

## **11 Unfinished business and unintended consequences: A conversation about teaching music in New Zealand Secondary schools**

Vicki Thorpe, Graham McPhail, Stuart Wise with Mary Horner, Jeni Little, Katie Macfarlane, Roger Powdrell, Tracy Rohan, Matt Stenbo, Andrew Stopps and Lynne Wenden.

*The blend of our New Zealand cultures – Māori, Pasifika, and Western European - this is a beautiful picture of what might be when we get our education processes right* (Roger Powdrell, Head of Music, St Patrick's College, Wellington).

In this volume we have presented ten perspectives reflecting a secondary school educational system that espouses a student-centred ethos, and yet paradoxically functions within a neoliberal political environment of increasing educational performativity. We have also explored the abiding tension between the requirement that music teachers work within national curriculum and assessment structures while meeting the complex needs of learners with multiple musical preferences from diverse backgrounds and cultures. In this chapter we look back at some key ideas and consider 'unfinished business' and unintended consequences of New Zealand's curricular reforms through a conversation with six practicing secondary school teachers and two of our authors, Tracy Rohan and Lynne Wenden.

Graham McPhail: I'm going start with two main ideas arising from our discussions about some of the issues raised in the book. The first is about what Matt Stenbo has suggested should underpin a music programme at secondary school, and how this has impacted on his curriculum choices as a Head of Department. Matt made the comment that 'the real educational benefit of learning music comes from reading and playing music, not so much from analysis. So this potentially will benefit students far more than a conventional course design'. Performance has certainly taken on the most prominent role in the New Zealand curriculum as the survey in Chapter 9 shows. However, later on in our conversation, in relation to Chapter 3, he also suggested that analytical and theoretical skills are important as well. Matt, how might these two apparently contradictory ideas come into some sort of balance?

**Matt Stenbo:** At Avondale College, our department philosophy is that everything we study in music needs to be related to performance. Students' compositions must be written so that they can be performed. Study of composers and artists will help us to better understand what they were trying to express and therefore how we can better perform their work. Music theory will help us better understand how to read or write music that will enable us to better interpret written music. Aural skills will directly contribute to our performance. But the biggest benefit of learning music comes from preparation for, and execution of, performance.

**Graham:** So dimensions of musical learning such as history and 'theory' are all developed to enrich performing?

**Matt:** Yes, and it relates to our role in providing a balanced musical education for our students based on their individual needs. We need to teach music theory, aural skills, and music history to help frame our performance.

**Graham:** But what about those students who don't want to perform, those who may be more interested in composing or musicology-type knowledge. Where does that leave them?

**Matt:** These students need a slightly different approach. There is definitely a place for musicians to grow with strengths in composition or musicology, but we make sure they have an understanding of the performance implications of their work. So encouraging them to take part in musical performance will be a big part of their programme with us, but also linking them with performers, making sure their compositions are performed live and linking up with preparation and performance of works they have written or studied.

**Graham:** Yes, I think *how* we do it, a pedagogical question, is very important and often teachers confuse it with *what* we should teach, a content question. Poor old 'theory' (!) can still be included, but carefully and cleverly embedded in the development of composing for example. Analysis could grow out of performing as you suggest. In other words, our curriculum design could take a much more holistic approach derived from some core concepts we know musicians need to develop.

**Graham:** Jeni, you also touched on another important challenge for music teachers.

**Jeni Little:** Yes, we have to address what we are preparing our students for. Previous course and curriculum design supported students heading to university to do a degree and didn't really provide for students heading into vocational pathways. It is now far more likely that senior students taking music will head in an industry direction and thus their learning in school must give time to prepare them for those potential pathways too.

**Graham:** Do you see the knowledge the students need for these different pathways as essentially different?

**Jeni:** I think that some musical knowledge is quite specific to genre/function but the basic concepts and musical understanding are true across all pathways. I think one of the biggest challenges faced is having well-balanced, experienced teachers who feel confident teaching analysis and harmony, as well as recording and contemporary song writing. We each have our own natural place of comfort in our musical worlds and have been impacted by our own musical education, but it is possible for anyone to advance their knowledge beyond their own knowledge 'fences'. I often find on *musicnet* (the New Zealand Ministry of Education teacher on-line forum) – we all jump into 'patch protection' depending on our comfort zones and how we have oriented our departmental 'flavour'. For example, at Green Bay High School where I am Head of Music, we are seen as a school of rock, and yet I have more classical pianists than ever who are still having their specific learning needs met in class. It is also about 'bums on seats'. We need to be able to cater for wide student interests. In the current climate of 'STEM is the way' and the total focus of the Minister and Ministry of Education on measuring through testing (therefore subjects where things can be measured less easily are seen as less valid) – there are many reasons why parental confidence in taking music (the Arts) as a subject is low. I believe that in the future the most important skills employers will seek are creative thinking and problem solving which are all higher learning skills found naturally in music and the arts (see Chapter 3).

**Vicki Thorpe:** Jeni, you have identified one of the biggest challenges for secondary school educators in the 21st century. Many of us find it ironic that some curriculum subjects, including Music, are sidelined in favour of STEM by neoliberal policy makers who seem to believe that New Zealand school education's primary purpose is to contribute to the nation's economy. Meanwhile that nation's secondary music teachers continue to foster higher-order abilities such as problem solving and creative thinking! Powerful knowledge indeed. A third important idea

running through this book has been the role of conceptual thinking in developing powerful knowledge for our students. Andrew, I know that you have engaged in a lot of conceptual modelling in your teaching. What do you think?

**Andrew Stopps:** Teaching conceptually has underpinned my pedagogical approach for a long time. I have found that thinking about music works in terms of ‘back engineering’ (see Chapter 7) has really helped students to know what to listen for, supporting their listening skills in any style or genre of music. It is not only listening to sound, but deeply thinking about the music, so it is really flexible. That creativity model of yours, Vicki, has had a major impact on my teaching lately. It has been very helpful for the students, and for me. I’ve found that it gives my students permission to experiment, and to almost feel like they are off-task, a bit naughty, even though they’re not! Thinking in that way gives them permission to experiment, make mistakes, take risks, and think outside the box. I believe that these things are also important in music performance and so transferred the concepts of the model into that part of the curriculum too. This means that my students feel ‘allowed’ to experiment with their playing and not worry if it is not perfect right away. When giving feedback I can say to my students: ‘You are in the messy phase of your learning of this piece, or your instrument, at this point.’, thereby reassuring them that they will move on to a more refined, polished stage later. In the creative aspects of learning music it is so important that students have permission to be ... well ... free. That ‘messy’ phase is probably the most important part, and to know about it is what I call ‘powerful knowledge’.

**Mary Horner:** I’ve just become acquainted with the creativity model and it reminds me of the intricacies involved in teaching composing. I find that teaching composition where numerous musical conventions, genres, and materials are presented and valued by my students is regularly a pleasure for me. I’m finding that NCEA group composing encourages authentic collaboration between student composers who are often working together anyway, particularly Māori or Pasifika students. It is therefore responsive and ultimately fair for them and me to have it available as part of the qualification. With my MENZA ((Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa) hat on, I think that is likely that on-going professional development is going to be needed for music teachers to realise the potential of this model. The problem is that these opportunities are so limited by budget constraints and our hectic schedules. Even so, if more teachers knew about this model and incorporated its concepts into their teaching then it would, in my opinion, increase the likelihood of greater recognition of creativity in music curriculum.

**Vicki:** Your point about professional development is important one, Mary. I recently conducted a short research project with two of my Master of Teaching and Learning students, Hannah Gilmour and Kathy Walton-Roy. They trialled the model in their junior music classes (see Thorpe, Gilmour & Walton-Roy in press). While both advanced the model in new and effective ways, we also acknowledged that neither student teacher possessed well-developed and mature composition pedagogy at this point in their professional learning. We noted some missed opportunities for Hannah and Kathy's students to engage in deep, powerful learning through metacognitive engagement in compositional concepts. It would have been reassuring to know that these two young teachers subsequently had access to research-led professional development *related specifically to the discipline of music* rather than the largely generic support available from the Ministry of Education. Sadly, other than the largely volunteer-led work of MENZA, this is currently not the case for New Zealand secondary music teachers' professional development.

**Graham:** Now I'd like to consider is one of the unintended consequences of our curriculum reforms. One recurring issue in our book has been that, because teachers and students have so much choice in our secondary school education system, knowledge has become compartmentalised and commodified. The real danger is that students might view knowledge only as being 'instrumental' in getting them their qualification and not value it for its own sake.

**Andrew:** I agree. The battle I have when teaching composing is that the moment you start to focus on the NCEA credits then creativity just becomes an exercise and not an artistic thing at all. There is a risk then that what the student produces isn't authentic as a piece of music because it is a short answer to a short question that has no meaning. Recently when I was giving some Year 11 students feedback on their first compositions I told them, 'to some of you, this task seems to be just another internal NCEA assessment but it's not. You are creating art that I would hope you would want other people to listen to'. This was because some of them were focused on getting NCEA credits as their primary outcome. I'm fighting that battle all the time.

**Graham:** As Andrew suggests, often students are not connecting with learning for its own sake. We might expect the arts and music to escape this sort of commodification, but it is pervasive now in the school and university systems, and in society as a whole. It is also a real

challenge for music as a subject to fulfil the needs of students who want to go further with their studies, and those who want to pursue music as ‘amateurs’, in the best sense of the word.

**Matt:** While we do need to prepare some students for tertiary level study in any area of music, we also have a responsibility to prepare all our students to be able to appreciate music and use it to enrich their lives. I think catering for the students who are undecided about choosing to study music is perhaps the most difficult part of our job. I always suggest to my students that they keep their options open, even if at the beginning of their Year 10 Music course they say they have no intention of taking Music at senior secondary level or beyond. It makes sense to keep this option open to then through continuing to improve their technical ability on their instrument. I think some schools may have a choice of separating students into different classes based on this but I see this as a luxury that isn’t sustainable in most schools. Also, if students get in the wrong ‘stream’ or change their objectives part-way through the year it may lead to unintentional dead-ends.

**Lynne Wenden:** In my chapter I deal with just that scenario, Matt. Even if schools were to have the luxury of different classes based on potential pathways, the knowledge components need to be embedded everywhere in order that students have access to them when they need them. I also believe that NCEA structures allow students like Ata, who have not been effectively prepared to further their music study at tertiary level, to fail.

**Roger:** In this respect it is interesting to consider your suggestion, Lynne and Graham, that too much priority can be given to wider participation and student choice over acquiring specific knowledge. There are obvious advantages in greater student participation and flexibility. As a Head of Department I make decisions about curriculum content and delivery. My goal is to provide engaging and relevant programmes that also prepare the students to proceed to advanced study should they desire it. As Matt has said, some school Music Departments have two courses for senior music – one academic and one more practical – which works well in schools with bigger rolls and extra teaching spaces. Whatever the classroom situation though, it is important to think about each student individually, discuss their goals and support them to achieve them. And of course, university is not the only tertiary study option.

**Lynne:** As I see it, a dilemma facing secondary music educators is that, because relatively low numbers can threaten the existence of music classes in some secondary schools, these two

groups are often taught together. Supporting the goals of each is not easy. There are further difficulties for teachers when students like Ata change their objectives or move between these two groups near the end of their secondary schooling.

**Tracy Rohan:** It's also about moving between worlds. Music is such a powerful tool for the development of identities, and music education can be a key process for shaping social values and attitudes. Maxine Greene (1995) has spoken of the power of the arts to develop social imagination. Through artistic experience people can gain a sense of what it means to be the 'other', developing empathy and understanding. For this to be possible, however, we need to be open to the 'differencing' (Mansfield 2002) or 'decolonising' of music education as Bradley (2006) describes with reference to the ongoing privileging of Western ways of knowing.

**Katie Macfarlane:** Yet, despite the exciting and student-centred way music programmes some of us have developed since the inception of NCEA, our practice is still dominated by the examination board and Western European models of both pedagogy and assessment. Most of us have worked hard to ensure our students are exposed to a wide variety of musical genres and experiences to develop students' musicianship in a holistic way. Perhaps a way forward for music could instead be found in a re-imagined pedagogy – the 'how' of our approach to music education. This is particularly true for musical literacy. Often in New Zealand secondary schools this becomes the main focus of junior programmes as we are faced with the challenge of the vast majority of our students having not had access to the language of music in primary school. This means that practical, written, and aural literacies are sometimes taught 'theoretically' to ensure students are ready for, and have access to, the notation demands of NCEA Level One. Just imagine if the pedagogical framework was redeveloped around what Sarath, Myers and Campbell (2017) describe as the 'pan-human' aspects of music such as improvisation and creativity! I dream of a creativity-centred curriculum with improvisation and composition placed at the heart of a culturally responsive music programme that recognises all students' cultures.

**Tracy:** I think we still have a long way to go yet to develop truly culturally responsive practice in music education. It is great when music education is an opportunity for students to learn about the many ways that music is created, learned, and understood, focusing less on 'product' and more on 'process'. In terms of cultural response and social justice, Jorgenson (2003) describes music education as having both the potential and the responsibility to be a powerful

agent of change and that such change is needed to create a fairer, more inclusive, more caring society. Similarly, Spruce writes of the ‘hegemony of musical theory’ (1999, p. 76) where the high status given to music reading becomes a ‘tool for social delineation’ (p. 77). This can result in the devaluing of music that is learned and communicated through aural–oral means.

**Graham:** As Elizabeth, Alexis, and I argue in Chapter 5, we need to value both but also recognise what sort of knowledge is most powerful in terms of what possibilities it opens up for students in terms of their intellectual development – abstract thinking. We believe that this is a universal human phenomenon that goes beyond culture.

**Jeni:** But I think we still need to address cultural knowledge as part of this musical development. In my first teaching job I was able to apply the cultural understanding that I gained after being immersed in the Cook Island culture to my predominantly Polynesian students. I attended *Polyfest*<sup>1</sup> rehearsals and tried to make a cultural connection with those students. I had the advantage of growing up in a diverse family so my Pasifika ‘comfort levels’ were already strong. To build good relationships and strong rapport with a diverse range of student cultures requires one-to-one interaction and knowledge of how that individual identifies themselves. School records might tell us one thing about ethnicity – but the student might have an entirely different self-view. I think that the key is to learn as much about this as you can directly from the person in front of you.

**Graham:** As Matt has suggested, teachers are increasingly aware of the need to integrate ‘theory’ so its ‘use’ is made meaningful for students. Let’s remember that some students enjoy learning music theory for its own sake as well!

**Roger:** Students like Ata need theoretical and musical analysis skills to prepare them adequately for university. In reality, the base-line skills students need for tertiary study are not learned quickly in one year as happened when Ata essentially changed her learning objectives. Learning should ideally have been taking place over many years – if the curriculum was being taught and delivered effectively. Another essential requirement in this respect is the development of literacy skills. Many schools have recognised the need for this and are addressing it.

**Lynne:** Universities are also starting to require, for example, English literacy credits from specific English Standards as prerequisites. In Ata's case it is unfortunate that more thought was not put into her preparation. Ideally, she should have had another year to prepare for university. To me it's disturbing that anyone is able or indeed encouraged to 'smash' through different level NCEA Standards the way she did.

**Roger:** I can see how it is perhaps tempting to allow students to opt out of doing the NCEA assessments that require the more theoretical skills. Students typically enjoy performance more than academic learning, which often seems less relevant to them. Some choose assessments where they know that they can get their 'Excellences' or where they are more confident, in other words, doing what they enjoy. In defence of students though, we give them a lot of assessments – who can blame them if they become very strategic in what they give their time and effort to? It is easy to understand their logic. But it is possible to make the transition to tertiary study smoother by identifying these students early and helping them to be adequately prepared; particularly those students like Ata who have gaps in their knowledge that could seriously affect their transition. The NCEA environment can sometimes make this challenging, but it is possible to work through these difficulties. The NCEA does tend to compartmentalise learning and assessment, but New Zealand secondary teachers have a choice about what and how they teach. I certainly think that it is possible to dovetail the NCEA Music assessments and teach in a holistic way. For example, when listening to a piece of music, students could focus on several things: analysis, composition techniques, musical interpretation, social and historical background, aural and transcription skills – all of which are relevant when they work on the various individual NCEA standards. Yes, I personally find it a challenge and it makes further demands on me when I'm already stretched with heavy workloads, but I believe it is possible for students to be taught in a way that enables holistic learning across different forms of musical skills and knowledge. The NCEA and our curriculum, paradoxically, make that possible.

**Matt:** Yes that's what I do, too Roger. I prepare the students before they get to Year 11 and NCEA Music too. For example, in the junior years, Year 10, we study musical theatre and contemporary New Zealand artists. We study the work of New Zealand singer-songwriter Brooke Fraser, her background and cultural influences, and then move on to a song that we investigate individual elements of like harmony, melody, texture, form, instrumentation. We also play the song (and maybe another from her or another artist depending on the class's

ability) and relate it to the score reading and aural skills the students are going to need the following year for their external exams. In relation to the music analysis we have studied *Hairspray*. We start off with the history of musical theatre and its underlying social themes. I have found that these themes really grab the students' interest, especially when we explore some modern examples of social issues like segregation. We connect these ideas to the instruments used, solo/duo/chorus forms, and then investigate the musical elements of a couple of significant songs. The students have theory workbooks that go alongside the delivery of all of their study units, ensuring that the kinds of learning the students will need for the NCEA external exams, such as score reading and aural, are embedded in everything they do. The choice of content engages the students who may not be interested in going on to more serious music study too. While we need to prepare some students for tertiary level study in any area of music I believe that we should prepare all our students to be able to appreciate music and use it to enrich their lives.

**Roger:** Thinking back to the challenges we face preparing our students for tertiary study (or not!), I don't have a thorough knowledge of the courses and assessment methods used at New Zealand universities. It would be useful for music teachers like myself to have better communication lines with tertiary music institutions and hear directly from them about what we could do better to prepare students for tertiary study. However, tertiary institutions should, in my view, attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the knowledge and skills of their first-year students. As we have seen in Lynne's chapter, 'Grade 5 theory' and performance skills are not always enough to ensure a smooth transition. Some means of identifying students' strengths and weaknesses prior to beginning study would provide the information universities need for developing solutions.

**Tracy:** I think Ata's situation gets at the heart of culturally responsive practice where Ata's cultural knowledge and identity should be viewed as a strength and resource to be nurtured and celebrated. It is a shame that the potential of NCEA wasn't realised in Ata's case to prepare her for university and it is a shame that the resources of the university didn't wrap around Ata to remove barriers to her success. Looking at the wider picture though, I am grateful for the way that our secondary teachers work to provide personalised, flexible pathways in response to the diverse needs and aspirations of our young people, and of the curriculum and assessment structures that enable this to happen.

**Roger:** The kind of initiative that is working well is what Victoria University's New Zealand School of Music is doing in their 'Young Musician's Programme'. This programme provides excellent preparation for tertiary study for secondary music students. Several of my students have participated in this and eventually gone on to study music at tertiary level. Another great organisation in Wellington is 'Music Futures' which supports young people by way of grants and workshops. These kinds of initiatives help with the transition to tertiary study. But, it seems to me that there is the possibility for more flexibility in course design and assessment at university, providing greater opportunity to develop students' individual strengths. Are students sometimes made to jump through some unnecessary hoops? Can there not be a system that is flexible enough to recognise students' unique talents and cultural background that allows them to follow paths that fulfil their potential while still demonstrating high-level learning? This is the pathway that schools deliberately pursue under NCEA, but universities seem to demand a particular approach in order to study music and is perhaps less flexible in terms of cultural needs.

**Lynne:** While *Ata* was nurtured and cared for very well by the people she was working with directly at university I agree with you, Tracy, that the systemic restrictions to creating a positive learning environment in secondary schools apply to universities too. As Graham said, 'commodification is pervasive in schools and universities'. *Ata* needed to be in a much more culturally responsive educational environment a lot earlier in her schooling

**Roger:** One of the students I taught at my school had an almost identical experience to *Ata*. He was a talented young Cook Island Māori singer, he gained a place in the New Zealand Secondary Students' Choir and eventually went on to study singing at university. Like *Ata*, he worked through Grade 5 theory in his final year at school. He also struggled with the academic challenges of university, but he managed to make it through his degree albeit with some very generous sponsors and mentors supporting him. Both *Ata* and the young man I taught were inspired by their experience in that choir. It opened them both to a whole new world of music. I can identify with their experience. For me, singing in the New Zealand Youth Choir was one of the most valuable educational experiences I had in my university years. Many of the people I sang with went on to do great things with music – some to sing on opera stages around the world and many to become teachers who have had significant influence in schools as music educators and choir directors. This experience could have been a springboard to launch *Ata* into something great. Imagine her on an opera stage, or in a South Auckland school as a music

teacher inspiring students. The ‘Atas’ of this world need to be cherished. It seems to me that choirs like the New Zealand Secondary Choir and the New Zealand Youth Choir are examples of what is possible in music education in Aotearoa New Zealand. These choirs are internationally acclaimed. They have excellent directors, but one their great strengths and a key to the unique and outstanding choral sound is the blend of our NZ cultures – Māori, Pasifika, and Western European. This is a beautiful picture of what might be when we get our education processes right.

**Lynne:** If students have a degree in music then there are certain expectations about the broad range of skills and fundamental knowledge that they have acquired on the way through. As others have noted here, university study isn’t the only option available to students, there is definitely room for universities to consider the difficulties some students face, particularly in their first year. A four-year music degree would help in this respect. I do regret the fact that no New Zealand conservatoire currently offers culturally responsive pathways for students who want to study Western European classical music but whose secondary schooling hasn’t prepared them sufficiently to do so.

### **Where to next? Unfinished business**

**Vicki:** In the final sections of the book we look to the future, asking “What are the biggest challenges facing New Zealand secondary music teachers right now?”

**Mary:** One challenge I’m really excited about is the recent move in some secondary schools to integrate music curriculum with other subjects. For example at my school next year, we are offering a new NCEA pathway called *Creative Technologies*. It will incorporate students’ choices of NCEA achievement standards from Dance, Drama, Music, Design, Media Studies, and Performing Arts Technologies, across all three NCEA levels. Some students will choose just one or two Arts achievement standards in their programmes of study. However, they will be working alongside ‘specialist’ students who have opted for more Music, Dance or Drama study, providing opportunities for greater breadth and depth of learning in their chosen subject. As the sole music teacher in my school I’m also really looking forward to collaborating with my colleagues in other curriculum areas when we implement this next year.

**Vicki:** I've noticed recently that, like your school Mary, many New Zealand secondary schools are in the process of re-designing their course structures in this way. It is made possible by very flexible curriculum and NCEA assessment structures. A whole new world of opportunities for deep, connected learning are opening up for us. Exciting times indeed, although in this book many of us have expressed the view that any study of music must be thoroughly grounded in discipline and style-specific conceptual knowledge. Programmes of this nature will require careful, thoughtful and informed planning on the part of everyone involved.

**Andrew:** I believe the biggest challenge right now is advocating for the subject and getting people to understand just how important music education is for everyone. Senior school 'Music' can sometimes be viewed as a very specialist subject for 'talented students' only, almost an elitist subject, or at the other end of the scale as a 'bludge' subject where you can just cruise along to music and jam and have a good time and pick up a few easy NCEA credits. Along with this I think technology is going to be a big challenge. I really struggle to meet to needs of students to create music digitally it is so expensive and not all students have the same access to hardware, WiFi and software, and the Cloud. It becomes an equity issue that is just going to get worse. The problem for music is that we have all this new stuff and there is more and more every day. There is a real tension between the need to notate in the traditional sense and yet make the most of the huge music opportunities available now and in the future. When we teach conventional notation we are engaging with 300 year-old technology while trying to make it relatable to 21<sup>st</sup> century music making. That is why I always teach hand written notation before digital notation because I view learning music literacy the same as learning any language. You would never dream of teaching only typing to students learning to read and write. For me, the same applies to music.

**Stuart Wise:** For many students, the software and what it allows them to do, becomes a source of creativity in itself. The pre-recorded loops, which come packaged as part of a sequencer, provide them with instruments and/or rhythm patterns that they cannot play. Findings from my research show that many students are able to manipulate these loops, modify them if they want, combine them with different sounds, sample sounds to create new loops and combine them in a multitude of different ways very much in keeping with the new forms of creativity in the digital domain. Increasingly students coming to class possessing a high level of digital literacy and are able to manipulate sounds quickly and easily. They enjoy working in the digital

environment and know how to create effective pieces using the software available to them. These new forms of composition may be challenging in terms of assessment because there's a danger that they may be considered either not original or as some form of plagiarism. We might need to reassess our assumptions about originality and borrowing, as Crow (2006) suggests. The same might be said for NZQA when it comes to assessing these ideas summatively. It may be that there is a new role for us to guide our students and find new approaches (Vakeva 2010). We need to work as *enablers* who accept that the creative possibilities of such technologies in the hope there is equitable access to them. As many of us in this book have observed, we find ourselves in culturally complex classrooms where digital music tools can help us to cross boundaries within the context of *authentic* musical expression. I agree with Leong (2011) when he suggests that we should support learning strategies and activities that value individualised and group learning. For example, we need to utilise gaming and 3D technology and immersive environments that are based on open platforms, contents and channels.

**Matt:** That's a lot to become familiar with when you are already very, very busy! I think the biggest challenge for New Zealand secondary school music teachers is that we are required to have such a vast range of skills. Not only administrative (like all other teachers), but a huge range of classroom knowledge from varied music backgrounds, and then on top of that we need co-curricular skills. I find that filling three goals in on an annual staff appraisal doesn't scratch the surface of what I am working on in any given year! The demands on our professional knowledge and skills seem much higher than most other subjects.

**Jeni:** It is a major workload issue to keep up with the pace of change and sometimes it feels overwhelming. I think it boils down to not trying to upskill across all areas at once, but to set one primary learning challenge each year and to give it as much time as you can allow. For myself, I am naturally curious and have always been an early adopter of technology and usually have set a goal of something I want to produce or make, and I learn what I need as I go to complete the task (project-based learning). I also am happy for students to teach me particularly if they know more than I do, which happens frequently with software and apps. A lot of my learning happens via this mechanism.

**Stuart:** The role of the teacher in a digital world, where much of the software encourages exploration and experimentation by individuals, continues to be very challenging. We know that students coming into secondary schools now are more technologically aware and digitally

literate than perhaps those from five years ago, and many may come from Modern Learning Environments or Flexible Learning Spaces that are beginning to emerge in new schools. These students are used to working by themselves, have had considerable experience working with a range of digital technologies across a range of subjects and have the ability to navigate intuitively when exploring software, including through a range of drop down menus, which provide access to an ever-increasing range of features. From classroom observations, I have seen evidence that many of these students regularly move far more quickly through the features and functions of the software they are using than their teachers. This can be very challenging for teachers and as Jeni and Matt have said, keeping up with the latest software and apps can prove to be a major workload issue.

**Matt:** In the future I think the secondary music teacher's role will continue to change, with the increasing performativity pushing more students into core subjects. Music teachers will need to be even more flexible to maintain their departments with declining numbers and focus may fall more on music outside of the classroom. I agree with Andrew and Stuart that the integration of digital technology into the music classroom will pose problems for many existing teachers, especially those with strengths mainly in performance who may struggle with the changing needs of the larger body of students. Regardless of all the research already done and currently being undertaken on the neural and cognitive benefits of learning an instrument from a young age, I do not believe that parents of high-achieving children will be pushing them into music classes, they will do it outside class time. At Avondale College we have predominantly Pasifika students in our classes and predominantly Asian students in our co-curricular groups. I think this split will increase. The future music teacher will therefore need an even wider range of skills and the ability to cater to different groups of students in classes and co-curricular programmes.

**Stuart:** Throughout this volume various authors have shown how music education in New Zealand secondary schools is becoming increasingly complex. It is a challenge for secondary school music teachers to 'walk in both worlds': of formal and informal music learning, of traditional Western European Art musics and contemporary popular forms. The first of these worlds is that of the traditional, formal music educator who, historically, has a qualification grounded in knowledge and understanding of score analysis, music theory, music history, and harmony. Despite a consistently progressive movement in secondary school education, the external Achievement Standards for NCEA music assess this knowledge, in a national

environment where ‘examinations’ are generally more highly valued by employers, parents, and the school community (Hipkins, Johnston & Sheehan 2016). While the importance of the Western canon cannot be denied, Western art music and its performance and academic traditions comprise only one channel of a braided river of musical styles available to a modern musician. The second world is that of the contemporary/popular music where high levels of performance skills are developed through listening to recordings, working with other musicians, and learning from them or by finding accessible instruction on the internet. Contemporary/popular music knowledge does intersect with Western art music but may require quite different pedagogies on the part of the teacher. In this world, creativity and originality may take new forms, that of the mash-up or the re-mix for example where new and inventive use is made of existing material. We are at a crossroads and it is clearly time to reconsider the position of Western art music as the dominant paradigm within music education.

**Vicki:** It is also important to differentiate between curriculum and assessment systems. I do not believe that the New Zealand curriculum for ‘Music-SoundArts’ privileges Western art music, or other artistic paradigms. There is a great deal of choice available to New Zealand secondary school teachers, and Western Art music need not dominate. In fact I’ve been in some music departments where it is almost non-existent and popular music is the dominant discourse. The structures that privilege Western art knowledge over other kinds of musical knowledge (Spruce’s ‘hegemony of musical theory’ 1999, p. 76) are those of the NCEA Music external assessments. I suspect that music theory and note-reading knowledge and skills are assessed through external, written exams principally because they are written forms that align with the historical model of examinations. Real-time aural perception exams, harmonic analysis, essay writing, and score analysis suit the national examination system and, unlike music performance and composing, are relatively low cost to administer. At the same time, we acknowledge that these are powerful, useful things for *all* musicians to know and be able to do. The enduring problem for us as music educators is when hegemonic forms are privileged at the expense of other valid ways of knowing, and musicking. However, as Mary mentioned earlier, this does not necessarily have to be the case because some schools are beginning to utilise the flexibility of the NCEA to design programmes that more readily meet their students’ needs.

**Graham:** Music is such a ‘big’ subject with unique challenges. It is so open to the wider world of social change and personal preference in a way that most other subjects are not. The issues facing school music teachers are complex and multi-layered because they converge with

students' tastes and identities, and with academic disciplines, with cultural knowledge, the official curriculum and assessment structures, school structures, the list is endless! As is evidenced time and again in this book, the educational environment is a dynamic one where teachers are required to be nimble, responsive, and very well informed. We have all addressed, in various ways, the problem of how we might teach music in a more holistic and artistic way, while avoiding fragmentation and over-assessment.

## **Conclusion**

The initial impetus for writing this book arose from a conversation between the editors about how secondary school music teaching in New Zealand might differ from that of other countries, and what were its particular strengths. Throughout this volume we have asked 'What really counts as curriculum content and how are we to teach it?'; 'How do we teach "what counts" in a way that is responsive to the needs of our students without it becoming so localised it cuts off access to knowledge they cannot find by themselves?'

We've acknowledged that New Zealand secondary schools are places where we strive to guide our students towards ever-greater conceptual and embodied musical understanding within flexible, 'high-trust' curriculum and secondary school assessment structures. We also acknowledge that we continue to struggle to meet the musical learning, music-making and cultural needs of increasingly diverse students where New Zealand Aotearoa's status as a bi-cultural nation challenges us to honour the rights of Māori students as *tangata whenua*, the indigenous people of the land.

Looking ahead we must acknowledge the challenges music educators will continue to face in an increasingly contested curriculum. Beginning music educators will face even greater pressures as they work to develop their adaptive expertise to meet the needs of stakeholders, principals, communities and an ever increasing level of diversity in the student population, many of whom may have had little or no prior formal music education. They will be required to manage constant change amid the everyday "churn" of life in a school, whilst continuing to promote all the wonderful, exciting, inspiring and rewarding opportunities for lifelong engagement that teaching music offers to everyone.

John Drummond observed in the preface that music is 'an activity that takes many different forms and always has a social context' and that music learning happens through 'thoughtful

doing' (p ...). This book represents 'thoughtful doing' from multiple secondary school contexts and in multiple forms and as such, we hope that our work might inform music education research, music teacher education, and music curriculum and assessment design in other countries. We sincerely thank the many teachers and students whose work is at the heart of this book and remember the famous Māori proverb:

Hutia te rito o te harakeke  
Kei whea te kōmako e kō?  
Kī mai ki ahau;  
He aha te mea nui o te Ao?  
Māku e kī atu  
he tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata

If the heart of the flax bush was removed,  
Where would the bellbird sing?  
If I were asked  
What is the most important thing in the world?  
I would say  
It is people, it is people, it is people.

<Biographies of the contributing teachers: (Insert somewhere near the beginning of the chapter)>

*Mary Horner is a secondary Music teacher in Lower Hutt, New Zealand and holds a music degree in Piano Accompaniment (University of Adelaide, Australia). She is currently enjoying working with teachers across the Arts curriculum in multi-media productions, some of which are devised and composed by students. She is a former national board member of MENZA (Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa), New Zealand's school music teacher advocacy and professional development organisation.*

*Jeni Little is Head Of Music at Green Bay High School in Auckland and describes herself a 'long tooth' teacher who has had her 'feet in the classroom' for 29 years. She has made a conscious decision to be a classroom music teacher and is committed to 21st century pedagogies and lifelong learning. She is passionate about traditional Polynesian music, NZ composition and song writing, and the positive place of community music making in our society.*

*Katie Macfarlane is an experienced secondary school educator, both in the classroom and as a mentor, head of department and professional development facilitator. She*

*holds a BMus(Hons) in Performance Flute and a Masters in Education. Her recent masters research explored the development of a bi-cultural pedagogy for music education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A leading choral director, Katie has worked with choirs such as the NZ Secondary Students Choir, Wellington Youth Choir and the Wellington College Chorale. She is the Deputy Principal of St Patrick's College Silverstream, Wellington*

*Roger Powdrell is Head of Music at St Patrick's College, Kilbirnie, Wellington. He studied at Canterbury University, majoring in vocal performance. Roger has directed numerous award-winning vocal groups, including barbershop quartets and choirs, including St Patrick's College's Con Anima, the recipient of the New Zealand Choral Federation's Platinum Award for best New Zealand secondary school choir.*

*Matt Stenbo is the Director of Music at Avondale College in Auckland. He is also an NZMEB examiner and the Musical Director of the West City Youth Concert Band. He approaches music teaching with the belief that performance underpins all music education in some way.*

*Andrew Stopps (BMusEd) is Head of Music at St Patrick's College, Silverstream, Wellington. He has published numerous music workbooks, arrangements and teacher resources and original compositions for Concert Band and Orchestra. He is a national board member of MENZA and founded the Wellington Band and Orchestra Festival and the Association of Band and Orchestra Directors Aotearoa. He has taught in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Canada.*

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<sup>i</sup> Established in 1976, *Polyfest* is the largest Polynesian festival in the world. Schools from the Auckland region perform annually on five stages – Māori, Cook Islands, Niuean, Samoan and Tongan.