Misconceptions underplay Western ways of musicking

Abstract
This paper draws on rich dialectic interchanges to reflect on individuals whose culturally
developed notions distance them from their intrinsic musicality. With particular focus on
two self-perceived non-musical individuals in a hermeneutic study, I explore how
musical beings experience a non-musical position. The participants reveal insightful
glimpses into misconceptions of human musicality in Western communities where
unrecognised cultural directives label musical beings as either musical or non-musical.
Embedded in everyday language, cultural influences restrict free musicking and inhibit
the development of musical skills to dictate life-long inhibition. I argue that to ignore this
phenomenon is to perpetuate an unnecessary and harmful reduction of human being.

Keywords
Enculturation; dialectic insights; hermeneutics; musicality; performance; qualitative

Am I one of the never picked?
Oh yes
I don't sew,
paint, sculpt
sing, play music...
Something stops me
(Participant RM)

So you can sing? You can play? You know a lot about music? You are musical!
Societal prejudices (Gadamer 2004, 484), situated around skilled performance and
ownership of musical ‘knowledge’ have transformed musicking into an object (Small
1998, 2), a thing to be lauded or criticised. Blacking (1976) had already challenged the
prejudicial status quo of Western musical hegemony to question how it could be that, “in
societies supposed to be culturally more advanced...apparently general musical abilities
should be restricted to a chosen few” (4). Wondering about this Western conception of
music he famously asked: “Must the majority be made ‘unmusical’ so that a chosen few
may become more ‘musical’?” (Blacking 1976, 4). He also noted that, despite societal
belief that only some people are musical, the film industry operates successfully on the
assumption that we are all musical (8). As Small (1977/1996) reminds us, musicking has
a capacity to lift us out of separatist being to “live more fully” (Small 1977/1996, 199), to
connect with others; it is important to guard against the destructive power of virtuosic or
star aspects of professional performance which can work to destroy many non-musicians’
belief in their musicality (163). Small (1987/1998) also cautions against the restricting
effects of the notion of music as product which can too readily position non-musicians as

Recent research supports the understanding that we are innately musical; it
recognises that being musical is part of the human condition (Nzewi 2002; Welch 2001).
For example, Bannan and Woodward (2009 465) argue that music is part of the
instinctive drive that underlies communicative action and note that children naturally
engage in musicking as a response to their environment. Yet, despite evolution of human
architecture showing an adaptation for music processing (Norman-Haignere et al. 2015),
many individuals in Western cultures live with a deep conviction that they are not
musical (Bodkin-Allen 2009). In this paper, I seek to contribute to the small but growing
literature into self-perceived non-musical individuals (Bodkin 2004, Joyce 2003, West
2009) to consider what we might mean when we say we are musical or non-musical.

Understandings of human musicality

We may wish to go beyond Plato’s view where “…we human beings have been
made sensitive to…rhythm and harmony and can enjoy them” (Laws II 653e). Considered
from the perspective of someone raised within the traditions of Nigeria, musicking is an
intrinsic part of human being, “a humanizer” (Nzewi 2009, 107). Free from the restrictive
notions of talent, performance and “critical judgement” (Westney 2003, 138), notions that
so often determine who will engage with music in the West, Nzewi demonstrates
interconnective, participatory musicking that enables healthy human living; music, like
“breath” (2003, 221) is a living part of human being. Nzewi’s embodied knowing would
accord with the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definitions of musicality where the
“quality or character of being musical; accomplishment or aptitude in music; musical
sensibility” all refer to those myriad aspects associated with the doing of music; these
include composing, playing, singing, listening, dancing and all actions associated with
music (OED Online 2013). For Nzewi, then, music is more than mere playing and
listening; music, for him, “is the science of being, the art of living with health” (2002).
This view is increasingly supported by contemporary neuroscience. In their review of current studies, Morrison & Demorest (2009) emphasise the ubiquity of music within cultures, revealing how “cultural constraints on music perception and cognition” are measurable. Importantly, Immordino-Yang (2011) notes how findings in this discipline can “link body and mind, self and other, in ways that only poets have described in the past” (98). This integrating aspect highlights “the importance of emotion in ‘rational’ learning and decision-making” (Immordino-Yang 2011, 99) and the central place of the “social learning” (98).

Participants in the never picked study (author 2007), however, lacked this integrative cohesion. Their experiences led one examiner of the never picked thesis to report: “it is not uncommon for individuals to hold negative perceptions of their own musicality as a result of interaction with members of our [the music teaching] profession”. It is, then, important to challenge a widespread view where individuals are considered to be musical only if they have developed performance skills; if they can sing or play an instrument. Such assumptions, Gracyk (2004) argues, may also be observed in the world of research where particular tools (such as surveys) can lead to a slanted view to infer a binary separation. In his article on musical identities (2004) Gracyk is concerned about presuppositions that categorise individuals as musicians or non-musicians depending upon whether they learn music or play instruments (2-3). Such unfortunate labelling, Gracyk suggests, can lead children to see themselves as being non-musical when they may not have previously perceived themselves in such a way. It is relevant to wonder how it can be that music education researchers might themselves, unintentionally, contribute to everyday dichotomous assumptions where musical beings are labelled as being either musical or non-musical. How can it be that music educators might also contribute to such a practice (Author 2007)? This paper draws from a current project (Author, in progress) to question this assumption.

Before any attempt to judge teachers and educational administrators as perpetrators of this phenomenon, however, it is helpful (once again) to heed the voice of Small (1977/1996). He recognised that members of the teaching profession, like their
students, are caught within what Straume (2015) terms a “social-historical” (1468) reality. Small wrote:

I must make it clear that I in no way seek to blame teachers of music for this state of affairs [my italics]; the situation is one which concerns our entire culture, its concept of knowledge, its attitude towards art and the consequent nature of its system of education. Teachers, no matter how well-meaning, are as much at the mercy of these assumptions as are their charges - and their employers - and it is not possible to make any radical changes in one element of the culture without making changes in the others (Small 1977/1996, 204).

Small so clearly recognizes the holistic aspect of an everyday reality, one that is at the centre of this interpretative study. In this exploration, we step back from ‘what is’ to question underlying assumptions which leave many individuals distanced from their instinctive musical expression.

A hermeneutic exploration

“Hermeneutics”, Ezzy (2002) explains, “is the art and science of interpretation” (24). So, it is through the elusive, never ending “process” (Ezzy 2002, 77) of interpreting qualitative data that this study seeks to further investigate this state of affairs which so concerned Christopher Small. Together with a cohort of 12 participants comprising both musicians and non-musician participants, selected via ‘purposive sampling’ (Punch, 1998, p. 193) I begin to further tease out questions raised by the never picked participants in my previous study (Author 2007). Although I prepared an Interview Guide to ensure that communications did gain essential information to enhance meaning (Polkinghorne, 2005 p. 142), research conversations were effectively unstructured as I followed up on participant responses to gain insight into nuances that led to deeper reflections of their reported experiences. I wondered about the something in the epigraph above. What could it be that stops the research participant, RM, from singing or dancing? He would not even contemplate singing ‘Happy Birthday’! It was not long before RM offered fresh perceptions into living with an assumed non-musical position. His thoughts joined with those of the other participants; the play of my thoughts became increasingly enriched with their words (together with insights from interdisciplinary literature which included educational philosophy, neuroscience and psychology). My perceptions moved through
simple analytic ‘findings’ to new understandings. Iterative revisiting of original data and the literature played towards enhanced meaning and led to a detailed focus on two participants. So it is that conversations, annotations, email interactions, and face-to-face interactions are explored; individuals’ ways of perceiving are laid open to sharpen points of view and to develop a communication of meaning. As Gadamer notes, this is the task of hermeneutics (Gadamer 1975/2004, 361).

Ezzy (2002) highlights the iterative process of analysis; interpretation happens from the beginning of the process (77) and continues throughout the investigation. Eisner (1998), too, recognises the nature of the process and the need to adapt research plans to respond to questions arising from lived experiences (172). So it was that, in an initial analysis of musician and non-musician data, it was surprising to find that they not only confirmed findings from my earlier investigation (Author 2007) but that some musician participants, too, could suffer from the pervasive effects of ill-timed judgement on the freedom to develop their musical skills (Author 2010). Westney (2003) describes their experiences as “performance [associated with] public scrutiny and critical judgement” (138), whereas in her investigation into “what it means to be musical”, Vestad (2014, 266) refers to the “everybody can narrative and the only the talented can” [author’s italics] (249).

Caught within this tradition, those who felt that they belonged to the latter category were left feeling musically inadequate; many were reluctant to sing or play where others might hear them (Author 2007). Their freedom to be musical (Author 2012) was disrupted. It became clear that, if we were to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, it was important to find ways of working that could shed light on the potency of ‘unconscious systems’ (Foucault 1972, 15) which lead us to judge ourselves and become distanced from our sensual, musical selves. In the hermeneutic analysis below, I seek to bring this phenomenon into the open, to capture an understanding beyond specific experience of the participants themselves. So this interpretive study, the workings of which are demonstrated below, offers varied insights into how we are persuaded to be (Denzin 1992). Participant RM (he will tell how this ‘name’ came to be),
together with Mel and Harry, are introduced in Table 1 below. Their stories and dialectic interchanges are complemented by perceptions from community readers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant pseudonyms</th>
<th>Contact type (all granted official ethical permission to collect/record/publish their comments.)</th>
<th>Subject position</th>
<th>Self-perceived musical status (before research)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rude Mechanical (RM)</td>
<td>After signing ethical permission, RM (who lives in London) entered into an extensive email interchange. This continued over several months. He then entered into brief dialogic responses with other participants.</td>
<td>An engineer who believed himself to be incapable of singing or hearing with ‘proper’ appreciation, RM showed keen interest in neuroscientific findings; these led him to change his view on his musical status.</td>
<td>Non-musical: cannot sing or play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry</td>
<td>2 hour-long transcribed interviews [as part of the never picked study (Author, 2007)] and detailed responses to researcher’s writing. Iterative annotations on published papers. Dialogic engagement with other participants (anonymously, via email).</td>
<td>A philosopher and teacher educator during the never picked study, Harry generously contributed to this study (this could be due to his commitment to helping research students). Following his retirement, he has continued to respond via email with annotations on my published papers; he engaged with the other participants in a dialectic exchange re ‘misconception’ of musicality.</td>
<td>Non-musical: cannot sing or play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>Following ethical clearance, Mel typed and signed a document containing rich details of her musical position. She contributed annotations to my published papers and then engaged in iterative responses with other participant annotations on my papers (via email).</td>
<td>Mother of two young girls, Mel is a passionate proponent of music as part of the curriculum for all children. She enjoys singing with her children in the car. During her education in Scotland, she “learned” to feel “unnatural”. She is determined that this situation will not happen for her children.</td>
<td>Non-musical but loves music and joining in (when cannot be heard by others).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tales that tell: other people make music: RM introduces his story and tells how he came to be RM

When retired engineer RM read my thesis reporting on never picked participants (Author, 2007), individuals who perceived themselves to be non-musical, he identified with their position. Although he lived in London (whereas I am based in Western Australia) he agreed to become part of my research project. In his first email (after completing ethical details for participation) he tells his story:

As a child I learned that other people do music. It was clear to me and others that I had no ability at all. In the final year at Primary School, we were expected to play recorders as a class. I wiggled my fingers but did not blow, no-one found out. The same applied in communal singing, all that was needed was to open my mouth roughly in concert with the words, no-one knew. More importantly, no-one heard anything horrid [researcher italics]!

As an adolescent, new friends showed me a new world, one of music…another world opened up, but a world of listening not making music. Musicians were national heroes, it clearly took natural ability and much work to become one, simply listening seemed the natural thing to do.

I remember very little of what I learnt specifically at school, much of school based learning sinks un-noticed into one’s being, but I remember studying Shakespeare’s A Mid Summer Night Dream in which are some simple people unschooled in the finer arts. They are called the Rude Mechanicals. Later in life when I had learned the lowly position of Engineers [my profession] in a class ridden society, I chose to refer to myself as a Rude Mechanical as a jibe at educational snobs who assume they are the fount of all learning….It is both comical and deadly serious, it masks a fair degree of anger at those who think the Classics are intellectual and Engineering is for the plebs.

Although I appreciate music of many diverse kinds, I am fully confident that my ability to make music is at or very near zero. When asked to sing, I never comply, the inhibition built up over a lifetime is far too strong as is my certainty that I will never be able to sing. This does not bother me too much, other people make music [researcher italics].

With this final sentence, RM entirely re-captures Harry’s view on this aspect of encultured Western practice. Harry, a philosopher and professional educator, kindly continued to support my research after being one of six key informants in the cohort of 29
self-perceived non-musical non-musicians in the *never picked* study (Author 2007). Engaging with the perceptions of these two participants, engineer versus philosopher/teacher educator, offers a unique perspective from which to explore everyday musicking in our Western societies. On the one hand, there is RM, a retired engineer with a deep interest in history and culture who lives in London; he volunteers in various capacities relating to web design and engages in other projects such as military history. Following his acceptance of my invitation to be part of this research, his contribution to my project has proved vital. On the other hand, since his retirement, Harry continues to edit and write contributions for philosophical research and educational journals; I particularly appreciate his decision to contribute to the dialectic interchange because his view of musicking represents a way of thinking that continues to significantly diverge from the position I have come to hold.

Except for their mutual appreciation of the work of professional musicians, hermeneutic analyses of my research reveal how Harry and RM represent deeply contrasting views on human musicality. As Gadamer (2004, 356) plays with the importance of “sense” as it implies “direction” in the process towards hermeneutic understanding, so, during the dialectic interaction with Harry and RM, I have experienced many moments of unknowing, moments where my musical sensing and knowing have dissipated. Rather than being detrimental to my sense of being musical, however, these experiences have, instead, led to a deep change in my sense of what *being musical* might mean. Like many of the conversation partners of my research, I have undergone a radical change in my understanding of what musicality is. Thus, “the knowledge of not knowing” (Gadamer 2004, 356) has opened my awareness to different ways of knowing. This process also highlights a puzzle regarding Harry. How can it be possible that, over more than a decade of intermittent engagement in this conversation involving musicality, he did not himself become “aware of the knowledge of not knowing” (Gadamer 2004, 356)? Yet, his written responses suggest that this is so.

*Something* stops me
RM presents a different view:
You have convinced me of inherent musicality. As one of the never picked [as mentioned above, RM aligned himself with the never picked position after he read the thesis (Author 2007)], I had considered musical as being good at music, being able to sing or play an instrument, but you have made your case.

Yet, these words do not mean that he is persuaded that he might be musical. He makes his position clear in his response to the following excerpt from a participant in the never picked study:

20 year old participant:

By about age 8, I knew I was not musical…this knowing was a gradual thing. I cannot say how it happened. I hardly outshone…others in the class when we learned the recorder…whereas I excelled easily in maths (never picked participant, Author, 2007, 108-9).

RM writes:

Carbon copy of my experiences.
The kids from musical families did and were applauded; they had it, that mystical ability to do music. I didn't or at least thought so.

Am I one of the never picked? Oh yes, I don't sew, paint, sculpt, sing, play music, write (much) poetry, act or take part in politics, all excellent things to do. Something stops me.

My project focuses on that something as RM leads me to further question our Western musicking practices. On his self-devised 2-dimentional plane (see Figure 1), RM represents his musicality as a relational, objective state. While RM is the first person to admit to the limitations of his representational chart, other participant responses suggest that this graph captures how the notion of musicality is perceived by many individuals in the West.
**Figure 1.** RM’s self-assessment of his state of musicality [figure devised by RM]

This setting of his musical ‘position’ helps to propel our conversation toward issues raised. His simple diagram helps to make sense of a mountain of words and to guard against speaking and hearing from different perspectives as it provides another way to clarify how RM feels about his inherent musicality. Indeed, within our particular conversations (via email), it complements the hermeneutic way to understanding (Gadamer 2004, 356) in this on-going attempt to grasp the question that can help to uncover insights into this elusive *something*.

Where RM perceives musicality as something that allows “other people” to do, it is pertinent to consider the notion of *musicality* for Malloch and Trevarton (2009, 9). Their view of musicality, diametrically opposed to that of RM, epitomises movement back and forth between people to bring connectivity to their separate lives. Their understanding embraces our human propensity for wordless connection to highlight the deeply communicative role that intrinsic musicality can play in our lives. Indeed, this notion of non-verbal interaction is evident even in email interchanges where, very often, it is in the spaces between words that meaning resides. It is in the rhythm of language itself, in words used and in words chosen not to be used, that offers clues to help uncover superficial claims and expose basic puzzles lying within dialectic exchanges. It is not unusual that long-held convictions clash with the increasing evidence which indicates
that all humans are inherently musical (see, for example, findings from Koelsch et al 2000, and Peretz 2003).

**Harry’s List**

Harry raises issues from a different standpoint. Through his consistent assertions that humans are either musical or non-musical, he leaves little doubt that he is not sympathetic with any notion of universal human musicality. His belief confirms Levitin’s (2006) lament where, in Anglo-American cultures, we have learned to “separate classes of music performers and music listeners” (Levitin 2006, 6). Despite such a belief [teased out in the qualitative never picked study (Author 2007) which closely examined Harry’s knowing], Harry reported that he sang along with his classmates to a popular ‘educational’ radio program in Australian primary schools. He recalled that such an activity,

> “like sums, was another thing you did at school”...he viewed music as a specific activity that enabled an individual to display a particular talent. For Harry, unless an individual was prepared to put in excessively “hard yards, then music was something that only gifted people could do” (Author 2007, 129).

I cannot help but wonder how it is that, since Harry holds a view so different from mine, he continues to support my project? Can it be his passion and support for serious, incremental education research that keeps him involved? Or, is a conviction that no-one could successfully challenge his knowledgeable view leading him to be steadfast in his contributions...to lead me to understand? Conceptual ‘knowing’ such as his lie at the root of Blacking’s question, quoted above; how it is that so many of us, never “chosen” to sing, dance or play, brand ourselves as “unmusical”? (1976, 4). Harry, however, does not consider himself to be unmusical, merely, non-musical when it comes to singing, playing or dancing. In his words, he

> …is not unmusical, merely non-musical when it comes to singing or playing. *Musical* refers to the unusually talented, whereas those who do not fit this category but who can participate in some way are non-musical. Unmusical is a term kept for those who do not participate in any way in music (as the illiterate do not participate in reading/writing).

It is revealing here to examine Harry’s thoughtful (yet entertaining) list which outlines his view of what he has labelled the non-musical classes (the ‘class’ to which, in
his eyes, he belongs). Here, he assumes that some individuals tend to class themselves as “musical” while others see themselves as ‘non-musical’ and that they proceed to live with the consequences of such labelling. With serious pedagogical intent, Harry delivers a way of seeing my project through a perspective of the ‘non-musical classes’. Although his view on musicality is an antithesis to mine, a careful examination of what I will term ‘Harry’s List’ makes it clear that he has taken the trouble to familiarise himself with details of my research:

Non-musical classes
1. Cannot distinguish between noise and music
2. Can distinguish but not moved or interested
3. Moved/interested but not willing to make the effort to listen
4. Willing to listen but not perform
   4a. Lack technique/instrument
   4b. Lack confidence
   4c. Unwilling to make effort
   4d. Unwilling to inflict unsatisfactory performance on self or others
   4e. Do not obtain joy from own performance
   4f. Others’ diagnoses (tone deaf, etc) that exclude from public performance
5. Listening as part of life but not perform
   5a to 5f
6. Listening as part of life and perform but only as a result of great effort and with unsatisfying or poor results, i.e., not talented so not musical

You can elaborate on (sharpen) these classes if you see fit in the light of your deep understanding of music etc.

I assume you judge a person’s life to be flat if they do not engage in music.

4a/f (obviously the scale needs a g) are not mutually exclusive as I expect you are interested in how f produces b, c, d, c. But a to e could be the result of something other than f. Clearly you can also have harmonics where an individual has more than one of 4a/f at the same time.

Harry’s List offers insight into self-perceived non-musical persons whose formative years would not have included a musically nurturing environment (Trehub 2006; Peretz 2005). It is necessary to emphasise that my research does not consider individuals suffering from a neurological disorder (see Brust 2003), so Harry’s first point is not relevant to this discussion. The remainder, however, evoke the three main themes from the never picked study where the notions of performance, judgement and talent preclude musical development for all (Author 2007). In his point 4a/f, it is apparent that intrinsic musicality, negatively affected by the notion of music as performance, means
that talent is viewed as a prerequisite for making music. With little or no healthy music education available, this perception could too easily lead to withdrawal from engagement. It could leave individuals caught in a false dependence on the notion of talent where, in Harry’s words, being musical “is a thing one is or one isn’t”. It was this belief that led Welch (2001) to declare that such “limiting conception of humankind as either musical or non-musical is untenable” (22). Whether Harry’s List might provoke or entertain, it does raise an important question: How is it that, despite research confirming human musicality (Welch 2000, 2) and a close interconnection between music and culture (Morrison and Demorest 2009), that a pervasive Western cultural practice continues to underplay intrinsic musicality?

In light of societal expectations where behaviours undermine individuals’ free engagement in music making (Joyce 2003; West 2009), Harry’s List reminds us how important it is to question societal beliefs that discourage healthy, intrinsic human behaviour. In his interviews, Harry showed that his “pragmatic acceptance was linked to a conviction that, with limited funding, it was mandatory to give priority to ‘the important stuff, language, maths, science and social science’ in the school curriculum. [He was] convinced that ‘language learning, maths and getting a job [were] more worthy of effort (given limited resources) than aesthetic activity (including music)”’ (Author 2007, 145).

To consider Harry’s claim that music is “a side piece to the whole educational business...just one of the frills...an add on...not essential for the younger child’s development” (Author 2007, 104) is to realise how far such thinking is from a wider recognition of universal musicality (Tramo 2001)—along with its humanising capacity (Trendwith 2003). It contrasts tellingly with understandings presented by Turino (2008, 3) who, drawing on the work of Bateson, recognises the arts as a way of being that can access and express subconscious awareness and thus become a means of communicating with others. Turino’s experience demonstrates that music is no frill, but that, through dance, art, and music, we can bring intangible awareness to vibrant living. Indeed, it is through our engagement with the arts that we “adults can play...free to explore [our] own subconscious, and also to make mistakes. They are, therefore, important arenas of self-development” (Boyce–Tillman 2000, 91).
Despite his wide experience in the provision of education, then, I suggest that Harry fails to appreciate the value of the arts as an integral part of the school curriculum; yet it is clear that his beliefs are an outcome of a lack of the musical arts in his formative cultural experiences. Neither Harry nor RM experienced a nurturing musical home life, nor did they enjoy an inclusive, developmental music program as part of their early education; they had little opportunity to experience inclusive musical engagement.

**Classroom practice can nurture musicality...or not**

An experience by a classroom teacher offers hard-won wisdom to reduce the danger of students ‘learning’ that they are non-musical (Thibeault 2010). It occurred at that time of the year when the music teacher had to present a successful concert for parents and senior education officials. Thibeault abandoned his carefully planned healthy music education program (from which all children benefited through understanding and developing their musical voice) to focus on a single-minded practice for an end of semester concert. Finely honed music education aspirations were sacrificed. The performances were splendid! Yet, it was in that very moment when he was receiving accolades for the wonderful result when Thibeault realised something was wrong. He recognised that such vainglorious attempts to look and sound good actually denied young students an opportunity to gain a broad musical understanding and to enjoy their experience. He recognised that, despite the connection between a good musical education and an enjoyable performance, ‘the links between concerts and education are often tenuous (Thibeault 2010, 27).

Thus, Thibeault draws on his teaching experience to expose a tension between music education practice favouring the production of a polished product and an inclusive music education where “[p]articipatory music, built on different values, suggests a viable alternative — music education designed for all” (Thibeault 2015, 59). In his alternative view, no-one would ‘learn’ that they were non-musical. Unfortunately, RM’s lived experience demonstrates the performative model; his story supports Thibeault’s suspicion of a ‘performance-based curriculum’ (2010, 27) where only some students shine (at the expense of others’ exclusion):

Of all the experiences of my past 60 years, why do I remember so very clearly faking it during a recorder concert at primary school? Whilst the others blew for all they were
worth, I merely wiggled my fingers on the recorder without blowing in the full
knowledge that I could not move my fingers in concert with my desires. It was a key
moment in my non-musical development [RM; my italics].

Following his reading of misplaced judgement associated with perceptual damage
(in Author 2012), RM responded that such situations also led to:

...misjudgement by me, I saw others doing what I felt I could not.
So the music education I received was even more powerful in enlisting me into the never-
picked than your fear of judgement.

Yet, with his current understanding that humans are intrinsically musical, and his
unfortunate ‘schooling’ now in the distant past, I ask:

Does RM sing ‘Happy Birthday’? – will he, when [his grandson is] 1?
Not a chance!

His replies to the following questions make his position clear:

So— you will not sing? Correct
You cannot sing? Correct
You do not want to sing? I know it would be nice but..........
You are too embarrassed to sing? Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes !
You feel too ashamed to sing? Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes !
...and why might your answer be so?
‘cos I can’t!

RM’s music ‘learning’ experiences suggest that many of us would do well to heed
educators such as Thibeault (2010)! It is also important that we note individual
experiences by those who feel distanced from their musical selves. RM, for instance,
confirms Western cultural expectations that only some individuals can sing; he also
emphasises that part of his ‘learning’ to be non-musical occurred as a direct result of his
educational experiences. Interestingly, as Richards and Durrant point out, it can be a
point of pride for some individuals to show-off their [mis]perceived non-singing status
with fellow ‘non-singers’ (Richards and Durrant 2003, 80). Their research shows,
however, that contrary to such convictions, individuals who present as non-singers can
learn to sing—given appropriate opportunities.

**Dialectical processes toward understanding**

To illustrate participants’ self-perceived musical status over time, Table 2
indicates participant positions at the start of their research conversation and their self-
perceived status after dialectic interaction. Because she provides a valuable perspective in her passionate opposition to Harry’s annotations in a dialectic interaction, Mel offers an insightful view. As a mother of two, who came to believe that she is musical as part of the research process, she changed her position from feeling that she was non-musical despite not playing an instrument and not feeling able to sing in tune.
TABLE 2 Participant perceptions of musicality and of being musical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Age during dialectic processes reported in this paper</th>
<th>Self-perceived ‘musician’ status at start of research conversation</th>
<th>Perception of human musicality at start of research conversation</th>
<th>Perception of human musicality following research conversations</th>
<th>Self-perceived ‘musical’ status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rude Mechanical [RM] 62 years</td>
<td>Self-perceived non musician</td>
<td>All humans exist somewhere on a musical spectrum, one end is labelled &quot;musician&quot;, the other end is occupied by me. Being so close to the end, I think I have a trivial musicality. The mountain to climb to achieve any sort of musical ability is too steep, too high and offers many dangers. Even the foothills are too steep.</td>
<td>All humans are inherently musical to varying degrees, but social pressures and misconceptions can be more powerful than &quot;natural&quot; ability. I now see that my love of listening to music and rhythmic works is evidence of musicality but that is not (nearly) strong enough to break the socially induced damage.</td>
<td>Musical appreciator, taken as evidence of previously unsuspected musicality. I never sing, even in private as the difference between what I imagine and what comes out is vast and unpleasant. I can imagine I can sing (perhaps this is evidence of musicality?) but then I can imagine I can fly like a bird, without assistance from a machine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry 70 years</td>
<td>Self-perceived non musician</td>
<td>Humans are born with a talent for music – or they are not. Individuals can be musical as ‘receivers of’ others’ music making.</td>
<td>To be musical is to perform. “We [non-musical individuals] compensate by being heard in other ways that provide such satisfaction as is possible”. We get enjoyment as listeners from our “participation as essential members of the musical community.” To sum up human musical ability: “the ability to beat time with a stick might be counted as huma or it might be to hit an intended note with the voice, to memorise a score and reproduce without errors, to perform a set piece with a modicum of sensitivity and expression, to sight read, to improvise in an original manner, etc.”</td>
<td>Musical as appreciator but non-musical regarding music - despite enjoying listening to music on occasions and singing ‘Happy Birthday’ &quot;with gusto&quot;</td>
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Chapter 5

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Musical Experience</th>
<th>Self-Perception</th>
<th>Quoted Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>Self-perceived non-musician</td>
<td>I LOVE music, I love listening and singing to music (but always by myself!). Music is part of what makes us human [but] I feel I am tone deaf and completely unmusical. I joined choirs at school but always felt I had no right to be there and that I had smuck in.</td>
<td>&quot;An ‘unmusical person’ in my opinion doesn’t exist”. However, discriminatory actions leave some individuals feeling as though they are ‘tone deaf. Singing is where music stems from – you can hear yourself sing inside and yet make no noise.” My children and I enjoy singing together. Individuals are ‘not encouraged if [they] don’t excel or sound in tune. Music is treated differently from other subjects.” To label individuals as ‘unmusical’ “defines people for a lifetime and stops them participating in every day. I feel sad for the little girl me [who was shut away from doing music and felt I had no right to sing]. I would be devastated if my daughters ever perceived of themselves in this way musically.</td>
<td>&quot;I would now describe myself as someone who is musical but I have allowed society to make me perceive myself as unmusical.”</td>
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Researcher challenged

As mentioned above, part of the dialectic interaction occurs with participants’ responses to my written papers. In the instant to be reported here, it is Harry who notes my prejudice. His accusation reveals a “tension between the text” (Gadamer, 1975/2004 305) and my developing hermeneutic perception. Harry interprets my meaning through his particular Western tinged lens to reveal an unrecognised worldview. In my paper (2012) paper, I ask: ‘How is it, then, that within our educational and social institutions we continue to condone a situation where musical beings ‘learn’ to restrain their intrinsic musicality? Why might they feel the need to accept a role as consumers of others’ musicking?’ (219) Harry underlines this final phrase and annotates: ‘Now you are being disparaging and revealing your deep prejudice instead of rejoicing at their participation as essential members of the musical community.’
Deep prejudice? Wondering about this accusation, I re-examine interview and annotation texts. Further interpretation is required. In his reference to ‘essential members of the musical community’, it is relevant to tease out this perception where, we recall, Harry believes individuals are either born musical or they are not. He claims that being ‘musical…is a thing one is or one isn’t’. Regarding his young grandchildren’s musicality, for instance, he had commented:

I wouldn’t think of them as ‘mathematical’ or ‘musical’ etc., but if [they] did something which showed that they were talented or appreciative—they mean two different things—then I would say, ‘yes, [they are]’ mathematically’ talented or appreciative or ‘musically’ talented or appreciative…to be ‘musical’ could be ‘appreciative’ or ‘talented’ (reported in Author 2007, 126).

Harry’s world is one shared by many in Western culture. Those judged to be musical are split into two major groups: the talented—the singers and players, and the appreciative—those who understand, enjoy listening and/or collecting music. Further, some individuals are perceived as being musical because of their superior knowledge about music; Harry’s view edges toward this conception. Davidson (1994) understands the negative effects of such separatist notions where the domination of the “talent account” (Howe et al, 1998) “isolates later development from early experience. The continuity of growth is cut off. Early forms of musical knowing are ignored in favor of the formal, articulated knowledge of the expert” (Davidson 1994, 102). Davidson’s (1994) research indicates that this predominance of the importance of talent leaves individuals with a skewed view of the vibrant reality of music in their everyday lives. He understands that such limitations of human expression are an outcome of educators’ and musicians’ limited perceptions of music awareness (Davidson 1994).

Harry’s challenge, then, raises many issues. In accusing me of prejudice, he subtly uncovers his self-perceived position, which, as mentioned above, he shares with many people in our society. From his viewpoint, Harry does not heed references in my work that support inherent musicality; he insists that my argument requires individuals to demonstrate developed ability to sing or play if they are to be considered ‘musical’. His following comments further clarify his position:

I think conceptual clarity is useful. Indicating terms to designate the talented, the background range of museness and the totally absent (but still human) would help. Your definition of ‘unmusical’, ‘not musical’ will need to make clear how some attitudes,
values, personality characteristics, whatever, lead a person to choose not to do what you value for reasons of your own.
I cannot see how anyone could learn an instrument without considerable practice well above and beyond what is enjoyable in itself. Constant [playing of] scales IS NOT INHERENT or ENJOYABLE [Harry’s capitals].
This final comment incensed one community reader who wrote: “Harry seems to equate being musical with the ability to perform. Practising to be beyond enjoyable! How does he think musical people become proficient? AND some people...actually enjoy scales!”

In revisiting early conversations with Harry, I further recognise their potential to lead to deeper insights into how we speak about human musical nature.

Harry: But lots of people say...would say ‘you’re not physical or you’re not mechanical not mathematical or not musical...
Eve: So you see it in the same sense?
Harry: Yes...not naturally inclined that way or whatever...
Eve: But not denying that it’s an intrinsic part...an integral part still of their lives [i.e. being musical]...like it is for you...?
Harry: Oh, I’m musical in other senses. But that’s not the way in which that sort of use of that term is focussed.

These comments complement email communications a decade later in which, attempting to tease out this notion of being ‘musical in other senses’, Harry suggests that ‘[t]he focus could then shift from how to do to how we may enjoy’. Despite being defensive when he perceives (incorrectly from my perspective) that I have underestimated the importance of his music listening, he fails to consistently recognise the ‘essential’ part that he plays in his own sensual experiencing. He steadfastly maintains a separatist view regarding music; he knows that he cannot do music. He holds on to this position despite the fact that he enjoys listening to his favourite recordings and that his carefully chosen listening demonstrates that he is an integral part of the musical community. Not merely as a ‘receiver of’ music (his original claim), but, as a discerning listener he is a critical part of the whole—completing the part played by the musicians (de Haan 1998)iv. Gadamer also understands how players play their part so that the whole can be experienced (Gadamer 2004 108). Harry is aware of the role of the arts, writing that “[t]he response of the spectator also feeds back into the performance so it is not a one-way relation”. Yet, when I wrote of the participants feeling “that they have no ‘licence’ to do music and that they
are not part of the human musical community” (Author, 2012), Harry notes that he aligns “with the former but not the latter”. I wonder: has he not questioned how his teenage attempt to learn the trumpet was undermined by his tutor’s lack of insight and skill? Has he not considered effects of the lack of musical environmental learning in his childhood, where his only musical ‘education’ was to sing along to the ABC weekly broadcast on the radio?

Mel, who is introduced briefly in Table 2 above, strongly disagrees with the stance taken by Harry. Together, their views deliver an important insight on musicking. Harry perceives music as a production by the talented wherein non-musicians, as ‘spectators’, are ‘receivers of’ the music. Mel, however, understands music and the doing of music to be instinctive aspects of being human. She knows that humming along to others’ musicking, (or even singing in the mind) places a person in the role of musicker. In Harry’s view, his separatist notion perceives the musician and the spectator play the parts of performer and listener, while Mel accepts that humans are being musical as they become involved in a musical event. In pedagogical mode, as part of our dialogues, Harry considers these positions:

Spectators are no ‘mere’ item. To be a spectator (a form of receiver) is to be wired for sound in a particular way that produces a form of satisfaction in the spectator. Some of that wiring is (according to you) hard and some of it is learned. The response of the spectator also feeds back into the performance so it is not a one-way relation. So the ‘separatist view’ accepts the other view on its own level but its focus is on the macro-role of the individual (as performer or spectator)—both are musical but the spectator is a non-musician and may be unmusical. I suspect that the issue here is one of differing ‘levels of description’ as with ‘You are just a blob of water with some other chemical reactions tossed in’ or ‘You are a sensitive, talented musician destined to make much of the world happy’.

Perhaps because of his reading of philosophy and awareness of tradition, Harry’s response to the matter of musicality may have been influenced by ancient Greek thinking to follow a Western traditional view of musicality, one that has its roots from the time when the Romans adopted Greek thinking (see Arendt 1968, 25). Since Harry emailed thoughtful ideas and quotes from Arendt, it is appropriate to note a little of her wisdom as she appreciates the power of the senses and the limitation of words: “Nothing we see or hear or touch can be expressed in words that equal what is given to the senses” (Arendt 1978, 8). Arendt might be surprised at Harry’s response to my text in Table 2.
Table 2 Participants’ responses to researcher text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher’s text (Author 2012, 208)</th>
<th>Harry’s comment</th>
<th>Mel’s comment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whidden claims that it is a “social injustice” (11) when only those judged to have “innate singing ability” (Whidden, 2010, 13) feel free to sing.... Tellingly, one of her participants says: “Our culture keeps everyone in check” (8).</td>
<td>to sing, ie to be musical is to perform</td>
<td>Sing or play or anything musical—you can hear yourself sing inside and yet make no noise.</td>
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In his comment, Harry reveals a stringent presupposition regarding the nature of being musical as he equates ‘being musical’ with being able to ‘perform’ in a way that gains approval from others. Mel sees musicality in a different light. Despite her belief that everyone has music in them, she has often found herself overwhelmed with self-perceptions that deny this fundamental human attribute. Her earlier conception of herself as an unmusical person who believed that she should not attempt to sing or play when others could hear her has changed during the time of her involvement with this investigation and through her nurturing of her children. She has developed her ability to engage in communicative musicking and values feeling free to be musical, whether listening alone or singing in the car with the children. Her more inclusive understanding of musicking contrasts with that of Harry; she no longer separates performance from participation but recognises the connection—one that invites communication. Through her awareness of how musical skills are learned, Mel understands the misconceptions (including negative self-judgement) experienced when individuals do not have access to developmental music learning. As she says, (see Table 1 above), she ‘would be devastated if my daughters ever perceived of themselves in this way musically’.

Guilty as charged!

In my practice of sending completed papers to interested dialectic partners, I was initially surprised at Harry’s accusation of bias in favour of skilled singers and instrumentalists in my 2008 paper. A music philosopher, upon reading Harry’s criticism, assured me that the paper was not biased in favour of performers. However, when, I returned to the earlier texts to seek evidence of the prejudice mentioned above, an even greater surprise happened. Extracting each section wherein Harry had noted bias in the
2008 paper, it became clear that, without the ameliorating surrounding text, Harry was right! Especially if the individual were sensitive to feeling excluded, a discerning reader could properly interpret the sections to read that non-performers might not be considered as ‘musical’. Particular statements, without the broader implications carried by the intervening text, revealed an unintentional bias.

Language can be suggestive in “subtle and insidious” (Wierzbicka 2011, 43) ways; we are shaped by our language. Indeed, Wierzbicka’s (2011) questioning of English usage in relation to the humanities can be applied to Harry’s reading of my text. If we appreciate music as an intrinsic aspect of our humanity, then we understand that all humans are musical, rare exceptions being only those who suffer from neurological abnormalities. If Harry were to read my text with this knowing, he would not need to accuse me of ‘being disparaging and revealing deep prejudice’. His accusation, however, raises an important question regarding the distanced, reified state of ‘music’ in our everyday world.

**In search of the something**

How can we better articulate the something that arrests human musicking? While evidence from neuroscience research now confirms the instinctive nature of human musicality (Collins 2013) and qualitative research demonstrates it (Author 2012), researchers in the area of musicking do not have to look far to find those who label themselves as non-musical. Although RM and Harry both listen to and respond to particular music, for instance, they find themselves living within a culture in which they feel they must define themselves as being non-musical. Both purposively select and enjoy favoured music; yet, succumbing to societal pressures where “musical barriers that are inherited in Western societies by the time children reach ‘the age of reason’” (Higgins and Shehan Campbell 2010), they do not feel free to acknowledge their inherent musicality. Their stories, however, show how their musical selves reach out to connect to music in a way that enhances their lives and tends their emotional needs. Not only does their perceptive listening to music reveal the palpable participatory nature of their musicking, but also their willingness to contribute generous time and thought to my project.
In her work to ensure connective musicicking is accessible, West (2009) captures her participants’ predicament to reveal how our Western culture suffers a “psychosocial” (215) void. Her concern that singing and playing are necessarily restricted to “gifted” individuals while the rest remain “mute” goes further; she argues that such societal dysfunctions in singing and music education are reflective of “a general social dysfunction” (215). Through direct interaction with members of the community, her ongoing “Outreach Program” (West 2004) offers a way to free people from hidden restrictions that circumvent vibrant music involvement.

RM would qualify for all categories of West’s Selective Mutism for Singing (2009, 214–5); undoubtedly his home and school environments contribute to his view. Yet, much of that something RM recognises as leading to his deep inner knowing relates to still unexplained but powerful “dynamic culture-biology interactions” (Chiao 2009, vii). Thibeault’s (2010) mid-flight recognition of dangers inherent in the polished performance, with its expectations of high standards of presentation, brings us closer to understanding this something. He recognises that the widespread focus on ‘high stakes’ performances can limit potential musical learning opportunities for students which, in worst case scenarios (such as those experienced by many participants in my research), lead individuals to know that they are not musical. Many students experience a diminished learning environment in which minimal nurturing of innate potential undermines development of musical abilities; it is not surprising that these students judge themselves as being non-musical when they feel that they cannot sing or play. Harry’s short-lived attempt to play the trumpet (as a teenager), for instance, is an example of the power of the talent myth and an underestimation of the value of experiential learning.

Can Harry help?

For many readers, Harry’s List might appear to provide a logical and convincing conception of human musicality. However, I argue here that the assumptions beneath his ‘rational’ list reflect a flawed understanding of what it means to be musical. As the work of Koelsch and his colleagues (2000) reveals, the human brain is implicitly musical. Further, in his accessible explanation on music experiencing, neuroscientist Daniel Levitin (2006) explores how:
All of us have the innate capacity to learn the linguistic and musical distinctions of whatever culture we are born into, and experience with the music of the culture that shapes our neural pathways so that we ultimately internalize a set of rules common to that musical tradition. (27)

Yet Harry's view does not acknowledge societal pressures that lead individuals to restrict their musical learning. His list does not take into account the something that distances them from active engagement and consequent development of musical abilities. Interdisciplinary work (Chiao 2009) now reveals how the roots of culture lie in neurological processes of our brains which, in turn, are affected by developed cultural practices as in a feedback loop. Harry's 'Non-musical classes' may thus be seen to reflect an imposed social construction. I argue that this learned conception of music, clearly defended by Harry, is caught in an elitist perspective that obfuscates holistic awareness; it reifies music as a form of specialised behaviour, accessible only to the initiated. This widespread view, cleverly caught by an individual finely attuned to expectations imposed by his cultural everyday reality, fails to recognise the vital connectivity offered by music in its many and varied forms.

Yet, Harry raises important questions when, through his language, he exposes his deep convictions that music is something that talented individuals do for the non-talented to appreciate. On the one hand, this reified and separatist view reflects our restricted Western conviction of music as a performance; it fails to properly portray communicative, connective, human action. It too easily perpetuates a class system where elitism and pride exclude many people from developing their musical voice. A connective musical experience, on the other hand, is one where music happens for both listeners and performers as part of a musical event; one where play connects. The former, a performance for the consumer, creates a limited avenue for the development of the human spirit; whereas the latter, a performance with others as audience, dancers, singers, etc, helps to form community of spirit and to enhance healthy human expression. We can actively 'participate' by listening (Gadamer 2004, 108; de Haan 1998); we become part of the musicaking as, together with the musicians, we help to create the music that brings us to a deeper understanding of ourselves and of our world. So the listener is a critical
part of the whole, completing the role played by the musicians. The players play music so that the whole can be experienced by all who engage in the musicking.

Participants’ insights (including perceptions from those who recognise their intrinsic musicality and those who question it) provide in-depth revelations into musical experiences and so allow an exploration of music as a way of being in our cultural reality. Their perceptions offer ways to challenge constricting views that govern our potential to be musical. Despite some protestations, their life stories and perceptive reflections demonstrate implicit musicality; their contributions provide the evidence to challenge cultural practices that deprive individuals of a way to develop their intrinsic musicality and so to enjoy a healthy musical human existence.

In my attempt to understand this puzzle where cultural influences affect everyday human musicking, hermeneutic approaches continue to refine the essence of what it means to be free to be musical, free to respond to the inherent part of our nature that has existed and has been developed since primordial human beginnings. So often, it is because of the participants’ lack of freedom to respond to and develop their musicality that their contributions reveal inner perceptions of obstructive societal influences. Their lived experiences suggest that recognition of human musicality per se means that splitting of individuals into musical or non-musical becomes irrelevant and burdensome.

Acknowledgements
I am most grateful to the 4 anonymous reviewers for their most generous engagement with this paper.

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West, S. 2009. Selective mutism for singing (SMS) and its treatment: Conceptualising musical disengagement as mass social dysfunction. In Musical understanding:
Never picked: This term is taken from words of participant Sonya in *The Ballad of the never picked* (Author 2007). It refers to those who feel that they are not musical, who would never be chosen or who would exclude themselves from singing, dancing or playing when others could witness their musicking.

Christopher Small (1987/1996, p. 50) challenged our assumptions about music and advocated the use of the verb musicking. Concerned about the common view of music as object, he sought to recognize the human value of being engaged in playing, singing, listening, composing, dancing or any actions involving music. To engage in musicking embraces all senses as we feel alive and respond musically to our lifeworld.

Western: “the term ‘Western’ is applied in a similar way to the common usage of the term ‘Asian’ and refers broadly to Anglo-Saxon, European and American cultures” (Leong 2003, 169). It represents a way of being that, in many instances, excludes holistic, embodied awareness.

Harry: Originally part of the *never picked* cohort (Author, 2007), Harry became involved with this ‘mis-conception’ project as a reader of my published papers. Having remained consistent in his views for more than a decade, Harry is an articulate representative of those who hold the widespread ‘Western’ belief that “music is something people could only do if they happened to be born ‘musical’”. His view accurately reflects Levitin’s summation that, “in our own culture [we have formed] separate classes of music performers and music listeners” (Levitin 2006, 6).

The notion of *Community reader* is adapted from Lincoln’s exploration of “Community as arbiter of quality” (2002 pp. 334-6). For this study, interested readers from the community were invited to criticize, annotate or contribute their personal experiences when reading researcher published papers. They added valuable reflections regarding perceptions of both ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ to enhance the interpretative process.

The notion of Socratic *docta ignorantia* (Gadamer 2004 p. 356), the Greek reflection on not knowing, helped me to work toward questions that had a capacity to play toward understanding.

De Haan recognises that it is important to “address the issue of listening as an essential and integral part of the music-making process” (238).
Episode V

Judged out

Normal human responses
turned into performance
arrest free action
lead away
from connection
to projection
to style
of perfection.

Missing a part of being
not free to play and sing
it’s time to open
embodied
awarenesses
to connection,
challenge
misconception.
...the capitalist system has found its own methods of cultural control

*(Jenner, 2010, p. 33)*

As explored in Chapter 5, when societal misconceptions about musicking become the norm, individuals may feel distanced from instinctive musicking; they may learn to ‘know’ that they are not musical. It is pertinent, however, to question how such an “unconscious adoption of assumptions [might be] built into the vocabulary” *(Rorty, 2009, p. xxxi)* as was seen to be the case in Chapter 5. This phenomenon illustrates how, in contemporary capitalist societies, rather than developing as actively thinking beings, we are often controlled by deeply embedded directives where, “...under the cover of democracy and human rights, [capitalism maintains power through] the vast control of cultural industry. Its potency flows from its ability to subjugate the totality of life to the mechanism of production and the interests of capitalism” *(Yaakoby, 2013, p. 994)*. Yet, despite powerful cultural persuasions that have deep influences on how we are, how we dare to be, these controls fail to fully penetrate to an essential part of our being. It might be the case that they may disturb a part of our musical sense, may prevent us from certain performative actions, but deep musical impulses reside nevertheless; we respond to music, to the music of nature and to composed musics that touch down deep into our emotional core.

To recall Caterina, whose story is told in the Prelude of this thesis, it was music that captured the melancholy of Caterina’s longing — of her missing. It is sad to recall that her musical voice, the voice that tells how music is so special, remains silenced. She has been judged! She is not one who can make music, who can join in with musicking. She has learned that music making is for the ‘talented’. And yet — it is through music that we can know our melancholy *(Del Nevo, 2008)*, for music allows us into deeper recognition of our being to become aware of connective aspects of our humanity and our world; it is through music that we can open our being to more deeply connect. Del Nevo (2008) writes that ours is a “dark age” since we denigrate a poetic understanding that promotes “imagination of the heart [and that we subjugate] music to technology and commerce” (p. 11) leaving us devoid of a rich source of human connection and appreciation of the ordinary, the everyday reality of our lives. Chapter 6, below, explores the prejudice, passed on unconsciously in everyday language, that
propagates and perpetuates a Western separatist culture that, as Veck (2009)
understands, can become an “exclusionary force” (p. 142).
Western Prejudice towards Intrinsic Musicality

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Abstract

The connective power of music, instinctive to the human condition despite Western misconceptions, survives to be part of everyday living. A separatist view, however, so often leaves us to perceive music as something made by the genius musician for the knowledgeable receiver; it becomes something performed, an object to own. Widespread societal judgement, associated with this notion, leaves many individuals distanced from humming (Nzewi, 2014) musicality; they feel that they cannot perform to an expected standard. It is pertinent to doubt the value of a practice that leads many individuals to become consumers of selected musicians’ performances, at the same time reducing the likelihood that they may freely engage in musicking. For, despite recent research that confirms inherent human musicality, many musical beings struggle with deeply embedded dualistic beliefs as they learn to perceive themselves as non-musical. Societal assumptions, carried in everyday language, leave them merely wishing that they might be musical. Kafka (1924/2007) captures this dilemma as he leads us to doubt dualistic disabling. He exposes a widespread musical void, one too readily filled with substitutes that endanger healthy engagement; one that leaves us disconnected from others and from our world. This paper examines aspects of Western performative practice to consider alternative views. It acknowledges the value of indigenous musical arts to re-connect humans to each other and to enable a re-sensing of deep ecological perspectives which open possibilities toward healthy relationships with each other and with our living environment.

Keywords: Musicking, Western duality, Western prejudice, intrinsic musicality, connection

Introduction

This paper is concerned with a Western separatist view (McKnight, 2015) where intrinsically musical beings are led to doubt their human musicality (Ruddock, 2012); many believe that they cannot sing (Ruddock, 2010). Traditional Western beliefs, carried through everyday language (Ruddock, research in progress), very often mean that musical acts will be judged upon perceived standards of performance; these vary according to particular expectations. Thus, rather than acknowledging the musicality of all, individuals
Western prejudice towards intrinsic musicality

growing up within a Western influence are watched and judged as being either musical or not (Ruddock, 2007); this deters many from freely engaging in musical acts. Perceived talent, then, often determines access to music learning. Yet, as Pitts emphasises, quality musical learning needs to be available if children are to develop their inherent musical being; it is important that they are not constrained by cultural expectations that too readily lead them to “assuming that their only future access to music is as a listener, like their parents” (Pitts, 2014, p. 144). Examples of different ways of being, however, offer different views. Speaking from a Yuin* (McKnight, 2015) perspective, free of the dualistic constraints of Western heritage, McKnight (2015) considers how ways of being are “sung” (p. 276) to give direction and cohesion to community — song delivers knowledge and ways of learning toward respect. Also acknowledging the importance of music to community, Trendwirth (2003), considers a Northern Australian Aboriginal reality where the spiritual dimension of music plays toward connection; he notes that, unlike the situation in Western based education, musical expression is considered to be an essential life skill in tribal living; acquiring musical skills is considered to be normal for everyone (p. 319). I argue that we have much to learn from these examples which emphasise the central place of song toward connection of community and country.

Unlike such inclusive musicality where cultural understandings lead to “interconnectivity and participation by all” (Nzewi, 2013, p. 3), however, the widespread notion of “performance [associated with] public scrutiny and critical judgement” (Westney, 2003, p. 138) in Western cultural experience leaves many individuals feeling that they have “lucked out” (Nicholson, 2011, p. 2; Ruddock, 2007). Believing that they cannot sing; some prefer to pretend that they are talking on the phone rather than admitting to singing (Ruddock, 2010, p. 7). So, despite recent research showing that music is part of the instinctive drive that underlies communicative action where children “naturally” (Bannan & Woodward, 2009, p. 465) engage in musicking as a response to their environment, many learn to believe that they are not musical, so cannot sing or play (Ruddock, 2012). Further, where “[popular consciousness] is still affected by the eighteenth-century cult of genius” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 80) and is carried in language (p. 844), it may readily disrupt our view, prejudicing intrinsic responses. Examples exposing such misconceived understandings that prevent individuals feeling free to sing include a study into early childhood teachers who believe themselves to be “tone-deaf” (Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014) and children who learn that they are non-musical as “a malfunction of our enculturation processes” (West, 2009, p. 215). A study into social and cultural influences affecting individuals who believe that they cannot sing (Whidden, 2010) also points to the nature of the culture itself; one that “keeps everyone in check” (p. 8).

It is revealing, then to learn from Bodkin’s (2004) research in New Zealand, where, in her examination of teachers in early childhood education, she found that there are significant differences between teachers from different ethnic backgrounds. Her findings reveal that, while Māori and Samoan teachers were musically confident, teachers from a Western background were reticent; they were reluctant to engage musically with the children. Bodkin argues that their misconceptions occur because of “a very high standard of musical achievement that exists in beliefs about musicality in Pākehā [Western] culture, particularly with regard to singing and instrumental skills”. Emphasis on such standards led the Western teacher-participants in her study to perceive themselves as being “musically inadequate” and to withdraw from active musical engagement. Where musical engagement is a part of our human condition and contributes to health and well-being, it is important to continue the search to articulate how it is that so many individuals are
Western prejudice towards intrinsic musicality

distanced from a core part of their being as they are caught in the prejudicial notion that only the talented have a capacity to sing and play (Ruddock, 2007).

Deeply embodied, human lifemusic (Paton, 2011), however, survives within us despite Western influences that disrupt inherent musical action. It can be argued that Western traditional acceptance of the value of scrutinised, critically judged performance (Westney, 2003, p. 138) leads to a dualistic nature of music which makes way for technological replacement of human action (Nzewi, 2009). This, in turn, leaves us vulnerable to “cultural control” (Jenner, 2010, p. 33) by capitalist systems. Where some individuals become the makers of music while the rest of us accept a mis-taken role as consumer, it becomes too easy to misconstrue the nature of musicking. Instead of creating a musical experience together where musical engagement nurtures connection, listeners and musicians are too readily separated in a reality where performance awaits critical reception. Contrary to human being, such a practice fails to appreciate the value of engaging in music that involves embodied rhythmic connections between people and with their lifeworld.

Ways of Seeing

Writing from within the Western tradition, Gadamer (1975/2004) recognises that we are scarcely aware of our human being: “Man is alien to himself and his historical fate is a way quite different from the way in which nature, which knows nothing of him, is alien to him” (p. 278). Concerned that we are estranged from the natural world, Gadamer stresses the need “to be aware of one’s own bias” (p. 271) and he draws our attention to the understanding that human playing reveals we are “part of nature” (p. 105). Further, he notes that an important aspect of being able to see behind our assumptions is to be able to recognise difference, for a denial of prejudice delimits an understanding of both the past and our living “humanity” (p. 277). Thus, we necessarily live with our prejudices; they are our living historical consciousness, the springboard from which we make decisions. Yet, as Damasio (2006) shows, it is only through our pre-knowing that we have a capacity to act, our decisions being but reflections of past experiences (p. 165). From his acceptance that we are necessarily prejudiced in our understanding, Gadamer (p. 272) offers a hermeneutic ‘method’ towards expanding our world of knowing. His grasp of the essential reality that each experiencing being sees the world through the whole of her/his past and present (p. 241) informs us that our Western view, historically coloured by Enlightenment thinking, leaves us unaware of the power of tradition; often hidden from our awareness, our prejudice goes unrecognised (pp. 272-3).

It is this prejudice inherent within Western thinking that not only limits our perception of our human “finitude” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 277) but it can blind us to influential myths that circumvent humanning (Nzewi, 2013, p. 4) instinctive action. Here, it is helpful to draw on perceptions from a key participant who has contributed to two studies into perception of musicality (Ruddock, 2007; Ruddock, research in-progress, 2016). This participant, an educational philosopher (pseudonym of Harry), steadfastly maintains a separatist view wherein he ‘knows’ that he cannot do (my emphasis) music. He maintains this position despite explaining how he enjoys listening to his favourite recordings, turns to particular ‘favourites’ to recover from deep distress, and sings Happy Birthday “with gusto” (Ruddock, research in progress). I argue, however, that his embodied response to his carefully chosen listening provides evidence that he does enjoy being an integral part of the musical community, not merely as a “receiver of” (Ruddock, 2010, p. 2) music, but also as a discerning listener; Harry insists that he cannot, without excessive work, learn to make music. Yet, De Haan (1998) notes that such a listener is a critical part of the whole—

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completing the part played by the musicians; a view supported by Gadamer (1975/2004) who understood that the players play their part so that the whole can be experienced (pp. 104–8). Interestingly, the following text: “...the 20 self-perceived non-musical participants, who are the focus of this investigation, feel that they have no ‘licence’ to do music and that they are not part of the human musical community” (Ruddock, 2012) elicited a thoughtful response from Harry. After noting: “For me, the former but not the latter”, again confirming his non-musical position as a performer, he included a review of Arendt’s thoughts regarding excellence and the public sphere with her assertion that mutually dependent musicians and audience are essential.

Not only does Harry defer to Arendt’s work in defence of his position, he also shows himself to be in sympathy with her thought in other instances. Her work can be heard in his claims that “[t]he response of the spectator also feeds back into the performance so it is not a one-way relation”. Yet, despite recognising certain mutuality in a musicking experience, Arendt and Harry both perceive the underlying reality of musical performances to be one where performers and audience properly play their separate roles (Arendt 1968, p. 154). They also hold the belief that only some children are born with a talent. While Arendt holds that the gifted individual can easily excel in music and so “attain a perfection without much training and experience” (Arendt, 1958, p. 169), however, Harry understands that, ‘to get to be a talented performer, everybody has to put the hard yards in [and that] would have required much greater effort and commitment than I was willing to invest!’ Despite acknowledging the necessity for practical music experience, he also claimed that we would only judge children to be musical if they “could do something that demonstrated that they were talented or appreciative” (Ruddock, 2007, p. 85). However, evidence now supports an understanding “that all humans have the potential to exhibit musical behaviours and to be ‘musical’” (Welch, 2000, p. 2). Further, as Trehub (2003) finds in her work with infants, young humans are born with a predisposition for engaging in music. It has also been confirmed that development of innate musicality depends upon opportunity (Welch, 1986, p. 297), not talent (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998, p. 437).

To deny music education or to impose misjudgements on a child’s early musical expression is to turn her into one of Kafka’s *Mouse People* (Kafka, 1924/2007), one who will miss out on developing her musical potential and so exist with unnecessary limitations to her intrinsic musical self. As Turino (2008) shows, however, such a way of being would not be out of keeping with the foundational ethos of Western capitalism (pp. 35-6). For education, in our “society of jobholders” (Arendt, 1958, p. 31) where schooling focuses on preparing for work that will bring financial independence, is seen to direct priorities. But I argue that it is important to recognise that humans are not merely workers. Rather, we are beings with complex needs, many of which conflict with the reality of mandatory education and the workplace. For Arendt, rich awareness of European history and philosophy meant that her perceptions were influenced by a particular historical consciousness. In her view of music and the public domain, her deeply embedded worldview echoes a Western tradition of her past. Yet, her remarkable insight into the human condition, as experienced by peoples affected by the Western tradition, makes her work a valuable guide from which to consider how our everyday being might survive the crumbling of our historical tradition. It is instructive to examine how Arendt (1968) engages with the creative insight of Kafka.
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(1924/2007, p. 13) to reflect beneath the banality of everyday living — she provokes her readers to think beyond their current circumstance.

Despite her generally insightful understandings, however, her view of music reveals a dualistic conception situated within the genius mode (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 49, 80) where distinct expectations are demanded by both expert performer and knowledgeable spectator. I suggest that her culturally learned mis-conception of human musicality led her to accept the belief that a talented individual could deliver a fine musical performance without necessary experience (Arendt, 1958, p. 169), a belief now refuted by extensive research which confirms human musicality (Peretz, 2003, p. 192). Further, recent thinking exposes such widespread belief to be a mis-taken view (Levitin, 2006, p. 196); our way of seeing is ever clouded by our own prejudice.

The Matter of Music

Instead of encouraging connective involvement in music, then, Arendt perceived performed music as something that properly contributed aesthetic value to the public sphere. For her, the notion of judgement remained central to an understanding of the aesthetic with its associated idea of spectator as judge (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 176). I argue that this view may leave non-artists and/or those without expert knowledge distanced from the creative act. This would leave those of us who are perceived to be born without creative genius to accept a role as spectator, a necessary part of the “public realm”, whose job it is to enhance the public sphere through informed judgement (Arendt, 1978, p. 19). In contrast, Kafka (1924/2007) offers a double-edged view of Western performative practice. His short story, Josefine, the Singer, or the Mouse People (1924/2007) offers a fine phenomenological study into musicking in the West. There is something about Josefine, her song and the people that challenge us to question our Western culture. Kafka’s short story reveals a pathological lack of human connection; he teases us toward understanding. Perhaps it is in the very ordinairiness of Josefine’s song (one that once, long ago, we could all sing) that enables it to evoke memories of human communicative living, a way of being that is now endangered. On the one hand, Josefine, a most fallible artist, can lift us away from the mundane constrictions of everyday living, while, on the other hand, she simultaneously restricts our potential for musical expression. This flawed character, whose singing was not especially different from the rest of the people, presents us with an artist who demands that her audience revere her presence. Her stance leaves us living with a neurotic strangeness, silently expressing our musicality through the singer; acquiescing to an expectation that we live separated from our composite humanness. Kafka (1924/2007) brings an uneasy recognition of something, something not yet clearly expressible, yet something that lives within his story to remind us that, in our culture, a part of our humanness is curtailed, leaving us to survive in a neurotically restricted reality where we live as quiet as mice (p. 267).

In his story about Josefine, then, Kafka captures the essence of Western culture where connective human development through the musical arts is curtailed and many individuals are silenced; they dare not be seen singing or dancing. Compelled to follow societal rules like the mouse people, they fear that they would suffer societal disapproval if they dared to join in the musicking. Despite recent research (Abril, 2007; Whidden, 2010) which confirms this negative judgemental aspect of Western culture, music educators’ passionate work to effect change, struggle to maintain momentum (Ruddock, 2012; West, 2016). Tellingly, in his African community, Nzewi demonstrates the cultural void resulting from
a loss of humanning (p. 7) musical arts. Facing the decimation of his musical heritage, he laments the smashing (my italics) of the essence of African musical arts practices that sustain meaningful, healthy living; he recognises the disastrous effects of Western colonial dominance. His anger palpable — his understanding clear — he reveals sophisticated, affective power of African musical arts practices to deliver community and societal health until:

...the eternity-chasing external colonialist and religious hurricanes invaded and smashed through African advancement [to] overthrew cultural practices, and devastated the humanity-sublime societal systems as well as the re-cyclic mental disposition to issues of existence and creativity. The original African creative ideology and performative intellect in the musical arts became equally condemned and obscured in school education, out rightly (sic.) substituted, thereby disorienting learners. (p. 6)

Nzewi (2013) understands, first hand, the value of musicking and works tirelessly to tell us of its communicative, health-giving value. But we find this hard to hear; we fail to understand. He is dismayed by the prejudice shown by Western scholars who misconstrue African Chorus-solo cycle, for instance, “to misrepresent the generic humanity principle of chorus-solo” (p. 9) value within African practice. Such misunderstanding and undermining of the musical arts have left many African peoples without access to healthy practices which nurtured “humanity virtues and mind wellness” (p. 11).

Despite deep prejudice and lack of opportunity (many of us in our Australian community having had little or no quality music education), Kafka’s Josefine (Kafka, 1924/2007) may lead us to wonder about the way we are. Josefine was in no doubt that her performance was that of a talented artist and that her gift should be recognised; her story highlights the deep damage that the stifling nature of such performance practice imposes on instinctively connective human being. In the instance “where some naughty little thing started innocently [singing, whereupon] we quelled the disturbance with angry hisses and whistles” (Kafka, 1924/2007, p. 267) Kafka’s short story calls into question the human value of European aesthetic historical tradition. Whilst Arendt (1998) did not question the value of superior performance, where music was created and presented in a proper public place so that the spectator could gain access to true excellence and thus be enriched (p. 49), Kafka leads us to consider the loss of connective vitality that arises when the people loose their musical voice and maintain obedient silence. In contrast to her call for active involvement in political discourse, her rich philosophical background with its powerful palate of Western thinking did not inspire Arendt to challenge such a silencing.

Kafka’s authorial voice, however, wonders about “this matter of music [before declaring that] [w]e are completely amusical” (1924/2007, p. 264). He then proceeds to expose his perception of the reality of Western music to reveal an exclusively flawed art form which, while steeped in conceit, yet it has something special for us. As already mentioned, Arendt also accepts that the arts bring something important, a way of knowing, to the public realm (1958, p. 49). Yet, she Arendt claims that, as spectators, we are not “involved in the act” but that, along with fellow spectators, we judge the genius of the performer (Young-Bruehl, 2006, p. 176); this view is deeply different from the provocation offered by Kafka. Rather, Kafka (1924/2007) questions that such a perceived notion of the performing artist captures the essence of the art and challenges his reader to wonder about accepted Western practice. His ingenious insight brings a tangible resonance to the pathological effects that are brought about with a dualist perception that affects potential for instinctive wholeness of human being.
De Haan (1998) also emphasises the essential role of listeners as they play an active part in music making to alert us to the damage done by accepted practice. Paton, (2011) would go further. From his position in the twenty-first century, he works to reduce constrictions of the European musical heritage to engage people in vibrant musicking. Making no distinction between experienced musicians and the novice, he argues that, to improvise music (like we improvise our conversations) is to be part of the world in time.

**Western prejudice towards intrinsic musicality**

**Connected Human Being in Time**

De Haan and Paton are not alone. Hodges (2007), for instance, understands that being musical is critical to our “development as a species” (pp. 9-10), that music is at the heart of what it means to be human. Too often, however, traditional prejudice means that only those perceived to be talented will develop singing or playing skills; the rest of us accept a role as consumer. I argue that notions of separatist achievements and/or competitive excellence in the arts or sport may distract us from developing the “humanising knowledge” considered by Nzewi (2013, p. 7). Neuroscientist Daniel Levitin (2006) also emphasises that the “power of art...can connect us to one another, and to larger truths about what it means to be alive and what it means to be human” (Levitin, 2006, p. 244). Thus, whilst it might seem unfair to criticise Arendt in the light of insights into human musicality gained since her death, yet her otherwise brilliant portrayal of Western thought in her finale of *The Human Condition* (Arendt, 1998) appears to be caught up in a traditional Western aesthetic view where, unlike Kafka, she fails to acknowledge an essential part of being human. Like Nzewi (2013), however, Trendwith (2003) recognises that music has the capacity to humanise. He is aware that his musicking has a capacity to connect him “to something that I don’t understand (the ancestors?) but find immensely profound, satisfying and empowering. It can transform my awareness and allow me to ‘see’ things that I don’t normally ‘see’” (p. 319). Living in an Aboriginal setting in Northern Australia, Trendwith noted that, for his Aboriginal colleagues, such knowing is an acknowledged part of being.

Although it is generally not considered appropriate to talk of such things in the Western setting, I would say that Aboriginal teachers see these mysterious processes as the ultimate goal of traditional music teaching. In the learning and performance of the traditional songs and dances the power of the ancestors and the country are invoked and re-consecrated. Inter-tribal and inter-personal relationships are defined and strengthened. Modes of communication are utilised which are quite different from those that are used in daily living. As such, music is considered vitally important to the development of the balanced individual. Without music, these aspects of self cannot be developed. The individual is both deaf and mute, so to speak. p. 319

Further, individuals who felt that they were non-musical tell of how they live with only the wish that they were musical, that they could sing or play (Ruddock, 2007). I argue that, for humans to live with such a wish creates a barrier to further distance individuals from the freedom to freely engage in musicking; their non-musical label cements their estrangement from humanising music in everyday living. It is important to ask why we fail to support music in education. I argue that it is important to query how it can be that we are blind to a cultural disabling (West, 2009); that we fail to see how the excluded miss out on an essential part of their humanity. Indeed, Veck (2009) explores how part of an everyday culture can become an “exclusionary force” (p. 142) and how language itself

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becomes a tool of exclusion. Then, as Veck reminds us, Arendt writes that we are “of the world and not merely in it” (Arendt, 1978, p. 20), yet she reflects a societal practice which places us in danger of living a life with a one-sided relationship with each other, with humanity itself. As it is embedded within our historical consciousness, Arendt represents Western prejudice by exposing the musician/spectator dichotomy, which, in contemporary reality, is where music is produced by musicians for the consumption by consumers. I argue that, when this reality creates a gap between makers and receivers, where musicians are seen as performers who provide a product for consumers, this can restrict opportunities for humanning communicative musicality.

Caught in our twenty-first century neo-liberal turn, this void has become entrenched (Leong, 2008). Little attention is paid to the fact that using music in this way may distance us from the immediacy of our musical interrelationships to diminish vibrant consciousness and effective social connectivity (Nzewi, 2014; Trevarthen, 1999). Tellingly, there was scant protest when DeNora introduced her notion of music as prosthesis (DeNora, 2000), despite this idea indicating that something is missing, that our musicality is less than inherently human. Further, her attempt to define music as a performance that “may evince social patterns” (DeNora, 2007, p. 800) fails to evoke the essence of human musical being; it begs her claim to “ask about music’s power” (DeNora, 2007, p. 799). I argue that such a “prosthesis” (DeNora, 2000, pp. 102–7) analogy turns music into something like a manufactured ‘add-on’, a tool constructed for use. This notion is far away from the connective singing “in Yuin ways of knowing” (McKnight, 2015, p. 276). It fails to recognise the very notion of human musicality. Frith (2003) reports his “unease at treating music in simple functional terms” (p. 46) as he emphasises that music is no mere tool but a way of communicating — that musicking is a part of people’s being, bringing people together in ways both “real and imagined” (Frith, 2003, p. 46).

Even in *Josefine*, Kafka (1924/2007) fleetingly captures an experience where the listeners subtly interconnect with each other as well as with the singer by being part of her performance — before they retreat to:

...a certain exhaustion and lack of hope [which] leaves a heavy mark on our otherwise tough and optimistic people. Our lack of musicality is probably something to do with that; we are too old for music, its excitement and lift don’t assent well with our heaviness, we sigh and decline (Kafka, 2007, p. 274).

For, considering the pathological state of his people, Kafka senses the magic of the communicative, humanising element of music. Yet, he wonders whether, in reality, the people merely imagined the power of Josefine’s song or whether it was their being together was what mattered? Being together, connecting, finding ways to move back from separatist notions that have dominated Western experience; to fully recognise humans as sentient beings. Yes, this is what matters. But how can we do it, how can we escape materialist matters to *be* together? Caught in time with nothing certain other than a sense of our past, where our past is our experiences, intricately blended with our tradition, and where, as Gadamer suggests, we are aware “that [we are] master neither of time nor the future” (1975/2004, p. 351) we would do well to seek a connective balm. We would do well to learn from peoples like the Yuin, to sing our togetherness and vulnerability, sing toward connection and unity to engage in inclusive everyday existence — for cohesiveness and respect of each other and of our world. With a capacity to touch sense connections across a life-span, it is our musicking that can bring memory, present and future to play.

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toward a balance that can evoke calm, can allow an individual to be one with everyday knowing and being.

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Chapter 6

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Notes

1 Christopher Small (1997/1996, p. 50) challenged our assumptions about music and advocated the use of the verb musicking. Concerned about the common view of music as object, he sought to recognise the human value of being engaged in playing, singing, listening, composing, dancing or any actions involving music. To engage in musicking embraces all senses as we feel alive and respond musically to our lifeworld.

2 “The Yuin people…are the Australian Aborigines from the South Coast” of South-Eastern Australia (Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yuin)

3 “Humanning” (Nzewi, 2013) refers to a connective living towards health and worth; it embraces interconnective, participatory inclusion.
Episode VI

We sigh and decline\textsuperscript{23}

We assume
We are
We know the world
Let’s recall; in Chapter Five
Plato knew\textsuperscript{24}
“...we human beings
have been made
sensitive to rhythm and harmony
and can enjoy them” (Plato, 1997a, Laws II 653e).

Yet we sigh.
Sensitive to?
Enjoy them?
We stand
clothed in a subjectivity
that keeps at bay
a way of being
that connects
inwards to the rhythm of our life-being,
outwards to community and lifeworld.

We accept that
“other people make music”\textsuperscript{25}
We let ‘something’
in our culture
stop us
to dis-connect.

\textsuperscript{24} Plato, (1997a, Laws II 653e)
\textsuperscript{25} Chapter Five
Caught in time

Cut away.
Loose connection
in dissection
rational knowing
stops flowing
wisdom within
embodied mind.

Fear steers life
To its end
Freezes
Kills love
Disturbs being.

Forsakes art
as a way
to live well today
to face down fear
and accept him.
Music, art, dance
deliver
a craft for living
a way to die.
Chapter Seven

*Judged: ‘she won’t be a star’*

*(from ‘I do not sing’ Chapter Two)*

In the final lines of *I do not sing*, the composite presentation of participant voices in Chapter Two, Lily ‘sings’ the soprano line:

*But if you strip the word ‘musical’ of societal pressures*
*then I’d probably consider myself musical*
*although I might not be a good performer*
*I love to play music*

Simultaneously, Andrea’s words in the bass line tell her travelling daughter’s tale, one where two guitarists joined a backpackers group:

*...when two boys started playing,*
*everyone sang*
*...you know the spontaneous*
*sort of music*
*and I’m thinking we used to*
*sing songs in the car,*
*but now the i-pods make it*
*hard to create*
*that environment.*

Then, Andrea replies to my query about her musical experiences: “*me?* playing music? …always wished it was happening but it never really did.” She reveals a pragmatic approach to music in everyday life. Despite envying her peers who enjoyed access to piano lessons and wishing that she could be the musician making the music, she readily accepted that her parents had no room to accommodate a piano in her family home. When, in her early teens, her friends started to learn the guitar she had persuaded her “parents into buying a guitar and took [her]self to guitar lessons”. She enjoyed learning popular songs and basic chords but recognised that she had started a little too late, and sadly, the desire for long nails and frustration at a lack of independence in tuning the instrument undermined her initial motivation. When referring to her daughter’s singing, she comments: “*she won’t be a star* [my italics]…at all…takes after her Dad…that’s what I say”.

To recall Harry’s story in Chapter Three, he was 17 years of age when he also wished that he could make music; he wanted to play some of the jazz sounds that he so admired:

...as an extension of just listening to it...it basically it seemed to me that, having discovered music, which was interesting and exciting, a stage to go beyond that [listening] would be to see whether I could actually produce any of it myself. Well, at that point, I couldn’t...the effort and commitment that I was willing to invest in may be partly due to the [lack of] feedback of instantaneous success [my emphasis] or the disappointment the results were not as attractive as one might’ve wished.

For Harry, the focus is more on successful performance than his actual engagement in musicking. I posit that Harry’s perceived lack of success and feelings of disappointment are a consequence of living in a performative (Dudley, 2009, p. 212) culture where a “liberal individual, classically conceived” (Thompson, 2016, p. 256) constantly awaits critical judgement. Recognising the inherent dis-ease in this reality, Nzewi (2009b) holds that: “Competition and the bogey of excellence amputate consciousness for what is in the best interest of all humans” (p. 102). Certainly, it can curtail musical action and human connection. Despite Harry’s cautionary defence in Chapter Five when he wrote: ‘Now you are being disparaging and revealing your deep prejudice instead of rejoicing at their participation as essential members of the musical community’, it is Harry himself who refers to “just listening! His sixth point in ‘Harry’s List’ in Chapter Five also emphasises this view: “Listening as part of life and perform but only as a result of great effort and with unsatisfying or poor results, i.e., not talented so not musical”. In these words, Harry exposes a societal perception that has the power to undermine attempts to become involved with musicking. Through his innovative Lifemusic, Paton (2011) however, shows another way of musical involvement where:

...anyone, playing anything to whatever level of technical competence can communicate musically with anyone else (p. 232). ...the structures of music are etched into the fabric of human consciousness: they exist in the forms and shapes of speech melody; they vibrate in every corner of the world; they sway with the rhythms of our bodies and the beating of our hearts; we only need to listen (p. 131).

Sadly, Harry fails to be properly convinced that his responsive listening is true musical engagement. In contrast to this notion of musicality where judgements regarding developed performance skills and honed knowledge determine who might be ‘musical’,
the following paper questions exclusive practices to consider a life enhancing education that has the potential to nurture sensitivities toward vital being.
On being musical: Education towards inclusion

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ABSTRACT
This article questions educational practices that undermine "being" musical. Where Western misconceptions about the nature of human musicality distance many individuals from meaningful engagement with an intrinsic part of their humanity, I challenge the status quo to argue for an inclusive educational practice which gives everyone an opportunity to be musical. Despite evidence from neuroscience now supporting the understanding that humans are a musical species, the widespread neo-liberal oriented focus on vocational training fails to recognise music as an essential aspect of healthy human being. Where current polarised music education provision supports a discriminatory system that leads to widespread underdeveloped musicality, I draw on Gadamer and Dewey to explore how musicmaking integrates cultural development and to question the value of a practice that leaves many of us musically disabled. Including examples of teaching practices that engage and transform, I argue the case for an enriched, broader curriculum that no longer sees music as a "frill".

Introduction
Music, with its capacity to touch sense connections across a life-span, brings past, present and future to play towards a state that can allow an individual to be. Drawing on research that reveals how many individuals in Australia do not have opportunities to develop their musicality (West, 2009; Ruddock, 2010), this paper explores everyday Western realities that preclude vibrant engagement in Lifemusic (Paton, 2011). A widespread preference for a vocational focus in schools means that music frequently exists as a frill in the school curriculum, so that only the chosen few who are judged to have professional performance potential (Ruddock, 2007) have access to music engagement. As Dewey understands, narrowly focussed vocational learning makes education unnecessarily dualistic (1916/2009) and arguably leads to a view that music is something created by a gifted few, leaving those who are not considered musical to be distanced from their instinctive musicality (Ruddock, 2007). This notion that selective talent is a prerequisite for being musical thus alienates many from full engagement in an authentic human action. While many music educators are caught in a system dominated by notions of commodification (and) technical (Lines, 2003, p. 249) prowess, this paper argues that there are inclusive alternative practices that can work to enhance intrinsic musicality.

Such a vision is supported by findings in neuroscience (e.g. Collins, 2013; Morrison & Demorest, 2009) which offer serious rebuttal to western convictions that only some humans are born musical (Ruddock, 2012). As we benefit from new knowledge and begin to include practices based upon new insights into human musicality, however, it is important to heed useful advice from Brust when he warns that
[Musical experience ... is more than the sum of its distinctive parts'] (Brust, 2003, p. 187). Indeed, despite the explosion of brain research dedicated to music in the decade since Brust's warning, many aspects of human musicality retain their mystery. Yet, it is not the unknown that keeps many individuals from engaging more freely with their intrinsic musicality, rather, I argue that it is the mythical known. How is it that a musical species has learned to commodify music in such a way that we believe only some gifted individuals are capable of producing music for the rest of us to use? Chris Small warned of the dangers of reification which he asserted has been a 'besetting fault of Western thinking ever since Plato' (1998, p. 2). He recognised the deep-seated cultural assumptions (Small, 1977/1996, p. 204) that are dominated by a belief where, to be musical, a person needs to be able to demonstrate skilled performance ability or deep musical knowledge. In this article, I argue that such misconceptions of what it means to be musical restrict individuals' healthy engagement with their musicality and their lifeworld. This article reflects on evidence that counters disabling views where talent is seen as a unique prerequisite for Musicking: I argue that what matters is the general recognition of intrinsic musicality of all humans (assuming normal neurological functioning and development) (Welch, 2005, p. 117). If we are not to accept only culturally approved performances by those who have won the right to make the music; if we are not to acquiesce to cultural persuasion that we are completely amusical (Kafka, 1924/2002, p. 264), it is important to consider how misconceptions of musicality lead to widespread denial where both overt and subtle effects of misconceived language use lead musical beings to 'learn' that they are not musical.

With his sensitive analogy to 'the play of light, the play of the waves,' Gadamer (1960/2004, p. 104) draws attention to the idea that our human playing shows that we are part of nature and that our playing (whether it be via dramatic interplay, dance, the visual arts or music) comes from deep within us. It is a natural process (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 105), part of our way of knowing ourselves and coming to terms with our world. Yet, for many students in Australia, this way of playing and being is not recognised in their everyday school realities which are focussed around effective preparations for inclusion in the economy. Far from musicking as understood as a way of vibrant being in time (Paton, 2011), musical acts are too often judged for evidence of potential 'talent' where those individuals deemed 'gifted' are more likely to receive an opportunity to access music learning. Rather than bringing joy and vibrant being in time, however, this potential that must be worked towards (Gibbons, 2013) can become an onerous obligation that locks the 'talented' into life-long work commitment. Too readily dissolving into obligated existence, such living is far distant from enlightening 'serious play' (Gadamer, 1960/2004, pp. 102, 103) or being free to simply value authentic life engagement (Gibbons, 2013).

In Western culture, with its emphasis on individuals' value being dependent upon their economic activity (Dudley, 2009, p. 205), skill achievement either enables societal inclusion or dictates a lack of acceptance. Unfortunately, in the current neo-liberal environment musicking is too often reduced to preparation for a professional career; something available only to those who are perceived to be born with potential to be professional musicians. Indeed, in his questioning of the relationship between education, knowing and the striving to achieve one's potential, Gibbons plays with the notion that school learning is of no value as it fails to engage the student about 'timeless and peaceful nature of things' (Gibbons, 2013, p. 110). It is important to challenge the belief that vocational learning must be the prime function of schooling and one way is to recognise the value of the arts in the curriculum; education through the arts can revitalise and enhance understanding and appreciation of the richness of the world and our place in it (Dewey, 1916/2009, 1934).

Music integral to healthy education

Musicking

Through musicking, we can actively engage in intrinsic human being to enhance connective living. In times when science as we know it would have appeared to be pure magic, humans acknowledged the power of music. Plato, for instance, emphasised the potency of carefully chosen music to ensure
development of good character (Plato, 1997b: II 376 e; III 398 c – 402), also to heal and revitalise (Bourgault, 2012, p. 64). But music was not just a power to be used; it was through rhythm, dance and song that our forbears responded to vibrations of our world to feel ‘the echo of the universe’ (Schafer, 1973, p. 4). Seriously opposed to the widely accepted notion of music as commodity (Leong, 2003), concerned researchers continue to recognise the universality of music and emphasise that human music-making (including singing, playing instruments, dance and visual art) needs to be perceived as ‘integral’ to healthy living (Aldridge & Aldridge, 2008; Dissanayake, 2009; Nzewi, 2013b). They understand that visual arts, music and dance are powerful ways to communicate and to be and that their absence can lead to social, physical, psychological and spiritual disharmony. Further, Nzewi argues that music is:

...the science of being; the art of living with health. Music is the intangible resonance of which the human body and soul are composed. The human body is the quintessential sound instrument; the human soul is the ethereal melody. (2002, p. 160)

A contributing conversational partner in a research project (Ruddock, in progress) puts it this way:

Music is not a cog in a machine, nor a brick in the wall, but something more akin to a dynamic droplet of water vapour in a vast ‘electric’ cloud; being essentially integrated. Music is able to, lyrically, ‘touch off’ idea streams, in concert with a subconscious level (involving) melodic and rhythmic emotive torque, thereby providing a complete experiential journey. (Miller)

Yet, in Western societies our musical experiences often fail to include such harmonious connection. It has been eighty years since Dewey expressed concern that our disconnected art experience was removed from our everyday living (1934, p. 7); he understood that such a separation had a negative effect on the potential for our deeper comprehension of our human being. Also focussing on this deeply connective power of music, Bowman (2010) notes that it is our aural, deeply embodied, experience that can offer a way to connect with an ephemeral reality to embrace our inner and outer worlds where body, mind and spiritual awareness recognise the self and ‘other’ (p. 5).

**Music as part of integrated education**

While education curricula too often fail to provide a quality education for all in Western systems, integrated views can adapt segmented curricula design to offer healthy, engaging music experience. As part of mathematics programme, for instance; Miller (2013) demonstrates how, with sensitive planning, integrating music with a general curriculum can benefit both teachers and students. Her collaborative experience shows augmented learning in music as well as ‘core’ curriculum subjects where music becomes an aspect of being in the classroom that matters for all: the teachers enjoy being in a learning space and enthusiastic students demonstrate markedly improved behaviour (and learning outcomes) in their vibrant connection and enjoyment (in this case, of mathematics and music) (Miller, 2013, p. 18).

Such educational practice is in tune with Dewey who understood that unnecessarily dualistic, constrained subject matter failed to fully engage students’ interest. Instead, he recognised the value in the facilitating of broad human learning where integrated understanding reflected across particular disciplines to the benefit of all (Dewey, 1916/2009, pp. 57, 58). This view supports the suggestion that inclusive practice predisposes students to be wholly engaged:

We don’t see reality as it is, we see reality as we are. The sense of self is not primary as it seems (but) only a construct of nature to force us to hold our forms together; music can help us become full spectrum individuals. (Miller, see endnote 2)

**Inclusion for intelligent life engagement**

We are not only drawn to music (Levitin, 2006, p. 7) but music plays an important part in integrative and long-term health (Hanna-Pladdy & Gajewski, 2012; Nelson, 2009, p. 15; Nzewi, 2013b). Thus, vital engagement is arrested by a reductionist view of human being where socially imposed influences set up beliefs and structures that destroy ‘intimate organic connection’ (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 288) and undermine
potential ways of learning. Following the pioneering work of Blacking (1976) and Small (1977/1996) whose work questioned western practices that reduced widespread engagement in musicking, more recent research highlights the relevance of neuroscientific findings that show how social and emotional engagement is crucial to learning (Immordino-Yang, 2011). Further, Gould (2011) provokes her readers to overcome limiting reified and exclusionary practices to make the difficult move towards a music education that would upset current ways to become relevant and engaging for students. She makes it clear that music can matter for most (Gould, 2011). Indeed, in his reflections on Dewey’s philosophy, Romer likens intelligent education as an integral part of human experiential development to a kind of cultural breathing (Romer, 2012, p. 138) which, I argue, would include the rhythm of musical arts, mathematics, science and all important aspects of intelligent action. This inclusive way of being is disallowed by segmented curricula and capitalist notions of performative practice that endanger vital being.

Enculturated distancing from musical being

Abstraction from experiential being

Living in a culture where individuals are distanced from their inherent musicality (Ruddock, 2007), musicking is perceived to have become an objectified part of the capitalist norm, something to be made and used as a performative commodity (Lines, 2003). As Leong understands, when the emphasis plays on performance rather than ‘musical insight and understanding’ (2003, p. 156), both musicking in the wider community and music in education subvert rather than enhance human connection. This focus on performance is cemented by educational programmes (Leong, 2003, p. 156) at the expense of every day musicking. Not only stilling expressivity and creativity of many gifted performers, the elitism that results from the emphasis on talented performance leads to an everyday reality where many individuals feel that they are excluded from active musical engagement. In the resulting loss of group coherence, expressive integrity and connectivity flounder because such engagement cannot flourish without a mutually accepted nurturing medium (Nzewi, 2013). When the notion of talent acts as a prerequisite to musicking it has the power either to enable or to disable. Both talented and untalented are caught in a system where musickers are in ever present danger of becoming either producers or consumers of music as object. Potential for authentic engagement is threatened in a predominantly performative culture where comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (Ball, 2003, p. 216) undermine the spiritual dimension of being human (Nzewi, 2008, p. 9).

Indeed, Elizabeth Gould argues that such ‘refined performance practices’ (2011, p. 140) lead us to ‘mismeasure’ persons (Gould, 1996, p. 56) such that this misconception of musical beings creates then sets apart those who are recognised as being musical from those who are labelled non-musical. Even for an expert who accepts that ‘talent is essentially a social construction’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998, p. 411) and who entitles an article, ‘Trivial and Pervasive’ is it possible to be caught up in perpetuating this notion. Csikszentmihalyi concludes his response to a target article (Howe, Davidson, & Sloboda, 1998, pp. 399–407) with: ‘Given limited resources … wouldn’t we provide training opportunities first to those children who, for whatever reason, show interest and ability in a given domain?’ (p. 411). Csikszentmihalyi fails to acknowledge that the nurturing of holistic human development in education necessarily includes an understanding that music learning occurs in a musical environment. Too often in current practice, however, students chosen to be part of a music programme are more likely to be those who have already enjoyed the advantage of developing in a musical environment (Welch, 2005, p. 117) while those who have missed out, miss out. I suggest here that Csikszentmihalyi is caught in the ‘trap of reification’ (Small, 1998, p. 2); offering music learning only to those who already show familiarity with singing and playing increases the likelihood of music being perceived as a performance object, something that requires an enviable skill and which is accessible only to the gifted individual. In this instance, however, Howe et al. correctly reply to Csikszentmihalyi that it is too important to ignore implications of what they refer to as the fictional nature of ‘innate talents’ (Howe et al., 1998, p. 437).
They carefully work to clarify societal assumptions that follow from a belief in what they term the talent account which, they claim, is 'discriminatory and divisive' (Howe et al., 1998, p. 437).

**The point of education?**

Gibbons (2013) poses an erstwhile challenge to the status quo when he questions whether the central purpose of school — and life — should be a constant striving to fulfil our potential. I concur; life is more than a job. We live in time and cannot control how or where we find ourselves, especially, we cannot know how we will attain our potential...our final death' (Gibbons, 2013, p. 1093). In his introspective reflections, Gibbons achingly evokes western misconceptions about our human capacity for being musical. Rather than a societal embracing of music making as part of living where we can be in time and space (Schaefer, 1973), objectified music is too often perceived as an unessential fill in the Australian curriculum, important only for restricted individuals as part of their vocational learning.

In his story about a singer and the 'mouse people' (those not entitled to sing) Kafka (1924/2007) captures inherent dangers that lie within such a restricted view of schooling as a socialisation process. He presents a picture of a people whose constrained musicality reduces vital humanity. These people, whose diminished outlook imposes a widespread inaction that disables human instincts' (Nzewi, 2007; p. 31), polgynantly reveal a dislocated musical experience. Further, to disable some from active musical engagement too often leads to a loss of group coherence. West labels such a 'psychosocial condition [as being not only] a problem for music education [but suggests that it is] a general social dysfunction' (2009, p. 215). Her warning coincides with contemporary music education practices that are destroying opportunities for individual musical expression (West, 2009) thus restricting the potential for the musical arts [to function] as a science of social stability' (Nzewi, 2002, p. 160). Current western reality leaves many individuals with minimal experiential musical knowledge as they respond to restrictive social judgement which deflects engagement from singing or playing (Ruddock, 2007; West, 2009). This dysfunctional reality means that individuals' inherent musicality is disabled (West, 2009, p. 215) such that they cannot work towards harmonious 'humanly organised society' (Nzewi, 2002, p. 160).

Yet this is not new. Just a decade after the Kafka story, Dewey (1934) opened his Art as Experience with the claim that the notion of the 'art product' leaves a gap between the music, art or drama from the living human experience that was the catalyst for its making (pp. 1, 2). His keen observation retains its relevance as it emphasises that imposed separation not only undermines individuals' connections to human everyday reality but also limits access to a deeper understanding of the human condition. It is in such disconnected arts experiences of Western society that the 'arts' are removed from real life (Dewey, 1934, p. 7). Seen as a frill by many principals and senior teachers, they are too often rationalised out of what is referred to as a crowded curriculum; approximately 10% of Australian primary schools have no music programme at all, and the quality of music education of the remainder is variable (Pascoe et al., 2005). Further, it is significant that, despite extrapolated figures used by the Music Council of Australia (Harvey, 2009) accurate numbers for music teaching in schools in Australia are not available; it could be worth asking whether this reality would be acceptable for mathematics.

**Limitations of performative practices**

I draw on Dewey (1916/2009), however, to question the notions of music and mathematics as separate entities; such definitive distinctions, it can be argued, belie the very nature of experience wherein our various "capacities...are intrinsically connected" (p. 138). As Dewey understood, it is the "process of engagement" (p. 139) itself that lies at the heart of fruitful learning. This paper argues, then, that striving for success in our neo-liberal everyday reality can lead to what Dewey recognised as "[self]-consciousness, embarrassment, and constraint" (p. 143) whereas "whole-heartedness" (p. 143) can lead to effective engagement and sustained interest free of performance anxiety. Yet performative practices that undermine human value continue to flourish in school practice; we continue to tolerate a limited curriculum which narrowly focuses on preparing students for success in future employment. It is then,
relevant to question whether school-based knowledge, as it now exists, properly prepares students either for employment or for life (Weiss, 1995, p. 63). Indeed, when he challenges general acceptance of the Socratic expectation that we must examine our lives, Gibbons finds ‘something absurd about knowledge’ (Gibbons, 2013, p. 1097). He reports Noddings’ warning that ‘what children know from school about knowledge is that they do or do not have it and that this having or not having is what will predetermine much of their time’ (Gibbons, 2013, p. 1099). Gould (2011) also presents a challenge to the status quo when she encourages readers to trouble a music education that debilitates inclusive educational experience so that it can become a transformative engagement for all, not merely exclusive performative learning for some. When we fail to examine societal assumptions supporting reified performance practices in both music and music education (Gould, 2011 p. 140), we leave our cultural foundation in a destabilising mire of incomplete action that can endanger lives, which, not fully lived, crack before their time into depression or escapist consumption.

Indeed, participants in a research project (Ruddock, in progress) reveal a hermeneutic consciousness which evidences an unnatural silencing that dominates their everyday western reality. As it was for the mouse people (Kafka, 1924/2007), so these individuals today are silenced by an unrecognised cultural discipline. Then, a quick historical search reveals that such limiting realities have been recorded before Kafka’s Josefine. It was in an early twentieth century psychological study where a subject … gave … up [making music because she] was laughed at’ (Pear, 1911, p. 92) that Pear saw a problem with the way we viewed human musicality. He attempted to change assumptions underlying perceptions of being musical by repeating a pertinent warning written just over a decade earlier:

In the question of establishment of laws, it is best that the vague concepts ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’ be completely banished from tone psychology, and replaced by those conditions which, in a special case, cause us to term an individual musical or unmusical. (Meyer, 1899, p. 21, endnote 1).

Yet, throughout the twentieth century, tests to select musical children have continued to be an important way of selecting who will and who will not win a place in school music programmes. Strongly supported by Seashore (1938) and his followers, tests maintained their sway despite informed thinking by music educators such as Mursell (1948) who, after initial acceptance of the value of tests in music education (1931) questioned whether it was not more important ‘to enable a human being to realise his (sic) musical potentiality, to help him to evolve into a musical person?’ (p. 6). Thus, he challenged the value of musical tests as a means of gaining access to music learning. Sloboda asserted that ‘it would be foolish, and possibly unfair, to make major educational decisions on test scores alone.’ (1985, p. 238).

Despite these cautions and the explosion of neuroscientific research that now demonstrate the inherent musicality of humans, in her recent research project seeking to create superior aptitude tests, Law reveals an ambivalence toward human musicality. Interestingly, she refers to untrained individuals who display ‘latent musical ability’ as musical sleepers (Law, 2012, p. 7). It would seem that, despite careful research that shows humans are born musical, deeply embedded assumptions continue to influence who will and who will not be considered musical and also determine who will enjoy access to meaningful music learning.

Without effective music learning opportunities, negative societal assumptions readily undermine musicality. Participant experiences in a research project into human musicality offer a poignant example (Ruddock, in progress). A Grandpa wrote:

As a child I learned that other people do music.
It was clear to me and others that I had no ability at all.
In the final year at Primary School, we were expected to play recorders as a class.
I wiggled my fingers but did not blow.
no-one found out.
The same applied in communal singing.
all that was needed was to open my mouth
roughly in concert with the words,
no one knew.
More importantly, no one heard anything horrible!

Interests, in his final response to on-going researcher questions regarding his claim that he would never sing with his grandson, he reveals a changing perspective. He reports that, when playing music to his grandson:

To my utter horror and [Grandson's] apparent amazement and amusement, I found myself singing along with When I'm Sixty Four (oh no, not yet!). This was not of course singing in any meaningful sense and should the speakers have failed at any instant, the noise left over would have started a debate on offensive noise limitation measures, but it took me by surprise just how joyful he seemed at his Grandpa's Lapse of Good Judgement... this was new...

How joyful indeed! I suggest that this example of vibrant musical engagement by a self-judged non-musical person highlights the need to question dualistic societal assumptions of musicality which, more than a century ago were seen to be 'open to serious doubt' (Pear, 1911 p. 94) and 'not fundamentally essential (grundwesentlich)' (Meyer, 1899, p. 21).

Vibrant engagement

In his refreshing examination of the arts in education, Cannatella (2008) reveals how the place of the arts is not to be doubted as part of life for all, rather it is through engaging in the arts as a part of everyday living that makes possible our 'human flourishing'. (Cannatella, p. x) Drawing on the insights of Merleau-Ponty, Cannatella (2008, p. 99) demonstrates how an arts education is an essential part of informed human development that helps us to develop an embodied awareness that can enhance thinking toward intelligent perception and knowing. Education through the arts can nurture potential sensitivities leading to vital ways of knowing, which, if left to chance (as the Grandpa's experiences shows) can be shut down by cultural judgement.

Further, one insightful music teacher shows how engaging students via a fresh approach can turn around a negative teaching space. Talbot (2014) demonstrates a clear sighted view that allowed students to transcend what had become a damaging situation where they had been caught in inappropriate and disengaging system expectations. With genuine acceptance of each student as potential contributing creative partners, Talbot (2014) gradually adapted the environment (Dewey, 1916/2009, pp. 13–23) to acknowledge students' intelligence, ability and inherent interest. Their creativity was valued as they engaged freely to plan for meaningful action; contributions of each member of the group played out together in active living and learning. In this project, Talbot demonstrates how important it is to step aside from set ways of teaching and learning to adapt a particular teaching situation to the cultural reality and make-up of individuals. Dewey expressed such insight this way: 'To be used intelligently, existing practices, however authorised they may be, have to be adapted to the exigencies of particular cases' (Dewey, 1916/2009: p. 141). In his narrative, Talbot presents a wonderful story of the transformation of a group of 'bad' (2014, p. 30) students as they changed dramatically to work together as collaborative musicians; all were drawn into active engagement to respond with ideas of worth. In his telling, the only thing Talbot omits to acknowledge is the palpable influence of his own experience and expertise. Both are remarkable. What matters most for my argument, however, is the demonstration of genuine acceptance of students as contributing creative partners; they each maintain individual autonomy as they work together for mutual benefit (Talbot, 2014). Such inclusive and democratic education, as Dewey had noted, allows intrinsic, organic human learning. This contrasts tellingly with autocratic systemic practice that may lead to rebellion and indifferent involvement.

Positive changes that happened following Talbot's integrative practice (Talbot, 2014) highlight how authoritative division of educational experience into clearly defined sections can leave a teaching environment in danger of reductive, linear, isolated blocks of learning; this can also mean that a 'crowded' curriculum succumbs to political influences that will determine specific content. Where a particular
example of teaching might appear to be brilliant (such as the work of Talbot) it may, however, be seen as threatening to systemic practice. Yet I argue that such inspired, creative and nonconforming practice, works well, not only for the intrinsic enhancement of each student, but also as an effective preparation for their economic employment.

Towards integrative being

Intelligent experiencing together with communicative action is also evident in the case mentioned above where Miller (2013) worked to integrate music and mathematics. Both music teacher and generalist classroom teacher benefited from the communicative practice together with the enhanced harmony within the student body where the children enjoyed the participatory, organic process. While these examples of enlightened teaching practice might not be specifically aimed at future economic employment, such integrative involvement does prepare the student more fully for juggling the complexities of everyday life beyond school (Dewey, 1916/2009, p. 22).

This paper offers examples of teaching that go beyond the development of practiced performance to emphasise long-term benefits of inclusive, engaging human involvement. I argue that it is important to learn from the past so that we can recognise what is truly for the good as opposed to what might appear to be successful, performative outcomes. We can continue to learn much from Small (1998, p. 2) who correctly recognised the seeds of refined western practice in a tradition passed down from the Greeks. As Plato makes clear in Laws (a work written in his final years), performed music needs to be of high quality to positively influence its audience since ‘music, dance and drama needs to be appropriate in order that it has a potential for positive effect’ (Plato, 1997a, 660 e). Yet in regard to education, Plato also recognised the power of music as an integral part of teaching; he advocated, for example, the importance of songs as devices for producing ‘(Plato, 1997a, Laws, 659 d–e, p. 1351) good citizens.

Recognition of the powerful part music can play in education leads me to question decisions that exclude music from everyday experiences in many Australian schools where music is too often regarded as an unessential frill in the curriculum. I argue that human being is diminished when how we live is overshadowed by restrictive, performative demands where only some individuals are deemed to be talented and encouraged to develop their musical skills; others are limited to accept the role consumer within a contemporary, consumptive market reality. Such diminishing can be ameliorated by embracing a democratic education that includes music as part of an integrated curriculum that provides all students with an opportunity to engage in playing, singing, improvising and listening. Inclusive education practice matters as it opens a way to connect with others and with the harmonies and rhythms of our natural lifeworld. Relevant for all students, quality music education enables connective engagement to enhance human being. This is what being musical is. Where no narrow learning by rules restricts and condition, intelligent experiencing and taking risks allow ventures into the unknown. Thus, each student becomes free to engage in a creative process, not as mere consumers but as human beings free to connect in a community of vibrant living.

Notes

1. Christopher Small (1987/1998, p. 50) challenged our assumptions about music and advocated the use of the verb musicking. Concerned about the common view of music as object, he sought to recognise the human value of being engaged in playing, singing, listening, composing, dancing or any actions involving music.

2. David Miller is a participant in my current research project who has chosen to use his real name rather than a pseudonym. He is a thinker and inventor who has described himself variously as an average musician who, from time to time, admits to feeling extra non-musical.

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Disclosure statement

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Notes on contributor

Eve Ruddock taught music in Western and South Australian schools as well as studio piano teaching in Darwin and Perth. Questions about the way people engage in music making led her to complete a Masters study at the University of Western Australia before continuing research with a hermeneutic study which focuses on tensions between intrinsically musical and lived experiences. Her current project explores a mismatch between conditioned perceptions of non-musicality and human musical reality.

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Chapter 7


Episode VII

*Being Musical*

Why conceal
a part of us
that can feel
can reveal
to connect
through sound
through rhythm
our humanity?
When
to unconceal
can work to heal
to bring us all
to be part of
to be present
in time.
PART III: CODA

Chapter Eight

Music is a natural human condition...In Western society, however, there is a dissonance between this natural human condition and the reality of music engagement

(Lines, 2003, p. 248)

As a species, humans are both biologically and culturally musical (Morrison & Demorest, 2009), yet many individuals in Western cultures live with a deep conviction that they are “musically inadequate” (Bodkin-Allen, 2009, p. 256). This perception is widespread despite evolution of human architecture now showing an adaptation for music processing (Norman-Haignere et al., 2015); a discovery that supports an understanding of the communicative role that music can play (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). For Malloch and Trevarthan (2009), “musicality” epitomises movement back and forth between people to bring connectivity to their separate lives (p. 9); it plays towards wordless connection. In the Prelude to this thesis, for instance, we hear a participant who believes that she is “the most unmusical person you’ve ever interviewed”, yet this mother-to-be reveals a musicality that is part of her “primordial being” (van der Schyff, 2013). Her words below, taken directly from her transcript, capture the dichotomous nature of her reality where the distancing effects of societal assumptions conflict with her intrinsic musical nature:

Music is part of our lives
tribal communities
drums sticks rhythm
there’s something in music akin to us as [hu]man
our expression
something intangible
a very important part of our lives
I get that feeling
amazing, mystical expression
of sound
where does it come from?
very very very special...music.
the one thing that enables emotional communication
sitting quietly
listening to the trees and the birds
that’s a kind of a music of life
it’s the sounds of life

I think you’re either born with it or you’re not
singing and voice
expression of music
I’d love to do singing lessons
too embarrassed
I should get singing lessons just to see
teacher’s going to go ‘Oh, no hope’
[Caterina of the never picked]

In the beginning of this excerpt we become aware of her musical disposition, her intimate connection to her intrinsic musicality. In the second section, however, she exposes her fatalistic acceptance of cultural conditioning. Within her Western lived experience, she had undergone what Small (1998) refers to as a “process of demusicalization” (p. 212). This thesis focuses on this distancing from “a natural human condition” (Lines, 2003, p. 248).

The Prelude to the thesis first confirms findings from my MA research (Ruddock, 2007b), where musicking, rather than being understood as a connective human action, was perceived by many as talented performance for critical judgement; many individuals completed their formal years of education persuaded that they were non-musical. The discussion also includes a brief acknowledgement of detrimental effects that the social media can deliver towards music engagement. Drawing on unused data from my former study, I revisit the reality where individuals find themselves feeling non-musical as a result of their exposure to their everyday culture which disrupts instinctive musical response. Indeed, Lines (2003) points to the media as being a contributor to “feelings of inadequacy [which are] perpetuated [due to] the sophisticated treatment of music performance” (p. 248). 26 Here, he locates the issue which, I posit, is

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26 "Technology has in a way done the ‘non singer’ as great disservice as we forget that what we hear on our sound gear is the result of goodness knows how many hours of recording and re
at the heart of the matter: music as performance for critical judgement can diminish its capacity for an evolved, vital communicative role in human being.

Since Blacking (1976) so eloquently brought to light the phenomenon of culturally ‘engineered’ non-musicality, theorists (Small, 1998) and researchers (Lines, 2003; Swain & Bodkin-Allen, 2014) have further explored this ‘unnatural’ aspect of Western culture. Despite the seminal writing of Blacking (1976) and Small (1977/1996; 1987/1998; 1998) and insightful work from professional musicians (Westney, 2003; Paton, 2011) and neuroscientists (Levitin, 2006; Morrison & Demorest, 2009), musical ‘disabling’ continues. It was a community reader of one my published papers who used the term ‘engineered’ as he queried whether a social determinant could be responsible for the phenomenon under discussion. While there was not, at the time, a reasoned answer for his question, it has proved to be a valuable tool in my search toward enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of ‘unnatural non-musicality’. Despite many excellent research studies in music education and related fields, no research has yet addressed the questions that continually arise from everyday musical experiences and that are seen, for instance, in the participant text examined in this project. Yet, the community reader’s question was important; the issue of musical beings learning to perceive themselves as non-musical leads many to miss out on a connective, humanning (Nzewi, 2013a) part of ‘natural’ being. When initial explorations of qualitative and ethnographic research failed to offer a clear route to addressing the puzzle, I realised that no virtue was to be had by playing with shadows and set out to seek answers by treading the path “that dialectic sings” (Plato, Republic, 1997b, Book VII, 532a). Thus, through the hermeneutic process, with Gadamer (1975/2004) as my guide, I sought questions within the participant text that could lead to answers (via “question and answer”) — already lying within that text (p. 578).

In my quest to find how it could be that musical beings were distanced from their inherent musicality, I further explored complex, contradictory data from a participant of my former study. In Harry’s extraordinarily informed perceptions, considered in Chapter Three, there remained an enigma. An educational philosopher and experienced recording…impossible to produce that quality of sound in real life.” (Community Reader, Liz Nicholls)

27 His question frames chapter 3 and is recalled in chapter 4.

28 Thibault (2010, 2015) realized (see Chapter 5) that we can become so involved in what we mistakenly believe to be the essential work of music education that we fail to realise what is truly for the ‘good’ and so become distracted by “shadows” (as Plato imagines in his allegory of the cave, Republic Book VII, 515c).
teacher educator, this participant spoke from a rich experiential background. Given his deep awareness of human learning, I wondered how it could be that, with his minimal music background, he could expect to suddenly acquire performance skills? Yet this is how it was; his knowing was imbued with the notion of ‘giftedness’, of ‘talent’. While it might be conceivable to question whether an ‘uncultivated’ human musicality could be perceived as an ontological reality (Tillson, 2013), his actions revealed an intrinsic response to music – despite culturally embedded convictions that he was not musical in the sense of being able to make music. Categorically defining himself as non-musical regarding making music in any way, he declared: “I cannot sing, not even in the shower” Later, however, I was to discover that, not only did he seek out and respond to particular music, during dialectic responses in this investigation he would note that he sang “Happy Birthday with gusto”.

Seeing beyond the ‘seen’

Contradictions within participant experience revealed unrecognised cultural influences which, so integrated with the fabric of everyday being, went unnoticed; influences remained beneath consciousness (Foucault, 1972, p. 15) to direct how musicking could be. In an attempt to tease understandings from the research text, the work of this thesis first focused on the search to articulate a question that could deliver enhanced understanding, and could begin to explicate this ‘unnatural’ influence. However, assumptions revealed in the text, having developed beneath the surface of awareness over time were “of too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis” (Foucault, 1972, p. 24). Instead, they led to hermeneutic wondering where “[t]he being that is concerned with its being presents itself, through its understanding of being, as a means of access to the question of being” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, pp., 522-3). Thus, it was through complex and contradictory participant experience that dialectical interactions toward meaning took place. Together with research data drawn from honest and direct contributions of the twelve participant cohort, Harry, and the literature, I began to move closer to an understanding of the enigmatic essence of being musical. This process to understanding the phenomenon of culturally imposed non-musicality became clearer when, despite being made aware of findings in contemporary neuroscience that confirmed musicality as an inherent aspect of the human condition, the central protagonist Harry maintained a separatist non-musical position. He was aware that research revealed that everyone is capable of being part of their culture’s musicking (Koelsch et al., 2000; Levitin, 2006, p. 27), the only exceptions being those who are born with neurological malfunction (Nzewi, 2009c, p. 188). Yet, the puzzle of
perceptions of non-musicality was palpably present; a question was waiting to be found. As Gadamer (1975/2004) posited, when the question is properly found, the answer lies within the text, waiting to be “broken open by the question” (p. 357). So it was that, drawing on Dewey (1896; 2009/2016), dialectic processes were to lead the question into the open at the conclusion of Chapter Three.

My task, then, was to tease out assumptions that lead to the denial of intrinsic musicality. Yet the research path chosen to address this question was not readily obvious. Chapter One explicates the background processes involved in the search to find the question. It provided a base from which answers could be found within the research text, drawn out via dialectic interactions (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 356). Access as to how we know what we know continues to be a project in progress as humankind continues to seek understandings of who we are, how we are and where we stand in the reality of being. In a move designed to access first hand experiences of the phenomenon, I drew on lived experiences of a disparate cohort of self-perceived musicians and non-musicians; their musical realities raised questions of hierarchical acceptance and exclusion. Even while establishing the groundwork for the investigation it became clear that ways of ‘knowing’ would need to expand if deeper insights were to emerge. Thus, arts-based processes became a way to play through experiences and assumptions so that this hermeneutic project could develop via theoretical interpretation to enhanced understanding.

Because it is based on participant experience, this investigation is empirical (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. xi) in the sense emphasised by Barone & Eisner (2012). Re-presented in narrative, poetic and dialogic forms, the research text derived from participants’ interactions, peer reviewers and community readers became a rich source of experiential data for on-going dialectic interpretation (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 357). Recent findings in the literature, specifically in the fields of music education, psychology, cultural neuroscience and philosophy, also contributed to the material undergoing analysis, for as Josselson insists, interpretative work comes from an engagement with the text — not the individuals themselves (2011, p. 35) . The main purpose was to recognise hidden aspects of everyday living in order to reveal restrictive cultural practices that distanced many individuals from their inherent musicality; it was important to keep in mind that only when recognised can the power of the unseen be subverted. Participant experience revealed that musical individuals were caught in a system where they perceived themselves as non-musical ‘receivers’ of music; they deferred to ‘official musicians’ as owners of the music. Despite this, however, dialectic
interplay considered in Chapters Two through Five showed how convinced non-musical individuals actually displayed inherent musical qualities; their musical responses belied culturally endorsed convictions.

**Performativity v recognition of what is**

It may be that “it is in the performance and only in it…that we encounter the work itself” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 115). However, connections made available to us when part of a performance, whether as player or audience, can be disrupted when performance turns into performativity, when human ‘play’ turns into a critically judged ‘thing’. As Gadamer insists (pp. 110-125), it is crucial to perceive the essential part the audience and spectators play. The latter are no mere consumers of the work made by the ‘talented’, rather, they are an integral part of the play where, in and through time, human beings engage with and become part of an event through which they connect with and gain insights into their lifeworld. Of concern, and a focus of this thesis, is that human connection is threatened by the widespread notion of performativity. In Chapter One, I refer to Koopman’s (2005, p. 119) theorising of this reality, where “the dominance of performativity threatens to marginalize music and music education” (Koopman, 2005, p. 119). Koopman posits that:

The conditions created by performativity are opposed to those in which the arts thrive (1.1). From the artistic point of view, performativity should be combated rather than endorsed. Attempts to justify music education by appealing to the performative results of music education will be shown to be misguided (1.2)

Thibeault (2010, p. 27) brings intuitive awareness to this question. In Chapter Five, I reported how, in the midst admiring acclaim for his students’ excellent performances at the presentational school concert, he experienced an insightful recognition of that which is. I wish to argue (after Gadamer, 1975/2004) that, as true recognition may occur when losing oneself in an aesthetic occasion, where the ‘art’ experience can speak in a way outside limited human existence, it is this experience itself that works to bring recognition of that which is. Gadamer (1975/2004) suggests:

It still seems to me a vestige of the false psychologism that stems from the aesthetics of taste and genius if one makes the processes of production and reproduction coincide in the idea. This is to fail to appreciate that the success of a work has the character of an event, which goes beyond the subjectivity both of the creator and of the spectator or listener (Note 27, p. 164).

In a recognition that challenged, ostensible excellent productive practice, I suggest that Thibeault experienced a “full presence” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p.123) of the event,
not the singing, not the applauding parents, but the totality of the happening. His consciousness, I suggest, experienced awareness beyond the limitations of the particular parts of the concert-event itself; he was able to realise the educational implications and the potential lifeworld that could come forth, or fail to come forth from such an event.

It is pertinent here to recall a comment from the Introduction of this thesis where Paton reminds us of Small’s understanding that “some kind of tectonic shift in cultural perceptions” (2011, p. 175) would be necessary if we are to establish a belief in intrinsic human musicality. Change occurs when given the opportunity and this arises with a consciousness of what is. I wish to suggest that Thibeault’s ‘revelation’ can help us along the path toward Small’s “tectonic shift”. Gadamer’s (1975/2004, pp. 351-2) bringing into to the open our ignorance – both of our nature and of time – can lead toward more insightful realisation of who and what we are. His understanding can lead us to see, more truly, what is; hermeneutic reflection is a way to tease open assumptions that keep perceptions locked into restrictive beliefs. Dialectics, at first through teasing truths into becoming apparent by allowing voices of the other to be heard, and then through interpretative dialectics (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 467) can help to recognise conceptions within Western culture that preclude recognition of our musical nature.

It was in a world dominated by particular expectations of performance practice that the participant, Simone, lost her will to sing. In Simone’s story, told in Chapter Two, we witnessed a former passionate singer reduced to silence. Her feelings of being distanced from her singing self were exacerbated by negative judgement, trained upon a particular technical style of jazz singing. It is important to emphasise that human being fails to flourish in a world of reductionist thinking, reductionist being (Straume, 2015, p. 1474). Thus, when Thibeault (2015) demonstrates the value of starting a question by imagining: “I closed my eyes and dreamed of ensembles in harmony, of live music and live bodies together” (p. 55), he lifts thinking beyond the limits of accepted practice to further open up possibilities for music education.

In the real world of music education today, however, performative expectations frequently lead to thwarted human musicking; musical development is arrested not because individuals lack musicality but because they have lacked nurturing musical learning opportunities (Welch, 2005). This point is highlighted by Nzewi (2012) when he recognises an oftentimes hidden reality regarding inherent African musicality. He reveals that recognised musical abilities are learned through everyday living; individuals are not automatically musically able — we develop our musicality within cultural practice (Nzewi, 2012). Rather than enabling participatory musicking, however,
Western cultural practices are caught within traditional values which support non-performance of music, dance, and drama in some parts of the population. In an environment dominated by critical judgement of performance skills, accepted Western practice can readily dissuade some individuals from musicking; this decreases the opportunity for song and dance to become a natural part of daily artistic expression. In Chapter Five, self-perceived non-musical individuals reveal how it feels to suffer culturally imposed passivity that restricts potential human action. It is telling that, in a social environment dominated by the notion of competition (Nzewi, 2007, p. 29), many do not feel that they have a licence to actually do music.

**Towards recognition**

Richards and Durrant (2003) set out to understand how it is that people came to believe that they could not sing. They considered how, “in the often musically elitist context of Western society” (p. 78), the accepted and divisive myth that either we can sing, or we cannot (p. 80) continued to thrive. In answer to their first aim, to “understand why some adults believe themselves to be non-singers” (p. 85), they found that, “psychological barriers to singing are greater than physiological ones [and, essentially] and that “fear [and] embarrassment” (p. 85) led to deep inhibition. Encouragingly, their work showed that singing skills can be acquired with carefully honed encouragement; as Welch claims: “we just need the opportunity” (Welch, 2005, p. 119). Despite Richards and Durrant’s (2003) expertise in leading former “self-perceived non-singers” to enjoy singing in a choir, the question remains as to how such a particular disabling phenomenon would develop and be sustained within a culture.

To work toward an understanding that could free us from the dichotomous and limiting notion that we are either musical or not, it is helpful to note how divisive influences remain from a past era. Gould (2002) is explicit: “We still carry the historical baggage of a Platonic heritage that seeks sharp essences and definite boundaries”. In order to resist being thus “shaped by the social-historical” (Straume, 2015, p. 1468), it is necessary to first recognise it and to become aware of its influence if we are to escape such harmful shaping. Kafka (1924/2007) not only recognised the phenomenon, but delivered a clear message. It was his keen imagination that allowed him to see that our distancing musical practice was, somehow, evidence of a reduced way of being wherein our vibrancy is quelled — where “we sigh and decline” (Kafka, 1924/2007, p. 274). In his *Josefine*, a short story that is a fine phenomenological study into the world of Western music, Kafka builds up a ‘case’ whereby we can see the reduced connectivity that happens when we fail to perceive the harmful aspect of performativity where the
‘talented’ performer achieves star status; the audience is reduced. Captured in Chapters One, Two, Six and Seven, Kafka’s insights illuminate as they draw attention to ‘unnatural’ behaviour; behaviour that many of us continue to accept without question. Kafka teases us into new considerations of our subdued musicking, one that very often leaves us caught within a conscious present yet which, even despite its limitations, lifts us away “from the fetters of everyday life, and it frees us too for a little while.” (pp. 275-6). Inside the system, Kafka recognises that something is awry, he wonders about a culturally imposed phenomenon which leaves many of us as quiet as mice (p. 267) as it distorts connective action. From outside the Western system, Nzewi (2009b) looks on, dismayed. He recognises a people whose diminished outlook imposes a widespread inaction that “disables humane instincts” (p. 107). Worse, we have imposed our “misunderstanding” (Welch, 2001) across the globe.

In Chapter Four I focus on the survival of intrinsic musicality in the face of negative cultural judgement. Here, I recall that it was over a century ago when Meyer (1899) suggested that the use of “the vague concepts ‘musical’ and ‘unmusical’ be completely banished…and replaced by those conditions which, in a special case, cause us to term an individual musical or unmusical” (footnote 1 p. 21). Although Pear quoted Meyer when he doubted the effectiveness of similar tests in 1911 (p. 94), the notion of testing for musicality remained. Pear asserted that “[i]t would be of a great interest…to find…a more scientific basis for the concepts of “musical” and “unmusical” (p. 94). Seashore (1938) was to do just that; arguing that properly devised tests would mean that funds were not wasted on those children who “are not musical” (p. 290). While Mursell and Glenn (1931) at first supported testing for music ability, in Education for musical growth (Mursell, 1948, p. 6) Mursell advocated inclusive music education that would enhance musical development. Informed arguments counter this practice of testing to exclude (Sloboda, 1985, p. 238), and present proven music learning practices which have life-long implications for human health (for example, Higgins & Higgins, 2013). Despite benefits of interdisciplinary, inclusive education that effectively challenges restrictive learning planned around political and vocational demands (Hopkins, 2014), tests continue to be widely administered to determine which students will have access to music learning. Too often, it is only the ‘lucky’ ones who will win access to music involvement. This contrasts with understandings from Višňovský and Zolcer (2016) who draw on Dewey to emphasise the importance of participatory cultural involvement to promote healthy, human living. Possibilities of participating are greatly reduced when individuals ‘learn’ that they are not musical. It is, however, challenging to work toward
change given the nature of the current regime (Višňovský et al., 2016). Yet, I argue that it is irrational (within Western thinking) to persist with this discriminatory practice in light of neuroscientific findings that substantiate human musicality (Morrison et al., 2009; Levitin, 2006). Further, I posit that it is not ‘rationally’ correct to maintain the musical versus non-musical divide, particularly given recent evidence that we have evolved cortical pathways for music as well as for speech (Norman-Haignere et al., 2015). It is relevant to wonder, then, how long it will be before we recognise the distancing effects that come forth from our classic heritage, how long it will be before we recognise the critical importance of musicality to evolved humanity (Hodges, 2007).

**Prejudices lead to loss**

Chapter Five reports on dialectic interactions that show how barriers to musicking occur through everyday language; this highlights the need to continue to work to uncover assumptions that affect freedom to be musical. Seeing beyond the ‘known’ within Western tradition where accepted, objective knowledge sets up particular confines for human being, Gadamer (1975/2004) alerts us to prejudices in our understanding. He exposes perceptions where, not only are we separate from our world, we are “alien” (p. 278) to ourselves; he reveals the importance of becoming “aware of [our] own bias” (p. 271). Heeding insights from Gadamer’s hermeneutic understanding, together with on-going questioning of my own perceptions, I attempt to break open the veil that hangs between researcher and understanding. Dialectic interactions between myself, participant data and the literature begin to make clear those societal influences that work to restrict musicking. I draw on Arendt (1958) in Chapter Six, for example, to explicate exclusive notions of excellence along with a related belief in “the musical child prodigy” (p. 169). Combined with the expectations that the purpose of schooling is to prepare individuals for success in the workplace, such beliefs very often preclude arts engagement; they can lead to a diminished human musicality in everyday Western culture. And again, Chapter Six brings insights from Kafka’s *Josefine* (1924/2007) to expose pathological effects of the dualistic musical-or-not view.

Reflecting on the nature of hermeneutic experience, Gadamer (1975/2004) recognises that our “*tradition...is language* (Gadamer’s italics, p. 352). So it is in hearing words, teasing back and forth, interpreting in the light of conflicting understandings that the dialectical process shines a new light on the phenomenon itself: while dialectic partners may fail to reach agreement, the relationship between dialectic partners maintains reflective integrity. This is how it was with Harry. In their appreciation of his text, several peer reviewers noted the value in Harry’s perspective
(presented in detail in Chapter Three). And this is so, despite, given his rich Western heritage, Harry surely projected the particular Western historical consciousness that leads to the “dissonance between this natural human condition and the reality of music engagement” (Lines, 2003, p. 248).

In Chapter Five, I explored how misconceived assumptions are carried in language to deter natural engagement with musicking. Where our classical heritage has led us, via the notion of “excellence” (Arendt, 1958, p. 48), to a separatist culture, we have learned to laud those who perform, who “distinguish [themselves] from” (p. 48) others. As I noted above, Koopman (2005, p. 119) opposes the dominance of this divisive practice for it not only excludes many from being part of music and music education, but in the final analysis, it means that those who determine policy are too often those who have ‘missed out’ on the benefits of a musical background and who, like Harry, have yet to appreciate the benefits arising from active involvement in musicking.

Music perceived as performance for critical judgement is seen to be a major influence on freedom to become involved. Yet, there are other ways of understanding and doing music where “performative skill was not demanding: if you can walk, you can dance African music” (Nzewi, 2016, pp. 7-8); inclusive participatory practices can lead to connectivity and cohesion (Nzewi, 2013a). In his Lifemusic, Paton (2011) shows that this can be so, even if the musickers have never had any musical experience before or even if they have a disability. I wish to argue that a dominance of the performative aspect of musicking, together with the pervasive influence of a belief in the ‘talent account’, has taken over possibilities of active music making for some members of our Western communities. This has led to a situation where players in the music industry (who, in turn, use musicians) ‘own’ the music and where an intolerance for ‘non-expert musicking leads to an unnatural silencing of many individuals.

Necessarily prejudiced by our historical consciousness, freedom to develop as a musical being depends upon how a particular environment either enables or disables. Instead of children instinctively engaging with their musical world, then, in Chapter Six I argue that Western separatist views very often encourage only those who are perceived to be born with a talent for music; those considered non-musical are too often excluded from a world of musical learning. Lacking experience and encouragement in everyday musical actions, individuals’ views can be affected by notions of excellence, where, finding themselves vulnerable to feelings of embarrassment, they withdraw from singing and playing. Not only does this reality mean that many of us refrain from
musicking in our everyday living, but it also leaves us to play out our musical connectivity through the medium of the professional. Kafka poignantly points to the danger of reduced being when a part of our humanness is taken over — removed from our potential for expression, for connection.

Yet, musicking in reality is not merely performance to be judged, bought and sold. The Western practice of perceiving music as a product, something that is made by talented musicians for consumption by the rest of us, where we play separate roles as either listener or performer, is vehemently countered by Paton (2011). He acknowledges that “people have come to invest heavily in the cultural belief that music is a commodity which is provided for them by others” (p. 173). He sensitively shows that this need not be so. In his Lifemusic project, the musician and composer demonstrates that music is for everyone and that everyone can benefit on many levels in being musically engaged. He affirms that: “[m]usic connects us to time and in so doing, it deepens our connection to life itself” (p. 21).

It is important to recall that this phenomenon affects not only Western communities, but that Western colonial imposition of performative practice means that it also undermines humanning musics in other cultures. In Africa, for instance, life-enhancing musical arts that delivered community and societal health has been misconstrued and displaced by Western forms that fail to understand or appreciate the affective depth of African inclusive, interconnective musical arts, with their capacity to work toward cultural and human health (Floyd, 1998; Nzewi, 2013a, pp. 6-9). It is clear that we may still learn from Kafka (1924/2007). His Josefine (1924/2007) continues to offer wisdom as her story captures the pathological effects of a performativity that can lead to an exclusive, ego-enhancing show and can interfere with the deeply connective role musicking plays toward human well-being. Where materialist matters disrupt human harmony, hope can emerge from valuing other ways of being; ways that can connect and heal, such as those revealed by Australian Aboriginal and African voices (McKnight, 2015; Trendwith, 2003; Nzewi, 2013a). These voices come to us with a generosity that offers cohesiveness and respect. They sit well with Paton’s (2011) passion for nurturing a way of musicking which allows individuals and communities to be in time.
Concluding thoughts

Music

Music is everything.
the sounds of life
sitting quietly
listening to the trees
the birds
a music of life
the sounds of life.
[words taken directly from data of participant Caterina of the never picked]

Given that many individuals in the West feel themselves to be non-musical, it is good to keep in mind that being musical is a natural human condition (Lines, 2003, p. 248). In this project, I have focussed on recognition of an unnatural phenomenon in a culture where assumptions distance many musical people from their intrinsic musicality. To become free of the pervasive influence of these assumptions, hidden beneath conscious awareness, it is necessary to bring them and their pervasive effects into the open. With Gadamer (1975/2004) as guide in the play toward understanding this divisive phenomenon, patient engagement in the hermeneutic process has led to enhanced understanding (1975/2004, pp. 103-4).

Without the opportunity, this natural, human musicality may not be realised; many Western individuals feel that they have no licence to do music. We are not automatically musically able, but develop skills when developing in a musical environment (Nzewi, 2012). Welch understands that effective music education promotes the musicality of all (2005, 119). Unfortunately, however, narrowly focussed education provision may leave some individuals feeling non-musical, as seen in the case of RM. He was left to pretend but not to genuinely participate, to ensure that no sound came from the recorder or from his mouth so that “no-one heard anything horrid!” (RM, reported in Ruddock, 2016). I argue that he was caught within a diminished way of being. When RM surprised himself by singing ‘When I’m Sixty-Four’ to his grandson (Ruddock, 2016), he was surprised by the child’s “joyful” response; I hoped that this might be the beginning of a new freedom for RM. But this was not so. When I later sent him a poem that captured an individual’s non-musical position, RM responded:

Your poem is spot on. The word taboo is right, something never discussed for fear of upset. It was taken as axiomatic that only musicians can do music let alone try.
Why do it? I find writing poems hard although I do try. Limericks are easier for an RM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>once there was</th>
<th>the word 'taboo' is right</th>
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<tr>
<td>Warm and wet but growing cold</td>
<td>The music within was subdued</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nell was wrapped before she was old</td>
<td>Before she was booted and shoed</td>
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<td>Wrapped in cloth nurtured with care</td>
<td>And now she’s quite sad</td>
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<td>she learned to talk life seemed fair</td>
<td>For what she once had</td>
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<td>Stories told opened her world adventures told mysteries unfurled</td>
<td>It’s harder to bolster her mood</td>
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<td>But one thing she should not do. making music was taboo</td>
<td>He hear the big names and celebs</td>
</tr>
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<td>Shut right out! should sing no song only gifted could belong</td>
<td>The posh and the famous young debs</td>
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<tr>
<td>to the class of people who owned the music through and through,</td>
<td>We never do hear That lowliest tier</td>
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<td>The menfolk, their wives and the plebs.</td>
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<td>So now she is quiet and mute</td>
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<td>With never a song or a flute</td>
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<td>She cannot quite say</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why her life is so grey</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Or who to blame or impute</td>
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<td>[Limerick by Participant RM]</td>
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Yet fine music educators are ready and willing to work so that individuals like RM do not need to be silenced, so that individuals in Western cultures need not ‘learn’ that they are not musical. Yet this is not likely to be effective until we dare to affirm everyone’s innate musicality and drop the dualist belief that only the ‘gifted’ can be musical. While this research project is a humble drop in the ocean of understanding, answers already lie in wait. To consult Dewey, for instance, is to keep on finding answers; Rømer (2012) reminds us to read Biesta and Burbules’ who tell us that “we only know what the problem is at the very moment that we are able to solve it: Problem and solution stand out completely at the same time” (p. 146). Their words echo Gadamer’s understanding that, once you can articulate the question, then you are already
on the way to finding the answer which “lies in the sense of the question” (p. 356). Who we are, where we’ve been and how we know — these all affect how it is that we can find questions: how we can find ways outside our acquired cultural constrictions to see beyond our ‘cloud of unknowing’ (Anonymous, 14th Century/1983) towards a fresh awareness.

Here, having embarked on a path to deeper understanding, it is tempting to include much more before I conclude. Again, I take advice from Gadamer who understands that: “[i]t would be a poor hermeneuticist who thought he (sic) could have, or had to have, the last word” (1975/2004, p. 580). Musician Julian Appendix 5, then, ends this venture towards enhanced understanding with a final *sonic hug*:

**value in vibration**

sonic hug

good way to welcome

large circle

circle begins with the softest sound

hurricane over the horizon

‘mmm…just a hum

then — mouth open

open sound.

great sound

loudest sound

project

eyes closed

tremulously experiencing

sonic hug

reverse

die away

cyclone disappears

over horizon.

same experience

same sound

experience different

value in vibration

experiencing

whole body.
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Appendix 1

The ‘Unnatural’ Path of the never picked (Ruddock, 2007, p. 92)
### Appendix 2

**Published papers tell a tale**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Placement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working toward the Research Question — Prelude Chs 1 - 2</td>
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<td>Hermeneutic processes addressing the Research Question — Chs 4 – 7</td>
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<td>Central research story in <strong>bold</strong>.</td>
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**"It’s a bit harsh, isn’t it!" Judgemental teaching practice corrupts instinctive musicality**

Here, I retrieve untold data from the never *picked study* to introduce the phenomenon where individuals are distanced from their intrinsic musicality; here, the focus extends from the school environment to broadcasting.

**A spiral design delivers recognition towards harmony.**

As I seek appropriate method/s to move beyond culturally constricted knowing. The prior ‘spiral design’ acts as a catalyst to art-based and hermeneutic ‘methods’. Participant cohort introduced.

**Societal judgment silences singers**

Both musician and non-musician participants expose restrictive cultural practices; their contradictory voices reveal a potential base for hermeneutic processes to seek a central research question (CRQ) (developed in Chapter 3).

**“Sort of in your blood”: Inherent musicality survives cultural judgement**

This chapter focuses on the CRQ: *How can everyday musicking be freed from socially evolved constructs that restrict instinctive musical expression?* Drawing on self-perceived non-musicians who feel that they cannot *do* music, the reproduced paper here further analyses intrinsic rhythmic and melodic nuances to confirm their musicality. Evidence introduced here highlights the importance of recognition of each individual’s human musicality.

**Misconceptions underplay Western ways of musicking**

Participant experiences reveal powerful societal assumptions
that affect their potential to engage with intrinsic human musicality. They ‘learn’ that “other people make music”; their everyday musicking is restricted by the talent notion, leaving the gifted people to do music. It becomes apparent that it is crucial to re-
consider unquestioned assumptions and to reflect on words that carry skewed judgemental directives if we are to face down a restrictive tradition that subverts inherent musicality.

**Western prejudice towards intrinsic musicality**

Despite restrictive human musicking, recognition of deep seated prejudices and examples of connective musicking suggest ways to consider alternative practices toward connective human being in time.

**On being musical: Education towards inclusion**

Being judged as lacking potential to be a professional musician distances intrinsically musical beings from everyday musical engagement. It also reduces opportunities for spiritual awareness and connections. Relevant and inclusive education connects and engages and can restore individual and cultural health toward vibrant living.

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<th>Chapter 6</th>
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Appendix 3

Participants’ pertinent observations for this study

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Enjoys group musicking; Hope’s observations support findings from <em>never picked</em> study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Simone ♫</td>
<td>A communicative and sensitive singer from whom an elite music institution took “all the joy out of it” because of its intense focus on technical proficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tanya ♫</td>
<td>[comments after reading Simone’s story in <em>Societal judgement silences singers</em> (in Chapter 3)] “…after uni I felt I couldn't participate anymore…pretty much everything about Simone's story really hits me hard in the guts! I’m very glad that I'm not the only one.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Marg</td>
<td>“For some people, music <em>is</em> innate but it is deeply buried and they need someone to show them”. Marg enjoyed singing in everyday situations until, living in an isolated environment with a partner who did not sing, she stopped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Enjoys listening and singing in everyday life despite early cruel judgement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jamie</td>
<td>After being told to mime at school (she was ten, now is in her ‘twenties’) she still declares that she does not sing where anyone might hear She sings along to recorded music while doing chores or driving her car. She comments that she does “find [her]self singing sometimes to [her]self [without] really intending to”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Accepts societal reality where music is perceived as performance; acknowledges there’s ‘something missing’…appreciates spontaneous sort of music when it happens. She notes that ‘you have to be good at it to go public’, it’s not accepted that just anyone can sing/play. She found it amusing when her daughter recalled being “asked…not to sing ‘just to mime’” when her school choir was to sing in public: she can sing but won’t be a star…at all…takes after her Dad…that’s what I say’. She responded very positively to information that music learning happens in a musical environment; she recognised a gap in her early musical background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dave ♫</td>
<td>Independent thinker who perceives himself to be a musician (although not ‘professional’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>GP</td>
<td>Perceives musical ability as a ‘gift’, one that she does not have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>RM</td>
<td>“As a child I learned that other people do music. It was clear to me and others that I had no ability at all…You have convinced me of inherent musicality.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Julian ♫</td>
<td>Professional musician for whom music is “so much part of what I do”. He has empathy for individuals such as the never picked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>“Music is a primeval response to life. But I feel sad for the little girl me. Would be devastated if my daughters ever feel this way where they feel that they had no right to sing in the school choir but they had snuck in”. Takes great care to ensure her children experience music education (her family moved house to ensure they could attend a school with an inclusive music program).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♫</td>
<td>Musician</td>
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</table>
This PhD study comprises 12 participants; it includes some data from conversational partners from the *never picked* (Ruddock, 2007) study. It is important to note that one participant (Harry) from the 2007 study became a central protagonist of this investigation.

Throughout this research, the term *musician* relates to a human reality which recognises “musicality as a universal endowment” (Nzewi, 2009 p. 77); all individuals who engage in musicking to enhance their everyday living are considered to be *musicians*. This does not infer that they would be professional musicians where the honed skills are developed to ensure singing, playing, conducting, etc are presented in a professional capacity. *Musician* can also refer to those individuals who have developed a professional capacity to earn living alongside musicking as part of everyday living. Thus, musicking includes participation in various forms such as singing (for others or while doing chores, etc), playing instruments, dancing, listening, composing, teaching, music for health (for own well-being or as a professional therapist), publishing, etc.
Appendix 4

Community Readers [CR]

The supervisor/s, examiners, seminar audience, editors and journal readers may all contribute something to the pool of evidence against which claims that the knowledge is new may be tested. So, a thesis written “in secret” and seen only by a supervisor and some examiners is less well supported in its claim to have produced new knowledge than is one opened to broader scrutiny during the conduct of the research. (Haynes, 2006)

As mentioned in the Glossary, the notion of Community reader is adapted from Lincoln’s exploration of “Community as arbiter of quality” (2002, pp. 334-6). To this end, interested readers from the community were invited to criticize, annotate or contribute their personal experiences when reading the papers either being prepared for or published as part of the preparation of this thesis. Wolcott (1990) also notes the value of seeking informed readers, reporting that:

I share my developing manuscripts with informed readers as part of the process of analyzing and writing. Rather than a mass distribution of a manuscript in next-to-last draft, what I have in mind is a continuous process of asking one or more individuals to read the current version. Academic colleagues are usually good for one careful reading at most; there is little point in pressing busy people for more, but no excuse for not asking at all. (p. 132)

Wolcott is correct, while ‘informed’ people are busy, many will agree to a careful reading of at least one paper. The table below presents a brief overview of individuals who read the papers, either prior to or following publication. Their readings offered valuable responses that contributed to the dialectic processes of this research:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Contribution to this project (where cited )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marg: retired nursing sister</td>
<td>As a community reader for the never picked project, Marg accepted an invitation to be a participant for this study. She not only granted two interviews, but also attended a course for [Comments in bold indicate CR reflections that echo understandings developed in this project.]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[(Refer to page 272 for continuation.)]
non-singers so that she could deliver feedback for this research. (Chapters 1, 2 and 5)

Bob Webster*: computer analyst
Bob responded to my 2005 paper (Ruddock & Leong, 2005) with a particular question that was pertinent for this study (see Chapters 3 and 4).

André Lebel*: retired geophysicist
André delivered perceptive editorial comments on the papers in Chapters 3 and 5.

Rhea: arts connoisseur, retired primary school teacher
Rhea commented on the paper in Chapter 5; her self-view reflects the position of many of the self-perceived non-musical participants:

*I think performing anything for an audience is daunting...I think people equate musicality with performance in public, or for an audience of some sort, even if only family or friends, or those who may accidentally overhear music making. Also it is setting yourself up to be judged by whoever hears you doing music. Loads of people don't want to be in that position. There are so many good performers; it is hard to measure up.

[ much has to do with] confidence and the perception of what others may think of you and how you perceive yourself. ...for whatever reason. I always felt I didn't know how to sing! With my hearing problems I wasn't in tune and then felt unable to sing because I wasn’t any good, as I was led to believe by the nuns. Still think I sing like a frog, so don't sing in church, or very rarely (personal communication, 19 February 2012).

Annie: Retired
Annie commented on papers in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. She recognised the connection between experiential musicking and consequent withdrawal from active engagement. She noted that this could be due to:

Music/musicality/performance...

Her comments include: rather than encouraging less able students to perform [where we might be]leading them into a
path of failure...with the experience of snide comments
judgemental looks...instead, perhaps we should include in our
educational curriculum the lessons of acceptance and the
benefits of participation.
I found your thesis brought some strong emotions to the
surface, particularly those relating to music (and art) being an
integral part of the human soul and which should be
experienced in some form by every human on this planet!

Susan de Ruyter*: After reading Ruddock & Leong (2005) and Ruddock (2012),
Journalist and Susan offered the following observations that are particularly
mother of three pertinent to education and to culture considered in this thesis:
Music is essential in the 'early learning' area of schools but
kids are turned away from music as an everyday part of their
educational experience as they grow.
I remember buying my first music tape as a kid and proudly
playing it for an elderly relative, who said it sounded like a
billy goat stomping on a tin. I was hurt by that remark, even
though it wasn't me creating or performing the music. It was a
judgement of my choice, my taste. Your papers mention
western culture as restricting people and denying their innate
musical heritage by promoting the idea that music is only done
by professionals and those with special talent. It's worth
considering another definition of culture. As well as meaning
the ideas and customs of a society, it also means a developed
understanding of the arts. Cultured people are those with good
taste and manners. In both of these definitions, culture leads to
people being judged on their musicality. It seems culture has a
stultifying effect on music.

Liz Nicholls: Liz’s comments on music in the media form Footnote 26 in
grandmother Chapter 8. She forwarded her comments in an email following
her reading of the paper from Chapter Two. Capturing the
cultural influences that subdue (or silence) intrinsic musical
expression as performativity and judgement arrest
communicative being, Liz wrote:

*I was particularly taken with Simone's story (page 9) - could really relate to some parts of it.*

*I believe that one can, as a child, sing instinctively, joyfully with no thought of how it sounds until an adult (or in my case an over proud dad) decides it is necessary to go public and sing for [my bold] every visitor that sets foot inside the house. So begins the awareness of the need to sound "good". Innocence disappears and self judgement begins.*

*What really finished me off, about age 9, was being packed off to sing on the radio - ‘The Willie Weeties Show’ - with about a million other kids. There was a general expectation at home that I would win, which was never going to happen.*

*I can laugh about it now, but I suspect that was the beginning of my near paranoia about singing alone.*

* Real name
Appendix 5

Sonic hug

I call it a sonic hug – and…it’s a good way to give a welcome to someone, if you’ve got a new person into the group, or…a few people…put them in the centre of the circle, then you make a large circle around them…and, the circle begins with the softest sound they can make…something like a hurricane over the horizon, so it’s ‘mmmm’…just a hum. And then, indicate for the mouth to open so it then becomes an open sound. Then you get this great sound like a jet aeroplane about to take off…where the engines are warming up…and then you go to the loudest sound…you project the sound in to the persons in the centre…who are sitting there with their eyes closed…tremulously experiencing this sonic hug…and then when we reach a maximum we allow it to do in reverse…to die away…and then the cyclone disappears over horizon. Then we can get some feedback from the people in the centre. For some people, it’s a very terrifying experience – ‘I thought I was being attacked by natives with spears’ – other people – ‘I thought I was in heaven’ – same experience, same sound…but they experience it differently…then, of course, the next time, they are in the group giving it to someone else…n it’s a really nice thing to do…n I think there is value in the…the vibration…hitting your chest…and the experiencing it in your whole body, not just your ear drums. [Julian’s transcript, 18/11/2010]
Appendix 6

Serious Play

Play is serious in series towards knowing

We can learn “only if the player loses himself in play”
(Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 103)
Appendix 7

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Appendix 8

Misconceptions Underplay Western Ways of Musicking: A Hermeneutic Investigation

Eve E. Ruddock
University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia

This paper draws on a hermeneutic project to reflect on culturally developed notions that distance individuals from their intrinsic musicality. Participant experience offers insight into misconceptions of human musicality in Western communities where unrecognised cultural directives label musical beings as either musical or non-musical. Embedded in language, cultural influences restrict free musicking such that everyday practices inhibit the development of musical skills and dictate life-long inhibition. I argue that to ignore this phenomenon is to perpetuate an unnecessary and harmful reduction of human being.

Keywords: Musicality, enculturation, dialectic insights, hermeneutics, performativity

I don’t sing, play music... Something stops me

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As a species, humans are both biologically and culturally musical (Morrison and Demorest 2009), yet many individuals in Western cultures live with a deep conviction that they are “musically inadequate” (Bodkin-Allen 2009, 256). This perception is widespread despite evolution of human architecture now showing an adaptation for music processing (Norman-Haignere et al. 2015)—a discovery that supports an understanding of the communicative role that music can play (Malloch et al. 2009). For Malloch and Trevarthan (2009), “musicality” epitomises movement back and forth between people to bring connectivity to their separate lives (9) as it plays towards wordless connection. While

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many recognise musicality as being part of our “primordial being” (for example, van der Schyff 2013), two of the protagonists in this paper categorise themselves as being non-musical.

Ever since Blacking (1976) so eloquently brought to light the phenomenon of culturally ‘engineered’ non-musicality, theorists (Small 1998) and researchers (Swain and Bodkin-Allen 2014; Lines 2003) have further explored this ‘unnatural’ aspect of Western culture. Despite the seminal writing of Blacking (1976) and Small (1977/1996; 1987/1998; 1998) and insightful work from professional musicians (Westney 2003; Paton 2011) and neuroscientists (Levitin 2006; Morrison and Demorest 2009), musical ‘disabling’ continues. One experienced music educator went so far as to report: “it is not uncommon for individuals to hold negative perceptions of their own musicality as a result of interaction with members of our [the music teaching] profession” (personal communication).

It is important to challenge the view that individuals are musical only if they have developed performance skills—if they can sing or play an instrument. Such widespread assumptions are not only present in everyday culture (Ruddock 2007) but Gracyk (2004) argues that they are also found in the world of research. He contends that a particular research tool (in this case, a survey) led to a slanted view to infer a binary separation between those who learned a musical instrument and those who did not, leading children to label themselves as “non-musicians” (3). In his article on musical identities, Gracyk (2004) expresses his concern about presuppositions that categorised individuals as musicians or non-musicians depending upon whether they had music lessons or played instruments. Such unfortunate labelling, Gracyk suggests, can lead children to see themselves as being non-musical when they may not have previously viewed themselves in such a way. It is relevant to wonder how it can be that music education researchers might, unintentionally, contribute to everyday dichotomous assumptions where musical beings are labelled as being either musical or non-musical. Music educators, too, have been responsible for leading students to believe that they are not musical (Ruddock 2007).

However, before judging teachers and educational researchers as perpetrators of this phenomenon, it is helpful (once again) to heed the voice of Small (1977/1996). He recognised that members of the teaching profession, like their students, are caught within what Straume (2015) terms a “social-historical” reali-

ty (1468). Thus, prejudice within Western culture itself (Gadamer 1975/2004) acts to distance us from our instinctive musicality (Ruddock 2016)—we fail to notice historically developed misunderstandings of human nature which blind us to inherited dichotomous beliefs that disallow humanning (Nzewi 2013, 4) instinctive action. In this paper, dialectics between participant experience, researcher, and the literature work together to tease out societal directives that undermine a freedom to engage in healthy musicking.

**A Hermeneutic Exploration**

“Hermeneutics,” Ezzy (2002) explains, “is the art and science of interpretation” (24). So, it is through the elusive, never ending “process” (Ezzy 2002, 77) of interpreting qualitative data in the light of current understandings that this study seeks to recognise assumptions that play against inclusive musicking. Together with a cohort of 12 participants comprising both self-perceived musicians and non-musician participants, selected via ‘purposive sampling’ (Punch 1998, 193), I began to further tease out questions raised by the ‘never picked’ participants in my previous study (Ruddock 2007). Although I prepared an Interview Guide to ensure that participant communications could access essential information to enhance meaning (Polkinghorne 2005, 142), research conversations were effectively unstructured as I followed up on participants’ responses to gain insight into nuances that led to deeper reflections of their reported experiences. I wondered about the something in the epigraph above: What could it be, for example, that stops the research participant, RM², from singing or dancing? He would not even contemplate singing ‘Happy Birthday’! With his first detailed email communication following ethical approval, RM offered fresh perceptions into living with an assumed non-musical position.

Drawing from dialectic interactions of three participants and the literature, this paper explores diverse understandings of human musicality. Two of the participants, RM and Mel, responded to an invitation to be part of the 12 cohorts of my project which developed around a central question: How can everyday musicking be freed from socially evolved constructs that restrict instinctive musical expression? The third, Harry, a central protagonist of my ‘never picked’ MA study (Ruddock 2007), became involved with this ‘misconception’ project as a reader of my published papers. Remaining consistent in his views for more than a

decade, Harry is an articulate representative of those who hold the widespread ‘Western’ belief that “music is something people could only do if they happened to be born ‘musical’”. His view accurately reflects Levitin’s summation that, “in our own culture [we have formed] separate classes of music performers and music listeners (Levitin 2006, 6).

As Ezzy (2002) understands, it is in the nature of hermeneutic analysis itself that the interpretative process continues to play back and forth between participants, researcher, and the literature. Furthermore, Eisner (1998) points to the need to adapt research plans in response to questions arising from lived experience (172). In an initial analysis of data in this investigation of self-perceived musician and non-musician participants, it became clear that not only self-perceived non-musicians suffered from the pervasive effects of ill-timed critical judgement, some musician participants were also silenced (Ruddock 2010). Where Westney (2003) describes such experiences as “performance [associated with] public scrutiny and critical judgement” (138) and Vestad (2014) refers to “the everybody-can narrative and the only-the-talented-can narrative” (266), Kafka (1924/2007) leads us to question the dominance of the notion of unique giftedness that can impose non-musicality to reduce vital humanity.

**Mel**

Also questioning this view, participant Mel enriched the understandings developed in this article. Her personal experience had led her to “feel tone deaf and completely unmusical” so she had determined that her daughters’ school should include a comprehensive music curriculum, even when this meant that the family needed to move from their home into a different school catchment area because their original position was near a school that lacked a music program. This social worker and mother of two argued that:

To label individuals as ‘unmusical’ defines people for a lifetime and stops them participating. I LOVE music, I love listening and singing to music (but always by myself!). I have always felt that I am not good at music and that I am unmusical. I do not know why I cannot recall anyone ever telling me that I am not good at music or am particularly tuneless yet for my whole life even as a child I have defined myself as not good at music. I joined choirs at school but always felt I had no right to be there and that I had snuck in. I would always sing very quietly in

case my out of tune voice was detected. I would be devastated if my daughters ever perceived of themselves in this way musically.

**Understandings of human musicality: RM and Harry**

We may wish to go beyond Plato’s (1997) view where “we human beings have been made sensitive to ... rhythm and harmony and can enjoy them” (Laws II 653). Free from the Western domination of talent, performativity and “critical judgement” (Westney 2003, 138), notions that so often determine who will engage with music in the West, Nzewi (2003) speaks from a different perspective. Growing up within the traditions of Nigeria, musiciking was an intrinsic part of human *being*, “a humanizer” (Nzewi 2009, 107). Nzewi demonstrates interconnective, participatory musiciking that enables healthy human living where music, like “breath” (2003, 221) is a living part of human *being*. Such embodied knowing would accord with the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definitions of musicality where the “quality or character of being musical; accomplishment or aptitude in music; musical sensibility” all refer to those myriad aspects associated with the doing of music; these include composing, playing, singing, listening, dancing and all actions associated with music (OED Online 2013). For Nzewi (2002), then, music is more than mere playing and listening; music, for him, “is the science of being, the art of living with health” (paragraph 5). This view is increasingly supported by contemporary neuroscience. Morrison and Demorest (2009), for instance, emphasise the ubiquity of music within cultures and reveal how “cultural constraints on music perception and cognition” are measurable. For many Western individuals, constraints mean life-long separation from a freedom to be musical. A New Zealand study, for example, shows how early childhood teachers from a Western background felt that they could not sing with their students, whereas Maori and Samoan teachers were musically confident (Bodkin-Allen, 2009). Participant RM (part of my hermeneutic study) told how he learned to know that he was not musical:

As a child, I learned that other people do music. It was clear to me and others that I had no ability at all. In the final year at Primary School, we were expected to play recorders as a class. I wiggled my fingers but did not blow, no-one found out. The same applied in communal singing, all that was needed was to open my mouth roughly in concert with the words, no-one knew. More importantly, *no-one heard anything horrid* [researcher italics]!

I remember very little of what I learnt specifically at school, much of school based learning sinks unnoticed into one’s being, but I remember studying Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night Dream* in which are some simple people unschooled in the finer arts. They are called the Rude Mechanicals. Later in life when I had learned the lowly position of Engineers [my profession] in a class ridden society, I chose to refer to myself as a Rude Mechanical as a jibe at educational snobs who assume they are the font of all learning... It is both comical and deadly serious, it masks a fair degree of anger at those who think the Classics are intellectual and Engineering is for the plebs. Although I appreciate music of many diverse kinds, I am fully confident that my ability to make music is at or very near zero. When asked to sing, I never comply, the inhibition built up over a lifetime is far too strong as is my certainty that I will never be able to sing. This does not bother me too much, *other people make music* [researcher italics].

With this final sentence, RM entirely re-captures Harry’s view on this aspect of encultured Western practice. RM and Harry, both self-perceived non-musical individuals, offered unique perspectives from which to explore everyday musicking. On the one hand, there was RM, a retired engineer with a deep interest in history and culture who lives in London; he volunteers in various capacities relating to web design and engages in other projects such as military history. Following his acceptance of my invitation to be part of this research, his contribution to my project proved vital. On the other hand, since his retirement, Harry, an educational philosopher participant, continues to edit and write contributions for philosophical research and educational journals; I particularly appreciated his decision to contribute to the dialectic interchange because his view of musicking represents a way of thinking that continues to significantly diverge from the position I have come to hold.

Except for their mutual appreciation of the work of professional musicians, hermeneutic analyses revealed how Harry and RM represent deeply contrasting views on human musicality. As Gadamer (1975/2004) plays with the importance of “sense” as it implies “direction” (356) in the process towards hermeneutic understanding, so too, during the dialectic interaction with Harry and RM, I experienced many moments of unknowing, moments where my musical sensing and knowing dissipated. Rather than being detrimental to my sense of being musical, however, these experiences have, instead, led to a deep change in my sense of what *being musical* might mean. Like many of the conversational partners of my research, I have undergone a radical change in my understanding of what music-

cality is. For example, RM, particularly influenced by current brain research that indicated our “innate capacity” (Levitin 2006, 27) to learn music, wrote that he had become:

convinced ... of inherent musicality. As one of the ‘never picked’ s, I had considered musical as being good at music, being able to sing or play an instrument, but you have made your case.

These words do not mean that he was persuaded that he might be musical, however, and he made his position clear in his response to the following excerpt from a participant in the ‘never picked’ study:

20-year-old participant:

By about age 8, I knew I was not musical...this knowing was a gradual thing. I cannot say how it happened. I hardly outshone...others in the class when we learned the recorder...whereas I excelled easily in maths (‘never picked’ participant, Ruddock 2007, 108–9).

Upon reading the 20-year-old participant’s words, RM responded:

Carbon copy of my experiences.

The kids from musical families did and were applauded; they had it, that mystical ability to do music. I didn’t or at least thought so.

Am I one of the ‘never picked’? Oh yes, I don’t sew, paint, sculpt, sing, play music, write (much) poetry, act or take part in politics, all excellent things to do. Something stops me. It is this something that lies at the heart of my project.

Seeing beyond the ‘seen’

So integrated with the fabric of everyday being, contradictions within participant experience that revealed unrecognised cultural influences went unnoticed until it was teased into the open via dialectics. As Foucault warns, influences remain beneath consciousness (Foucault 1972, 15) to direct how life can be. In the beginning, it seemed that assumptions revealed in the text, having developed beneath the surface of awareness over time were “of too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis” (Foucault 1972, 24). Instead, they led to hermeneutic wondering where “[t]he being that is concerned with its being presents itself, through its understanding of being, as a means of access to the question of being” (Gadamer 1975/2004, 522–3). Thus, it was through complex and contradictory participant
experience that dialectical interactions toward meaning took place. Together with research data drawn from honest and direct participant contributions, Harry, and the literature, I began to move closer to an understanding of the enigmatic essence of being musical. This process to understanding the phenomenon of culturally imposed non-musicality became clearer when, despite being made aware of findings in contemporary neuroscience that confirmed musicality as an inherent aspect of the human condition, participant Harry maintained a separatist non-musical position. He was aware that research revealed that everyone is capable of being part of their culture’s musicking (Koelsch et al. 2000; Levitin 2006, 27)—the only exceptions being those who are born with a neurological malfunction (Nzewi 2009, 188).

Perceptions of non-musicality remained deeply embedded in some participant belief systems. In Harry’s case, for instance, the belief that individuals are either born musical or they are not stayed secure, despite the clash with increasing evidence which indicates that all humans are inherently musical (van der Schyff 2013). Through his consistent assertions that humans are either musical or non-musical, Harry leaves little doubt that he is not sympathetic with any notion of universal human musicality. His belief confirms Levitin’s (2006) lament where, in Anglo-American cultures, we have learned to “separate classes of music performers and music listeners” (6). In an attempt to make his position clear, Harry devised a list; one which would, in his view, properly clarify what might be meant by the “non-musical classes” (the ‘class’ to which, in his eyes, he belonged). Here, he assumed that some individuals tended to class themselves as “musical’ while others saw themselves as ‘non-musical’” and that they proceeded to live with the consequences of such labelling. Thus, with serious pedagogical intent (despite its humorous twist), Harry delivered a way of seeing my project through a perspective of the “non-musical classes”.

A careful examination of ‘Harry’s List’ offers a keen insight into the self-perceived non-musical mind.

Non-musical classes

1. Cannot distinguish between noise and music
2. Can distinguish but not moved or interested
3. Moved/interested but not willing to make the effort to listen
4. Willing to listen but not willing
4a. Lack technique/instrument

4b. Lack confidence
4c. Unwilling to make effort
4d. Unwilling to inflict unsatisfactory performance on self or others
4e. Do not obtain joy from own performance
4f. Others’ diagnoses (tone deaf, etc) that exclude from public performance
5. Listening as part of life but not perform
5a to 5f
6. Listening as part of life and perform but only as a result of great effort and
with unsatisfying or poor results, i.e., not talented so not musical

You can elaborate on (sharpen) these classes if you see fit in the light of your
deep understanding of music etc.

I assume you judge a person’s life to be flat if they do not engage in music.

4a/f (obviously the scale needs a g) are not mutually exclusive as I expect you
are interested in how f produces b, c, d, e. But a to e could be the result of some-
thing other than f. Clearly, you can also have harmonics where an individual
has more than one of 4a/f at the same time.

Harry’s List offers a view coloured with assumptions of what music is—a self-
perceived non-musical individual might well find their beliefs echoed in this list.
While the first point is not relevant to the discussion because this investiga-
tion does not consider individuals suffering from a neurological disorder, the remain-
ing claims confirm the excluding influence of the notions of critical performance,
judgement, and talent (Ruddock 2012). Bodkin (2004, 16) presents evidence to
confirm Small’s theory (1998) that such cultural assumptions affect many indi-
viduals’ belief in their ability to engage in musicking, leaving many to learn that,
like Harry, they are “non-musical.” These assumptions open the way for the tal-
tented to be the star performers while many too readily take on the role of the
“musically inferior” (Bodkin 2004, 256). Blacking’s (1976) question continues to
challenge our Western way: “Must the majority be made unmusical so that a cho-
sen few may become more musical?” (4).

On reading points 4a/f with Harry’s rich data in mind, it is clear that his view
of music as excellent performance, something developed through hard work that
is not always pleasurable, is far from being a communicative action which en-
hances connective living (Malloch and Trevathan 2009). Harry continued to
perceive music as something performed, something relying upon tal-
ent—something that only some of us have. Again, it was Small (1998) who effec-
tively challenged this notion of music as object (2); his influential revival of the term *musicking* (1987/1998, 50) to indicate the action of engaging in singing, dancing or other musical acts, works toward inclusion. As Nzewi (2012) understands, for instance, Africans’ inherent musicality is developed through everyday cultural practice; individuals are not automatically musically able—humans develop their musicality within cultural practice. This experiential knowing challenges Harry’s perception that being musical “is a thing one is or one isn’t”; further, it was this belief that led Welch (2001) to declare that such “limiting conception of humankind as either musical or non-musical is untenable” (22). Whether *Harry’s List* might provoke or entertain, it does raise an important question: How is it that, despite research confirming human musicality (Peretz 2005) and a close interconnection between music and culture (Morrison and Demorest 2009), a pervasive Western cultural practice continues to underplay intrinsic musicality?

In light of societal behaviours that undermine individuals’ free engagement in musicking (Joyce 2003; West 2009) *Harry’s List* reminds us how important it is to question societal assumptions that discourage healthy, intrinsic human behaviour. In his interviews, Harry showed that his “pragmatic acceptance was linked to a conviction that, with limited funding, it was mandatory to give priority to ‘the important stuff, language, maths, science and social science’ in the school curriculum. [He was] convinced that ‘language learning, maths and getting a job [were] more worthy of effort (given limited resources) than aesthetic activity (including music)” (Ruddock 2007, 145).

To consider Harry’s claim that music is “a side piece to the whole educational business ... just one of the frills ... an add on ... not essential for the younger child’s development” (Ruddock 2007, 104) is to realise how far such thinking is from a wider recognition of universal musicality (Tramo 2001), along with its humanising capacity (Trendwith 2003). As Turino (2008) recognises, the arts are a way of being that can access and express subconscious awareness when communicating with others. Furthermore, Boyce-Tillman (2000) understands that, through our engagement with the arts, we “adults can play ... free to explore [our] own subconscious, and also to make mistakes. They are, therefore, important arenas of self-development” (91). Considering Harry’s conception in the light of such views suggests that, because he lacked an essential experience with musical

arts in his formative cultural development, he did not have an opportunity to learn to properly appreciate the value of the arts. It is no surprise that his experience affects his lack of support for the arts as an essential component of the school curriculum—a reality exacerbated by his witnessing of inappropriate classroom music teaching.

**Performativity v recognition of what is**

It may be that “it is in the performance and only in it ... that we encounter the work itself” (Gadamer 1975/2004, 115). However, connections made available to us when part of a performance, whether as player or audience, can be disrupted when performance turns into performativity when human ‘play’ turns into a critically judged ‘thing’. Gadamer insisted that it is crucial to perceive the essential part the audience plays and that listeners are no mere consumers of the work made by the ‘talented’—they are an integral part of the play where, in and through time, they engage with and become part of an event to connect and gain insights into their life-world (110–25). Yet, human connection is threatened by the widespread notion of performativity. And, as Koopman (2005) theorised, “the dominance of performativity threatens to marginalize music and music education” (119); Small (1998) already understood that untoward focus on the success of a performance could damage “the real musical development of ... students” (212).

Thibeault (2010) offers a poignant example of the mistaken value of excellent performance. It occurred at that time of the year when the music teacher had to present a successful concert for parents and senior education officials. Thibeault abandoned his carefully planned healthy music education program (from which all children benefited through understanding and developing their musical voice) to focus on a single-minded practice for an end of semester concert. Finely honed music education aspirations were sacrificed. The performances were splendid! Yet, it was in that very moment when he was receiving accolades for the wonderful result when Thibeault realised something was wrong. He recognised that such vainglorious attempts to look and sound good actually denied young students an opportunity to gain a broad musical understanding and to enjoy their experience. He recognised that, despite the connection between a good musical education

and an enjoyable performance, “the links between concerts and education are often tenuous” (Thibeault 2010, 27).

Even a minimal music education, however, can have negative effects: during her limited musical education in Scotland, participant Mel had ‘learned’ to feel “unmusical”. Her experience left her determined that such a situation would not happen for her children. When reading several of my published papers, she recognised her own story and agreed to become a participant in my study. During this process, she came to believe that she was musical, reporting that: “I would now describe myself as someone who is musical but I have allowed society to make me perceive myself as unmusical.” Indeed, it was her passionate defence of instinctive musicality that led her to oppose Harry’s annotations on one of my published papers in an online interaction—Harry noted prejudice in my text. His accusation revealed a “tension between the text” (Gadamer 1975/2004, 305) and my developing hermeneutic perception when he interpreted my meaning through his particular Western tinged lens to reveal a previously unrecognised worldview. In my paper (2012), I had asked: “How is it, then, that within our educational and social institutions we continue to condone a situation where musical beings ‘learn’ to restrain their intrinsic musicality? Why might they feel the need to accept a role as consumers of others’ musicking?” (219) Harry underlined my final phrase and annotated: “Now you are being disparaging and revealing your deep prejudice instead of rejoicing at their participation as essential members of the musical community.”

Deep prejudice? Wondering about this accusation, I re-examined interview and annotation texts. Further interpretation was required. It was important to tease out Harry’s references to “essential members of the musical community” together with his belief that being “musical...was a thing one is or one isn’t.” Regarding his young grandchildren’s musicality, for instance, he had commented:

I wouldn’t think of them as ‘mathematical’ or ‘musical’ etc., but if [they] did something which showed that they were talented or appreciative—they mean two different things—then I would say, ‘yes, [they are] ‘mathematically’ talented or appreciative or ‘musically’ talented or appreciative ... to be ‘musical’ could be ‘appreciative’ or ‘talented’ (reported in Ruddock 2007, 126).

Harry’s world is one shared by many in Western culture. Those judged to be musical are split into two major groups: the talented — the singers and players, and

the *appreciative* — those who understand, enjoy listening and/or collecting music. Further, some individuals were perceived as being musical because of their superior knowledge about music; Harry’s view edged toward this conception. Davidson (1994) understands the negative effects of such separatist notions where the domination of the “talent account” (Howe et al. 1998) “isolates later development from early experience. The continuity of growth is cut off. Early forms of musical knowing are ignored in favor of the formal, articulated knowledge of the expert” (Davidson 1994, 102). Davidson’s (1994) research indicates that this predominance of the importance of talent leaves individuals with a skewed view of the vibrant reality of music in their everyday lives. He understands that such limitations of human expression are an outcome of educators’ and musicians’ limited perceptions of music awareness.

Harry’s challenge, then, raises many issues. In accusing me of prejudice, he subtly uncovered his self-perceived position, which, as mentioned above, he shares with many people in our society. From his viewpoint, Harry did not heed references in my work that supported inherent musicality; he insisted that my argument required individuals to demonstrate developed ability to sing or play if they were to be considered ‘musical’. His following comments further clarified his position:

> I think conceptual clarity is useful. Indicating terms to designate the talented, the background range of musicness and the totally absent (but still human) would help. Your definition of ‘unmusical’, ‘not musical’ will need to make clear how some attitudes, values, personality characteristics, whatever, lead a person to choose not to do what you value for reasons of your own.

> I cannot see how anyone could learn an instrument without considerable practice well above and beyond what is enjoyable in itself. Constant [playing of] scales IS NOT INHERENT or ENJOYABLE [Harry’s capitals].

This final comment incensed one community reader who wrote: “Harry seems to equate being musical with the ability to perform. Practising to be beyond enjoyable! How does he think musical people become proficient? AND some people ... actually enjoy scales!”

In revisiting early conversations with Harry, I further recognised their potential to lead to deeper insights into how we speak about human musical nature.

Harry  But lots of people say ... would say ‘you’re not physical or you’re not mechanical not mathematical or not musical...

Eve  So you see it in the same sense?
Harry  Yes ... not naturally inclined that way or whatever...
Eve  But not denying that it’s an intrinsic part ... an integral part still of their lives [i.e. being musical] ... like it is for you...?
Harry  Oh, I’m musical in other senses. But that’s not the way in which that sort of use of that term is focussed.

These comments complement email communications a decade later in which, attempting to tease out this notion of being ‘musical in other senses’, Harry suggested that ‘[t]he focus could then shift from how to do to how we may enjoy’. Despite being defensive when he perceived (incorrectly from my perspective) that I had underestimated the importance of his music listening, he failed to consistently recognise the ‘essential’ part that he played in his own sensual experiencing. He steadfastly maintained a separatist view regarding music; he knew that he could not do music. He held on to this position despite the fact that he enjoyed listening to his favourite recordings and that his carefully chosen listening demonstrated that he was an integral part of the musical community. As a discerning listener, he was not merely a “receiver of” music (his original claim), but was a critical part of the whole, completing the part played by the musicians (de Haan 1998).

Gadamer (1975/2004) also understands how players play their part so that the whole can be experienced (108) and Westney (2003) offers an example of such connective experiencing. During a piano recital, he sensed “the collective awareness, the attentive mind of the audience” (148) wherein he experienced a palpable link between himself and the listeners as they came together as a musicking community. This mutually connective example highlights the separatist aspect of Harry’s “performer v receiver” view which contradicts his experience that “[t]he response of the spectator also feeds back into the performance so it is not a one-way relation.” In response to my words noting participants feeling “that they have no ‘licence’ to do music and that they are not part of the human musical community” (Ruddock 2012, 207), Harry noted that he aligned “with the former but not the latter.” I wondered: had he not questioned how his teenage attempt to learn the trumpet was undermined by his tutor’s lack of insight and skill? Had he not considered effects of the lack of musical environmental learning in his child-

hood, where his only musical ‘education’ was to sing along to the ABC’s weekly broadcast to schools on the radio?

**Mel and Harry**

Mel strongly disagreed with the stance taken by Harry; her opposition triggered an interchange that delivered an important insight on musicking. Harry perceived music as a production by the talented wherein non-musicians, as ‘spectators’, are ‘receivers of’ the music whereas Mel understood music and the doing of music to be instinctive aspects of being human. She knew that humming along to others’ musicking or “when you sing inside and yet make no noise” placed a person in the role of musicker. In Harry’s view, his separatist notion perceived the musician and the spectator playing the parts of performer and listener, while Mel accepted that humans are being musical as they become involved in a musical event. In pedagogical mode, as part of our dialogues, Harry considers these positions:

> Spectators are no ‘mere’ item. To be a spectator (a form of receiver) is to be wired for sound in a particular way that produces a form of satisfaction in the spectator. Some of that wiring is (according to you) hard and some of it is learned. The response of the spectator also feeds back into the performance so it is not a one-way relation. So, the ‘separatist view’ accepts the other view on its own level but its focus is on the macro-role of the individual (as performer or spectator)—both are musical but the spectator is a non-musician and may be unmusical. I suspect that the issue here is one of differing ‘levels of description’ as with ‘You are just a blob of water with some other chemical reactions tossed in’ or ‘You are a sensitive, talented musician destined to make much of the world happy’.

Could his reading of philosophy and awareness of tradition, be influencing Harry’s response? A Western traditional view of musicality, with its roots coming from the time when the Romans adopted Greek thinking, places an emphasis on excellence; persons with good taste show proper judgement and so would play or sing only if their playing were superior. Tellingly, a participant of a study exploring societal influences affecting a freedom to sing (Whidden, in Ruddock 2012) believed that “Our culture keeps everyone in check” (208). Harry might agree. He noted that: “to sing, i.e. to be musical is to perform”; for a non-musical person like him, it would not be in good taste to sing.

Unlike Harry who equated being musical with excellent performance, Mel believed that everyone has music in them. Despite this, however, she had often found herself overwhelmed with self-perceptions that denied this fundamental human attribute:

An ‘unmusical person’ in my opinion doesn’t exist. However, discriminatory actions leave some individuals feeling as though they are tone deaf. Singing is where music stems from – you can hear yourself sing inside and yet make no noise. My children and I enjoy singing together. Individuals are not encouraged if [they] don’t excel or sound in tune. Music is treated differently from other subjects.

I feel sad for the little girl me—shut away from doing music and felt I had no right to sing.

Her conception of herself as an unmusical person had changed during the time of her involvement with this investigation and through her nurturing of her children. She had developed an ability to engage in communicative musicking; she valued feeling free to be musical—whether listening alone or singing in the car with the children. Her more inclusive understanding of musicking contrasted with that of Harry; she no longer separated performance from participation but recognised the connection—one that invited communication. Through her awareness of how musical skills are learned, Mel understood the misconceptions (including negative self-judgement) experienced when individuals did not have access to developmental music learning. As she said, she “would be devastated if [her] daughters ever perceived of themselves in this way musically”.

**Guilty as charged!**

In my practice of sending completed papers to interested dialectic partners, I was initially surprised at Harry’s accusation of my bias in favour of skilled singers and instrumentalists. A music philosopher, upon reading Harry’s criticism, assured me that the paper was not biased in favour of performers. However, when I returned to the text (Ruddock 2008) to seek evidence of the prejudice mentioned above, an even greater surprise occurred. Without the ameliorating surrounding sentences, Harry was right! Especially if the individual were sensitive to feeling excluded, a discerning reader could properly interpret the sections to read that non-performers might not be considered as ‘musical’. Without the broader impli-

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cations carried by the intervening text, Harry had correctly identified (uninten-
tional) bias.

Language can be suggestive in “subtle and insidious” (Wierzbicka 2011, 43)
ways; we are shaped by our language. Indeed, we can apply Wierzbicka’s (2011)
questioning of English usage to Harry’s reading of my text. If we appreciate music
as an intrinsic aspect of our humanity, then we understand that all humans are
musical, rare exceptions being only those who suffer from neurological abnor-
malities. If Harry were to read my text with this knowing, he would not need to
accuse me of ‘being disparaging and revealing deep prejudice’. But—Harry be-
lieves that individuals are either musical (i.e. they can play or sing to a particular
standard) or they are not. Reading my text from his perspective means that non-
singers/players are not musical. His accusation raises an important question re-
garding the reified state of ‘music’ in our everyday world.

In search of the something

How can we better recognise the something that arrests human musicking?
While evidence from neuroscience research now confirms the instinctive nature
of human musicality (Collins 2013) and qualitative research demonstrates it
(Ruddock 2012), researchers in the area of musicking do not have to look far to
find those who label themselves as non-musical. Although RM and Harry both
listen to and respond to particular music, for instance, in their Western culture
they define themselves as being non-musical. Both purposively select and enjoy
favoured music; yet, succumbing to societal pressures where “musical barriers
that are inherited in Western societies by the time children reach ‘the age of rea-
son’” (Higgins and Shehan Campbell 2010, 1), they do not feel free to
acknowledge their inherent musicality. Despite the “musical barriers,” their sto-
ries show how their musical selves reach out to connect with music in a way that
enhances their lives and tends their emotional needs. Not only does their percep-
tive listening to music reveal the palpable participatory nature of their musicking,
but also their willingness to contribute generous time and thought to my project.
In her work to expose and eliminate barriers to musicking, West (2009) captured
her participants’ predicament to reveal how our Western culture suffers a “psy-
chosocial” (215) void. Her concern that singing and playing are necessarily re-
stricted to “gifted” individuals while the rest suffer a “Selective mutism for sing-

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ing” leads her to argue that such societal dysfunctions in singing and music education are reflective of “a general social dysfunction” (215). Through direct interaction with members of the community, her on-going “Outreach Program” (West 2004) offers a way to free people from hidden restrictions that circumvent vibrant music involvement.

RM would qualify for all categories of West’s Selective Mutism for Singing (2009); undoubtedly his home and school environments contributed to his view. Yet, much of that mysterious something that led to RM’s deep inner knowing related to still unexplained but powerful “dynamic culture-biology interactions” (Chiao 2009b, vii). I posit that Thibeault’s (2010) mid-flight recognition of dangers inherent in the polished performance, with its expectations of high standards of presentation, brings us closer to understanding this something. The something, perhaps, considered in Straume’s (2015) paper on the philosopher Castoriadis where she considers how important it is to emphasise that human beings fail to flourish in a world of reductionist thinking/being (1474). Like Castoriadis (in Straume 2015, 1474), Thibeault (2015) demonstrates the value of imagining. He drew on his teaching experience to expose a tension between music education practice that favoured the production of a polished product and an inclusive music education to show how “[p]articipatory music, built on different values, suggests a viable alternative—music education designed for all” (Thibeault 2015, 59). In his alternative view, no-one would ‘learn’ that they were non-musical.

Unfortunately, RM’s lived experience supports Thibeault’s suspicion of a ‘performance-based curriculum’ (2010, 27) where only some students shine—at the expense of others’ exclusion. In RM’s words:

Of all the experiences of my past 60 years, why do I remember so very clearly faking it during a recorder concert at primary school? Whilst the others blew for all they were worth, I merely winked my fingers on the recorder without blowing in the full knowledge that I could not move my fingers in concert with my desires. It was a key moment in my non-musical development [emphasis added].

Thibeault (2010, 2015) recognised that the widespread focus on ‘high stakes’ performances could limit potential musical learning opportunities for students which, in worst case scenarios (such as those experienced by many participants in my research), lead individuals to know that they are not musical.

For many readers, *Harry’s List* might appear to provide a logical and convincing conception of human musicality. However, I argue here that the assumptions beneath his ‘rational’ list reflect a flawed understanding of what it means to be musical. This list has no acknowledgement of the “implicit musical ability of the human brain” (Koelsch et al. 2000, 539), nor a perception that:

All of us have the innate capacity to learn the linguistic and musical distinctions of whatever culture we are born into, and experience with the music of the culture that shapes our neural pathways so that we ultimately internalize a set of rules common to that musical tradition (Levitin 2006, 27).

Harry fails to recognize societal pressures that can lead individuals to restrict their musical learning and to succumb to that *something* that distances them from active engagement which could enable the development of musical abilities. Interdisciplinary work (Chiao 2009a) now reveals how the roots of culture lie in neurological processes of our brains which, in turn, are affected by developed cultural practices as in a feedback loop. Harry’s ‘Non-musical classes’ may thus be seen to reflect an *imposed social construction*. I argue that this conception of music, clearly defended by Harry, is caught up in an elitist perspective, arguably inherited from Greek origins (Straume 2015, 1468), that obfuscates holistic awareness; it reifies music as a form of specialised behaviour, fully accessible only to the initiated. I posit that this view, cleverly caught by an individual finely attuned to expectations imposed by his tradition, fails to appreciate the vital connectivity offered by music in its many and varied forms.

Harry’s exposé of music as something that *talented* individuals do for the *non-talented* to appreciate is important. On the one hand, this reified and separatist view reflects our restricted Western conviction of music as a performance for critical judgement, rather than properly portraying communicative, connective, human action. It too readily perpetuates a class system where elitism and pride exclude many people from developing their musical voice. A connective musical experience, on the other hand, is one where music happens for both listeners and performers as part of a musical event; one where *play* connects. The former, a performance *for* the consumer, creates a limited avenue for the development of the human spirit; whereas the latter, a performance *with* others as audience, dancers, singers, etc, helps to form community of spirit and to enhance healthy human expression. We can actively ‘participate’ by listening (Gadamer

2004, 108; de Haan 1998); we become part of the musicking as, together with the
musicians, we experience the music that brings us to a deeper understanding of
ourselves and of our world. Thus, the players play music so that the whole be-
comes an experience for all who engage in the musicking.

In my attempt to understand this puzzle where cultural influences affect eve-
ryday human musicking, hermeneutic approaches continue to refine the essence
of what it means to be free to be musical, free to respond to the inherent part of
our nature that has existed and has been developed since primordial human be-
ginnings. So often, it is because of the participants’ lack of freedom to respond to
and develop their musicality that their contributions reveal obstructive societal
influences. To imagine musicking not constructed as “a thing” (Small 1998, 2) but
as an evolved part of humanity could divert that something that gets between us
and our intrinsic musicality. The reified Western view, clearly recognised by
Small (1998, 2), leads us to separate out inherent, communicative musicking in
favour of performance abilities. Doing this research has made it clear that, de-
spite recent understandings that confirm how musical abilities develop within a
musical community, we too often remove a nurturing environment and proceed
to make the irrational claim that an individual is either musical or not. To insist
that music is something made by expert musicians is to fail to acknowledge the
crucial part that musicking plays in our everyday lives as we respond and connect
through sound, rhythm, and movement. Participant experience suggests that
recognition of human musicality per se is what matters and that the splitting of
individuals into musical or non-musical is constricting and divisive.

About the Author

Eve Ruddock taught music at schools in several States of Australia before special-
ising in private studio teaching. Questions about Western music practice led her
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**Notes**

1 *Never picked*: This term is taken from words of a participant in my MA study: *The Ballad of the never picked* (Ruddock 2007). It refers to those who feel that they are not musical and would never be chosen to sing, dance or play.

2 Pseudonyms are used for the participants in this paper; RM will tell how his name came to be.

RM was not part of the ‘never picked’ (Ruddock 2007) cohort. He refers to the fact that he identifies with their non-musical position.

De Haan recognises that it is important to “address the issue of listening as an essential and integral part of the music-making process” (238).

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