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Special Issue on Music Education

Editor's note by Dr Geoffrey M Lowe (National President, ANZARME)

This special issue on music education was developed via a collaboration between the Australian & New Zealand Association for Research in Music Education (ANZARME), Edith Cowan University and the editors of the Australian Journal of Teacher Education. It presents eight articles drawn from the XXXIXth Annual ANZARME Conference held in Perth, WA in October 2017, and endeavours to offer readers a cross-section of the breadth of current research in music education across both Australia and New Zealand, bound under the conference theme of *Time and Tide*. The authors involved range from PhD students to established senior academics: ANZARME is an inclusive organisation that celebrates music education research at all levels of the research journey.

Music education is unique within the education landscape in that it covers multiple teaching scenarios: classroom, instrumental and ensemble. As such, it offers rich and almost boundless opportunities for research. It is particularly important now, as while recent ground breaking research into the social value and cognitive enabling capacities of music present powerful messages to educational authorities, the place of music in school (indeed along with all the Arts) is being seriously challenged by those outside education, notably those who hold the purse strings. Music, as a subject in all its forms, requires a considerable financial investment and its benefits to students and beyond can appear intangible and difficult to quantify. Therefore, research assumes greater importance than ever before to inform and affirm its place and to continue to refine practice.

Music education pedagogy across all areas has made enormous strides in recent years. In his article, Leon de Bruin discusses the often ephemeral student/teacher dialogic interaction in the one-on-one instrumental music lesson particularly with regard to improvisation. How does one teach a concept such as improvisation (indeed, can it be 'taught'?), and what are the optimum dialogic interactions by which the instrumental teacher can encourage desired metacognitive processes and cultivate creative habits in students to allow improvisation skills to flourish? In the wider ensemble setting, Geoffrey Lowe explores the student voice regarding participation in a large-scale co-operative school music festival. Music education has largely inherited a competitive festival model (the competition-festival) in which winners and losers are often unwittingly defined, perceived benefits are framed largely from an extrinsic adult perspective and align comfortably in the prevailing neo-liberal environment. However, the educational benefit of operating in this paradigm is being increasingly challenged in terms of sustained student engagement and motivation, especially for students who do not see themselves as 'winners'.

Returning to the instrumental music fold, Information Technology (ICT) forms the basis of Daniel Lee, William Baker and Nick Haywood's article. They investigated the barrage of IT available for contemporary guitar and their article includes an exhaustive analysis of current resources with the overarching purpose of informing teacher educators working with potential instrumental guitar teachers. Dawn Joseph, Rohan Nethsinghe and Alberto Cabido Mass explore the potential for international cross-cultural collaboration within the pre-service training sphere. Operating across three cultures and two countries (Australia and Spain), their article describes the potential for and process of collaboration in the ICT age, issues encountered, and outcomes as described by the students themselves. It

presents contemporary pre-service music education teacher training with valuable insights into an effective vehicle for exploration of cultural expression and diversity.

While the issues and problems associated with generalist primary teachers teaching music has been well covered in the literature, particularly from a pre-service training perspective, Fiona King's article examines actual practice in Victorian schools. Her article looks into content, pedagogy and the place of music activities, as well as examining the teacher experience and the place of music in a wider integrated arts approach. Renee Crawford and Jane Southcott step out to explore the wider issue of teacher reflective practice, and specifically how an educational connoisseurship framework applied to auto-ethnography might assist in the process. Involving pre-service teachers, both researchers created an authentic assessment task directly linked to the lived experience of students, focussed on their educational practice. They examined how students actually engaged with the task, and the article has implications for the development of reflective practice in teacher education.

With ICT assuming greater importance in education in general, Anne-Marie Eyles examines its provision and application in Queensland schools. Her article reports on issues associated with the very definition of ICT in curriculum documents, through to the availability, familiarity and reliability of ICT to music teachers, and the professional development opportunities open to them. Her findings make sobering reading. Finally, Annie Mitchell's article describes the changing nature of pre-service music teacher training, including an examination of the skill sets required by twenty-first century music teachers, and the tensions between teaching and creative practice.

The range of articles offers a very brief snapshot into the diversity of contemporary music education research in Australia and New Zealand, and demonstrates the desire of the discipline to continue to refine, grow and maintain its relevance in the challenging educational landscape of the Twentieth Century.