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## Seven Steps to Heaven: Time and Tide in 21st Century Contemporary Music Higher Education

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## Seven Steps to Heaven: Time and Tide in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Contemporary Music Higher Education

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*Abstract: Throughout the time of my teaching career, the tide has exposed changes in the nature of music, students and music education. This paper discusses teaching and learning in contemporary music at seven critical stages of 21<sup>st</sup> century music education:*

- i) diverse types of undergraduate learners*
- ii) teaching traditional classical repertoire and skills to contemporary music students*
- iii) transitioning undergraduates through pre-service teaching into the workforce*
- iv) supervisory pedagogy for creative work higher degree research models*
- v) upskilling established teachers in musical practice and pedagogy*
- vi) professional development for adult community musicians*
- vii) disseminating learning back into music and teacher education.*

*Constant elements in this landscape are musicianship, practice, creativity, employment, aesthetic expression and personal fulfilment. Shifting sands include characteristics of learners, pedagogy, delivery, technology, industry trends, and learning through consecutive career stages. The final scenario addresses challenges for musicians and teachers to maintain their creative practice through self-directed lifelong learning*

### Introduction

One two three four five six seven, that's heaven.  
Seven six five four three to one, life's begun ...  
Seven steps to heaven Lord  
(help me) climb that road  
Steady but uneven Lord  
(help me) climb that road  
We're so unbelievably strong yet so ill at ease  
We ascend as we please  
We'll be standing at those gates  
Seven steps create. (Seven Steps to Heaven, 1999).

Throughout the time of my teaching career, seventeen years of university lecturing, preceded by two decades of secondary school teaching, TAFE and private tutoring, the tide has created frequent and indelible changes in the nature of music, its students and consequently, music education. Constant elements in this landscape are musicianship, practice, creativity, employment, aesthetic expression and personal fulfilment. Shifting sands in the ebb and flow of musical education include characteristics of learners, pedagogy to accommodate diverse learning cohorts, modes of delivery, technological developments and

resources, music industry trends, and learning through consecutive stages of musicians' careers. This paper discusses teaching and learning in contemporary music at seven critical stages of 21<sup>st</sup> century music education, describes pedagogical approaches responding to each stage, and interrogates the effectiveness of these approaches whilst aiming to uphold consistent and accepted standards of musicianship, performance, creativity and employability.

With reference to experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) and within a lifelong educational framework influenced by spiral curriculum models (Bruner, 1960; Harden & Stamper, 1999) and Efland's (1995) lattice curriculum, the following seven scenarios will be discussed:

- i) diverse types of undergraduate learners
- ii) teaching traditional classical repertoire and skills to contemporary music students
- iii) facilitating the transition of undergraduates through pre-service teaching into the workforce
- iv) developing pedagogy to supervise creative work higher degree research models
- v) upskilling established teachers in musical practice and pedagogy
- vi) professional development for adult community musicians
- vii) dissemination of research and pedagogy back into music and teacher education.

My pedagogical approaches used in these scenarios include integration of technological resources into individual and group instrumental practice, arranging contemporary repertoire to teach traditional composition forms, student peer team-teaching, the creation and facilitation of professional development programs for higher-degree research (HDR) supervision, instrumental group teaching and orchestral ensemble sections. The effectiveness of these strategies has been evaluated through student and peer feedback, performance outcomes, creative outputs and benchmarking. The final scenario addresses the challenge for professional musicians, academics and music teachers to not only maintain their musical and creative practice, but continually improve through self-directed lifelong learning.

### **Tidal Changes**

Throughout my teaching career, spanning almost four decades, I have observed significant changes in music education and the contemporary music industry. These include the reduced importance of music and the arts in secondary and tertiary curricula concerned with stable and lucrative jobs for graduates, increased use of technology in music performance and teaching, sequencers and synthesizers replacing instruments and therefore musicians in the industry, and (in cases) music education focused on enjoyment rather than competitive and rigorous study through formal grade systems such as the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB). The increased inclusion of contemporary music into an historically classical curriculum has also had significant impact.

Teaching university music students in a Bachelor of Contemporary Music (BCM) degree over the past decade has exposed a decline in the notation reading ability of most students, reliance on aural rather than notated learning of music, frequent lack of resilience in facing challenges in the learning environment, and fewer instances of sustained and rigorous instrumental and theoretical music training, whether traditional classical or contemporary. Some important recent trends in music education provision are institutional pressure to reduce one-to-one instrumental instruction in favour of small group teaching and, consequently, the increased importance of ensemble and group playing.

### **Timeless Constants**

Curricula in higher music education strive to maintain and uphold constant musical elements and professionally accepted, benchmarked standards. These elements, which recur as lifelong learning objectives, include musicianship: the ability to hear, translate, understand and interpret music; and practice, the ability to perform and/or compose music at increasingly professional standards demanded by repertoire, genres and performance opportunities. Creativity, through composing and performing original musical works, and a broader definition of thinking independently, is an assessable element throughout music education, and a desirable vocational attribute, particularly in emerging creative arts industries. Fulfilment, through the artistic expression of a musician's talent plus the satisfaction of playing, composing and collaborating with likeminded artists, are constant affective objectives in formal and informal music education and practice.

### **Shifting Sands**

- The ebb and flow of trends affecting higher musical education is illustrated by:
- differing characteristics of learners: mixed cohorts of school leavers with return-to-study students and mature students managing conflicting demands of study, family and employment
  - pedagogy to accommodate diverse learning styles, requiring an integrated portfolio of teaching strategies that addresses visual, auditory, reading/writing and kinaesthetic learning styles (Lujan & DiCarlo, 2006)
  - modes of delivery: blended delivery that combines face-to-face, on-line, community-engaged and work-integrated learning activities and environments
  - technological developments and resources: increased use of electronic instruments such as keyboards with sampled drum and bass patterns, electronic drum laboratories, play-along recordings and classroom use of visual resources such as DVDs and YouTube clips
  - music industry trends where more work is available for small ensembles (solos, duos, trios) rather than bands
  - learning through consecutive stages of musicians' and teachers' careers: from undergraduate student, pre-service music teachers, Honours and HDR researchers, to the lifelong self-directed learning of established teachers and musicians, and mature adult teachers/musicians with portfolio careers.

### **Aim of Research: Purpose and Alignment with ANZARME**

In accordance with the Australian and New Zealand Association of Research in Music Education's (ANZARME, 2017) conference theme of time and tide, the unchanging elements core to music education and the impacts of changing influences in the learning environment and socio-political landscape, this paper spotlights seven important scenarios in a continuum of music education, from undergraduate student to adult lifelong learner. With reference to experiential learning theory, the research reports on the construction, facilitation and evaluation of an holistic approach to curriculum, pedagogy and self-directed learning and musical practice that draws from the spiral models of Bruner (1960, 1996) and the lattice curriculum of Efland (1995). The research identifies common threads in learning and teaching that emerge throughout a music teacher's career and life, whilst responding to, and

capitalising on, the diverse impacts of changing work, social and industry environments. By evaluating these processes, I propose a refreshed approach to curriculum design and its implementation in contemporary music, pedagogical modelling that enhances the quality of music teacher education and creative practice, and a framework that can be extended to guide independent self-directed lifelong learning.

## Literature Review

Literature that informs and contextualises this research comes principally from learning theorists such as Bruner, Harden and Stamper, Efland, Kolb and Kolb. Bruner's (1960, 1996) spiral curriculum is based upon the belief that learning is hierarchical, foundational (where new learning builds on previous knowledge) and developmental. Bruner (1960, 52) proposed curricula structured "around the great issues, principles and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members". Bruner's perspective on the purpose of education has been summarized by Curzon and Tummons (2013) as learning through problem-solving, use of the mind by transforming one's cognition, interpretation, skilled reflective learning, intellectual honesty, rigour and self-discipline. Criteria for instruction must include effective learning experiences, comprehensible structuring of knowledge, optimal sequence of content presentation, which is reinforced through assessment and feedback and reflective of the nature of the knowledge, learner and learning process (Curzon and Tummons, 2013). A model of spiral curricula showing its hierarchical and developmental structure is found in Efland (1995, 135). This model identifies a preliminary enactive stage of learning with concrete materials, a middle iconic stage of learning from schematic diagrams, then a higher symbolic stage of thinking with abstract symbols. Spiral curriculum theory espouses recurrent encounters with subject matter, with each encounter building on prior knowledge, widening the material encompassed and deepening the learner's understanding of the subject matter.

Efland's (1995) lattice curriculum is conditional and contextual, requiring a more advanced knowledge of subject matter. This approach relies on a "cognitive basis for expertise within specific domains of knowledge" (Efland, 1995, 134). The lattice theory proposes different paths of learning, changes in strategies to obtain knowledge, and consideration of the domain expertise of the learner; e.g. distinguishing between adult learners who do and do not possess knowledge or expertise relevant to the specific domain. Problem-solving and transfer are intrinsic aspects of lattice curriculum. Curricula must develop the ability of learners to transfer prior knowledge to problem-solving in new areas (Efland, 1995, 139) and apply knowledge to solve problems in different contexts, resulting in advanced learning and cognitive flexibility (Efland, 1995; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson, 1988).

The spiral and lattice curriculum models share three inter-related factors: the organisation of knowledge in the learner, the organisation of knowledge in the domain, and the arrangement of content for learning (Efland, 1995, 135). Patterns of content presentation may offer optimal learning opportunities, but the limitations of such patterns need to be considered (Efland, 1995, 141). Spiral and lattice curriculum models both rely on repeated encounters with concepts and subject matter. However, the lattice model recommends engagement with content from many different directions and contexts, within the social and cultural context of the domain (Efland, 1995, 145). According to Spiro et.al. (1988) this approach preserves the complexity of the subject matter, exposes learners to overlapping and interconnected ideas, thus facilitating transfer and higher order understanding. Spiro (et.al,

1988) also recommend that teachers do not oversimplify curriculum and resources, especially in early encounters with the content.

Learning theories of 1960s and 1970s summarised by Shuell (1986, 427) propose that learning is active, understanding is a process with recognisable outcomes, prior knowledge is centrally important, and learning is domain-specific; expertise in one domain not implying expertise in another. These principles are reinforced by experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 194), which states that learning is a process, requiring relearning through testing and integration with new ideas, plus problem-solving and conflict resolution through reflection, feeling, perceiving and behaving. Learning is also an holistic process of “adaption to the world” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 194), resulting from synergetic and reciprocal transactions between learning and the environment. Finally, “learning is a process of creating knowledge” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 194). Experiential learning theory defines knowledge as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, 41). This theory proposes enhancement of experiential learning through growth-producing learning spaces, plus the inclusion of the learner’s life experiences, physical and social environments and their relationships (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 205-7). Kegan (1994, 42) states that “people grow best when they continually experience an ingenious blend of challenge and support”. Learning environments and curricula need to make space for conversational learning, the development of expertise (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 207), acting and reflecting, and the application and transfer of knowledge to different contexts (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking in Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 207). Keeton, Sheckley and Griggs (2002) reinforce these ideas, recommending integrated action and reflection, feeling and thinking. Hunt (1987) highlights the importance of “inside-out learning” focusing on one’s own experience with learners being responsible for their own learning; i.e. self-directed, lifelong learning. Kolb and Kolb (2005, 210) advocate for an holistic and coordinated approach to educational provision, encompassing curriculum, faculty, staff and administrative development, aligned with institutional vision and mission.

Harden & Stamper (1999, 141) champion a spiral curriculum because of its inherent characteristics: revisiting topics with increased levels of difficulty, resulting in new knowledge and broader applications, relating new learning to previous, and testing achievement through assessment. They identify the value of spiral curricula being in reinforcement of content, building new knowledge upon existing, continuity and vertical integration between curriculum stages, logical sequence of subject matter, and higher level objectives of application, flexibility and transferability (Harden & Stamper, 1999, 142).

Several common concepts have emerged from these curricula models, that learning is hierarchical, created by increasingly complex engagement with the subject matter of a discipline or domain of knowledge. Learning is developmental and ideally occurs through active, recurrent and diverse encounters with the content, presented in a logical sequence. Learning is also contextual, conditional on the disciplinary, socio-cultural and intellectual environment of the learner. Understanding is a process that can be created by active engagement in learning activities within a conducive environment, through processes of reflection and higher-level functions such as application and transfer of knowledge and skills to different contexts and disciplines. Curricula, and therefore educational provision, should reflect the ideas, values and issues of merit and worth to its society. Such values are evident in the Graduate Attributes of universities, e.g. the seven graduate attributes of the university where I work. These are intellectual rigour, creativity, ethical practice, disciplinary knowledge, lifelong learning, communication and social skills, and cultural competence (Southern Cross University, 2017). These attributes, plus research, information and technological literacy broadly reflect the attributes of many higher education providers in Australia.

## Methodology

The research has three stages using multi-methodological qualitative approaches. Data collection for the first three scenarios was conducted over a decade of teaching, through observation, peer review, student feedback and interrogation of my own pedagogy. Focus group discussions were held with three consecutive third year BCM Ensemble Direction and Arranging classes, each with enrolments of thirty students. The focus group discussions concentrated on topics of vocational training, music teacher preparation and pedagogy. Data was further informed by my observation and assessment of pre-service student teachers peer-teaching university music classes, working on education practicum, and through consultation with their supervising secondary teachers.

The methodology to develop a pedagogy of creative work higher degree supervision involved a systematic literature review specifically focused on practice-based and practice-led research supervision and assessment in creative arts, a survey of HDR provision in creative arts, an ethnographic study of higher degree supervision in three Australian universities, and an autoethnographic study of my own practice-based Honours and HDR supervision. Qualitative research tools were used to collect data: questionnaires for supervisors and students about research higher degree experiences and supervision; focus groups to discuss main issues raised in literature and from questionnaires; and interviews with selected academics and students. The project *Future-proofing the Creative Arts in Higher Education* used a staged strategy employing a variety of research methods: survey, interviews, focus groups and consultation (Baker, Buckley and Keet, 2009, 7). Their strategy also models embedded formative and summative evaluation and dissemination milestones. My approach emulates this successful model, incorporates relevant data that Baker et.al.'s research uncovered, builds upon their findings and recommendations, and extends the aims of their research in creative arts and music higher degree provision.

Data regarding community music participation and professional development for adult community musicians derived from my research project entitled *Conducting, musical direction and performance in community music ensembles and their influence on pedagogy*. This research involved interviewing the conductor or musical director of four ensembles (three orchestras and one big band) and surveying the musicians belonging to these ensembles through a questionnaire. As double bassist in each of these orchestras and pianist in the big band, I engaged in participant observation of the performance practices of conductors, musicians and my own playing over several years of rehearsal and concert schedules. This method aligns with Candy's (2006) practice-led research, "concerned with the nature of practice and lead[ing] to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice" (Candy, 2006, 1). Data were triangulated with my ongoing research about conducting and musical direction of cruise ship orchestras (see Mitchell, 2008) and my previous research about creating and facilitating professional development programs for instrumental music teachers (Mitchell, 2012). Data were analysed according to major themes and the focus of research questions: best and worst conducting and ensemble practices, professional and personal attributes of good conductors and ensemble musicians, professional development needs for adult musicians, musical and personal benefits of community music participation, and the impact of community music performance on music pedagogy.

Results of this research have been regularly interrogated through peer review, conference and symposium presentations, and publication. Student and peer teaching feedback has been regularly integrated to refresh the BCM curricula, particularly informing the delivery of units Ensemble Direction and Arranging and Advanced Studies in Western Art and Contemporary Music. As a member of Lismore Symphony Orchestra and staff member of Southern Cross University's music faculty, I have a liaison role advising

orchestras and facilitating professional development for adult orchestral musicians. Finally, the data collected through these three different stages of research has been considered within the spiral curriculum model (Bruner, 1960, 1996; Harden & Stamper, 1999), the lattice curriculum model (Efland, 1995) and experiential learning theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) to propose a composite model of my own.

## Seven Steps

In this section, seven important scenarios in the journey of a music teacher's education and career are discussed. Each scenario is supported by feedback from student or academic colleagues.

### **D) Foundations: Developing Advanced Musical Literacy in Diverse Types of Undergraduate Learners**

Students in two core second year units, Contemporary Music Theory II and Advanced Musicianship, represent a broad demographic with diverse skills, abilities and musical experience. The cohort comprises predominantly guitarists or vocalists, plus some drummers, bassists and keyboardists; generally possessing little formal music training or musical literacy. Most students in the BCM degree have a background in contemporary music and are beginners aspiring to work in the contemporary music industry. Some older learners have acquired professional experience through band work. A few have classical musical training. All students study foundational music theory and musicianship in first year.

The major focus of my pedagogy for second year is establishing rigorous theoretical knowledge through advanced study of jazz theory and musicianship. A theoretical framework is established by learning extended and altered chords and voicings, scales and modes, and contemporary rhythmic grooves and then applying this vocabulary to create sectional harmonisation and improvised solos over harmonic progressions. A chord vocabulary, based on the one found at the beginning of each Real Book (Sher, 1995), plus a template of piano voicings is used as a resource to support learning this vocabulary and to apply in composition and arranging. This template is current, relevant and related to globally-used industry-standard resources, and applicable to transcription, composition, arranging and performance work at professional levels. To reinforce theoretical learning, students perform practical exercises and repertoire employing studied chords, voicings, harmonisations and grooves, and apply new scales and modes to create improvised solos. This knowledge is then transferred to aural activities, where students undertake scaffolded, focussed transcribing exercises, then progress to higher-level transcriptions of fully arranged repertoire that exhibits the vocabulary and grooves under study. This musical information is then fully notated onto musical scores. Thus, advanced contemporary music knowledge and skills are learned through visual, auditory, written and kinaesthetic approaches, building musical literacy and practice. Admittedly a challenging and complex task, students report how this assignment vastly improves their aural perception and music notation skills: "By far the hardest assignment I have done at uni. I would like to thank you for a wonderfully challenging and rewarding semester" (Student Feedback, 2011).

Building an advanced musical foundation in this manner, that will transfer to and support future higher-order learning, accords with the approach of Spiro et.al. (1988). The complexity of the subject matter is preserved, learners are exposed to overlapping and interconnected ideas, and the rigor of content and learning activities ensure that curricula and resources are not oversimplified in these early encounters with the subject matter. Integrating

theoretical concepts with aural recognition, written interpretation and practical performance provides a portfolio of strategies from which this difficult content can be understood, and caters for the diversity of learning styles and experience of the student cohort.

#### **ii) Application: Teaching Traditional Classical Repertoire and Composition to Contemporary Music Students**

The previous example demonstrates the importance of embedding fundamental contemporary harmonic and rhythmic concepts in contemporary music curricula, and the need for all students to master this content. Conversely, contemporary music students also greatly benefit from foundational knowledge in classical musical theory, particularly knowledge of formal structures and compositional techniques, as secondary school teachers are required to teach classical musicology and composition. Third year music education major students in the unit Studies in Western Art Music undertake an intensive course of study in European classical music. This unit includes study of composing in traditional forms and learning traditional four-part vocal harmonisation. Musical principles shared between contemporary and classical genres include correct harmonic spelling, standard chord progressions, cadence punctuation, smooth voice leading, thematic development and manipulation.

One assessment task is to compose a fugue or sonata. After study of repertoire examples by score reading, listening and analysis, students are provided with sample templates for a fugue and a sonata, with subjects (themes) provided. This assessment is scaffolded by study of composition techniques such as thematic development, modulation, theme and variation, polyphony, accompaniment styles, imitation and canon, harmonisation and reharmonisation, counterpoint and countermelodic writing, ornamentation and embellishment. These techniques are then applied to the provided thematic material, using the template for a guide (see Mitchell, 2015).

Students report a high sense of satisfaction, being given a challenging task, but with appropriate scaffolding to enable their success. They produce a stylistically authentic creative outcome and demonstrate an understanding of traditional classical compositional forms and techniques. More importantly, the compositional craft students learn from this assessment, such as developing and accompanying a theme, modulation and reharmonisation, and composing within a prescribed structure are vocational musical skills that are transferrable to many professional contexts. Learning to compose in a variety of styles and genres, and having sufficient flexibility to transfer musical literacy, knowledge and skills between contemporary and classical musical genres, demonstrates the success of this pedagogical approach. When students recognise the potential of applying theory to their musical craft, a transformative moment occurs, resulting in a significant shift from receptive undergraduate learner to autonomous creative practitioner who honours the integrity and high scholarly values of the music discipline. This strategy accords with Efland's lattice curriculum approach, where curriculum develops the ability of learners to transfer prior knowledge to problem-solving in new areas (Efland, 1995, 139) and to apply knowledge to solve problems in different contexts (Efland, 1995, 139). The best aspect of this unit was identified by one student as: "The basic structures that were used so that we get the chance to compose our own classical composition and teach people in future these very same rules and techniques" (Student Feedback, 2010).

**iii) Leadership, Versatility and Specialisation: Facilitating the Transition of Undergraduates through Pre-Service Teaching into the Workforce**

Teaching final year music education students centres on facilitating their pathway from undergraduate learner, through pre-service teaching then supporting their transition into the professional workplace. The unit Ensemble Direction and Arranging has a practical and creative focus, developing the practical and compositional vocational skills required in high school music teaching. Students learn to create compositions and arrangements for ensembles found in secondary schools: SATB choir, mixed ensembles, big band, school orchestra, stage band and musical theatre group. They also practise conducting, rehearsal management, musical direction, large ensemble performance; essential vocational requirements for music teachers, band and choral leaders. An aligned unit, Advanced Studies in Western Art and Contemporary Music (ASWAM), entails musicological study of related genres, including opera and oratorio, musical theatre, Australian art music and jazz, music for film and television.

Students have previously undertaken a pre-requisite classical musicology unit, Studies in Western Art Music, fully taught by the lecturer. With ASWAM being situated in the final semester of the music education major and a cohort of pre-service teachers in the last stages of their degree, this unit is delivered by students team-teaching the lecture series to their peers, through musicology lectures and related ensemble performance classes. This assessable activity builds student skills in pedagogy, lesson preparation, resource development, communication and teamwork; all in a supportive environment. Similarly, students take turns to conduct and direct large ensemble classes, building conducting skills, rehearsal management, and musical attributes of tuning, intonation, time-keeping, dynamic and expressive control, ensemble blend and balance. “The final examination was in my opinion a great learning curve and I enjoyed quickly pulling together a small ensemble and conducting ... This practical activity exponentially increased my sight reading, ensemble direction skills and arranging skills as well as showed me where my gaps were” (Student Feedback, 2013).

This critical transitional stage of education involves the development of leadership and self-confidence in students, direction of classes and ensembles, responsibility for learning and independence. It has pedagogical merit in encouraging students to value and embrace alternative learning approaches and proactive assessment practices. On return from practicum, students evaluated their application of the knowledge and skills learned in these units during practicum. Students consistently report the benefit of learning pedagogical skills in a safe university environment, then refining their skills on practicum and in the workplace. They particularly valued the opportunity to act as directors and leaders. A small number of students, however, were confronted by their loss of dependence on the lecturer. I repeatedly observe how many students model their teaching on mine, which makes me critically aware of how I teach classes and what strategies and teaching practices I model.

**iv) Creating Knowledge, Aesthetic Expression: Developing Pedagogy to Supervise Creative Work Higher Degree Research Models**

The scholarly and innovative approaches embedded in the BCM degree, particularly the integration of curricula, pedagogy, vocational outcomes, creative practice and research extend to Honours and Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervision. The music PhD degree at Southern Cross University, recently relaunched with a focus on creative work/exegetical formats, is designed to invigorate participation and inclusion of professional creative arts practitioners in higher education, whilst recognising the academic value of their professional

expertise. In undertaking this renewal, several problems were identified: lack of consistency in national standards of practice-based music degree outcomes, a reactive rather than responsive approach to higher degree supervision, limited skills in the supervisory cohort to assess innovative creative work/exegetical projects and institutional pressures of administering creative arts disciplines together whilst providing specialised pathways for disciplinary study. Further investigation of the literature and discussions with academics revealed these and related problems are common across the sector. “The particular nature of pedagogy in research higher degrees in music remains under-developed and in need of reconceptualization or the development of an enlightened eye” (Harrison, 2012, 99).

To address this situation, I am undertaking a project to develop guidelines for HDR provision, create exemplary models of supervisory pedagogy, and develop assessment rubrics and related standards for assessment of practice-based music higher degrees. Outcomes of this project will include a kit of educational resources, and the design and facilitation of a professional development program for supervisors of creative works/exegetical projects. I am currently conducting this research through autoethnographic observation and journaling of my supervision of these projects, informed by Honours and HDR students. Some Honours and HDR students now possess the expertise to act as critical analysts, applying my models of pedagogy and composing to their own creative projects, then evaluating their effectiveness through their theses’ methodologies.

Most projects undertaken in BCM (Honours) and PhD programs are creative work/exegesis multimodal formats, producing outcomes such as original compositions, performances and recordings, accompanied by scores, arrangements and ensemble charts; music for film and multimedia; kits of practical educational resources with compositions, charts, lesson plans, associated texts and professional development programs for music teachers. These projects are outcomes of independent self-directed research and creative work, specific to topics of importance to the student and often of significant value to the discipline and/or the surrounding society and culture. For example, a 2015 BCM (Honours) project was recommended for publication of the exegesis and commercial production of the compositions and recording: “This work was extraordinary ... its standard speaks to the quality of the supervision that guided its development and presentation, and the nature of the program that enabled it” (External examiner’s report, 2015). Study of Honours and Doctorates fulfils higher-levels of learning models: for example, learning is a process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984, 41), Kegan’s (1994, 42) “ingenious blend” through which “people grow best when they continuously experience an ingenious blend of challenge and support”. Honours and HDR higher-level learning is also evidence of the constants in music education: creativity, employment, aesthetic expression and personal fulfilment.

#### **V) Holistic Process of Adaptation to World: Upskilling Established Secondary and University Teachers**

Music teachers, having established their careers at university, secondary and primary schools or in private studios, may encounter periods when forces in the workplace, the music industry, the educational environment or their personal career trajectory demand their upskilling. A noticeable trend exemplifying this scenario in recent years in the university environment is institutional pressure to replace one-on-one tuition with group instrumental teaching. This occurred in the university where I teach, following a managerial requirement to replace half the one-to-one instrumental lessons with small group classes. Both the one-to-one instrumental lessons and small group classes formed part of a suite of weekly offerings for the delivery of performance units that included group instrumental workshop and

ensemble classes. However, this initiative sparked many requests from instrumental teachers for pedagogical support to manage the change of delivery and learning environment.

In response to this I created a two-day professional development (PD) workshop that aimed to identify best practice in group instrumental teaching, develop expertise in appropriate teaching strategies in staff, identify the most appropriate curriculum content suitable for group delivery, create resources for group teaching and devise assessment instruments for group teaching. The results were rather mixed. Some teachers embraced the opportunity to diversify their teaching portfolio and adapt the PD workshop outcomes into their instrumental studio, whether they agreed with the imposed change or not. Group teaching strategies that were adopted included students playing different musical parts together on instruments (e.g. string parts, horn lines, chords on keyboards), students performing different roles together on instruments (e.g. melody or improvisation, accompaniment, bass) and students doing independent practice with headphones on instruments in group classes where technology allows (e.g. multiple keyboards, drum laboratories). Generally, there was resistance to the change to group lessons, considerable reluctance amongst some participants to interrogate their own teaching practices, little evidence of changes being implemented within some studios except on a superficial level, a perceived lack of the value of ensemble and workshop teaching, and a constant pressure to return to one-to-one teaching. According to participants, much of the reason for this was the imposed nature of the change, highlighting the priority of budgetary targets over academic outcomes, and the lack of collective ownership of curriculum change. An environment of indoctrinated perception of the supremacy of one-to-one tuition as the pinnacle of instrumental teaching continues to exist. Nevertheless, the influence of this workshop is spreading as more universities change from individual to group music teaching; its outcomes are currently being published in two book chapters that will be disseminated internationally. The workshop has also been used in another Australian university undergoing similar curriculum changes from one-to-one to group instrumental lessons. “Her research into this major curriculum change offers outcomes and strategies that are useful and transferrable to other institutions having to make similar changes” (Peer feedback, 2017).

#### **Vi) Fulfilment, Altruism, Transfer and Adaptability: Professional Development for Adult Musicians**

The mature adult musician’s and teacher’s career characteristically embodies a portfolio of teaching, performing and creative work such as composing. This stage in a musician’s lifelong learning journey can realise very positive outcomes of aesthetic expression, personal fulfilment and altruism. Such outcomes have been expressed by the conductors and community orchestra and ensemble musicians interviewed in my research project *Conducting, musical direction and performance in community music ensembles and their influence on pedagogy*. The musical benefits of community music participation they reported included improved performance ability, informing one’s pedagogy and refinement of ensemble skills. Personal benefits included engagement in a community of practice, improved health and well-being, increased confidence and affirmative ageing. The civic benefits identified were altruism, cultural enrichment, audience engagement, access to arts in regional, remote and isolated communities, benevolence and charity.

However, being a member of a community orchestra or ensemble is still a vital stage of teacher education, as many members are music teachers. Community music ensembles provide environments with a huge potential for learning for musicians, teachers and conductors. During this year, an influx of new members plus an evaluation of performance standards of one of the orchestras studied in my research highlighted the continual need for

upskilling, education and (in some cases) re-learning of musical practice for members.

Performance practices needing specific attention were:

- ensemble playing: the ability to play within a section and within the whole ensemble in time, in tune and in balance
- notation and reading skills
- technical facility and tonal quality
- interpretation of styles and repertoire
- personal practice: the ability to practise using constructive methods that result in improvements to playing rather than repeating engrained mistakes and poor habits.

Personal attributes needing improvement included awareness of one's individual and collective responsibility to, and impact upon, the group; willingness to critique and improve one's playing; personal responsibility to address faults in one's playing and professionalism to heed advice and constructive criticism from conductors and sectional leaders. It is also incumbent on proficient long-term players to embrace their teaching and leadership role within the ensemble, by positively mentoring new section members, modelling best rehearsal and performance practices, and possibly directing small rehearsals for one's individual section.

Consequently, this orchestra's rehearsal programs now involve more sectional rehearsals where instrumental sections, under the direction of sectional leaders and in consultation with the conductor, work on specific aspects of repertoire. More importantly, instrumental sections work to improve intrinsic faults such as poor time keeping, rhythmic feel, tonal blend and balance, and understanding of the section's role throughout significant parts of the selected repertoire. In many cases, musicians need to re-learn private practice habits by transferring skills learned in isolation, such as solo performance, and adapting them to an ensemble situation; where each player must listen to the ensemble and adapt their playing and tone to suit the group. Some conductors also require re-education in communicating with players, needing to develop the professionalism and tenacity to provide honest constructive feedback, identify and workshop problems, demand and obtain agreed performance progress and standards, rather than repeatedly affirming and rewarding mediocrity. This is a major learning objective in professional education; the conductor being a master teacher, responsible for modelling best practice in musical pedagogy and leadership. One conductor (2015) identified the following important professional and musical skills required by conductors:

Be competent in leading the orchestra, not only musically but also in a position of leadership and promotion of the ensemble in the local community ... possess the necessary musical skills to be able to guide community musicians coherently from the first rehearsal right through to a polished performance.

#### **Vii) Evaluation, Reflection, Action, Integration: Dissemination Back into Music and Teacher Education**

The impact of this journey, "Seven Steps to Heaven" resonates when the learning is reflected upon and evaluated, and the lessons drawn from this process are acted upon and integrated into future curricula and pedagogy. My research may be used to inform teaching to develop best practice in class ensemble conducting and direction, embed a vocabulary and literacy of music theory, aural musicianship, performance and composition that is vertically and horizontally integrated; and facilitate leadership in pre-service teachers by informing them of current research and modelling teaching strategies in "learning spaces that promote growth-producing experiences for learning" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 205). The following quote

is evidence of effective dissemination of my curriculum and pedagogy back into music and teacher education.

I have been very fortunate to have enjoyed a great career in music education since leaving SCU. I would like to offer my thanks and respect to you for the impact and influence you had on my music teaching philosophy and practice, particularly in relation to the rigour you brought to the teaching of aural skills in musicianship. I have employed these techniques in my own teaching practice to great effect since (Principal, Northern Territory School of Music, 2016).

By “creating and holding a hospitable space for learning” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 207) for the provision of university curricula, students and pre-service teachers train effectively to undertake careers as music and instrumental teachers. Similarly, through professional development provision and informed community-engaged ensemble and orchestral programs, established musicians and teachers can continually upskill, maintain their professional practice and improve their pedagogy through lifelong learning. These mature-career teachers and musicians have an important role as mentors for younger and less proficient players and teachers. Such mentoring, even though often overlooked, can also play a vital role in upskilling colleagues in schools and universities, such as assisting junior staff prepare for promotion or undertake new teaching responsibilities.

## Summary and Evaluation

When commencing this research, the curriculum model I had developed was based on Bruner’s Spiral Curriculum, with essential concepts of creating a foundation of musical literacy, expanding this foundation into advanced musical literacy comprising an integrated program of theory, aural musicianship and performance. By applying this musical literacy in new and challenging activities such as composing, ensemble playing, musical direction and peer teaching, students develop versatility, leadership and higher-level learning. Building on these skills, students can specialise through self-directed independent projects such as Honours or Doctorates. Other students transition into vocations as music teachers, professional musicians, composers or follow a portfolio career embracing a diversity of these endeavours. Essential elements underpinning this spiral are creative practice and research. Figure 1 illustrates this curriculum model.

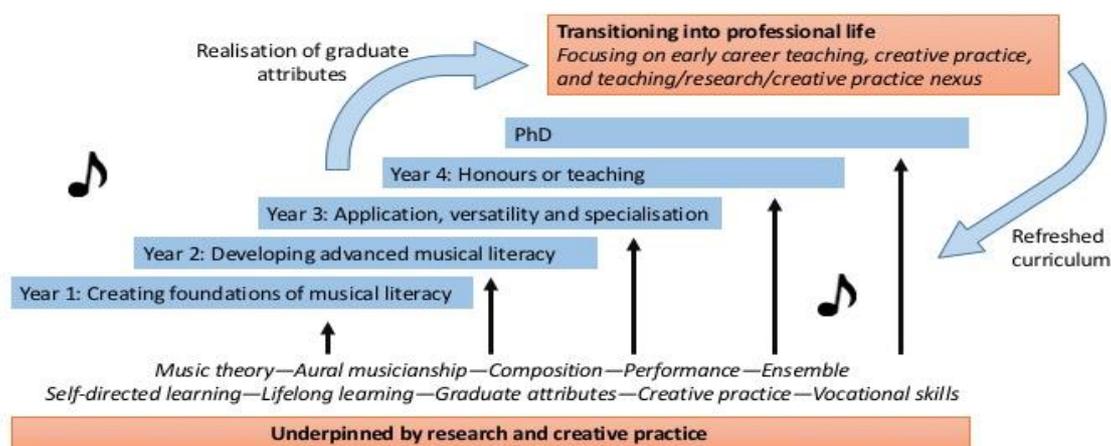


Figure 1: A Spiral Curriculum in Contemporary Music

Through continual development and refinement of my curriculum, integrating major concepts in the learning theories and curriculum models of Bruner, Efland, Kolb and Kolb, I have designed a more comprehensive curriculum model than the diagram above. This concluding section presents my new model and evaluates the success of the pedagogy discussed in this article against the principles of my proposed curriculum approach. The evaluation is supported by graphs displaying formal student ratings of my units and teaching from 2011-2017. My model is established on the following principles: curriculum is built on a foundation of advanced knowledge of subject matter Efland (1995), is hierarchial, developmental (Bruner (1960, 1996) and builds on prior knowledge; and recurrently engages with subject matter in increasing levels of complexity through a diversity of approaches and teaching strategies (Efland, 1995). Curriculum design should exhibit a comprehensible structure of knowledge and sequence of presentation (Curzon & Tummons, 2013), with vertical and horizontal integration of content. Knowledge, skills and expertise are learned within a domain then applied to new subjects and contexts, developing cognitive flexibility (Efland, 1995). Learning is an active process, involving problem-solving, reflection and evaluation; knowledge is created by transformation of experience ideally resulting in creative learning outcomes and holistic adaption to the world (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Through this process, learners ideally transform into self-directed, independent professional musicians and teachers who can maintain their musical and creative practice, but continually improve through self-directed lifelong learning. Constant elements in this landscape remain: musicianship, practice, creativity, employment, aesthetic expression and personal fulfilment. The expertise and knowledge acquired through engagement in this learning process should fulfil the university graduate attributes of intellectual rigour, creativity, ethical practice, disciplinary knowledge, lifelong learning, communication and social skills, and cultural competence (Southern Cross University, 2017).

**The tide of  
changing  
steps  
through  
the time of a  
musician's life**



**A spiral of  
lifelong  
learning stages  
upheld by  
a lattice of  
constant  
musical  
principles built  
on a foundation  
of musical  
literacy**



(Photo: Tree Stairs, 2014)  
**Figure 2: New Curriculum Model**

The “Seven Steps to Heaven” spotlighted in this article represent significant and transformative events on the lifelong learning and career of a music teacher and musician. The scenarios I have presented fulfil the learning objectives of my new curriculum model in the following ways. Step One: in the first two years of the Contemporary Music degree, a foundation of musical literacy is established then reinforced by advanced study of music theory, aural musicianship and performance. Step Two: the knowledge and skills learned from this foundation are extended and then applied to more challenging tasks of composition, and transferred to various musical styles, structures and genres. The theoretical content of this curriculum is integrated vertically from fundamental to advanced, consecutively sequenced upward through the years of this degree. The curriculum is also integrated horizontally, as expertise is developed in this domain by reinforcing theoretical concepts with aural recognition and performance across different units in each year level. Original composition and arranging is undertaken through a process of creative problem-solving. Step Three: final year Music Education major students transform into self-directed pre-service teachers and leaders, exhibiting versatility through practising a portfolio of teaching approaches to content and delivery, facilitated in several vocationally-relevant contexts. Step Four: in Honours and higher degree research, students combine their knowledge of the musical domain and expertise in musical literacy, performance, research, creative work and often teaching, to produce independent, self-directed creative projects on a topic of great significance and interest to them, and ideally of importance to the music discipline and broader society. These research projects add to the intellectual capital of music and education disciplines by creating knowledge, contributing to literature and creative repertoire. Affective outcomes of this high level of learning include personal fulfilment and aesthetic expression.

Although the next three stages on this journey occur after university, they have continued relevance to teacher education, spotlighting opportunities for upskilling and career development for teachers and musicians. Step Five: by undertaking professional development, either formal or informal, throughout one’s career, and being receptive to the continual need to refine one’s pedagogy; teachers can build a portfolio of leadership, managerial, creative, pedagogical and musical skills and knowledge. Such diversity, and participants’ readiness to learn and adapt to new and different situations, can produce teachers of exceptional ability, flexibility, relevance, professionalism and effectiveness. Step Six: similarly, community music ensembles are populated with university music students, music teachers, private music tutors, semi-professional and professional musicians. Most members acknowledge the benefits from community music participation as personal fulfilment and altruism. Community orchestras and ensembles would benefit greatly from professionally designed professional development and rigorous individual practice programs. These aesthetic demands offer excellent opportunities for adult learners to continue their lifelong education and for conductors, sectional leaders and other teachers to create and facilitate specialist programs designed to improve the performance and capabilities of their musicians and the overall ensemble. Steps Five and Six both entail participants alternating roles between teacher and learner, a flexibility of attitude and practice where the musician must recognise and act upon their need for learning, then manifest their ability to pass on acquired skills to new learners; transferring and adapting their expertise to new situations. Step Seven fulfils the evolution of this curriculum design, by assessing and reflecting upon the learning outcomes and pedagogy practised, then integrating this knowledge back into the learning cycle.

My pedagogical approaches used in these scenarios include integration of technological resources into individual and group practice, arranging contemporary repertoire to teach traditional composition forms, student peer team-teaching, the creation and facilitation of professional development programs for HDR supervision, instrumental group

teaching and orchestral ensemble sections. The effectiveness of these strategies has been evaluated through student and peer feedback, performance outcomes, creative outputs and benchmarking. Formal student feedback over the past seven years consistently rate my university units and my teaching over 4/5, which is higher than the School or university average. Figure 3 illustrates these statistics. “In 35 years as an educator I have rarely encountered such compelling evidence of high quality teaching as the result of conscious professional refinement” (SCU Head of School of Arts and Social Sciences, 2016).

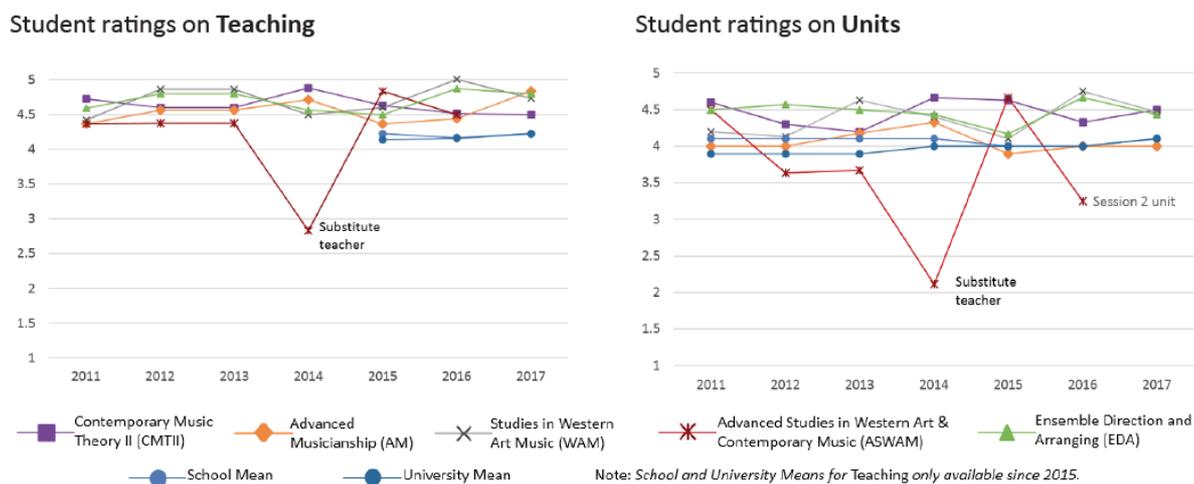


Figure 3: Formal Student Feedback 2011-2017

## Conclusion

This article follows one possible life journey of a musician and music teacher, spotlighting seven pivotal, transformational events during their career. With a secure and innovative curriculum model providing structured learning opportunities, the learner can successfully grow from student to self-directed creative artist, teacher, leader and professional practitioner; empowered with sufficient self-efficacy and flexibility to alternate between learner and teacher throughout the successive stages of their life and career. In accordance with the theme of ANZARME’s 39<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2017 “Tide and Time”; changes in educational provision, student learning styles, technology, resources and the institutional environment reflect relentless manipulations and effects of the tide of twenty-first century innovation. Underpinning the domain of musical practice, knowledge, pedagogy and education with the timeless professional standards of musicianship, performance and creativity maximises opportunities for learning and employability, and the manifestation of creative and aesthetic expression and personal fulfilment. Aligned with The Australian Journal of Teacher Education’s (2017) purpose “to enhance the quality of teacher education”, my recommendations are for twenty-first century musicians and music teachers to follow a clearly structured and scaffolded path through their music education and teaching career, modelled by an innovative curriculum and underpinned by rigorous musical standards; for teachers to recognise and take advantage of the situations throughout their life and career that provide significant learning opportunities; and the humility to alternate between the roles of learner and teacher throughout their life’s journey. It is not a matter of “those who can’t play, teach; those who can’t teach, teach teachers” but of nurturing portfolio music teachers who can play and teach and learn and teach teachers.

“Remember that man first began perfect as a star, there we were, here we are.  
One two three four five six seven, home heaven” (Seven Steps to Heaven, 1999).

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