

The 21st Century Conservatorium: Developing a Theory of Repertoire

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Introduction

Conservatoria and tertiary music training institutions, like many arts training institutions, are faced with issues such as a competitive global market, demographic change, cultural and aesthetic diversity and regional identity. In an environment of change and funding challenges, this talk identifies the:

- Development of a pedagogy and repertoire that embraces musical traditions, diversity and cultures
- Teaching of necessary skills for professional training and sustainable career paths in the music industry
- Utilisation of contemporary modes of delivery for education and the promotion of identity
- Delivery of a curriculum that empowers the music graduate

The Music Industry

Before talking in detail about music, pedagogy and courses, I will discuss the impact that government higher education funding has had on tertiary education in Australia

In 1988, the Hawke Labor government introduced the Higher Education Funding Act. This required any institution with less than 2000 students to amalgamate with a larger university partner. Since then, the tertiary music education environment in Australia has been in constant change. Survival is based on music industry relevance and student numbers. There are now courses in industry skills, jazz, world music, music theatre, and music technology. Some institutions have begun to specialise in contemporary popular music such as Brisbane Conservatorium Gold Coast Campus.

Michael Hannon, in his book *Careers in Music*, lists no less than 143 different jobs in music. The job site www.mymusicjob.com shows the diversity of jobs available in the music industry. These include careers in recording, promotion, publishing, venue management, broadcasting and performance.

The screenshot shows the homepage of mymusicjob.com. At the top is a yellow navigation bar with links: HOME, SEARCH JOBS, POLICIES, CONTACT US, RESOURCES, ABOUT US. Below this is a dark blue header with the text "welcome to mymusicjob.com" and "Jobs: 746". The main content area features a grid of ten job categories, each with a representative image and a label: Recording, Publicity/Promotion, Club/Venue Staff, Radio, Musicians, Retail, Graphic/Web Design, Journalism, DJ's, and Photography and more!. Below the grid are two columns. The left column is titled "job seekers" and contains the text: "Join now to: Immediate access to members only job and internship postings. Post your resume with samples of your visual arts, written and audio skills. Sign up for JobMail so we can let you know when new jobs are posted." followed by a yellow "enter" button. The right column is titled "employers" and contains the text: "Post your Music Jobs: Place FREE listings for full-part time, contract jobs, or internship opportunities. Search the list of resumes from local applicants and receive new resumes automatically via email." followed by a yellow "enter" button.

In many ways, freelance musicians and composers belong to the small business sector. Music graduates enter the market selling their skills. These skills can be highly specialised or a blend of various skills. In either case, students must be totally aware of the market niche within which they wish to operate.

As with any new small business venture, it often takes at least five years to be profitable, be it a computer consultant, florist, service provider, etc. For many, in the initial stages of establishing a business, there will be a period of going into debt in order to finance the

operation. The music graduate will similarly take time to identify a market, establish networks, invest in capital infrastructure, get known to potential employers and develop audiences and clients. More often than not, this period will be financed by a range of activities, some musical some not.

The above issues are important to acknowledge, however, with only three years to complete a music degree, how does a conservatorium curriculum prepare graduates to enter the music industry as well as develop the necessary technical skills required of a 21st century musician?

What is a Conservatorium?

There are many historical resonances in the word ‘conservatorium’. Its derivation can be traced back to the following root:

- I. **con-servo** , āvi, ātum,
...to retain, keep something in existence, to hold up, maintain, to preserve,
leave unhurt or safe

Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3D%2310490>
Cited in The Perseus Digital Library <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

In Europe and the US the term ‘conservatory’ or ‘conservatoire’ is used instead of conservatorium. A conservatory is defined as:

1. College or university school of music or a school devoted to other arts such as film (American Film Institute Conservatory)
2. a conservatoire, large greenhouse where plants are cultivated

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatory>

Both these definitions imply a culture in which activities flourish, grow and are maintained.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica states that the term and institution ‘conservatorium’ derives from:

“...the Italian *conservatorio*, which in the Renaissance period and earlier denoted a type of orphanage ...The foundlings (*conservati*) were given musical instruction at state expense;...

<http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9025945>

The Britannica goes on to say:

The *conservatori* were thus the first secular institutions equipped for training in practical music.

<http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9025945>

This training was for the choirs attached to churches and shows that a conservatorium was an industry provider.

We can amalgamate the various meanings of the word ‘conservatorium’ to embrace preservation and cultivation. *Preservation* suggests the process of recovery such as the researching of traditional or stylistic performance techniques, while *cultivation* suggests the exploration of new contemporary performance practices, compositions or new relationships with audiences. In the light of the above discussion, here is an updated interpretation of the term conservatorium:

Conservatorium: a hot house of activities associated with musical recovery and discovery and linked to the music industry and various communities.

Towards a Theory of Repertoire

So how do we do foster musical discovery and recovery? One strategy is in the development of a *theory of repertoire*. The word *repertoire* comes from the Latin *repertorium* meaning ‘inventory’ or ‘catalogue’.

rēpertōriūm , ii, n. [reperio] ,

I. *an inventory, catalogue, repertory* (post-class.)

Cited in The Perseus Digital Library <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

Repertoire is associated with the catalogue of works that ensembles and performers have under their ‘belts’. In this sense, repertoire defines specialisation and identity. This could be defined by a period, style, composer’s output, collection of diverse works, or even on an institutional level such as a conservatorium’s curriculum offerings. I call this repertoire on the **macro level**.

On the **micro level**, repertoire as an inventory refers to the stock of techniques and ideas present in any single musical work. A composition may consist of gestures such as fast passages, leaps, pitch slides, harmonic and rhythmic formulae, etc: all contributing to the list that the composer or musician wants us to hear.

The collection of sounds within any work means that in order to play that work successfully, the musician must be aware of the references embedded in each gesture. For example, a trill in a piano solo is only meaningful if the player understands the expressive content behind that trill and its stylistic context. If not, the trill will be ‘flat’, inexpressive, and reduces the meaningfulness of the performance. Therefore, repertoire, be it on the macro or micro level requires the recognition of diverse musical experiences. These experiences can be stylistic, technical or cultural.

Repertoire and Recognition

The root of the word *repertoire*, ‘repertor’, means ‘a discoverer’.

rēpertor , ōris, m.

I. *a discoverer, inventor, deviser, author*

This enables us to explore many nuances. Through a collected musical inventory, we discover new musical experiences or sounds. This is similar to any devised collection of works which we discover, for example, when in a museum or art gallery.

The next series of examples show the role of repertoire on the macro and micro levels in the development of a musicianship. The examples are based on the use of speech rhythms in music. Whenever we speak, we are also speaking a rhythm.

The 16th century French chanson was a popular song form heard all around Paris. It modelled the Parisian declamatory speech style with usually one note for each syllable. Let us listen to an excerpt from Jacques Arcadelt's 16th century chanson.

***Margot labourez les vignes, (Margot sings the vines),
Jacques Arcadelt (1504? – 1568)***

In these songs, the words controlled the musical form. They were often bawdy, sexy, physical, comic. They used sounds from everyday life such as bird calls, trumpets, natural sounds and people sounds. Now let us listen to Ravel's *Nicolette*, from his *Trois Chansons* (1915).

‘Nicolette’, from *Trois Chansons*, Maurice Ravel (1915)

Upon hearing *Nicolette*, one is reminded of the previous 16th century version. The two works, on the macro level, ‘speak’ to each other over the duration of 350 years.

On the micro level of repertoire, Ravel includes the popular French chanson style using one note per syllable as part of his inventory of techniques. Just as the 16th French chanson referred to bawdiness and human utterances, so too does Ravel include bawdy utterances in his inventory. This is the wonderful pitch slide on the word ‘jolie’ (pretty) by the low male voices as if they are licking their lips at the sight of Nicolette.

To perform this piece properly, in other words go beyond the notes, a musician must be able to recognise the references, be they contemporary, popular or historical.

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has written much about this recognition process. To paraphrase and over simplify his work, Ricoeur says that we bring to any situation our own

history. This history interacts with that situation in order to understand it. The result is a deeper understanding of that experience thereby enriching future similar engagements.

A performer has the potential to enrich a performance of *Nicolette*, with an understanding of French declamatory speech patterns, the earlier French Chanson form or vernacular utterances such as the onomatopoeic glissando in the male voices on the word 'jolie'.

Let us now listen to an excerpt from Edith Piaf's song *The beautiful story of love*. Again you will hear the direct relationship to the earlier French chanson style with the use of speech rhythms.

La Belle Histoire d'Amour,
Words by Edith Piaf, Music by Charles Dumont (1960)

On the macro level, these three examples have defined a repertoire based on French declamatory speech rhythms. We have been able to understand the inventory on the micro level of each work by translating the experience from one work to inform the other. As we make these translations, musical knowledge crosses boundaries thereby broadening our understanding.

Now I would like to play two contemporary examples of speech and music representation. They definitely are not French chansons but excellent examples of contemporary speech declamatory style.

***Well may we say....* Robert Davidson (2001)**

Well may we say... by Robert Davidson enables us to identify and experience contemporary patterns in speech intonation and rhythm. The humour in this work is created by our recognition of a particular musical style associated with the speech rhythms and historical context.

The next example is modern a day equivalent to Ravel's *Nicolette* and the 16th century chanson by Jacques Arcadelt.

Testimonial Year, Hilltop Hoods (2007)

Like the previous chansons, the rap song *Testimonial Year* refers and comments to contemporary culture and sounds, using speech rhythms. Just as Arcadelt's *Margot works the vines* informed our listening of *Nicolette*, the experience of both these French Chansons informs our understanding of the rap song. This results with an understanding of the use of music and speech rhythm in all these works be it from the 16th century, early 20th or now.

Repertoire: knowledge recovery, discovery and rejuvenation

The Ravel and the 16th chanson incorporated their contemporary world around them. In being open to the world around us, repertoire helps us understand:

- Where we have come from?
- Who we are?
- Where we might like to be?

Knowledge boundaries are traversed and the repertoire becomes strongly linked to location, community, history and ideas. Our musical identity is continually rejuvenated and invigorated. New knowledge and old knowledge are waiting to be discovered.

The Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, in his wonderful book, *Rabelais and his World*, writes that rejuvenation is essential for growth, and this rejuvenation involves exploring opposites such as mixing high status with low status, the authoritative with the vernacular or the popular with the elite. This produces a thriving discourse. Opposites complement each other in a complex intricate game of quotation, parody, allusion, burrowing, juxtaposition and transformation. A dynamic relationship of renewal is created as everything is repositioned in relation to each other. Nothing is sacred in repertoire's desire to rejuvenate itself.

The above speech rhythm examples show how a tertiary music program can combine traditional, contemporary, popular and non-western music making. It is interesting to note that many conservatoria and tertiary music training institutions in Australia do not engage with contemporary music other than a few isolated examples. Therefore it begs the question: when does a work using popular or contemporary references become part of conservatorium's teaching repertoire? Do we wait 10, 20, 30 years or simply embrace it now and establish an identity that points to the future?

The love for new sonic relationships and the preservation of historical sounds can be summed up with the following. A diverse approach to repertoire enables us to hear:

New Sounds in Old Contexts
Old Sounds in New Contexts
New Sounds in New Contexts
Old Sounds in Old Contexts

In this way, students and staff members discover and recover musical knowledge and experience.

21st Century Musicianship

Musicianship is usually defined as the artistry and skill in performing music. This raises the question: what are musicianship skills? There are traditional skills such as pitch and temporal differentiation, analytical and pattern recognition skills and physiological skills such as muscle control and coordination. However there are other skills and many of these have been influenced by technology.

Technology has had a huge impact on modern music making, from creation to offering new performance outlets. For many musicians, a music performance will be linked to performing in front of a microphone either in an amplified context, or in the recording studio.

Akin to this is the need for musicians to make and distribute their own recordings as a CD or on-line. Apart from having a busy freelance schedule, royalties or recording sales are the

most common means for income generation from performance. The following statistics on record sales are of interest. For recording sales in 2006:

- Digital track sales: up 65%
- CD Album sales: down 5%
- The fastest growing music category was Classical music downloads, up 23%

Released by Nielsen Music 2006 Year-End Music Industry Report on recording sales. (http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/2007/01/yearend_music_s.html)

The new download environment reduces the costs of touring. Recorded performances are more cost effective than a live performance. There is more chance in selling 1000 units on line than at the ticket counter of a pub gig or concert hall.

In a competitive world where traditional performance opportunities are becoming less of an option such as a salaried orchestral position in Australia, musicians who have control over their music production and distribution will have more chance of survival than musicians who don't.

Recording and technological awareness is an essential part of the small business strategy that musicians need to know about. In their report to the Queensland Music Industry, Rogers *et al* identify the music industry as having two tiers of activities:

“The first is made up of the activities of major music labels and commercially successful artists who at times attract significant sales.

The second tier - the "grassroots" - largely consists of independent musicians, production personnel and producers attracting both niche and at times mainstream audiences.”

They go on to say that the second tier is:

“Characterised by informally networked micro-economies, independent artists, niche markets, and the exploitation of new technologies, the second tier creates value through networking and **creative entrepreneurialism.**”

Queensland Music Industry Value Web: From the Margins to the Mainstream

Rogers, Ian K. and Ninan, Abraham and Hearn, Gregory N. and Cunningham, Stuart D. and Luckman, Susan H. (2004)

<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00002422/>

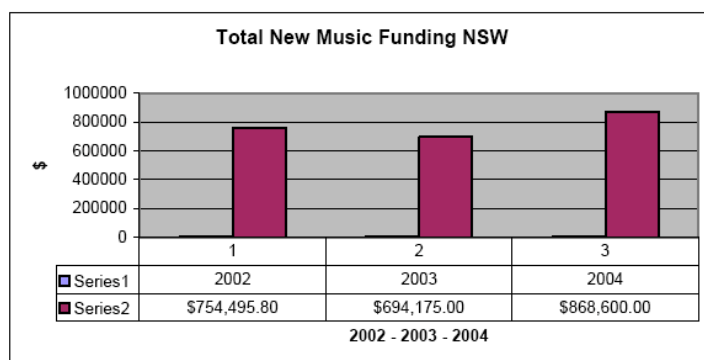
The “entrepreneurialism” of tier two is the ability to think laterally and creatively. In his address to the Music Council of Australia, Hans Hoegh-Guldberg writes:

“...in order to survive, any firm...either has to beat its rivals on costs or by developing unique features in its product or service...”

Uniqueness can mean difference and/or innovation. Innovation is the process by which something is improved. In other words creative thinking becomes the driving force.

The following statistic from the NSW Ministry of Arts reported that funding for creative projects increased by 13% in the years 2002 and 2004

NSW Total Funding for new music has increased by 13% over 2002-2004



NSW Ministry for the Arts states that it, *generally defines new music as music created by composers and/or sound artist.*¹⁰

(as quoted in Hans Hoegh-Guldberg <http://www.mca.org.au/index.php?id=38>)

The implication here is that the more the student is able to network, think laterally and be creative, the more the chance of success. The more we at the conservatorium can align with a creative thinking aesthetic, the more we are preparing students for a viable future.

Here is an example of musical innovation which is simply the use of a piano accordion in Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyrie*.

The Ride of the Valkyrie, Richard Wagner (1856)
Arranged and performed by the Uri Caine Ensemble

The piano accordion is never usually associated with 19th century romantic repertoire, let alone Wagner. We hear Wagner in a new way. To evoke Paul Ricouer, the pleasure in listening to this work combines our memory of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyrie* with an instrument that refers to a completely different repertoire and community.

This is a very simple example of ways musicians can operate in today's knowledge economy. This is not the space to discuss music's relation to the knowledge economy in detail but some essential features of the knowledge economy are:

- the necessity for knowledge to be transferable,
- the ability for knowledge to be re-purposed and repackaged
- knowledge is linked with information and communication technologies
- knowledge crosses boundaries
- involves constant skill upgrading (for example: new software)

Creative thinking, innovation, constant skill upgrading and entrepreneurialism are fundamental to modern day survival in the music industry. Today, it is not enough to play well with the hope of being discovered. It's about telling the world that you believe in whatever you are doing, and using the right modes of communication to let people know.

Music makers today must be proactive and able to identify and create their own contexts, adapt, communicate with diverse communities and collaborate. All of these underpin survival in a knowledge economy. 5 years ago, most of the following terms were either unheard of, or not considered mainstream activities: Wikis, Blogs, tagging, YouTube.com, Web 2.0, My space.com. These and other forms of data presentation and dissemination enable the student to be conversant with contemporary modes of delivery. Therefore, it is obvious that student assignments should incorporate these activities so that they are taught communication skills to access their future.

In other words: while essay writing is good for representing ideas and experiences in words, assignments that use digital representations via Web delivery etc, prepare our graduates to engage with the music industry.

Repertoire and Performance Diversity

So how do we teach students to think creatively through performance? One approach is to promote a performance culture of diversity and difference. It is through difference that we make connections.

The University of Western Australia aptly sums its approach to diversity with the following:

“Teaching which disregards diversity places students at a disadvantage by reducing their capacity to learn. An inclusive curriculum which acknowledges, respects and responds appropriately to diversity can contribute to:

- enhanced learning outcomes for a greater number of students
- validation of student experiences and world views
- development of international skills, cross-cultural perspectives, respect for different values and learning styles, and other skills useful in a diverse global environment
- improvement of academic standards and the quality of university teaching
- recruitment and retention of a greater number of students from diverse backgrounds.

<http://www.csd.uwa.edu.au/tl/99TDChecklist.htm>

In order to embrace diversity, students learn about concepts and patterns that exist across a diverse array of genres. They then apply these concepts to their own music making. The result is knowledge translation.

The next example demonstrates knowledge translation via stylistic diversity. The knowledge to be discussed is the relationship between phrasing, texture and register.

Golden Wedding consists of a series of distinctive blocks of sound, called textures, arranged in a non-linear progression. The textures are linked to each other by register. Register refers

to the placement of a sound which can be high, middle or low. Throughout the work, the drummer articulates various registers. The work is one gradual expansion of registers.

The Golden Wedding, Jean Gabriel-Marie,
arranged by “Jigs” Noble for the Woody Herman Orchestra (1941)

Let us now hear the opening of Beethoven’s Opus 31 No. 1. In similar ways as *Golden Wedding*, you will experience the expansion and contraction of registers, all of which are linked to phrase shape and form.

Opus 31 No. 1 (G major)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1802)

While stylistically different, the two works exemplify knowledge translation. Just as much as musical knowledge is translated from *Golden Wedding* to Opus 31, so too can knowledge be translated from the Opus 31 to the *Golden Wedding*.

The incorporation of works from different styles means we need to develop an approach to teaching instrumental technique that embraces diversity. Sometimes a good way to do this is to use embodied learning.

Embodied learning

Embodied learning is the learning of knowledge and experience through the body. It is non-verbal communication, knowledge is articulated via a specific physical representation. Embodied learning in music cannot be represented by text, words or music notation.

Any jazz musician knows that no notation will adequately capture the swing feel required in jazz. Swing feel in pieces such as *Golden Wedding* means playing behind and in front of the beat. If players played the notation exactly, it would sound stiff and definitely un-jazz. One can only learn through ‘feel’. The feel is the essence of the music, the music notation is merely the reminder.

To understand ‘feel’, we need to teach the musician to play away from the page and rely on their experiences of that music to be the impetus.

FUNK GUITAR PATTERN

While the funky guitar solo you are hearing can be notated, the notation will never capture the feel of the music. As stated previously, every musical style is an experience, referring to a particular location, time or community. If an opera or symphonic score requires the musicians to play in a funk style, it will be important that the musicians have an experience of the musical reference.

The issue is not to confuse the teaching of technique with the representation of a particular technique within a style. Technique is the skill or systematic procedure by which a complex or scientific task is accomplished. Musically this means the ability to recreate a desired sound again and again. Good technique is the ability to reassure the listener that you can execute a particular passage. Bad technique results in an unpredictable outcome. Its most simplest definition for a performing musician is muscle control and for a composer, knowledge of style and instrumental capacities.

A Portfolio of Pedagogies

A diverse curriculum requires a shift from a predominantly traditional instructivist method of teaching, to include a constructivist approach. Instructivism, also referred to as behaviourism, is defined by the following:

- Knowledge is in possession of the teacher.
- There is explicit teaching of an agreed body of knowledge from which there is no deviation.

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/instruct/instruct.html>

Instructivism assumes that the student is an empty vessel into which knowledge can be filled. Instructivism is discipline teaching at its most systematic. Klein (2006) in referring to Bernstein writes that disciplinary teaching has the following traits:

- subject matter and objects are isolated for study
- a body of evidence, canon, content, laws, formalisms
- exempla, models, paradigms, and law
- concepts and theories
- methods, procedures, techniques, and skills
- explanatory modes, language and argument styles
- ontologies and epistemologies.

Klein, J: *A Platform for a Shared Discourse of Interdisciplinary Education*
http://www.jsse.org/2006-2/klein_platform.htm#Literatur

It represents the traditional teaching pedagogy used by many conservatoria: the master student relationship in which the student copies the teacher's actions, any individual variant on this could be considered wrong.

Embodied learning is a type of instructivism in which the student copies the particular style through feel and by ear. Rock lead guitarists do this all the time by working out by ear famous guitar solos from recordings.

Instructivism is time intensive. It sequences the learning into a linear experience and is an example of slow learning. Slow learning is crucial for any physiological based pedagogy. Music performance training, just as in sport, physiotherapy, or the building of complex hierarchies, involves making the sure the student is properly prepared for stressful and demanding situations.

The instructivist approach **is necessary** for the teaching of instrumental technique within a particular style. The body has to be taught how to achieve a certain sound without doing physical damage and to achieve reliability in performance. However when instructivism is taken for granted, it implicitly becomes connected to 'power' and a fixed hierarchy. Students are expected not to challenge and are dis-empowered by being made to feel there is a right way in doing something and many 'wrong' ways.

Constructivism is the opposite. Roles and expertise are also respected, but the relationship between teacher and student is in continual flux. This is because it is more about application than replication. Constructivism is also referred to as student-centered or self directed learning. Students bring to the class their own experiences with which they 'construct' a new solution.

Herrington, Oliver and Reeves outline ten principles for a pedagogy based on constructivism, problem solving, collaboration, application and shared experiences. They write that the new pedagogy must:

1. Have real-world relevance
2. Be ill defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity
3. Comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time
4. Provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources
5. Provide the opportunity to collaborate
6. Provide the opportunity to reflect and involve student's beliefs and values
7. Be integrated and applied across different subject areas and extend beyond domain-specific outcomes
8. Be seamlessly integrated with assessment
9. Yield polished products valuable in their own right rather than as a preparation for something else
10. Allow competing solutions and diversity of outcomes.

Source: (Herrington, Oliver and Reeves as quoted in van Weert, 2005, p 21)

Constructivism is an example of fast learning. The student learns quickly by applying their experiences to a context. The relationship between teacher and student constantly shifts, in many cases resulting with a collaborative approach to learning. Experience is respected but roles can shift. This is also crucial for any interdisciplinary courses as it enables students to solve a problem using their own experiences and background. The more the team work, the more likely a more appropriate solution.

The constructivist pedagogy requires students to be creative. They apply their own experiences with the knowledge provided by the teacher to new contexts and their own world. This means they are learning survival and analytical skills for the future. The relationship between teacher and student constantly shifts, and in many cases results with a collaborative approach to learning in which the teacher is a facilitator.

This approach has been behind the Newcastle medical faculty in which the teaching is based on problem solving, not solution copying.

Finucane, Johnson and Prideaux write:

Students usually meet in small groups two or three times a week for PBL tutorials. They are presented with a clinical problem (eg, a patient with chest pain), and, in a series of steps, they discuss possible mechanisms and causes, develop hypotheses and strategies to test the hypotheses, are presented with further information, and use this new information to refine their hypotheses, finally reaching a conclusion. A tutor usually acts as a facilitator, guiding students in this group-learning process.

In the course of this exercise, students identify both their existing levels and gaps in their knowledge. These gaps form the basis for independent learning outside the PBL tutorials. The identification and pursuit of these so-called "learning goals" is a key element of the PBL process.

Problem-based learning: its rationale and efficacy, Paul M Finucane, Steve M Johnson and David J Prideaux <http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/may4/finucane/finucane.html>

This has established Newcastle Medical Faculty as the innovator and leader in the teaching of medicine in Australia.

From a musical perspective, improvisation and composition are valuable processes for applying a constructivist pedagogy and accessing one's creativity. For many people, improvisation refers to virtuosity. While true in some contexts, this however misses its main musical function. Improvisation is:

- the ability to find solutions based on what is available,
- the ability to explore possibilities within a genre
- a wonderful vehicle for showing understanding
- facilitates faster learning as the player has to internalise their knowledge to create deeper learning
- real time musicianship and musical thinking

Passacaille
Louis Couperin (c 1650 – 1660)

Improvisation enables the performer to 'construct' a solution. Just as Ben's guitar performance before was an example of real time embodied learning, so too is the piece you are hearing now. In this work, Rosalind is improvising over a bass line by Couperin. The

bass line and harmonies provide the structure within which she can show her understanding of ornamentation, style, harmonic and textural relationships in order to produce new outcomes.

While Rosalind needed to learn the nuts and bolts of baroque technique and style in the traditional instructivist way, her improvisation is an example of constructivism in that she can show her understanding of the genre. This is creative thinking in real time and like speech, provides the opportunity to practice, share and play with the vocabulary spontaneously.

Improvisation, creativity, concept learning through diversity as well as style imitation and interactions with technology underpin a contemporary approach to musicianship. ***Both instructivist and constructivist pedagogies are essential in this mix.*** This is what makes a conservatorium a unique place: A hothouse of invention, recovery and discovery.

Repertoire Recreation and Creation

Repertoire recreation is the stylistically correct performance of a musical work based on the instructivist pedagogy.

Repertoire creation is the creation of new work based on a constructivist pedagogy. The student is given the opportunity to creatively transfer learnt techniques into new outcomes.

The next two examples show the relationship between repertoire recreation and creation. The object of the task here is to construct a modern day parallel to the text and music relationships in Henry Purcell's 'What Power art thou' (1691)

Repertoire recreation

This song is from Purcell's opera *King Arthur*. It is sung by the character Frost. As the weather gets warmer Frost begins to melt. Frost doesn't want to melt, and cries out 'let me freeze'. It is orchestrated for baritone and string ensemble.

'What Power art thou?' Henry Purcell, from *King Arthur* (1691)

In order to perform this song correctly and within the style, an instructivist pedagogy is necessary. Any interpretation and ornamentation must be done within the limits of the baroque musical style.

Repertoire creation

The next song reconstructs the vocal line and its accompaniment into a totally new context mixing Purcell's *What power art thou* with African drumming, gospel and 1950s raunchy rock and roll sax playing. While using the same text and vocal lines as Purcell's original character Frost, the singer is now a person who, upon receiving a love letter, refuses to acknowledge the desire it causes within himself. He prefers to remain frozen in his emotions.

***Frozen,* Richard Vella/Henry Purcell (2002)**

This is repertoire creation while at the same time relies on specific techniques from gospel, rock and the baroque. We hear Purcell in a new light. The new construction brings together old and new styles. It explores new possibilities while at the same time relies on traditional techniques. *Frozen* is an example of repertoire in which "old sounds are heard in new contexts" and *What Power art thou* is "old sounds in old contexts".

Repertoire and Innovation

What does *Frozen* mean for training a future graduate. It is an example of knowledge creation in which new relationships and skills are demanded. The new version requires

playing with click tracks or fold back, backing tracks, playing with amplification, understanding new performance genres, trusting an external person to mix and produce the final sound.

This is an explicit example of how musical repertoire can be a model for interdisciplinary thinking. While some knowledge is lost in translation, new knowledge is found in translation. In order for this to happen, boundaries need to be porous. In order to understand interdisciplinary activity, I will refer to the work of sociologist Basil Bernstein. Bernstein writes that in order to have a porous relationship between disciplines, their boundaries must be weak and not closed off. Closing off creates silos, disciplines become impermeable to change and as a result difficult to readily embrace change. Knowledge is *verticalised* into a top down hierarchy and control is clearly defined by the relationships between all elements.

We see this in the traditional approach to specific discipline education such as history of Western European music or tonal harmonic procedures. For Bernstein, a porous boundary is created when knowledge is *horizontalised*. This means that there is no systematic relationship between elements and meaningfulness is location specific. Freely negotiated transactions, at the boundaries of different disciplines produces new meanings, contexts and outcomes. Hence an important factor for a discipline to grow and develop is its ability to absorb difference and change. On the large scale music does this. It can readily embrace difference and contradiction such as the mixing of a didgeridu with a saxophone.

Repertoire and Collaboration

ICON,

performed by Continuum Sax and Mick Davison (didgeridu), (2005)

Collaboration exists between individuals agreeing on working within the same terms of reference. The work you are hearing now is a collaboration between didgeridu musician Mick Davison and Marge Smith, lecturer in clarinet and saxophone. In this piece, the

musicians are negotiating commonalities and differences. The work is a unique statement about reconciliation and new possibilities through repertoire creation. However collaboration can only exist if all musicians involved are open to translation.

Collaboration also can occur between the conservatorium and various musical communities. It is a partnership between the two. Any musical community will be defined by a particular choice of instruments and repertoire. A Scottish bagpipe signifies a very different musical repertoire and culture than does a harmonica. Hence a theory of repertoire must be open to the implicit relations that can exist between repertoire, instruments and community.

This is why I played the Piano accordion arrangement of Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyrie*. To evoke Paul Ricoeur's work again, in acknowledging this work, we are acknowledging the piano accordion as a 'foreign' instrument with its own history. The 'foreign' instrument in this case is the accordion but it could also be the banjo, didjeridu, etc.

So called folk and indigenous based instruments are seen as being 'foreign' to the catalogue of instruments found in the 19th century orchestra. It is interesting to note that the instruments of the 19th century orchestra underpin traditional conservatoria identity.

The 'foreign' instruments enable alternative music histories and other communities to be included. They are like "new sounds in old contexts". In doing so, repertoire becomes revitalised and opens the possibility for innovation and new community partnerships.

Within any community, there will be expertise, knowledge and a skill base that is mutually beneficial to the conservatorium and community. Because of this, a conservatorium's relationship with communities is symbiotic. Both provide resources, knowledge bases and opportunities and a healthy community based program is able to provide the necessary interface between the two. The community demographics could be defined by age group, economics, ethnicity, profession, gender or cultural context. Once we acknowledge the powerful relationship between instruments, community identity and cultural diversity, we lay profound foundations for a sustainable future at the undergraduate, postgraduate and research level.

Such an approach can only enrich the conservatorium's identity as a hot house for diversity preservation and discovery. This relationship can best be summed by Dr. Richard Letts from the Music Council Australia.

“...community music development enhances and reinforces the formal educational system and offers possibilities for a real-world implementation of its educational outcomes. At the same time community music programs provide services which are beyond the capacity of the educational institutions. Partnerships between the two sectors have the potential for great mutual benefit.”

Dr. Richard Letts, 1994
Music Council Australia,
Downloaded, 17/9/06, <http://www.mca.org.au/index.php?id=133>

Repertoire as danger

In music, the sensuous pleasure depends upon a particular disposition not just of the ear, but of the entire nervous system: (Denis Diderot, ‘Lettre à Mademoiselle...’, quoted In *The Classical Style*, Charles Rosen, p 185)

Music is a sensory experience. It goes straight to the body and our being. Because of this sensuality, musicians over history have continually strived for new means of expression. This could be a power chord in a rock song or the opening chord of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Musicians love to push boundaries, play with and revel in ambiguity, contrast and similarity. It is what musicians find pleasurable.

Think of the gorgeous extended chords in Mahler's symphonies, the transparent orchestrations of Debussy, the seductive rhythms of African music, the vocal colours of Bjork, or the ecstatic polyphony of Palestrina. As musicians we communicate through the body and this is why music, be it a performance or composition, is dangerous and exciting. In a reference to Soren Kierkegaard's work *Either/Or*, music seduces us, demanding we give over to its sensuality.

Let us listen to Mozart's extraordinary ‘Queen of the Night’ aria from *The Magic Flute*.

**‘Der Hölle Rache Kocht in meinem Herzen’,
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart,**

from *The Magic Flute* (1791)

Can you imagine what it must have felt like to have heard Mozart's Queen of the night aria for the first time: the extreme use of registers, the dramatic shifts in phrasing, rapid changes in orchestration, the ecstatic sound of the high voice, and shifting harmonies? Its impact must have been as shocking as Jimi Hendrix's guitar solos from the sixties or punk rock in the seventies.

While the vocabulary of Mozart's music was familiar to audiences with his use of tonality and rhythmic gestures, it was in the way he challenged, or rather played with, musical structure that made his music dangerous. The writer and pianist Charles Rosen writes about this danger in his book *The Classical Style*. For Rosen, Mozart's music was seductive in its desire to push the boundaries for expression. Rosen writes:

“Almost all art is subversive: it attacks established values and replaces them with those of its own creation; it substitutes its own order for that of society. Mozart's...works are in many ways an assault upon the musical language that helped create it: the powerful chromaticism that he could employ with such ease comes near at moments to destroying the tonal clarity that was essential to the significance of his own forms...Mozart was as unaccommodating as Beethoven, and the sheer physical beauty, prettiness, even, of so much of what he composed masks the uncompromising character of his art.” (Rosen, p 325)

Just as Mozart's music was dangerous in his time, so too we must allow the conservatorium curriculum to be open to 'danger' in our time. In other words: be open to the unfamiliar, the new, the foreign or the popular. Because it is this 'danger', that may be the very future stuff that will feed our music graduates.

SUMMARY

To sum, a conservatorium's curriculum must be continuously porous at its boundaries so that it can embrace change and keep abreast of new ideas, pedagogies and developments. The music industry today demands not only traditional performance training skills but also:

- creative skills
- improvisation skills
- the ability to play different genres

- the use of appropriate contemporary technologies
- analytical and pattern recognition skills
- studio recording skills
- management, business and communication skills
- collaboration and team work skills
- problem solving strategies

These skills are fundamental to repertoire creation and recreation. In doing so, our curriculum preserves traditions but also cultivates innovation.

This is essential if we want our graduates to engage with the music industry and by default the knowledge economy. Whether it be a tango, a sonata, rap, a mass form, rock, fugue, orchestral work, metal, disco or glitch culture, these experiences are all to be included so that we produce a musician totally adept in performance and composition.

This is what empowers our graduates, and the way to empower the graduate is to give them opportunities throughout the curriculum to experiment, explore and evaluate.

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