Chapter Five

Methodology, Methods and Procedures

Introduction

In Chapter Two I discussed narrative and phenomenological theoretical principles. In this chapter I now describe how the theoretical principles form the basis of specific methodologies. Narrative and phenomenological methodologies are strategies geared toward enhancing understanding of experience-for-the-other, emic perspectives and individual 'realities' and they seek the 'situation-specific meanings that are constructed by social actors' (Schwandt, 1998, p. 221). Research phenomenologists seek to understand phenomenal experience 'as it is lived, not merely as it is theorised' (Pinar, et al. 1995, p. 408), and narrative researchers collect stories of lives and re-write them as narratives of experience (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

Importantly, after the discussion of methodology, I explain the logistical procedures, methods and techniques used to conduct the study. This includes the recruitment of participants, gaining access to the contexts of their musical lifeworlds, the data generation processes used 'in the field', and the data interpretation processes used. In addition, 'arts-based' design elements and literary forms of expression (Barone and Eisner, 1997; Barone, 2000, 2001) are described as these are used to enhance the re-storying of data.
The 'case study' framework

The thesis is 'a series of phenomenological narratives' but it may also be defined as a collection of case studies. By following the directions of Stake (1995) each participant is considered an 'intrinsic case', a 'bounded system and context' where focus is placed on the 'particularity and complexity of the single case' (see Stake, 1995, p. xii). Stake (1995) suggests that with case study, we also consider the issues within the 'bounded system'. 'Issues', he states, when viewed as 'conceptual structure' help force attention to 'complexity and contextuality' and by identifying the issues we become familiar with an entity, how it struggles and copes with problems' (p. 16). The issues that I focus on in each case study include the relationship of each 'case' to specific realms of 'lived experience with music teaching and learning'.

By avoiding cross-case analysis and comparisons my aim is to foreground individuality and uniqueness and to highlight what is musically personal, perspectival and idiosyncratic to each participant. Importantly this aim precludes the making of broad generalisations for as Stake (1995) suggests, 'a single case or just a few cases are a poor basis for generalisation' (p. 7).

Narrative Methodology

As a methodological approach to 'knowing and structuring experience' (Bruner, 1986, Polkinghorne, 1988) narrative inquiry is 'sweeping a range of academic disciplines' (Josselson, 1995, p. 31). As an approach to the idiographic study of lives it has flowered in many overlapping and related fields. These include psychology (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Sarbin, 1986; Mishler, 1986a; Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995; Josselson and Lieblich, 1994; Murray, 1995), social science (Mishler, 1986b, 1999; Tierney, 1993; Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995; Richardson, 1997; Bochner, 2001), education (Egan, 1986; Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, 1994, 2000; Bruner,

The methodology of narrative inquiry is based on 'intelligent applications of the use of narrative (theory) ... for the understanding of human lives' (Lieblich, 1994, p. xi). The methodology makes use of the personal accounts of informants as these contain descriptions and interpretations of the structures of experience, which are then available for further description and interpretation by the researcher. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the inquiry process as the capturing and reporting of storied knowledge and suggest that narrative inquirers 'live, tell, retell and relive stories' (p. 71). In a narrative approach data is 'captured' from any available form of descriptive record or social text. These may include interviews, field notes, autobiographical writing, journals, oral history, annals, chronicles, memory boxes, photographs and artefacts, letters and conversations, speeches, visual records such as film, videos and music (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, pp. 96-115; Denzin, 1997, p. 231, also Hatch 2002, p. 280).

As my focus was the phenomenon of lived musical experience, I chose to collect 'field texts' from 'shared work in the field' (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 265). This included – the conducting of semi-structured, in depth interviews with the five participants, videotaping or audio recording musical performances by them, conducting informal interviews with parents and teachers of the student participants, writing field notes of observations 'in the field' and keeping a reflective journal.

Narrative researchers see the data generation process as a joint living out of the narratives of both researcher and participants. This conjoining of lifeworld experience means that narrative inquiry is viewed as a collaboration and co-construction of data. Researchers 'live in' the participant's storied accounts, and therefore include stories of their own experiences in their field observations and field notes (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, p. 275).

In post-positive research designs, when the data generation processes have been conducted, the next phase would traditionally be the step of 'interpreting data
and presenting findings'. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) however, refer to this phase as ‘making meaning out of experience by turning field texts into research texts’ (p. 119). This requires a detailed investigation and interpretation of the raw data or field texts in order to turn them into a meaningful and readable form. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) refer to this process as restorying or retelling. They describe it as follows –

Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analysing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then re-writing the story to place it within a chronological sequence. Often when individuals tell a story, this sequence may be missing or not logically developed, and by restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas.

(p. 332)

As Kvale (1996) concludes, the narrative researcher’s task is to answer the question ‘How can I reconstruct the original story told to me by the interviewee into a story I want to tell my audience?’ (p. 185). Thus, the term narrative inquiry refers to both that which is investigated (the stories and the meanings embedded within reflections of experience) and also the means by which the work is undertaken and presented (thinking narratively to synthesise and interpret the meanings inherent in the stories). The structuring of causal links into a new, readable story requires attention to scene and plot. Scene is the ‘place where the action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining roles’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). ‘Plot’ is the structure of the action of the story, or, as Clark (2004) suggests - ‘the series of events consisting of an outline of the action of a narrative or drama’ (p. 1).

My field notebook and reflective journal were important for recording observations and impressions. Importantly, interpretation did not commence when all the field research had been conducted. It took place concurrently with the data generation processes in ‘an ongoing fashion’ as I did not wish ‘to wait until I was
removed from the research context’ (see Hatch, 2002, p. 56). It was vital, in many cases to capture fleeting impressions and “on-the-spot” intuitive ideas.

With narrative methods I ‘gained access’ to musical lifeworlds by ‘capturing’ and interpreting the participant’s stories. Additionally, I have utilised phenomenological methods to focus on the ‘primacy of lived experience’ and phenomenological reflection to capture the essence of musical lifeworld experience for the participants.

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**Phenomenological Methodology**

Phenomenological methodology advanced primarily within the developing discipline of qualitative psychology (Gurvitsch, 1966; Giorgi, Fischer and Von Eckarisberg, 1971; Aanstoos, 1984; Giorgi, 1984; Wertz, 1984; Von Eckartsberg, 1986; Karlsson, 1993). The earliest of these writings have influenced other areas of research where further adaptations have been made, notably in education (Van Manen, 1990) and social science and health psychology (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 1996).

Phenomenological researchers are concerned with ‘the meaning of lived experience’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). They focus on phenomena as consciously experienced in everyday life and seek to understand the identified phenomena ‘as it is lived, not merely as it is theorised’ (Pinar, et al 1995, p. 408). A phenomenological researcher ‘studies the subjects’ perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects’ consciousness (and seeks) to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences (in order to) explicate their essential meanings’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 53). Another perspective is held by Fuller (1990) who links a theoretical principle of phenomenology to a methodological application where meaning is interpreted from experience. He states that.
Phenomenology is the plea for a confrontation with “the things themselves”, phenomena on their own lifeworld ground. And phenomenology at the same time is a method for understanding these “things”, these everyday events of meaning, an interpretive describing of the invariant structure of meaning events.

(p. 43)

Again, as with the narrative schedule, the art of writing and rewriting is fundamental to phenomenological research. Moustakas (1994) describes the writing stage where lived meanings and interpretations are presented as a 'composite textural-structural description' of the essence of experience (pp. 121-122). Van Manen (1990) describes the important transferring of interpretations into research text. He states that

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence - in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.

(p. 36)

Informed by this description, in the musical lifeworld portraits, I have inserted interpretations of data that are designed to capture phenomenological expressions of the essence of lived experience. These sections are reflexive re-livings and reflective appropriations of meaningful musical experiences. Coupled with narrative interpretations, in addition to the concept of texts as re-livings, I consider the student portraits as phenomenological re-tellings of musical lifeworlds as told in narrative form (see Bruner, 1986, p. 6, also Denzin, 1997, p. 61).

In this study, the ‘contextual world’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 79) where data are collected includes the home, school and communities of musical practice. These physical spaces are the contexts of the inquiry. However, as the explicit intention of phenomenology is ‘to investigate meaning on its own lifeworld ground’ (Fuller, 1990, p. 25), I recognise that it is the music meaning structures generated within the physical spaces that are the contextual targets. The focus becomes – not only the
spaces themselves but how they are existentially 'lived in'. Van Manen (1990) refers to this concept of space as lived spatiality, which is one of four existential realms or lifeworld existentials (p. 101 and 172). In addition to spatiality (lived space) the other existentials are 'temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body) and sociality (lived relationship to others)' (p. 101 and 172). Importantly, these realms are contextual focal points where meanings are uncovered.

I follow Van Manen’s suggestion and reflect on the existential realms within the music lifeworld ground of each participant. These, I refer to as lived music-time, lived music-space, lived music-body and lived music-social relations.

The contexts of lived music-space and lived music-time

To consider space and time phenomenologically is to study how they are 'lived in' and 'lived through'. Importantly, these existential realms are the foundations of our experience. For example, when discussing 'lived space' Fuller (1990) suggests that it is not grounded in physical, objective space. Rather, it is the other way around. He states that

**Objective space clearly is not, in phenomenology's view, the one underlying space on the basis of which all other spaces are consequently built up. That prerogative belongs rather to lived spatiality.**

(p. 71)

Also, according to Van Manen (1990) chronological or 'clock time' is different to 'lived time' (p. 104). For example, in each portrait, the chronological sequencing of musical events and episodes is the descriptive backdrop to the meanings constructed within existential lived music-time.

Lived music-time and space are more than the 'when and where' of the participant's relationships with music. They are the 'meaning dimensions' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 103) of time and the locations where the meanings occur. With
this guide, I focus on the spatial and temporal ‘lived’ meanings uncovered from the participants’ accounts of their lives, including

- school timetables, classes, private lessons, examinations, after-school rehearsals, school concerts and tours;
- community music events such as pantomimes, theatre productions and eisteddfods;
- other performances such as band competitions, busking on weekends and holidays and also time spent “looking for gigs”;
- time spent on computers – composing and recording;
- attending concerts and festivals;
- private listening and relaxing to music;
- looking for “good CDs”, discussing music whilst “hanging out” with musician friends.

Additionally, all of the five participants spend time engaged with either one or more related performing arts and associated activities. Some of these include dance and drama and stage and lighting production.

The contexts of lived music-body and lived music-social-relations

Observations of participant musical performances offer opportunities for phenomenological reflection on the existential realm and experiential context of the lived music-body. To do this I suspend or ‘bracket’ (as far as possible) my array of music “teacher, performer, connoisseur, technician, assessor” selves where attention is directed toward the quality of sound and its production techniques. I am then able to focus on the lived music-body in action, and ask myself, “How is the participant bodily (living) in the music?” “How do the bodily gestures indicate meaningful structures within the performance experience?” Importantly, in addition to understanding the body’s relationship to music experience, by focussing on these questions I am able to make further interpretations based on
discovered connections between meanings expressed by the participants in interviews with the actions that I have observed in their musical performance. Here is an example of this interpretive process with the participant Jan –

Jan had mentioned, in interview, how she deliberately selects songs where the lyrics have meaningful 'messages' that express what she feels about her life. As I was transcribing this part of the interview, I began to think intently about her comments and wondered if this related to the song she sang at the performance I had witnessed. I decided to watch the videotape of her singing the song 'Lion Tamer'. I made an important connection between what she had described and what she was now singing and expressing in the song. I realise how the performance is especially meaningful for her and how she is 'bodily' located in the music. The lyrics poetically and metaphorically reflect certain personal perceptions she harbours of self. They reflect a specific concern that she has in her life. From her performance, I learn how music is used as a form of expression of her personal life matters. (See page 206 for details)

The existential, phenomenological lifeworld realm of social musical relationships is an important contextual focal point within the study. As Van Manen (1990) states, 'parent-child and teacher-child relationships... are charged with interpersonal significance' (p. 106). In this study, significances are explored within the interpersonal musical relationships with family members, teachers, classmates and fellow musicians. They provide insight into the social and musical influences that shape musical identities.

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An Outline of Procedures, Techniques and Processes

The following table is a brief outline of the research design. The details of each stage will follow.
Research Procedures

- Ethical permission to conduct the study was sought and granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Tasmania.

- Contact was made with the appropriate authorities and governing bodies and permission was granted to conduct the research in a Tasmanian State school and a Private college.

- Contact was made with the Principals of the schools. Access was granted and music teachers agreed to participate and assist in the student recruitment process.

- Five music students were the principal participants in the study. Parent/s and music teachers of the students were important secondary participants.

- The students were self-selected – volunteering after attending the project information talk given by me as a guest speaker in their school music classes.

- All participants read study information sheets and signed participant consent forms. Participating parents read and signed parental consent forms and participating music teachers read and signed teacher consent forms.

Data Collection Procedures

- Three 30 minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each student participant. Single, informal interviews were conducted with the parent/s of each student participant and also with their school music teachers. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

- Students were observed while in musical performance. These performances were either video or audio taped. My field and reflective journal notes formed an important source of narrative and phenomenological data.

Data Interpretation

- Data was interpreted using a) Narrative analytical procedures (Polkinghorne, 1995) and b) Phenomenological reflection and interpretation (Wertz, 1984 and Van Manen, 1990). This structure is designed to blend interpretations of lived experience with 'storied knowledge' and 'paradigmatic, conceptual knowledge'.

- Composite portraits were narratively constructed using the data interpretations. Writing the research portraits was perceived as a method for further reflection and discovery of lived meanings – not only of musical lifeworlds, but also of different 'ways of thinking' about music and pedagogy and researcher/researched relationships. Arts-based and literary design elements were used as vehicles for presenting storied meanings and enhancing representations of lived meanings.

Table 1. The Research Design

4 There is one exception here. I later abided by Jeremiah’s request not to meet his parents.
To recruit music students I sought access, through the Tasmanian Department of Education, to a State senior secondary school and a private, independent college located in the Tasmanian capital city of Hobart. I specifically targeted these schools as they have strong musical reputations in the local community. The music department of each offers a variety of courses, band and ensemble programs, and private music tuition. Many students from both schools go on to undertake tertiary music study.

The public school, Riverside College is focussed on vocational training and the music course structures are centred on contemporary music forms such as rock and 'pop' styles, jazz and musical theatre. However, the school does have a traditional concert band and it caters for individual, enthusiastic Western art (classical) musicians. The contemporary outlook is emphasised with music technology, audio design and associated subjects such as media, video, sound and lighting courses. During my visits to Riverside I observed a strong 'pop' culture where musical rivalry between the College rock bands was a feature as each would strive each year to win the local 'Battle of the Bands Competition'.

On the other hand the musical spirit of St. Catherine's, the private, independent school is founded in its longstanding Western art tradition. The music program, with the inclusion of strings and a choral strand, features an orchestra and several choirs. The music courses do not feature the practice of rock and popular styles and whilst students may receive tuition in guitar the focus is on Western art repertoire. However, popular style is represented in a well-supported musical theatre program and large-scale productions are a regular feature of the college musical life.

The participant recruitment procedure

Permission was granted from the Tasmanian Department of Education to conduct the research and I proceeded to contact the schools. After a meeting and discussion with each principal I was introduced to music teachers who then
arranged for me to present a short research recruitment talk to students before the commencement of music lessons.

My rough script for this speech went as follows –

"My research project aims to contribute to our understanding of the needs and changing nature of music education. In order to do this my plan is to hear the individual perspectives of enthusiastic and dedicated music students.

I am interested in learning about the ways you construct significant and meaningful relationships with music – hearing from you – about the specific ways you get ‘into it’, love it and spend long hours practising it. I would like to hear about your feelings and attitudes to music and the types of learning processes you use.

Most importantly I would like to hear about music’s part in your personal life histories – how you grew up with it and how it has become such an important part of your life.

I plan to write up individual, musically focussed stories so that administrators and teachers who read them may get a close look at the inside ‘nuts and bolts’ of individual musical lives”.

After this introduction, I briefly answered questions about the project and then waited for the conclusion of the music lessons when volunteers were invited to meet me in order to ‘sign up’ for the study.

Through this self-selection procedure, critical case samples surfaced as the participants who volunteered perceived themselves as enthusiastic and dedicated. I later recognised that the recruitment procedure had isolated participants who were ‘captured by music’ and all were highly motivated performers. I would later discover the extent of their enthusiasm and dedication. All were seeking music careers, either through further study at University, Performing Art Schools or by going straight into the music ‘business’. They enjoyed talking in detail about their musical lives and desires and plans for future success with music. Enthusiasm was evidenced in the commitment that all five participants made to the study. While I tried to minimise the intrusion on busy schedules all were willing to give up valuable time to be interviewed, and to be observed in musical performances.
With the selection process I could not control such variables as gender, age, type of instrument, socio-economic background or schooling (as I assumed idiosyncratic, well-developed musical identities to be independent of those factors). Four participants, Polly, Mario, Jan and Kristin, were aged between sixteen and eighteen and in their last two years of school (Years 11 and 12). The exception, Jeremiah, was twenty-one years old. He had left school and “worked in mundane jobs” before deciding to return to “Year 13” specifically to study and complete the Higher School Certificate in music. Polly, Mario and Jeremiah were from Riverside and Jan and Kristin attended St. Catherine’s.

Collecting stories and ‘lived experience material’

In keeping with the spirit of qualitative research, I recognise data as ‘lived experience material’. Van Manen (1990) coined this term believing that the traditional meaning has ‘quantitative overtones associated with behavioural and more positivistic social science approaches’ and relating to measurement and discovery of facts (p. 53). For the sake of brevity, I use the word data but apply Van Manen’s definition. I also acknowledge Bochner’s (2001) approach and qualitative reflection of data. With a narrative perspective, he says ‘think of the life being expressed not merely as data to be analysed and categorised but as a story to be respected and engaged’ (p. 132). While transcribing interview recordings, I also heeded Kvale’s words to ‘beware of transcripts – the interviews are living conversations’ (1996, p. 182).

The principal strategies used to collect data were semi-structured and informal interviewing, video and audio taping of musical performances, participant observations and the writing of field and journal notes.
Semi-structured interviewing

A postmodern, constructivist stance to interviewing assumes the process to be ‘a social production and unfolding of relational meanings that are constructed through linguistic interaction’ (Kvale, 1996, p. 226). In this stance the relational meanings of personal accounts, statements, beliefs and narratives of experience are co-authored between the participant and interviewer. On this point Kvale (1996) states:

The interview is an intersubjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest. The interviewer does not merely collect statements like gathering small stones on a beach. His or her questions lead up to what aspects of a topic the subject will address, and the interviewer’s active listening and following up on the answers co-determines the course of the conversation.

(p. 183)

With this approach the interviews were viewed as guided conversations where my task was to encourage the participants to ‘follow streams of thought’ and assist the exploration of ‘in-depth experiences that (were) unformulated, yet powerful in their lives’ (Bresler, 1996, p. 12). My role was to elicit important life-history accounts and perceptions of life episodes and attached meanings.

Hatch (2002) makes a distinction between semi-structured and informal interviews. He believes that informal interviews are better suited as strategic parts of observation studies where they will not be the primary source of data (p. 92). I refer to my own design as semi-structured because the interviews were the major source of data and were informed by the observation data – not the other way around. In addition, I entered the interviews with important guiding questions and specific themes to cover. However, I also sought a degree of informality and flexibility, wanting to allow wider, less researcher-directed responses and stories to emerge. To do this I sought a relaxed atmosphere by trying not to project an air of ‘being in charge’. I introduced myself not as a teacher, but as a researcher from the
university and presented myself in interview as a fellow practising musician engaging in a 'conversation about a theme of mutual interest' (Kvale, 1996, p. 125).

The guide questions on my notepad (see Appendix A) were not rigidly adhered to if the participant wanted to discuss musical issues, topics, events or life episodes that were deeply felt and hence important to them. However, every interview with each participant had a theme and any control I exerted on the direction was intended to stay reasonably close to the theme.

Importantly, my aim was to strive to be sensitive to individual forms of expression and articulation. In some cases descriptions of musical life events were accompanied with interpretations and explanations of the causes of situations and personal meanings of events. At other times there were laconic, one sentence answers. In both cases the guide questions on my notepad would act as a safety net, either with handy reference points to return to themes or as prompts to allow conversations and questions to probe issues more deeply.

Responses to interview questions were often elaborate and eloquent but I also recognised that meaning and profundity often came in short, sharp answers. For example –

**DAVID: What is it about music that attracts you to it?**
A: Just mainly the idea that – *(pause and with emotion)* I suppose it is something beautiful. It kind of brings me pleasure to be able to like sing or listen to music and I just...(pause) yes!

Often it was sufficient for me just to say "Tell me about..." and the participant would talk freely (in one case for nearly ten minutes without interruption from me). Some would focus meticulously on individual points while others would span a great range of life history in a few sentences. As each unique relationship with music unfolded I attempted to adjust my approach in order to pace and match interaction with the specific case. A challenge for me as an interviewer was to apply a situational appropriateness to the variety of temperament and
personality of each participant. Some musical relationships were described emotionally and with intensity. For some, while there was a dedication to music, the part it played was regarded as simply 'matter-of-fact' and a normal part of daily life.

On a number of occasions, several participants turned interview topics toward issues that were a cause of emotional conflict in their lives and they took the opportunity to 'get something off their chest'. These discussions reminded me that music is not always happily enmeshed in the emotional life of the self. I was concerned and offered practical advice as best I could but my role as researcher was stretched to one of counsellor or support person. As a 'confidant' I believe these issues were not topics to expand upon, probe into or refer on. Importantly, I felt that more direct and personal assistance was the domain of their parents and teachers and it reinforced my concern that a multi-dimensional view of musical identity is required in order to include empathy toward the emotional aspects that occur in musical lifeworlds.

While my later data interpretation procedures would uncover the deeper layers of meaning from the transcripts, an important task in the interview setting was to pick up on immediate meanings as they presented themselves in order to build upon and explore responses to the questions.

The Three Interview Series

I undertook an interview schedule based on Seidman's (1998) 'structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing'. This involves a series of three interviews with each participant (p. 11). The purpose of this series is to get a broader exploration of context. Seidman (1998, p. 11) quotes Mishler (1986b) who states that, 'Interviewers who propose to explore their topic by arranging a one-shot meeting with an “interviewee” whom they have never met tread on thin contextual ice'. Seidman describes how his ‘three series plan’ takes context into consideration. He states that
The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them.

(p. 11)

The interviews were kept to approximately thirty minutes each and the intention was to space them at two-week intervals. However the spacing varied considerably and became determined by the timetables and work commitments of each participant. I now describe the three separate interviews.

Interview One: Focused Life History

Seidman (1998) identifies the purpose of the first interview as one of putting ‘the participant’s experience into context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time’ (p. 11).

With this focus I sought to elicit stories that would illuminate how the participants had commenced their musical lives. Questions probed for descriptions of musical experiences - both within the family circle and also of early music activities and experiences that took place in and out of school. In addition to seeking information about important events, I sought perceptions of ‘significant others’ – those that had been influential in their musical lives.

Importantly, in order to answer the second research question, I sought descriptions of experiences that were remembered as deeply felt, formative, transformative or epiphanic.

Interview Two: The Details of Experience

In this interview, participants were asked to concentrate on the current details of their musical experiences. In bringing the focus into the present I asked
questions that sought the physical details of current engagements with music. While Seidman suggests 'we do not ask for opinions but rather the details of their experiences on which opinions may be built' (p. 12) in the case of this study, because my concern is with individual perceptions and 'realities', I specifically sought personal 'opinions' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs.

This interview was the opportunity to focus my inquiries on to the third aim of the study, which is to understand each participant's encounters with different types of music learning experiences. I therefore asked questions about attitudes and perceptions to different learning processes both in and out of school and also about personal approaches to music practice sessions. The relationship with school music was discussed.

Interview Three – Reflection on the Meaning.

The third interview provided opportunities for the participants and I to reflect and discuss experiences portrayed in the other two interviews. Reflecting on the meanings of experiences I sought to uncover connections that would 'establish reasons for what they are now doing in their lives' (Seidman, 1998, p. 11). My strategy in this interview was to ask questions that would prompt the participants to reflect on their values of music, of 'what it is', and their relationship with school music.

In this interview I also asked each participant if they had an important musical 'artefact' or memento that had significant personal meaning for them. Discussion of such items, which ranged from CDs of "special songs" to an Aboriginal didgeridoo, provided data for interpretive insight into participants' values. This 'hermeneutical exercise' helped to reveal the 'the lived experience surrounding the material culture (which was) translated into a different context of interpretation' (Hodder, 1998, p. 113).

In this interview I also asked the participants to look to the future and to talk about their hopes and aspirations for a future with music.
Interviews with the parents and music teachers

The interviews conducted with the parents and music teachers of each participant took the form of informal conversations. I was invited to family homes to talk to parents and to the schools to interview the teachers. As these interviews took place after the completion of the student interviews and musical performance sessions I had much background information about the participants. However, I attempted to use this information, not to dictate, but to steer conversations to the student participant's musical lifeworlds. The parents and teachers were open and eager to discuss their son/daughter/pupil's background in music. Again it was often sufficient for me to say "Tell me about..." or "How did ... first become attracted to music?" By entering family homes I was placed into important contexts of participant musical spaces and 'family musical scripts'. My experiences in these contexts also provided valuable observational data.

Interviews with parents and music teachers provided important perspectives and additional dimensions to the musical lifeworlds being investigated. By including interpretations of parent and teacher experiences and stories I could build a more dimensional or 'crystallised' (Richardson, 2000) picture of the participants' musical lifeworlds and therefore more elaborate and composite portraits.

Participant observation and music performance sessions

When the opportunity arose, I made random notes of observations in order to generate further data. 'Raw field notes' (Hatch, 2002, p. 82) were written down in a field notebook whilst in settings such as the interview sessions, visits to homes and schools, whilst at musical performance sessions and on occasions, outside school staff rooms when waiting for participants to arrive. My notes often attempted to capture passing thoughts and fleeting impressions that would often
surface at any time. When not ‘in the field’ I also recorded reflections and thoughts into a research journal.

The time engaged in participant observation was an important opportunity to ‘enter the lifeworlds’ (Van Manen, 1990, p. 69) of the participants. I would attempt ‘to see the world through their eyes and make sense of social settings and how they make sense within that setting’ (Hatch 2002, pp. 72-73). I could also observe some of the things the participants took for granted – things that did not surface in the interviews (Hatch, 2002, p. 72). When I was with the participants in their ‘settings’, I attempted to engage in what Van Manen (1990) calls ‘close observation’ or a ‘hermeneutic alertness to situations’. This requires not only alertness, but also the process of ‘stepping back to reflect on the meaning of situations’ (p. 68).

Attending musical performances by each of the participants was an opportunity to assume a ‘hermeneutic alertness’ to the musical lifeworlds of the participants. The sessions were vital for my overall impression of the participants for while we had talked about and discussed music and their musical lives, I now had an opportunity to witness the existential realm and experiential context of the ‘lived music-body’ in action. The sessions were either video or audio taped and when I left the ‘field’, having ‘preserved documentary records’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 126) was important for reference, for later observation and reflection.

In the next section I present the phenomenological and the narrative interpretive and analytical procedures. These are discussed and related to the process of narrative construction.

Re-storying - turning data into narrative portraits

My first step in ‘systematically searching for meaning in the data’ (Hatch, 2002, p. 148) was to develop an overall scheme for the construction of narrative portraits. I began by setting up different ‘plot lines’ or ‘organising themes that identify the significance and the role of the individual events’ (Polkinghorne, 1988,
These plot lines include interpretations and meanings of events and episodes that relate to the different research questions.

I now describe three individual interpretive tasks involved with writing each plot line. While isolated here for the sake of explanation, in the written portraits the lines are tightly woven together.

The First Interpretive Task

The first task was to construct a plot line that would map the musical life history of each participant. This plot line included significant, deeply felt lifeworld music experiences, events, and episodes. I selected these 'happenings' (Stake, 1995, p. 37) from the data as I recognised them as powerful, epiphanic or transformative - either as formative moments in musical life journeys or as 'enhancers' of musical identity. With this plot line I illuminated the meanings and qualities surrounding the significant experiences. To do this I followed the advice of Moustakas (1994) who states

The qualities of the experience become the focus; the filling in or completion of the nature and meaning of the experience becomes the challenge. The task requires that I look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe; always with reference to textural qualities.

(p. 90)

Contained within this plot line are the interpersonal musical relationships, influence of family and teachers and accounts of everyday musical events. They form a narrative background for the more dramatic experiences, events and episodes within the plot line.
The Second Interpretive Task

My next task was to develop a plot line that presents the participant's perspectives, opinions and attitudes toward issues of formal and informal music learning. To do this, where appropriate to the overall story, sections of raw data were selected and included as they directly express the personal opinions and perspectives of participants to particular educational issues. While raw data are framed by interpretation and comment I minimised these inclusions as Kvale (1996) advises against 'butchering the subjects' exciting stories into atomistic quotes and isolated variables' (p. 254). Purposefully, from these sections of raw data, paradigmatic categories were developed and included into the overall narrative structure of each portrait.

Within this plot line I also include vignettes of autobiographical detail. These have a twofold purpose. Firstly, they 'strive for honesty and revelation of a larger picture' (Richardson, 2000, p. 931) by placing my researcher self, not in a transcendental realm but embodied in the research and educational issues and struggles (see Usher, 1997, p. 39). Including my practical life experience of the educational issues being portrayed provides the reader with a background of my contexts, biases and the lens through which I look. Secondly, the vignettes contain personal comment and criticism that is designed to add to the on-going educational dialogue and debate about the issues being portrayed. As Eisner (1991) reports, in qualitative research criticism provides a 'social utility' and more 'public presence' to the personal process of being a connoisseur or describer and relater of qualities (p. 85).

The Third Interpretive Task

My third interpretive task within the narrative scheme was to write both of the plot lines mentioned in a way that would highlight and contrast Bruner's 'two ways of looking'. With this plan I used the paradigmatic mode to construct
conceptual knowledge about events and the narrative mode to construct storied knowledge of particular situations. To achieve this I am informed by Polkinghorne’s (1995) adaptation of Brunerian theory where narrative construction is divided into two separate interpretive procedures that reflect the narrative and paradigmatic ‘ways of thinking’.

All the plot lines are both descriptive - 'an accounting of' - and also interpretive - 'an accounting for' the meaning structures that accompany experiences (Eisner, 1991, p. 95).

I use phenomenological and narrative interpretive procedures to capture the qualities and essences of experience (Van Manen, 1990, p. 77) and musical meaning for the subject (Koopman and Davies, 2001). I shall now describe each of these interpretive processes in turn.

Phenomenological methods

Phenomenological methodological principles are structured into practical steps and guiding principles by Van Manen (1990). The following six steps are his suggestions for the conducting of pedagogical phenomenological research and inform my approach.

1. ‘turning to a phenomena that seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualise it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterise the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole’.

(p. 30)
The specific data collection procedures advocated by Van Manen (1990) and also Moustakas (1994) include interviewing informants and close observation of lifeworlds. In these processes the researcher is not a distant observer of the observed. Van Manen (1990) states that 'Rather than observing subjects through one-way windows, or by means of observational schemata and checklists the phenomenological researcher enters the experiential situation in order to study lived experience' (pp. 68-69 and see also p. 160). The process of phenomenological reflection is designed to 'transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Here essence does not refer to a single, objective truth or concrete fact existing independently of the phenomenon, but the structures of potential meaning available for interpretation. Importantly the textual expression we compose is 'concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself' (Smith, 1996, p.263).

In addition to the work of Van Manen, I also adopt specific guidelines for phenomenological reflection and interpretation from the work of Wertz (1984) and Moustakas (1994) which are based on the phenomenological philosophy of Husserl. Wertz (1984) states that

With phenomenological reflection we magnify and amplify details, slow down, patiently dwell and linger in the described situation while attempting to maintain (as far as possible) an empathic presence to the described situation.

(p. 42)

Phenomenological reflection, according to Wertz, begins with 'a bracketing or suspending of preconceptions and a fresh immersement in the lived reality to which the description refers' (1984, p. 42). He advises the following steps and guidelines -
1. 'Empathic presence to the described situation. The researcher uses the description to enter and immerse him/herself in the situation just as it was lived by the subject.

2. Slowly down and patiently dwelling. The researcher spends time lingering in the described situation.

3. Magnification, amplification of details. The researcher allows each detail of the situation to be fully contacted, to loom large for (his or her) consideration.

4. Turning from objects to immanent meanings. The researcher attunes him/herself particularly to the meaning of objects and events as they are lived by the subject.

5. Suspending belief and employing intense interest. The researcher extricates him/herself from the straightforward naïve absorption in and commitment to the veridicality of intended meanings and becomes interested in their genesis, relations and overall structure'.

This process of reflection or 'dwelling' on the 'lived experience material' may incorporate what Husserl called 'imaginative variation'. With this we 'seek possible meanings through utilisation of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions' (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-100). By revolving descriptions in imagination we open up ways of considering lived time, space, body, causality and the relation of the phenomenon to the participant self (see Van Manen, 1990, p. 69; Burnard, 2000a, p. 231). An important 'imaginative variation' step that I utilised was to reflect on the 'underlying themes or contexts that account for the emergence of the phenomenon' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). For example, reflection on the context and circumstances surrounding a participant's particular musical experience opened up 'hidden connections' and 'potentialities of meaning' (Kvale, 1996, p. 4 and p. 193) and 'causal links among ideas' (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002, p. 332). With the
process of phenomenological reflection, I recognise that there is 'no single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of experiences' (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99).

This stage of the thesis involved an amount of tension as I experimented with the phenomenological reflective process. At times, when sifting through the mass of data I would draw a blank. To assist difficult moments, and to help my focus, I would often remind myself to look closely in order to 'bring out significances... not apparent in the data as such' (Smeyers and Verhesschen, 2001, p. 76). I also turned to self-questioning about the phenomenological task at hand. In difficult moments, I used 'explicating guide questions' for new directions that would allow 'the life texts to reveal themselves' (Wertz, 1984, p. 28 and also Van Manen, 1990, p. 79). When drawing a blank with the data I would ask myself the following -

"What does this tell me about the way the participant experiences music?"

And

"What is the meaning of this experience for the participant?"

At this stage my field, journal notes and the video and tape recordings were also 'dwelt on' for further essential lifeworld music meaning. Interpretations from these alternate sources of data formed a structural corroboration (Eisner, 1991, p. 110) and crystallisation of the lifeworld meanings uncovered in the interviews.

I shall now describe the additional, narrative interpretive procedures that help the turning of data into portraits.

**Two types of narrative interpretation**

Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) explains his perspective of story analysis. He states that we may consider stories as 'stories with meaning' or we may look at stories 'in order to generate themes for further analysis' (p. 25). From the
perspective of Brunerian theory (1986), these two processes require two different forms of reasoning or cognition. The first uses narrative reasoning and the second, paradigmatic reasoning.

Polkinghorne (1995) elaborates the analysis of story as follows –

I find that there are two primary kinds of narrative inquiry that correspond to the two kinds of cognition - paradigmatic and narrative - described by Bruner (1986). I call the type that employs paradigmatic reasoning in its analysis, analysis of narratives, and the type that uses narrative reasoning, narrative analysis. In the first type, analysis of narratives, researchers collect stories as data and analyse them with paradigmatic processes. The paradigmatic analysis results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings. In the second type, narrative analysis, researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesise or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories (for example, a history, case study, or biographic episode). Thus, analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories.

(p. 12)

Importantly, the texts constructed from paradigmatic and narrative reasoning are distinct as they have different functions. Smeyers and Verhesschen (2001) describe the contrast stating that in paradigmatic text meaning is stored within concepts and narrative text meaning is stored within narrative (p. 76). Polkinghorne (1995) also distinguishes between the texts that are formed from the different modes. He states that a paradigmatic text will focus on 'particulars as instances of general notions and concepts' and 'functions to generate general knowledge from a set of particular instances' (pp. 14-15). On the other hand a narrative text 'configures people's accounts into stories' and is 'actually a synthesising of the data rather than a separation of it into its constituent parts' (pp. 14-15).

For the sake of clarity I re-configure Polkinghorne’s terminology and refer to the interpretive procedure that uses paradigmatic reasoning as paradigmatic analysis and the second, using narrative reasoning as narrative synthesis.
In the section that follows, I describe the two interpretive procedures in more detail and then explain how I have combined the two types into the narrative scheme of each portrait.

Constructing sections of the portraits using narrative synthesis

When using narrative synthesis I focussed solely on the particular and ‘connections among self-relevant events’ within the data in order to create a ‘coherent developmental account’ (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 15). ‘Potentialities of meaning’, significant lived experiences and episodes were sought within the data and then a shaping and storytelling process proceeded where the new meanings were textually developed into a more elaborate narrative (Kvale, 1996, p. 193). Conducting this process I specifically held in mind the musical lifeworld events that are unique to each participant and sought to construct a picture of the ‘whole person’ rather than construing codes or categories from the descriptions.

The benefits of narrative synthesis are explained in the following quote where Ezzy (2002) is contrasting it with the paradigmatic processes of coding, categorising and comparing in psychology.

In contrast to the qualitative sociology, mainstream academic psychology has rarely examined the person as a whole. Statistics disaggregate the individual into measurable attributes. Similarly, the traditions of grounded theory and thematic analysis, through the use of cross-case comparisons, tend to disaggregate individuals, focusing on codes and categories rather than people as the units of analysis. In contrast, narrative analysis refers to the whole of a person's account. The parts of the story become significant only as they are placed within the context of the whole narrative.

The emphasis on whole people and whole narratives represents a radical change of focus. (p. 95)

I recognise the focus of narrative synthesis (analysis) and utilise it toward the goal of constructing portraits of ‘whole people’. A study based solely on a
paradigmatic analysis would leave individuals disaggregated into categories with their behaviour and experience simply as recognised as examples of wider conceptualised phenomena.

**Constructing sections of the portraits using paradigmatic analysis**

In the paradigmatic sections of text storied accounts are configured into elements and instances of general notions or wider conceptual themes (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13). Following Polkinghorne's model, the wider conceptual themes are arrived at in two ways —

a) They are derived from previous theory. The researcher applies the concepts to the data to determine whether instances of these concepts are to be found.

b) They are inductively derived from the data by the researcher.

I used both processes but placed more emphasis on b) because with the inductive process the themes are 'empirically rather than theoretically derived' (Mishler, 2000, p. 129). By deriving themes from 'within' the data I sought to move 'outward' from each participant's experience to wider concepts. This contrasts with the process at a) that begins with themes and imposes them on the participant. The process at b), I assumed was more suited to the aim of the study, which sought to retain focus on the intrinsic idiosyncrasies of individual musical realities.
I notice these two processes occurring in my thinking about self-understanding.

In searching, for example, for ontological and epistemological clarity, I will conceptualise and categorise my own ideas and understandings of the nature of being and knowledge. These understandings seem to arrive from 'within' through intuition or systematic thought processes. They then lie in a dormant dimension of tacit knowing. Often these will then 'resonate' with concepts and descriptions that I read or hear about. The resonance seems to be a subtle recognition of a kind of intersubjective 'truth' - accompanied by an exclamation of "Yes! That's it!"

Alternatively, in a deductive process I may read or hear about concepts first. I then think, reflect and ruminate until a theoretical understanding is achieved. However, the feeling of 'resonance' in this case does not take place until I am able to match the 'theoretically' derived concepts to self-understandings of my own experience - those that are derived from 'within' in the first process described above.

The types of interpretation in the restorying process

In the early stages of planning the research my first inclination was to compose musical lifeworld portraits without any paradigmatic categorisation whatsoever. I eventually decided on a structure that would use a combination of narrative analysis and paradigmatic analysis. The reason for this is that, while I had been enticed by 'novelistic modes of fiction' (Barone, 2000), I believed an educationally critical thesis would be served better by 'referring to qualities located within the research setting' (see p. 151) and so decided not to abandon the use of the 'paradigmatic text as an industrial tool' (Barone, 2000, p. 146). As a result, in the five portraits, data that have been subjected to paradigmatic analysis form sections of text that are contrasted with those sections that have been subjected to narrative synthesis and phenomenological interpretation. Meaningful lived experience episodes are re-storied, and infused with sections of paradigmatic analysis where I
relate lived experience and meanings to wider issues and concepts. The alternations represent the movement of my thinking between modes as I construct the portraits. Mishler used a similar process in *Storylines: Craftartists' Narratives of Identity* (1999) where he describes combining two types of analysis - although his terminology is different. Describing the ‘two mode approach’ he says

First, the aim is to develop an approach to the analysis of personal narratives that both works out from the respondents’ “ways of telling” and, at the same time, locates their representations within a broader cultural and social context. I refer to this as a critical analytical perspective. Second, the approach seeks to preserve the variability among identity trajectories rather than construct an idealised, abstract scheme of development.

(p. 51)

My blending of paradigmatic, narrative and phenomenological approaches within the musical portraits is similar in design to that used by Mishler and it functions in the following two ways.

a) Paradigmatic ('critical analytic') interpretations work out from the participants’ ‘tellings’ of their musical lifeworlds, to locate their representations within the broader cultural and social context of their musical landscapes – particularly the landscapes of music teaching and learning and educational ‘issues’ (both my ‘issues’ and those identified by other theorists).

b) Narrative and phenomenological interpretations work to ‘preserve the variability among identity trajectories rather than construct an idealised, abstract scheme of development’ (Mishler, 1999, p. 51). The participants’ ‘tellings’ are interpreted to form a further ‘telling’ of their individual musical ‘realities’ and the uniqueness of their lifeworlds.
Linking phenomenology and narrative in the textual structure

Narrative synthesis and phenomenological interpretation are unified in purpose and together they contrast with the paradigmatic approach. The former are complimentary as both are directed toward understanding the lived world as it is experienced. The purpose of phenomenological interpretation - 'rather than fitting data into pre-existing categories... (aims) to reveal personal meaning' (Bresler, 1996, p. 12) and the goal of narrative synthesis is to 'explicate meanings and textually develop them into an elaborate narrative' (Kvale, 1996, p. 193). Additionally, both are concerned with 'an individual's personal perception or account of an object rather than an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself' (Smith, 1996, p. 263). These two approaches are unified into the portraits to form 'meaning within stories' as opposed to the 'meaning within objective categories' that result from paradigmatic analyses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paradigmatic ('critical') analyses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serve to</td>
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<td>Locate 'representations in broad social and cultural contexts'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhancing understanding of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective perspectives of educational 'issues'</td>
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Fig. 2. The Data Restorying Process
A progression – from paradigmatic to narrative reasoning

While I blend and move between both ways of looking, the sequence of portraits becomes progressively less paradigmatically constructed and more and more narratively constructed. This design is intended to highlight an important aim of the study – which is to explore the contrast and promote the ‘narrative way of thinking’. The gradation effect through the sequence of five portraits is one of emphasis and degree –

While the final portrait Jeremiah was not constructed using paradigmatic analysis, all of the portraits are embedded with narrative ‘storied meaning’.

‘Writing’ as a mode of inquiry

The writing of a research report, in standard social science practice, has been seen as a ‘mopping-up’ activity after the data has been acquired – ‘a transparent report about the world studied’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). However, when the writing process is recognized as a vital part of the research practice and an integral part of the discovery process it may be considered a method of inquiry in its own right. It becomes a ‘way of knowing’ about the topic and our relationship.
to it (Richardson, 2000, p. 925). Thus from the outset of the thesis, I considered writing to be the backbone supporting the narrative and phenomenological elements - for ‘wording the world’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923) went hand in hand with the development of understanding and the emergent discovery of the processes required to capture the studied phenomenon. I did not know and discover first, and then write. Writing was the discovery process and created the link between knowing and telling (see Richardson, 2000, p. 924).

Summary and reflection

The interpretative procedure used to construct the portraits involved looking for distinct ‘hidden significances’ or ‘potentialities of meaning’ in the lived experience material. The narrative approach is descriptive and also interpretive as ambiguous meanings, existing as essences that ‘already lie open to view’ (Wittgenstein, 1968, p. 43, n. 92) within the narrative structures, are sought. While in the process of ‘looking’ and interpreting I moved between the two ‘modes of cognition’ or ‘ways of seeing’ (Bruner, 1986). The paradigmatic mode involved looking for episodes and significances and relating them to wider concepts. Its purpose was to create a critical dialogue within the ‘conceptual shared world of knowledge’. The narrative mode was used to focus on meanings, events and experiences that were idiosyncratic and unique to each individual participant.

I also adopted a phenomenological ‘attitude’ to my experiences in the field and while reflecting on the generated data in order to focus on the lifeworld of the participants and the essential structures of their experiences. Importantly I recognize that phenomenology is not purely a theoretical approach but is ‘above all a way of seeing, a way of grasping the world and of articulating experience’ (Natanson, 1966, p. 21). The case studies that now follow are my way of seeing and articulating the musical lifeworlds of the participants.
Chapter Six

The Narrative Portraits
Polly Jameson

Polly and I searched the busy music department of Riverside College for a quiet interview setting. We had arranged to meet during lunchtime recess and we now negotiated our way down the corridor past concert band members who were transporting drums and instrument cases from one room to another. After stepping over random groups of acoustic guitarists sat practising in doorways we eventually bargained for the use of a rehearsal room.

As I set up the tape recorder on the lid of the piano, the strains of a violin filtered from the next room and mingled with a powerful rock riff from some other part of the building. In the heart of this thriving, active music centre I began to learn of the place that music takes in the life of Polly Jameson.

I began by asking Polly to talk about her background in music.

POLLY: I guess originally my great love of music came from my father. We used to live in the country and we had forests on both sides and he would make me sing into the forests to make my voice echo, so I could hear myself and... um... yeah. My father started me singing, definitely, and I never thought I was a good singer but people would just tell me “Oh you can sing!”

As Polly was speaking I sensed the power of individual and personal experiences like these when - as Maxine Greene (1995) has suggested - the imagination is released. As she reflected, Polly recognised her particular experience as an important moment and a departure point where she began her musical journey. As an active interpreter of her own experience she selected and confirmed this episode as the source of her love for music.
While listening to Polly recount this experience, I had a momentary visualisation. I saw a younger Polly standing by the side of a dirt road, in a high country rural setting in New South Wales, with her father beside her. Later, while dwelling on this opening story I revisited earlier thoughts that I had about the power of her lived moment. As I looked for further 'potentialities of meaning' in her description I had a sense of the significance and value of music in action. While listening to the interview recording, I revisited the visualisation that I had earlier, allowing it to expand as I looked for a meaning of her experience. I wrote a phenomenological interpretation of my own 'lived experience' while reflecting on Polly's experience.

A young girl, shock of red hair glowing in the sunlight, joy beaming across her face and with a sparkle in her eye, is launching her voice into a lush green forest. Her father is standing by watching. He is smiling; his face illuminated and proud, knowing that this is an important moment of self-discovery. The young girl is engaged in an act of discovery - of what the voice can do in the world. She is enjoying discovering the quality and musical potential of her voice through its echo.

However, it is not only the creation of the echo that sparks her imagination. As Polly turns sideways, she sees the look of approval from her father. The recognition of shared delight and approval in this moment supports the experience and provides additional confirmation of her being-in-the-world. Gratitude ("yeah, my father started me singing") and self-worth are other outcomes of the experience that have remained with Polly.

This formative lived experience of singing includes vocal experimentation and listening, interaction and communication with her father and her surroundings ("Children often glance at their parents for cues about how to interpret what is happening" – Byng-Hall, 1995, p. 27). Viewed in this social and
interactive manner, 'music' is part of a Gestalt. It is not an isolated stimulus that works independently but may be considered 'dynamic material of structuration' (DeNora, 2000, p. x).

Following my reflection on Polly's experience I felt a reinforcement of the value of exploring 'music in action' and the social and subjective mediations that accompany music engagement. Interpreting stories of musical experience provides opportunity for a particular type of understanding, where deeper meaning structures of its significance to the social actors may be recognised. Abstract theorising of music as an autonomous product is important but if the details within 'everyday musical experience' are bypassed we miss the opportunity to highlight the value or significance of such 'moments' to the individual. In Polly's case, her opening story contains a phenomenological 'essence' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10) of the meaning that accompanied her process of discovery, of experimenting with and 'organising sound'.

Further interpretations of Polly's stories of formative experience help to highlight how music contributes and directs the path of her life and locate the direction and development of her musical self.

After dwelling on further stories of Polly's musical world, I see how facets of her musical identity have been formed and how that identity resonates across many areas of her life. Some of these musical 'resonances' contribute to her self-esteem, her motivation and aspirations and they are embedded in many of her social values and within her 'family script'. Also within her stories lie revelations of how music engagement adds to her confidence as an adolescent in a difficult and competitive world and how it has contributed to her bright and cheerful personality.

*
Prelude – Polly’s Musical Beginnings

Polly is from a rural town in New South Wales. Her parents Tony and Maureen have been adventurous, often embarking on new directions, careers and businesses. Maureen is an educator, a counsellor and a part-time sports coach. Tony has been a chef, a restaurateur and viticulturist. Together, as a co-operative team, they have farmed and grown grapes.

Moving home and family several times (on one occasion from an economically depressed area that could not sustain or suit their business aspirations) has meant that Polly has experienced a variety of homes and schools and therefore music environments and communities.

Based within the experiences of moving and changing direction for a better life, a strong family unity is evident within their individual stories. For Polly, music forms a constituent and important part of the unifying process. As an inspiring, fun and shared activity, it acts like a link, a consistent thread running through family events and connecting relationships. Both parents have been lovers of music and Polly recognises their influence and support in her musical experiences and endeavours. In addition to her opening story, she presents further examples of how music has been an important part of her family relationships, particularly with her father.

POLLY: My Dad and I when we worked in kitchens and stuff we would sing together and yeah my Dad was the one that started it off but my Mum was the one that got me into the lessons.

Polly would often help her father at work in restaurants. Singing together, while dishwashing, clearing-up and driving home was an important shared unwinding process at the end of the day. When I first met Polly she worked on Friday and Saturday nights as a waitress at the restaurant where her father was employed and so this family musical tradition was continuing.
Sharing music with Dad is thought of warmly, within some ‘difficult times’.

POLLY: So yeah, but with Dad... you know... we were... I never had that much music around me because we didn't have a TV or anything like that and we were very poor. In the beginning when we first lived on the farm, all we had was a radio and Dad used to put it onto an old FM station.

And birds used to sing in the morning and... then we got an old record player.

Maureen comments on Polly’s early love of music and dancing. She mentions her husband’s influence on the developing musical identity.

MAUREEN: We always used to find Polly dancing in her room and singing at the same time. I also remember, driving on long trips with John... and Polly would just sing along with the radio and he would give her hints on how to really feel the music and on how to really get your voice ‘out there’. I’m sure that has a lot to do with the way she perceives herself and also how she perceives the music. It seems like music is an extension of herself.

The positive regard for music within the Jameson family can be traced to a transgenerational influence (Borthwick and Davidson, 2002, p. 64) where high esteem and value placed on music is passed on. This is evident in Polly’s discussion of the origins of her own love for music.

POLLY: My grandmother really wanted to be an opera singer and she had that opportunity yet she had to give it up to raise a family. And I think my father learnt a lot from her and so he was always singing.
However, Polly started with an interest in ballet. But she was always singing and her natural ability was soon discovered. Polly's mother, Maureen relates the incident when the formal singing lessons commenced.

MAUREEN: It was quite interesting actually the way it happened because Polly wanted to do ballet and I enrolled her in ballet classes. She went away to Ballet Camp and when I went back to pick her up, there was this elderly woman there — very proper and very ballerina — long neck and the hair up in the bun and the whole bit and she was very nice. When I was picking Polly up, she called me over and she said, 'oh, you are Polly's mother aren't you?' and I said 'yes'. And she said, "well, all I can say is that girl has the most glorious voice and it would be a crime if you did not get her singing lessons. As a ballerina, her talent is good but she will not be Dame Margot Fonteyn but she has this glorious singing voice and you would be remiss to not have her trained".

Forces and tensions are not uncommon, in different degrees, in most family relationships. According to Byng-Hall (1995), who discusses 'family scripts', if some role is not being performed emotional pressure, may be applied 'using shaming or guilt-arousing techniques' (p. 34). This situation may occur when parents, wanting the best for their children, have a role or 'script' prepared and children counter attack while striving to find their own way, their own individuality, likes and dislikes.

While she acknowledges the support of her parents a tension, though subtle, surfaces in the following account by Polly.

POLLY: I think (pause) ... (quietly) it sounds a bit horrible... a lot of my motivation comes from my parents. From the fact that I don't want to disappoint them... now that they have put so much energy and money into my voice I would feel, (pause)...ungrateful if I just said, "Oh no - I don't want to sing anymore." I
love to sing, but that extra energy that it takes... Sometimes I think - if only I didn't have to do two to three hours singing practice each week - I could hang out with my friends. But in the long run, I know, it will benefit me and also... my father (pause)... has been (pause) ... especially... But he never had the opportunity and I feel very privileged that I have had the opportunity to be tutored. Because I know it is expensive... it is twenty dollars for half-an-hour and so... yeah... but my motivation... a lot of the time is just to please other people. But I'm (pause)... DAVID: But that's not a ...
POLLY: I don't think that is a bad thing!
DAVID: ... and it's not a problem for you?
POLLY: No.
DAVID: Because you enjoy doing it.
POLLY: Yeah! I...
DAVID: It clashes with some people, but it doesn't with you?
POLLY: Yeah! No! I... I enjoy it - if I didn't - if I absolutely loathed it I would have to say to my parents (lowers voice) "Look I'm really sorry that you have wasted all this money, but I just hate singing" - but it is not true - I love to sing - I love to sing!

In addition to family support, others (including the ballet teacher) have also contributed to Polly's musical direction. Stories of her primary school days include recognition of the support of teachers and friends.

POLLY: I think the very beginning for me would have to be when I was in primary school and singing the national anthem and we did that in every assembly and they always got the words wrong. I was boasting to a friend that I knew the words and I was so good - I knew the whole words and the teacher
was getting quite annoyed with my boasting, understandably - I always did it. So she propped me up on the table and made me sing the national anthem to the whole school. I mean it was a small primary school - there were only sixty students and I knew them all but um... that was definitely... and then after I sang that song the teachers kind of went “She can sing!” “Oh my gosh we didn't know she could sing” - and they stuck me in the choir...

DAVID: So you did a good job of it?

POLLY: Apparently yes! (Laughing) and that would have to be my very first memory of an important musical experience.

Importantly, her ability in many of these musical situations and interactions provided Polly with positive feedback, which in turn has helped to raise her confidence and self-esteem. In situations that were considered awkward predicaments at the time, she soon discovered that she could elicit the appreciation of others. I continued the conversation about singing the national anthem.

DAVID: And how did you feel about doing it - did you feel good?

POLLY: No! I was packing it! I was so nervous. I thought “great you’ve done it again Polly - you’ve put yourself in it!” and I was really scared I would get the words wrong too - got them right though - no I didn’t think I was good at all. I’ve never actually thought I was good - people have always just told me I was and I’ve always thought “Oh yeah” - I just sing - I just do my thing you know, because I love it and so...

DAVID: But if people have said you were good - has that rubbed off do you think? Do you feel confident now?

POLLY: Well yes I feel more confident. I mean, I hear a lot of people say, “I can't sing” and it is not that they can't sing it is just that they have never been given
the chance to sing. I think the reason I sing now is because I was given the chance to and people told me I could sing. I never thought I could sing. If nobody had told me I don't think I would be singing today because I wouldn't have had the confidence. It definitely gave me confidence. It gave me the confidence to start singing in the restaurant (laughing). And then you know once my Dad heard me sing a lot more - because I was thinking "Oh I can sing" - he sort of went "Hey she can sing!" He then really encouraged me and then - you know - he told my Mum about it and my Mum said "All right we will send her off to singing lessons." And that is where it all began... you know. Once I was in singing lessons that was it I thought "Oh yeah - I can sing!" Ha!

In addition to music, Polly is enthusiastic about acting and loves the drama course at her College. An option that she wants to consider in the future is to audition for NIDA (The National Institute of Dramatic Art), as she would love a career 'on the stage'.

Polly considers it important to have a wide range of skills and she has another "main love" - the audio-visual course that she takes at Riverside College. She believes that audio engineering skills will boost her qualifications and prospects for the future.

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Musical values

I asked Polly how music affected her life. Her answer indicated an important social value and it reveals some of her feelings for her music teacher and how she values her friends.

Well! I think with music, I wouldn't have as many friends as I do now. If I
didn't sing! And my teacher... especially with my singing teacher. I think she is a
marvellous woman. I would never have met her had I not... been singing. At
school, I would never have met half of my friends... that I have met in the choir.
And for my parents, if I didn't have that musical interest, they would never have
got into the whole scene of the eisteddfods and so forth and getting to know
other parents whose children sing. And it is like an interest that holds us all
together initially and that is what makes us have friendships. But then you learn
other things about them and it broadens but I don't think if I actually shared an
interest in singing or any thing like that or music or bass guitar I would not have
as many friends as I do now. Not at all! Not in the slightest.

DAVID: There are millions of ways that music is valued around the world. But
how do you personally value it?

POLLY: (With a deliberate and serious tone) I hold high value for music. Huge! I
mean around the world music is so different. You go to Africa and they use
drums and rhythms - they love percussion. And you don't usually find people
there using violins or cellos or things like that... but they value their music just as
much as I would value a piano piece or something like that. It all depends on
what you have been bought up with. But for me music is just another aspect of
my life that I don't think I could live without because I have come to love it so
much. It would be like taking oxygen away from me... and to a lot of other
people as well.

DAVID:: What are some of the benefits that you - and people in general gain by
being involved with music? How does it contribute to your life?

POLLY: It makes you appreciate so many things. I was listening to a very
interesting program and they were saying that people don't appreciate music as
much these days because it surrounds them so much and they begin to take it
for granted. But, I tend to disagree with that because even if it is there all the
time, it is always appreciated, and it is really important for everybody - I think. It just depends what you are into. But for all the different people... some people go for the boppier, basic tunes and other people go for classical - like my grandmother would have a completely different taste in music to me yet we both hold high appreciation for it.

**Attitudes to different styles**

Although stating that there is surprisingly little empirical research on the claim, Green (2001) says that ‘it is a common assumption that the musical tastes of adolescents tend to be narrower than those of young children and adults’ (p. 121, see also Zillmann and Gan, 1997). Counter to that assumption, Polly’s discussions exhibit a ‘taste’ for a wide-range of styles. She sings ‘classically’ for her examinations, having a liking, as she states, for the ‘soul of Schubert, Gershwin and folk songs’. Her liking for popular 1960’s and 1970’s styles echoes her father’s musical influence and her childhood listening.

POLLY: Dad had a couple of records - the Beatles, Cat Stevens, (laughs) - he’s the one I remember most - ‘I’m Being followed by a Moon Shadow.’ And the Beatles definitely - I still love them. And also ‘The Wall’ - Pink Floyd - that’s another one - (laughs) Yeah!

Importantly as she describes the artists she likes she reveals the variety of styles and something of the musical content that she finds attractive.

DAVID: OK, now you mentioned Cat Stevens and The Beatles, what other types of music are you ‘into’?

POLLY: The Whitlams - definitely They are a Melbourne band.

DAVID: Currently a popular band?

POLLY: Yes they are ‘big’ - I love them and also Tori Amos - she is American I
think and she has got this really original style. It is not quite so straightforward as the rest - I really enjoy that. Um, but then with some of the older stuff - The Beatles - I really love them. They are just... even though they are fun to 'bop along to', they are so original. There are a lot of singers today trying to do the same thing – but it doesn't work and I just cringe. Cat Stevens - he's wonderful and also Pink Floyd and Queen - some of their stuff is great.

DAVID: It is melodic, with good harmonies!

POLLY: Yes that's it. Because I have sung in so many choirs I really enjoy harmonies and things like that. They just appeal to me I guess. But also I just love the sound of a simple piano and somebody's voice. That's why The Whitlams appeal to me so much because sometimes it is just simple and things don't need to be complex to work and just simple piano and acoustic guitar and a person singing and it can be beautiful. Yeah, that's why I love The Whitlams so much - I really love them.

DAVID: So you don't necessarily break it down into different types or styles of music? For example, I mean - would you say you like jazz?

POLLY: Well I do. I love jazz! Um - I've always wanted to sing in the kind of - big band, bluesy type - Blues is something that definitely comes from my father. He loves the Blues and used to just sit there singing away to his hearts content. I have always wanted to sing... I see those women who stand in front of those huge Jazz bands with their mikes and they (enthusiastically) have just got the biggest strongest voices - yet you know they are not forcing it or anything and it is just fantastic. I have always wanted to sing like that.

Polly's range of musical taste and her attitude to different styles are a reflection of the diversity of musical activities she has been engaged in. Her private singing lessons are formal 'classical' lessons with a focus on piano-accompanied
‘folk’ and Schubert songs. She has presented this type of material at local eisteddfods and at Australian Music Examination Board graded exams.

Later in a further discussion of musical taste Polly is apologetic for liking a particular artist. Perhaps she is accounting for an awareness of the perception among her peers that this is ‘uncool’ music. This reminded me of how I had previously questioned my own class of year nine music students whether they liked Kylie Minogue’s music and they had chorused that it was “teenybopper” and “bubblegum”, words they had used with negative connotations.

DAVID: Any other current things you are listening to?

POLLY: (Laughing) This is my sad point - Kylie Minogue - at the moment (laughs) and her boppy little songs.

DAVID: Her latest one is good isn’t it?

POLLY: Yeah it rocks! (Laughs).

I suggest that Polly’s admission for liking Kylie Minogue’s “boppy little songs” is a brave stand against peer pressure or what she believes are widely held negative opinions.

Polly’s taste for ‘pop’ styles is discriminating with respect to lyric and cultural content.

DAVID: What specifically do you like... currently... music... and some of those videos... different trends and styles going on at the moment?

POLLY: Well I don’t like that R and B stuff - that Rap, (sings in a Rap style) “Oh dah, yeah -down with the homies” - Don’t like that stuff - I can’t stand it. But Kylie Minogue - she’s rocking at the moment.

DAVID: Yeah! She’s very good - doing different things. So - Rap music - there is a whole culture with it, isn’t there?
POLLY: Huge culture. Huge, it's outrageous! You know the big beanies and baggy trousers and the short tops.

DAVID: And the way you move.

POLLY: Yeah! And all those hand movements that have to go with it - you bend your knees and you (sings and moves) "Goin' down, yeah man!"

DAVID: (Copies movement – elbows up, thumbs up and index fingers pointing into chest)

POLLY: Yeah that's it - that's it! And its huge - it is not just the music. If you actually listen to the music a lot of it is just so similar. It is just a basic beat underneath and then someone going (sings and moves in a Rap style) "And I went down, and I shot him in the head - yeah, yeah - then he died – Oh cool!"

DAVID: Some of it is very violent isn't it?

POLLY: It is! I... I really don't like it... I think it is awful! Some people do it well. Some people do combinations that are more subtle... like they also add harmonies. And yeah that's what they do... they have this little rap bit and then they will have a chorus. A lot of female bands are doing that these days – like 'Pink' – she does that a lot and just basically the girl bands. The guys don't do it so much but Rap or R and B I think it is called nowadays – when they add harmonies – I like it. It appeals to me a bit more.

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Contexts and communities of practice and learning

Polly was 'encultured' into music (Green, 2001, p. 22) in various social contexts and 'communities of practice' (Wenger, 1998). Family social music processes, particularly singing with her father, were important but Polly's musical
identity also developed within various ‘communities of musical practice’ (see Barrett, 2004) other than the formality of the school environment.

POLLY: I've sung in a lot of choirs. I sang in a choir with the TSO (Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra) - that was fantastic. That was one of the best experiences I have ever had! Then there were musicals and auditions for musicals. I sang in the chorus of a big production of 'Oliver'. And I've also sung at cabaret nights organised by my teacher. They were nights where people go out to dinner and you entertain them during the course of the evening.

In contrast, she also sang (and played bass guitar) in the Christian ‘pop’ band at her local church.

POLLY: But singing in the church band was wonderful. Just the whole experience of having all these musical instruments backing-up because, I have always just been used to having just a piano. That's basically all I had ever sung with. But once you get the drums, the piano and the guitars and the bass - everything - it just makes it so much more up-beat - a complete new genre really instead of singing folk songs and Schubert and things like that.

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Music as a mood enhancer

DeNora (2000) points out that ‘music is appropriated by individuals as a resource for the ongoing constitution of themselves and their social psychological, physiological and emotional states’ (p. 47). Also according to DeNora (2000, p. 46) our ‘sense of self is locatable in music’ and ‘musical materials provide terms and templates for elaborating self-identity’. In the
following conversation Polly describes how similarly, she appropriates music in order to enhance her moods and we can also see how she ‘elaborates her self-
identity’.

DAVID: Do you separate your music – playing and listening – into say music for fun and relaxation? And music for... any other specific purposes?

POLLY: Ah! (Pause) ... because... I go for so many different genres, I think it's because I know what appeals to me. But then I know what kind of music works to create an atmosphere or...you know... helps make emotions for people... enhance moods. For me, when I listen to music it is usually to make me relaxed or make me feel happy. Like... a lot of the time if I'm in a bad mood if, I put on 'boppy' music, you know... and it lifts my mood up and I feel like 'boogying'. I feel really happy then – but if I'm in a really bad mood and decide – oh yeah I'm going to put on depressing music, I usually end up crying 'cos it is not making me feel any better - you know (laughs). And so a lot of the time when I am listening to music it's to make me feel better, to make me feel happier and when I am working with music it's usually to try and get an effect from the audience.

DAVID: And do you listen to - or watch 'Rage' (a music video TV program)?

POLLY: Yeah! - Yeah!

DAVID: Do you get up early specifically to watch it?

POLLY: Usually I am too lazy because often I have been partying on Friday night. But sometimes I do get up and listen to Rage. It's good because when you are just sitting at home and you don't want to actually think, it is just nice to listen to some music but also be entertained by the people dancing around and having a bit of a 'boogie'.
The mood enhancing property of music, for Polly is not just a private and personal matter but is one that spills over into social relationships.

POLLY: Also I have a friend, Andrea and when she is restless and she can’t sleep, she puts on Enya or ‘The Piano’ soundtrack ... and I walked into her room one day as she was playing it and it just made me just go “Uh! (Laughs)... I melted, “I could go to sleep now I’m just so relaxed!” And I love that feeling when music just has the ability to completely relax you and make you go... “I could stay in this state forever.” Or it can totally hype you up and just make you feel so happy just like you could do anything you know... and it’s true I mean if you go to a party and there is no music playing, people sitting around and feeling like – “Yep!” (Polly feigns a bored look and taps fingers on desktop) ... “Let’s have some conversation!” But when there is music going everyone is like “Yehhhhhhh!” (Laughs) and they go off because ... I think it is a relief... that’s what it is. For me, in those social situations... it’s a relief.

Music – “an addiction of emotion”

Polly continued to talk about the ways that she uses music as a regulator of her emotional states. In the next interview segment she mentions that the attraction of music is the emotional affect that she associates with it. Importantly, all the participants in the study, in answer to the question “what attracts you to music?” mentioned ‘emotion’ or ‘expression of emotion’ as part of their reply. In all cases, music acts as a vehicle and a tool for the exploration of emotions. Music acts as a structuring component for emotional identity. Polly’s interprets her emotional musical identity in the following segment.

DAVID: How would you describe your love of music and what attracts you to it?
Polly: What attracts me to music? It would definitely have to be... it's like an addiction of emotion. It can create emotions for you and I find that very addictive in a lot of ways. Like I have said before, sometimes when you listen to music it already depends upon your emotional state but it can really enhance it. If you are sad and you put on really sad music you can just bawl your eyes out really and other times if you are not too happy and you put on funky music you sort of pep up... you are a bit happier. It's just... yeah it is definitely an addiction for me... (laughs). I love the way music can do that.

David: Could you be specific about the ways music affects you emotionally... your moods and feelings? Say... when you are listening or playing.

Polly: I love that feeling when I am singing and know I am creating a beautiful sound. Sometimes I get really frustrated because I hear people being able to sit at a piano and just create this beautiful music and I long to be able to do the same thing. I know my gift is being able to sing and some people long to be able to sing and create a beautiful sound with their voice. But often when I hear my own voice I am pleased with the sound I create. Often when I have worked so hard on a piece... constantly striving to improve it... getting the timing, the pitch, the rhythm, diction, the words and the emotion just right... and finally got it all together and perfect and then sung it to an audience... there is a lot of satisfaction. And you can tell whether you have done it right. I love that feeling when you get up on stage and you perform it. And nobody knows all that hard work you have put into it and they forget about it and they just get taken away with the music and sounds and if you can do that...

But I have only probably done that - I would say twice, when it was really special and it was with one song. And I just love this song and when I sang it I felt like I had a beautiful voice and I felt very confident with this song and it is just such a satisfying feeling... so satisfying... it's great.
POLLY: But when I'm listening to music you know... (Pause) ... it depends what mood I'm in as to what I want to listen to. Sometimes, like I said if I am in a really bad mood I'll put on happy music to help me pep-up, feel better because I may have had a really crap day but then if I hear something beautiful I think not everything out there is crap – you know (Laughs). There are beautiful things in life and I love that feeling.

For Polly the pleasure of musical engagement is also contained within the social setting. Some of the emotional feelings that she enjoys are the consequences of having conducted a good performance and receiving acknowledgement and response from other people. Positive feedback is part of the emotional “addiction”.

DAVID: That feeling is with you as you are performing and it persists afterwards?
POLLY: Yeah! When you sit down and think... you know... and especially when people come up to you and say, "That was beautiful... that was so touching!" Because it was a sad song and they would be like ... "It was really nice, it was beautiful".

In a further interview segment, in response to an imaginative scenario that I had proposed, Polly provides a strong indication that music ‘meaning’, its importance and existence are principally to “evoke emotions”.

DAVID: Pretend I am an alien - just landed on earth and I have no idea what this human activity 'music' is. Could you please explain it to me?
POLLY: (Laughs) Oh no!
DAVID: Yes - I'm an alien - I don't know what music is!
POLLY: You don't know what music is?
DAVID: We don't have it where I come from.
POLLY: Are you an alien now?
D. (Nods).
POLLY: So you are no longer human! Oh Gosh! Do you speak English? OK, great! (Laughs). Oh this is hard. I think I would sing to you. I would sing something and then I would see what an impact it had.
DAVID: Go on, sing something!
POLLY: OK. (Sings in a sweet tone) "Dear mother mine in cottage low, who toils so hard and long"
(Asks) What was that? That was singing!
DAVID: The alien asks, "why do you do that?"
POLLY: (Laughs) Um! Did you enjoy it?
DAVID: Yes I did actually; I thought it was quite different. We've never had that on my planet before.
POLLY: How did it make you feel?
DAVID: Mm, 'feel'?
POLLY: Yes, I'm asking you, when I sang to you – that's what we call it – we call it 'singing'. When I sang, how did it make you feel?
DAVID: I'm not sure, I want to know why you do that?
POLLY: (With a more serious tone). We do it to provoke emotions... I feel, I think what we do... we sing or play an instrument to create music in order to create emotion.
DAVID: So music... the emotional aspect of music is very important to you on Earth?
POLLY: (Emphatically) Oh yeah!
DAVID: But... OK! Good, I'm convinced because I'm not from the planet where Mr. Spock (from Star Trek) is from - where they don't have emotions at all. We do...

POLLY: (Laughs).

DAVID: Yes I did feel emotion – I enjoyed it - it was very nice.

POLLY: (Laughs).

While Polly's musical world is strongly linked to her impressions of it as an emotional vehicle, she acknowledges a certain mystery about music and the emotions.

POLLY: Yeah - I really don't know what it is - I mean ... I can't... I know that when you write a piece of music you can achieve different effects by say using different scales and tempos... say for instance, a minor key, but I don't actually know what it is that makes... that effects people. It's just the same with poetry or words you know... (D. Yes!) ...You can write this stuff and it can deeply affect people but... and you know what you are doing but you don't know why it does that to them.

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Attitude to classroom-music

Polly's relationship with music developed through a variety of learning experiences, situations and social contexts. Seeking insight into more formal music experience, I ask her to discuss school music and to consider and evaluate the importance of different situations. She evaluates and grades, in order of importance - private lessons, rehearsals and then classroom music lessons.

POLLY: For me, I have always got the most benefit from my private lessons 'cos
I think that is when you can reach more of your potential because it is one-on-one where it is completely focused on you and improving... you know... your ability, your technique. So for me that is what it is all about - learning technique to create the best sound I can from my voice. And if you have got a private teacher you just... it, it helps so much. That would definitely be number one for me. And then rehearsing is important because without practice, even if you have got that individual helping hand, just focused on you and then if you don't practice they can only help you to a certain level and you have got to go through it by yourself.

And I guess classroom music comes after that. I think in a classroom situation it's very difficult for a teacher because you always have a few students who really do want to learn but then you also have those students who just really couldn't care less you know. They don't think they have the potential and they would rather be doing something else. And they are there because they have to be. But fortunately, when you get to College, um, usually in the music classes, people are only there 'cos they want to be there and so I think from high school situations to College classroom situations it is very different.

DAVID: You are talking about the difference between elective rather than compulsory music class?

POLLY: Yeah because in College you know what you want to achieve and the teacher knows that you are there because you want to learn and so I think a lot more gets done... but in high school it is so different.

DAVID: So you wouldn't want to become a music teacher, teaching years seven to ten?

POLLY: I mean... No! I don't think I could do it. I would feel so depressed by those students who just didn't want to put in that little bit of extra effort. And I still think it is really important because even if you are one of those children who
really doesn't want to be in that class you still pick up things and you still can have an appreciation for music.

DAVID: The theory is that everybody deserves a broad look at music and has a variety of experiences with it. It is valuable...

POLLY: Yes. Because if you look at a lot of teenagers these days, when you ask them about music they go, "Oh yeah! Britney Spears! And - you know - they really only fit into one genre, they are not talking about classical music, piano music and that kind of thing. So I think music lessons and classes are a great way to expand their minds. As for learning, I don't know. I wouldn't like to be back in the class situation (non-elective, compulsory classes!) I prefer one-on-one.

DAVID: Are there any class music activities that you have a preference for? Looking at the classroom only.

POLLY: I remember a teacher, Mr. Madden, when I was in high school and he was the one that taught us guitar. What he would do, he would give us a pretty simple piece of music, but something that would allow you to experiment. Usually a twelve bar blues or something like that so when you know what your chords you could begin to get confidence to do your own thing. We could then go off and compose our own funky little things.

DAVID: Did he have you working in small groups or with the whole class?

POLLY: Because guitar was a very popular instrument there was about twenty of us in the class and he would go around individually trying to get to see all of us in the lesson. But in an hour lesson, it is not really very long and you only end up getting five minutes and your time is up. But I think I learnt the most when I was in...he put twenty of us in a big group - with him in the middle. And it started off and we would all strum and then he would go "Right!" and point to someone and it would be their turn to solo. Initially when we first did it everyone would go -
"Ugh!"- Because they were so nervous. But after a while you became more confident and I thought doing that in a classroom situation was fantastic – it gave me a lot of confidence.

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Valuing technique

Polly values the benefits that come with having a good vocal technique and is thankful for having been ‘classically trained’. Often in our conversations the topic of ‘good technique would surface.

POLLY: It is like anybody can sing but unless you have proper training... know how to use your breath and you know how not to damage your vocal folds... If you know the correct techniques to use, then you can become a great singer. And that it is the difference between OK and beautiful - and that is what is important to me.

Having a concern for the correct skills Polly values the idea of being able to sing many different styles while physically preserving her voice. The specific and ‘correct’ technique is also an influential factor in the styles she likes. For example, she is wary of styles that she believes can damage your voice.

DAVID: Is it important to have an adaptable vocal technique?
POLLY: Yeah that’s right - and that’s because I think for anybody to just study classical music, and it doesn’t have to be opera or anything like that... it puts you in good stead for anything because you can use those techniques and adapt them to anything else. It also puts you in good stead for acting. It is important when on the stage and a lot of people don’t know how to use their breath and
their vocal cords effectively. You know — good voice production — and I hear a lot of people damaging their voices because they haven't had the right experience to learn. It's like - it puts you in good stead for the rest of your life. It's like ballet - children who have done ballet - I did ballet when I was younger - and it has always put me in good stead because my movement now has... my posture is a lot better than it used to be. It is the same for singing it just puts you in good stead for the rest of your life I think - even if you don't become a professional.

I think classical music puts you in good stead for anything. You just need to be able to adapt those techniques to the particular style and make sure you are taking care of your voice. Because if you get into jazz or rock bands you can damage your voice because you are trying to get that cool scratchy sound like Janis Joplin. For example a lot of people go "Wow her voice is awesome!" and then they try and force that scratchy sort of rusty sort of sound and although it was fine for her a lot of people can't adapt to that.

DAVID: Yes, I don't know how some of those Heavy Metal singers survive!

POLLY: Exactly! I often listen to somebody and I just think "Ow" and I can feel ... the pain in my own throat - for what they must be doing and I just sometimes feel like going "Oh wait - how about using your breathing instead." (Laughs).

When she was invited to sing in her Church 'pop' band, Polly had already commenced formal singing lessons and had developed the necessary 'correct' technique to be able to look after her voice.

POLLY: When I began singing in Church I was now singing these 'pop' tunes but I was always careful I did not damage my voice. Singing those kinds of songs... for a lot of people... that is how they damage their voices.

DAVID: By using incorrect technique?
POLLY: Misusing their breathing - they use their throats and they damage the vocal cords.

* “Plenty of strings to your bow” *

Polly expresses a determination to have a career in the music industry. In addition to having a desire to sing professionally, she balances her aspirations with a pragmatic view of the difficulties ahead and so has planned several career options. This is why her energies are stretched across singing to acting and audio and visual engineering.

Part of the pragmatic view can be attributed to influence from her parents who both show interest in Polly having many options.

MAUREEN: Polly loves musicals and she also has a great love of acting. And so her singing - with a good classical training, plus the music theory, plus her talents in acting and drama and things like that leads her down the path where she has plenty of strings to her bow. She can sing classical songs... head off and do something at the Conservatorium with a group there, she can do a musical or she can do some singing that is more localised and contemporary. So it gives her a range of options rather than just saying that 'I am a classical opera singer and I can only sing in this particular mode'.

Toward the end of Year Twelve, Polly operated the lights for a stage production at College and thoroughly enjoyed the experience and challenge of “getting it right” – helping to generate mood and emotion through the subtle use of sound and lighting effects. She has become enthusiastic about the whole field of stage management.
POLLY: At College I've been learning about the importance of music in all the areas of the Arts. How you can use music and lighting to enhance the stage setting and even create more emotion in a scene. It has added another whole aspect onto my love of music ... things that I didn't think of before. I had always thought about my music... as just performing...singing in a choir or playing guitar or bass... being in a band. I never thought of it as sitting at a desk and fiddling with knobs. Never! I didn't even know about that kind of stuff.

I had spoken to Maureen Jameson about six months earlier. She had told me that Polly had graduated from College and was now living in Adelaide. She was staying with her grandmother.

I now dialled the Jameson's' number. I was wondering how Polly was getting on in the big wide competitive music industry and in a large 'mainland' city. How were her dreams and aspirations unfolding?

Maureen answered the phone. We greeted one another. She almost bubbled over with enthusiasm for the opportunities that had eventuated and was happy to talk about her daughters' successes and new directions.

"Polly is living in a flat with her elder sister Sally. She is absolutely flat out all the time. So many things have happened. She is right into lighting and sound engineering. She is doing a two-year full-time Associate Diploma course in Stage Management at the Sanford College of Fine Arts. But not only that... she works in a bar quite a few evenings a week — a bar where there is a real music scene. And she is meeting all sorts of people and the manager of the pub is the
guitarist in a popular busy band. And guess what... Polly is singing with them. Not only that... but she is in charge of handling the sound and lighting as well, setting up the gear and everything."

"That's great," I said "And how..."

Maureen continued. She had so much she wanted to say.

"The important thing for me is that — with an Associate Diploma, she can easily get into NIDA. She agreed with me that that is an option open to her in the future. But you know... apparently she has a real knack of handling... she just seems to have a real talent for audio and lighting design. She's met so many contacts at the College and is so in demand to do the sound at different functions. I spoke to her the day before yesterday and she told me that at the college she has met a super-duper important guy who has promised her a job next year in France, with the team of sound lighting technicians with 'Cirque du Soleil'. I said to her that she should stay and finish her Diploma and get to NIDA — but you know what kids are like. She said that she would rather travel and not miss the opportunity for such a fantastic offer. So who am I to get in the way of her future. She said she could always pick up with NIDA later. They would value her experience with 'Cirque du Soleil' anyway.

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Mario Micalizzi

Mario is seventeen and a student at Riverside College. He exudes energy and enthusiasm and whenever we meet for the interview sessions he is welcoming and appears eager to talk about his musical life. Mario is highly focused on a singing and song writing career and intends to 'make it' in a dynamic popular group. He has studied drama and dance and he deftly combines skills from these disciplines into theatrical performances. Jenny Roberts, Mario’s music teacher at Riverside, considers him to be a natural, a born performer saying, “he doesn’t just sing, it is the whole persona”. Later, when I have the opportunity to observe Mario performing at an open-air festival I witness an exuberant, whole-hearted ‘stage presence’ generated through naturalness with singing, moving and acting.

At the first interview, from the opening question, Mario talks about his background in music and his developing love for it. He speaks quickly, unfolding and interpreting his formative musical experiences with detail and often with humour whilst linking events into chronological order and a narrative ‘whole’.

DAVID: What was your musical background like?

MARIO: The first instrument I ever played was the cello. I started when I was 4 and it was twice the height of me, but I could still stand on a chair and play. I gave that up a couple of years later when I was in the middle of a Suzuki concert. I wanted to go to the toilet in the middle of the performance so my mother took me off stage and I never touched the cello again (a wry smile). After that I progressively moved through the usual primary school standard practice where you have guitar and recorder. But I never really got to be involved in
either guitar or recorder as I was always focussed on singing and dancing and drama and things like that. With my singing — I used to get up at about 6.30, 7 o'clock every Saturday morning to watch the 4 hours of 'Rage' video clips. When they came on I used to sing to all the cheesy songs that were on there - I became a big fan of Rage. I basically learnt to sing by doing that. After the Suzuki/cello thing I didn't have any further formal music training, but I did go to a drama academy in Sydney where I was born. It was the Bob Drury Drama Academy, an academy for kids who want to audition for TV shows such as 'Neighbours' and 'Home and Away'. I wasn't really set for a career on a television soap show so I opted out of that and concentrated mainly on my music. But I kept drama on the backburner as I always knew I loved the whole spectrum of performing arts — dance included.

Looking closely at some of these specific incidents in Mario's musical beginnings, I will begin by exploring them in light of different types of situational learning.

Informal, 'vernacular' music learning

Mario's interest in music was evident from the age of four. His mother, wishing to encourage him, started him with formal 'Suzuki method' cello lessons. However, it was singing and dancing that he was really attracted to. Although he now relates the 'cello incident' with wry humour, the experience (perhaps traumatic for a six-year-old) of having to leave the stage to go to the toilet, is a moment that he now symbolises as a movement towards discovering music in his 'own way'. From that moment, Mario was motivated towards more informal modes of music learning. Even primary school music activities, recorder and guitar, were rejected while he began to pursue his own musical and performing interests.
Mario's idiosyncratic, personal form of musical discovery and informal learning practice commenced when he began watching the Saturday morning video program. At this formative time, he became excited not by the singular concept of 'music' as an aural activity but by the combined aural and visual impact of creative performance, music, singing, dancing and acting. The formality and singular focus that is necessary to learn the cello did not attract or satisfy him as much as the physical engagement of these other activities.

Mario watched, listened and imitated and through interaction began to acquire singing and aural skills, "informally" by *listening* and *copying*. This process set a foundation, for he says he can now "easily pick up songs by ear." When I later observed Mario performing, I assumed that much of his stage persona, confidence and skill could be attributed to early experiences in front of the television, absorbing and emulating stage actions, and copying popular dance movement and style.

The type of learning Mario has gravitated to is what Green (2001) refers to as a particular kind of 'informal, vernacular music learning practice' (p. 22). This, she states, is an 'everyday' music enculturation process where musical skills are 'naturally' acquired. Mario attributes importance to these early informal learning experiences, recognising them as the beginning of his commitment to singing and dancing and to popular styles of music.

In addition, Mario believes he 'discovered music on his own'. In our third interview together he speaks slowly and thoughtfully about this process. The following statement is poignant and significant meaning becomes clear to me when I remember that he had told me he is an 'only child' and had experienced a lengthy estrangement from his father.

**DAVID:** How do you describe your love of music? What attracts you to it and what motivates you to play?

**MARIO:** (Slowly, deliberately) Most people, when they are born... I'm getting philosophical here... most people when they are... born... they experience a wide range of things when they are growing up. Like through the different
activities that their parents and brothers and sisters do. I myself when I’m in exploration, experiencing different activities... but I didn’t really have any source to draw on, to be swayed between any sort of activity... I was able to inform myself about different things... by myself. I didn’t have anyone to talk to about them. I had to discover music by myself. And I did... and the fact that it is such a complicated pastime... to some people... to play music and to sing, was something that interested me because I found that I could easily adapt to being able to do it. And I love the challenge of being able to play and sing. And that to me is just a very powerful thing... that I discovered all by myself.

Not having anyone to talk to about music, Mario went about discovering it on his own, ‘informing himself’ and interacting with ‘Rage’, the television music video program. Importantly, he took advantage of solitary experiences and developed strength and determination from them. Again, Green (2001) has referred to another common feature within the informal learning practices of ‘popular musicians’. She refers to the practice of ‘goal-directed solitary learning’ (p. 16). However, Mario’s preference for ‘solitary learning’ is not simply a ‘common practice’ for it is an outcome of, and strongly connected to childhood circumstance. As an ‘only child’ his initial, substantial music learning experiences were undertaken as solitary activities. In the process of watching and interacting imaginatively with the televised music videos, by himself, Mario was undisturbed, able to focus and intensify his relationship with music through a natural process of self-fulfilment. In this satisfying way music began powerfully acting in his life, as an agent, a mediator between social and subjective events and as DeNora (2000) says, as a ‘technology of self’. Later, I ask Mario what attracts him to being in a band.

To be in a band – it’s sharing music, sharing a passion and love with other people that are like-minded and want to do the same thing. And to be able to do
that together, to experience such a great art form together is a wonderful thing to be able to do.

From this response, Mario reveals how he is attracted to and reaches out toward a communal, more social aspect of music sharing. There is also a clear indication of some of the motivation behind his desire to be successful as a 'front man' in a band. However, underlying this social 'reaching out' there is the self-dependent, private need to discover and succeed on his own. The 'solitary learning practice' turns out to be a 'safety net' - protection - wishing not to rely on others who may depart again. An 'after-thought' in our conversation indicates this self-dependence.

MARIO: But on the other hand... when you said (what is it like) to be in a band, I appreciate it a lot even though it may seem like attention seeking... I would appreciate it a lot more if it was just myself... being able to get my message across rather than a group.

DAVID: Do you mean you would really like to be a solo artist?

MARIO: Aspiring in the end to be a solo artist but at the moment I haven't got the skill. I can sing – I know I can sing – but if you just sing up on stage - one person, without backing. And not really...

DAVID: It's a double-edged sword...

MARIO: It is.

DAVID: ... where you need to be... you need to express yourself, but you need other people to assist you.

MARIO: Help, express... so that is why I am learning to play other instruments so eventually when I have eventually gone through this band extravaganza and been famous (smiles) ... touch wood... (knock) I am able to do it all by myself.
And get my message across... what I have been crafting myself into... since I was younger.

DAVID: I also had great feelings of that... now I'm talking quite a few years ago now... and part of that arose from disappointments with band situations – relying on people – putting a lot of eggs in one basket if you like. And then the only person in the end I could rely on was myself.

MARIO: ...was yourself.

DAVID: Does that ring a bell with you?

MARIO: A lot. I haven't been able to experience that in the music side of things, but in general life you can really only rely on yourself. You can't expect too many things of other people, because they don't really understand what you want.

DAVID: We are talking about the social aspect of ensemble playing...

MARIO: An amazing thing to have to bridge.

DAVID: It is going to be an amazing journey for you.

MARIO: I can't wait.

* Mario's descriptions had led me to reflect on my own experience. I had 'resonated' with his situation and I confirm how music can 'fill one's life', becoming a medium, interacting between 'inner' and 'outer' experience. I recognise how music used in this way, is able to satisfy and fulfil specific personal needs, perhaps often helping to manage a feeling of isolation.

I re-affirm that the interpretive concern of the study is with the exploration and unfolding of social action and the way 'ordinary people go about making sense of their experience' (Bruner, 1996). This is not a case of psychoanalytical 'digging' or the overt search for 'subjective driving forces' (see Fornäs et. al.
1995, p. 173). My task is not to locate psychological factors while explaining the operation of hidden, underlying causes and then leave them 'atomised' (Ratner, 1997, p. 14) and separate from lived experience. Rather the interpretive process synthesises meanings in order to understand how music is used in the construction of a meaningful life.

Dwelling on our conversations, more detail emerges of how music contributes to the complexity of Mario's musical character and identity. There is an 'outward face of musical identity, a publicly observable thing' (Cummings, 2000, p. 10). This particular self uses music outwardly as a tool that socially interacts and is a medium in relationships with others. Operating from this part Mario is outgoing and confident, often humorous and always popular with his peers.

However, an 'inner musical face', is connected to a more private self where music experience offers security, fulfilment and satisfaction. This self is happy to relate to music alone. This inner identity developed from a solitary and self-motivated music discovery and learning style.

Importantly, Mario distinguishes the 'cello moment' and the 'learning from video clips' as symbolically important events, for they were the time where he moved to take control of his own learning and direction. Since then he has identified positively with informal learning processes and solitary learning procedures.

* * *

**Music learning as discovery and 'osmosis'**

In a previous episode Mario's early music skills had been conceptualised as 'naturally acquired' through 'solitary learning practice'. His reflections indicated that
he values and defines these early experiences, not as learning processes but as the 
discovery and exploration of music (perhaps he is an instinctive or archetypal 
constructivist!). His descriptive, self-evaluative comments stated that, while acquiring 
skills, he was “in exploration” and that he “informed himself”. He had also added that

I had to discover music by myself.

Later Mario relates a moment that he again identifies as musical discovery. In the 
following episode he reveals how an informal interaction with a teacher was 
particularly meaningful. This episode is an example of how informal music learning 
experiences may not always be confined to ‘out-of-school’ situations. But here I 
focus on Mario’s preference for discovering music.

DAVID: OK now what about – during your education with music – are there any 
particular teachers - or anybody, who were inspirational – that you can recall?

MARIO: An Aboriginal teacher of mine – actually he was the physical education 
teacher - helped me. I never really liked sport and always used to ‘sit-out’. 
Anyway, I would sit-out and I used to sing songs and when the class was playing 
sport – he used to come over and sing songs with me off the radio. He was just 
really nice – he didn’t care that I didn’t want to do sport and he would just sit 
there and just sing with me.

Importantly, at a later interview we returned to talk about this episode and 
Mario described it saying that the physical education teacher –

helped me discover music. He didn’t teach me about music, he showed 
me music and there is a difference.
Reflecting phenomenologically on Mario’s experience and becoming ‘immersed in the lived experience to which the description refers’ (Wertz, 1984, p. 42), I generate the following meaning structure.

Mario identifies a difference between being shown and being taught. Being “shown” music is equated with “discovery” and preferred to the process of “being taught”. The physical education teacher made a connection to Mario’s inner musical identity, the essentially private part. This is the part that prefers to discover music rather than be taught, for discovery is the preferred routine for his inner musical ‘face’ for it suits his ‘solitary’ learning style and is how he began - “in exploration”.

The episode was impressionable for the young music enthusiast. An adult, a teacher (“he was really nice - he helped me”) was not trying to teach him but was happy to show or simply ‘music’ with him. And not only was the teacher allowing him to “sit-out” - to escape what he didn’t enjoy but was sanctioning and encouraged what was important.

The episode is an additional example of music skills being acquired ‘naturally’ in ‘everyday’ music enculturation processes. This ‘natural’ type of learning ‘occurs without any conscious application’ and has been described as a process of osmosis (Green, 2001, p. 100).

Osmotic music learning, Green (2001) points out, is often the way of ‘popular’, jazz, folk and ethnic musics. In these areas, she states, the ‘learning practices of the musicians are indeed more natural than many of those associated with formal education, more akin to the ways in which very young children pick up language, and draw more heavily on enculturation experiences’ (p. 100). Green goes on to discuss music learnt through ‘osmosis’ and those (classical, formal) styles that are learnt through ‘disciplined study’. She is critical of the dismissive attitude (and she is citing the philosopher, aesthetisician and ‘anti-rock critic’ Roger Scruton) that
assumes one is the way of nature (‘inevitable, therefore amoral’) and the other of culture (‘worthwhile and ethical’). Unacceptable to Green is the ‘crude opposition of ‘discipline’ and ‘osmosis’, (and) the notion that skills and knowledge which are acquired by ‘osmosis’ are for that reason, unworthy of inclusion in or recognition by the processes of formal education’ (p. 100). Fortunately, as Green discusses (p. 151), ‘the new classroom music education’ (compared with ‘traditional classroom music education’ - p. 127) that commenced in the 1980’s, is more likely to cater for ‘popular’ musicians and osmotic, natural learning.

Solitary, osmotic, discovery and exploratory learning practices (rather than formal, disciplined teaching) have formed the basis of Mario’s individual and unique musical identity. It is fortunate that throughout his formal education he has had inspiring moments that have supported his individual approach. Riverside College could be classed as incorporating ‘the new music education’ and so he is ‘at home’ with his present course of study. However, Mario’s storied musical education is bound together with his inner life. It is not as though music was simply an ‘addition’ that had been superimposed on his life through formal teaching – as a sort of ‘transference from without’. It is more that music has become imbedded in the inner, private self and is used as a tool, moving ‘outward’ in a process of self-discovery and exploration of possibilities and social mediations.

In the following interview extract we can see how music, as a tool and mediator, has further assisted social and self-discovery.

Mario had experienced Aboriginal culture in his primary school. Music bridged his relationships and was instrumental in helping construct an attitude of positive and sensitive cultural respect.

DAVID: Is there a personal artefact that is really important to you? Its representation in music means a lot to you – such as a certificate, a recording,
an instrument or even a memory... Could we discuss that now or next time we meet...

MARIO: No! I know what it is! A didgeridoo that was given to me by one of my friends at La Perouse public school in grade two. He lived next door to me and he was in – I don’t know – his thirties or forties when he made this didgeridoo from his native tribe – out of this gum tree that he had in his back yard. He gave it to me and I have still got it today. I play it almost every day. I love the didgeridoo.

DAVID: How is it special to you? MARIO: Because... it is the same thing that my PE teacher in La Perouse when I was younger – and my aboriginal friends that I made there – the sort of people I grew up with. Although I am not greatly involved with Aboriginal culture it is a special thing because they are Australian people and we are not ... (inaudible). I like strange instruments and I like the way the didgeridoo sounds – even though I can’t play it properly – do circular breathing – I can still play the didgeridoo. It is just a very special thing to me with the fact that it was given to me by Aboriginal people – I didn’t have to buy it at the shop – at some ‘cheapo touristy’ price.

DAVID: Was it a token...?

MARIO: An acceptance gift.

DAVID: Aboriginal music goes beyond...

MARIO: It is spirituality. It is because all countries and races – you can always communicate through music. Just anything – even banging on a lid or something – is still musical. You can’t not play music – even by accident. It is cross-cultural – a no boundaries language sort of thing ... fascinating!

*
In Mario’s present experiences, informal and solitary learning practices continue alongside the formal practices in College. While Mario attends a Year Eleven contemporary music course he is highly motivated outside the classroom and is presently teaching himself to play the guitar and keyboard.

And at the moment I’ve gone back to learning guitar -- I’m teaching myself and I have also got a keyboard at home. I am not playing clarinet or saxophone anymore because I didn’t think I would really get anywhere with that.

However, despite the private, ‘inner face of musical identity’ that prefers solitary practice, Mario is not a ‘loner’. He balances the private with a robust social identity where the ‘outward face’ is shared with friends and classmates at College.

Within Riverside there is a significant popular music sub-culture or ‘scene’. I became aware of this ‘scene’ while visiting the College over a period of six months. It consists of a large community of popular music peers who are centred on both the contemporary music course and around two ‘high profile’ College rock bands. These bands are popular both within the College and the outside community. They have appeared at several large festivals and achieved successes at local ‘Battle of the Bands’ competitions. They have also recorded CDs of their own compositions.

Mario is part of this scene. Although not in either of the bands he regularly plays with the musicians and occasionally busks with one of the guitarists. Fortunately, Mario has been able to build on his informal beginnings with music as the popular music course he is engaged in at Riverside supports and encourages some of the more ‘vernacular’ forms mentioned by Green. These include songwriting and composing in ‘group effort’ sessions (Green 2001, pp. 80-82) and also a community style of band rehearsal and performance that includes ‘jamming’.

Despite an apparent preference for informal learning, Mario makes the most of musical situations and reflects positively about many school experiences.
School and formal learning

Although Mario had said that he “didn’t have any further formal music training after the Suzuki/cello thing” of course this is not the case as classroom music lessons have been ongoing and he describes how at a later phase, he had clarinet and saxophone lessons. Also he currently has a 45-minute singing lesson each week at College. The apparent contradiction, a Freudian slip perhaps, may be an indication of the value he holds for informal and solitary learning practices, which are at the forefront of his thinking.

While Mario lives a kind of ‘double musical life’, with outer and inner faces of musical identity, the solitary practices have been balanced by social, community and school music engagement. A number of school and ‘formal’ experiences have afforded Mario opportunities for confidence building and the construction of a ‘performing identity’.

I used to love singing in Primary grades 1 and 2. Before I moved to Tasmania I was at La Perouse Public School in Sydney – which was probably 75% Aboriginal so I was in a minority there. But that was important for music and performing. I was in one of the groups that used to tour around primary schools and do shows. I remember reciting a poem about the famous Aboriginal Albert Namatjira - my first experience of performing in front of a large audience. I was five and there were about 1200 people in the auditorium – so from a very early age I have been used to big audiences. I am comfortable with big audiences especially in music because with stage lights, you can’t see the audience – you can just focus on the darkness. So, I have always felt confident when I have been performing. Since those days I have always been in choirs - in and outside of school. I also had this music group with some kids in my street – we got together and we wanted to make it big like some of the big pop-star acts of the time but we never got off the ground. In primary school I was - right from grade
three until grade six - I was in the choir every year. In grade 7 I joined the junior choir and then moved up to the senior choir. Then I wanted to join the concert band so I played clarinet for all four years of high school until grade 10. But in year 9 and 10 I started playing saxophone. My mother encouraged me with that - I think because she thought that it would be a good instrument for me to play to entice the female of the species (smiles). But I didn't really mind what I played and gave up both at the end of grade 10 as I was still focussed on my singing.

A formal and informal learning gestalt

I returned to explore the topic of 'types of learning' and knowledge acquisition at a later interview. I was interested in how Mario experienced and contrasted his theoretical, formal knowledge with the more intuitive 'folk knowledge' achieved through 'vernacular everyday practice'. Also, how he had bridged formal and informal learning patterns and how these contributed to his musical knowledge as a whole.

DAVID: With your formal music education - how much of that has rubbed off into your skill as a musician and songwriter - for instance do you use your formal knowledge of music in you composition style?

MARIO: I do. Not so much this year but in grade 10 when I had my solid theory training I used it and also in '99 early 2000 (when) I was involved in a music theatre group. That was with ...(name inaudible) who is Greek and he taught us lots of Orthodox Greek Church music and we learnt all these weird harmonies. I have always loved harmonies so I like to learn how to do proper harmonies and sing harmonies in music. But with my theory like - we had a solid theory unit with that as well, so as well as doing western culture I have also learnt strange
European music like that, and African and whatever – I have learned about that through my theory work.

DAVID: When you compose, do you think intuitively or do you actually think of theory you know like – writing two different melodies at specific intervals apart – or do you just hear it and feel it and write it?

MARIO: I hear it and feel it and write it but essentially like - I know that that is what two different parts – that is what I am hearing but I don’t – when I first hear it, I think isn’t that a fabulous melody or a fabulous piece. I don’t say “Oh he is playing C, D, E, F, or G with chords 1, 4 and 5 underneath it, I just appreciate the music for what it is and try and emulate that. I don’t... (pause)

DAVID: Hear it in your head and...?

MARIO: I hear it in my head and write it down. I don’t say what... I just try and figure it out.

We return to this issue at a later conversation. Again discovery becomes an important issue.

DAVID: My point is that you have taken control of your own learning. Importantly now, how do you reconcile or see school music in relation to how you have taken control of your own learning? People often learn a lot – sometimes more – in their own space than in the classroom situation. How do you see those two things?

MARIO: You do learn a lot more by yourself because you can exercise your own limits, whereas in a school situation it is catered on one level – to give you a particular range of knowledge. But by yourself, you are left to discover your own things which of course when you get the school foundation you can then expand your knowledge but... I don’t think that... unless in the beginning when you are first discovering... about your love for music and your love for anything really...
that if you don’t know that you can go outside what you have been taught and discovered for yourself, you won’t do it when you get the opportunity. I really do appreciate what I have learnt in the school system, especially since my beginnings and in recent years at high school.

**Entering a ‘virtual world’**

I return to Mario’s musical beginnings for there is another important transformative experience that plays a part in his relationship with music.

After Mario had introduced his musical background, I asked him to recall further important musical events in his life. Without hesitation he related an experience that I assumed to be powerful and important for as he recalled this experience he became animated. As we revive the past in the present context we often become re-associated and re-connected to the original emotions and images.

I can remember to this day what turned me on to music. It also happens to be my very earliest prominent memory. It was 1988 and the Bicentennial celebrations were taking place. I was living in Botany Bay at the time. They had bands playing and fireworks. It was HUGE! That was my very first memory of hearing people singing. They had Aboriginal music, singing and dancing demonstrations and it was like – with so many people playing on the beach – bloody great! I was very impressed! I loved it! About a fortnight before that, if someone had asked me what I wanted to be, I would have said “Prime Minister”. After the Botany Bay celebrations if the same person had asked me again – “What do you want to be now?” I would have said, “I want to be a performer.” That was when I was four years old and ever since then I’ve stuck to trying to be the very best I can be as a singer.
I later reflect on the power of moments like these when consciousness, reaching out, becomes unselfconsciously absorbed in the moment.

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It is interesting to watch children unselfconsciously absorbed in private, 'virtual worlds' of fantasy and imagination, where self is merged or captured. We can become transfixed, drawn into a virtual world, often when reading a book or when engaged in the song, dance and dramatic play of others. Perhaps this was the experience of four-year-old Mario as he faced a group of painted, stamping Aboriginal dancers. He became absorbed in the lived experience of colour and movement, the sounds of singing, clapping sticks, and didgeridoo, magically enhanced within his own excitement with the fireworks and the fun and laughter.

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'Virtual worlds' are the blending of self and phenomena – or to put it another way, the barrier between self and other disintegrates. More than simply a high degree of concentration, this state involves a forgetfulness of self where we leave chronological time and space and enter 'lived time and space'. Metaphorically, we may express this by saying we get "lost in a book" or "time stood still". This 'state' is often desirable in musical performance and has been described as 'loss of ego' and 'elimination of self' (Green and Gallwey, 1986, p. 95, who quote Leonard Bernstein, and Kató Havas). This self forgetfulness, viewed as a result of the 'intentional' function of consciousness is what prompted Clifton, with his phenomenological theory of 'music as experience', to say, 'Music is what I am when I experience it' (1983). Moreover, this experience described by Csikszentmihalyi as
‘flow’ becomes attractive and motivational as it is ‘autotelic’ or rewarding in and of itself (1988, p. 8).

On returning from these ‘virtual worlds’ according to Maxine Greene (1995) we are ‘placed into new contexts with new sets of meanings and values (which) suddenly adhere to objects and practices previously taken for granted’ (p. 74). These new meanings, values and contexts are life enriching, contributing to our growth – they are some of the non-easily-measurable outcomes of arts education.

Mario emerged from his Botany Bay experience ‘turned on to music.’ His retelling of the story reveals the implicit meaning that it had for him. In the next section I explore the experience for further implicit phenomenological meanings.

**A co-conspiracy of phenomenological meaning**

Between the first and second interview with Mario I took time to reflect on his ‘Botany Bay experience’. Reading through the transcript and making a connection to Maxine Greene’s conception of meaning and imagination, I assumed that coming out of the transfixed moment Mario ‘returned from a virtual world and was placed into a new context with new sets of meanings and values’. Wishing to share my observation with Mario, I simplified and re-conceptualised that statement (for the sake of conversational convenience) as ‘Mario experienced transformation’. At our next conversation I seek his comments and further reflection (wishing for a co-conspiracy of meaning construction - see Barone, 2001a, p. 178 and also Mishler 1986b, p. 52). I suggested to Mario that his experience was ‘transforming’.

**DAVID:** I was really interested in an experience you had. You mentioned the Bicentennial celebrations. It seems that it was quite transforming for you?

**MARIO:** It definitely was transforming. It was more of a thing to see people acting, dancing and singing and everything and to want to be able to do that too and to know that I could do that. And what did it mean to me? Well, growing up I
suppose – I mean I was only 4 years old but I somehow became older than I was. It was a maturing sort of thing.

By acknowledging and re-formulating the past experience as ‘transformative’, Mario’s new account of the experience creates, through a different light and reflection, new meanings of the value of the moment and the importance of music in his life. These are implicit in his new narrative account. Later, while reflecting on his response, I write random notes in my research journal as I attempt to ‘magnify and amplify details, slow down, patiently dwell and linger in the described situation while attempting to maintain (as far as possible) an empathic presence to the described situation’ (Wertz, 1984, p. 42). Scribbling down notes and writing ideas helps me ‘dwell’ on Mario’s reflections on his reactions to ‘people acting, dancing and singing’.

What phenomenological or ‘lived’ meanings are implicit in Mario’s account? I think of Kvale’s (1996, pp. 3-4) qualitative researcher metaphors and acknowledge that while often I assume the role of ‘travelling reporter’ who ‘describes qualitatively as stories the potentialities of meaning that he hears and sees’, in this case I am a ‘miner’. Here I am digging for nuggets of meaning – what van Manen (1991, p. 10) refers to as phenomenological essences.

Importantly, Mario re-confirms the original lived experience as powerful for as he says, it helped create a ‘maturing experience’ and motivated a significant navigational turn in the course his life – away from becoming ‘Prime Minister to Performing Artist’.

I search for an essence of Mario’s experience.

I use what Husserl called ‘imaginative variation’. I seek possible structural meanings and also vary meanings through the utilisation of imagination, considering lived time, space, body, and the relation of the phenomenon to self, to being (to Mario’s experience). I think of the importance of imagination in this interpretative process and how Johnson (1987) sanctions it, believing that it is an unacknowledged component of rationality. And Maxine Greene (1995) suggests
that imagination should be released from its confines and in so doing it will release us from ours.

I also have an intuitive feeling about the events in Mario's narrative (Husserl emphasised intuition in opposition to Descartes who emphasised deduction - see Moustakas, 1994, p. 33).

I attempt to extract an essence, a 'moment of experience' from Mario's formulation that constitutes the experience of 'being transformed by music, singing and dancing'. In the process I must not 'violate the formulation' by Mario (See van Kaam, 1969, p. 334)

I persist with the magnification of details. Answers do not come easily but I linger and dwell until intuition surfaces and I begin to focus and resonate with a sentence uttered by Mario that defines an important transitional moment, the lived moment when potential was activated –

**MARIO:** It was more of a thing to see people acting, dancing and singing and everything and to want to be able to do that too and to know that "I could do that".

I repeat the phrase **I could do that** to myself four times, each time with emphasis on succeeding words. I write in my journal –

I could do that
I **could** do that
I could **do** that
I could do **that**

The same order of words, read aloud again, each time with different emphasis, creates four different meanings (Imaginative Variations!) I repeat the complete sentence four times, each time changing the word emphasis. The
experience of emphasising each word in turn and reflecting on each context has
the effect of generating an overall structure of lived meaning. In order to clarify
this I ascribe concepts of lived time, space, body, causality and the relation of
the phenomenon to self - to each word in the phrase.

I – Being, Self (subject, ego, me)
Could – Potential (imagination, time, becoming)
Do – Experience (action, possibility, and skill)
That – Being, Phenomena (object, music, singing, dancing)

I (Self) and phenomena (That) are both included as Being as they are
fused in the virtual world. Moustakas (1994 p. 100) now suggests creating a
synthesis of the meanings and essences of the experience into a statement.
This will include an 'intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural
descriptions into a unified statement of the (transformative) experience as a
whole'.

Here it is -

Mario interprets this moment as instrumental in directing certain powerful
changes in his life. As a transformative moment of lived experience it has extended
out from an experience absorbed in music singing and dancing. Consciousness had
'thrust' out toward phenomenon (Greene, 1995). An important force behind that
movement is the ingredient 'imagination'. The Self, (including the body and feelings)
has been captured through imagination, by aural and visual impressions. This
mind/body state is accompanied by feelings that inspire a further reaching-out – to
motivation and potential, to actions and skills. Mario's imagination leads him to test
his ability to become, to move from "I could do that" to "I will be that". There is a
self-fulfilling need. But in this case, a lived moment with music has inspired a
particular personal path to self-achievement. As a four-year-old child Mario made a
commitment to becoming a performer on the strength of powerful impressions and 'new sets of meanings and values.'

Mario made a strong commitment at that time and now, aged seventeen, he has subsequently stuck to his plan. He is part of a theatre troupe that regularly performs, entertaining children. I was invited to observe the show.

* * *

"Brown Snake Transmits the Force"

I load the car with video camera, tripod, film and notebook and set off down the Southern Highway. The windows are down and warm air gusts in bringing aromas of wattle and eucalyptus mixed with the smell of hot tar-seal. This is the hottest day of the summer and above the sky is a brilliant azure that blends into a milky pastel smoky heat haze at the horizon. Soon out of town I turn left toward the coastline. The quiet side road dips toward the glistening D'Entrecasteaux Channel and sailing boats are visible against the backdrop of Bruny Island, which is a burnt, golden hue. I drive through apple and cherry orchards, past tractors, shacks, newly-mown grass verges with wooden stalls laden with bags of tomatoes, 'honesty' boxes and signs saying "$1 a bag". This is a quiet part of the world – even on a normal hot summer Sunday afternoon there is very little traffic. I used to wonder if the farmers ever sold anything at the gate. But today is different. After half-an-hour of driving the density of cars going my way has gradually built up. Soon, a line of cars laden with families and children are all crawling bumper-to-bumper toward the local event of the year – The 'Taste of the Huon'. This festival of food – fruit, cheeses, sea-fare, wines, jams and pickles - woodcarvings, leather belts with silver-smithed buckles and a
myriad of other handcrafted products, is also a great venue for music, singing and dancing.

Once into the Showground, I notice that there are several performing stages. The sounds of African djembe drums swirl around the show-ground blending with folk styles, fiddle-tunes, Turkish belly dancing music and blaring public address announcements. Although I may have time to sample the fare, I am here to see and hear Mario performing in ‘Theatre Alfresco’.

I push through the crowd with the camera equipment and bags. In an open grassed area, Brown Snake and Crow, a short pantomime is in progress. Mario (Brown Snake) is dressed in a straw hat and baggy clothes singing and clowning in front of forty or fifty children seated on the grass. The children are actively engaged, laughing, shouting and clapping.

Mario’s enthusiasm for music, singing and dancing is infectious and through his public performances he helps to ignite the imaginations of others. Just as he was moved and inspired, so he now moves and inspires others.

Mario’s transformative experience, where he had initially been “turned on to music”, was at an open-air celebration. It was perhaps coincidental that as I observe him, he is now performing at a similar function. He had described how, as a child, the festive atmosphere, the singing and dancing had inspired him to become a performer. And now as I watch him, the children seated before him are entranced. Some may be absorbed in virtual worlds and perhaps the new meanings and values they create as they reflect on their experience - will inspire them into music.

Mario perhaps unwittingly is a cultural ambassador, a mediator adding to the conversation between music and the subjective processes of others. But perhaps not so unwittingly, for he does have awareness, a personal vision of his role as a socio-musical conversationalist. For while searching through the interview transcripts for reflective comments about musical identity, I find something significant. It occurs in
our conversation when I ask him what it is he is doing with *this thing called music*. He says -

I'm bridging a gap that exists between people... communicating in a common language and feeling.

***
Jan Peterson

Don't try to get rid of your motivating force when you find it, but use it to study yourself.

G. I. Gurdjieff
(quoted in Anderson, 1962, p. 62)

"Music is my life."

"What would you do if you couldn't do music?"

"I wouldn't want to be without the thing that keeps me going a lot of the time."

"When do you get time to do homework?"

"I don't. I just try and find minutes that aren't there and squish it all in."

*  

I sense an air of tension as everyone assembles into the room. The formal atmosphere is intended to simulate that of a professional concert. As the students move to their seats they are hushed although an occasional whisper and nervous giggle echoes around the auditorium.

Eight of the students are about to take their turn performing in this assessment concert, which is part of a pre-tertiary music course. When everyone is seated introductions are made, there is loud applause - the students are sympathetic to each other's nervousness and hence are supportive of each other. Everyone wants everyone to do well. I have set up the video camera on one side of the auditorium at St Catherine's College. Jan Peterson is about to sing, performing for her peers,
guests and class teacher. Pressing the record button on the camera I move back to my seat – to listen and watch.

Jan, being slight of build looks vulnerable and nervous as she prepares to sing. She straightens the music on the stand, pushes up the sleeve of her cardigan as if to say “I mean business” - the piano introduction starts. Soon the room warms - her tone has a charming quality and she sings tentatively at first with care and attention, but soon relaxes as the song unfolds. We are drawn in, captivated.

* *

Jan Peterson, singer, pianist, flautist, actor, dancer and self-confessed musical “perfectionist” attends St. Catherine’s College for girls. She is in Year Eleven having entered the college in the previous year - enticed by its renowned arts program and a scholarship. Her parents and music teacher describe her as “very strong” academically, and “having many roads she could go down”. However, music has come to the forefront and she plans to study music at tertiary level and then make it her career. Jan’s parents support and encourage her musical direction and goals.

Jan sings soprano and prefers classical music to pop and jazz but at present it is the music theatre repertoire that fires her imagination. Despite articulating clear preferences about musical styles, there is an element of doubt about the future and which genre to pursue.

JAN: I don’t know what direction to get into – whether to go to musical theatre, like I am at the moment or whether I want to get into professional opera. It sort of depends on how my voice develops.
The last two years have been very busy. Participation in music and
dramatic stage productions, pantomimes and eisteddfods, programs both in and
out of school, have provided a variety of performing experiences and stage roles.

Jan's piano playing is at the same examination grade level as her singing.
However, her mother says she is “more comfortable singing and it is her primary
aim”. Jan agrees saying “I think of myself as a singer more than anything else.
That’s basically what I excel at more.” As a flautist she is primarily self-taught. “I
picked it up in primary school, know the notes and because I can read music
from playing the piano, I just teach myself and pick up whatever I can from
orchestra tutorials”.

Versatility is a feature of Jan’s involvement in the college arts programs
for in her various roles, she is always in demand, always occupied. Her timetable
includes choir, vocal ensemble, orchestra, and personal preparation for vocal and
piano assessment and there are often rehearsals underway for music and drama
productions, which are regularly staged. Jan’s college timetable is full and music
structures and fills her ‘lifeworld’.

Jan’s musical identity has been constructed and nurtured within family
relationships and home-space. This became evident in the first few minutes of my
arrival at the family home when her parents, Joanne and Brian had agreed to talk
to me about their eldest daughter’s life in music.

* 

The Petersons live in a northern suburb that is located on a hillside, over­
looking the Derwent estuary and facing across the water to the city of Hobart.

I had arranged to meet at the family home and it was dark and raining hard
as I drove across the bridge. Looking back across the water, the city lights were
barely visible through the mist and sea spray. Eventually, after having peered past
the slapping, sloshing windscreen wipers for the street names and the house
numbers I finally pulled up outside the home - the glow from lights in the house looked warm and inviting.

Jan opened the door and greeted me. Recorded orchestral music sounded in the upstairs living area but we by-passed that room and Jan ushered me down the stairs through a large family room and into an office.

"Have a seat, Mum won't be a moment; she's in there," she said pointing to a door at the other end of the room. "She'll only be a moment - she's just finishing teaching." I heard the faint sound of a piano and voices from behind the door. I thanked Jan and she left to go back to whatever she had been doing. I sat down in the chair and was left to reflect. I imagined she was in the process of "squishing" in some homework.

The house was set-up for music. The piano-room had a solid door that I could see had been especially built for soundproofing. The music emanating was quiet and muffled.

Soon Joanne Peterson emerged from the music room and we made introductions - to Corinne also, the youngest member of the family.

"I was just helping Corinne with some music that is coming up for her exams soon" she explained. I later discovered that Joanne a competent pianist, regularly guided both of her daughters as they played through their repertoire and prepared for exams.

We begin our interview and shortly, Brian Peterson entered the room and joined the conversation. Their stories paint a picture of Jan's musical family life, but first I will tell of Jan's perspective of family and music.

* * *

At the first interview with Jan at college, I had asked what it was that attracts her to music. Her family surfaced immediately to the forefront of her thinking.
JAN: I think the general attraction to music is... it has been in my family for a long time so it's something I have been brought up on.

The connection of music to family and family history was quick. I recognize a significant and influential contribution to Jan's musical world.

***Lived musical space, relationships and the family 'script'***

Borthwick and Davidson (2002) suggest that there are many influencing factors within family life that contribute towards a musical identity and immediate family members often play a shaping role. Particularly from parents, there may be a 'parenting script' that is a blueprint of musical values and expectations for development. These are passed on and are external factors influencing children (p. 76).

Joanne Peterson has been the primary musical influence in her daughter's life.

JAN: My mother has been the one who has basically brought me up with the musical background. She helped develop an appreciation of music from quite a young age.

DAVID: So basically you can remember listening to her play?

JAN: Ah, well she has started playing again in the last five or six years because my sister and I take piano lessons. She began playing again to bring herself back up to scratch so she can help us – recognize our mistakes and call them out. I think she did up to grade 8 in the Trinity examinations. And it was just too much work with the family so she ended up letting it go. But she is a very musical person herself and she has got a very broad range of knowledge. She is really helpful.

DAVID: And she has been encouraging?
JAN: Very much!

Extended family - and maternal and paternal grandmothers were also pianists. Brian Peterson (father) is not a musician (“I used to learn as a kid and can read music but I have trouble making two hands co-ordinate!”) but within the extended family there have been other singers and pianists. A great-aunt, “heavily involved in the arts” is acknowledged as recognizing Jan’s “natural ability” and it was she who suggested formal training. From that moment encouragement and music lessons began.

Talking with Joanne and Brian Peterson, it becomes clear that Jan’s individual musical identity is an extension of a larger family musical identity sustained through a ‘family script’ and ‘transgenerational plot’ (Byng-Hall, 1995 and Borthwick and Davidson, 2002). From the following conversation, a co-construction of the family script emerges revealing its contribution to Jan’s musical life.

BRIAN: (father): My mother plays the piano and her sisters do - and my grandmother, on my Mum's side, used to. And I've got a funny feeling that my grandmother on my Dad's side - yes she did too.

Even before Jan was born there was a piano here. She would have heard Joanne playing. (To Joanne) You always reckon she used to jive to music when you were carrying her.

JOANNE: Yes, she has had music since before she was born if you think about it. If she was particularly restless, I would go and play the piano and she would calm down. When she was young, I would always play the piano - I would sit her on my knees and sing songs to her; she used to pick things out on the piano and fiddle around. As a baby and when she got to be, not much past twelve months old, she would climb up on the piano stool and have a poke around. She was a
very advanced child. We were hearing her first words at ten months. By twelve months we were getting sentences. By about twelve months old she was fiddling around on the piano by herself but she never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight.

Borthwick and Davidson, (2002) state that within the 'transgenerational plot', 'parents see their own parents as key players in their children's current musical identity' and often 'musicianship (is) an inevitable part of continuing the family identity across the generations' (p. 63). A love of music, its high status and role, is seen as an inheritance passed on through family and extended family members, a musical legacy passed down through generations. Relating this concept to 'script theory' (Byng-Hall, 1995), Borthwick and Davidson show how family musical involvement and values are passed on. However, Borthwick and Davidson also state that often parents, possibly due to negative experiences within the family, might be cautious of 'scripting their own children's futures.' (p. 63). Joanne's caution is expressed as a pragmatic interest and concern that her daughter's own script would be allowed to unfold without pressure.

JOANNE: Jan never actually started formal music lessons until she was about eight. I wasn't a firm believer in starting them young - before she was ready - and said she really wanted to learn. At about nine years of age she joined a small entertainment group - singing at old people's homes and she joined that because she couldn't do gymnastics or sport or anything like that. She had bad ankles and she wanted something more than the piano so she went in that direction and just wanted to do it for a bit of fun.
I reflect on the uniqueness of family musical 'scripts' and 'plots' and conclude that they are as individual as the people immersed in them. As a teacher, I was introduced to a great variety and diversity of these whilst talking to parents at 'Parent-Teacher' evenings. I would hear and discuss parents' stories of their child's musical past and about aspirations, expectations, hopes and fears for their musical futures.

Most people have interesting stories about family and the music that filled childhood. I thought I would randomly test this statement by asking some of those close to me.

I talk to my wife, Eilish nee McCarthy who hails from Count Cork in Ireland, about her memories of music in the home — of her family musical legacy. In the Irish tradition, the stories are easily at hand.

"I remember Granny Mac - playing old 78 records - of John McCormac singing 'Marble Halls', 'The Moon behind the Hill'. Mum - singing 'Silence is Golden', understandable - with eight kids in the house it was always bedlam. Also, 'We're all going on a Summer Holiday' - while slaving over a hot stove or doing the housework and great piles of laundry. And Dad - he would often sit at the bottom of the stairs late at night after coming home - "full up". Sitting there he would sing 'rebel songs' - 'Patriot Game' and 'Foggy Dew'. More bedlam if Gran Howard was over from England. The next morning she would counter attack by singing 'Jerusalem', 'Lambeth Walk' at the top of her voice and she would play Elgar and Vaughan Williams records."

Eilish and I joked about this family knack of communicating and passing on messages through the selection of songs. The lyrics would often cleverly reflect the expression of feeling at the time and also communicate a distinct, often cryptic message to other family members.
A friend, Sean Donahue, says his memories of family musical 'scripts' are more about talk of music rather than actual music itself. His parents didn't sing or play but seemed constantly lost in reverie and reminiscence of music in their childhood. Although a legacy did come, he says, in the form of an artifact - his grandfather's ancient mandolin. It was his father's keepsake and seemed to contain "locked up" memories. Sean's father would talk fondly of his father sitting in a huge armchair and gently strumming the mandolin, entertaining the family seated on the floor around him. It was Sean's Dad's nostalgic and fleeting childhood memory of music in the home.

Sean's mother would also tell stories of music in her young life - about her piano lessons and the grumpy, strict teacher who would rap your knuckles when you got it wrong. She would talk about her mother and brother's love of music. These stories too were always accompanied by nostalgia for the music she had "given up" or had to give up because of circumstances - "moving overseas and the war". The first time Sean heard her play was the first time she had played in twenty years. They were at a friend's house. He remembers how his mother looked nervously at the friend's piano and after being prompted to play, said, "Oh, I've forgotten everything". Tentatively though, as though drawn to it like a moth to a flame, she sat down, thought for a moment and then began Chopin's Prelude, Opus 28, number 7. She played the first four bars perfectly but the memories came flooding back, tears welled in her eyes, she stood up, closed the lid of the piano and walked out of the room.

The Peterson family musical relationships appear to take place in a positive atmosphere that includes musical nurturing, support, and
encouragement. According to Joanne, no 'hot-housing' techniques or pressure takes place. When I ask if Jan was naturally motivated toward music, she says –

Yes, there has never been any pushing from our point of view. Encouragement and a bit of harassment when exams are due and you are not ready, Jan – but apart from that, she sets her own goals and off she goes.

The Peterson's home environment had always been saturated with music and it had been a familiar experience for Jan, even prior to birth. Always surrounded by music, her self-identity was forming with it as she played at the piano with her mother and sang with her aunts. I envisage Jan as a toddler, where activities such as poking around on the piano and hearing and seeing family musical play are an integral part of a 'non-dualistic' childhood consciousness. What I mean by a 'non-dualistic childhood consciousness' relates to William James' theory of the two components of identity, the 'I' and the 'me'. 'The 'me' is the part of our identity that can be observed and known, whilst the 'I' is the part that is able to reflect on the 'me', i.e. which has subjectivity and is the knower' (Hargreaves et al. 2002, p. 9). Before these processes of self-definition and self-concept are formed no boundary exists between self and other; there is only one component. Jan's developing self-awareness and self-concepts have formed alongside growing awareness of self in relation to music. Reflecting on Bruner's theory that, 'meanings of self grow out of contexts of practice' (1990, p. 118) I see how, for Jan music is a meaningful part of Self. Music and 'growing up' are integrated. For Jan, as a toddler, there was an 'I' apprehending 'music' but no 'me' separate from 'music' - just music experienced pre-conceptually and pre-reflexively as sounds, sights, and sensations.

As identity formation relies on the developing sense of a 'balance between self and other' (Kroger, 1989, p. 5) Jan's musical identity is closely related with and balanced through interaction with the musical identity of her mother.
Importantly, when a child's life has been infused with music from birth a sense of naturalness with music occurs. Howe and Sloboda, (1991), in a study of the influence of family upon musical background present a quote by a parent talking about her son’s natural acceptance of music as part of life. Initially, Howe and Sloboda say:

In a number of instances it was clear that although music undoubtedly formed an important element of the child's early childhood, the child was not at the time aware that a family background in which music played a role was in any sense unusual. Music as an element of home life was simply taken for granted.

(The parent states) It never occurred to him (the child) that it wasn't part of our natural world. The doctor came one day with a black case and he said, “What does the doctor play?”

(p. 43)

While some participants in this study have interpreted their commitment to music as having begun from a particular inspirational moment or defining transformative experience, for Jan, the decision to dedicate her life to music may be described as a dawning. Music didn’t arrive dramatically later in life; it was always there. There was no fanfare or fired-up single imaginative moment of delight that started the ball rolling. There was just a steadily growing self-confidence in ability and love for music involvement. Music doesn’t simply surround Jan; it is infused into her life to the extent that she says

Music has become my life – it is what I do.

However, there is an acknowledged important moment for the gradual transition into awareness of the importance of music was ‘triggered’ by growing self-confidence from a particular experience. It grew with continued success at events and competitions.
By the time she had reached Year Ten, Jan had sung in the chorus of a professional production of ‘Oliver’, performed in several pantomimes and played an extensive summer season as a lead in ‘Aspects of Love’. These experiences were positive and the success helped to promote the move from the thought “maybe I can” have a career in music to the firm conviction “I can.”

JAN: Right up through primary school until grade eight I had always wanted to be a teacher. Music was just something I did outside of school and it wasn’t something I ever thought of moving into. It wasn’t until grade nine really when I got into the chorus of ‘Oliver.’ And that was the trigger. And I decided well maybe I can – I want to do something more. And so at the end of grade nine I was offered a scholarship here and I think by that time I had decided. Also I had won a lot of prizes at the eisteddfods during that year as well and I thought well if I could do this I can keep going. Now music has become my life – it is what I do. So it was probably getting into the ensemble chorus of ‘Oliver’ that triggered it the most. To say “OK well I can do this!” That was probably it.

Successful performance experiences have triggered positive feelings, a growing sense of achievement and self-confidence. These factors are tied to self-belief and self-esteem and as an important part of her musical identity we will later see how she monitors these through music and musical performances.

* * *

I am reminded again of Jerome Bruner’s assertion that ‘meanings of self grow out of contexts of practice’ (1990). His description points to how our sense of self and self-identity develop as a result of what we do and our contexts of experience. This perhaps could be simply put as ‘we are what we do’. An example also comes to mind.
There is a scene in 'Rumpole of the Bailey' where Rumpole, (the actor Leo McKern) is alone in his office, sitting at the desk, perusing a complicated legal document. He is thinking aloud. He is suddenly distracted by an intruding thought. He looks up, pauses and his mouth opens. He appears aghast as he asks himself, "Who am I?" He is dumbfounded by his own question. He looks vacant and is suddenly rather anxious at not finding an answer. Then he looks down at the legal document and then with a relaxing feeling of recognition says, "Oh yes." He carries on working.

The 'me' in music

Jan is serious about her music and school life. This is evident not only in her vocal tone and demeanor when in conversation, but also in the particular descriptions of her experiences and her critical reflections of her own musical performance and behavior. I proceed by following the theme of Jan's characterization of herself as a 'perfectionist' and how a degree of self-criticism assists her in the achievement of high standards.

Davidson (2002) comments on the personality of solo performers who engage themselves in many long hours of lonely practice. Helpful, she says, is a degree of introspection, self-containment and 'an ability to be self-critical as well as the ability to take criticism in order to conquer the challenges of learning' (pp. 101-102). However, the attributes of introspection and self-criticism may be developed, not solely to 'conquer learning' but exist prior to learning and music is used as an agent to sustain these attributes. DeNora (2000) concurs with this by stating that music may be 'appropriated by individuals as a resource for the ongoing constitution of themselves and their social psychological, physiological and emotional states' (p. 47). From my informal conversations with Jan, her
mother, father and music teacher, I discover how music is the agent in the ongoing constitution of a critical self. Music engagement provides Jan with a way to closely monitor self-worth and self-image.

As we are talking about her broad range of skills, as a singer, pianist, flautist, actor and dancer, I ask which of these are most important to her. Jan answers the question but an admission that she is self-critical is offered 'out of the blue'.

JAN: I suppose I think of myself as a singer more than anything else. That is basically what I excel at more. Although I don't go around saying I am a pianist and singer and I play the flute as well. I guess it's because as a classical singer - with people my age - there are not many of them and so rather than being a pianist - which there are millions - being a classical singer when you are younger isn't so much of an obvious choice. So basically I call myself a singer. I must admit I am my own critic.

DAVID: Are you?

JAN: Yes, I am my own worst critic. I have really high expectations of myself and I don't always meet them so I go through stages of depression - every now and then when I don't do as well as I think I should have.

Kathleen Cooper, Jan's classroom music teacher, recognizes this specific tendency. In conversation, she describes it in the following way:

KATHLEEN: Jan puts incredibly high expectations on herself and then assumes that everyone else has got them of her too.

I continue this point with her parents.

DAVID: Would you describe Jan as being self-critical?
JOANNE: Too much sometimes.

DAVID: Positively, you can be your own best teacher really. 

JOANNE: Yes, but sometimes she doesn't give herself credit for her ability. She is telling herself that she can do better and better rather than saying 'I think that was pretty good and I am happy with my performance - but next time I could do this and this', she tends to go 'That wasn't good enough'. Well, being artistic, she tends to sort of be that way - it is one of those things. But we try to temper her emotions and say 'look, Jan, try and give yourself credit'.

DAVID: Or perhaps be just a little more content with results. Maybe it is quite common with artists - to be perfectionists.

JOANNE: But I think there is equilibrium somewhere.

BRIAN: She is too much of a perfectionist.

JOANNE: Actually one of her former teachers - a grade six teacher she was talking to in the school holidays asked Jan "are you a fully fledged perfectionist now or are you still in training?" So right back - even in grade six when she was only eleven years old it was evident.

Jan's self-criticism extends over to analysis of her performances and she may often become disappointed when she does not meet her own expectations. But she also declares that she is trying not to 'hang on to disappointment' after performances that do not go so well.

JAN: I have tried to learn from experience - not to let performances get me down because I did that last year and I was a mess.

Jan and I continue discussing this issue and she ascribes some of the specific emotional issues attached to performing to the sensitivity and difficulty of 'being a singer'.
As a singer you are emotionally involved with the piece because the instrument is inside you. If you are a pianist – I know if I stuff it up – I can actually forget about it and leave the instrument behind. But being a singer it is in your head, it is - what you perform is actually you, so if you are disappointed with the performance you are more disappointed with yourself. And the disappointment lasts longer.

DAVID: So, is performing a bit of a roller-coaster ride?
JAN: It is, very much.
DAVID: Although you have to take the good with the bad.
JAN: You do.
DAVID: I guess you have to learn to move on from bad experiences.
JAN: Yeah, it is still... I haven't been performing long enough probably to be able to get over it quickly.
DAVID: You may find that many musicians are like that... are self-critical. You are like that?
JAN: Yes.
DAVID: You really want to do your best?
JAN: Yes, I am probably a lot harsher on myself than anyone else is. My teachers know it; my mother knows it especially. Most of my good friends are really good musicians. One of them is my accompanist and he knows that I pick myself to bits. And so he is very reluctant to point out anything that - unless it is terribly wrong he won't point anything out because he is afraid I will start criticizing that point and take it too far. I am getting a lot better and I am a lot more confident with it but it is still... I don't show it as much but there are still things that really irk me that I have done wrong. And so I will criticize myself
about it until I can try and fix it... or until I make it really worse and then I get really angry and it comes right out.

Jan's tendency to be self-critical has been part of a high achievement strategy and part of the reason for her success with music and high academic level in general. Of concern to her, parents and teacher is the resulting depression and dissatisfaction that often accompanies a post-performance analysis. Jan however has a coping strategy, for she has another way to use music.

"The Lion Tamer"

From the first interview with Jan, I went away with an impression of a young girl with a rather intense, stoical composure. She seemed very serious and resolute about everything she did. I heard purposeful and precise explanations of music, her family, school and lifestyle. I reflect on Jan's criticisms of her musical performances and behavior, and of admission and characterization of herself as a 'perfectionist'. Subsequent interviews and observations point to the fact that she is perhaps a little too "hard on herself".

Later, I listen to the recording of Jan singing at her exam assessment. The song, 'I'd like to be a Lion Tamer' is built around metaphor and irony. It is melancholic, a poetic expression of adolescent angst, of not accepting how one is and also the fantasy and need to be different. Jan sang the song appropriately, reflecting the sentiment with a clear, pure and delicate tone and with a rather sad expression. I wondered whether the irony was not only within the song but that there was a poignant reflection of the song to her life and how she was expressing herself through it. While I reflected, I returned to the interview transcripts and there I believed was a key to the way Jan 'locates her

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self in music'. I read and re-read her response to my opening question - “What attracts you to music?”

JAN: It's the opportunity music provides to be able to express personal opinions and feelings through a different form without having to say to somebody, “I feel very strongly about this.” You can find repertoire that expresses exactly how you feel without... and you can put your own interpretation into it. It's a very... although it is appreciated by so many people... it's a very personal thing. It's a good way of being able to release tension.

As I listen again more intently to the song, focusing on the lyrics I make a connection, a discovery of her purposeful selection of repertoire. I believe that the song reflects an expressive need – a chance to ‘feel through a different form’, an opportunity in the midst of a busy daily life, with associated tension and occasional depression caused through self-critical perfectionism - to let go, to relax and to dream a little.

I'd like to be a Lion Tamer, sequins and tights and silk top hats.
I know I could be a lion tamer, I've always gotten along with cats.
I'd have a whip but never use it; I'd simply hold it in my hand.
I'd like to be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
I would be someone grand.

I couldn't be a ballerina; I never could stand on my toes.
I couldn't be a Spanish dancer, I'd look ridiculous with a rose.
But everyone has a special calling, something that only she can do.
I could be such a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
I would be special too.
I could begin with baby leopards, move on to tiger cubs and then,
After I learn to handle lions, maybe I could work up to men.
I never wanted fancy mansions, butlers and footmen liveried,
I never wanted lots of money; money can't buy what you really need.
I never prayed for any favors, but here I am on knobby knee.

Please let me be a lion tamer. If I could be a lion tamer
Wouldn't he have to finally notice me?

(The Magic Show' – Stephen Schwartz, 1973)

Jan counters the perfectionist and critical self by selecting repertoire to support, and give credence to the self that perhaps is 'softer' and needs to have a voice. She prefers to give vent to certain emotions through this self, using music to expresses some of the more 'hidden' feelings. The particular self that Jan 'locates in the music' is a private 'hidden self' that she reveals to the world in her own particular form and process. Importantly that self is an antidote to the critical self that is focused on perfection.

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For my wife's family, expressing sentiment or communicating messages to others through song lyrics is an overt, often humorous musical peculiarity. Jan's expressing personal opinions and feelings through a different form is a more hidden process of expression, an example of music as a 'technology of self' – where it is used for the 'emotional and personal constitution of self' (DeNora, 207)
2000, p. 46). DeNora goes on to explain what she calls ‘musically composed identities’:

The sense of ‘self’ is locatable in music. Musical materials provide terms and templates for elaborating self-identity - for identity’s identification. Looking more closely at this process highlights the ways in which musical materials are active ingredients in identity work, how respondents ‘find themselves’ in musical structures. It also highlights some of the ways that music is attended to by its recipients, how music reception and the units of meaning that listeners find within music differ dramatically from musicological and music-psychological models of music reception and their emphasis on the perception of musical structures.

(2000, p. 68)

DeNora describes how with this particular use of music, we ‘can follow music as it comes to be converted or transposed – in and through interpretative appropriation – into something extra-musical, something social, [a] registration of self-identity. Music is a “mirror” that allows one to “see one’s self”’ (p. 70). Jan, like the participant’s in DeNora’s study is engaged in the process of seeing herself, composing her identity through music and ‘locating within its structures the ‘me in life.”

I wondered about Jan’s self-reflections – how she saw herself as self-critical and a perfectionist.

DAVID: Have you ever thought where that pattern (self-criticism) comes from?

JAN: Um, I think it is just... It hasn't really come from anywhere I think it is just something that I have. It is just part of me. I'm very much a perfectionist. I try to be very much... a perfectionist and I have for quite a long time. A lot of my teachers have noticed it because I try and do the
best the whole time and if it is not to my standard then it should be better.

Even if I can't get it any better. But it is something I am working on.

... Which is why I have to try and sort of fix myself up and find my standards because I was making myself very unhappy. I have never been optimistic. I always had a pessimistic attitude towards it even if I couldn't do any better. I wanted to do better and I told myself I could.

Using music as a 'mirror of the self' Jan is undergoing a process of self-discovery. (In postmodern terms, this amounts to the creation of a new self with which to view the old one. In narrative terms, it amounts to creating a new story of self.) Projected into the future, Jan will continue a process of self-understanding as she explores her musical identities. In her own words and interpretation she is 'working on' or 'fixing' her tendency to perhaps be overly self-critical as it often leads to disappointment and depression. This 'studying her motivating force' need not mean analysis or introspective dissection of self. Perhaps through reflection with music as a mirror for self-perception, Jan will be able to create a balance of selves or write a new story.

*Lived musical time*

Jan structures music listening into her daily routine and divides its use into different social and personal functions. While she will often listen, with serious intent, to a recording of a song in order to learn it for a performance, an exam, a show or an eisteddfod, music is often used in 'guiding, shaping and facilitating functions' (Shepherd, 2002, p. 9). For example, when she is not in the 'learning mode' Jan will put on CDs or tapes of her favourite music theatre pieces simply
"for fun". However she also qualifies this by saying that just recently, she has been too busy, or “not at home long enough” for much “fun” listening.

Jan uses music as a study aid and will often play background music while doing homework. Specifically it has to be ‘classical’ music, and she will put on the local ‘Classic FM’ station. Importantly it has to be music that she doesn’t ‘know’ for problematically, if she knows the music it draws her attention away from the study. This is specifically why she will not listen to theatre music or music she knows well, for “I will be waiting for a song the whole time and get nothing done”. Additionally music is used for relaxation and as an aid to sleep.

JAN: A friend lent me a tape of some theatre music that I now listen to at night because... I know it so well that I fall asleep listening to it. Because I know what is coming next and my brain is going – OK this is coming next and I just go to sleep. Which is... I have found is the easiest way of getting to sleep when I am so tired.

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At the appointed time for the next interview, Jan walks into the classroom looking quite stressed. We exchange greetings and settle down at the desk where I have positioned the recorder and microphone.

DAVID: What has happened this week?

JAN: Well, I have been at school every evening again for drama and that is just starting to get rather stressful. I have a lot of homework to do that I haven't got time to do because I don't go home in the evenings.

DAVID: My, it is a full life, isn't it? So the drama performance is on Thursday evening?
JAN: Yes

DAVID: Then things will level out a bit.

JAN: Hopefully, but then the musical starts so –

DAVID: It is back into it?

JAN: Yes.

DAVID: When do the holidays begin?

JAN: In three weeks.

DAVID: In three weeks time! So you start the musical before then?

JAN: Yes, we've started rehearsals already. But we don't have one this week because we have drama until late tonight, tomorrow and Wednesday and we start again next week and we will go right through until the holidays. And then get right back into it as soon as we come back.

DAVID: In the holidays, do you actually get time off?

JAN: No.

DAVID: You try to catch up with things?

JAN: I try and get everything done that I haven't got done and there is a dance Eisteddfod from 31 May to 10 June and I am there every night. I am either dancing or my sister is dancing or I have friends who are dancing. I have got two nights, my sister has about six and the rest we are just going to see so we are there, basically every day.

DAVID: When do you get time to do homework?

JAN: I don't. I just try and find minutes that aren't there and squish it all in.

DAVID: Is it music and drama that are taking all your time? It is not anything else?

JAN: No
DAVID: It's a full life but do you enjoy it? Do you love it?

JAN: I do. It is just drama at the moment, more than anything because it is production week and so everything is just so stressful and being here every day is getting a little bit wearing.

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Jan's musical lifeworld is caught up in a web of passion and angst. I sense the simultaneous forces of both a pushing and pulling in her relationship with music. On one hand music, as she had stated, is her life, the very thing that keeps her going, but on the other, she uses it (according to her music teacher) "to beat herself up". These complex and opposing functions serve to fuel different parts of her personality. As a perfectionist, music causes her tension and worry as she strives for distinct goals. It is also used as a medium, a way of voicing thoughts that cannot be voiced in any other way. There is self-concealment when she first creates a musical mask and then expresses herself from behind it.

Jan is living life from within these musical complexities and I wonder how she will resolve the tension created by the forces that motivate her – where she both loves music and uses it as an intimate form of self-expression and where she challenges herself with it. She believes that music is her life, but she uses her musical experience as a mirror of self and it is through the reflection that she critically studies herself and her life.

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Kristin Greenhill

The young girl was rummaging through the stereo cabinet in the corner of the lounge room. Her father, Jim Greenhill, sitting in the easy chair, peered over the top of the newspaper to check what she was doing.

“What are you up to Krissy?” he said, with mock sternness, knowing full well that she was again looking for something to play on the new cassette player in her bedroom. He glanced across at Janet sitting on the other easy chair across from him. She was reading, holding the book above the small dog on her lap. They looked at each other, smiling.

Kristin heard her father but ignored him. She pulled out a cassette case from the rack and read aloud.

“Les Miserables!” She exclaimed, looking puzzled. The English pronunciation caused her Mum and Dad to chuckle to one-another.

“Lay Mizzer-rab-blU11 It’s French dear.” Janet said but Kristin, staring at the cover didn’t hear.

“I don’t want to listen to this. It will make me sad. Miserable music!” She said in a complaining tone.

“Just try it dear – there are some lovely songs there you might like,” Janet suggested. Kristin slowly ambled off to her room, looking at the cassette and mumbling something about being miserable.

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“I metta - gin-soaked ballroom queen in Memphis - - dah da da!”
Jim Greenhill, seated on the sofa was singing and strumming his favourite acoustic guitar. He was getting in some quick practice for the gig at the Nag's Head in Newtown on Saturday night. Gerry and the Hat Tricks only played out about four times a year – a long time between gigs - but when they did it was something special. He knew all the old songs off by heart having played them for years – just had to brush-up a little. These days the main challenge was to learn guitar parts for all the new songs that Kristin came up with and pestered him to play for her. At that moment Janet interrupted.

"While we're in Melbourne next week let's take Krissy to see 'Phantom of the Opera' - I see that it's on at the Apollo Theatre" she said while looking at the entertainment section of the newspaper that was covering the dog on her lap.

"Yeah, good idea" Jim replied. He stopped what he was doing and pondered his daughter's obsession with music and specifically theatre music.

"Yeah, she would love it," he said. "You know it must be about six months since the night she discovered the 'Lay Mizz' cassette and she hasn't stopped playing it and singing 'Castles in the Clouds' - or whatever that song is called. It's amazing how she has taken to that sort of music."

"And as for the cartoon video version – she's just about worn it out" Janet added.

They both were thinking and there was quiet for a while - just the crackling of the log fire, a breathy snore from the sleeping dog and music drifting from Kristin's bedroom upstairs.

"You know that she's put all that pop girl band music to one side – 'The Spice Girls' and the teeny stuff – she just doesn't play it anymore. I don't know what her friends think. They must think she is different or something." Janet spoke as she stroked the dog.
"Well the amazing thing is that she just loves that music. Ever since last year when she sang 'Lillie Marlene' at the school concert and blew every one away – she just won't stop thinking about music. And she is just so keen at her dancing classes."

"I think, when we come back from Melbourne, we should find her a good singing teacher. And hey! Guess what! Miss Baker at school told me that in a few months they will be auditioning for an up coming huge production of 'Les Mizz' – right here in Hobart."

Again they looked at one another and smiled. They fell silent as they turned to gaze at the log fire. But they didn’t see the flames; they were looking into the future and the possibilities for their daughter. Kristin's voice quietly drifted down from the bedroom upstairs –

*In my life there are questions and answers that somehow seem wrong
A heart full of love, a heart full of song
In my life, I'm no longer a child and I yearn for the truth that you know of the years...years ago
There is a castle on a cloud. I like to go there in my sleep.*

(Schönberg and Kretzmer, 1980)

* The bedroom was suffused in a pink glow. It emanated from reflections of soft light from the pink lampshade onto the myriad of scattered pink soft toys. Mobiles of all shapes and sizes were hanging from the ceiling and the small dressing table and desk were covered with books, dolls and toys. A row of cassette tapes and CDs emerged
from behind the lace curtains and all along the windowsill. On the bedside table with the lamp, there was a cassette/CD player, and more tapes and books. The walls were covered with posters – ‘Les Miserables’, ‘Phantom of the Opera’, ‘Secret Garden’ and ‘Cats’.

Nine-year old Kristin was lying on the bed looking at a glossy program. She saw the small photograph of herself as the young Cosette and the larger one of the whole cast. There she was, dwarfed at the front but in the full of the spotlight. She almost squirmed as she relived the excitement of that moment, feeling again the atmosphere, the smell of the make-up, the hot lights and the costumes. She could feel the blackness out there in front of her and from the dark, the hundreds of eyes upon her.

The audition for ‘Les Mizz’ had been pretty easy really. She hadn't been a bit nervous for she had lived the life of young Cosette many times while engrossed in the video. Before she got there she knew the story line and the song off-by-heart. She had once even dreamed that she was Cosette and at the audition it felt like it was Cosette, not Kristin who had been singing. And even before ‘Les Mizz’, ever since the trip to Melbourne and the magic of ‘Phantom of the Opera’, she had known what she wanted to do with her life. It was a magic life of music, singing and dancing and the stage.

She turned over and put a cassette into the machine and turned it on.

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Kristin found a seat at the back of the bus. Today she was feeling pretty misunderstood and didn’t feel like talking to the other St Catherine’s College girls who went on the same route. They weren’t close friends anyway, only acquaintances. They were maths, science or sports freaks – nobody was from Performing Arts.
I just want to be alone, and hide among the other passengers. Year Twelve is nearly over and things are hotting up with the Big Questions, like “what am I gonna do with my life after college”. And there are just too many big issues coming up at once. Why all at once? For a start there’s Mr. Randall. I would dearly love to give up drama. Not just because of him, but there are not enough hours in the day to get it all done. And I just don’t understand why he doesn’t like me. We just don’t click. And gosh! It’s a pain for drama especially – that’s where you’ve just got to get along with your teacher. It’s so important and I don’t. It’s not through lack of trying – I haven’t been rude or disrespectful or anything to him but we just don’t get along. I suppose our personalities don’t match – because I guess, it’s just the fact that I am used to rehearsals being run as a serious rehearsal. That’s just what I’ve become accustomed to and Mr Randall doesn’t run rehearsals like that.

For goodness sake, we had to be there at ten yesterday morning and he was there at ten to eleven. We were supposed to start a run for back stage crew to watch at twelve and we didn’t start until twenty to one. He knew I had permission to leave at one because I had to go and sing at the fashion parade. Things like that just grate on me and I guess it’s just what I have become accustomed to. I really would give it away if I could. I can’t understand why we are not allowed to drop out of subjects at the moment.

Oh why can’t I just focus on music? It’s just such a huge part of my life. It makes up just about everything I do – or want to do. It’s in everything I think about, what I hear and what I see in everything - especially in people. It’s how I establish connections with people. It’s how I meet them. And I’m always flicking on the radio to listen to some music or a CD or going to a music rehearsal or learning music or going to lessons or... even going to dancing and stuff... that’s all listening to music... and even drama – I find it
difficult to... It really upsets me when people think - oh, yeah, she does music. They just don’t realise what it entails. There is nothing more rewarding than going to a concert and seeing how hard someone has worked on something and... And that’s another thing. The scaling system that they’ve come up with in Tasmania – like with the pre-tertiary scores and stuff. They have...who is to say that Maths stage 2 takes... It probably works out some mathematical way but it just annoys me that they can decide that Music is not as hard as Maths stage 2 courses. I mean you have to be a talented mathematician to do Maths stage 2 but you also have to be a talented musician to do Music and that annoys me that it’s not given the same credibility.

I can’t wait for the ‘West Side Story’ rehearsals to begin. That’s what it is all about... where the magic is... and that is what I want to do with my life.

Kristin’s head was up against the window of the bus. She alternated between looking at her own reflection and then through it to the outside world, the town passing by. She wanted to know how she would fit into the scheme of things. How the future would turn out. She saw how, to get work in music theatre she would have to leave this place – go to the ‘mainland’ for further study, it was where the auditions and big productions were.

There is going to be a bit of a wrangle ahead with Mum and Dad. I know they’re worried about me leaving. They have been such an amazing support for me - all through the busy times – with all the running around and making the costumes and everything. It just... it has just taken so much out
of Mum and Dad but they haven't seemed to mind... well, I know they mind but they don't say that they mind, kind of thing.

In some ways it would be easier to stay here. I know this place and all my supportive friends are here. I could get a job in any production here... perhaps continue with my teaching. Oh why can't things be simple? It is all right for those Maths, Science and IT girls. They will all simply breeze into Uni and then breeze into a job and you can bet your life their parents are all happy with what they are doing.

Making plans – it is all so scary. It's baffling that 90% of actors are unemployed. I don't want to be one of those people. I must get my application into performing arts school – possibly NIDA or the Western Australian Academy or – but it is just hard – I love music and I desperately want to do it and I must strive for it. Like, I am not going to be – even though those statistics say – I am still going to try and do it because that's what I love. I know Mum and Dad don't really want me to pursue it as a career because I guess they just don't see it as something that is going to be... Well, I suppose they are scared as well. They are probably even more scared than I am. They would love me to say – I want to go to university and do this so I can go out and get that job. I think that is what they want me to say but when your heart is not in it – you can't. I just can't say it. I can't say to them that I am going to go and be a lawyer. I am going to go to university and I need to get this score to get these... my heart is just not in it and I don't...

I know they say that you have to follow your heart in some ways.

Yeah... but its difficult because I really don't want to disappoint them either. I would desperately love to be able to say to them that I want to go and do this and this and then this but I can't... I would love to but I can't.
The bus pulled up sharply. Kristin jumped into the moment, leapt up and struggled with her school bag as she manoeuvred past the other passengers and alighted out of the rear door. She crossed the busy street over to the McDonald’s restaurant. She would be working there until at least 10.30 tonight - things were already looking busy. Up at 7.30 in the morning for her dance teaching class – but tomorrow is another day.

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“Busy life and busy days”

It is early, Monday morning and Kathleen Cooper, the Head of Music, greets me and opens up the music room. We chat pleasantly and I express my gratitude for being allowed into the school at “this busy time of year”. She reminds me that she and all the girls had been at school all day yesterday as it had been the College annual ‘Open Day’. Also it was approaching exam time, drama and music rehearsals were in full swing. There was little free time in the lives of music teachers and students – for example a week ago last Saturday, many from Performing Arts had spent the day grape picking in order to raise money for the Department.

I set up my tape recorder and prepared myself for the interview. I had arranged to meet Kristin. She had a free moment before classes.

“Hi Kristin, how are you?” I say as we settle down in the chairs in front of the microphone. “Have you had a busy week. Tell me what has happened.”

“Hi - yes I have had a busy week. Oh gosh, what have I been doing? Well let me tell you my timetable. On Monday, I am here at College until 5.00 for drama and then I have got dancing from 6.30 to 8.30. Tuesdays, I am here again for drama until 5.00 and then again I have dancing from 6.30 to 7.30 so that is kind of my night where I can do stuff after 7.30 and that’s good. Wednesdays – I
am here for drama until 6.00 and then I have to go to dancing to teach from 6.30 until...”

“You teach?” I ask, amazed that she would find the time.

“Yes – from 6.30 – 9.00 p.m. I teach on Wednesdays. Thursday I am here until 5.30 for The College Singers and that is like a nice night off as well and then Friday nights I work at McDonalds. Saturdays I teach dancing until 1.00 and then work after that and Sundays, I also work.”

“Yesterday, Sunday was Open Day here at College. Were you involved?” I said, remembering my earlier conversation with Kathleen Cooper.

“Yes. Yes, yesterday I had to cut work short to be here. I am a deputy house captain and I have to show people around the school.”

“It is a busy life, isn’t it?”

“Busy life and busy days.”

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The following week Kristin and I meet again for another interview. The ‘busy schedule’ topic arises again.

“I just see the workload getting way worse”, she says. “With West Side Story coming up and my end of year theatre performance stuff and my exams and just everything is just – it is just going to snowball.”

“Does this sometimes get to you?”

“It does and I get really stressed and really upset about it.”

“When do you get time for homework?”

“Well, I don’t.”

“Do you stay up late?”

“Well, I do – I stay up very late doing homework. I become accustomed to doing homework very late at night – after rehearsals, on weekends after I have finished work and...”

“There is a holiday coming up – do you get a holiday?”
“No. There is an Eisteddfod for the first week and a half. Then I am probably most likely going to be working pretty much solid for the rest of that otherwise… because our drama play will be over by then which will be excellent – I just can’t wait until it is over – I really can’t. I just… I mean, I have been so bad with rehearsals lately. I have missed a few rehearsals and I have been leaving early and coming late and…”

Something flashes into my mind as we are speaking – a recent newspaper story. It was discussing a survey that concluded that forty-five percent of Australians worked more than five days a week. This was in spite of promises that the technological revolution - particularly computer technology - would provide us with more leisure time. I wondered if anyone had surveyed the increased workload of school students.

Then I also remember a conversation with my wife. We were driving in the downtown area, stopped at traffic lights, when we observed about twenty college uniformed girls walking past. What was unusual was when my wife and I looked at each other and in unison said – “Look at their back-packs!” The size and obvious weight of each bag was enormous. Many seemed to be hunched forward in order to counter the weight and several smaller girls were straggling behind the main group, seemingly trying to keep up. A cumbersome gait was even more noticeable when several tried to run, while hurrying across the road at the pedestrian crossing. The burden was increased for the few who were carrying musical instruments.

“It’s probably sports day” Eilish suggests, “They not only have books, but all their sports gear in those bags.”

“That reminds me” she continues, “of a chiropractor speaking in Sydney about having concern for the effect of the weight of backpacks on growing adolescent frames. And also – remember the Grammar School where they
changed hundreds of the laptop computers supplied to students because a new model had come out that was nearly a kilogram lighter. They were trying to save the kids that extra kilo.

I returned to our conversation. Kristin was speaking about her busy life and the burden of her day.

"Even from when I was about 10 - when Les Mis finished, my life was starting to get busy. I started to realise the dedication that it would take and because I had got used to it from an early age, I can cope with it now. Like I find it is really easy to kind of... put it this way, I am used to having to practice and having the dedication to turn up to lessons and working my life around my music commitments."

Kristin's life in music, up until now, had been a pretty straightforward journey. From the age of six, when she had seen 'Phantom of the Opera' she had decided what she loved most and what she would be. There hadn't been any indecision about her direction and the only moments of stress had been while auditioning - wondering how she had done and would she get the part. Mostly, there had been successes with auditions. In fact she could not think of one part that she had auditioned for that she did not get. And all the shows had been amazing successes - not one flop. There were a few disappointing eisteddfods where things hadn't turned out well - but they were usually minor, fun things - not exactly career dependent events. Incredibly, she just used to get on with life, with the joy of preparing for the next pantomime and show. Even with some of the stress of rehearsals - there was always one panic or another - from having to learn songs and routines in a hurry to preparing or altering costumes - that was all part of the game that she loved - she wouldn't have changed anything.
But now with the future looming large Kristin realized she needed to start making decisions that before had been made for her. What with exams and job-hunting at the end of this year – she started to feel differently about life, herself and how to approach some of these issues. She hadn't had time to reflect on what it was she was doing with music. She just got on with the business of it all. There hadn't been any need because things were going so well and she felt lucky to be involved with music – to be so totally immersed in it - without question. But now specific events were asking her to reflect. She thought and looked into her life to see what it was in relation to music. She reflected in order to determine what it meant to her.

I've never thought much about what music actually is because it is hard to explain. You can't explain what it is or why you do it. I mean in some ways it is like asking, "why do birds sing?" I don't know. I guess it is just some peoples' way of expressing themselves. A lot of people play it to please others – to give enjoyment to other people – but often, amongst musicians, it's for themselves. Often it's an expression of how they are feeling at the time.

That reminds me - it's kind of like - the other day, Mrs. Cooper was saying that she and Mrs. Reeve were really stressed one day - just pulling their hair out so they took time out, just sat down at the piano and played a piece together. And they just felt so much better afterwards – just from playing a piece of music together. I mean, for composers, they can write down what they are feeling in music but for people playing, they can interpret it however they feel like – it's personal.
That's what it is – I think it's about personal expression. Because, I suppose, it's... because music allows us to bring out this need for expression that we have. You can take somebody else's words and melody and put your own expression into it. And you can kind of... you can express things that words alone can't because it is not just... you can experiment with vocal tone and body language in communication but music brings a whole new element into that.

And I guess I'm lucky because I find it is easy to express myself through music. It is part of my personality to be able to put expression into my singing. Because if I am feeling lonely, I can just pick up a piece that makes me feel good or one that makes me smile and I can just sing it and feel... I don't know... just feel better just for thinking... ah, there is something I can do like... all is not lost because I can think of this and it doesn't make me... Gosh this is corny... but it's like that song from 'The Sound of Music' – 'My Favourite Things' or something. It's kind of a bit like that though. You can just pick it up and... it is there at your disposal sort of thing.

I really love getting into the part. I guess that's why I like drama also and particularly music theatre. It's so important for singing and it is part of the expression thing.

Imagine expressionless music! That completely ruins a performance – I don't know if it is just me or – but I would not be able to just stand there and just sing a song because songs have words, even if they are in another language. They are words with meaning and there is nothing more frustrating than to watch a singer just standing there and singing a song as if the words were just vowel sounds. Like... even the simplest phrase can have the most amazing meaning and it is sad if an audience does not get that.
And the phrasing... surely the phrasing is an important part of music meaning. Everything that you play has a meaning. It is about something or it is inspired by something. And a good instrumentalist can show that through the feeling that you give out. It does not only come through spoken word but just through tonality and, you know, just how they play it... it just... it is someone getting into a piece and just...

Everything has a meaning in music and you have to create it or find it. You can't expect your audience to connect with what you are doing unless you understand what you are doing and how you are trying to convey it to them. That kind of thing, I suppose, takes a lot of work but the most dedicated and the most successful kind of musicians can do that.

And another thing - I guess I'm glad I am a singer. Thankfully I don't have to cart around a huge instrument to be able to do it. I can lock myself in a room with a piano and just sit there and just, you know...

Part of what I like about music is that it really challenges me.

I guess the challenge is all linked to trying to find meaning in everything especially some of my more vocally demanding and less familiar repertoire. Like my classical pieces and that... trying to learn the words and then conveying a meaning to an audience who don't necessarily speak the language I am trying to speak. I guess that is a challenge but it is also the greatest joy as well so I guess that is what drives that challenge - like trying to find what it's all about.
"Studying is a bridge"

As Kristin reflects on her life at St. Catherine's she feels emotional about some of the issues that are confronting her.

*Even though I am incredibly busy, I love my music... and that's what tears me... like I love it so much and I just want to do it and get somewhere with it—learn new skills and do what you are supposed to learn. But it is just not really happening at the moment—unfortunately.*

A trail of meaningful connections in Kristin's musical life leads me to important issues that have arisen. These are the several issues that seem like wedges placed between the demands of the school, the curriculum and Kristin's wishes and expectations. I make connections to the different schools that she has attended and their specific part in her story and how impressions of these have influenced her thinking about St. Catherine's. At her previous school Kristin blossomed in the supportive musical atmosphere and freedom to pursue her chosen field. When she first came to St Catherine's, she compared the complexity of her new life with her former school and was disappointed. Now she "had to do everything" and could not focus solely on music. This situation improved during the last year but problems continue to account somewhat for why—"it is not really happening at the moment."

Soon after meeting Kristin, I had a strong impression of the depth of love and commitment that she has for music. From the age of six, she had become 'hooked' on singing and performing. The discovery of music soon became accompanied by success—singing 'Lillie Marlene' in primary school and then the various important roles
in large stage productions. Re-assured that she had the creativity, good voice, and attributes that would help her to succeed in the music business, she went from strength to strength and deepened her commitment to singing and stage performing.

But contrasted with the deep love and commitment is an uncomplicated approach to the art of singing and the technicalities of music. Kristin has constructed her own personal 'meaning of music', feeling confident about her ability and having no doubts about its function and significance in her life. She has nurtured a strong relationship with it and while she still wishes to "keep on learning new skills", a paramount reason for studying it is that because doing so will more likely help her to secure a music career.

My opening question sought insight into her attraction for music.

"Kristin, please tell me, what is it about music that attracts you to it?"

"It's the prospect of being able to do something with it in the future because that idea is really what I have always wanted to do so I suppose that studying music - I see that as a bridge helping me to obtain that goal".

Kristin hasn't chosen to articulate what music means to her - other than stating how studying it will help achieve her goal, which is to continue living it. Her reflection of 'what is attractive about music' echoes the attitude that - because she has had success and enjoyment with music in the past, she would very much like to continue doing it in the future. I view the nature of Kristin's response, as a reflection of her straightforward attitude to her music and goals, for the attraction of music is to just keep doing it.

I reflect for a moment on Kristin's reply and her 'uncomplicated' approach. It reminds me of the diversity of musical identities that I had come across as a classroom teacher.
Whilst teaching classroom music, I had developed a personal philosophy that included amongst other ideas, the concept that the purpose of studying music theory and technique is to deepen our relationship with it. I assumed that it is the interaction and sensitivity between the person and musical processes that creates meaningful performances. Imparting this philosophy, I discovered, was perhaps helpful to those students who were interested but needed encouragement and 'a reason' to take up theoretical study. But I was also aware of many students who were already immersed in highly personal and committed relationships with music and who had perhaps learned 'by ear' or 'vernacular' processes, and who had little theoretical background. For many of these students - whose musical identities had already been formed and structured in a way that was not deeply grounded in abstract musical concepts - attempts to become more technically or theoretically involved often served to confuse and block that existing relationship. While I saw all students as holding the potential for more musical discovery I was aware that musical inhibitions are often a reflection of social and psychological inhibitions. Breaking free is not achieved by pushing on the part of the school, the curriculum, parents or teachers. The complexity and diversity of personal musical identities includes those who have a love and commitment to music and who understand that it is how you use music that is significant - not necessarily the technical depth involved. While technical proficiency and virtuosity are desirable goals, they are the by-products of music study and are the results of a deepening relationship with music. In my experience, sought as ends in themselves, these musical attributes will often lead to dazzling but 'cold' or 'empty' performances. I would consider old blues singers as examples of simplicity and directness and contrast
them to 'mechanical' renditions of Bach or to the many technical, virtuosic, guitar 'speed merchants' who used to leave me impressed but cold.

Prior to arriving at St. Catherine’s Kristin had already developed a sensitive relationship with music. She had worked hard at school and was determined to succeed at the ‘academics of music’. However, a certain amount of friction has occurred in Year Eleven and Twelve at St. Catherine’s College because, in a highly academically based curriculum, she has found theory a problem. She attributes this to her early days and beginnings – where she started as an ‘ear’ musician.

While discussing classroom music we approached these issues and Kristin revealed the story of her non-technical background and some of the friction this causes. The following episode began with a question that sought to look at issues of music theory.

“Kristin, what about the academic side of music?”

“The academic side of music… I am not very good at theory. I am terrible at it actually. I mean… I am not terrible. I understand the concepts and stuff but I just find it hard to apply them. I find it pretty hard to apply them and I guess it goes all the way back to my childhood and learning from the tape. I don’t claim to be very good at theory... because... I am not. I never had to do theory to learn my instrument. I never had to know all the notes and scales in order to begin singing and most of my learning has been ‘by ear’”.

“And is it lack of interest or is it that it just doesn’t seem to click with you?” I asked tentatively, trying to go deeper into the issue but concerned that I would, in her eyes, become a judgmental teacher discussing a ‘failing’.

“It is probably a bit of both,” she said, seemingly happy to discuss the matter further. “I guess because it was not essential for my instrument when I
started... like I know the basics and that is pretty much all that I have needed to learn for the voice. If I played another instrument, it would be a lot more valid but I suppose... it is a bit of both because it is not that I don't try but it is just some of the stuff doesn't click. I am not sure why. But I can sight read and I can sight sing. Yes, and I can work stuff out... bash something out on the piano but I am not by any means, a pianist. I can't play for myself. I find it very difficult to practice on my own which makes practising difficult. And I guess it just comes back to the fact that I didn't need to learn the basics of music theory to be able to learn my instrument because whereas if I picked...you know... I used to play the flute. In fact I played the flute from year 5 to year 9. But to pick up an oboe or a trumpet or sax or whatever, you have to be able to know the basics of theory and be able to apply it to your instrument and I guess that with singing, well for me... in the beginning, it was not so important.

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It's difficult to be analytical about music because I probably listen for - just the entire package. It's the overall beauty of the music that I am attracted to. I mean if a singer has been recorded then someone must have seen something there good enough in their voice to be recorded, therefore I just always judge music by the way that I feel after I have heard a song. Or even during a song. Like if I listen to something and I go, gee that was beautiful then I think, why was it a beautiful song? It might have had beautiful lyrics or it might have had a beautiful melody; it might have had beautiful harmonies; it might have beautiful accompaniment.

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In addition to admitting to stress with her workload and experiencing some conflict in drama where she had felt misunderstood, Kristin indicates that the transition from school to college had not been easy.
Kristin’s schools prior to St Catherine’s College included Swindon Primary and then Argyle Secondary School. At Argyle, music had been ‘smooth-sailing’. We discussed these transitions. They arose while talking of musical experiences and ‘turning points’.

“A turning point was probably going to Argyle. My transition from grade 6 to grade 7… just that initial transition was a turning point. I was transiting schools and… from Swindon primary to Argyle which really… it was like so different. At Swindon they had no focus on the arts at all and then at Argyle it was just all there for me to do and I was… and that is when I started having this hugely busy schedule because I found out that I could do interesting stuff. I could do whatever I wanted to do… pretty much.”

“It sounds like your experience at Argyle was great.”

“It was. It’s an awesome school and I enjoyed every second I was there. Like I love the arts and I was sometimes… even in my early years in primary school… ridiculed for loving choir and you know… like I used to skip sport lessons because… I mean this is what it came down to… like at Argyle you could do everything. You could do your sport if you wanted to and you could do your music and everything. But at Swindon Primary… because it was a primary school I suppose… so to do choir it was during sport lessons so as you can imagine… well ninety percent of the class went to sport lessons and then just a couple of us went to choir. We were different and ridiculed for liking choir and liking music. I wasn’t a loser or anything but it just kind of… it was strange and I only had one other friend who liked music at my primary school. And it was just us two. And we only sort of got together because we were the only two that were into music and we could do that together. Yes, but that was really hard. So you kind of had to decide between music and sport. Yes and then I went to Argyle which was a really good experience and where I really got into music. It was probably the place where I decided that music was the direction where I wanted to go because I just loved every second that I was at Argyle. I loved it. I completely loved it because they let you relish in who you were and who you wanted to be and what
you wanted to do. There were so many opportunities to do every single thing that you wanted to do. The teachers in general were great and the feeling of the school was brilliant. The teachers were amazingly supportive... even my other subject teachers... you know, they would let me do things in their class time and then let me... you know. I still had a balanced time at school because I have always worked really hard but I was allowed to grow in the area that I wanted to grow in and become... yes... I was allowed to find out exactly what I wanted to do within music. It was really, really important... those four years at Argyle were just the most... they were the defining years of what I wanted to do and that is when I knew that I wanted to do music.

"Yes and then what happened when you arrived here?"

"Well we made the decision to come to St. Catherine's because... well, I am here on a scholarship for the school of performing arts. Like for dancing and drama but I was a little disappointed in the music department here... just general organisational things. Like you just... I guess I came from Argyle, which is a State School, and they had done workshops and master classes and things and always managed to be able to send us along to them for free. We didn't have to pay for anything because, I suppose they assumed that it was a State school and probably none of us could afford it - which in fact we actually couldn't. But I suppose coming here, it kind of... I don't know. There is more of a pressure to be in everything rather than... like to do your sport and your music and your academic stuff and you are not just allowed to do one - which is hard. Hard for me because I sort of knew which direction I wanted to go into. And I was under a lot false impressions of what was going to be happening when I came here, so I was a little disappointed to start with. At first I absolutely hated St. Catherine's when I came here... absolutely hated it but Mrs Jones has been really good and last year was awesome. I had a really good year and I got into it - last year with my music and stuff. I was just disappointed that they didn't do a musical last year. Well, anyway, I got really good marks last year. I was really happy and I worked really hard for my exams. I got OAs and HAs and everything and this year I am doing
fine. And I love doing drama but the way they have arranged the class this year is terrible. It is absolutely catastrophic and it is not working at all but I guess it is just the politics of the school that can't be changed.”

* 

Kristin prepares to sing. With determined movements she removes her school blazer and places it over a spare music stand behind her and loosens her tie. She thinks to herself, quickly reflecting on the situation that is about to happen.

*I feel good... I'm a confident person. There is not a lot that worries me about performing now... like... I can get scared in certain social situations but with music and acting I can walk straight into the part - just go on the stage and sing to people. I can sing to anyone. I mean, I sing to people just sitting closely in front of me and yes, some social situations do frighten me. But I am good at debating and am a pretty confident public speaker. I feel pretty much at home here.*

Kristin moves toward the piano to organize the music scores for Mrs. Cooper and then finds her performing space to the side. She is aware of her posture and how it reflects her confidence. There is the familiar feeling of excitement that always arises at this time – the time she looks forward to most. The problematic issues in her life melt away. She feels at home now fully believing that this is what she is meant to do with her life. All other events, like studying theory, working at McDonald's, teaching on the weekends – are simply means to this end, processes that support and allow her to do this. Appearances in 'Les Miserables', 'Oliver', 'Secret Garden', 'My Fair Lady' and countless Eisteddfods and public performances – both with singing and dancing, have
assisted the development of self-assurance and belief in her ability and a knowledge in the fact that she is good at this.

She is also confident because the songs are well prepared. But this time there is also a slight nervousness that she recognizes is due to the assessment procedure about to take place. She will not be able to just 'charm' the audience in this case. Mrs. Cooper and others will listen critically and react to her performance not only from an emotional perspective but also with a focus on technical and theoretical issues such as intonation and timing. If it were only about audience response she knew she would 'pass' but criticism of this nature is always a bit daunting.

Importantly, the strategies she has learnt put her into a performing mode. She has decided that you need a sort of psychic boost and preparation that will firstly get you into a confident frame of mind but also prepare you for the role you are about to slot into. After all, the drama and singing teachers had reinforced that enough.

Kathleen Cooper, the music teacher presses a crease down the centre of the music score. With arms poised ready above the keys she takes sideways glance at Kristin and begins the short introduction.

Sssh
It's, oh, so quiet
Ssshhhh
Ssshhhhhh
It's, oh, so still
You're all alone
And so peaceful until...

You fall in love
*Zing boom*
The sky up above
Zing boom
Is caving in
Wow bam

You've never been so nuts about a guy
You wanna laugh you wanna cry
You cross your heart and hope to die
'Til it's over, and then...
It's nice and quiet
But soon again
Starts another big riot

You blow a fuse
Zing boom
The devil cuts loose
Zing boom
So what's the use
Wow bam
Of falling in love

Sssh
It's, oh, so quiet
It's, oh, so still
You're all alone
And so peaceful until...
You blow a fuse
Zing boom
The devil cuts loose
Zing boom
So what's the use
Wow bam
Of falling in love

The sky caves in
The devil cuts loose
You blow blow blow blow blow a fuse
Owwww!
Then you’ve fallen in love

(Bjork, 1995, 'Post')

The song is a good vehicle for Kristin’s sense of drama and theatrics. The performance is animated. The *Wow Bums* and *Owwwws* are in fact screams where Kristin’s hands are up to her face. Each *Ssbbh* is accompanied with a silencing index finger up to her lips. Upon singing the second line Kristin is distracted – we are all distracted by the appearance of the College principal and several guests. They enter from the mezzanine floor and walk down the stairs behind the performers. Kristin glances sideways, wondering what is happening - but is unfazed – the interruption is minimal and she does not miss a beat. She is professional, an experienced trouper, and I can’t help thinking that she even rises, just a little more, to the occasion, appreciating celebrity additions to her audience. The principal and guests move quietly to the side where they can observe the performance.

They too, like us become captivated.

*Postscript*

Mrs Greenhill, on the other end of the phone, greets me warmly despite being ‘puffed’ from a dash in from the garden to get the phone. It is nearly nine months since we met to discuss Kristin’s musical world. She is interested to know how the musical story of Kristin is coming along. I am interested to know how Kristin is since graduating from St. Catherine’s.
I learn that Kristin is now at University. She did well academically in Year Twelve and is now studying Information Technology. She is very busy because evenings and weekends she continues to teach singing and dancing.

Kristin's musical dreams and aspirations are still alive although Mrs. Greenhill comments on the lack of opportunity for her in Hobart. We both agree on the difficulty and competitive nature of the industry everywhere. Kristin did get into the chorus of 'Oklahoma' but was too busy to audition for any of the available parts. She is “saving up”, perhaps to go to the “mainland” after graduating. She has friends in the Theatre there.
Jeremiah and I found a table in the corner of the Student Unions' cavernous glass-walled cafeteria. On the other side of the room a television was relaying a cricket match. A few students sat watching it and apart from the commentator's voice, the place was fairly quiet. The coffee wasn't good but the sun streaming through the window onto our table, helped to warm the atmosphere. As I set up the tape recorder I reflected on Jeremiah's offer to participate in the study. At one point I had doubted his suitability for the study for at twenty-one, he was not a 'regular' school student having spent two years in the work force. But he posed an interesting 'case' because although he lived in a flat and had left school at eighteen to work in various jobs, he had decided to return and complete a music course at Riverside College. Interestingly, although 'at school' he classed himself as a professional musician, and as the singer, songwriter and guitarist in a working band, he was actively engaged in either playing 'gigs' around town or at least always hunting for them.

I began by asking Jeremiah how he saw his musical world.

"Well I think of myself as a musician but what that really means is that I just play music and get paid very poorly... Ha! But basically music is what my life centres around. I love it - I love all aspects of it. It's an amazing thing you know - it really is. Ah... not sure really where to go from there. Strange really because I had all these good ideas when we were walking across the car park."
I remembered some of Jeremiah's earlier spontaneous remarks as we walked to the cafe.

"You said it gets into your blood and..."

"Yeah... it does," he said suddenly picking up the train of thought. "It gets into your blood... it's ... well look, I have been involved in heaps of jobs. When I first left school, in the few years before going back to complete Year 13 at Riverside, I got into all sorts of things like office admin and all those sorts of boring jobs where you sit behind a desk and type things into a computer all day. But the whole time this music I was getting into... studying, it just got bigger and bigger."

He thought for a moment and backtracked through his life.

"I started when I was eighteen - when my Mum bought me a guitar and it sort of went from there. It was just in my blood... it was starting to slowly take over everything, I mean..."

"It consumes a lot of your..." I interjected but he bubbled over.

"It consumes everything. As I was saying to you earlier, in the car park, that when it is in your blood it courses through your veins and gives you an almost a... divine sort of ... an idea that there is something bigger out there. It's like the music that I create, or the music I play that other musicians have created ... makes me feel that there is a bigger world out there and it sort of... it calls out ... it becomes something that consumes you. It's a big deal!" He said, concluding with great emphasis.

This time I was reluctant to interrupt his train of thought but he paused and drank from his bottle of Coke. I continued.

"Music has a lot of meaning for you... in terms of commitment to it and to personal expression? Do you want to express yourself through music? Is that important?" Suddenly I felt concerned that I was sounding too intellectual, too academic. But he straightened up, paused and looked at me with eyebrows raised.
"Yes! It is... what is the point if it is not personal? I mean if you are up on stage or even in your bedroom or a backyard somewhere, and you just strum along and go through the motions then it's not music. Other people may hear it as music but to you it's not — to you it's just an action you are going through. It is like... breathing and blinking — something you just do. So you have got to feel it, you have got to...

He paused, sat back in the chair and thought. Immediately he bounced forward again, hands and elbows flat on the table, continuing with intensity.

"It comes down to the dynamics of the music. If you are just strumming through it the same - every bar - then it becomes bland and boring. You can be there just doing the simplest task like being on stage playing rhythm guitar in a band. But you need to make it come alive. You are not just playing rhythm guitar to yourself - you are playing in a band. Not just strumming along. Playing in a band means you are contributing to a greater thing than you alone could do in music. It is not just about getting the most air-time or getting on with bands or getting people to say "Wow what a fantastic musician!" but just contributing to something that is bigger... and sometimes that means less of you and more of them."

His eyes sparkled and he broke into a smile as he added —

"But sometimes you are the star. It is a matter of give and take." As he looked at me the smile turned to a wry grin.

At that point I began to feel more relaxed (or perhaps it was relief) knowing that sitting before me was someone who had plenty to talk about. Little direction or prompting would be needed from me for Jeremiah has an open attitude, a detailed music story and a willingness to describe it. He had constructed a well defined 'musician identity' and had feelings, ideas and perspective about music and his role as a musician. However, I was still getting to know him and felt a certain reserve - of "treading on toes" - and my questions proceeded cautiously, attempting to probe carefully.
“So, spiritually music is important to you?” I asked.

“That is the biggest part. That is my job! I feel for me at least... I feel it is like a divine call almost. It is something I have to do. If I don’t do it... then I know I am going to be lost.”

The notion of music as a divine call and again his exhibition of a passionate approach intrigued me.

“Could we look at that... I mean we can question or analyse ourselves to a point where it becomes unproductive... but do you actually really question that in order to find where that drive comes from? It’s great to think that it’s divine, lovely, and spiritual, but...”

“Yeah, yeah! I think about it all the time! Sometimes I am forced to do that. I’m sure all creative people do that. They think, “I have got this, where does it come from?” You know... it is a basic human need to know and I believe it comes from God. I believe that God is very much involved with music. Perhaps not all music but most music. He couldn’t have... I think He just doesn’t want the kudos for some...” He cut himself off with a spontaneous laugh.

“So you have a faith... music comes from a spiritual place?”

“It does. It has to... I mean... for me God created music...and it is a beautiful... most fantastic art-form... it’s wonderful. My basic outlook on it is... I have written songs. They are good songs; they are songs that have mattered to people. And my basic philosophy behind recording an album is, well I have got these songs – let’s record them – not just for the sake of recording, but because well why else would I have the songs – why else would I write them? Unless they were going to be recorded – unless they were meant to be... almost... you know what I mean? It is like musicians who write songs and don’t perform them – you think, “Why did you write them?” Did you write them for yourself? That’s great but you wrote a song that is meant to be ‘out there’ for people to hear.”

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We continued, expanding Jeremiah's notion of the divine in music and the "job" that had been "assigned to him". Souls were touched by music and it was important for him to reach out to them through his songs. A zealous approach to music and an appreciation for the divine in it, had begun three years earlier when he had been invited to be the lead singer in the band at the Stillwater Christian Centre. There he had his first "taste" for sharing music and "reaching out" with it. It was also there that he recognised that he could use his good singing voice and where he became serious about music, singing and guitar playing. It was then no coincidence that while singing in church that the quality of his voice and good musical ability were viewed as blessings – as gifts from God.

"So you really see it as a gift" I said, wishing to hear more.

"Yes, it is a gift. I feel blessed and extraordinarily lucky to be able to sing. From my perspective I have met so many people who have wanted to sing and it is all they want to do and ... so I see it as my obligation to sing. It is now my job because I have been given something that these other people who want to do it can't do, but I have got this thing so, it is like... well if you have got it then use it. If you don't use it then why have you got it?"

"Have you had to work at it?" I asked. The teacher-self came to the fore seeking to know about developmental matters

"No - I have always been able to sing. That is why all my friends have called me a bastard - for so many years because I have always been able to sing. My voice has got richer and better and fuller in tone now and it sounds a lot better than the early days. It was always something I could do."
Jeremiah Jones stopped writing in the little exercise book on the coffee table, put the pencil behind his ear and leaned back on the couch. He reached for the guitar lying next to him. As he played a familiar chord, he thought, "I love this guitar." He listened to the crisp resonance, feeling the vibrations in his chest.

He returned to the song he was working on. It wasn't coming together. He began to feel tense. "Damn it - come on, you have got to change this. Chuck it away - start again" he thought. "You have got to get personal! I mean... you can write songs about 'yellow submarines' or something - songs that are just going to make someone smile but you still won't have touched them. People are just going to walk away thinking, "what a quirky song!"

He questioned how he wanted to write and to sing. He started to feel agitated and demanded that this issue be solved. He thought about what it meant to wear your heart on your sleeve and to put yourself on the line. It's like playing on stage. Pretty much putting yourself on the line up there so you may as well go the rest of the way. Make it personal, about real things - about things that matter... about questions of life... about pain... about... not just, "Oh I broke up with my girlfriend and I'm really blue!" That just doesn't feel creative. Yeah! I am an intense person - I can't help it. He laughed to himself. That's great! Probably why I am gonna be a good songwriter! I am a good songwriter! But it is like... you can't write a song about pain unless you are in pain. But God knows I've been there... really felt it. I'm not just an observer. I know what it's like to hurt, love and I've had my share of confusion... Have I been confused? Been lost too. I know my songs won't come off as being childish or naive. I am not going to write about being flowery and happy and all that simple rhyming stuff. Yeah, that's the problem. At the moment you are not being honest with it, you are being an observer and an onlooker and it is just not right. It doesn't make sense. Come on! You want to be able to touch another human being. It doesn't
matter how - in any way, shape or form. I don't care whether they say “Oh I bloody hate that song! That is a piece of shit!” I just want to move them – to get a reaction.

Jeremiah played the D chord again. Now something was happening. This time he had to move rapidly between singing, writing and strumming the guitar because a flow began that he couldn't stop. He started to sing the words “I am afraid...” over a simple three-chord pattern and he could see the form developing before him. The moment was powerful for he knew what he wanted to say and he knew how he wanted it to sound. In the early hours of the morning the song was complete. "I am now a real songwriter!" he thought as he sank back on the sofa. He was tired, drained but content knowing that he had not only written the song he wanted, but had discovered a direction with which to take his song writing.

The Student Union café was filling up. Someone dropped a plate at the checkout. The clatter was accompanied by loud cheering. At that point Jeremiah was confirming the power of music in his life.

"It dominates you – it gets in your blood and it calls out. You can ignore it but it just keeps calling and from a muso’s perspective you just feel you have to follow because if you don't you are just going to drive yourself crazy till you do and if you don't you will be bored brainless." He laughed loudly, sat back and took a swig of Coke.

I thought about Jeremiah's passion for music and had a stabbing moment of reflection of my earlier musical life. I saw my own intensity while seeking to grasp some of the opportunity music could offer. I had passionately connected my life and the guitar together, seeing learning and discovery stretching like a long road over the horizon.
There had been the creation of an emotionally based musical identity and matching personal 'story'. These manifested outwardly as a striving, a need to share what was inside - through music. Additionally, I momentarily recalled the social and professional challenges that I had confronted and the decisions I had faced, and saw how similar ones were relevant to Jeremiah's life now. Also, an important, transformative moment in my musical life suddenly came to mind and I projected this train of thought into the present. I asked Jeremiah to describe an experience that may have been transformative - a musical turning point for him.

"I wrote a song called "I am Afraid." It was the most intensely personal song I had ever written. Simple... three or four chords in the whole thing... it was just a very simple thing. It penetrated something in me that just... and something in me just wrote it... or to put it another way, it just came out and sang itself. I wrote that three or four years ago and I still sing it now. It was a huge change of direction! That's when I suddenly realised what I wanted to do with music. And that was to touch people. I wanted to get inside their lives... even if just for a moment... even for a few minutes... for them to hear a song and to touch their pain and say, "You are not alone!" That was the point of it all. I mean it is a horrible feeling in the world, to be alone. There is an avenue there to help someone feel just a little bit better, I guess. To hear on a personal level... to hear that something you have written has made someone break down and cry. Or to hear that somebody has been helped. Or that they feel that they are not alone anymore. Or that, in some way their life has been enriched by something that I have done. It boggles my mind. I mean some of the songs I have written I have got testimonials back from people saying that if they hadn't heard that song then they didn't know what they were going to do with their life. Suddenly it turned their life around. A guy I knew was going to commit suicide then he heard a song I had written and he said it changed that."
I sensed pride and satisfaction emanating from Jeremiah as he spoke. He had been buoyed by achievement. The goal had been to “reach” people with his music and he had had dramatic confirmation of success. Not only was he reaching people, he was effecting positive changes, giving meaning to lives. This was spurring him on to greater things.

Jeremiah had always believed he was destined to be an artist in some form or other and his life had taken a few twists and turns. At one stage, comic book art was the main focus as he had an extraordinary ability to draw cartoon-style. He was also interested in drama. Interestingly the comic art and drama were linked through one point of contact – a teacher who promoted both. This point now surfaces when I ask Jeremiah about important influences in his life.

“One of my biggest influences wasn’t a musician it was Sam Peters – my drama teacher. He had the biggest influence upon me that anyone ever did. He taught me to dream – and to think outside the square that I live in... to think about bigger things and more important things in life.

“How specifically did he do that?”

“He just did! It is not like he said, “This is how you do it! Gave me the twelve-step program... but he just did... he inspired the socks off me. Taught me to be better than myself or to... to... he really encouraged me in everything I did.”

“That was your drama teacher...” I began, but Jeremiah continued, anticipating my interest in the issue.

“Ah, he gave me a comic book ... actually he gave me about 2,000 comic books! But that is what really started me off. It was comics. That is what started me
being creative. Until then I was rather boring and bland. But um..." he broke off into a laugh.

"So you are into art as well?" I asked.

"Comics are great!" He replied. "They are another source of inspiration. And movies - I knock off lines from everywhere. It's like... I'm very creative and original with my lyrics but sometimes I can get an idea from anything”.

But eventually it was music that took the predominant place in Jeremiah's life. His creativity is now channelled into song writing, recording, and performing at local venues and the inevitable 'hassle for gigs'.

A broad picture of his musical identity was forming as he had given a detailed and passionate introduction to his musical world, and how he saw himself. He had included thoughts of his own creativity, which had included his interest in comic art, and the important inspiration and influence of his drama teacher. We would eventually move on to talk about his earliest memories, his school music experiences and the influence of his family. But for a moment we paused while Jeremiah took the wrapper off a round of sandwiches and tucked in and I turned the tape over and checked the recorder. It gave me a moment to reflect on the rather unusual set of events that occurred when I had driven earlier that morning, to the outer suburbs to meet Jeremiah at his house.

I turned into the cul-de-sac. It was a small street of suburban red brick bungalows with low fences, mostly with ragged un-cut grass squares in front, and straggly bushes around borders. The post boxes were makeshift and many of the front gates either had paint peeling off them or were unhinged. I proceeded, driving slowly as children were running up and down the street, throwing ball or skipping rope and I was looking for
number 24. I rounded the turning circle at the end of the street, pulled up and parked in
front of the house. There was an old car in the driveway so I figured someone was at
home. But then I saw the front end was up on blocks - no wheels. I was ten minutes
early so I sat in the car, opened my brief case and proceeded to read my notes in order
to run through my mind some of the questions I was going to ask Jeremiah. It started to
rain and the children ran past. Some looked in the car window, jeered and then ran on
their way home. Someone was home. I was being watched. I looked up to see the
curtain falling back into place. I thought it better to make my presence known.

I knocked on the door. It opened slowly. A tall man with long hair and clad in
denim peered at me, squinting as though the light now coming into the house was
painful.

"Yeah" He said.

"Hi, I am here to see Jeremiah – we had an appointment at 11. I'm a bit early
so..."

He brushed me aside to look out of the open door. He looked both ways up and
down the street.

"Come in" he said, "I'll see if he's in his room". He knocked on a door adjacent to
the hallway we were standing in.

"Jay!" He called out.

There was silence

"Jay – someone here". This time there was a grunt from the room. We waited for
a few moments uncomfortably looking at each other. The man in denim smiled.

"I think he's had a late one," he said.

The door opened and Jeremiah, holding a towel around his waist, looked at me.
There was a moment of non-recognition as he peered through half-closed, sleepy
eyes.

"Shit" he exclaimed.
"Hi" I said, "It looks like a bad moment. I could go out and get a coffee and come back later if you..."

"Ah... just give me a few minutes," he said.

I couldn't help a glance past him through into his room. You could not see the floor for magazines, comics, cassettes, CDs and clothes. There was a stereo and guitars were lined up against the wall. I nodded and backed away.

The man in denim spoke, "Hi my name is Stu - are you here about music?"

I introduced myself and we shook hands. I mentioned the nature of my business and Jeremiah's agreement to be interviewed.

While rolling a cigarette Stu began to sing Jeremiah's praises.

"He's great isn't he? Always playing that guitar and now getting some good gigs around town. That's where he was last night I think."

Stu said I could wait in the front room if I liked. He ushered me through, saying "Scuse the mess", and left to go to the kitchen to make coffee. The front room, the lounge or drawing room of any normal house was in this case a rehearsal pad. A drum kit was set up and dominated the floor space. The open fireplace was packed full of what looked like unburned fish and chip papers and remnants. There were beer cans lying around the room and the smell of the smoke of a thousand cigarettes permeated the carpet and curtains.

I was surveying this scene and imagining a rock band rehearsal in this small room with guitar amplifiers and the drum kit in full flight when Stu put his head around the door.

"Er, could you do me a favour." His face was screwed up in an apologetic grin. "Do you mind just moving your car a little way down the street? It's just that the neighbours and the landlord..."

I obliged, not wishing to seem surprised but also not wanting him to feel the need for further explanation. As I walked out of the front door I saw my dark green Ford
Falcon and suddenly it took on a rather ominous look standing there in the empty street.

When I returned to the house I could hear Jeremiah singing in the shower. Stu and I chatted. We drank coffee as he told me the story of the break down of his marriage, how his wife took off with the kids, wouldn’t let him have access to them and how he subsequently went down hill.

When Jeremiah surfaced we made plans to drive to the university campus and conduct the interview in the Student Union café where he could also get some breakfast.

As we drove off down the road Jeremiah said, “Gotta move! I hate living there. It’s not inspiring, not good for my creative juices.”

The sun had now moved away from the table and the students watching the cricket match got up to leave, clattering chairs, cups and plates. But others replaced them and a queue was forming at the counter as it was turning to lunchtime. I had changed the tape in the machine and Jeremiah, happy to eat and talk was set to continue his musical life-story.

I had been intrigued by his bravura, his sureness of purpose and his evangelical desire to move people and to comfort the lost and lonely with his music. He had shaped his musical life into a kind of vehicle through which the power of music would flow. He saw himself as a music conduit, channelling what was good in this life and exuding it to others and fulfilling the purpose that had been bestowed upon him.

I then thought about Jeremiah’s musical journey and how he had arrived at this moment and how he had constructed such perspectives.

“What are your earliest memories of music?” I asked.
"Earliest memories of music – Oh crikey! That's going back a while! It has always been music for me... I have always loved music. I was born in the eighties so I didn't really have much good music to listen to" He laughed, took another bite of his sandwich and paused to both chew and think.

"I think one of my earliest memories of music is of songs like "Get out of My Dreams and Into My Car" - that was an awful song but – more to the point – sixties music had the biggest influence on me from an early age. There was a radio program called 'Six O'clock Rock' on a popular FM station and Mum introduced it to me when I was 10. I thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. It sort of shaped my love for music from an early start. It got me really sucked in and it wasn't till I was about 16 or 17 that I got interested in other types of music."

"What was the role of music in your early family life? You said your mother introduced you..."

"Ah! Yes - she just loved sixties music and she wanted me to like sixties music too because my brother liked Heavy Metal." He laughed. The laugh was like a playful mocking of his judgement. But then suddenly he became more serious.

"The family hasn't really played a big role – you know – we haven't been the sort of family that sang carols round the piano at Christmas time. But we've all got a love for music- everyone in my immediate family loves it. My older brother is a fantastic guitarist. He is about twenty times the guitarist I am – but he seems to think I am better than he is so...but I don't think so." He laughed again.

"Are any other family members musicians?"

"Ah no! My older brother Ben sort of is but he doesn't get a chance to much these days – he is married with a full time job... sort of... didn't keep the faith."

"Your parents weren't musicians?"

"No." He said. There was a pause. I reflected for a moment but wanted to know more about his family influence.
"Please talk about your early influences... probably... sounds like your mother was an early influence..."

"Yes she was but importantly so was Ben, my brother."

"He played guitar before you?"

"He played guitar years before me. I didn't even pick it up until I finished college the first time. I mean, I was eighteen – the first time I picked up a guitar – ever!"

"What stopped you getting into it before?"

"I don't know! I had always wanted to but I was lazy – you know I was an artist. That's another thing! I write – not just songs but I am a writer and an actor, an artist. I am into all that sort of stuff. I just didn't really have time to seriously get into music before then. I thought I wanted to be a comic book artist back then and I was drawing comics with my best mate. Basically, I didn't really give the music a look until I got... because I have always been able to sing and that is one thing that has just remained the same ever since I was young. I was singing in plays or singing everywhere and it was something that was very big in my life."

"How do you describe your singing voice?"

"I love it. It's something I get a lot of confidence about. I think it's pretty rusty and probably has a long way to go."

We then moved on to talk about Jeremiah's education and school music associations. The discussion evolved into other areas that I considered important providing insight into his musical world. His impressions of self were revelations of his character and showed how music was used to reinforce self-confidence.
“Well from about kindergarten to grade three I banged sticks against things. And that was fun! But my big breakthrough came when I played Oliver in the school production. And also in primary grade five I sang in another production.”

“Is this where you discovered you had a ‘voice’?”

“No. I always knew I had a voice.” He said confidently and broke into a mock child’s voice “I can sing! I can sing!” And as I would sing they would all go. “Wow, he can sing” and I thought I was king…”

“You were not shy as a child?” I said, perhaps stating something that was now becoming obvious.

“No” he said laughing aloud, as if it too should have been obvious. “God no! Probably it is why I am at where I am at now.”

“You started early…”

“Not really it is just that I’m confident - I get in people’s faces and they hear me whether they want me or not. Oh gosh!” He laughed again. “I was very precocious as a kid. I was in a production in grade Five … again in grade Seven… I was in a couple… I could always act and sing and always be cute enough for the directors to like me. It was great. Musically I started out playing clarinet in grade Seven. I went on to saxophone in grade Eight.”

“You did formal study like, sight-reading and…”

“Yeah! This was in the music classes. But I was bloody good at it. I got upgraded to 1st Saxophonist in the band - in grade Nine. Started doing it in grade Ten until… they tried and make me 2nd Saxophonist in the band and I kicked up a stink because I was much better than the other person was. And it pissed me off – as it would. It wasn’t about being a prima donna it was just about – the other saxophonist was not as good. And I wanted to be 1st Saxophonist because the music was better.”

“Do you still play saxophone?”
"No! But I wish I still did because it is a brilliant instrument. I like clarinet more though now. I wish I had stuck with that because it is a beautiful instrument. I dropped out of school bands in grade Ten. That was the turning point where I stopped doing music till after college. So there were three years of not doing music but then I could still always sing. That was when I got involved with the band out in church and stuff..."

"Jeremiah, have you enjoyed the theoretical aspect of music?"

"No!"

"No! So for instance... with classroom music... the theory sessions... you haven't enjoyed that?"

"I have been good at it. I understood it. It was easy for me to understand it... I don't know why. It just came very easily."

"But what don't you like about it?"

"Restricting!" Jeremiah countered in an emphatic tone. "You play a piece of music, paying attention to dynamics and timing but essentially... I am always thinking of something deeper... what was involved when Mozart or Beethoven wrote pieces of music... or ... and they had to write them down. And we see how they wrote them down. But essentially in doing so... or when they died, the magic part of the music was lost because it would never be played the same... or right ever again."

"So you are talking about the limitations of notation?"

"Exactly! It is like when you go to the movies and you see this fantastic movie with special effects that make you shiver but then you see the documentary about the making of the film and it loses the magic. It is like the theory sucks the joy out of the music in a way. Because before then it was just some cool triplet but now it has got a name and now it has a whole bunch of theory behind it. It's like whoa! It is not fun any
more. Before it was something that happened accidentally, something that someone
did one day that made something magical happen."

"Would you describe yourself as an intuitive musician?" I asked, having
searched my own feeling of popular music learning styles and also something of the
difference between 'folk' knowledge and 'theoretical' knowledge.

"Yeah! But I see theory's place. It's a definite place but having said that, I am
glad I've done it."

"How much has the formal aspect of school music helped or impacted upon
your..."

"Not hugely! I mean - I have notated one of my guitar pieces, which was
actually a satisfying job. Something I had fun doing - trying to put the feeling I felt when
I played it... onto the page... it was difficult - because you never play it the same way
twice any way. For a start, it's not meant to be."

"Overall, how do you see school music... classroom music? And your class
friends, what do you think is the general impression of it?"

"I know musos who enjoy it and I know musos who hate it. I'm a sort of a fence
sitter with it. Because I can see its place but I can also wish it wasn't there because -
like I say - it sucks the fun out of it. If you know all the secrets it's no longer the
mystical thing. It's no longer mysterious because you know exactly how it works, you
know why. It was like the other day - a friend of mine, Jonathon, he wrote a song and it
had this really nice twist in it because it was in 4/4 but the chorus was in 6/8. And the
thing with it was that I understood how it worked. It wasn't like, "Oh that is a cool thing,
how did you do that?" It was, "Oh I can see that you have got it in blocks" It went 1234
123 123. And I could understand how it fitted the music still. And I wished I didn't.
Because I don't want to be thinking about that while I am listening to this music. I want
to be hearing...it was overtaking... do you know what I mean? Do you understand what
I am getting at?"
"You want to keep that side separate!" I said, not wishing to side step his question, but wanting to keep his perspectives coming.

"Yeah, I want to keep it separate. I wish I could just keep it over there" He said, pointing to some imaginary place. "Visit it when I need to go there. But otherwise keep myself separate from it because I just want to feel it. If you can't feel it, it's not music. It's just no~"

"So of all your classroom music – what would you have changed?"

"Funny thing - after all that I have just said – probably nothing. I enjoyed the classes. Kathy the teacher made it fun – she didn’t make too big a deal out of the theory – she didn’t drill it into us. We could learn it if we wanted to. She was there basically teaching it to us - if we wanted to take it in we were welcome to, if we wanted to discard it – then... we would fail! Our choice!"

"Well did you have a goal to reach a specific theoretical level?"

"No!"

"So you have been able to follow your heart in your school music?"

"Well I graduated top of the class so I was happy. It was a good experience."

"Did your performance mark lift your grade?"

"I think so... yeah! I just know I graduated on the top level. There were other people there too. I am not saying I am the best and the brightest because I am not. There were some fantastic musicians in that class... like Aaron... fantastic guitarist. I have a lot of respect for him. He can kick ass! But no, I wouldn't change anything – it was good... it was fun."

We concluded our meeting and while walking back across the car park made arrangements to meet in a month for a further interview. Jeremiah gave me his mobile phone number and advised me to keep in touch because he would “definitely be looking for a new place to live in the next few days.” I was anxious to complete interviews and observations with him for the year was drawing to a close; he would be
graduating from College in a few months. He had also suggested that he might head off to Sydney in the New Year.

Jeremiah wanted to go into town so I dropped him off in the High Street.

The Three-Interview plan with Jeremiah was going astray. Our next interview appointment turned out to be a disaster. I had phoned him and we arranged to meet on the following Thursday at eleven in the morning. As I parked in front his new accommodation, a small redbrick house on a sunny sloping street near Hobart City centre, things didn't look good. I noticed all the curtains were drawn. I knocked, waited and knocked again – harder this time. No sound. I stepped off the small wooden veranda and was walking through the small iron gate back to my car when the door creaked opened. Jeremiah stood there, again with a towel around his waist. He squinted in the sunlight as he looked at me.

"Oh... Hey man, I forgot! I'm sorry but it's just not a good time right now."

"Right, OK", I said, trying not to let my disappointment show. I cursed myself for not ringing first – to remind him.

"Call me soon – we'll do that interview. Sorry!"

"Are you OK? Have you settled in here?"

"No man, it's not working out – I'm gonna have to move again – but it's cool because I think I've found somewhere better. Ring my mobile OK".

Jeremiah opened the door and smiled at me. This time he was dressed and ready for the interview. It was late in the afternoon. It had been a month since the last
missed appointment and I was getting concerned about completing the interviews. I
had, however learned news of him through an article in the local newspaper where he
featured in a 'band profile' segment. He was doing well with a percussionist friend and
together they were playing plenty of gigs and had plans to record a CD. As we spoke
now, I discovered that there had been a few difficulties in moving into the new house.
Finally, a friend with a van had helped him move the bed, guitars, stereo, CDs and
comics.

As we went into the lounge area, Jeremiah introduced me to two house-sharing
friends. They were just on their way out and their parting words to Jeremiah were a
reminder for "the two hundred bucks needed for the house bond". He reassured them
that the money was "on its way" because he was soon to collect the money owed to
him from the sale of a guitar. We settled down for the interview. As Jeremiah had
"plenty of time and wasn't going anywhere" I saw a window of opportunity and he was
happy to complete "two interviews in one shot". I recorded ninety minutes of tape while
Jeremiah answered my questions and importantly, played the guitar and sang. He
described how he had "got into song writing" and demonstrated how he composed. He
played fragments of ideas and riffs and showed how they had developed into songs.
Finally Jeremiah performed some current songs that were destined for the new CD that
he would soon be recording. I left the house with the important tape and my observer
mind reeling with thoughts and perceptions of the 'lived experience material' that I
needed to write down.

I lost track of Jeremiah as his mobile phone number was soon disconnected.
However, I later caught an unusual set of fleeting glimpses of him. From the corner of
my eye, while driving in a busy street, I saw him 'flying' down the pavement on a
skateboard; the tails of a great black overcoat were billowing behind him. The next
glimpse was while I was performing at the local ‘folk festival’. From the stage, I looked
up from my guitar, glanced through the window at the end of the hall to see Jeremiah
with a group of musician friends. They were at the signing up point; where musicians
put their names down to perform on the ‘open house’ stage. Jeremiah was ‘hassling for
gigs’.

God and music feature together in Jeremiah’s sense of self and they combine
together to fashion out his life’s purpose. He had been “blessed” with music and natural
talent and was now musically ‘being in the world’ in order to fulfil this blessing. I
reflected on his evangelical connection to musical performance and expression and
remembered how it had been nurtured at the Stillwater Christian Centre. At our first
interview, I had asked Jeremiah to select a pseudonym for the study. He unhesitatingly
selected Jeremiah explaining that he had always liked the song Jeremiah was a
Bullfrog. However, despite the decision for his choice, the biblical reference now strikes
me as also relevant for there is a prophetic approach to his musical zeal. He had
already comforted the needy and was aware of the power of music to reach people and
as a prophet he would continue to help people by leading them from catastrophe to
themselves.

Jeremiah is also sacrificing much in order to fulfil his prophetic, musical purpose.
Comfort, security and a steady income do not feature in the musical journey to get his
songs heard. Where and when will I catch another glimpse of Jeremiah? Perhaps, it
will be on a Rage music video clip because sacrifice, self-confidence, determination
and a degree of bravado are positive steps to “making it in the popular music
business”.

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