundamental part of social life, then it stands to reason we should regard music and musicking [2] as an important means of telling stories and constructing personal narratives (Riddle 2012, 2013).

I agree with Bowman's (2006) suggestion that narratives need not be verbal; that what 'narrative' is and does for enquiry ultimately depends on "what we ask of it" (p. 6). In my view, other fields such as musicology and film studies have had a more sustained theorisation of the relationship between music and narrative than music education and, while this too cannot be pursued here, my approach to narrative is also informed by visual narrative methods that treat the narratives within images and visual culture as data and/or use visual artefacts to generate storytelling (Andrews, Squires, Tamboukou, 2012). This twofold conceptualisation relates to musical narratives as my research participants tell stories *about* music and tell stories *through* music, in which narratives are constructed in both words and music. These personal, 'small' narratives relate to larger social and cultural narratives:

> *The musical text, however, displays only the first level of meaning systems informing musical performance. What has never been adequately explored, in my opinion, is the second layer of representations, the background structures that inform the actual performance of musical texts (McCormick 2006, p. 124).*

Using McCormick's work as a departure point, I consider four levels of meaning in music: the narratives in the creation of the musical text/object, the narratives within the musical text itself

2 The verb 'to music' (musicking) coined by Small (1999) pays credence to the multiple ways musical behaviours– playing, listening, composing– are performed in action and constitute social practice.

(vis-a-vis a dramaturgical script or visual image), the narrative in the translation and performance of the text [3] (Rink 1999), and the cultural or 'master' narratives that constitute the mediating background structures of musical texts and performance events.

3 In the case of improvised music, the second and third levels are conflated.

This approach is not to presume musical performances are a representation of reality. They are not objective artefacts and are open to multiple readings; like other aesthetic performances they are always re-representational (Leavy 2008). Rather, I am interested in how fertile the lived processes involved in composing music are for the study of the society-individual nexus (Burnard 2012a). Music sociology makes a convincing argument for the material and discursive entities of musical practice to be brought into balance in the analytical frame (Prior, 2011) and a conceptual way forward for me is the notion of 'musical sociology': that is, doing sociology *with* music as advocated by DeNora (2003) and Bell (2011), as opposed to only doing a sociology *of (or on)* music as a noun. Hence, my method of analysis oscillates between reflections on the doing of music and the music done, which is linked to Denzin's (2003) notion of the dissolved boundary between performativity (doing) and performance (done).

Critiques of narrative methods focus on its privileging of spoken or written texts and its troubles in accounting for the unsayable, that is, the orality of language, embodied knowledge and the 'inner landscape' (Freeman 2004; Leitch 2006; Redman 2005). Experience does not become meaningful only when it is put into words. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) argue that,

> *Much of what is most central to human subjectivity is non-discursive in the sense that it explicitly resists symbolisation. Putting these things into words is a retrospective act which attempts to make sense of them, but the 'things' themselves are not linguistic; literally, they can't be said (p. 120).*

Shepherd & Wicke (1997) go further to argue that music precedes language because, put simply, words do not exist without their rhythm, pitch and volume in our minds. Much is written about the musical aspects of speech such as the rhythmical repetition and vocal intonation. Yet, in analytical terms these features are often not described as 'musical' because most of this kind of work is being explored in sociolinguistics and social-psychology. In the music field the synergistic relationship between musical and linguistic communication has often proved to be a fruitful creative intersection, such as the work of composer Robert Davidson who exploits the musicality of speech to astounding affect in his *Voice Portraits* series. Little attention, however, has been paid to musical utterances in conversation analysis, for example, when talking includes singing, humming, whistling, percussive use of the body such as clapping and foot stomping. This leaves fertile ground for music-based and narrative researchers to explore.

As mentioned, the musical body is less often considered as a narrative producing entity than other forms of communication, particularly activities traditionally perceived as cognitive such as listening and composing (Bowman & Powell, 2007). "As embodied, music involves touching, smelling, moving, seeing, and more. Bodies in states of music are multiply sensed and strongly connected to the world" (Bowman & Powell 2007 p. 1099). Bresler (2005) takes this forward into an arts-informed methodology with her suggestion that musical sensibilities and having an 'ear for detail' may attune scholars to form, rhythm, harmony, timbre, melody and polyphony. These are more than analytical metaphors, rather they are embodied dispositions that the musician may deploy in all stages of the research process. Her argument revolves around the significance of the affective, embodied dimensions of musicianship which offers an opportunity for a reflexive "re-seeing" or indeed "rehearing" of their own "internalised story" (Bresler 2006 p. 35). Music compositional processes are well-known to open up possible

new creative horizons for teachers (Stavrou 2012), yet how is this re-visioning also influenced and perhaps limited or constrained by cultural narratives of creativity?

> *The trajectory from performance as mimesis to poiesis and finally to kinesis [4] is particularly useful to qualitative researchers and ethnographers because it provides a means by which we may identify how human beings imitate each other in multiple and complicated ways while they are simultaneously generating meaning and resisting domestication. Moreover, it reveals how these performative actions are ripe with contestation, breakthroughs, and change (Madison 2005, p. 171).*

Born (2010) reminds us that, in regards to music, theories of mediation "can lead not only to new openings in musical discursive possibilities—to invention—but also closure, reification, discursive and musical stasis, processes in which supervening forms of power are often at work" (p. 34). Therefore, my main aim in this study is to explore how the teachers' musical narratives, as performative actions, are both inventive and reifying in regards to their personal-cultural narratives of creativity. I go about this exploration by thinking through the meaning-making in the students' creative compositional processes, contrasted by a focus on their musical texts, their stories about being musical and what this means for their creative identities through music-making. The next section shares the musical narrative of one student, Abbie, as an example of this inquiry.

UNDERSTANDING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' MUSICAL CREATIVITIES

Music was a big part of Abbie's upbringing, particularly in her early years. Across her 21 years of life she has enjoyed singing in choir, playing the flute and piano, and regrets giving up the piano because she would still like to have a 'tinkle'. She comes from a

4 This mimesis–poiesis–kinesis triad is in reference to Conquergood's (1998) conceptualisation of performance as imitation (mimesis), moving to a poetic agency (poiesis) and finally to a level of reflexivity that enables change (kinesis).

large musical family and is the youngest of eight children. She has inherited her grandmother's Steinway piano, but because it doesn't fit in her current home, her cousin the acclaimed Australian singer-songwriter Missy Higgins is now custodian. Hanging out with her cousin—attending her concerts, recording sessions and signings—has given her an insider view of the pop music industry and she admits "I get a bit jealous sometimes and I'm like, 'Oh, I wish that was me.'" She has fond childhood memories of family jam sessions and she has a particularly strong musical relationship with her father's brother, a music teacher, who lived with the family when she was young. "He'd always come home and play his guitar and I think from the age of three I knew every word to every Beatles song that ever was, and still do." And yet it seems she feels unentitled to use these experiences in the construction of her musical identity. She explains her music-making has only ever been about fun as opposed to having professional aspirations. These days her musicking involves mainly listening:

> *I listen to a lot of music. I remember lyrics too—you play me one song and I'll remember the lyrics straight away. I always happen to listen to music. I've always got my iPhone. I've always got the radio on. Otherwise, I'd go a bit crazy, like, "I need some sound. I need some sound. I hate silence. I hate silence!"*

I get the sense, however, she has lived in the shadows of her older and high-achieving family members. For instance, she describes her elder sister who has a PhD as "naturally gifted" whereas she must work hard for her successes. Even though she describes herself as "not that musically creative", the way she constructs this story about how she composed her music—something she has never done before—suggests otherwise.

> *I came up with the idea of kitchen sounds because I've been babysitting my sister's kids and they've done a thing at school about different sounds and pots and pans and whatever. And my original idea was I'll get the kids to stay in the kitchen and make*

a hell of a lot of noise. They're really, really good at doing that. It's their favourite pastime. If they want your attention, they just go into the kitchen and just bang noises around. That's where my inspiration came from I think. Then I thought, "No, it's just gonna sound like absolute rubbish." It's just gonna be a whole bunch of sounds and no one's gonna be able to understand that.

So I kind of pulled it apart and went, "Well, I'm gonna use kitchen sounds 'coz it's a common sound, you can kind of picture it in your head." I literally just walked in the kitchen and went, "Yeah, that'll do, that'll do, that'll do." And took them into a room and just played with the different sounds and the different tones and the pitches. I got so sick of listening to the banging and scratching noises that just weren't combining the way that I would have liked, I had to walk away and come back to it the next day with fresh ears and new ideas. After taking some time out to think about what I wanted I had another shot in bringing it all together. I found myself just letting the sounds work for themselves, and me more so just arranging them. I closed my eyes and imagined myself cooking dinner, what sounds would you hear? This is how I came to my final combination. By not making it overly complicated, but just sounds that everyone can recognise and be able to identify.

Abbie portrays a dialogue between her and sound. Composing sound-based music frees Abbie from the expectation that her music must conform to any pre-set conventions and gives her the confidence that "I can do this." Working with "just sounds" democratises Abbie's musical landscape, where she is already the expert of the extraordinary in her everyday soundworld (DeNora 2002), and helps to overcome her high anxiety about composing. This represents a possible contestation of the musical norm that 'real' composers are "dead, white, men" (Burnard 2012b). She playfully immerses herself in her bedroom to saturate herself with aural possibilities through experimentation, but this is not without problems, tension and emotional labour. She said this phase produced "endless options" that she had to decipher—she settles on the sound of tapping on the bottom of a pan for a

steady pulse and continuous rhythm, the sound of a dropping a pot which she speeds up for intensity, and she contrasts these "heavier" sounds with the calmer sound of washing her hands in water, closing with the single sound of her whistling kettle.

Abbie closes her eyes and imagines in her mind's ear the soundscape of her kitchen at mealtime. It is at this point, when she uses her musical body to attend to the temporal and timbral characteristics of a place during a daily ritual, that she says composing her sound collage begins to "work". She learns from thinking in sound that sometimes less is more for communication and she talks about sound as having an agency of its own that she responds to by metaphorically stepping back and letting it speak for itself. To make order from the creative freedom Abbie has using everyday sounds as music, she utilises the drama of this ritual as a narrative framework for her musical structure. This productive constraint (Barrett 2003) enables her representation to focus on the temporality of cooking dinner in the kitchen (refer to digital asset 2).

DIGITAL ASSET 2

Abbie's attraction to this story form has another function in the dialogue between her music and her imagined audience. Unlike other students who were more experimental in their form, producing a musical text that is intelligible and able to be read as 'music' was particularly important for Abbie as the following conversation shows:

> *I got a lot of strange looks at home.*
> *They were like, "What is Abbie doing in her room?*
> *Chilling out banging pots and pans together." <Laughs>.*
> Did you play it to your family?
> *No. <Laughs>.*
> Well, why not?
> *<Laughs>. Because it was like, "This is weird." <Laughs>.*

It was just like, "What the fuck is she doing?" <Laughs>.
My boyfriend's like, "This is what you do every day?"
I'm like, "Yeah." <Laughs> "I'm intelligent!"
But I think it's harder than English or Maths
or something like that
because you need a drive to kind of do it as well,
it's not as simple as writing some words or doing some equations.
It's totally an academic subject.
My friends, when they did music in Year 12,
I didn't see them for about six months.
They'd always be doing their homework in the bus or something.
I'm like, "Dude, what are you doing?"
I'm like, "No, no, no, no. I'll sit over here and do my Maths."
I guess because I find it's too much work
I'm like, "Nah."
I need it to come naturally kind of thing.

Abbie's music authorizes this performance of creative competency "not through the citation of scholarly texts, but through its ability to evoke and invoke shared emotional experience and understanding between performer and audience" (Denzin 2003, p. 13). Her story about being musically creative, however, intersects with what I have referred to elsewhere as the 'natural' narrative (Hall 2012). Abbie constructs a binary between the musically able (educated) and the 'dis'-abled (uneducated), which calls into question whether or not her experiments in sound-based music represent a discursive 'break-through'. The Western art music canon has at its core the notion of the musical 'genius' or 'master' which sets up a derisive discourse (Burnard 2003) that polarises a small minority of those who are perceived as musically 'talented' against a non-musical or 'untalented' majority (Stollery & McPhee 2002). While, in some regions of the globe, popular music pedagogies (Green 2008; Karlsen & Väkevä 2012) and digital music technologies (Bolton 2008) have made developments in deconstructing this hierarchy in the school classroom, in many contexts the high cultural capital

of the musically able as an innate or 'natural gift' continues to be reproduced through school education and musical fields at large. We see this reified in Abbie's story in which she constructs a superior Other—the academic, intelligent, musician—in contrast to herself. She says her friends noticed her musicality, "Everyone's like, 'Oh, you should go on radio or something. You love music.' I'm like, "Yeh, but --." This 'but' is Abbie's fall back on the notion that musicianship should somehow be 'natural' and not acquired, which is in contradiction with her clear understanding of the discipline and learned capacities of being a musician. Although she says later that she is proud of her sound collage, the sarcastic tone of her "I'm intelligent" statement suggests that this particular creative experience, while transformative, perhaps has not achieved kinesis because its transgression is questionable (Denzin 2003). Or has it? Her story above sets up a conflict between the understood and misunderstood that she partially resolves with this reflection on being a new university student. When she first learnt an assessment task was to compose and record her own piece of music, she says,

> *I was freaking out. I don't understand it. What am I gonna do? But then I just kind of worked it out. It kind of all fell into place... because it's a personal thing...you didn't want us to reciprocate anything that anyone else had done. It's us as music creators rather than what other people have done. So that was good...rather than in Year 12, "This is a piece of writing, reciprocate it and then we'll memorise it for exam." But I was like, "That's a crock of crap." That's why I like uni because you're not just this other number. You're actually doing something that means something and you're part of a group that understands what you're doing, you're not just another student, so I like it.*

The other creative enabling aspect of composing sound-based music is the close relationship between self-sound-body. A common theme across the students' narratives, especially those who used sound-based composition by sampling sounds from

their everyday or producing sounds with their own body in some way, is the perception that this commitment to 'real' sounds is more creative than using pre-recorded sounds, through Garageband for instance. Another student explains that this form expresses her 'essence'—it is the music of me and my life (Hall, forthcoming). For Abbie, she is able to reposition herself as an educational agent, not just an object in a system, because of the deeply personal and autobiographical connection. She says this composition, "brought me back to my childhood" when she would "make songs up and create music by finding anything in the kitchen that would make loud noises". But it appears to be more than associated with her memories as she uses the act of creating her own music as symbolic of her resistance against the depersonalised and demoralising aspects of the education system.

This positive experience has mobilised Abbie to take action in her world in small but meaningful ways. I ask her to describe how she imagined she might work with children in the future, given that she was yet to experience being a teacher in the classroom. She recalls many activities she participated in that she plans to try out in her classroom one day. Some things she has already tried out with her young niece and nephew and she tells this story about how she engages them with Herve Tullet's, *Press Here*, picture book, inspired by a workshop experience where we recreated the text through dance and musical improvisation.

> *Mia just thought it was like this magical book. She was like, "Oh, That's so cool." We're doing this game and we made it all practical. And I was like, "Well, I'm learning that in uni and I'm learning to do it in a classroom, and I'm just doing it with my family. It's fun. But Max thought it was magical. "How are you doing this?" It's just what I do. I'm magic...I think that's why I like the younger years of children because you can use something so simple and make it into this big thing and you can talk about big concepts. Like in multicultures, we talk about using picture books to talk about racism and stuff like that and I'm like, "I fully don't still*

understand it now and I'm nearly 21!" And I think that's really cool...you're kind of getting them to start the ball rolling early.

Being musical and creating her own music has given Abbie inspiration for the ways she wants to be with children and the imperatives of her evolving pedagogy as a teacher. She realises the power that she has as someone who can deeply affect people through encounters, including musical ones. Through musical creativities she has connected with the 'magic' of aesthetic experience where the 'simple' can open out into 'big things'—where emotions, bodies, histories, ideas, imaginings, politics and pedagogies are enmeshed. Music is a useful method of unpicking this intermingling. Through the creative processes of composing music, musical products and talking about music, autoethnographic performances may be performed and analysed. I suggest that the ethnographic theatre as a space that brings together "texts, performers, performances and audiences" may indeed "be anywhere" (Denzin 2003, p.38), including musical spaces. These spaces can be fraught and not necessarily 'safe' as Abbie's narrative indicates. Nor are her narrative possibilities boundless. The dialogue between the self and the art object that I have attempted to portray through re-storying Abbie's experience, shows that in the critique of one's own creativity, personal narratives are resourced by pasts and cultural representations that can limit the stories one has access to tell.

Most of the pre-service teachers I work with accept a status quo of being 'average' and therefore not belonging to the small group of people who are so-called entitled to identify as 'musical' and 'creative'. Discourses and structures that do this kind of work confront us everywhere, from reality television talent shows that idolise prodigy to university courses that reinscribe borders between specialist and generalist arts teaching. Born (2005) sets music studies a challenge, that "If we accept that the patterns of meaning projected into music are routinely stabilized, that they can attain some kind of reproduction or closure over the long

term, then it behoves us to ask under what conditions this is so" (p. 14). The pattern of reproducing immanent musicality as belonging to an elite population is an unresolved issue and I hold tight Denzin's (2003) warning that "if only the actors change, and not the social order—then the systemic processes producing the problem remain in place" (p. 46). As an educator I often wonder where to begin in changing social orders other than myself and my students—it is easy to feel this is far too grand an ambition for one teacher in one classroom. But perhaps part of the problem has been not doing enough critical sociology with music, because it is when questions are simultaneously asked *in, on, about*, as well as *through* music that understandings may have their fullest resonance.

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