

Towards the Inclusion of Group Music-Making in Irish Second-Level Classrooms

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Music-Making in Irish Second-Level
Classrooms

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Abstract

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Towards the Inclusion of Group Music-Making in Irish Second-Level Classrooms

The status and role of group music performance in Irish secondary schools presents a scenario with contradictory trends. While group music-making ranks as an educationally and socially enriching activity, evidence suggests that in this context, it occurs more often outside rather than inside music classrooms. This study examines the inclusion of such pursuits relating to the activities of composition, listening and performance as outlined in the Irish Leaving Certificate examination syllabus.

A two-part research design comprises focus group meetings with practising music teachers followed by action research in Irish second-level schools. Initial findings from the group discussions inform the planning of music lessons involving group performances designed by the researcher and teacher participants. A series of tri-partite and cyclical lesson plans begins with the exploration of musical ideas through group music-making. These ideas are performed while students listen, formulate and offer critical response to the group performances of their peers.

Emergent findings from the action research are interpreted through Wenger's theories of learning, Lerman's theory of critical response, Csikszentmihalyi's conceptions of 'flow' and enjoyment, and Barthes' concept of 'jouissance'.

The first set of findings reveals the flexibility of classroom group music-making as a learning pursuit, outlining its multifaceted contribution to the integration of performing, listening and composing activities. The second set of findings demonstrates how group performing stimulates developments in musicianship and social skills, alongside new classroom

management strategies. The third set focuses on experiences of 'jouissance' and 'flow' in group performance, revealing the potential of such activities to engender heightened and memorable awareness during optimal instances of musical concentration.

The thesis concludes by way of a critique of current music syllabi in the light of the research findings and highlights the potential benefits of adapting emergent research pedagogies to future studies as well as to music curriculum development.

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Chapter One: Situating the Research

1.1 Background and Rationale

This research centres on an investigation of group music-making in Irish second-level schools. Its aim is to study the integration of group performing activities into classroom practice. In particular, it explores the potential of these pursuits to enhance the learning experiences of second-level music students and teachers and also to influence their engagement with both curricular music-making and music practice beyond the classroom.

A rationale for the choice of research topic emerges from three areas. The first of these concerns the practice of group performance within Irish second-level music education in general and it relates in particular to the inclusion of group music-making in the three central strands of the Leaving Certificate music syllabus¹ namely performing, listening and composing. The second relates to the author's personal experience as a second-level music teacher gathered from a career spanning over twenty years and involving both anecdotal information collected from teaching colleagues and experience as an examiner for Leaving Certificate Music practical examinations.

The third context includes accounts from young adult musicians who participated in an earlier MA research dissertation undertaken by the author (Berrill, 2008). In that study which investigated the pathways of young musicians, it was found that experiences of group music-making, particularly those pertaining to second-level group performance, were a formative influence on their continued engagement with music.

¹ The Leaving Certificate Music syllabus (1996) constitutes three core activities: performing, listening and composing, each worth 25% of the total marks. Ordinary level students choose one of these activities to represent 50%. Higher level candidates undertake an additional study (a Higher level elective) for the remaining 25% of the marks.

1.2 Description of Research Problem

A brief examination of the state of music as an academic subject in Irish secondary education reveals that it seems to be in a comparatively healthy state. Statistics from the State Examinations Commission demonstrate that in the past 12 years, the number of candidates sitting the Higher Level Leaving Certificate music exam (the culmination of assessment in music at second-level) has almost doubled, growing from 2,995 in 2001 to 5,824 in 2013 (The State Examinations Commission Statistics accessed 14/03/14). Within this examination system the performance elective² worth half the overall marks, is currently the most overwhelmingly popular option, chosen by over 99% of the exam candidates.³

The Irish Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus dating from 1996 outlines strong support for participatory performance in many contexts. Among the stated aims is the intention, 'to encourage active involvement in performing, composing and listening to music' and also to 'develop an informed interest in music and the enjoyment of music-making', (An Roinn Oideachais, 1996, p.1).

Additional objectives include the fostering of attitudes which 'value through participation, musical creativity and the social sharing of music' and which 'provide an opportunity for regular practice and development of individual and group performing and composing skills' (ibid. p.2).

Given these objectives and aims, it is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that the activity of group music-making with all its attendant creative and social contexts might occupy a fairly prominent position within Irish second-level classroom pedagogy. With regard to this situation however, current anecdotal evidence suggests some contradictory trends.

² The performance elective constitutes a combination of core performance and elective performance, each worth 25% of the total marks.

³ Information released from Marian Mullen, Chief Examiner, Leaving Certificate Music State Examinations Commission, 15/04/14.

First, although there *are* numerous presentations of group music-making at second-level practical examinations, many of these ensembles often rehearse and perform outside the classroom and some exist as a culture completely apart from the school environment. Student acts such as the céili band⁴ the rock group or the string quartet may never have performed or been integrated in any pedagogical manner into classroom group music-making activities. In this context, the ideals of 'participation, social sharing and musical creativity' in the classroom as promoted in the syllabus seem to relate more to out-of-class or extra-curricular activities than to those in the classroom.

Second, many records have been made of the significant, memorable, authentic, educational and life-affirming moments that do occur in the group music-making field. The potential value of this work, (for example an evening rehearsal for the school musical or a lunch-time guitar club), has been brought to the fore in the writings of numerous music education scholars among them, Swanwick (1999), Jaffurs (2004) and Pitts (2005). However since these activities often involve additional commitment at the edge of the school day, outside of normal timetabled practice, not all music students are afforded the opportunity to avail of them within the Irish second-level music education system. In other words, because these valuable educational practices occur as they do outside of the mainstream, some music students miss out.

Third, in an earlier research study undertaken by the author and concerning an examination of the musical pathways of fourteen young adult musicians in East Galway (Berrill, 2008), all but one of the respondents in the investigation alluded to 'highly charged moments' linked to the sphere of group music-making (Woods, 1993, p.356). At the time of that study (five to

⁴ Céili band: a group of musicians playing Irish traditional music in which the melodic instruments (including fiddle, accordion, wooden flute, banjo, tin whistle and concertina), play in unison and are often accompanied by piano and drums.

ten years after their related second-level experiences), all these young adults were enjoying continued engagement in a variety of musical practices at both professional and amateur levels.⁵ They acknowledged that group music-making had been a channel to academic success and moreover, it seemed that group performance had been in some measure a 'critical event' (ibid.), with 'enormous consequences for their personal change' (Sikes *et al.*, 1985, p.230). In addition it constituted a conduit to the musical 'life well lived' (Regelski, 2006, p.2), which they continued to enjoy.

To summarise, group music-making can enrich the experience of second-level music students and it can illuminate engagement in both curricular and extra-curricular contexts. In particular cases it can also lead to a life-long engagement with music and music performance. However, although performance is an intrinsic component of the Leaving Certificate syllabus, group performing activities often occur more frequently *outside* the classroom than they do *inside* the classroom.

At this point, an outline of the framework of the Irish Leaving Certificate music syllabus will demonstrate the organisation of the three essential activities and the related assessment systems. This framework will be revisited in the critique of the syllabus in Chapter Ten, (p. 267).

1.3 The Irish Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus

The Leaving Certificate General Programme

The all-embracing nature of the second-level educational experience and its position in the wider continuum of education in and for life is well charted in the statement of general principles outlined in all Irish Leaving Certificate

⁵ Some examples of these young adults' continued engagement with music include involvement in MA degrees in performance (viola and recorder), lead singing and drumming with two internationally known Irish folk bands, song writing - with recent chart success, a semi-professional performance as an Irish traditional musician and teaching at both primary and secondary levels.

programmes (An Roinn Oideachais, 1996, p. i). Aims citing ‘the development of all aspects of the individual’, from aesthetic to intellectual, in all situations, home, work, community and leisure, as well as school, emphasise the importance of the preparation of students for future requirements in life beyond the school. There is also focus on the balance between personal, social, vocational and further education elements as well as the importance of ‘self-directed learning, independent thought, critical thinking, self reliance initiative and enterprise’ (ibid.). These overarching values reflect a holistic approach to senior cycle students’ education and they are mirrored in the music syllabus rationale, aims and objectives sections. To a large extent they also resonate with the outcomes of this research. For example if the development of all aspects of the individual is to be considered and there is focus on self-directed learning and independent thought, then learning pathways will always need to be flexible. If a balance between the personal and the social is to be achieved, then the development of the young individual is an all-important matter, whatever the subject.

The Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus

Echoing the above statements, the opening General Aims section in the Music Syllabus begins with a depiction of music as a ‘worthwhile accomplishment; an education for life’ (p.1ibid). Mention of the importance of music ‘for its own sake’ moves to the inclusivity of ‘socially shared musical activities’ and links to ‘personality, skills and co-operative effort’ (ibid). These aims resonate with evocative statements by education scholars such as Wenger who outlines ‘the importance of lived-in authenticity’ and the ‘life-giving power of mutuality’ (1999, pp. 276-277) and Dewey who states, ‘knowledge is no longer an immobile solid; it has been liquefied. It is actively moving in all the currents of society itself’ (1974 /1899, p.308).

The encouragement of musical creativity through ‘active involvement in performing, composing and listening to music’ alongside emphasis on the cultivation of ‘an informed interest in music’ (An Roinn Oideachais, p.1) can be connected to the combined development of literacy and musical skills. While these pursuits link particularly to the critical

response activity in the action research sessions, there is also ample evidence of an educative vision similar to that of Regelski which extends beyond the school through 'critical and imaginative faculties of music-making' aiming to reach 'the levels of functionality that allow and promote life-long musicking' (ibid., 2006.p.4).

The Leaving Certificate: Objectives and Attitudes

Within the objectives section of the Leaving Certificate Music syllabus, (p.2) there is clear division of the learning process into knowledge, understanding and skills. Links to the three core activities are continually highlighted, for example knowledge that enables students to practice listening and composing with 'greater proficiency and interest' (ibid.). The concept of inclusivity recurs and relates here to the 'articulation of perceptions in a wide variety of styles and genres' (ibid.), as well as to regular opportunities for the development of both individual and group performing. All these objectives resonate with the general inclusivity inherent in the action research lesson plans and the multifaceted musical and social ambience within the all of the group music-making activities.

This is a section of the syllabus where the ideals are most comprehensively stated, where phrases like 'to value through participation musical creativity the social sharing of music' and 'to encourage the enjoyment of music' (ibid.), articulate clearly the potential for dynamic experience in the music classroom. This educational approach, which also includes 'tolerance for the artistic views of all', builds on broad specifications that are mirrored in the Northern Irish CCEA syllabus (CCEA, 2007, p. 3-4) and it is also adumbrates key curriculum concerns in the English syllabus (AQA 2012, p. 18), and the Welsh WJEC syllabus (2012, p. 3).

Returning to the Irish syllabus, the discussion now moves to the design of the course and the manner of its implementation in the classroom. In this respect, the Irish Leaving Certificate music examination stipulations are accommodating and valuing of all manner of musical genres, performing skills and culturally diverse approaches. There are many similarities with the

Northern Irish, English, Welsh GCSE, and Scottish Higher counterparts. While the Irish syllabus states that its course objectives can be realized in 'two years of classroom based study following on from the Junior Certificate course of study' (ibid. p.3), the Northern Irish CCEA Syllabus (2007, p.4) has more particular specifications and stipulates that prospective students should 'possess some skill in vocal or instrumental performance as well as having some understanding of basic harmonic progressions and staff notation'. These pre-requisites presume prior development of vocal, instrumental, harmony and literacy skills, which will be further advanced in subsequent performing listening and free composition activities.

The Leaving Certificate Syllabus Structure

The basic structure of the Irish syllabus involves three core pursuits entitled 'essential activities'. These constitute performing, listening and composition and Tables 1.1 and 1.2 offer a condensed version of their inclusion in the examination framework that will now be considered. The syllabus is offered at two levels Ordinary and Higher. The Higher level includes the Ordinary level requirements and specifies a 'greater depth of knowledge, understanding and skill'. (An Roinn Oideachais, pp. 3-4). For Ordinary Level music there are three activities and the student chooses one of these to represent 50% of the total marks.

Table 1.1: The Ordinary Level Syllabus

Performing	Composing	Listening
25 %	25%	25%
or	or	or
50%	50%	50%

Higher level students undertake additional work in one of the three activities (a Higher level elective) for the remaining 25% of the marks.

Table 1.2: The Higher Level Syllabus

Performing 25 %	Composing 25%	Listening 25%	Higher level elective 25%
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Included in Table 1.3 are further details relating to the nature of the Higher Level Electives. As all the tables outline, both Ordinary and Higher levels provide the opportunity to gain 'up to 50 % of the total marks in the musical activity that best suits the students' talent' (ibid. p. 4).

Table 1.3: The Higher Level Syllabus: Elective Options

Performing Elective Additional 25%: Longer Performance; Further expansion of the essential performing activity (p.7)	Composing Elective Additional 25%: Portfolio Selection of original work (p.9)	Listening Elective Additional 25%: Extra Study of Special Topic chosen by the candidate (p.12)
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1.4 The Research Question: Aims and Objectives

While it is to be expected that group music-making might feature in the performance component of the Leaving Certificate syllabus, this study investigates the incorporation of group music-making as a pedagogical tool of academic significance in the remaining two components also. Consequently, the question at the core of the research examines the extent to which practice in Irish second-level music classrooms can be enhanced by the integration of group music-making into all core activities within the music syllabus.

From this main question two sub-questions emerge. The first is an enquiry relating to the extent and the nature of the integration of group

music-making in current Irish second-level classroom practice. The second examines the extent to which group performance can be directly integrated into certificate examination music pedagogy.

The aims of the research are: firstly, to explore the extent of group music-making in Irish second-level schools through music teachers' accounts of this pursuit and secondly, to develop models and exemplars of classroom group music-making within the structures of existing Irish music examination curricula.

The central objective stemming from these aims is the strengthening of the status of group music-making as a pedagogical tool which possesses the potential to illuminate musical understanding in *all* core components of the second-level music syllabus. In connection with this principal objective, it is envisaged that authentic experience with practical and theoretical musicianship can encourage music students to forge connections with music-making in the wider spectrum of their life's experience. In addition, experience in this context can also enable students to make more informed decisions regarding their options in the choice of the elective component within the Leaving Certificate syllabus.

Stemming from these objectives, the research methodology includes two main proposals. The first concerns collaboration with representative groups of participating music teachers who would assist the investigation into current practice involving classroom group music-making. The second involves the subsequent design of a relevant and enlivening series of group music-making classroom activities to be implemented in the music classes and it also entails the collation of all findings generated in both sections of the study, with a view to further incorporation in second-level music lessons.

1.5 Two-Fold Research Design

Since the research plan focused on an examination of the inclusion of group music-making into all components of the Irish second-level music

curriculum, a comprehensive knowledge of current practice in this context was considered to be of paramount importance. In order to gather the requisite information from practising teachers, a series of group discussions was organised. In these focus group meetings, the discourse centred on the activity of group-music making in both curricular and extra-curricular contexts and involved the experiences of both teachers and students.

With the data thus generated, the teachers and the researcher collaborated in the planning of new lesson models involving group music-making activities. In order to gather information on the pedagogical value of these group-performing pursuits, the participatory process known as action research was implemented in a selection of twelve second-level classrooms located throughout Ireland.

To reiterate, there were two equal and inter-related parts to the research design and two distinct yet related periods of data gathering and analysis. The first phase, the focus group investigation, involved group discussions with practising second-level music teachers. A total of 28 participating teachers took part in three separate discussion groups. Data generated from these three meetings subsequently informed the second component of the study, the action research. This phase of the study was concerned with the design of a series of music lessons, which were then implemented in twelve classrooms in various locations, countrywide. Permission was given from each of the school authorities to conduct an action research session for one double class, that is, for a period lasting approximately one hour. Information emerging from these action research activities was then analysed and collated with material from the earlier focus group study. Apart from some quantitative data gathering via musical profiles of the teachers involved in the Focus Group discussions, all other analytical approaches in this research were qualitative, centering on the transcriptions of both audio and video tapes, the field notes and the pre and post-session written feedback from both teachers and students.

1.6 Parameters of the Research Study

The research was conducted within the following limitations:

First, a total of 28 teachers were involved in the focus group discussions and though every effort was made to include as representative a selection as possible in terms of professional experience, age and geographical location, the sample size is too small to produce generalizable findings. Similarly, in the action research, the school locations and the class sizes were chosen to represent as geographically and educationally varied a selection as possible. However the researcher made one visit only to each school and the amount of time allocated to each music-making session was approximately one hour.

Second, this study covers one aspect of the second-level curriculum only, group music-making. Though it advocates that this group performing pursuit be integrated across the existing curricular system, there are other essential components of the music course (for example the study of Irish music or the historical background and analysis of prescribed works) which are beyond the scope of this research.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, the research is not a review study of the curriculum. It is conducted in the context of the Leaving Certificate examination constraints and though trajectories moving outside this domain are discussed in the action research analysis and the critique of the syllabus (see Chapter Ten), the research is designed to consider and promote creative pedagogies within existing (though sometimes restrictive) frameworks.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

The subject of ethics in the field of music education is wide-ranging and it pervaded this study particularly at the stage of access and acceptability (see Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005, p.56). The research design was two-fold, comprising two research methods and two different sets of participants, so

ethical considerations such as confidentiality, analysis and dissemination of findings, openness, impartiality and accuracy were dealt with on separate occasions for each phase and at each research location. As soon as the project outline was finalized and formal permission granted, contact was instigated with the appropriate bodies: the school authorities, parents of the students involved and the teachers themselves.

In the first phase, the focus group meetings, volunteers were recruited by means of a letter circulated through, and with, the consent of the Irish Post Primary Music Teachers Association (PPMTA). When the group of 28 practicing music teachers volunteered, they were then forwarded a plain language statement outlining the purpose and content of the research project, the exact nature of participant commitment and arrangements for anonymity, confidentiality and safe storage of the research data. They were asked to sign a consent form and also informed of their right to withdraw their contributions at any stage of the study. To ensure anonymity, all teachers participating in the focus group discussions were given pseudonyms and no schools were identified.

For the second stage, the action research, the recruitment of participating teachers evolved in two ways. Four teachers involved in the initial focus group discussion meetings opted to continue their contributions in the action research. The remaining eight music teachers, having been made aware of the research project at the annual general meeting of the PPMTA, subsequently volunteered to take part.

The action research component involved interaction with second-level students in their music classrooms and so at the outset, permission was sought from each school. Principal teachers were contacted and given information regarding the nature of the project and all other relevant research details. When permission to visit the school was granted, the parents of all the students involved were then issued with letters that outlined the proposed lesson plans and requested consent for the participation of their children in the project. This parental consent was

procured before the event of the action research and delivered to the researcher's safekeeping before the onset of each music-making session.

All the music teachers involved in this phase were also issued with plain language statements outlining the basic nature of the group music-making lesson plans and, in accordance with the nature of action research, they collaborated with the researcher before, during and after the research cycle. All participating teachers were informed of the arrangements for the safe keeping of the data transcriptions, audio and video recordings and any other confidential material. The schools involved in the action research were named according to the county of their location, and thereafter the 12 different music-making sessions and the 12 music teachers were referred to by number; for example, 'Teacher from Melody 3'. The students were given pseudonyms and the music-making groups were labelled alphabetically; for example, 'Riona, Group B, Composing 1'.

Since the study relates to group music-making in Irish schools, the research topic will now be situated in a review of recent Irish literature referring specifically to this topic.

1.8 Situating the Research Question: Relevant Irish Literature

Until recently in Ireland, comparatively little has been explored in the area of group music performance within second-level education. However, in the past twenty years, particularly since the advent of the Music Education National Debate⁶ (MEND, 1994-1996), this trend is being reversed and a growing number of studies and investigative reports relating to music-education in general and the topic in particular have appeared.

For relevant historical and comparative reference, this cursory review will take as its starting point the last decade of the 20th century and in

⁶ MEND a series of national debates that took place from 1994 to 1996, with the aim of setting up a forum, which would systematically address the difficulties in Irish music education.

this context, one of the most seminal publications is Marie McCarthy's *Passing it On*, (1999). This work constitutes an investigative account of processes of music transmission in 19th and 20th century Ireland as viewed through the lens of musical and cultural development. The wide-ranging study also focuses on the juxtaposition of the two political ideologies embedded in the Irish history of these centuries, nationalism and colonialism. Linking the transmission of music to Irish history over the last 200 years, McCarthy employs four inter-related concepts, namely: music as culture, music as canon, music as community and music as communication. Situated at the cusp of the twenty-first century, this examination of various related forms of music transmission and educational participation in diverse genres, cultures and locations looks forward with considerable resonance to the advances that were to appear in the twenty-first century. Of these developments, the most relevant to this study was already emerging in the shape of the re-organisation of the second -level music-syllabus in 1996.

When this syllabus was implemented in the late 1990's elements within Irish second-level music education seemed to travel forward rapidly as the framework broadened and moved towards more inclusivity. In addition to the Western Art music style, all musical genres were now welcomed and a tri-partite framework which included a practical component with a potential weighting of half the overall marks (see p. 5), contributed in no small manner to the significant increase in the popularity of the subject at second level. For the practical examination, young group music-making musicians could now present ensembles at suitable standards in any genre and with any combination of instruments. Corresponding developments in pedagogical approaches that might encourage participatory, instrumental or vocal activities in relation to the composition and listening components were, however, another matter.

Research Studies in Irish Music Education

The examination of music education in Ireland has been approached from many angles in a number of doctoral and master's studies. Some are marginal to the subject matter of this study; for example, Moore's (2013)

critical examination of the ways in which 'musical habitus', cultural capital and social class impact upon students' opportunities and experiences in higher level education; and Feehan's MA study (2003), which documents the involvement and the subsequent decline of the religious in girls' voluntary secondary schools of the 1980s and 90s.

However, quite a few other studies are located within the second level music education system and resonate clearly with elements in this study. Some seek to clarify and develop pedagogical approaches at specific levels or in particular genres. Others identify fractures in the interface between the aims of the syllabus and practice in the music classroom. This short review will now focus on those pertaining to 'the transmitted set of values' (McCarthy, 1999, p.181), which connect to second-level music education.

Irish Second-level Music Education

In the first of these studies entitled 'Exploring the Challenges of Teaching and Learning Junior Certificate Music: A Collaborative Process of Reflection and Action' (2012), O'Connell identifies some of the challenges involved in the teaching of the Junior Certificate syllabus. These examples include tension between the 'quality and depth of musical experience and the quantity of material covered', (p. 289) and the fact that 'composition appears to lie at the periphery of Junior Certificate classroom 'musicing' (p.292). In this longitudinal study worked with eight second level teacher/ practitioners, (including the researcher herself), O'Connell collected data through regular group meetings and semi-structured interviews. In response, she developed a 'Programme for Teaching and Learning Junior Certificate Music', which incorporated the praxial philosophy of learning⁷ through active music-

⁷ The praxial philosophy of music education: an approach to music education which aims to develop the musicianship of all music students through the actions of performing, listening, improvising, composing and arranging, (see *Music Matters*, David Elliott 1995).

making. Among the aims of this programme, which connect with the subject matter of this project, are the development of inclusive pedagogical processes that facilitate learning for all students, and also the furtherance of literacy skills through integrated experiences of performing, composing and listening.

Another significant finding in this study points to the process of action research as 'an agent for change in music teacher thinking and classroom practice' (ibid. p.ii). Though O'Connell's research is situated within the Junior Certificate cycle, her findings, involving the development of more active music-making and performance in the classroom and the adoption of a 'sound before symbol' approach to the teaching of music literacy, resonate clearly with the practical pursuits implemented in this study.

The second doctoral study in this review 'The Bloom of Youth' (Johnston, 2013) focuses on Irish traditional music and it is also situated in second-level education. Here Johnston uses an integrated grounded-theory and action research approach to conduct his research amongst a 'cross-section of post-primary music teachers'. His thesis explores 'the nature of experience of Irish traditional music as it interfaces with and negotiates the realities of the post-primary music classroom.' (2013, p. iv). He addresses the complex nature of the transmission of Irish traditional music and conceptualises a nine-point theory of 'educational experience' in this context. A number of these points, including aspects of aural awareness, obser-visual, kinaesthetic and tactile awareness, and participatory and presentational performance link clearly with elements of O'Connell's study and also with the participatory subject matter of this study; group music-making,

Higgins's doctoral research, also located in the second-level music classroom, investigated the pedagogical processes that support students' experience of *musique concrète* composing techniques. In a research methodology that resembled that of the second component of this study, Higgins formulated a three-stage model and tested it in 16 sites in Ireland.

She found that soundscape and soundtrack composing are 'strong scaffolds' for student endeavours in this area and in addition, she outlined a new mode of 'ear re-training' as students acquire skills in applying sound edits to structural processes and move from literal to abstract meanings (Higgins, 2013, p. iv).

Composition Practices in Leaving Certificate

There is additional research focus on experience in the Leaving Certificate classroom in the following two master's studies and it is noteworthy that though completed six years apart, both highlight the tensions that exist between the aims of the Leaving Certificate syllabus and composing practices in the classroom.

Jonathan Browner's 2002 M Ed investigation is entitled, 'The Pupil as Composer - The Extent to which the Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus Encourages the Acquisition of Composing Skills'. Although his examination centres on the student's individual response to the composition paper, aspects of his study involving classroom based music-making pursuits such as creative arranging and free composition resonate clearly with the performing activities and the lesson designs in this research. Browner states that 'the potential offered by the core-composition paper is unlikely to encourage any real composing skills' (2002, p. vii) and citing Swanwick's fear that it is 'so easy to substitute facts for sensitive action', (1994, p.60), he maintains that students need to see and hear the musical value of what they are doing or the results of their composing activities could easily become 'music by numbers' (p.2 *ibid.*)

Browner views composition as an act of creation and imagination and he sees the notion of assessing it solely on the basis of composing exercises as 'essentially flawed' (*ibid.* p.86). In response, he cites the need for 'a more musical mode' of teaching and assessing composition (p.112). Maura Lucey writing six years later, (2008, p. ii), concurs with Browner and in her MA study, maintains there is little room for the development of

creativity and imagination, when the majority of students 'practice composing exercises with a view to achieving high marks in the examination'.

Findings in these two studies connect very clearly to activities in the forthcoming action research particularly when the student activities link to the composing option. Consequently a close examination of their responses in this context is necessary in the forthcoming study.

An additional and very relevant picture of the state of music education, in the second-level classroom in the first decade of the twenty-first century, can be found in the subject inspection report 'Looking at Music',⁸ (2008). This composite report of forty-five subject inspections of the teaching and learning of music in post-primary (secondary) schools was undertaken between 2006 and 2007. In the findings, which reflect the current practice in the teaching of music at post-primary level, there are a number of salient themes, and recommendations that point, with timely reference, to the nature of this study.

The inclusion of practical music-making in the second-level classroom is a central issue in this report, one of the main teaching aims being specified as; 'giving students the opportunity to take part in and enjoy practical music-making' (2008, p.24). Such practice-based performance is related to a synthesis of performing, composing and listening where the power of 'sound before symbol' is also stressed.

Accounts of the examiners' disappointment in lessons which involve 'skill and drill', and 'mechanical exercises' with 'no reference to sound' (ibid. p.25) are balanced by comments on commendable practice

⁸ Looking at Music (2008) a presentation of the outcomes of 45 subject inspections undertaken by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (DES), reporting on the practice of teaching and learning music in post-primary schools. See:http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/insp_looking_at_music_08_pdf.pdf [accessed 21/06/13]

including 'activity-based learning' that involves independent peer learning. Concerns relevant to this research topic include commentary on the lack of practical music-making experience (p.29) and recommendation for more 'pair or group work' (p.27).

The approach of this examiners' report to certificate examinations is significant and includes awareness of the balance between exam-related and general musical development (p.42). The additional comment that in some instances students 'rarely experience practical assessment similar to that in the exam', seems to point in the specific direction of this research problem; namely the proliferation of circumstances where group music-making is seldom included in classroom pedagogy.

1.9 Preview of Thesis Structure

Following this introductory chapter which has outlined the nature of the study and discussed it alongside recent Irish-based research, Chapter Two presents a collection of theoretical perspectives relating to group music-making. It begins with an historical overview of the topic, interwoven with accounts of developing philosophies of music education as they pertain to particular historical periods. Embedded in this account, will be consideration of literature as and where it becomes relevant to the discussion. Chapter Two concludes with a review of models of group music-making, linking elements within these international developments to explorations of second-level music education practice in this research.

Chapter Three and Chapter Four are both concerned with the first phase of the research, the focus group meetings. Chapter Three includes background information to the research methods employed. It documents accounts of the progress towards the focus group design, describing the pilot study, the focus group sample and the research locations.

Chapter Four chronicles the findings emerging from the focus group study. Initial commentaries entitled 'research pointers' are dotted through this analytical chapter. These indicators form a type of discursive and analytical bridge linking both phases of the overall research process. They

reappear in the ensuing chapter, where they become integral to the design of the group music-making activities in the action research phase. In this chapter, through the emergence of the themed findings, three overarching concepts begin to develop: namely 'Flexible Pathways in Music Education', 'Musical Becoming' and 'Jouissance and Flow in Group Music-Making'.

Chapter Five begins with an introduction to the second component of the study, the action research. This is followed by an outline of the development of the research design, linking data from the focus group phase to existing action research theories and methodological frameworks from relevant literature. All this material is considered together in the design of lesson plans for the action research.

Chapter Six constitutes a narrative of the implementation of the 12 group music-making lessons. Though adhering to a common basic plan, the design of these lessons focuses on three different group music-making activities, connecting to specifications in the *Leaving Certificate music syllabus*. These comprise melody writing, harmony and composition. Mirroring this three-way design framework, the chapter itself also splits into three sections namely, the Melody Classes, the Harmony Classes and the Composition Classes.

Following the analytical narrative in Chapter Six, the nature of the over-arching concepts (first outlined in Chapter Four), are by now refined, with the following three chapters constituting further analysis on each of the themes in turn.

Chapter Seven is concerned with Concept One: Flexible Pathways in Music Education, that is, the rich diversity of learning pathways within the practice of group music-making in Irish second-level classrooms. There are three interrelated areas in this section of the analysis. The first focuses on methodological and management strategies in the music lessons. The second gives account of the various working experiences in the group music-making classes and the third outlines examples of the student's self-directed learning trajectories along independent pathways.

Chapter Eight, linked to Concept Two, is entitled 'Musical Becoming' and involves a semantic deliberation on this term, wherein two considerations emerge. The first, 'musical becoming' concerns the human, personal and social development associated with group music-making interaction at both individual and group levels. The second focuses on 'becoming musical': the concept of developing musicianship and of the growth of musical understanding within the small communities that constitute the music-making groups.

Chapter Nine relates to Concept Three and discusses instances of 'flow'⁹ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and experiences of 'jouissance'¹⁰ (Barthes, 1973), as they occur within group music-making classroom experience. This deliberation begins with discussion on the meanings of musical behaviour. It then moves to consideration of 'jouissance' where both 'joyous performance' and 'flow' or optimal experience in performance are linked. Following this, the concepts of 'jouissance' and 'flow' are combined and the pursuit of group music-making is outlined in terms of Csikszentmihalyi's nine components of enjoyment.

Chapter Ten constitutes a synthesis of the overall findings discussed in the context of the Leaving Certificate syllabus and with reference also to other syllabi in Northern Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland. The chapter considers further developments alongside proposals for the inclusion of group music-making activities in the second-level classroom. A rationale for

⁹ 'Flow': an optimal state of heightened consciousness where skills and challenges are balanced, where action and awareness merge and where the sense of time becomes distorted (Csikszentmihalyi & Le Fevre, 1989, p.189). See** Chapter Nine pp. 232-234 for more detailed discussion.

¹⁰ 'jouissance': the noun derived from the French verb 'jouir' meaning to have pleasure in, to delight in or to savour. See Chapter Nine, pp. 227-232 for more detailed discussion.

a more longitudinal research study relating to the topic and recommendations for future policy brings the thesis to a conclusion.

This introductory chapter has situated this research problem within current Irish research studies and outlined a preview of the overall research plan. The next chapter presents a historical account of group music-making alongside a *discussion of philosophies of education*. It concludes with a consideration of models of group music-making in current Irish and international contexts.

Chapter Two: Group Music-Making: Historical, Philosophical and Community Perspectives

Introduction

This chapter will examine connected historical and cross-cultural perspectives relating to the pursuit of group music-making. It will also reflect on associated philosophical viewpoints that have informed and continue to enlighten group music-making practice and it will discuss models of practice linking to the classroom activities in the action research.

The activity of group music-making or creating music together is a defining human characteristic. There is no culture or society without either its music or its distinctive modes of musical performance. In Swanwick's words, music-making is a mode of human discourse 'as old as the human race' (1999, p.2), and within any community involved with group music performance, lies a consensus of understanding and exchange that relates to social and cultural norms as well as to the creative musical process itself. Discussing such human experience from an anthropological point of view, Blacking states:

All music is folk music, in the sense that music cannot be transmitted or have meaning without associations between people. (Blacking 1973, p.x)

He continues:

Music can transcend time and culture. Music that was exciting to the contemporaries of Mozart and Beethoven is still exciting ... the early Beatles songs are still exciting ... The explanation for this is to be found in the fact that at the level of deep structures in music there are elements that are common to the human psyche although they may not appear in the surface structures (ibid p.109).

One of the central tenets in this research is the investigation of the manner in which such human feelings of excitement and joy from within the human psyche pertain to experiences in group music-making pursuits in Irish

second-level classrooms. This chapter examines the wider and more general picture, the presence of deep structures in *all* group music-making which provoke creative and responsive exchanges. The discussion will consider such interactions as they thread through historical concepts from the time of the ancient Greeks to the modern day models of group music-making. It will include consideration of the views of music theorists and music educators from ancient civilisations, through classical-humanist ideas of music education to more recent and contemporary thought in the Western music education.

Past perspectives and values within the development of music education have informed both what has emerged at present and also what can be currently understood as good practice in this field. However, within this history of group music-making, I take the liberty of moving across continents and time with focus on developments pertinent to music education and in particular to group music-making in schools and other educational institutions. While I have chosen to address recent Irish research separately at the end of the first chapter, I will discuss parallel models of Irish practice in the conclusion of this chapter.

2.1 Historical Contexts and Philosophical Approaches

The Ancient Greeks

Although we can divine some information about music-making in pre-historic cultures from archaeological remains, artistic images and the remains of musical instruments, it is with the invention of writing and in particular within the chronicles and artefacts of the Ancient Greeks that we find the first comprehensive picture.

Group musical performances were popular in Greek society, being associated with public worship of the gods as well as births, weddings, funerals and the ballad-like reciting of epic poetry. The Greek word for music, *mousikē* embodies just this approach, referring to the word for the *Muses*, which relates to any or all of the arts including poetry, literature and stylised dancing as well as to music. Music-making, song and dance were often

intertwined seamlessly and the dancing choruses were usually accompanied by marching accompanists who played the pipes or the lyre. West depicts such a group music-making parade at a major religious festival the *Panathenaea* in Athens

At the Great Panathenaea, choruses of young men and women sang *paean*s and danced through the first night on the Acropolis ... At dawn a great procession set out ...the sheep and cattle to be sacrificed were conducted by the religious officials and after them came a band of *kitharists* and *auletes* playing in concert at the head of the rest of the crowd of participants. (West 1992, p.19)

The Greeks considered music both as an art for enjoyment and as a science closely linked to mathematics and astronomy. The latter approach is associated with the work of the philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras, (546 B.C.), who viewed music as 'a system of musical sounds and rhythms' being ordered by numbers and as exemplifying the 'harmony of the cosmos and corresponding to it' (Grout, 1962, p.7).

Plato (429-347 B.C.) and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) also wrote on the philosophy of music, and its importance within the education system. Plato's vision for the education of the ideal Greek citizen incorporated two important elements: gymnastics for the development of the body, and music for the mind. Music was included alongside art in the curriculum for young boys, and melodies, often played on the lyre, were thought to help students become more civilised and balanced since Plato believed that perception of beauty in the arts and music would in turn foster the development of a 'beautiful disposition in the soul' (Mark, 2008, p.6).

This potential to be affective and cause an excited response, as Blacking discusses, is further specified in the writings of Aristotle. He stated that melodies 'contain in themselves imitations of the *Ethoses*' and that 'listening to such strains, our souls undergo a change' (Burkholder et al., 2006, p.16) and he reported for example that 'the Phrygian melody makes men divinely suffused' inspiring enthusiasm while the mixo-lydian mode induces 'a more mournful and refined state' (ibid. p.12).

These writings contain evidence of a significant development in the perception of the status of group music-making. Aristotle maintained that while music was important for the education of the citizen, its prime function was to further the 'purpose of intellectual enjoyment in leisure', (ibid. p.11). Performance for the enjoyment of others was, he believed, a vulgar pursuit and therefore not suited to the development of the ideal Greek citizen's furtherance of the 'self'. Thus musical performances became the realm of citizens of lower rank in order 'not to impede the business of riper years', (Mark, 2008, p.15).

Elements of this approach: the dissociation of the pursuit of music-making from the higher-ranked 'furtherance of the self', were to surface again with the advent of Christian modes of music-making and recur centuries later in deliberations involving the philosophy of music education relating to Music Education as Aesthetic Education¹, (MEAE), and Praxial² music education. These aspects also connect significantly to the current study of group music-making in the Irish second-level classroom as examined in chapters Four and Five.

The nature of the Greek music was essentially melodic with contours linked to the rhythm and metre of poetry, and texture that was mostly monophonic. Surviving fragments of music on tombstone inscriptions and scraps of papyrus (Burkholder et al., 2006, p.21), depict Greek notation of these single line melodies which were usually performed by the *Aulis*, a double flute type pipe instrument, and the *Kithara*, a large lyre, (Grout, 1962, p.12). In early precursors of the 'worksong' which were also to reappear in Afro-American and numerous European folk traditions, West (1992, p.29) describes groups of *auletes* or pipers who were employed to aid construction workers when the City of Messene was built in 369 B.C. Seoighe (2000, pp.46 & 47), reports that these groups of *aulete* players were regular members of

¹ MEAE see p.35, Chapter Two for more detailed discussion

² Praxial Music Education: see p.13, Chapter One for more detailed discussion

the Athenian trireme rowing crews and they were also used by sailors to synchronise the hauling of ships to water.

Greek music was for the most part memorised and passed on aurally, and since very few scores existed, performance was based on improvisation, instrumental ornamentation and, according to Seoighe, it was essentially creative in nature (ibid. 2000, p.184). In these early records there is evidence also that singers in group performance were employing a type of heterophony; that is where groups of singers and vocal soloists performed a monophonic vocal line to an embellished instrumental version of the same melody, (Grout, 1962, p.14). In this respect the Greek music-making connects forward to two current features of group performance; first, the methods of aural transmission which pertain to the present day in the Irish traditional music culture, and second, to the creative hub of the jazz genre, musical improvisation.

Other aspects of the Grecian approach to music and music education continue to influence music in performance in Western Civilisation to this day. As enumerated by Grout, (ibid. p.23) these include firstly, belief in the status and importance of music as a subject within education, secondly, the influence of music on human behaviour and thirdly, various numerically ordered musical theories linked to intervals, scale systems, rhythms, and acoustics. Perhaps the most noteworthy development of all was the Platonic positioning of musicians and other artists at the lower levels of Greek society, while the intellectual approach to music was deemed a more worthy development of the 'self'.

The Romans adopted much of their musical practice from that of the Greeks, especially at the time when Greece became a Roman province in 146 B.C. In Roman society, music often functioned in a supporting role to the increasingly important pursuit of rhetoric. In addition, with the ascent of the Roman Empire, came the development of group music-making on a large scale. The first sizeable orchestras and choirs were patronized by such emperors as Nero, who himself aspired to become a musician.

Christianity and Group Music-Making

Moving to the dawn of the Middle Ages, in the fourth century, the focus of group music education and group performance became more utilitarian as it related for the first time to the ascendancy of the Christian church and the emergence of an institution which aspired to control education for its own purposes. Soon after Christianity became a legal religion, edicts from the church began to reject both instrumental music and the performance of music for entertainment in favour of the more elevated pursuit of vocal worship. Unaccompanied choral music now began to play an important role in emerging religious ceremonies and as the church leaders began to take control and dictate modes of musical performance, solo cantors and choirs gradually assumed importance.

Manuscript illuminations from the time clearly show the practice of seating a divided choir in two stalls facing each other in order to sing antiphonally,³ (Grout 1962, pp.55 & 56). There were variations on this mode with group and solo interaction alternating with choir and congregation (ibid.). In a manner similar to current choral rehearsals there were also leaders within each choral group and the illustrations (ibid.), show two figures, most likely the leader or conductor and the cantor, standing in front of the ensemble.

Most of the music up to this time was still being performed from memory. However, as Christianity spread throughout Europe, it became necessary to implement a systematic form of notation that would ensure consistent standards in vocal performance within the growing number of Church centres. Pope Gregory worked to establish a conformity within this

³ Antiphony: (Greek opposite- voice), is a call and response style of singing, used in Christian music and ritual. It can be performed by two semi-independent choirs in interaction, singing alternate musical phrases or as a responsory involving a choir and a congregation, usually in the form of a Gregorian chant, to a psalm or other text in a religious service or musical work.

body of music and his name has also been given to the style of chant; Gregorian chant that emerged in the 6th century. Church schools called *scholae cantorum* were inaugurated to educate the young Christians and priests, and to develop these vocal skills. Under the rule of Pope Gregory the curriculum in these church schools was also expanded and music education was developed to include singing, instrumental performance, harmony and composition (Abeles et al., 1984, p.6).

Although nominally a style related intrinsically to the Christian church, Gregorian chant is of integral importance to the development of group music-making in general. It includes a variety of approaches to melody, text setting, and to modes of performance that have formed the source of much polyphonic⁴ music. Moreover, owing to its continued use through the centuries, something Burkholder (2006, p.70), describes as 'part of the musical world for over a thousand years', it is a forward-pointing finger of tradition that has cast its mark on much of the general music practice in the Western Art tradition. Gregorian chant is currently performed daily in various religious centres, it can be found in works of Mozart, Berlioz, and Stravinsky as well as in the musicals of Sondheim. In the words of Burkholder et al (ibid.), there is a sense in which 'all later music in the Western tradition wears its imprint'.

Secular Group Music-Making

Group music-making outside the church was assuming an increasingly diverse character since performance in this instance was not bound by rules and edicts. Early bands of itinerant poet-musicians were writing satirical songs in Latin and these influenced the subsequent and flourishing tradition of the *Troubadour/Trouvère* that originated in Western Europe and later moved to Germany and England. Since these musicians did not avail of

⁴ In music, polyphony is a texture consisting of two or more simultaneous lines of independent melody, as opposed to music with just one voice (monophony) or music with one dominant melodic voice accompanied by chords (homophony).

notation most of the instrumental music has not survived. However evidence of their modes of group performance can be drawn from the lyrics and the single line melodic illustrations of the songs that were transcribed later (see Burkholder et al., p.76-83). For example, the predominance of strophic form with numerous choruses suggests frequent chorus and solo alternation.

In relation to harmonic texture, Sachs (1963, p.56) points to the fact that unlike the developments towards parallel fourths and fifths called *organum*⁵ that were beginning to be implemented in the religious performances of the time, the intervals in these secular tunes were organised in thirds. According to Sachs, these 'tertial chains'⁶ (Ibid.) have laid the foundations for the tonic - dominant harmonies that appear in much of the current western musical repertoire. At the same time examples of these medieval songs in illuminated manuscript (Cantigas Manuscripts, p.83, *ibid.*), show connections with the ancient Greek musical approach in the graphic illustrations of dancers performing alongside the musicians.

To summarise, group performance in the first millennium continued to be influenced by elements within the ancient Greek group music-making tradition. These included the social enjoyment of the pursuit, awareness of its therapeutic and religious value and integration of the music-making with theatre, poetry and dance. At the same time developments in religious and secular vocal music, including the incidence of *organum* and 'tertial chains', were pointing forward to subsequent advances in harmony. The nature of

⁵ Organum a plainchant melody with at least one added voice to enhance the harmony In its earliest stages, organum involved two musical voices; a Gregorian chant melody, and the same melody transposed by a consonant interval, usually a perfect fifth or fourth.

⁶ In music theory, *tertian* describes any piece, chord, counterpoint etc. constructed from the interval of a (major or minor) third. A common triad or chord can be regarded as comprising a 'stack' of two such intervals.

group music-making was continuing to diversify, and its status within the expanding realms of music education was by no means consistent.

Group Music-Making in Music Education

As economic development prospered and learning continued to be promoted by the church, the appetite for more organised music instruction and tuition was beginning to flourish. From the reign of the emperor Charlemagne in 1050, the spread of the *scholae cantorum*, or cathedral schools burgeoned throughout Europe and these schools began to teach Latin grammar and rhetoric as well as music.

The divided approach to music education, namely the idea of music as a valued form of knowledge: *theoria*, and the concept of music as a skilled performance-based activity: *praxis*, was continuing to develop. This view connected back to Plato's paradigm of 'knowing' as detached contemplation rather than active 'doing' (Shusterman, 2000, p.35) and it was to occupy much of the philosophical discussion relating to music education in the second half of the 20th century. The quest for musical knowledge was also growing beyond the control of the Christian church and the first European University was established in Bologna 1088. The Paris University opened soon after in 1150, and the first schools for laymen were set up around 1200 (Grout, 1962, p.74).

The Italian *conservatoria*, the precursors of modern conservatories or schools of music, were founded in the 16th century. These establishments were secular institutions equipped for practical training in music and they were also orphanages. The first of these, a boy's music school, was established in Naples in 1537 and this was closely followed by a *conservatoria* for female orphans in Venice. As the age of enlightenment approached, musical events opened to the public at large, more concerts were arranged and independent travel for the furtherance of knowledge was becoming popular. Following the explosion of print culture, all education philosophy, (music education included), seemed to be moving towards an awareness of equal opportunity for all.

By the 17th and 18th centuries, the term *conservatoria* was associated with a secular place for teaching and learning music, and there were up to four such institutions in the city of Naples alone. In these colleges, *praxis* was blended with *theoria* and, in early precursors of modern day artists-in-residence schemes, eminent composers of the day, for example Pergolesi, Paisello, Scarlatti and Durante, were housed. Standards of performance and knowledge in music theory were now necessary admission requirements and the example set by Naples was soon emulated by The Paris Conservatoire, (1795), the Prague Conservatory, (1811), The Royal Academy of Music in London, (1822) and, when the network expanded to the Americas; Rio de Janero, (1847), and Boston, (1853).

Music Educators

These institutions were dictating the musical standards of entrance examination requirements and as a consequence, the interest in Europe and Britain turned to the pre-conservatory stages of musical education and began to focus on the development of the younger music student. The number of scholar/musicians interested in the modes and methodologies of teaching and learning music at this stage became a growing phenomenon. In his collection of essays, *The Great Music Educators* (1976), Simpson has gathered profiles of a number of these: from Rousseau (1721-1778) who was among the earliest of such thinkers, working with groups of young children singing 'simple clear-cut melodies accompanied by the 'most usual chords' through to the alternative notation schemes, moveable 'doh' patterns and sol-fa systems pioneered by Englishman John Curwen (1816-1880). Groups of children were trained in the rhythmic movement systems of Dalcroze, (1865-1950) and in the liturgical chant singing methods of Justine Ward (1879-19).

This approach to music education continued into the 20th century in the work of English educators Stuart Mac Phearson, Ernest Read and Percy Scholes. It culminated in the innovative and internationally renowned methods of two composer/educators: Zoltan Kodaly (1882-1966), who worked with Hungarian folk music using the voice and a carefully graded

system of ear and sight singing through tonic sol-fa; and Carl Orff (1895-1981), who introduced an organised framework of teaching the elements of music, choral singing and aural training as well as the implementation of percussion techniques. Yet another approach, the work of Shin'ichi Suzuki, was specific to string playing. This method, conceived in the mid-20th century, was linked to Suzuki's language acquisition theory (Suzuki, 1968), and his belief that all people learn from their environment. The important components here included children learning in groups, performing from a very young age and being totally involved in their musical communities.

The general aim of all these music educators in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was to invigorate music learning processes. Consequently an increasing number of young students working in group music-making mode were brought to the centre of the music education process.

United States of America: History, Philosophy and Curriculum

In the United States of America a somewhat different pathway into inclusive music education was developing with the arrival, in Virginia 1619, of the first West African slaves to work for white settlers. This unique musical heritage (which survived the horrific experiences of the slaves) emerged as a composite of distinctive elements from the European musical tradition already existing in America, and rhythmic and tonal elements from the native African musical culture. It was to become 'the unique product of the New World' (see Abeles et al., 1984, p.8).

At this time, as in Europe, American school music education consisted mostly of vocal instruction linked to the furtherance of musical worship in the Christian churches. Within this popular practice of singing however, different techniques were emerging, reflecting the influence of the African cultures. For example the 'Lining Out' a type of 'call and response' method was used and repetition by rote, (learning by ear), was the most popular teaching method. Music education was moving towards the establishment of church-led 'singing schools' whose main remit was to

improve the quality of singing in the churches. By the turn of the 18th century these singing schools had expanded to include instrumental music. Standards of musical performance were beginning to rise and further developments included the differentiation between singing schools that operated at an elementary level, teaching beginner students to read, and singing societies, which were inculcating higher levels of musical performance.

A significant development in the world of American musical education was the adoption of methodologies and theories established by the Swiss educator Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Pestalozzi stated that the best education was one that was acquired through the senses or through participation. His principles included firstly: the teaching of sounds before signs, secondly: the observation and imitation of the effects of sounds rather than the learning about them passively and thirdly: providing the principles of the theory after the practice.

Pestalozzi was one of the first educators to distinguish between knowledge found in books and the knowledge acquired through action and experience. As such he could be deemed a forerunner of elements of John Dewey concept's of education. Writing 86 years later in 'Democracy and Education' (1916) Dewey was to state:

When an activity is continued into the undergoing of consequences, when the change made by action is reflected back into a change made in us we learn something. (1916 pp.238/239)

Lowell Mason (1792-1872), a Boston music teacher and the first teacher to advocate the teaching of music in public schools encountered this methodology when he visited Europe to observe Pestalozzi's approach. Mason concurred with the Greeks belief that music contributed to wellbeing and he also held that it could unite the musician with God. Significantly he instigated the first American inclusion of the 'music for all' policy, believing that everyone could enjoy music and that if children could read, they could sing.

After the American Civil War in 1865, the drive to include music in the everyday education of all children grew and throughout the United States of America, many outstanding music educators (for example Benjamin Jepson), developed programmes to introduce music into primary schools. The pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey involving the 'education of the whole child' was becoming more popular. From 1889, pedagogies that included and promoted school performing groups were being developed and these led to the formation of school orchestras and choirs as well as methods of group or class instruction which had been adapted from English models (see Albert Mitchell's *The Mitchell Class Method for the Violin* and Raymond Carr's *Building the School Orchestra*). This concept was spreading among other schools and the instrumental variety within group ensembles was growing.

Another development relevant to group performing pursuits was the emergence of the concert bands following the end of the Civil War. The growth of this concert band movement was then assisted by the return of suitably qualified bandmen at the end of World War II. These musicians were employed to develop the band programmes in schools and a variety of educational courses and school programmes flourished. Orchestras were established and new techniques of group instruction (for example, teaching all members of a wind band together in a graded system of performance) began to thrive.

Up to the turn of the 19th and 20th century, North American developments in music education had reflected those in Europe. After World War II, during a time of political re-evaluation and of rapid social change, perspectives in this context were beginning to undergo a significant transformation and music education scholars were beginning to recognise the need for a profession-wide philosophy. In the North American public schools of the 1940s, music education was a rapidly growing area of specialisation. The number of vocal and performing ensembles was increasing and the dominant focus on instrumental playing and choral

singing and concert bands was further encouraged by regular inter-school competitions.

Alongside these advances, there was also a growing awareness of the benefits associated with music-making as social practice. Music education in this context had a functional role and it was valued mainly for its overall contribution to 'the social, physical, moral and intellectual development' of school children (McCarthy & Goble, 2005 p.19). Other music educators such as Allen Britton, Charles Leonard, Bennett Reimer and Abraham Schwadron acknowledged this utilitarian focus on the subject but while mindful of the manner in which any extra-curricular activities or public performances might contribute to the communal life of the school, they were also aware of the continued shortage of qualified music teachers, the erratic provision of the subject itself within the school curriculum and the need to fight for an increase in its academic importance and respectability. (ibid. p.20)

The Aesthetic Rationale

In response to this situation and influenced by the ideas of John Dewey, Suzanne Langer, (1957) and Leonard Meyer (1957), began working towards a philosophy of music education that was drawing heavily on Western aesthetics. In this rationale, the educational emphasis moved from the functional value of the music to an appreciation of the music as a work of art. Students were encouraged to understand the meanings emanating from the expressive forms within a piece of music. The significant educational reaction in this instance was emotional and embedded in the artistic beauty and form of the musical work as an object. Extra-musical or utilitarian values were significant but they were considered secondary to the aesthetic rationale.

One of Langer's most noteworthy claims was that the aesthetic forms of musical works bore close resemblance to the general forms of human feelings. She adopted the term 'symbolism' for this representation and claimed that music was a 'presentational symbol' that could 'articulate

subtle complexities of feeling that language cannot even name let alone set forth' (Langer, 1957, p.222).

Writing from a slightly different perspective and drawing on John Dewey's philosophy of art, Meyer addressed issues dealing with musical meaning and the manner of musical communication. In his book *Emotion and Meaning* (1957), he claimed that knowledge of the relationships evident in the style and form of the musical work itself was integral to the students' musical understanding and could bring about 'increased clearness and acuteness in perception' (Meyer, pp. 77-78). There were some similarities of approach in the writings of these two philosophers; both focused mainly on the musical work as an *object* (usually in the Western Classical tradition), and both also furthered the idea of music as a 'mode of knowing' that was unique and distinct from the approach in other academic subjects.

James Mursell was one of the first scholars to give this concept the name of 'music education as aesthetic education', a philosophy subsequently referred to as MEAE. Writing in the late 1930s and 40s Mursell, whose views resonated with those of Plato, maintained that 'education in and through music must mean first of all participation in noble and humanising emotion'. He also argued that for music education to succeed, it must be 'learned and taught with the primary emphasis upon its aesthetic aspects' (Mursell, p.6). This approach was to surface later in the English second-level music education systems following World War II.

Charles Leonhard, another early proponent of the MEAE philosophy, agreed and he also stressed the need for 'systematic and consistent efforts to develop an aesthetically valid philosophy of music education' (1953, pp. 23-26). His book *Foundations and Principles of Music Education* (1959), written with Robert House, was widely used in teacher training, and provided a strong framework on which to base this developing philosophy.

From the mid-50s onwards, the idea of MEAE was gathering momentum and other musical scholars, among them Foster McMurray and Harry Broudy, joined in the search for a central and unifying philosophy.

Broudy believed that an ability to detect form was 'at the heart of musical education' (1957 p.78) and he described pieces of music as 'types of aesthetic experience' that needed to be encountered by the music student who would attempt to 'grasp their sensuous characteristics' (ibid. p.69). This approach was a definite alternative to the utilitarian rationale evident within both church and school in the previous decades, and it seemed an answer to the profession's struggle with the respectability and status of the subject.

It is interesting that the evolution of Music Education as Aesthetic Education (MEAE)⁷ and its subsequent absorption into mainstream music education in North America was a comparatively short process. However alongside these developments within music education, landslide societal changes were taking place including the growth of a unique teenage musical culture, the awareness of different musical genres and the dissemination of informal music through technology, cinema, and media in general.

The Tanglewood Symposium⁸ (1967), in essence a response to this situation, produced a series of principles known as the 'Tanglewood Declaration' which turned out to be, in the opinion of Mark (2008, p.323), the music profession's 'most powerful and meaningful vision statement of the century'. Among the relevant recommendations endorsed by this symposium was the acknowledgement of 'the aesthetic value of all genres in an all-inclusive and student-centred ethos' (ibid.).

By 1975, Charles Gary the executive secretary of MENC⁹ declared that 'The purpose of music education in our time is to reveal to students

⁷ This philosophy will be referred too as MEAE for the remainder of the thesis.

⁸ The Tanglewood Symposium: a 1967 gathering of music educators, music performers together with other non-musical leaders and government officials to 'articulate a vision for music in a rapidly changing society' (Mark, 2008).

⁹ MENC: The National Association for Music Education is an organization of American music educators dedicated to advancing and preserving music education in the United States. Founded in 1907 as the Music Supervisors National Conference (MSNC), the organization was known from 1934 as the Music Educators National

what music can do for their lives and to offer as many opportunities for musical learning as they desire and are capable of assimilating' (Mark 1996, pp.78-79). This approach augured well, outlining the seeming capacity to reflect developments in American society and respond with an all-inclusive music education curriculum.

Britain: The Child-Centred Approach

In Britain, the progress in music education and curriculum development from the same period (the mid. 20th century) often mirrors that of North America. When the General Certificate of Education was established in 1951, the examination syllabus was based on Western Classical Art music and included rudiments harmony, counterpoint and music history. Accordingly, activities in the classroom revolved around the musical appreciation of pieces, studies in music theory and music history. The approach to performance included class singing from a small repertoire including arrangements of British and other international folk songs. Education scholar John Finney, (2011 p.31), recounting his own second-level music education experience in the 1950s, describes a curriculum deeply polarised between theory and practice with the performance activities often consisting of a session of singing together similar to a choir rehearsal. This atmosphere was impersonal and orderly and, in common with the American approach of the time, concerned mainly with the passing on of the knowledge that was inherited from the past.

Reflecting on this situation Finney points to similarities with the Platonic philosophy where participation in music-making was thought to bring about a static and well-ordered society. Writer Raymond Williams commenting on music education in post-world-war Britain (Finney, 2011, p.29) concludes 'education has a major role to play in the maintenance of the social and economic order in post-world-war Britain'. With regard to the

Conference (origin of the MENC acronym). In 2011, the organization changed its acronym from MENC to NAfME: the National Association for Music Education.

inclusion of group music-making in the classroom, it seemed that elements of the divide between *theoria* and *praxis* that had been initiated in ancient Greek society still pertained in the music education systems of both North America and Britain

In the British primary schools there were developments relating to classroom group performance. In 1957, Carl Orff's 'Schulwerk' had been introduced into the primary schools by Margaret Murray and many secondary schools had collections of percussion instruments, including glockenspiels and chime bars, as well as recorders. However such instances were not common and most music-making was orientated towards extra-curricular or one-to-one instrumental tuition on classically approved instruments.

In 1963, The Newsom Report¹⁰ identified the need to have a searching examination of the then current music curriculum. There were striking similarities between the findings of this report and the problems encountered in the North American situation. These included a shortage of suitably qualified music teachers, erratic accommodation within the timetable, lack of resources and a narrow conception of music as a subject. In Britain these findings further involved a restricted programme of choral singing which was off-putting to adolescent boys in particular and was further contributing to the regular disappearance of music from the syllabus altogether.

The slide downhill looked set to continue. In 1964 the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was established and in 1968 the School's Council Enquiry 1: 'Young School Leavers in Britain', conducted a survey of young second level school-leavers. These students judged the subject music to be the most boring and irrelevant experience in their

¹⁰ The Newsom Report, a government sponsored national survey of secondary schools implemented in 1963 by the Central Advisory Council for Education in England.

second level experience. Following this the Schools Councils Working Paper (1971), identified a further conflict between students' enthusiastic response to their music culture outside school, and the subject music in school. It was recognised that a new popular music culture had exploded onto the scene, bringing a huge influence to bear on the young adolescent musician and that as a result, music teachers needed a new and more relevant approach to the teaching of music at second level. So began a succession of attempts on the part of music educators to deal with the problem. In this instance, the work of two British educators, John Paynter and Keith Swanwick is very significant.

From the mid-1960s the music educator and composer John Paynter had been advocating a student-centred curriculum: one that explored the manner in which children could understand music through creative composition. In an article entitled 'Music in a Liberal Education' (1970, p.1) and in collaboration with other composers including Wilfrid Mellers and Peter Ashton, Paynter called for a new approach to music in both primary and second level curricula. A new undergraduate programme was developed where young music student teachers attending the University of York could work on creative composition and improvisation alongside second-level pupils.

With the publication of *Sound and Silence* (1970), Paynter and Aston built on this teacher/pupil collaboration model. Their approach was inclusive with Paynter maintaining that every student could think and reason as a composer. Groups of pupils were encouraged to work creatively with their teachers in the exploration of all manner of sounds from those on classically approved instruments to the tapping of a ruler. These work schemes were sometimes programmatic (a storm at sea), or at times musically abstract (involving changes in dynamics). Although the main focus was on exploration in the manner of contemporary modern music, all musical skills were implemented, including those in the popular music style. From 1973 to 1982, Paynter also led the School's Council Secondary Project, encouraging the dialogue and discussion that placed creativity at the centre of the classroom music education curriculum.

English music educator Keith Swanwick was also encouraging a focus on creative composition. In *A Basis for Music Education* (1979) he introduced an integration of performance and structured listening. Linking back to the Greeks integration of the *muses*, this model blended musical activities with skills and creative arts in other areas, literature, drama and dance. Swanwick collaborated further with Dorothy Taylor, (*Discovering Music*, 1982), in the development of the music curriculum for English secondary schools, making many useful suggestions for creative musical encounters in the second-level classroom.

Swanwick's aim was to help develop musical criteria for the assessment of composition and to formulate a rationale for this approach in the classroom. In 1986, working with Jane Tillman, he formulated a development spiral (1988, p.76) which investigated the compositions of children of many different ages and stages. These were built on to develop a sequence of progress in musical education. This organised framework, to which music teachers could refer, seemed an ideal integration of composition, performance, listening, appraising and awareness, which could further connect to other creative arts.

United States of America: Philosophical Dialogues

Meanwhile, in North America, developments in music education were being clarified and consolidated with the 1970 publication of Bennett Reimer's *A Philosophy of Music Education*. Drawing from Langer's philosophy and basing his thinking on an investigation into the nature and value of music itself, Reimer outlined a system for the music teacher/director, whom he called 'the aesthetic educator,' (ibid, p.69). This educator would 'help students get closer and closer to the sounds of music' in order that 'the tone-conditions of melody, harmony, rhythm, tone-colour, texture and form which embody musical insights, could exert their affective power'. In a philosophical approach echoing the Platonic divide between music *theori* and *praxis*, Reimer acknowledged the utilitarian importance of group performances in school but he contended that the aesthetic educator by contrast was on a

different level and worked 'in a situation, worlds removed from these practical values' (ibid., p.111).

This system of musical instruction had a dual focus; a performance programme and a general programme. The two approaches, Reimer argued, should serve two separate groups of students but the philosophical focus in both cases was essentially aesthetic. Embedded also was the polarisation of the *theoria* in the general study and the *praxis* in the performance activities. Furthermore, in a scenario similar to that of Britain, the curriculum remained centred on the Western classical music canon, since Reimer warned against using what he described as 'trite, artificial music' (p.114), claiming that a real musical education required 'an aesthetic and pedagogical insight' (ibid.) far removed from the amateur level.

In subsequent developments in North America, numerous music curricula adopted the suggestions espoused in Reimer's philosophy (1970, p.29). Various curriculum projects, dialogues and conferences (for example the Music Educator's National Conference, MENC in 1971, the CEMERAL curriculum project in 1975, Harvard's Project Zero, and the Cleveland area project in 1978), were all engaged in focused dialogue regarding aesthetic education. Textbooks were published based on this philosophy (for example, The Silver Burdett Making Music Collection), and when it was introduced into the school curriculum it met with little opposition.

However, a diversity of musical dialogue was beginning to emerge that was to affect music education philosophy and ultimately the practice of music-making in classrooms throughout Northern Europe. Though the aesthetic rationale, (MEAE) continued to be endorsed, some American scholars became aware of the need for a new and more inclusive approach. Abraham Schwadron (1973, p.88) argued that the paradigm in general use was too narrow. He questioned the inclusivity of an aesthetic rationale which excluded international musicality and he urged the reconsideration of the traditional teacher - pupil relationship, advising the music educator to

'continually probe the nature and meaning of his art' and not to teach 'as if he knows all the right answers' (ibid. p.89).

Multi-cultural perspectives were also beginning to colour the music education picture. For example Blacking in 'How Musical is Man?' (1973), was validating the musical beliefs and practices of the Venda tribe in South Africa, while Herskovitz (1974), was studying the drum rhythms of Bahian boys, Links were being sought with the work of educational psychologist Jerome Bruner and from anthropologists Charles Seeger and Alan Merriam while from another direction, new perspectives in cognitive psychology were unfolding in the work of Howard Gardner. This theory of multiple intelligences, which included the significance of musical intelligence and the inter-relationship of the eight various intelligences, was beginning to resonate with developments in music education and assist in the growing status of the subject in curricular practice.

In the 1980s the relevance of the aesthetic rational was questioned from a new angle in the work of David Elliott. In an article entitled 'Jazz Education as Aesthetic Education' published in 1986, Elliott contended that the absolute expressionism central to Reimer's philosophy could not include those music styles beyond the Western Art Music context. Jazz pedagogy, Elliott argued, had special needs. It was 'a way of performing, of *being* in the music' (p.44) and 'strategies must be derived from the nature of the human perceptual and affective system and the nature of jazz itself, rather than from isolated principles of pedagogy and a predominantly Western European classical aesthetic' (1986 pp.44-45). Although relating specifically to music education in the jazz style, this represented one of the earliest attempts to re-instate music performance as an integral activity in music education pedagogy.

As the field of music education continued to broaden, in 1987 two music philosophers Francis Sparshott and Nicolas Walterstorff began to examine music education from a practical point of view. In 1991, Alperson expanded on this approach, drawing on the three areas of knowledge as

defined by Aristotle: *theoria*, representing speculative knowledge, *techne*, indicating the type of knowledge required to make or create and *praxis*, *signifying* the critical thinking and reasoning involved in finding the correct answers. He contended that the aesthetic rationale would sit alongside all of these different practices. This approach was significant on different counts; it expanded the selection of musical activities, and musical genres that could now be considered suitable for music education and it opened up the confines of a philosophy centred solely on the Western Art Music tradition.

The Praxial Philosophy

Towards the end of the 20th century, the most influential account of the practical and participatory approach constituted David Elliott's 1995 publication, 'Music Matters'. Here Elliott emphasised 'the practical nature of music practice' (p.43) and drawing on the writings of Sparshott, he stated that this practice of music was, 'at root, a human activity that involves (1) a doer: (2) some kind of doing: (3) something done: and (4) the complete context in which doers do what they do' (pp.39-40). He adopted the term *praxial* to describe this philosophy arguing that 'music ought to be understood in relation to the meanings and values evidenced in actual music-making and music-listening in specific contexts' (p.14). He also considered music-making as a 'particular form of action that is situated in and revealing of one's self and one's relationship with others in a community' (ibid.). As such, this approach resonates with the activities proposed in this study, linking the practical nature of the group music-making, to the social interaction with others in the group.

Elliott also drew on the writings of the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, linking the enjoyment of practical music-making experience to the positive affective state associated with challenging activities termed 'optimal experience' or 'flow'. This state, according to Csikszentmihalyi, constituted an instance when the 'opportunities for action in a given situation', match the 'ability to master the challenges' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pp.170-3 & 180-2). Such challenges in music-making

and listening, Elliott argued, represented unique and important ways of bringing order to musical consciousness.

Thomas Regelski was also at this time (1981, p.18) advocating what he termed 'action learning' which 'seeks the closest possible connection to a student's life'. By 2006 he was also discussing the interesting directions the teacher student relationship might take in these music-making classroom activities.

A paraxial approach to classroom music puts an *emphasis on the* 'doing of the music as an active pursuit where meaning is made, not taught as though it can be found' (2006, p.295).

Observing that the greatest percentage of music made in the world is not made for the concert hall, Regelski argued that the distinction between the utilitarian music serving some other function and the aesthetic of pure 'good' music enjoyed for its own sake was simply not valid. He noted the unique capacity of music; its 'making special' of human time and events and he contended that there was a set of 'process values' present in every musical praxis helping to make a life well lived (2006, p.2).

This approach involving the balancing of challenges and musical skills relates to the optimal feelings engendered during social and musical interactions. It also resonates with the integration of listening, composing and performance, which will be included in group music-making practice in this research study. Having begun with Greek modes of performance and arrived at ideals of integrated practice, optimal experience and aesthetic response as they pertain to musical experiences in the classroom, the overview will now consider a selection of group music-making exemplars which model various aspects of further relevance and significance to the research.

2.2 Models of Group Music-Making

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the activity of group music-making in the classroom is in an interesting position. It can be influenced by a growing number of principles, trends and styles as well as educational philosophies. In the planning of a performance-based classroom lesson, the second-level music teacher or any such leader of young music-makers has a multitude of influences from which to draw.

These include strategies emanating from the two philosophies central to music education, MEAE and the Praxial Philosophy. In addition, a worldwide and accessible collection of music from different cultures and traditions connects to both in and out-of-school music-making. The phenomenon of popular music with its informal pedagogies and methodologies (see Green, 2008), has diversified in a multitude of stylistic subdivisions and performing norms. The classical music tradition, the jazz genre and the pursuit of creative composition with all their associated instrumental disciplines provide yet more avenues.

The final section in this overview will include a selection of group performance models that resonate with the group music-making activities situated closest to the action research sessions in the second phase of this research.

Music-Making in the Community

The review starts with teams of music-makers, located mostly in the communities of Ireland and Britain, whose activities revolve around the 'doing' within group performance as espoused in Elloitt's Praxial Philosophy. Like the student teams in the action research, these groups are usually amateur, they vary in size and complexity and they pursue activities that involve the intuitive and active integration of musical theory with practice. Such communities are sometimes almost invisible as Finnegan outlines in her detailed 1989 account *The Hidden Musicians*, a study of amateur music-making in the English town of Milton Keynes. They exist in all socioeconomic levels, for example in Cohen's exploration of the rock music scene in

Merseyside, Liverpool (1987) and in Fornas, Lindberg and Sernhede's ethnographic study of three different Swedish rock bands; *Garageland* (1995).

Currently such practical mixed-ability approaches appear in a multitude of different musical contexts ranging from amateur operatic societies to bands playing traditional jazz and from classical ensembles to folk, rock and country music. They also link to 'community music' a participatory group music-making movement that has been developed extensively in Ireland and the United Kingdom, since the end of the 20th century (see Higgins, 2008). In the community music model, the initiatives often sit alongside or outside music education systems but elements of the trajectories therein often resonate with the more open-ended nature of creative work in the music classroom. In this context, *Free To Be Musical* (Higgins and Sheehan Campbell, 2010) offers a versatile and inclusive set of musical 'events' to inspire what the authors term 'the socially interactive process of making music' (ibid. p.1).

In the modern Irish music classroom, educational and musical needs often vary considerably. So although pedagogical approaches might focus on practice and participation, the awareness of the many levels of relationships in social as well as musical interaction, as coined 'musicking' by Small (1998), is equally important.

The bridge from the second-level classroom to the community can be crossed with organised inter-school links between group performing classes and community groups. These out-of-school community ventures, where musical experiences and knowledge can be shared, attest to the power of mutuality at work in the music-making. While it is not always possible to effect this community link with school timetabled classes there are impressive models which have been successful; for example, The South Bank Arts Centre scheme based in central London between 1994 and 1997. In these projects established professionals worked with class groups of twenty or thirty 11 to 14 year old students from inner-city secondary

schools in London. The performance styles included work with the Javanese Gamelan, Steve Reich's 'Inner City' composition and a pop concert entitled 'Freed Up'. These experiences, as recounted by Swanwick (1999 p.89-101), still resonate with accounts of joyful performance and authentic experience as well as the positive transformations in student behaviour that such projects sometimes engender.

Informal Music-Making

In the first decade of the 21st century, research focus on the music-making group moved to the learning methodologies within the pop group. In '*How Popular Musicians Learn*' (2002), Green studied the informal approaches of 14 popular musicians connecting their love of the music with the methods of acquiring musical knowledge. Similar studies of pop group music-making were implemented internationally. For example, Jaffurs' (2004) American study moved out of the school classroom to the garage where the teenage band rehearsed. Byrne and Sheridan reported a group of Scottish secondary school students who in a similar manner worked 'their own agenda' (2000, p.54) while Westerlund (2006) described these groups as 'knowledge building communities' where the teacher 'provides the tools for full and increasing participation'. In these instances, which resonate with the 12 action research sessions in this study, the music teacher becomes a facilitator supervising the student-directed learning.

In 2008, building on elements of these informal learning methods, Green formulated a new classroom pedagogy involving second-level student group music-making. This has contributed greatly to a most significant phenomenon in current English second-level education: the Musical Futures scheme. This project instigated in 2003 now involves over 10,000 children throughout the United Kingdom and Australia.

Some of the principles of this classroom methodology connect strongly with the design of the group music-making lessons in this study. For example, in the Musical Futures model, as in this Irish action research lesson design, the students perform in small groups, they play the instrument of

their choice and they often work with music that they have chosen. Their learning strategies are usually pupil-led, sometimes teacher-led and the lesson designs include an integration of listening, playing and an activity linked particularly to the music-making in these research sessions: informal composing (Green 2008, pp.149-180).

Traditional Music-Making

The existence of vibrant group performance in the Irish traditional music culture is another invaluable resource and model from which modern Irish classroom music-makers can learn. In this instance the tune or the melody is the primary vehicle for the development of technique and in this 'praxial' approach students learn by ear, often in master - apprentice mode (see McCarthy, p.61), and in a manner similar to the Musical Futures programme, they further develop aural skills with the use of recorded or online materials.

As a genre traditional Irish music is now embedded in both junior and senior second-level syllabi. The valuable work of community organisations such as the CCE¹¹ can connect directly to participatory group music-making in the classroom (see Johnston, 2013), assisting the development of rhythmic, melodic and kinaesthetic skills as well as the simple enjoyment of the music and the dance.

Other Musical Groups

Though the framework of lessons on orchestral instruments often operates on a one-to-one basis, these lessons often lead to participatory involvement in many group music-making ensembles such as youth orchestras, wind bands, training choirs, violin groups and youth jazz groups.

¹¹ Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann C.C.E.: A national association founded in 1951 and dedicated to the preservation and promotion of traditional Irish music.

In this context, the work of Music Generation¹² in Ireland is to be commended. This organisation directs a combination of philanthropist and local funding towards music education for all musicians of 18 years and under. This organisation currently works in 12 county centres and provides music tuition, organises group performances, and workshops for young musicians throughout Ireland. Other similar initiatives such as the Cross Border Orchestra and the East Meets West Orchestra bring students together musically and socially across geographical divides.

At this stage one of the strongest impressions concerns the diversity of musical and social experience engendered within these varied music-making models. In the second-level Irish classroom, it is difficult to conceive of one central impetus that might unite groups of performing musicians. However, to paraphrase Swanwick (1999), it is envisaged that in this research, it is the group music-making itself which will be the prime form of discourse, working its own style with its own instrumental combinations and perhaps finding some of the excitement that draws artists, music leaders, tutors, teachers and students to the pursuit.

In its examination of group music-making in education, this chapter has journeyed from the models of the Ancient Greeks to the diverse approaches currently implemented in second-level schools and communities today. The emergence of a philosophical approach to music education and its pathway through the aesthetic approach and the praxial philosophy has also been considered. Chapter Three remains with the concept of group music-making but now the research lens narrows considerably, focusing on second-level music teachers and their accounts of current group music-making practice in a variety of second-level Irish classrooms.

¹² Music Generation: an initiative of Music Network and funded by Irish rock group U2 and the Ireland Funds, this programme organizes music tuition and performances for young people under 18 years in 12 centres throughout Ireland

Chapter Three: The Focus Groups – Methodology Design and Implementation

Introduction

The overall objective of this research was to investigate the extent to which practice in Irish second-level music classrooms might be enriched by the inclusion of group music-making. Since this activity would be incorporated into all essential components of the Irish Leaving Certificate music syllabus later in the project, a key objective in this first phase of the study was the eliciting of information on current group performing practice from the second-level music teachers.

The data gathering considered music teachers' reflections on all manner of group music-making practice within second-level education. Of particular interest was examination of the diverse nature of this group performing practice: the shared habits, the individual approaches and in general the proliferation or dearth of this pursuit both as an extra-curricular activity and as a pedagogical strategy in the classroom. Also investigated were the connections between the teachers' individual music-making practices and their experiences of group music-making in second-level classrooms.

The chapter consists of three sections. The first introduces and outlines the rationale for the chosen research method: focus group discussions. The second section charts the development of the design of these meetings and the third section gives a narrative account of the data gathering process, the emergence of recurring themes and the progress towards overarching concepts.

3.1 Methodology

Rationale for Choice of Methodology

The activity of group music-making involves a multitude of varying and associated activities and the inherent 'situatedness' of such pursuits as discussed by Jorgensen, (2003, p.118) includes a number of creative and

educational interactions involving teachers as enablers, musical directors, co-participants, composers, supervisors and 'scaffolding musicians' (see Byrne, 2007, pp.301-319). In this study it was therefore important that the method of amassing data could access a representative and comprehensive sample of these diverse pursuits in as many contexts as possible. A series of discussions, which could generate amounts of relevant data in a dynamic and interactional yet relaxed manner, was needed. Exactly such 'exploration of collective memories and shared stocks of knowledge' is outlined by education theorists Kamberlis & Dimitriadis, (2005, p.903), as a type of group discussion-based activity where 'pedagogy... and interpretive enquiry intersect and inter-animate each other' (ibid.). This discussion method, namely focus group research, was chosen because it could be adapted in this research context to explore some of the integral elements within current Irish practice in educational group music-making and it would generate relatively large amounts of data in an efficient manner.

Further consideration identified several other important features that would enrich this particular research. For example, the focus group approach had the potential to unlock the type of data that might seem trivial, unexceptional or unimportant but that comes to the fore as critical. Such instances include situations when 'like-minded groups begin to revel in the everyday' (ibid. p.903), or the sort of information that may not be reached in individual memory but that might emerge within group discourse (see Lather and Smithies, 1997 and Radway, 1991). It was further noted that, as in the work of Barbour and Kitzinger (1999, p.170), focus group discussion would allow the participating music teachers enough authority to 'own' their interactive space as a type of collective debating activity while sharing anecdotes on each other's experiences and points of view. The researcher would be present, encouraging and attentive to the group interaction but in the terminology of Fine (1994), the discussions would be 'de-centered'. It was anticipated that this approach might help all participants work together, against 'premature consolidation' of any understandings within the topic (see Lather 2001, p. 218).

Some problematic issues relating to focus group research methods were also considered: first, the possibility that a group meeting of up to ten participants engaging in conversation for little over one hour might offer a more shallow understanding of the issues than those emerging from one-to-one interviews (Hopkins, 2007, Kreuger and Casey, 2009) and second, the belief that some emerging thoughts and notions might conform to the dominant idea present (Hopkins, 2007). In effect, the overall two-part design of this research produced its own significant counter-arguments to these questions. First of all, the topic itself, 'group music-making in Irish second-level education', was of a non-personal nature and it was addressed to music teachers working within their own profession. These teachers had volunteered their participation in this research, so it was unlikely that they might feel the need to conform or to compromise their views. Furthermore, additional one-to-one interaction and collaboration was planned for the second phase where there would be considerable opportunity for some teachers to include additional opinions and implement other significant ideas as they emerged.

Review of Focus Group Research Literature

Focus group methodology first emerged as a research tool almost a century ago and has been associated with the work of social psychologist Emory Bogardus since 1926 (Wilkinson, 2004). There has been considerable variation in the nature and format of this research method and it has been implemented in several distinct fields including consumer opinion on US military involvement in World War Two (Merton and Lazarfield, 1950), political emancipation (Freire, 1973), and feminist activism (Madriz, 2003). Since the late 1950s and 1960s, the method has been used most extensively within market research, particularly to explore customer preferences for commercial products (Conradson, 2005).

The actual term 'focus group' first coined by Merton, Fiske and Kendall in 1956, applied to a particular approach that involved the researcher asking specific questions *after* having completed a considerable amount of research. However in current studies, where most group

interviews are now designated 'focus group' interviews (Fontana and Frey, 2005 p.703), the more common approach is to involve a group in discussion at an earlier stage in the research. This approach may have various purposes: for example to stimulate recall of specific events, to identify key issues, to pre-test (for example, the wording of a survey), or to triangulate with other collections of data.

In the field of social sciences and more particularly research in education, the idea of a focus group discussion or negotiation, described as a 'staged conversation' (Kamberlis and Dimitriadis, 2005 p.904) has grown in the last 30 years as an important instrument of qualitative research, (see Bloor et al 2001, Fontana and Frey, 2000 and Morgan, 1998 & 2000). In relation to music education, several studies involving focus group discussion have been carried out since the turn of the century. Some have proven particularly effective in eliciting the opinions and perceptions of music teachers and educators (see Mac Donald and Byrne, 2000, Yourn, 2000 and Wai Man Lam, 2004).

In the context of this research a method was required that could bring together teachers from educational locations across Ireland in order to examine group music-making as an educational and social practice. Here also, as in the multi-site study of Ballentyne et al. (2012), the focus group discussion could be an efficient data-gathering process.

The positioning of the focus group session in this study was a further consideration. In this instance it seemed logical to implement such discussions early in the research but it was decided against a repeat of the method at a later stage. Following the action research, a large amount of data would already be collected via the transcripts of video recordings, continued collaboration and feedback involving the teachers and the addition of new voices, namely the student group music-makers. It was therefore considered that the framing of this two-phase enquiry with a further discussion (see Yourn, 2000) would move the focus from the centrality of the research: the activity of group music-making. In the event the existing sources provided

rich data and, as will be further outlined in Chapter Five (p. 104), they were supplemented with feedback from short teacher and student questionnaires.

The Pilot Focus Group Discussion

Since this study intended to generate data from the conversations of practicing music teachers using the focus group method, it was concerned with the dynamics of this manner of social interaction; how the participants would inter-relate while deliberating various issues and how their accounts would be 'articulated, censured, opposed and changed' (Kitzinger, 2005, p. 58). It was also clear that in order to allow themes to develop, the discourse would need to be loosely structured with just enough general prompts to set the conversation going in a focused direction.

In order to refine and define these issues, a pilot study was organized and the purpose of this event was two-fold. Firstly, it was hoped that a sample of current opinion might inform and guide the design of the focus group framework. Secondly, it was envisaged that the research design would benefit from a trial experience of group conversational dynamics within an hour-long discussion.

A conference suite in a west of Ireland city hotel was selected as the venue for the pilot discussion, and in November 2009, four second-level teachers with professional music teaching experience of between one and seven years music were recruited. Three of these teachers were music graduates and one of these, having recently graduated, was recounting her experiences in her first professional post. Another teacher, though a graduate in mathematics and geography, was a practising multi-instrumental musician engaged with extra-curricular music, instrumental music tuition and the promotion and first-time implementation of music as a second-level curricular subject in her school. The student population in the chosen schools ranged from 150 students, to over 800 pupils and the schools in question were situated in counties Limerick, Clare, Galway and Sligo.

In order to promote as much interactive discourse as possible, (Radway, 1991, Lather & Smithies, 1997 p.903), a loosely structured plan

was adopted. Following welcome and introductions, the researcher outlined the topic for discussion. Each of the four teachers was then invited to provide short verbal music-teaching profile and thereafter, the researcher stepped back and observed the discussion proceedings.

In the event, the teachers responded with ease to this first task, describing familiar music teaching backgrounds and situations. They focused on their individual instrumental and vocal music-making, citing the usefulness of these skills in the second level music-making context, the positive effects of these interactions and the consequent special qualities in the student - teacher relationship. The central discussion topic was then initiated by the question, 'How is group music-making happening in your secondary school?'

The dialogue, which had hitherto comprised the four teachers speaking in turn, now became increasingly interactive and fixed on the subject of extra-curricular music-making. A rich array of activities was discussed, from involvement in musicals to talent competitions and from music exchanges to choir concerts. This exchange, which continued for over 15 minutes, was progressing into the second half of the hour-long meeting when the researcher intervened by asking if the participants could direct their deliberations to the area of curricular group music-making in the second level classroom.

The enthusiastic conversation continued with three teachers describing practical group playing in their classes with one teacher in a contrasting scenario, bemoaning the complete absence of group music-making in her classroom. She further explained that only three out of the five scheduled classes for Leaving Certificate music had been provided, since her school management reasoned that 'there was only the theory to cover in the

classroom anyway'.¹ In the school's estimation, all the examination related practical music-making was taking place outside of timetabled school hours.

Other discussion topics included the blending of curricular and extra-curricular group music-making, the description of various systems of rehearsing and working on the edge of the school day and the feeling that music teachers in secondary school worked 'at least two jobs in one', (see Swanwick, 1999, p.100). After an hour and a quarter the researcher called the discussion to an end and thanked all the participants.

3.2 Towards the Focus Group Design

Following this account of the pilot study, examination of the issues which emerged and which relate to the design of the actual focus group framework ensued.

First, it was noted that all the participating teachers in the pilot discussion were young with relatively short terms of teaching experience, (one contribution being that of a very newly qualified professional), so it was decided that subsequent focus group discussions should consist of a more representative sample with regard to professional experience. Second, since the views of the pilot group and the data generated detailed experience gleaned solely from counties along the west coast of Ireland, a plan to recruit a more countrywide representative spread of current professional practice would be adopted.

Next, while it was felt that the accounts of the music-making profiles proved a suitable starting point allowing the teachers to warm to the discussion process, it was also noted that with a larger sample of six to ten

¹ The syllabus is designed so that its objectives can be realised through two years (180hours) of classroom study (An Roinn Oideachais 1996, p.3). In practice, this often results in a time-table allocation for music consisting of five classes per week with each class lasting approximately 40 minutes.

The syllabus structure allows for a 50% performance elective and this is the most overwhelmingly popular choice (see Chapter One p.5).

participants as recommended by Lichtman, (2006), this procedure might prove unduly time-consuming and also impinge on the natural conversational dynamic for a significant section of the discussion. It was decided therefore to introduce a very short questionnaire, designed to amass similar data from all participants simultaneously and in a shorter time (5 minutes), thus leaving more space for interactive conversation on the central topic.

When outlining their relevant professional profiles in the pilot discussion, the music teachers had described the significance of their various instrumental skills and it became clear that this concept was linked to the teacher student relationships formed during the activity of group music-making in the classroom. Accordingly, the subsequent questionnaire included specific closed questions that would access data regarding the teachers' individual habits of musical performance while also relating to their instrumental instruction and performance at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Towards the end of the pilot discussion it was observed that the topic of conversation was moving fluidly forwards and backwards from extra-curricular to curricular group music-making. It followed that within the research subject, there were two particular points needing clarification. First, the term music-making was emerging as a multi-faceted concept and before the groups could deliberate, they needed to formulate a common working definition. Second, because of the nature of the research question it was necessary to provide specific data on both *curricular* and *extra-curricular* group music-making. It was therefore determined to encourage each participating group of teachers to begin by formulating a working definition of the term 'group music-making' and also to prompt focus on the two distinct forms of group music-making, *curricular* and *extra-curricular*, with separate questions.

The following table illustrates the connections between the issues that emerged during the pilot study and those that contributed to the focus group design.

Table 3.1 Towards the Focus Group Design

Emerging issues in pilot study	Impact on focus group design
1. Sample of teachers have relatively little professional experience	1. Recruitment of a more representative sample
2. Sample of participants are limited geographically to the west of Ireland	2. Recruitment of a more country-wide spread of practicing music teachers
3. Teachers' accounts of individual musical profiles time-consuming, not conducive to dynamic discourse	3. Completion of a short introductory questionnaire replacing these individual accounts
4. Importance of teachers' individual instrumental skills in constructs of their professional profile	4. Use of closed questions in the questionnaire to access more detailed data in this context
5. Confusion over the term 'group music-making'	5. Formulation of a working definition of 'group music-making' for each discussion group
6. The often seamless blend of discussions on curricular and extra-curricular group music-making	6. The implementation of two separate questions to clarify the differences in these activities

The table 3.2 below illustrates the framework for the subsequent focus group discussions following the incorporation of findings from the pilot study.

Table 3.2 Framework of the Focus Group Meetings

Focus group meetings
1. Welcome and introduction
2. Completion of short teacher profile questionnaire
3. General enquiry to establish a working definition of group music-making
4. Examination of <i>extra-curricular</i> group music-making in current practice
5. Focus on current <i>curricular</i> group music-making
6. Discussion of other topics related to group music-making
7. Thanks and closure

3.3 The Implementation of the Focus Group Research

The Focus Group Sample

The participation of teachers was voluntary and the process of their selection had to be executed within the prescribed guidelines and in accordance with stipulated ethical procedures of St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin. To begin, the researcher contacted the chairperson of the national organisation of second-level music teachers in Ireland, the Post-Primary Music Teachers Association (PPMTA) seeking permission to circulate an online letter outlining the nature of the study and requesting voluntary participation (see Appendices A and B). When the total of 28 teachers (1.5 % of the total PPMTA membership) responded by email, phone and post, they were supplied with a statement giving more details of the project (see Appendix D). Outlined in this form was the purpose of the research, the nature and timespan of the commitment and the requirements of participation. In addition, arrangements for the protection of confidential data were summarised, the teachers were given pseudonyms and asked to confirm the voluntary nature of their involvement (see Appendix H).

Of the 28 respondents, six were from Dublin city and county, four each from counties Cork, Galway and Mayo and the remainder were teaching

in counties Clare, Roscommon, Westmeath, Louth, Tipperary and Donegal. There were three separate discussion groups each consisting of 6-10 second-level music teachers (28 in all). These teachers were working in rural, town and city schools, and in environments that varied from community, religious, private and single sex to co-educational schools. The size of the music classes discussed spanned from just 4 to over 30 students and the teachers' professional experience ranged from the newly qualified to those with almost 30 years' service.

In the three focus group sessions, the same questions and prompts were implemented in the same order (see Appendix E) in so far as the direction of the discussions would allow. Analysis of the emerging data from the three sites was then collated as from within one large body of information.

The Focus Group Sites

There was a cluster of teachers from the west of Ireland included in the cohort of participants who volunteered, so it was possible to organise the first of the three focus group meetings in this area. This meeting took place in June 2011 in a hotel conference room in county Mayo.

For the other two gatherings, the occasion of the national Annual General Meeting of the PPMTA (2011), proved a very fortuitous opportunity. A weekend convening of this vibrant and strong association housed approximately 200 music teachers in a hotel in central Ireland and the second and third meetings took place during this conference. Both of these meetings used what is considered the desired maximum for such focus group gatherings (Lichtman, 2006): that is ten participants each. These teachers were working in all parts of Ireland. It was additionally fortunate that because of the dynamic nature of the conference, the teachers were already in reflective mode; interacting energetically with various aspects of second-level music education. Thus their pathway to engagement with this particular topic, 'group music-making in second-level education', was approached with immediate ease.

The Teacher Profile Questionnaires

Situated within an essentially qualitative research process, a questionnaire could be thought of as something of a substitute to direct conversational interaction. In this study however, for all three gatherings, the opening atmosphere was informal and dotted with light exchanges as all the participants completed a common task providing respective answers to the questions, all of which were linked to the topic of their music-making.

As can be observed in Appendix E, the questionnaire consisted of sixteen short questions. Nine of these were closed questions with a three-box choice for answers; three more involved factual replies to 'what-when-where' type questions and the remaining four required a short list of two to five items in response. In all cases, the answers involved were factual rather than evaluative or reflective; and participants were asked to reveal information regarding their professional teaching situations, their musical training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, their teaching location and their current habits of musical performance. It was envisaged that the completion of the questionnaires would take approximately five minutes.

Towards the Data Analysis

The following account charts the progression of the analysis from its inception in the group discussions to the emergence of educational and pedagogical concepts and principles. These in turn would influence the design of the action research in the second component of the study.

Apart from the quantitative coding of the short questionnaire responses, the central methodological approach to the focus group data was qualitative. This involved the recording of descriptive accounts of the teachers' discussions as complete transcriptions and the subsequent 'drawing out' of these narratives as studies of both musical learning and social behaviour in second-level school environments.

Writing in their qualitative data analysis sourcebook (2013, p.5), Miles, Huberman and Saldana state that methods which are 'dependable,

reliable and replicable in qualitative terms must be used to capture the complexities of the social worlds we seek to explain'. A methodological response to rich data often involves, as Keith Punch notes (2009, p.170), equally complex and often overlapping methods of data analysis. In this study, the inductive processes overlap and this concurs with the approaches of both Miles and Huberman, (1994) and Lynn Richards (2005).

The initial work involved the elucidation of common themes or codes from the narrative transcription in a system of data interrogation as outlined by Richards (2005, pp.70-72). These themes were then developed into overarching categories or concepts (see Miles and Huberman, 1994, pp. 55-72). The three stages of the analysis: the narrative, the themes and the concepts, completed a cycle, which runs as follows. First, the teachers' discussions were transcribed, second, these transcriptions generated important themes and third, the themes were organised in three overarching concepts.

To begin, all focus group discussions were recorded on a digital audio recorder and then transferred to an Apple computer for storage. As soon as possible the researcher's field notes were augmented with written narratives - one for each of the three discussions. In order to capture the freshest possible response, these notes were completed within approximately 24 hours of each discussion.

All of the conversations were then fully annotated, and a session of purposive reading occasions, augmented by the researcher's observations, was instigated. The responses were reread, checked for accuracy and pitted against the complete body of the transcription texts to test their significance. Sections of conversational data, which appeared to link strongly to aspects of the research question were thus identified, segmented and organised loosely in groups.

Using Richards' method designed to 'open up the data' (2005, pp.70-72) these loosely ordered clusters were then interrogated by the researcher using simple questions such as 'Why is this interesting?', 'Are there other

similar instances of this phenomenon?' and 'How, or in what manner does the data relate to the research question?' Thus records of what appeared significant and noteworthy were probed and challenged to consolidate and refine the issues as the analysis moved towards important recurring themes.

At this juncture, a sample of segments from teachers' conversations (in two different group discussions) illustrates the progress from descriptive data through emerging themes to overarching concepts. The interrogation had followed Richard's three-step process with stages entitled: *conditions*, *consequences* and *strategies and relationships*. First, the *conditions* that gave rise to the teachers' statements were questioned. For example teachers Sarah and Sabina stated,

We have a little session and the kids are telling me, 'Oh this is great tune this'll work really, really well' So I've found they're teaching me! (Sabina)

In the talent show this year I was shocked with how much I didn't have to do. They [the bands] were so good! (Sarah)

Then numerous sub-questions were posed such as 'What was interesting about the conditions in both of these group music-making situations?', 'In what musical genres were the groups performing?', 'Were the activities of the students curricular or extra-curricular?', 'What were the learning methods within these processes of group music-making?' and 'What might the students or their teachers have been feeling?' Responses to these questions helped move the data more firmly into themes or topic codes.

Secondly, the research examined *the consequences* of these statements. In this instance, the possible relevance of the emerging topic codes to current and working theories of music education were noted. For example, a description of what Sarah 'didn't have to do' in relation to the rehearsal of the rock bands led towards the topic of 'independent learning pathways' and the research was guided towards a discussion of the informal learning practices within Irish traditional music and to the methods used in the successful 'Musical Futures' project in Britain (Price and D'Amore, 2007).

Continuing in this manner, further queries emerged organically, such as: 'What would happen if the student music-making groups were allowed to follow their own learning paths? Would this pedagogical approach work in specified genres only, for example Irish traditional music or popular music? Could independent pathways be enjoyed within the essential activities of the established Leaving Certificate curricular framework?'

Returning to the third step, possible *strategies and relationships* were considered and these in fact constituted the first drafts of the group music-making lesson plans. In collaboration with the teachers, these emerging ideas were shared, reworked or changed thus linking a focus group topic such as *independent learning pathways* to connect with the design of group music-making activities in the classroom. At this stage, the lesson plan was very malleable and could consist of elements of free choice or include a task that might be completed in a number of diverse and creative ways. For example, the teacher and the researcher could make every attempt to encourage a relaxed and convivial atmosphere, or teachers could choose working material of a particular genre for their music-making groups.

At this juncture a list of fourteen significant themes or relevant topics emerged² (see the footnote and also Appendix O) and the process now moved on towards more all-embracing concepts. For example 'The Little Session' where the student group seemed to be teaching the teacher linked at first to two important themes: 'independent learning pathways' and 'student-teacher relationships'. Finally it was segmented and filed under each of the three overarching concepts.

² These fourteen themes are: curricular music-making, extracurricular music-making, student autonomy, variety in teacher response, competition, musicking, self-identity, special relationships, inclusion/involvement, behaviour-altering, autotelic experiences, fun on the edge of the school day, extra curricular performances, and enjoyable experiences.

In the analytical processes, these three main concepts developed alongside one other developing and consolidating throughout both phases of the data gathering. All were equally significant and their emergence from the fourteen themes is charted in the third section of the following chapter (See figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). The three concepts were named as follows: 'Flexible Learning Pathways', 'Musical Becoming' and 'Jouissance and 'Flow'.

The progress of a fragment of narrative data through the themes, towards the overarching concepts is illustrated in the following table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Towards the Concepts

Conversational data	Themes	Over-arching concepts
Student to teacher, 'This is a great tune'	Independent learning pathways	1. Flexible Learning Pathways
Teacher in focus group discussion, 'They're teaching me!'	Student-teacher relationships	2. Musical Becoming
Student to teacher, 'This'll work really, really well'	Satisfaction and the joy of 'joining in'	3. 'Jouissance' ³ and 'Flow' ⁴

With an illustration of the methods of analysis in place, Chapter Four, which follows, now charts the course of the actual meetings (as outlined in Table 3.2 p.59). It will consider the responses from the questionnaires first, next the establishment of a working definition of 'Group Music-Making' and finally, the analysis of the focus group discussions.

³ 'Jouissance': See Chapter Nine, pp.227-232 for more detailed discussion.

⁴ 'Flow': See Chapter Nine pp.232-234 for more detailed discussion.

Chapter Four: The Focus Groups – Analysis and Data Gathering

Introduction

This chapter begins with analysis of the teachers' profile questionnaire. An examination of the focus group discussion, which outlines the emergence of fourteen important recurring themes and the subsequent development of the three over-arching concepts, will follow.

Since the research design of this complete thesis constitutes two distinct phases, the analysis of this first component will include pointers dotted throughout the data that connect forward to the second research phase of the study, the action research. Situated within the focus group analytical accounts, these action research pointers are so called because they act as a bridge connecting the two phases of data gathering and linking significant elements within the focus group analysis to the subsequent design of the lesson plans for the action research.

4.1: The Questionnaire Responses

The questionnaire, which the teachers completed in the first five minutes of each focus group meeting, examined issues surrounding their professional profiles, their instrumental performance, current performing routines, preferences for particular musical genres and their various experiences within performance-based, undergraduate music education.

In an article examining the identity construction of music educators, Froehlich (2006, p.2), urges music teachers to examine their own lifestyles for clues as to how their 'selves', both professional and personal, relate to the classroom music-making. She cites important reflective questions which resonate with this study; 'What has shaped me musically?' and 'How do I inter-react in the musical situations I encounter daily?' (ibid. p.18). As will

become apparent in this account, musical preferences become particularly relevant and individual abilities make significant contribution especially in situations when the teachers participate alongside the students in performing, supervising or directing roles.

Teachers' Performing Practice

One of the most noteworthy findings was the link between group performing activities in the classroom and the individual instrumental practice of the music teachers. For example, Paul, who described a thriving lunchtime guitar club in his school, was an accomplished jazz and pop guitarist himself. Aoife, who organised the after-school fiddle class, was a gifted Irish traditional fiddle player, while Hannah, working to boost the morale of her choir, was also a singer.

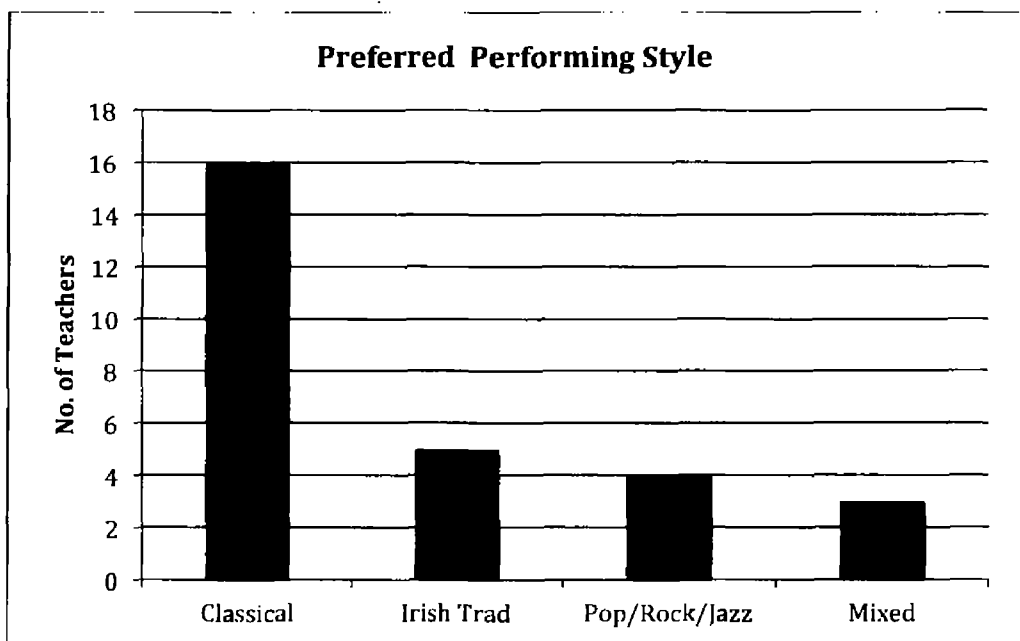
When the teacher participants were asked to describe their current modes of instrumental practice, an interesting picture emerged. Within this cohort of 28 participants, 16 teachers reported a strong link to the genre associated most often with music teaching: classical music. Considering the historical association between Classical or Art Music and music education that links as far back as the Ancient Greek civilisation, one might have presumed a stronger predilection than this to be the case. On the other hand, by 1996, the then newly-revised Leaving Certificate music curriculum had broadened to include music in many different genres and those teachers in their 20s and 30s (exactly half of the participating cohort), would themselves have been influenced by the widening of such horizons during their Irish second-level music education.

Furthermore at this time (the mid-1990's), the popularity of Irish traditional music was continuing its expansion, and it was being advanced in no small manner by phenomena such as the furtherance of C.C.E¹ led

¹ Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann, C.C.E.: An association founded in 1951 and dedicated to the preservation and promotion of traditional Irish music.

community-based teaching programmes and seisiúns,² the expansion of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann³ and the associated competitive infrastructure, the increasing popularity of young Irish folk groups and the internationally known theatrical show 'Riverdance'. While it is perhaps surprising that in this instance, only 5 of the 28 teachers cited 'Irish traditional' as their main performing style, it is notable that these teachers were among the younger participants. So it is certainly possible that this finding constituted evidence of the increased status accorded the Irish traditional genre since the 1996 curriculum re-design.

Figure 4.1 Teachers' Performance: Preferred Style



Linked to the predilection for the classical style was the popularity of 'the piano' as the instrument of choice for performance. When asked about 'main instrument or instruments' the majority of teachers (22 of the 28)

² Seisiún: Irish for 'session', a performance by an informal gathering of musicians, playing Irish traditional music in community venues.

³ Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann: meaning 'festival' or 'feast of music'. The all-Ireland culminating festival of a countrywide framework of competitions in Irish music and song, organised by C.C.E.

included piano in that list and of those 22 teachers, 15 put it at the top of their selection of main instruments. Again the usefulness of such a visual and 'demonstration-friendly' instrument as the piano was perhaps to be expected in any second-level school music class. It is noteworthy however that of these 15 pianists, 12 cited 'classical' as their main instrumental style, with only two choosing 'pop' and just one teacher indicating a mixture of styles.

Action Research Pointer: A

In the forthcoming action research, it is necessary to be aware of specific and individual approaches to genres that work best in each performance-based lesson. Teachers should be relaxed as they assist students, perform with them and supervise the music-making. The students in their turn can perform creatively without feeling threatened. In relation to the teachers' emerging performing profiles, it seems that they will be most likely to use the piano to introduce and demonstrate working material.

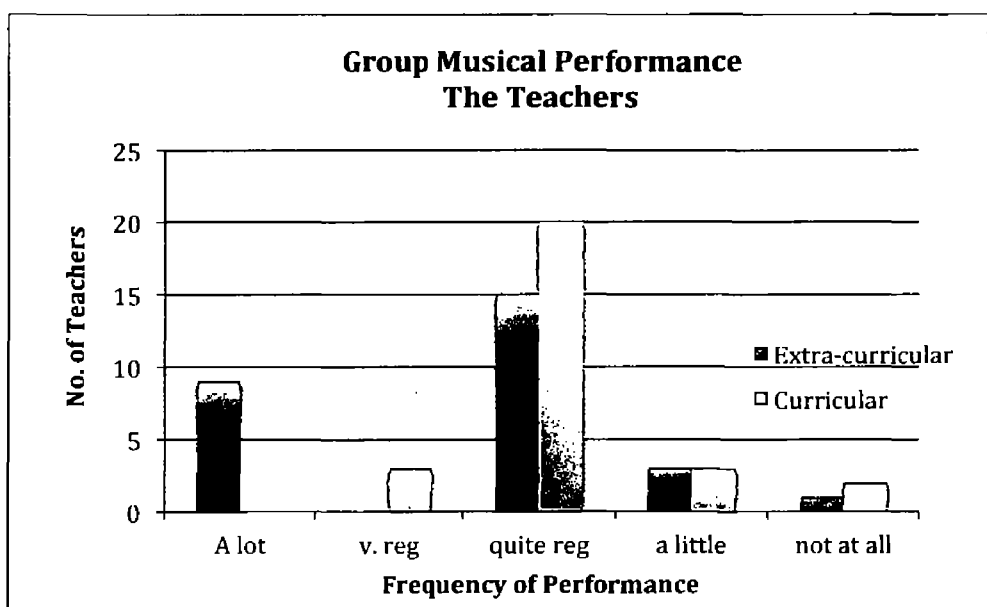
Performance in the Classroom/Out of the Classroom

The majority of the teachers stated that they enjoyed quite a considerable amount of performance outside the classroom. This finding resonates with Froehlich's study (2006) where activities relating to the *personal* redefine the *professional*. However in this instance, further investigation reveals that 'outside the classroom' actually signified both 'extra-curricular music making', and performance in another location separated from the school. Consequently in the following figure, *curricular* refers to group music making in the classroom and *extra-curricular* to all other such group music-making activities.

As figure 4.2 below illustrates, when the sets of data relating to teacher performance habits (both extra-curricular and curricular) are juxtaposed then group musical performance in the classroom takes place less frequently than that which occurs outside it in extra-curricular activities.

Nine teachers report playing 'a lot' outside the classroom while there are none in the same category performing 'a lot' with their pupils *in* the classroom. The situation regarding 'quite regular' group music-making within the curricular context, (20 of the 28 teachers) can be interpreted as quite encouraging. Nonetheless, if it is remembered that in the Leaving Certificate examination, the performing elective alone is worth 50% of the overall marks and if it is further considered that classroom performance can illuminate the other two components of the exam curriculum (composing and listening) then there is clearly room for an increase in the frequency of such creative activity in the classroom where teacher and students interact through performance.

Figure 4.2 Curricular and Extra-Curricular Performance- the Teachers



Multi-Instrumental Talent

Additional study of the teachers' response to instrumental playing demonstrates that many can perform on more than one instrument. In fact, 20 of the 28 teachers mention two or more instruments in this 'main instrument' category. This multi-instrument versatility unfolds further with the teachers displaying an open and enthusiastic attitude to 'other musical experiences' from playing the djembe, learning the uilleann pipes or the bass

clarinet to taking up the cello or conducting a male voice choir. However, only three teachers mention composing in this part of the questionnaire.

Action Research Pointer: B

These findings augur well since it is envisaged that the action research may encourage more teacher participation through group performance with the students. The teachers' openness and enthusiasm for new instrumental learning and directing experience, and their correspondingly wider fund of technical practical knowledge may contribute significantly. It suggests that as directors of, or performers within a variety of mixed ensembles, teachers will participate with ease. In this context, more emphasis on creative composition may also be encouraged.

The narrative account now moves to descriptions of the actual discussions.

4.2: Narrative Analysis of the Focus Group Discussions

Group Music-Making: A Working Definition

The conversations at the beginning of these proceedings in all three groups opened with a common focus: examination of the term 'group music-making' in order to establish its actual working definition. As a collective meaning-making exercise (see Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2005 p.904), this pursuit allowed each group to settle into distinctive conversational rhythms where they could discuss in a relaxed and co-operative manner.

For some time, all three discussions moved in a similar direction with the attention focused on the term 'group' and the all-inclusiveness of the activity of group music-making. The discourse included frequent phrases such as 'having everybody involved' and 'a group performing music together' or 'everybody can participate' and 'I'm part of this'. It pointed to the teachers' clear perception of the value of this activity.

The discussions then progressed to an examination of the nature of group music-making and here the pathways of the three discussions

diverged. Group Two moved promptly to consideration of the aim or goal of the group performing process and they detailed efforts to 'illustrate something that you're trying to teach.... by doing group performance' (Ciara). Then as other members of this cluster registered the importance of group music-making 'for its own sake' (Csikszentmihalyi 1990, p.41), they finally arrived at a general definition of a group music-making as, 'an activity where students are learning through experience.'

Members of Group One discussed a variety of activities that could be included under the heading of 'group music-making' and these included clapping, humming and composition as well as singing in a choir. This group also addressed the topic of a goal or an end product and their ultimate definition of group music-making emerged as, 'a performance-based activity with musical intention and musical outcome'. In some contrast, the teachers in Group Three disregarded the issue of objectives and end products, concentrating on the idea of involvement.

'Regardless of standard, everybody can participate'. (Peter)

No matter what your ability, you can play or participate at whatever level within that group. (Sabina)

So, to merge the three definitions together, the combined working definition of group music-making can be represented as an 'all-inclusive activity that is performance-based and that involves students working towards a musical outcome, while learning through experience'.

So far the discussions have differentiated between the happenings in the three different groups. In the remainder of the analysis, though the groups will be numbered 1-3, the emerging information will be collated as from one large body of data. The accounts are presented according to the themes and they will be organised in three clusters of related material each of which constitutes one of the three concepts. Tables 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 will subsequently illustrate this development.

4.3 Emerging Concept One: Flexible Pathways in Music Education

Theme One: Extra-Curricular Music-Making

One of the most noteworthy observations during the ensuing discussions was the teachers' preoccupation with and continued focus on extra-curricular group music-making. As has been already mentioned, this area was one of four topics of conversation organised by the researcher, but analysis of the discourse revealed that it monopolised 37.5% of the actual discussion time;⁴ a proportion twice as large as that relating to curricular group performance. The enthusiasm of the teacher participants for this subject was palpable. As well as dominating the designated discussion section, energetic descriptions of extra-curricular music-making re-surfaced again and again in diverse ways, and later merged imperceptibly with that which related to curricular music-making despite the earlier clear distinctions signalled by the researcher. In the concluding conversations, relating to workloads and timetables, any mention of group music-making seemed to prompt association with both types of group performance.

Linked to the significance of extra-curricular group music-making was the diversity of teacher response and student engagement within this pursuit. Whatever the mode of group performance or the location, the conditions were as varied as the many music-making groups that were being described. The following list is taken from focus group two, when immediately after the researcher's mention of extra-curricular group music-making, five teachers enthusiastically produced this flowing list in the short time of 20 seconds!

... concerts, gigs, lunch-time recitals, sing-a-thons, talent competitions Christmas carols, religious services, orchestra,

⁴This percentage was calculated using the timings on the video recorder that related to the semi-structured four-part discussion framework where the researcher approached both curricular and extra-curricular music-making separately.

graduation masses, grúpaí ceoil⁵, senior choir, friendship week, school musicals, choirs...

In the subsequent conversations there were further examples; school music groups travelling to perform for religious ceremonies, to record a CD of their work, to play for senior citizens or with and for their peers at Primary school level. Some teachers arranged concert visits by professional groups such as the Con Tempo Quartet⁶, music groups from third level, past pupil rock bands, and cross border ensembles. Music departments also collaborated with teacher performers in other subject departments, and with visiting professional instrumental specialists. In collaboration with the local county council, one teacher organised lessons in wind and brass instruments given by a resident brass and wind tutor.

Theme Two: Curricular Music-Making in the Classroom

When the discussion turned towards group music-making in the classroom, there were also positive accounts, focusing on the energy and the fun of group music-making. For many teachers, involvement in the teaching, directing and supervising of group performance was essentially a positive experience; regardless of the location, the paucity of resources or the perceived enormity of the working task. There was also diversity within these classroom music-making sessions. Some teachers performed with their students, particularly on the instruments and styles of their specialization. Other teachers opted for the levelling effect of teaching everybody to play an inexpensive and freely available instrument such as the recorder or the tin whistle.

The whole recorder thing is great for establishing a bit of rapport in the classroom...balancing the good, the middle and the less able: the

⁵ Grúpaí ceoil: a small to medium sized ensemble of musicians playing pre-organised arrangements of Irish traditional music

⁶ The Con Tempo String Quartet are the ensemble in residence with both 'Music for Galway' and RTÉ (the Irish national radio and television broadcasting service).

established musician in your class who is super on the piano or another instrument but has never done recorder; it's balancing out and bringing up the others as well. (Maggie, Focus Group Three)

They have to play the tin whistle, even if they're grade 51 on the double bass; they have to learn the tin whistle...and then when they have five tunes on the whistle, they can branch out. (Aoife, Focus Group Two)

I do find the recorders great for the curricular stuff - for the reading, the chords, the harmony and everything ... not just for performance. Right across ... I teach through it! (Sonia, Focus Group Three)

Some teachers were directing and choreographing, 'I do a Renaissance dance with them...costumes and everything. It's great fun!' (Anita, Focus Group Two); some were supervising, and enabling, 'In my school we have a lot of rock groups and I would be the enabler, I promise you that!' (Sonia, Focus Group Three) and some supervised the students' performance. Here is a description of Sabina's class being introduced to 12-bar blues.

We do the whole 12-bar blues and they do the improvising ... they just start... one note then in twos and threes...and they get such a kick out of that and I was saying 'I really, really enjoy this!' ... That they could all now improvise over a 12 bar blues ... on the recorder! (Sabina)

Hannah talked about the joy of group singing in her class.

We sing an awful lot in the classroom.... When I'm introducing triads to them we sing the triads...doh, me, soh, 1,3,5⁷. We sing all the features; we'll sing the scales; the broken chords, and sustained notes ... anything we have to. It's too much when it's on the CD to try and find the track... instead ... whoom! We can just do it! (Hannah)

⁷ The degrees of the major scale are often worked in the music classroom by the solfa names: doh, re, me, fah, soh, lah, tee, doh or the corresponding numbers one, two three etc.

This conception of the term music-making owes a lot to the writings of David Elliott (*Music Matters*, 1995) and his coined term 'musicing' which embodies the idea that music-making involves action or 'doing' and that musicianship is demonstrated in actions as a form of practical knowledge or reflective practice. Christopher Small's similar gerund 'musicking' (1998), involving the idea that music-making is first and foremost a form of social praxis involving a blend of human and musical interaction, will be discussed later in this chapter.

Celia, a teacher from Dublin, displays a commitment to Elliott's concept of 'musicing' in her classroom.

We use practical music-making to learn...Theory is never taught at the board. It's taught through the instruments, through experience.
(Celia)

She says of her Transition Year⁸, 'It's a full year of practical work we don't touch theory we don't touch manuscripts for the whole year!'

On other occasions however, it seems that worries and exam pressures take over. Celia says 'it's sometimes difficult to re-create that energy that you'd get in the extra-curricular activity'. Sarah, a young teacher feels this pressure:

I find the Leaving Cert. works⁹ very hard to get through as well. Practical time can be for practical exams. I don't want to be wasting time ...I want to do them (the set works) in a fun way, but I wouldn't have time to do that. I'd love to be creative and I'd love us all to be

⁸ Transition Year: A one-year non-examination programme, which is often optional and which occurs midway between the Junior and Leaving Certificate cycles in the Irish second-level education system.

⁹ The Leaving Cert Works: In the Leaving Certificate course, in order to 'develop listening ability, students must study four prescribed pieces of music in detail' (The Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus, 1996, p.10). These are known as the Leaving Certificate works, and popularly called 'the set works'

playing themes on the keyboards and doing all of that, but I don't have time. (Sarah)

It is significant that while Celia relinquished manuscripts for the Transition (non-examination) Year, when she works with the Leaving Certificate examination class she also feels the strain. In addition she acknowledges that some of this pressure is originating from the students.

I never use marks in my homework. I would always record them for myself... but the minute you get into an exam class, they'll say 'Miss what did I get for that? Mark me out of 40! And I'd say 'It's a great melody you've modulated there....' 'Yeah but what did I get out of 40?' (Celia)

Paul, whose open lunchtime class is in his words really a musical 'time-out activity', gives a most colourful and perceptive description of the relaxed atmosphere and the learning therein.

This chaos ... which is in the music room ... it works so well at lunch, because they're all chatty, they're all relaxed and it's a time-out ...it's seen as a time -out activity.

Interestingly, he too is not happy to bring this rich experience into the Leaving Certificate classroom: 'If I do that during the day, I would have a 6th or a 5th year [student] come up to me and go: 'This isn't on the course!'

Action Research Pointer: C

Despite the researcher's efforts to differentiate between curricular and extra-curricular music-making, there seems to be, in the experience of the teachers, a genuine merging of curricular and extra-curricular group music-making experiences. The findings at this stage indicate that there also exists a polarisation between what is perceived as informal 'time-out' group music-making on the one hand, and more serious academic musical activities on the other. It appears that group music making, whether it occurs in the classroom or out of it, is perceived as a 'time-out' activity. Consequently, in order to advance its status, the pursuit of group music-making itself needs to be incorporated into those curricular components, which are perceived as being traditionally more academic.

Action Research Pointer: D

In music, as in all other second-level subjects, there exists the potential for teachers and students to become stressed because of academic pressures. However, it appears that music has unique mechanisms for dealing with such a situation. Teachers can introduce an energetic activity, involving group music-making but which also links clearly to the Leaving Certificate course. If this music-making activity is enjoyable for its own sake, as well as being effective in leading towards the desired learning outcomes, then pressure will be relieved in more than one way. However, referring back to pointer A, since there exists diversity in teachers' methodological approaches, the need for the action research plan to be inclusive must also be considered.

Theme Three: Student Autonomy

The discussions also regularly touched on the independent directions taken by students: some who worked alongside the Leaving Certificate specifications task, and some who enjoyed being put 'in a spot'. Some who

were more confident could direct aspects of their own learning and devise independent methodological responses to the task.

Experienced teacher Nicola is proud of her group as the following extract shows:

Sometimes some students come to the fore in class. Obviously they're good performers, be they piano players or traditional players ... and they tend to lead and make suggestions to others. There are times you wouldn't be involved at all ... as a teacher you wouldn't be required! (Nicola)

She describes the informal arranging of a traditional song:

A couple of girls, they play concertina, fiddle, wooden flute and you'd hear those making harmonies and humming away. (Nicola)

Here is Sabina's experience:

After Christmas I start a traditional group ...that's very much the kids telling me and showing me and saying ...'Oh isn't this great tune ...this will work really, really well' ... so I find *they're* teaching me. (Sabina)

Peter agrees but his experience involves a different genre. He describes himself as 'the boss' when it comes to traditional Irish music but as more of a facilitator and 'somebody who just plays along' when the students are 'leading the stuff they're into' (i.e. the rock band). As previously mentioned, young teacher Sarah describes how she stands by watching the rehearsal of her rock groups and admits, 'I was shocked by how much they didn't need me!'

Theme Four: Self-Directed 'Musicing'

Often, it seems these students are in control of the learning pathway for themselves and also, through peer instruction, they are supporting their classmates. Embodying the concept of *musicing*, (see Sparshott 1987, Elliott 1995), they are learning through giving example, often coping with the mixed abilities of their friends, choosing material, solving musical and

technical problems; in short, developing through the authentic, musical 'doing'.

Action Research Pointer: E

These experiences, where teacher - student relationships rotate and students can demonstrate their expertise or instruct others in varied musical genres, and social groups are central to group 'musicing'. Within one class, the more diversity that develops in this context the better since authentic involvement in the creative process is a rich learning experience in any genre and for both student and teacher.

Sometimes these group music-making endeavours spanned both curricular and extra-curricular locations. Aoife described her experience,

One year I did group work for the practical. One person was in charge and they all had to arrange for all the other instruments in the group... and it was unbelievable! ...They practised at lunchtime I had tears and everything it was so intense! They were really into it and the only problem was, they wanted to do it every single class. They didn't want to do anything else. I spent the 5th year working away at the practical and that group got really good results ... and three of them are studying [third-level] music. (Aoife)

Theme Five: Competition in Group Music-Making

In all the group discussions, including the pilot meeting, talent competitions were presented as being almost universally popular. Many teachers discussed the influence of television and media shows citing titles such as 'X Factor,' 'You're a Star' and 'Our School's Got Talent'. They detailed the corresponding willingness of the students to become involved and to help organize such events in school.

'You're a Star'... it was a really good thing... all the kids would organise it and then you'd have different rounds and then you'd eventually get to the final. (Anita)

Talent shows? Well - we run one ... and again the music prefects would be the ones who are doing the auditioning. The teachers are really side-lined until the final then they ask us to accompany them.
(Amy)

There seems to be this thing happening; talent competitions! And lots of teenagers; they love the limelight...the talent competition is the buzz ... the business... this is where they want to be... on stage performing be it dancing, singing, instrumental or whatever.
(Maggie)

The motivation to improve performance and musicianship may exist in *competitive* events. However, in these situations, there are also students who although they may have progressed musically, perceive themselves as 'losers' if they don't 'win'. So the focus on learning and improvement must be maintained, alongside the more balanced engagement created by each group critically reviewing each other's musical progress.

Action Research Pointer: F

The lesson design could include some elements of relaxed appraisal, involving creative and educational comparison between the groups. There would be no focus on, or consideration of 'winners and losers'. Instead, the developing facility to make peer critical comparisons of the musical and creative processes would be emphasised.

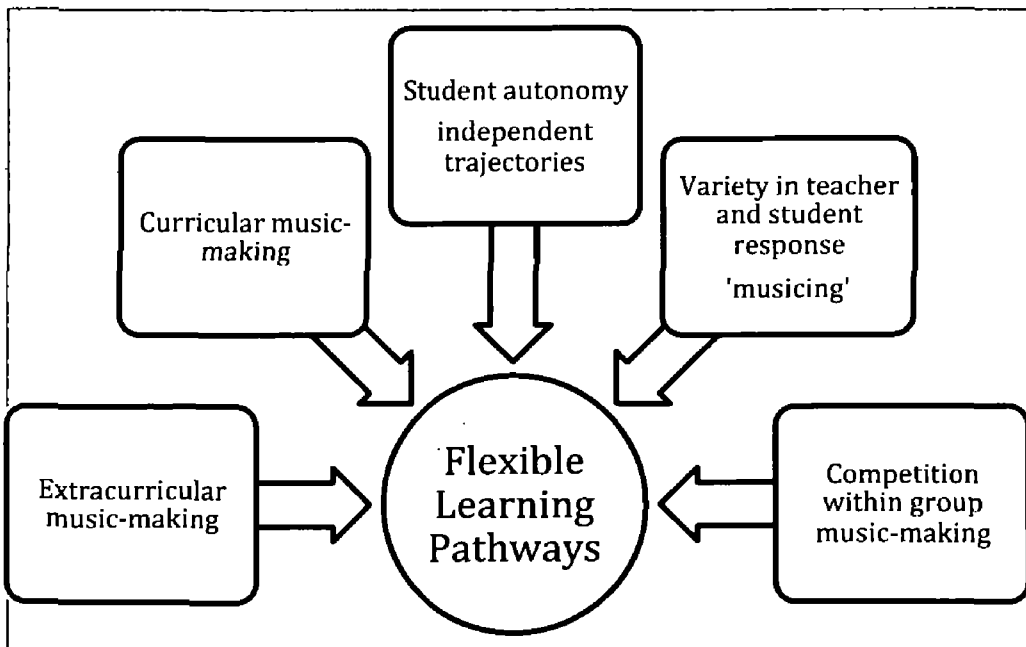
Action Research Pointer: G

Elements of group music-making within informal and creative approaches to creativity support the growth of students' self-esteem and musical confidence. However the data reveals no mention of the classical genre. The lesson design could include informal approaches to 'musicing' and these could be implemented within the more formal activities; for example those involving the core composition exercises. Such activities might subsequently encourage engagement with free composition.

The five themes to emerge in the discussion so far are extra-curricular music-making, curricular music-making, student autonomy, 'musicing' and competition within group performance. In all of these accounts, the potential of group music-making to mean different things to different teachers and students and yet continually relate to learning and developing musicianship constitutes a common thread. Within the blend of activities, as much rich learning was described in extra-curricular activities as in curricular pursuits. Student independent pathways appeared in both contexts. Competition featured strongly in every discussion, and it involved a type of intense interaction considered to prompt motivation. In the classroom however the focus needs to remain educational and stress free.

In the following figure, the five themes are now gathered under one over-arching concept entitled: Flexible Learning Pathways.

Figure 4.3 Towards Concept One: Flexible Learning Pathways



4.4 Emerging Concept Two: Musical Becoming

Theme One: Inclusion

The perception of group music-making as essentially a form of human action involving musical socialising brings with it many attendant issues. In this context, the teachers discussed relationships, communication, self-awareness, self-esteem confidence and inclusion. Their conversations resonated with Small's opening thoughts on *musicking* (1998, p.1): 'The essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action'.

They discussed the importance of being involved in an established event or an activity as well as being a member of the group or of the band when the moment becomes memorable. (See Woods, 1993, p.355) In response to attempts to describe the essence of group music-making, Sabina had two words, 'Everybody involved'. Hannah gave a longer description.

You give them out the shakers and they're tapping or playing the three notes on the recorder... I break them up into groups ... 'cause I have some students with physical needs ... you have the student who will just play away on the one note, then you'll have somebody else who'll put a rhythm to that...somebody else who'll play their tune and somebody else who's dying to bring in something that they can play. They all have bits and pieces so there's room for everyone. (Hannah)

This account has strong associations with Blacking's account of the Venda tribe (1985, p.2) and the manner in which family and friends respond with encouragement to all forms of musical engagement in young players and there is 'room for everyone' Yvonne believes this inclusive activity supports the development of self-esteem.

They may not be stars in sport so this is their time to shine. You're not a footballer but you're a very good guitarist. (Yvonne)

Émer agrees that it gives the students a chance to 'get some credit' both musically and personally while Nicola outlines the more forward-looking

nature of the experience,' If they have a positive experience as juniors[the Junior Certificate cycle in second-level], then it feeds all the way up'.

The sense of inclusivity often reaches out from the music classroom to young performing students who have not opted to study music but who are welcomed into the music department at specific times, such as Christmas, Leaving Certificate graduation and St Patrick Day in March.

It's just open to any student in the school. (Clare)

Regardless of standard, everybody can participate (Peter)

You'd be delighted if someone played an instrument. They may not be doing music but they might be a great 'trad', [Irish traditional] player and you'd be delighted to put them in with the rest of them. [the performing group]. (Nicola)

Theme Two: Self-identity - Musical Identity

Ryan, an experienced teacher, has an interesting record of participation and inclusion. Talking about his all-boy choir he states, 'I could pick out five students over the whole 30 years ... that didn't want to be involved'. In his estimation the musical group often has a status, an image, or 'kudos', instilling in the students a sense of pride in being involved and belonging to a particular set or team. Illustrating this point clearly in relation to his all-boys school, he says: 'The two things everybody would break their legs to be in were the rugby first 15 and the school choir'. Liz states that belonging to the senior choir has made a huge difference to the confidence of her girls in particular.

They feel part of the team... and on their own, they went down to the local choir and they started their own little group. They're so proud of themselves. (Liz)

These situations pertain to extra-curricular musical activities but something similar is also happening in class. Discussing performing activities in her classroom, Sabina observed this sense of belonging.

I think the kids get a great kick out of feeling ...I'm part of this ... no matter what the ability...that they can play or participate at whatever level within that group. (Sabina)

As Sabina has just mentioned, group performance has a broad appeal for students with a variety of musical skills. In the classroom context, it seems that the more talented can perform alongside the students with less experience or those with special needs, each student contributing musically according to his or her own level or ability. Music psychologist Ian Cross (2007, p.32) discusses exactly this point when he describes music as having, 'A floating intentionality that might bear quite different meanings for performer and listener, for two listeners or two different performers'. This type of ambiguity, he states, can be 'quite efficacious for groups and for individuals within the group' (ibid. p.36).

The average group of Irish second-level student performers contains a collection of players with very different levels of technical skill, different levels of musicality, understanding and experience. Within many musical ensemble scores there are often equally varied pictures as the musical parts on the different instruments lines present diverse technical challenges. This being so, group performance is at least a very useful model in which all students can be included, from the musically proficient adolescent, to the student with special needs.

In this context we can visit Hannah's choir and focus on her detail of the students who could be involved without being 'put in a spot' (see quote on p. 86). Here, the essential ambiguity within group performance might provide a type of comfort zone wherein students can manage their own musical learning without the stress of a solo performance or of unwarranted limelight.

Action Research Pointer: H

It seems that participating in a music-making team can alleviate the stress experienced by shy students for whom performing is not yet a common or relaxed occurrence and yet who deserve the chance to perform, listen, comment and compose. Csikszentmihalyi, discussing this context states, 'Self-esteem is intimately related to involving one's self in the challenges and complexities of an established domain of effort' (1993, p.204).

In this context, all group music-making ensembles in Irish second-level schools constitute an 'established domain of effort'. There is often an established code of behaviour, activities that are musically collective, described here by Cross (2007, p.36), as 'a synchronised modulation of action, attention and effect' which serve the growth of self-esteem, self-identity and social flexibility.

Hannah a choir director with 15 years' experience details how she copes with a school management team who are somewhat indifferent to her subject. She has an idea to build self-esteem within her choir.

I got badges online big red badges with 'choir' on... and they wear them with pride and every visitor who comes into the school [asks]... 'What are all these red badges?' and 'why have they got these red badges?' So they're [the students] singled out without being put on the spot and its lovely! (Hannah)

Theme Three: Special Relationships

Discussion of the special relationships between teacher and student linked to a number of these situations. One such example was the performer and teacher-accompanist relationship where the teacher would prepare the student(s) and then accompany them in the practical examination. This situation, where the student or group of students stood to gain up to 50% of the total Leaving Certificate marks, resonates with the 'highly charged

moment' as discussed by Woods (1993, p.356), and the mutual experience of such an event strengthened the student teacher relationship.

A second instance connected with two music genres in particular, Irish traditional music and popular music. It is significant that both these styles use more informal teaching strategies and employ learning methods such as those espoused by the traditional community groups, for example by C.C.E. (There are also elements of this research experience that correspond very clearly to the British 'Musical Futures' project and Green's second level classroom pedagogy (see Chapter Two). In brief, this teaching method embeds informal learning practices within second-level classroom pedagogy. The students often choose their own musical material and work in friendship groups. What is significant here is the flexibility within the teacher's role moving from director to supervisor or facilitator.

Action Research Pointer: I

These findings relate to the classroom management of the teachers and it seems feasible to include lesson plans with the potential for teachers to perform with all or any of the groups, to interact as an equal or to supervise from a distance. Different teaching and learning styles are associated with different genres and an awareness of this rich variety will help the organization of lesson plans, which should be musically manageable for teacher and student performing groups in a variety of contexts. Within group performing endeavours, it is also necessary to be aware of the diversity in ability levels and the corresponding variability in social and musical interaction.

Theme Four: 'Musicking' as Social Practice

The feeling of enjoyment and involvement in group performance extends out of timetabled curricular classroom music for Paul who in Focus Group Two describes an 'open-styled lunchtime music class:

Students that you never thought would play an instrument just come out of the woodwork. I have all sorts of kids coming to me with guitars and basses and drums and piano skills ... they'd never come up on your radar...maybe a lot of them don't do music ...I like that sort of atmosphere. (Paul)

Peter from Focus Group Three looks outside the timetable and uses the atmosphere within extra-curricular group involvement to lure other 'non music' students into the activity and ultimately into the music class.¹⁰ Sabina who performs with her students in the evenings after school agrees with Peter while Émer is enthusiastic about the development of personal communication skills in this context. She explains

To work in a group, they'd have to ... apart from all the musical stuff, they'd have to explain themselves and talk about it... and the more exercise they get at this the better. (Émer)

Theme Five: Behaviour-Altering Activities

Quite a few teachers explain that group music making seems to have a benign effect on many of its student participants (see Green, 2008, p.140). They describe how certain disaffected students are included in the various groups, in the hope that some of their untoward behaviour will be moulded by the 'musicing' (group music-making) activity itself. Émer, who teaches in an all-girls school, states:

The only place I'd have pupils who aren't in the best behaved category was in the choir and I let them in because that's the one thing they want to get involved in and be good at and they make an effort...they aren't always the good pupils ... they're especially good around the music department cause they know they won't get to use it again if they mess about! (Émer)

¹⁰ Students are permitted to join the senior Leaving Certificate cycle despite not having studied the Junior Certificate Course.

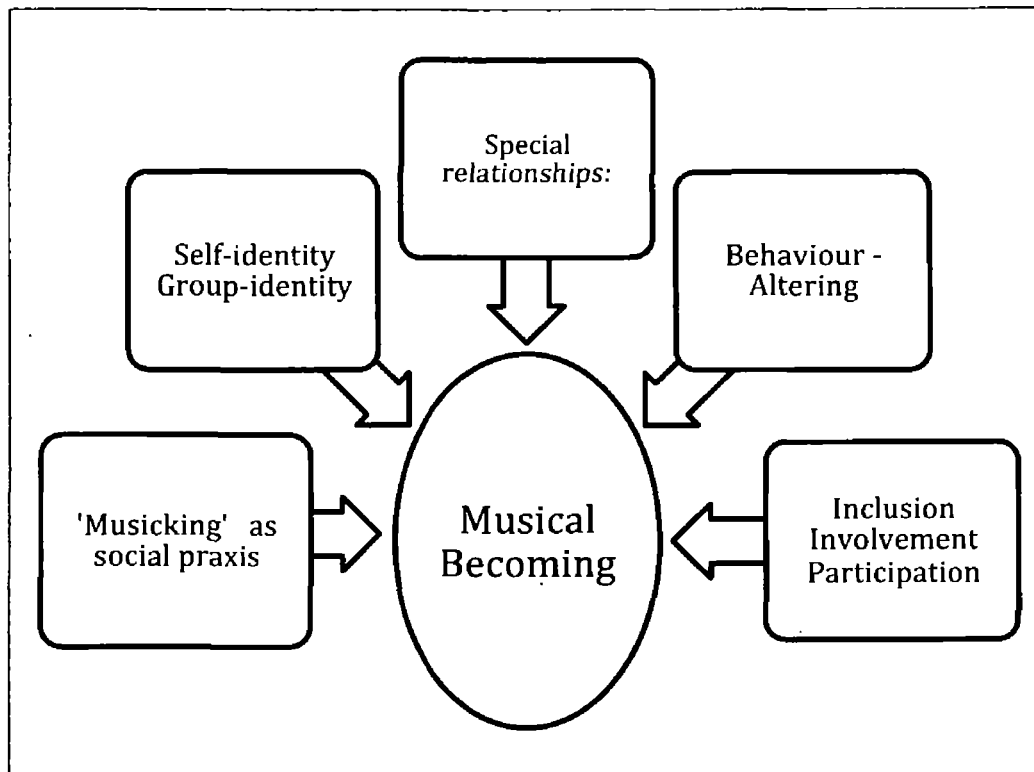
Nicola is equally forthcoming, and says that she has often been surprised when she hears from her colleagues that her 'best students who love music-making and helping others and sharing and performing' can present very differently in other subject areas!

Some explanation of this phenomenon can perhaps be found if we re-visit the idea of group music-making as a shared human activity. Among the teachers, there is a consensus that the 'common ground' in group performance is important. When the teacher is accompanying, conducting or playing music with the students, then the musically collective activity becomes an avenue for the growth of mutual respect for all involved. It is possible that a corresponding improvement in the behaviour and approach of an otherwise disaffected student might also result. Nicola sums up this view:

You've common ground. You're doing what they really like and enjoy; they get something real and tangible out of it, they can hear the results of their practice, it's more hands on, it's more human.
(Nicola)

These five themes are all related to the human activity of music-making which involves the development of both personal and group identity and instances of social interaction merging with musical interaction. They all pertain to the social and musical growth of the young adolescent at this stage hence the title of the concept: 'Musical Becoming'.

Figure 4.4 Towards Concept Two: Musical Becoming



4.5 Emerging Concept Three: 'Jouissance' and 'Flow'

Theme One: Enjoyable Group Music-Making

In these recounted experiences of music-making another common characteristic was the sense of energy, the dynamism that was engendered by the activity itself. The pursuit in question often became a memorable performing occasion, regardless of the technical standards within the performance. In all of the discussion groups this topic was discussed frequently with descriptions of fun and enjoyment peppering the teachers' accounts. In fact this enthusiasm, so pronounced by the teachers, seemed to spill over into their own dialogue with phrases such as:

They just love it (Ciara)

It's really, really good (Fiona)

You're doing what they *really* like (Nicola)

The kids get a great kick (Sabina)

They sing to their hearts content for about an hour (Amy)

An examination of the conversational patterns also reveals statements of quite an enthusiastic nature that were sometimes flowing and lengthy. The excerpt below, relating to an after school 'Glee' club rehearsal, is taken from Ciara's enthusiastic contribution.

After school we do an hour and a half, and they have singing and dancing and drama...and it's just growing into this massive thing ... but what they get out of it... they just love it! (Ciara)

In another example, Fiona gives a traditional fiddle class after school and she says:

I've just started and it's just brilliant! They're [the students]...'is it over already?' They do love it when they're performing...you can't beat it. (Fiona)

In fact, the teachers' sense of job satisfaction related frequently to extra-curricular activities and was at times palpable and inseparable from the enthusiasm of the students that they were describing. As already mentioned, this activity was often pursued on the edge of the school day or completely outside it, in the evenings, early mornings, or at lunch times. It could be supposed that such activities, eating into free time as they do, would justifiably induce complaint or negative reaction so this finding of enthusiasm in the midst of extra work was doubly significant.

So, after school we do an hour and a half ...and they have singing and they have dancing and they have drama (Ciara)

I like the atmosphere of the lunch-time music room cause when I was in school, it was so cool to be in the music-room during school ... so I guess we all try and foster that (Paul)

I've got a special choir after school on Wednesdays...we stay in on Wednesdays ... and shows take place on Sundays. (Hannah)

On occasion, some activities such as lunchtime instrumental classes or first year choir were included in the official timetable but more often, most of this

work happened on the edge of the school day. There was never a problem with scarcity of student involvement though conditions of recruitment varied. Sometimes all were welcome and on other occasions the more musically experienced students were chosen. Involvement was usually voluntary on the part of both teachers and students.

Action Research Pointers]

An important consideration is the potential of some of the positive aspects characteristic of extra-curricular group music-making to be adapted successfully into classroom pedagogy. The action research needs to find out if the energy recounted within these activities can survive such a move. Perhaps the framework of the lesson plans can go some way towards addressing this situation. In the focus group discussions, the element of joy is very obvious and satisfaction with the activity is described frequently. Experiences of 'flow' however may be more difficult to record (being unspoken), and they will need to be cautiously interpreted if, and when, they emerge in the action research.

Theme Two: Fun on the Edge of the School Day

The capacity of extra-curricular activities to involve and consume the spare time of both teacher and student in significant amounts of hard work was, in many of these conversations, accepted without question. The discussions painted a picture where many Irish secondary schools open their music room to a host of informal group music-making activities during lunchtime or after-school. In one brief aside when a teacher commented on the 'utopia of getting paid for all the extra work', the response of the group was genuine laughter and nodding of heads but significantly, no teacher appeared to object to the phenomenon of all the extra work. As a practice it seemed to have been taken for granted within the music teaching profession, linking as it does to the critical events so documented by Woods (1993, p.356-357), and the 'heights of the feeling of teaching well' (Connell 1985, p.127). This

enjoyment satisfaction and awareness of the 'peak experiences' in teaching (see Maslow, p.177) seemed to pay recompense to all involved.

As he describes his open lunchtime guitar music club, Paul's comments point to the attraction of such informal music-making for many students. 'I am amazed at who just comes in and picks up a guitar'. Little first years ... all the chords and stuff ... it's incredible'. It is very likely that his own skill as a rock and jazz guitarist gives Paul opportunity to perform and interact with empathy alongside his budding instrumentalists. On the other hand the music teachers' performing skills are not always perceived as a pre-requisite for this type of meaningful experience.

Sonia describes her school lunch time as, 'brimming with kids in the music room and all sorts of rooms around the music room...taking equipment out if there isn't enough room in the music room', and significantly in a further quip she informs the other teachers of her lack of skills in this popular music field. 'Let me tell you, I am just the enabler!'

Action Research Pointer: K

It seems a worthwhile idea to build on the particular methods that empower the students to take the lead in their own learning. There are accounts of developing student autonomy within these activities and while one significant genre in question here is Irish traditional music, similar approaches could also be used with musical material in all styles, (see Green, 2008, pp.123-124). The lesson plan could take elements of the exciting and enjoyable work in all genres and attempt to inject elements of the 'peak' experience into classroom work connecting to the existing examination syllabus.

Theme Three: Over-Whelming Job-Description - Autotelic Experiences

As the teachers discuss experiences of group music-making, many of them seem unaware they are also documenting their own extra hours of hard work. It often appears that the task of keeping the interactions within the

performing ensembles alive is never-ending, requiring constant renewal and commitment.

Music is a multiplicity of activities each requiring some specialist know-how, varying group size and different levels and types of equipment! (Swanwick, 1999, p.100)

A quote from Nicola, encapsulates the sense of a being almost overwhelmed by the sheer multiplicity of the activities

If you are a music maker you are naturally giving of your time; you are a generous person and you want to help others, so you are involved in lots...but you're torn in all different directions. (Nicola)

Ciara's description is also very positive and her commitment is considerable

So after school we do an hour and a half of singing, dancing and drama...the idea was that it would feed into the next musical... and then we're talking about getting people in to do workshops. It's just growing into this massive thing... it's nearly like a different job ... after school... but they love it...on the kids side, what they're getting out of it! (Ciara)

Herein lies the dilemma that many committed music teachers currently face as they work hard both *in school* and *out of school* hours. Discussing this issue in the *Music Educators Journal*, Estelle Jorgensen (2010, p.21), cites music teachers' problems when they feel unable to do all their necessary work during the school day. She warns of low job satisfaction and early burnout. However in the present Irish situation, it is not insignificant that these music teachers are giving time, usually their free time, and often giving it with intense activity and absorbed enjoyment. When this phenomenon is discussed by Nais, Southworth and Campbell (1992, p.200) in relation to primary level education, they suggest 'perhaps it is in the precious moments when teachers become creative artists and transcend the contradictions of the job'.

This explanation parallels with Aoife's account of her after-school traditional fiddle group. Here she is thinking of her afternoon's work:

Oh I have this after school!! But when they all come there is an energy I'm in such a good mood when I come out ...(compared) to when I go in. You know it definitely has energy to it. And they (the students) they're the same ... 'Is it over already?' They do love it when they're performing...you can't beat it! (Aoife)

Perhaps the key concept here is the energy created as both Aoife and her students become 'lifted up' by the group music-making experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1996, p.112-113), citing his theory of optimal experience, describes similar supremely buoyant encounters that are autotelic and in which participants such as chess players, rock climbers as well as musicians live totally in the moment, the deep enjoyment only being registered retrospectively. These he terms as optimal or 'flow' experiences and he describes how they occur: 'When the opportunities for action perceived by the individual are equal to his or her capabilities' (1996, p.114). The activities pursued by Aoife and her fiddle players seem to be finding their own intrinsic reward in this autotelic manner.

Theme Four: Resources and Resourcefulness

On the question of resources (or lack of), the response of this body of teachers is surprisingly pragmatic. Teachers with no permanent music room describe working on the stage of the school hall, in a corner of the gym, or they 'wander around, like minstrels with a little tape player in hand', (Ryan, Focus Group Three). Instrumental groups are split up and work in corridors, beside fire exits or perhaps in adjoining chapels.

Teachers discuss how they 'make do': they save the coupons for instruments buying them in local supermarkets; they acquire djembes, castanets and other instruments from returned holidaymakers. Others discuss with sadness the altered demographics in their working area and schools where parents can afford neither the instruments nor lesson fees. Yet these teachers gamely carry on teaching despite the lack of resources such as a music room, no safe space for the instruments and no safe or suitable space for rehearsal. Even teachers who work in the larger Irish cities speak apologetically of 'only pockets of instruments ... a few violins, one cello

but perhaps lots of guitars'. (Celia, Focus Group Two). Despite the admirable work of organizations such as Music Network¹¹ and Music Generation¹², in parts of Ireland, there is as yet no official framework of instrumental tuition that might redress this balance.

Action Research Pointer: L

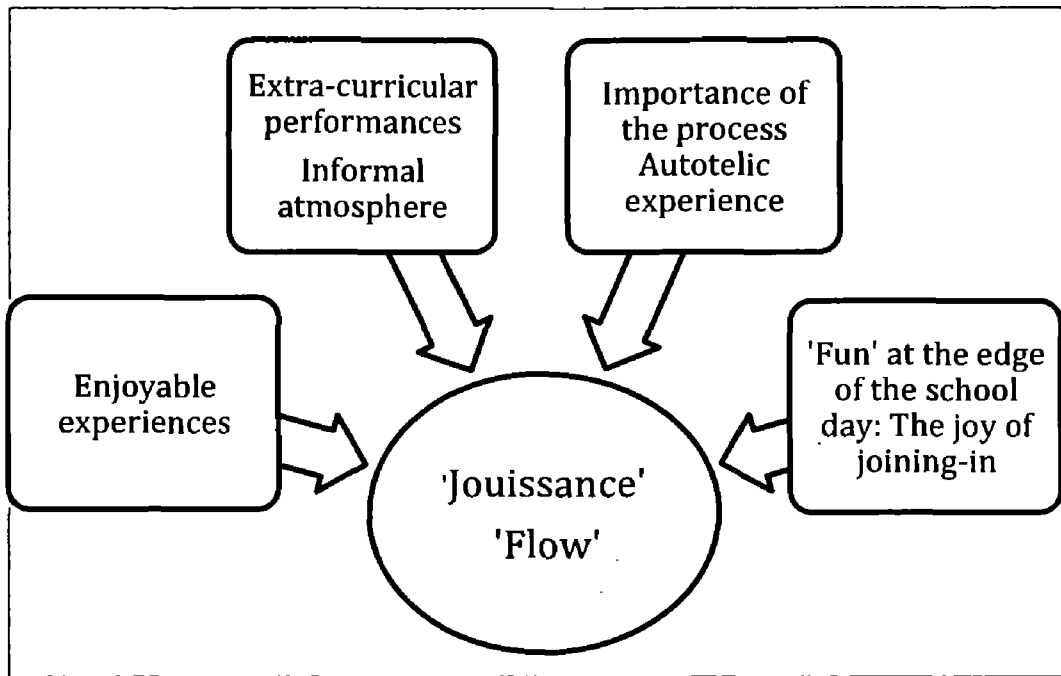
Throughout the discussions this cohort of teachers have demonstrated creativity and inventiveness as well as enthusiasm. A pragmatic teaching approach can, even in the event of poor resources, produce learning riches. On the other hand, in the absence of such resources as practice rooms with suitable equipment, the design of the lesson plans must have the potential to adapt.

As illustrated in the following figure, this third cluster of four themes forms the material for the final concept.

¹¹ Music Network: an organization dedicated to making high quality live music available and accessible to people throughout Ireland

¹² Music Generation: an initiative of Music Network and funded by Irish rock group U2 and the Ireland Funds, this programme organizes music tuition and performances for young people under 18 years in 12 centres throughout Ireland

Figure 4.5 Towards Concept Three: 'Jouissance' and 'Flow'



Conclusion

From the analysis of the discussion meetings, 14 important themes have emerged and alongside this process, a forward-looking commentary of 12 action research pointers was proposed. These pointers are revisited in the following chapter as they bridge forward, relating integrally to the design of the classroom activities.

Finally, the 14 themes are organised in 3 overarching concepts as summarized in Figures 4:3, 4:4 and 4:5 respectively. These concepts are flexible as yet and require data from the next phase to reinforce their significance. These data will emerge in the narrative account of the classroom research, Chapter Six. Each of the three concepts will then be revisited with more detailed analysis in chapters Seven, Eight and Nine.

Chapter Five: The Action Research Methodology and Lesson Design

Introduction

This chapter begins with an outline of and rationale for action research as the chosen data gathering method for the second stage of the study. It will then discuss relevant features from a selection of action research models in music education. Following this, the findings and pointers from the previous focus group component will be revisited and collated with data emerging from the pilot group music-making session. All these elements will then be brought together in the progression towards final design for the group music-making lessons.

The introduction of planned and considered methods of teaching music in the Irish second-level classroom was the central issue to be addressed in this second phase of the study. At this stage the constituents of the group music-making activities were informed by findings from three areas: first, data from the focus group discussions, second, core activities relating to specifications from the Leaving Certificate music syllabus and third, contributions from both the action research pilot study and the participating music teachers.

A series of planned music lessons was implemented in twelve second-level classrooms with practising teachers and students. The data gathering constituted a cycle of enquiry that was carried out as follows: group music-making lessons were planned in collaboration with participating music teachers. This collaboration involved telephone conversations and 'before and after feedback' questionnaires (see appendix M). The lessons were then implemented and as the study progressed the findings (which also included student questionnaire feedback), were reflected upon by the researcher and the teachers in preparation for the next group music-making class.

5.1: Action Research

This method of amassing the required data just outlined links closely to the research process entitled Action Research. The term, first coined by professor Kurt Lewin in 1944, was described in his 1946 paper entitled 'Action Research and Minority Problems' as a process involving a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action. This process of inquiry balances problem solving collaborative activities with data collection and analysis. In the 70 years following Lewin's paper, action research has evolved into a series of research procedures with impressive scope.¹ These diverse yet related procedures are divided into various categories each with their own distinctive sub-theories and two of these approaches: Cooperative Inquiry and Living Educational Theory, relate in particular to this research component.

¹Major Theories in Action Research

Action Science: the study of how human beings design their actions in difficult situations (Argyris, 1985).

Cooperative Inquiry: research 'with' rather than 'on' people' (Heron 1971; Reason and Bradbury 2001)

Participatory Action Research (PAR): building on the critical pedagogy put forward by Paulo Freire as a response to the traditional formal models of education where the 'teacher' stands in front and imparts information to the "students" who are passive recipients.

Developmental Action Inquiry: ' a way of simultaneously conducting action and inquiry as a disciplined leadership practice that increases the wider effectiveness of our actions' (Torbert, 2004, p.1).

Living Educational Theory: confronting the researcher to challenge the status quo of their educational practice and to answer the question: 'how can I improve what I'm doing?' (Barry, 2012).

Cooperative Inquiry

First developed by John Heron in 1971 and later expanded by Reason (1981 and 2001), cooperative inquiry includes active participants who are fully involved in the research decisions. This process constitutes a cycle of four different types of knowledge all of which resonate with the action plan proposed by this study. The first, entitled *propositional knowing*, involves knowledge of a proposed scheme that constitutes, in the case of this thesis, a series of lesson plans. The second, termed *practical knowing*, includes in this context both the expertise of the music teachers who supervise, scaffold and direct the music-making activities and the musical and social skills being developed and utilised by the students in the group performance pursuits. The third type, *experiential knowing*, constitutes peer feedback from the teacher and student participants, and researcher reflection that informs the data collection contributing to the subsequent re-working of the lesson design. The fourth type, *presentational knowing*, involves the crafting of the findings into pedagogical tools with the potential to illuminate learning through group music-making in classroom practice.

Living Educational Theory Approach

According to Whitehead and Mc Niff (2006), living educational theory concentrates on current experience with one's own learning and the learning of others within the action research cycles. Focusing on questions such as 'How do I (we) improve what I am doing?' and 'Why am I concerned in relation to the values of this action?' the course of this approach includes the development of action plans, evaluation of the influences of these actions, the gathering of the data and the reinsertion of modified and re-planned actions. In this group music-making project, such a cycle continuously evolved, with reflections and suggestions from participating teachers and students assisting the researcher in the re-drafting of the group music-making classroom activities.

Action Research in Music Education

With regard to recent models, Tim Cain's 2008 discussion of action research in music education is one of the most comprehensive compilations. It outlines a diverse range of studies located at different educational stages, from early year settings (Young, 2005), to conservatoires (Gaunt, 2007) and music studios (Welch et al., 2005).

Many of these studies focus on important aspects that relate to this research. One example: the value of incorporating open-ended challenges in a natural learning environment, was examined by Barrett (1994), in her study with primary-level student teachers. Hookey, also involved at this level with a combination of generalist and specialist primary-level music teachers (1994), emphasised the significance of constructing musical meanings independently. Some projects related specifically to student composition, for instance Savage's 2005 research outlining the importance of engagement in playful exploration or 'musical doodling' and the work of Conway and Borst (2001), emphasising that 'group work can be highly beneficial in the early stages of learning composition'.

Auh's 2005 study of creative teaching connected teaching strategies with the design of lesson plans. These strategies included 'teaching music with sounds not worksheets' and using a well-known television based and competitive performing format (Australian Idol) to motivate singing performance. A third strategy: that of working short and regular tasks to encourage the engagement of novice composers, connects clearly with the final lesson design for this research study (see p.119, at the close of this chapter).

Findings from some of these action research projects include strong focus on the social implications of group music-making 'getting together with friends or buddies' (Howard and Martin, 1997, p.71-82) and Davidson's conclusion (2004), that group music-making rehearsals can transform the experience of participants from 'feeling separate' to 'feeling assimilated' Focussing on the 'atmosphere of trust, acceptance, tolerance and respect for

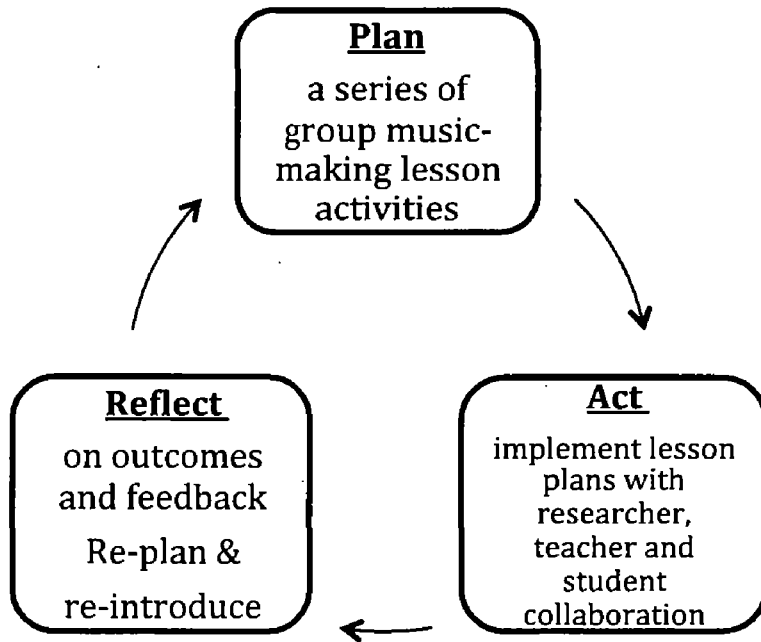
one another', as this project does, Black, (1998) stresses the worth of positive re-enforcement while Cope (1999) emphasises the processes of playing competently at social occasions rather than the construction of performance-based products.

The action research project that connects most clearly with the material in this study is the examination of aspects of the major Musical Futures project in England by Price and D'Amour (2007). Data collecting methods common to both studies include observation in second-level classrooms, transcription of meetings and questionnaires involving music leaders and peripatetic teachers. Further parallels include the age and stage of the students, their music-making in small groups, peer learning with 'real' instruments and engagement with self-chosen music. This 2007 study was however additionally wide-ranging in that it included the development of an e-learning resource and considerations of connections between formal and informal music education.

The Action Research Scheme: Plan – Act – Reflect

Elements of these action research studies will be re-visited in the organisation of lesson plans but this account will now return to the basic three-part action research framework as outlined earlier: plan, act and reflect. The following figure sourced from Lewin (1944), and also linking to the Zuber-Skerritt model (1996, p.99), illustrates the first outline of the action research process as it connects with the planned classroom activities

Figure 5.1: The Action Research Scheme: Plan-Act-Reflect



In this action research table, the material for the *plan* consists of the focus group data, elements of the Leaving Certificate syllabus, and teacher-researcher collaboration. The *action* comprises group music-making pursuits in the classroom and the *reflection* includes the deliberations of the researcher, the teachers and the students during the re-planning and implementation of the subsequent lessons.

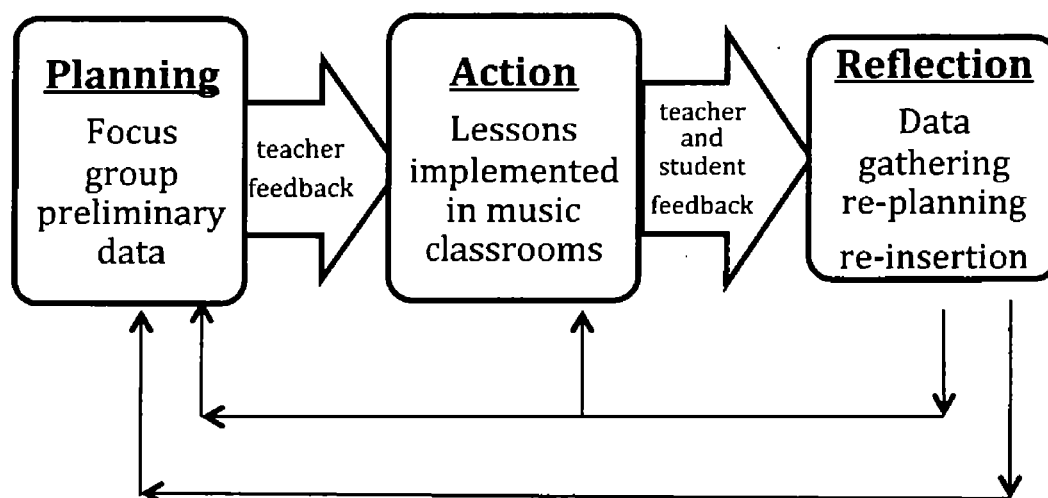
It is important to note that due to the repetitive nature of this action research cycle these three activities of planning, acting and reflecting were repeatedly modified as the research progressed. Also crucial to the process was the diverse nature of the individual teacher collaboration and planning with the researcher. Each of the twelve sessions involved a different music teacher and a new class of music students. To clarify, the character of the planning and action which was employed in an early action research session: Composing 1, was different to that implemented later in the Composing 4 session, since the activities in the classroom and consequent data gathering

and reflection were repeatedly considered and modified by the particular teacher involved as the research progressed.

The Group Music-Making Action Research Procedure

A framework was needed to illustrate the manner in which these cycles of planning, action and reflection continually adapted within the research process. Consequently, the following Figure 4:2 was developed from a combination of Lewin's illustration of multi-feedback loops (1958, p.201) and the Kemmis and Mc Taggart action research spiral (2005, p.564).

Figure 5.2: The Group Music-Making Action Research Process



In addition, there are two 'arrow areas' in the figure: one representing teacher feedback and the other including both teacher and student feedback. These are positioned according to their contribution to the process: for the action research sessions, the teachers completed brief 'before' and 'after' questionnaires and the student groups completed one feedback questionnaire immediately after their classroom session. All transcribed information relating to this feedback was analysed using a similar process to that employed for the focus group data (see the previous account using Lynn Richard's three-step stages, Chapter Three pp.64-65)

5.2: Towards the Design of the Lesson Plans

Revisiting the Action Research Pointers

With the research process figuratively encapsulated, the account now moves to the development of the lesson designs and the action research pointers (which were outlined in the previous chapter) will be re-visited in summarised format. There were twelve pointers in total and each of these prompted one or more courses of action contributing to the design of the lesson plans. They were tabulated alphabetically in the order in which they emerged from the focus group data.

However, for the purposes of further analysis linking to the design of the lesson plans in this chapter, they are now reorganised into four areas. The first of these connects centrally to the research problem, namely the status of group music-making as a pedagogical tool in the classroom. The other three areas relate to the overarching concepts: Flexible Learning Pathways, Musical Becoming and 'Flow' and 'Jouissance'.

Four tables now outline the connection between the regrouped and summarised pointers and subsequent courses of action in the music lesson plans. Each table will be preceded by a short discussion outlining the significance of the tabulated progressions.

Group Music-Making: Commonalities and Polarisation

Research pointer C, arguably the most significant observation at this stage, documented the polarisation of participatory group music-making and other musical pursuits such as reading, writing and listening. These more passive endeavours were perceived as being 'more academic' within the Leaving Certificate pedagogy. In pointer C there were also depictions of joy and satisfaction connected to group music-making activities. On the other hand, pointer D highlighted the stress experienced by both students and teachers in the Leaving Certificate examination classes. The research proposed therefore that the engendering of these optimal positive feelings, through group music-making, would help in allaying examination related stress.

Table 5.1 Group Music-Making - Commonalities and Polarisation

Pointers C and D	Courses of Action
<p>Pointer C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polarisation of participatory group music-making and more 'academic' work in the music class Lack of distinction between curricular and extra-curricular music-making - Experiences of joy in both activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of classroom activities, which connect group music-making to exam specifications in the Leaving Certificate syllabus
<p>Pointer D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of stress associated with preparation for the Leaving Certificate music examination - Proposal of group music-making as a unique means of dealing with such pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance of a relaxed, informal atmosphere and awareness of students' needs at all times - Adoption of the term 'Time Out' to embody the two-fold approach: dynamic and educationally informative, yet relaxed and enjoyable

Flexible Learning Pathways

As table 5.2 illustrates, there were five pointers (A, B, E, L and I), all relating to the concept of 'Flexible Learning Pathways'. The overlying focus was on the diversity of the students' and teachers' musical experience. The response to pointers A and B was to welcome diversity in teaching strategies, to remain open to work in a variety of genres, to design activities which could be completed by students with different levels of musical ability and to welcome whatever new musical experiences might present themselves in

the event. In addition, the possibility of different methodological responses to the same task within one class needed to be considered (Pointer E). The plans should have the potential to incorporate all combinations of instrumental and vocal ensembles (Pointer I), and be cognizant of the focus group finding that Irish second-level music teachers are resourceful and pragmatic (Pointer L), with the capacity to respond creatively to both challenge and change.

Table 5.2 Flexible Learning Pathways

Pointers A, B, E, L and I	Courses of Action
<p>Pointer A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity in teachers' own performing practice - The importance of the piano as a 'visual aid' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design of activities with the potential to be completed in a variety of styles and by students with mixed abilities - Inclusion a piano or a keyboard in every music-making session
<p>Pointer B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The breadth of teachers' musical experience and their openness to new experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporation of varied music-making activities - Acceptance of all manner of participatory musical response
<p>Pointer E</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The rich diversity in student music-making and responses to the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptance of all instrumental ensemble combinations and musically creative responses to the tasks
<p>Pointer L</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The resourcefulness of second-level music teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of adaptable lesson plans: Scarcity of resources may motivate pragmatic responses

<p>Pointer I</p> <p>- The diversity in teaching strategies and classroom management</p>	<p>- Collaboration with the teachers in design of activities</p> <p>- Awareness of teachers' and students' potential to move independently</p>
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Musical Becoming

The three pointers in this cluster: F, G and H recognised that elements within group music-making support and develop students' self-esteem. Pointer F identified the particular genres associated with this phenomenon, (popular music and Irish traditional music), and it resolved to connect such informal and relaxed approaches as were found there, with other more formal, musical styles and tasks.

'Musical Becoming' was concerned with the musical, social and personal aspects of being involved in a music-making group. In this context, pointers G and H discussed the development of confidence, self-esteem and performing identity within the activity of group music-making. It was important to be aware of the size of the groups and to implement tasks of suitable difficulty and length.

Pointer F related to the popularity of competition and the strong influence of the media in this context. It was deemed that intense competitiveness created an imbalance that was not always educationally or socially constructive, so aspects of 'winning' or 'losing' were not included in the lesson design. However, an awareness of the beneficial nature of some other competitive elements; for example increased motivation or the entertainment value of the different performances would still be incorporated in the relaxed and all-inclusive group comparisons within the lesson design. In addition, such elements of this phenomenon as could be included (keeping the well-being of all students foremost in mind), would be

given a trial application in the pilot group music-making class and monitored accordingly.

Table 5.3: Musical Becoming

Pointers F, G and H	Courses of Action
<p>Pointer F</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The popularity of competition and the influence of the media - Confidence within the Irish traditional and rock music genres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retention of the 'energy' of competitive interest - Relocation of this energy into musical peer comparisons and assessment of progress - Avoidance of the intense 'win or lose' approach to a musical product - Incorporation of informal approaches in all genres
<p>Pointer G</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The importance of the small group as an empowering learning community which increases self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintenance of relaxed and informal modes of learning that empower the students' approach to all activities - Implementation of short, manageable tasks linked to composition exercises and to composing
<p>Pointer H</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confidence and the sense of security in the music-making group as an 'established domain' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of students in groups which are small enough to be inclusive yet large enough to provide the necessary support

'Jouissance' and 'Flow'

In the discussions leading to 'jouissance' and 'flow', group music-making was viewed as a pursuit that operates on many levels simultaneously. It followed then that a group of students with different abilities could be concurrently involved with various measures of creative satisfaction. Within these diverse musical and social experiences, which would be unique to each group, the research hoped to identify instances of joy, happiness and satisfied

concentration that would mirror those recounted in the focus group discussions.

According to pointer H, these accounts of joy and satisfaction linked regularly to pursuits managed and directed by the students themselves, so the response was to design a plan that would give the students space for autonomous response and for development on independent musical trajectories.

Table 5.4: 'Jouissance' and 'Flow'

Pointers J and K	Courses of Action
Pointer J - Experiences of intense joy and concentration	- Encouragement of this response in all genres and with all activities
Pointer K - Joy and satisfaction linked to autonomous learning situations	- Inclusion of opportunities for music students to direct their own learning

5.3 The Pilot Class

It was decided to organise a pilot group music-making session in order to refine the three-activity lesson design and to ascertain the manner in which elements of the 'competition mode' could be incorporated. With the requisite permission granted from the school principal, the teacher and the parents of the students involved, this lesson was organised in a County Galway school in October 2010. As the music teacher explained, his class of 10 students had just embarked on the Leaving Certificate course at the beginning of the school year, so it was agreed that a melody writing activity would be most suited to their progress at this stage.

In deference to the 'competition mode' and in keeping with the relaxed atmosphere within the work, some terminology from media-based talent competitions was adopted. For example, this melody class was entitled the 'M Factor Class' and of the three groups organised by the teacher and the

researcher, the third team, Group C, would be called the 'M Factor Panel'. This group would circulate, listening, collaborating, and making written and verbal peer commentary on the progress of the other two groups. Groups A and B, the music-makers with instruments and voices, would each compose a melodic arrangement.

In the Leaving Certificate composition paper the melody writing activity is an individual and written task so it was hoped that this approach, involving two teams performing and one team assessing, might feel novel and enjoyable for all involved. It was also envisaged that the peer assessment would be incorporated in a relaxed and respectful manner and relate more to the progress of the melody writing than to the performed product. Group C, listening and formulating criticism, would be in effect developing their aural skills, while the two other groups would work with musical exploration, composition and performance. It was stressed that there were no 'winners or losers' in this activity and that performing and listening roles would be subsequently interchanged. Throughout the creation of the emerging melodies and the developing aural awareness of the processes, each group would work as a unit, sharing responsibility for the assessment and the musical outcomes. In addition, each musical pursuit would become a learning resource for the other groups (see Wenger 1999, pp.266-267), resulting in the integration of all Leaving Certificate components; listening as well as composing and performing.

Implementation of the Pilot class

At the beginning of the class the students were given a lively 4-bar calypso style melodic phrase and, after they had learnt to play and sing this without notation, the three groups set to work. The following narrative of their experiences is set amidst the outcomes of the event and it links to the forthcoming lesson design.

To begin, both performing groups were enthusiastic though at times some of the energetic exploration was lost in what seemed a haze of instrumental exploration. On reflection, both the teacher and the researcher

acknowledged that this first exploring activity had continued for too long (almost 20 minutes). It was decided that shorter more incremental steps would work more efficiently, the class would then be shaped more clearly for all involved, and, in corroboration with the findings of Millar, (1996, pp. 100-115), the three music-making activities could be rotated more efficiently. In addition, the term 'Time Out' could be implemented as a useful spoken signal for the cessation of one activity and the move towards the next.

At the same time the teacher felt his students ought not to be 'pushed through this process quickly' and that they needed time to reflect on their responses. This requirement became obvious at other times in the class where instead of musical performance there was what seemed like a lull in the progress: a time when the student would stare at the ground or at the wall, absorbed in thought. In other instances, the conversation was sometimes whispered and sometimes quite animated; as for example, when team B struggled to find the musical route to their melodic modulation.² All in all, the phenomenon of two groups maintaining *separate* workings of the *same* theme in the same room appeared to work well. It remained to be seen what might happen with a larger class involving more music-making groups.³

As the music teacher recounted, the students' growing awareness of transposing instruments was an independent and unexpected outcome.

One of the players was a B flat player so he had to work things out, transpose for himself and then transpose back into the 'concert' key

² The Leaving Certificate Melody writing exercise in the written composition paper sometimes specifies a modulation to a related key at a suitable point within the 16 bars. In the case of the melody being major, modulation to the dominant key is most common.

³ In most Irish secondary schools there is one classroom assigned as a music room. Instances of adjoining practice rooms and performing and recording studios are rare, and usually located in private or semi-private schools that can draw on independent sources of revenue.

for the other students. They realised the significance of this, 'cause at one point the guitar player was saying 'just play it!' and then he realised the saxophone player was thinking in a different key.

In this class of 10 students the sense of 'being in the team' or 'belonging to the group' was strong in most cases. However, group A had a very musical guitarist, John, who for the most of the session was deeply absorbed in his playing. Closer examination revealed that John's skills were intuitive and his abilities to communicate musically, for example through chord names, notation or 'guitar tab', were still developing. This situation became more obvious when in their first demonstration John elongated the second (A1) phrase by twice its designated length leaving the others in his team behind. After some collaboration, the group decided to leave this interesting 8-bar development because 'it sounded good!' The capacity to move beyond the remit seemed in this case an intuitive and musical response to the performing moment. This phenomenon, the emergence of an independent trajectory that moves outside the specifications of the examination exercise, was obvious already in the pilot group music-making session and it will be revisited in Chapter Seven (pp.188-190).

It is interesting that at the end of this class there were two melodies, neither of which met the requirements of the Leaving Certificate melody writing exercise. Granted, Team A would in time have found their way to the correct modulation; indeed the piano fragments that had punctuated their conversational efforts already contained the correct formula but the students in the group had yet to become aware of this. The demonstration of group B on the other hand, proved to be a more significant case. Their adoption of a more independent melodic arrangement could with continued work in this manner have moved into the free composition component. Mindful of the very low response to the free composition elective in the current examination statistics, recurrences of this instance would be monitored carefully in the action research.

In relation to the framework of the group music-making lesson however, the reaction of the students in Group C, the 'M Factor Panel', was

the most noteworthy development. These three students were clearly uncomfortable in their role as assessors. In the undertaking of their group task it became obvious that they had been socially set apart. Perhaps much more preparation in areas of aural skills and specific vocabulary was required and it must be noted that these students were in the early stages of their Leaving Certificate programme. In the event, after commenting on the length of the Group B's phrase, they contributed very little more by way of constructive criticism. Instead, they aligned with one or other of the two performing teams and began to play. One student, an experienced bass player, provided a bass line for Group B's melody. Another of the panel sat beside a rhythm guitarist and played 'that difficult B flat chord' while a third sat on the piano stool watching the work of the pianist.

The teacher and the researcher with wordless glances of consent accepted this strong signal that group C wanted to join in and be involved in the performing. Because the M factor Panel did not identify or function strongly as a group, the comparative 'competition' element was somewhat lost. On reflection, both the researcher and the teacher agreed that the music-making groups did not seem to require this element to motivate their work. The players appeared interested and absorbed despite the atmosphere of seeming musical chaos resulting from the diverse compositional processes being worked in the same room. No extra motivating factor was needed. In fact the phenomenon of a circulating 'M Factor panel was engendering unease in the students concerned as well as isolating them from the rest of the class.

An alternative might have been to prepare the complete class thoroughly before asking any student members to become listeners and assessors. However, it was considered that this would move the focus from the central purpose of the research study: the inclusion of group music-making in a Leaving Certificate curriculum-linked learning situation. In addition, prior access to a section or all of the class for another occasion was neither feasible nor practical.

The decision was therefore made to remove the assessing panel from the lesson plans and also to eliminate any terminology linked to the competition theme. All students would work in small groups and all would be involved in the three rotating activity plans: musical exploring, performing and reflecting.

In the teacher's opinion this participatory mode of 'musicing' was quite successful since 'it helped the students to hear what they would otherwise have been writing down'. He commented that the size of the groups (three - five students), seemed ideal and he identified the effectiveness of peer example in these participatory pursuits.

The students who didn't have much experience, they definitely learnt when they saw the others working in action: which is a big thing ... they saw them in action!

Considering the various ensemble permutations in the forthcoming research, he suggested the formulation of what he described as 'a contingency plan':

Just in case there was just one instrument, or four people who don't play, but sing ... For example, how would the four singers do this class?

These considerations were acknowledged by the researcher and interestingly, they were to resurface and prove significant in the Harmony and Melody classes later in the research schedule.

Following the pilot music-making session, the emerging issues were incorporated into the final lesson design as Table 5.5 now illustrates.

Table 5.5 The Pilot Lesson: Outcomes

Experience in the pilot class	Contribution to the lesson design
- The enthusiastic haze of musical exploration at the beginning	- More efficient rotation of the three activities
- The ebb and flow of the working energy within the group music-making class	- Including time to reflect and respond to the musical activities
- The self-absorbed response of some student(s)	- Monitoring group interaction as class progresses - Awareness of performance/demonstration as a useful strategy for engendering team spirit
- Ineffectiveness of the 'M Factor' panel in this educational environment	- Removal of the 'M Factor' Panel - Involvement of all students in group music-making activities

5.4 Framework for the lesson design

A cycle of short, manageable group music-making activities was now drafted into a class plan, taking into account all the aspects just discussed. The assessment element of the competition was removed. For all the groups involved, there were three different activities revolving in a cycle during the hour-long session and in each classroom session it was envisaged that this three-activity cycle would be implemented at least twice. This framework, involving the three activities as they were implemented in the action research classes, is now outlined.

Group Music-Making Activity One

Students would be introduced to an activity linked to melody, harmony or composition areas in the Leaving Certificate syllabus. They would be familiarised with a musical stimulus (a short melody, a chord structure or a

composing technique), which would form the working material for their group music-making task. Activity One would be very short (5 minutes at most), exploratory in nature and students would be encouraged to work as a group from the onset of the class. This musical exploration could take the form of melodic development, harmonic or melodic accompaniment, harmonisation of a given theme, orchestration or instrumental arrangement and the implementation of a composing technique. All student groups would work in their chosen manner, and implement any musical feature or arrangement of their choice. If they desired, the students or their teacher could also choose the working material.

Group Music-Making Activity Two

'Time Out' would be called and each group asked to demonstrate their musical progress. A relaxed atmosphere with supportive interaction would be fostered at all times. Additionally, all levels of technical ability would be encouraged and all musical endeavours would be treated with respect. The group performing renditions would be perceived as illustrations of the group's creative musical progress and the frequent utilisation of terms such as 'process' 'demonstration' and 'rendition' rather than 'performance' or 'product' would reinforce this approach. Students would also be urged to listen carefully in order to formulate accurate, critical peer response.

Group Music-Making Activity Three

Since this activity followed all the demonstrations, the capacity to make constructive comments, critical response and creative suggestions would now be fostered. Again all students would be encouraged to interact and contribute with musical opinions, no matter what the style of the performance. The teacher would monitor the development of specific terminology in the discourse and check other musical and technical details relating to all the performing activities. The music-making groups would then re-enter the cycle, beginning again with Activity One. The following table 5.6 provides a synopsis of the three activities.

Table 5.6 The Tri-Partite Lesson Plan

Tri-Partite Cyclical Lesson Plan	
Group Music-Making Activity One	Exploring and creating melodic development, harmonization, arranging/composing
Group Music-Making Activity Two	Each group demonstrating their musical progress All others listening, in preparation for the peer critical response
Group Music-Making Activity Three	Peer response Constructive comment Preparation for re-entry into the cycle

Variants of the Lesson Plan

This framework was further refined with specific details relating to each of the Leaving certificate core activities; melody writing, harmonising and composing. Samples of these lesson plans were provided for each of the teachers before the pre-session collaboration (see appendix L, the sample melody plan). At this point, in order to further situate the following narrative of the twelve action research sessions, there are three explanatory paragraphs giving account of each class plan.

The Melody Class

In the Melody plan a 4-bar theme, usually provided by the teacher ⁴, constituted the working stimulus. A group music-making exploration and development of the theme then ensued, and this led to the Time Out. All

⁴ For the Melody Class the musical material was provided by the teachers on four occasions. The researcher provided the material for one session.

students listened to the performed progress of the various groups and they were then invited to offer helpful suggestions and make constructive critical response. The emerging ideas, if suitable, were then re-inserted into the creative progress as the cycle repeated itself.

The Harmony Class

The diversity in the implementation of the Harmony plan mirrored the variety of choice in the Leaving Certificate composing paper. On one occasion the students were given a melody to harmonise. Sometimes the teacher chose the harmonic scheme and the students worked it to different melodies. On other occasions the students and teacher de-constructed an arrangement performing fragments of the material as they analysed the harmonies involved. Group music-making Activities Two and Three remained essentially the same as in the Melody Class.

The Composition Class

In the Composition plan, the students sometimes worked with simple themes (nursery rhymes proving very effective). Occasionally the themes were familiar and in genres chosen by the students. At other times the class started with a pre-rehearsed performance and the students would then deconstruct this and use the musical fragments in their own compositional creations.

The research now moves into the narrative of the twelve sessions, which are organised according to the particular group music-making activities: the Melody Class, the Harmony Class and the Composition Class.

Chapter Six: Action Research - Narration and Analysis

The Melody Class, The Harmony Class, and The Composition Class

Introduction

This chapter constitutes a narrative of the implementation of the activities in the twelve action research sessions. The accounts of each music-making class will include quotes from the action in the classroom as well as conversational and written feedback from both teachers and students¹. The study will then progress towards the more in-depth analysis and each of the three over-arching concepts will be further considered in the ensuing chapters.

6.1 Part One: The Melody Classes

Of the three designs, the Melody Class was, in pedagogical terms, situated closest to the specified activities in the examination syllabus so it was decided to begin the action research itinerary with this class plan.

Melody 1: North Galway

The Melody 1 classroom session was sited in County Galway and involved a mixed group of eleven music students organized in three separate music-making teams². These young musicians played a variety of instruments including guitar, keyboard, saxophone, trumpet and tin whistle and the object of the lesson, one stipulated by the Leaving Certificate music syllabus, was the continuation of a short melodic phrase to make a complete 16-bar melody which included a modulation.

¹ These statements and quotes may be revisited in the ensuing chapters in order to further highlight the same idea or to illustrate a separate point.

² Throughout this narrative the descriptive terms 'Team' and 'Group' are interchangeable.

After learning the working theme by ear, the students moved into their opening melodic task with the relaxed ease of students familiar with performance in the classroom. In a short time, each music-making group was deep in collaboration, no one seeming bothered or confused by the rich cacophony emerging from the other teams' work. The teacher, after opening her class in conventional directive style, moved into supervising mode and circulated around the groups with encouraging statements such as 'you have it - you have it!' where efforts worked musically. When she called, 'half a minute!' until the first Time Out³ demonstration, the intensity of music-making increased, in seeming concentrated composing 'flow'. This capacity of prospective performance to increase motivation and intensify preparation will be revisited in Chapter Nine: 'Jouissance' and 'Flow'.

In the spoken reflections that followed, the teacher steered attention away from the technical standards of actual performance with questions such as 'Do you think they changed key?' and 'How did they develop bar five?' In discussion the students identified musical progressions as 'the good chords', they described efforts as 'cool' and offered criticism such as 'the piano was good ... it went up higher to develop the A phrase'. Even at this early stage in the research, it was evident that the critical response activity (Group Music-Making Activity Three) could assist the students' development of related vocabulary to help them formulate more accurately what they were hearing.

As the length of the group compositions increased, musical interaction became more intense and at the end of the class, when the final Time Out performances were over, the music was still sounding. The students had to be encouraged to cease performing to make time for their written feedback⁴. While Cian the keyboard student still continued his efforts with an arpeggio figure, all the class were brought to attention in a mixture

³Time Out: the term given to practical presentation of progress with discussion and reflection

⁴Students' written feedback constituted a brief questionnaire, to be completed by the music group, (see Appendix N)

of embarrassment and pride when the teacher decided to record all three compositions.

In this session, it is significant that although the group music-making pursuits journeyed quite close to the prescribed Leaving Certificate melody-writing activities, the students' outline of their learning sometimes moved on quite a different pathway. For example after grappling with a melody in B flat major, Seamus, who played a diatonic C major tin whistle, stated 'I've learned how to transpose from B flat to C major!'

When discussing group music-making before the class session began, the music teacher remarked on the overall practical nature of the group performing approach: 'It's a different way of thinking when they have to compose something on the spot using their instrument'. The guitarist in Group B echoed the same concept: 'It's better to play out your phrases and see what they sound like instead of just making it up on the spot. I feel I did it more musically this way.'

Melody 2: Sligo

For Melody 2, a visit to a large secondary school in Co Sligo was organised. The senior-cycle music class of 16 pupils were divided into four music-making groups and their teacher was keen to approach what was for her a new venture.

I am particularly interested to see how peer learning will take place amongst the different levels, and most important how they will work together to write a melody.

In response to the relatively time-consuming Melody 1 opening activity (learning the theme by ear), the Melody 2 melody class plan had been modified and now included a pre-session preparation class. The teacher describes this groundwork:

I taught the melody by ear and had it up on the board. I got the students to sing through it loads of times and asked them if there were any obvious melodic or rhythmic motifs.

It was immediately apparent that the students had internalized the melodic theme well and that they could sing and clap it with ease, so when the group music-making started, they all moved into total focus and repaired to their four composing corners with each ensemble gathered around a central piano or keyboard. The teacher, in assigning strong leaders with keyboard skills to each group, had considered the students' ability and gender as well as 'mixing students with others not necessarily their friends'. The Melody 1 session had used a variety of instruments, but in this session, all the music-making was centered on keyboard performance. Ideas were discussed, suggestions offered and as the teacher had hoped, the students engaged with their creations through the 'visual aid' of the keyboard.

At this stage there was certainly 'musicking' as Christopher Small defines it (1998), in the collective listening and creative decision-making, if not in the diversity of the instrumental group participation. However, other pro-active musical personalities were also emerging. For example in Group C, while Maria the leader was performing some suggestions on keyboard, new rhythmic ideas were appearing for Alan who was tapping beats on the keyboard surface, and who eventually joined in performing on the bodhrán.⁵ Similarly, in Group A, Damien moved gradually from counting and conducting the introductions, to finally playing bongos. The field notes at this point record the students' varied rates of response to active participation, and as if to prove a point, one very quiet student made his first constructive comment only three minutes before the end of the session. 'The long note just before it finishes, I kinda liked that.'

Sensitivity in discourse, often situates criticism alongside a complimentary fact and in this class, such awareness was evident on more than one occasion. Here one team comments on the others melodic development:

⁵ Bodhrán: a traditional Irish percussion instrument made of goat's skin wrapped around a circular wooden frame, played with a stick

It's a really, really good melody but it was very different. No- it wasn't an A1 [a melodic development]⁶. It's too different... but the melody was really good.

In her feedback the teacher described how she was: 'pleasantly surprised by how honest students were in each other's evaluations and how they had no problems taking constructive criticisms'. She also noted how students could affirm what was very obviously good work from other groups and she was surprised to notice that, 'the leaders really lead the group and help the others too'.

The students also found the musical interaction enjoyable and some appreciated the support of their peers.

It is easier to write a melody when working in a team. It's difficult to get the modulation in A1 to fit but it is more achievable with the help of other people in the team. (Team B)

This aspect; the social praxis of group music-making, alongside sensitivity in critical discourse, will be discussed in more detail in the 'Musical Becoming' Chapter Eight.

Finally, an interesting example of 'discovery', where the students' learning moves independently, can be illustrated in the dialogue towards the end of the session. Here Team D comment on Team B's final phrase:

Team C: The 2nd bar had a nice chord

Team D: There's a kind of a clash

Team B: Alan: I like it!

Researcher: Why is it a clash?

⁶ In the Leaving Certificate melody writing exercise in the composing paper, a length of 16 bars with the form: A A1 B A2 is frequently specified.

In answer to this query the accompanied melody was replayed and Alan identified the notes C and Bb as 'clashing together'. This heralded the existence of the dominant 7th chord in F major⁷. As the teacher stated 'they know about the 7th note in chord V'. In this instance, they had uncovered it for themselves, experiencing it aurally in the group performance.

Melody 3: Mayo

For the Melody 3, the research took a slight detour and this diversion concerns the potential of the group music-making methodology to move from the Leaving Certificate to the Junior Certificate cycle. In the early action research teacher feedback from Melody 2 and Composing 1⁸, reference had been made to the suitability of this group music-making methodology for more junior levels. So it happened that during a visit to a senior class for the composing session Composing 2, a second music teacher in the same school volunteered her first-year class for some study. The researcher availed of this new opportunity and made a repeat journey to Co Mayo, this time to observe 13 first-year students participate in a Junior Certificate melody writing class.

Since these students were working a junior cycle programme, a brief examination of relevant sections of the Junior Certificate Syllabus will serve to illustrate its strong similarities with elements of the Leaving Certificate approach. Among the aims and objectives of the curriculum are the following:

To provide sufficient musical experience and factual information to enable the students to develop and practise listening and composing skills with greater understanding

⁷ The dominant 7th chord is built on the dominant or 5th degree of the major or minor scale. It has four notes the 1st, the 3rd, the 5th and the 7th hence its name: the dominant 7th chord.

⁸ Teacher Feedback refers to the 'before' and 'after' questionnaires completed by the teachers participating in the action research (see p.104 Chapter Five).

To encourage social awareness and an understanding of the artistic views of others through musical activities (An Roinn Oideachais, 1991, p.5).

In the composing skills section, (An Roinn Oideachais, 1991, p.10), the syllabus includes the requirement to 'conceive and notate melodic phrases in the treble stave'. Candidates chose one of three ways to present answers, '(a) Phrases set to given rhythms and/or metres or texts, (b) Phrases based on given melodic fragments and (c) Answering phrases to a given opening'.

So the opportunities to enjoy creative melody writing, albeit on a more basic level, were there. The teacher and the researcher chose option (c), where students were given a four-bar melody and were required to compose an answer making a musically complete eight-bar tune. Apart from the length of the activities, these first-year students worked a melody exercise similar to their senior cycle peers.

Students first clapped the rhythm and then played the given D major melody on tin whistles. There was one piano and one guitar in the classroom but since the D major tune worked very well on the diatonic tin whistles, the piano and guitar remained untouched.

For this group, just seven months into the second-level music education system, the teacher provided many pointers regarding rhythmic and melodic features for composition, setting all this information within inclusive and appropriate terminology: 'The best melody will have a lovely match of rhythms and will sound beautiful with this' (the given four bars). 'You could put in some teas, (crotchets) and coffees, (quavers)⁹ and if ye like it well that's the main thing'.

Though the class had all performed the melodic theme as a group, at the beginning of the composition task, they put down their tin whistles and

⁹ The syllabic structure of the two words, 'tea' and 'coffee' is used as a teaching aid to illustrate the rhythmic pulse of the crotchet and the quaver respectively.

began to make notes on manuscript. Creative group music-making was not a feature as yet and the teacher's comments illustrate a tentative approach to what felt like a new venture:

You can make a little bit of noise when you are experimenting with it, just to see how you are getting on.

You are allowed to go the piano or play along on the tin whistle if you want.

Lots of figuring out and writing down remained the order and the first exploratory note on the tin whistle was played 24 minutes into the class. The researcher gently reminded the groups about focus on instrumental performance with, 'Can we play this in two minutes?'

For the first Time Out, Team A's performance was launched with the solo playing of a talented traditional tin whistle player who managed the opening theme very well but struggled somewhat reading the rhythm of the group's newly composed bars. After this first performance, when the researcher asked for any comments, there was no response. A nervous giggle and frightened glance was the most significant reaction. Both the researcher and teacher continued to encourage and to prompt with statements such as 'is the melody working?' and eventually the tin whistle player, studying the music, offered 'I think I played five crotchets in the last bar.'

This tentative response to an invitation to become critically responsive is understandable in a first-year group working a new venture with a comparatively new teacher in a new school, the whole being recorded on video camera¹⁰. What is noteworthy however, is the speed with which these young students shifted into a more responsive mode. In the rendition of Team D, almost 7 minutes later, the response to the request for feedback was immediate, with the students answering straight away with comments such as: 'It's not very clear' and 'It goes high then it goes down to low'. The researcher then asked: 'Do you think it is using the wave pattern that your

¹⁰ All action research sessions were recorded on video camera

teacher told you about?’ and a young boy answered: ‘Not really - it’s just going up that way then ...’ [jerking gesticulation downwards]

Oliver, the guitarist was responsible for these comments and an account of his advance through the class epitomises the students’ general progress. At the beginning of the class, Oliver was quietly attentive for the whole of the opening teacher-led activities. Then at the start of the composing activities when the other two members of his team moved to the piano, Oliver remained seated behind his desk nowhere near his team members or his guitar. Eventually, nearly three minutes into the group composition work, he quietly moved from the desk and took his guitar to the others beside the piano. For the first Time Out rendition he chose to observe his teammates while silently fingering some chords on the guitar. Then when encouraged by the researcher to join in he showed he could manage the three primary chords in D major and played along quietly. By the end of the first performance session it was Oliver who was commenting and clearly describing the melodic shape of team D’s melody.

His closing remark at the end of the feedback report recounts his progress towards this social praxis in a most articulate manner.

We enjoyed the way that we could compose our own music in front of a camera and that we were not alone and worked as a team.

Melody 4: East Galway

A visit to a young music teacher in East Galway was organised for the fourth group music-making session. In this small all-girls’ school there was a senior music class of eight students and at the time of the visit, they were approaching the half way stage in their Leaving Certificate programme.

The music teacher’s introduction to this class had elements of Melody 1 and Melody 2 but with further and new additions. She opened the activities with the sound only, playing the given melodic material on piano and within a few minutes all girls were playing the 4-bar theme by rote with a measure of fluency. There was a strong Irish traditional character to the

instrumental line-up with instruments such as the concertina, wooden flute and fiddle, as well as a silver flute, piano, keyboard and two singers. As in the Melody 3 session with the tin whistle player, indigenous and stylish ornamentation was intuitively creeping into the renditions. When the students had learnt the tune by ear, the teacher moved on:

'You've got the notes, now can you try and play it like I'm playing it.'

In this manner she continued talking through many features both melodic and compositional, with the students playing all the examples. She introduced articulation, staccato marks, legato and phrasing marks, interchanging words such as 'smooth' with 'legato' as she worked, employing questions such as 'what helps us play legato?' and encouraging memorization of these details for the prospective composition as she added 'Listen, I want you to try and include it afterwards'.

Then as the students were asked to consider the notation of the melody, Sibelius software was used and with a blank score projected on the board, the girls were encouraged to write the tune as group aural practice. 'Can you remember it from playing it?' Thus the teacher integrated notation, performing experience and aural skills with the invitation to replicate the theme on the computer score in a most cogent manner. Even at this stage no performance details or methods of notating this information on the screen were overlooked.

The teacher's directions were clear.

The most important thing is that you play it as much it as possible and then you can jot down your ideas, but don't work it on paper first.

An invitation to move in an independent direction was also issued.

You can do anything you like. You can add harmony to the melody, chords or a countermelody, dynamics, articulation, percussion, clapping, any musical arrangement ... anything goes.

Almost immediately the three teams began to play with all instruments engaging but the voices remaining quiet. The teacher circulated among the

groups issuing constructive comments such as 'I like that development of that idea' and 'that's strong!'

Within the teams' work, different methods were quietly emerging. For example Team B playing flute and concertina were swiftly jotting down the ideas on manuscript, while Team A were using a mixture of exploring and writing. In Team C the traditional fiddle player would pause, in seeming reflection, and then play a perfectly formed idea. This apparently effortless engagement with creative music-making is further discussed under 'Flow' in Chapter Nine.

It soon became obvious that all groups were working completely to the examination remit (with a four-phrase AABA plan and a prescriptive length of 16 bars). So by mutual consent the teacher and the researcher decided to encourage the groups to move away from this dictate. The teacher began:

Girls - you know the way I get you to move down low, then include an octave leap - well, leave all that and go with what your ear is saying.

The researcher added: 'Even if it is longer than 16 bars, that's fine too!'

By the end of the session however, all teams had adhered to the stipulated examination activity and produced a musical and clearly constructed 16-bar melody. The pressure to remain within the confines of the examination specifications is understandable, and the students were clearly responding in a mode that was usual for them. It would however be interesting to witness their response if they had not yet encountered the 16-bar stipulation or if they had enjoyed a 'play time to discover melodies for themselves' as suggested by the Melody 2 teacher.

In the event, only Ciara the fiddle player from Group C moved into improvisatory mode with a very confident traditional styled flourish to

round off the composition.¹¹ While the students had followed the 16-bar pattern, it seemed from the feedback that other ideas had been sown. When asked what they learned from this practical approach, the teams responded with:

Melodies don't have rules all the time. Creativity is very important.
(Team C)

To use your ear rather than using rules... the more risks you take the better you know what works best. (Team B)

Like her colleague in Melody 2, the teacher was very interested in the interaction within the music-making groups

I put an experienced musician in each group - in some groups they emerged as leaders - in other groups they worked collectively as a team.

She also commented on the different role instruments can play in this group music-making scenario, noting that singers were less likely to experiment with developing material and discussing the ease with which young traditional musicians could move into composing and improvisation.

They were quicker at developing material, maybe coming from their links to learning by ear - and the way phrases are developed in Irish music.

She also gave some very constructive suggestions relating to further developments: one, allowing a student to manually insert the notation on the Sibelius screen (thus combining dictation and technological skills), and two, relating to the Leaving Certificate practical examination,

¹¹ This instance was one of the purest creative responses in the complete research itinerary and it will be further examined in relation to 'Flow' and 'Jouissance' in Chapters Nine and Ten.

Perhaps it could be considered to somehow allow students to use their instruments to compose for the Junior and Leaving Certificate exam.

A final note on peer instruction from the teacher's feedback shows her awareness of both the musical and the social implications.

In one particular case Ciara who was playing the violin demonstrated what chords she wanted Breda to use on the piano. I was delighted to see how open they were at giving each other direction.

This particular instance will be re-visited in the 'Musical Becoming' chapter.

Melody 5: Dublin

The final melody composing session, Melody 5, was organised in a Dublin city all-boys school with a class of 17 students who were in the final stages of preparation for the Leaving Certificate music exam. Since this event was looming large on the academic horizon, both the teacher and the researcher in their pre-session discussion deliberated on specific preparation for the exam. The Melody 5 class design remained close to the essential activities in the exam syllabus and the teacher's opinion that 'structure is the bedrock of creativity' also linked neatly to a group music-making session that more than any other, was geared to examination dictates.

In the previous and separate Composing 1 and 2 sessions, the use of working themes from the popular charts had been suggested in both teacher and student feedback. The suggestion had proved invigorating in Composing 3 so for this class, the opening theme of the current chart hit 'Candy' by Robbie Williams became the chosen melodic working material. The boys responded quickly to this familiar 'pop' chart material and within minutes all were singing an accurate *a cappella* version

Group C had, within their instruments, the make-up of a rock group: three guitars and drums and already their body language response to this lively theme was making its mark. Within this group, Dylan, a very musical player, was experimenting with melodic ideas on glockenspiel and before

long he had encouraged Barry (a student with Asperger's syndrome) to cease re-arranging the chime-bars and join in.

After two minutes Group A, who had been working mainly with guitar, moved to the piano and began writing their ideas on manuscript, trying them out over an already well-structured chord scheme. At this stage, this group of five members comprised three boys who were engaged and busy and two students who were still observing.

Of the three teams, Group B experienced most difficulty with creative engagement. Four of the group were using voice and they certainly sang confidently in their reproduction of the opening four bars. They did however struggle when it came to the development and creation of new material. The field notes at this point record the importance of group make-up and in particular the significance of the even spread of instrumental and vocal skills and the teacher's feedback echoed this observation. In this case, the lack of strong leadership to reproduce the team's melodic ideas remained a problem.

As the Time Out approached, the different music-making tactics of each group became more marked. Group A was using two writers at the piano whose ideas were very capably accompanied by the rhythm guitar while two other team members looked on in a somewhat detached manner. After this group's Time Out demonstration, the others in the class responded:

It was good but all of the group could have been a bit more involved.

Subsequently the guitarist persuaded his piano playing teammate to include one of these boys playing xylophone and then he proceeded to help the second student by demonstrating a suitable rhythm on bongo drums.

While Group B seemed at a creative loss, unable to move beyond a reproduction of the opening four bars, Group C on the other hand embodied a richness of approach, including the improvisation of the guitars and drums and the notated melodic work of the glockenspiel and chime-bars.

Fortunately for this group (C) these two approaches gelled in the first performance producing a homogenous presentation with all six students involved.

The rock style improvisation of this group also came to the fore in the second Time Out performance where the modulation to the dominant flickered on and off depending on the melodic direction of the lead-guitar. This instance developed into an interesting 'spot the difference' aural game. Group C now in full comprehension of the significance of the raised 7th demonstrated both modulating and non-modulating versions for the others in the class and in doing so strengthened their own perceptions of both the performance and the sound of a modulation to the dominant.

In an interesting and co-incidental alignment of the planning and the musical experience, the teacher had expressed hopes of such focus before the class:

I love the idea of them taking a specific musical idea like modulation and working it with a (group music-making) class.

Team B, who were stuck on melodic creativity, eventually decided to work a percussion development of the melody with a tambourine and 'found' sounds such as pens beating on the desk. Andrew reached for an extra chime bar and joined with a strong rhythm in a seeming unconcerned manner with shoulders shrugging. Yet when his effort was complete, his eyes busily sought affirmation from his teammates.

The sense that this MM5 melodic exercise had to be completed and that time was short was palpable and further exacerbated when the class bell rang just before the final Time Out rendition. What seemed a two-sided problem: time passing quickly on one hand and the fact that the nature of creative group performance is absorbing on the other, was captured by one of the group B students.

It is easy to find the melody notes when you have the accompanying chords but it required a lot of time - which we don't have in the leaving cert exam.

This concern was understandable considering the proximity of the actual examination but what is significant here is the manner in which the prospect of the forthcoming exam was affecting this student's approach to creative group music-making.

Most other students seemed to enjoy the 'novel' approach. The guitarists in Group C enjoyed, 'The freedom to test the melody before writing it down'. Group A enjoyed 'The interactive nature of working the melody with the accompaniment', and learned how to, 'develop without straying too far from the original.' The most succinct comment however came from group B who had the greatest struggle with their melodic composition: 'There's more creative ways to write a melody!'

6.2 Part Two: The Harmony Classes

The design of the Harmony sessions for this action research class links to the perception of a chord as a musical working compound. In this instance, individual pitches (usually three or four) are performed together by a small music-making group. These notes inter-connect to form a musical entity: the chord.

Harmony 1: Wexford

The object of this class was to take a well-known melody or song and through group music-making (in this instance group singing), to produce its chordal accompaniment. Each vocal chord would consist of three or four notes and through the incorporation and implementation of these vocally produced chords, a deeper understanding of the harmony would develop.

The harmony exercise in the Leaving Certificate composition paper¹² is also closely associated with this activity.

The Harmony 1 music teacher in the large County Wexford school was very interested in the idea that the students would be able to 'hear the make-up of various chords through active participation'. She explained that though most of the students in the class were strong singers, some of them had little or no instrumental experience. So she had organised her class of ten students in three vocal music-making groups. The researcher, remembering the previous pilot class discussion, (Chapter Five, p.118) which had cited such a scenario (unavailable instrumental resources and/or instrumental technique), was also eager to work in this instance with voices only.

This being the last week in November 2012, the proximity of Christmas prompted the teacher's decision to use the very well known 'Stille Nacht' tune for the music-making session. In this class the questions flowed with consistent student - teacher interaction and informal but relevant banter among all, so the element of critical response, (the Time Out) was not a planned event but more a constituent and spontaneous activity right from the opening discussion of choosing a suitable key.

For the three primary chords, all students attempted to hold their separate and specific note. Nathan from group A, (chord 1), was the first to acknowledge a problem; 'I'm not really sure of the note' and to opt to play his keynote Bb on the piano. This manner of vocal pitching is quite difficult for some students (the boys at this stage having particular problems), and since all singers were holding an individual pitch, inaccurate efforts became obvious immediately. Throughout the class there was an equally mixed response that the teacher's best efforts with repetition and practice was only

¹² For more detailed discussion see Composition in the Leaving Certificate critique, Chapter Ten, p.267

partly correcting. On the other hand, this seeming difficulty also produced distinct learning outcomes as the leader of group C, (chord V) pointed out.

It was difficult holding the note independently...but it made us understand the chord and learn about it rather than just listening.

When the middle note or the third of the chord also began to cause pitching problems, the teacher focused on distinct major and minor tonalities, again transforming the struggle into a learning situation and illustrating the significant potential of the third of a chord. The difficulties with *a capella* and solo pitching continued so at this stage the teacher's response was two-fold. First she reflected on the difficulties with vocal pitching and harmonisation.

Teacher: Maybe a simpler way would have been to start with instruments. What would be nice about that?

Joe: You could just put your finger on the fret.

Next she redesigned the basic group chord-singing activity, giving teams of three or four one note only to sing and asking all to focus on the bass note of each chord. No student was now exposed in attempting to maintain a particular pitch and the whole class group singing together could now form one chord.

The strong vocal performance that ensued was altogether more satisfactory. Of particular value was the examination of the difference between the dominant and the dominant seventh chords. Three-note teams could not manage this four-note chord so in group C the seventh (a high-pitched Eb), was sung by experienced soprano Joan who could pitch with ease. Discussion on the quality of the dominant seventh chord ensued.

With this altered approach, (the whole class singing each chord), the groups moved into the harmonisation of 'Stille Nacht'. The teacher would play the melody against the class group, sustaining one particular chord at a time. Their reactions ranged from a frowning and head-shaking 'No!' to a resounding "Yeah that's cool!" as for example when the class chose the

submediant minor chord¹³ for the opening of the hymn! By this process of elimination the singing group harmonised complete phrases of the hymn.

The most interesting learning occurred when a second inversion tonic chord was needed in the penultimate bar approaching the perfect cadence. For the whole of the second last bar, the class had opted for a blanket dominant chord and with, 'Do you think you like that dominant chord all through?' and 'We might have to look at something else', The teacher moved into a quick lesson on the inversions (re-voicing of the bass note) of chord 1, the class responding with 'That's nice!' at the sound of the second inversion.¹⁴

In the absence of a complete performance, the importance of the process, the understanding of the sound colour of various chords and their make-up was becoming evident here. While the original plan of single voices holding specific pitches had to be abandoned, the idea of team singing to create each chord was very successful. The teacher agreed.

I most definitely will use this exercise to explain inversions... I'll also use it in choir class ... this is a great way to develop students' ability to harmonise naturally and learn what sounds good.

Referring to the specific performance make-up of her class she stated, 'The sheer physical activity of the class made the topic feel 'real' especially for those who have not had the opportunity to experience being part of the actuality of a chord'

¹³ Submediant chord: the submediant is the sixth degree of the diatonic scale. The submediant chord is built on this note and is a minor chord. It would be unusual to use a minor chord at the opening of 'Stille Nacht'.

¹⁴ Second inversion chord: a basic chord consists of three notes: the root, the 3rd and the 5th. The second inversion chord is re-arrangement of these three notes which uses the 5th in the bass.

Harmony 2: Tipperary

The visit to County Tipperary some weeks later proved quite a different experience from the Harmony 1 session. This school had organized a 50-minute session with a large and mixed group of 18 students. The teacher, aware of the all-vocal Harmony 1 session, had elected to also work with singers but opted to add a variety of instruments including guitars, banjo, keyboard and trumpets. He was also aware of the success of a strong opening group performance in the Composing 3 Donegal group, so he had chosen to start the session with a song his class had already rehearsed thoroughly. Even from the opening vocal warm-up in this early 9 o'clock Monday morning class, all the group were involved in the music-making with the guitars and banjo working hard to accompany the two-chord vocal riff which, as vocal warm-ups do, was raised a semitone at each repetition!

Next on the teacher's list was the performance of 'To Do Run Run', complete with four-part harmony, a trumpet countermelody in the chorus and accompaniment from guitars and banjo. The teacher subsequently guided a more detailed analysis of the first page of this score using the instruments to illustrate the major key of the piece and an outline of the five principal chords. Responding to statements such as 'I want you to try and figure out where the chords go', and 'Can you pay close attention to the[notes of] the bass line', the class continued their work, eventually singing the roman numerals¹⁵ of the chordal structure to the melody of the song.

At this stage and throughout the class the students were playing and responding as one large group, answering mostly on an individual basis. For example, 'I think it's the same chord scheme repeated', and on occasion

¹⁵Roman Numerals: The three principal chords in a major key are often tabulated by their degree number of their position in the major scale; for example, chord 1, chord IV and chord V

collaborating quietly in discussion with their peers or in their instrumental families¹⁶.

The approach changed with the introduction of the second song, which was new to the group and in an interesting turnabout the singers were asked to become harmonically aware of their performance while the chord players (guitar and banjo) were invited to play the melody of the new tune. The second score, a homophonic arrangement prepared by the teacher, used mostly three-part chords and was eminently suitable for this group performing approach to the understanding of harmony.

In this Harmony 2 class, there was a significant mixture of old and new classroom methodologies. Though nominally divided in two, the students worked mostly as one classroom group, when necessary splitting into their instrument families. In the activity packed class the teacher maintained his teaching role working at a fast pace, dictating the group performing pathways and finishing with a written focus on learning outcomes.

On some occasions the students moved independently, as for example when the trumpets worked their own transposition of the melody and the guitars and banjo were invited to produce the different inversions of the G major chord. Mostly however this was a conventional teaching situation with the teacher continuously directing.

In addition, the constant group music-making, with thick texture and varying combinations of instruments and voices gave physical life to the students' developing sense of harmony. With this approach, determined by the teacher and where the class group moved back and forth from group performance to discussion and illustration of the chords, the students had the advantage of full and instant recourse to a 'live library' of performed

¹⁶Instruments are often organised according to their physical similarities: strings, brass, woodwind and percussion. In this instance the students were seated together, according to these families.

extracts. The capacity of this pursuit to support aural development will be revisited in Chapter Ten.

When it came to feedback, the student voices mirrored the overall class approach, some reflecting on the teaching methodology and some discussing their own learning outcomes. 'We learnt more how it sounds and became more familiar then with these sounds.' Some others just relished the physical activity of performing. 'I got to play music...just play music!'

Harmony 3: Limerick

As befits the action research process the last research trip, a visit to a city school in Limerick, was born of a crossover of many of the other classroom sessions. Throughout the visits, various combinations of teacher - researcher direction¹⁷ had been employed and in this session, the teacher and the researcher followed the later Composing 4 and Melody 5 examples and worked as a team.

The design of Harmony 3 included feedback from two particular sources. First, in the Melody 2 visit to Sligo, the music teacher had drawn the researcher's attention to a 2011 recording from Australian comedy group, 'Axis of Awesome'. Entitled '4Chords', this piece incorporated a series of over 20 popular songs all sharing the same chord scheme in the manner of a quodlibet or mash-up.¹⁸ The second source, the idea to use an actual 'mash up', was adapted from student's suggestion in the Dublin Composition 4 class. 'To expand it you could try different songs...maybe even playing them at the same time' (Group A, Composition 4)

As in Harmony 1 and Harmony 2, the basic plan involved students performing in chord teams with the whole class reflecting on the group

¹⁷ See Chapter Seven, pp. 162-163 for further discussion of the music teacher/researcher team in the action research sessions

¹⁸ In the 'pop' genre, the term 'mash up' replaces the term 'quodlibet' to describe such a superimposition of songs or melodies with the same harmonic structure.

demonstrations. In preparation, the Limerick teacher and the researcher chose the familiar chord scheme I V vi IV, and prepared an assortment of suitable pop songs that used this scheme as an ostinato¹⁹ accompaniment. The final choice now included 'With or Without You' (U2), 'Where is the Love?' (Black Eye Peas) and 'Apologise' (One Republic). The idea was to familiarize the students with the primary and secondary chords in F major, then introduce the unaccompanied melodies of the chosen songs, asking the music-making groups to work an original arrangement. The teacher was very interested in this approach.

This 'sound before symbol' is particularly appealing to me - where students are so often concerned about harmonic theory and structure that they forget about the most important element of all, the sound.

The group of 17 girls were in the first year of their Leaving Certificate music course. They were divided into three groups with an interesting assortment of instruments ready: three keyboards, (one for each music-making group), a silver flute and a wooden flute, three guitars, four singers, a violin, a descant and a treble recorder and a euphonium. A harmony activity sheet based on one of the Leaving certificate composition questions had also been prepared by the teacher. In this exercise, melodies and lyrics were provided and students created a harmonisation with their chosen chords. So although the class design had been altered to include a 'mash-up', this Harmony 3 session still integrated some of the requirements of the Leaving Certificate curriculum.

The researcher and the teacher opened the class presenting the five main chords in F major and with barely any preamble the girls were playing these basic chords as a class group exactly as had happened in Harmony 2. To establish an adaptable performing 'bank', various moods and metres were now introduced to the chord selection: from rock style, through slow

¹⁹An ostinato is a recurring musical pattern; in this case the 4-chord harmonic structure in the accompaniment of the songs repeats continuously.

and dreamy, more emotional renditions and finally to a version of 'Take Five' which imitated the 5/8 pulse. These students and their teacher seemed very much at home with classroom music-making and their willingness to participate in this informal and relaxed harmonic warm-up worked as a very effective alternative to the strong pre-rehearsed performances of classes Harmony 2, Composing 3 and Composing 4.

With the 'fun' element remaining high on the agenda, the researcher and the teacher now gave an informal rendition of the Bryan Adams classic, 'Right Here Waiting for You'. This performance was repeated a few times while the class as a whole group was encouraged to use their instruments and their ears to explore the accompanying chords. At first, the students needed encouragement to play their response on the instruments, as their teacher later commented,

The students are used to playing - but it is almost as if, in their minds, there is a separation between performing and listening to these chords and a sheet of music.

The girls did eventually move from a quiet exploration to produce some musical harmonic accompaniment and in later feedback, they recounted their own difficulties: 'To hear the chord transition instead of learning when to put it in' and 'to use your ear rather than theory on the paper'

Of the three groups, the experience of group A is perhaps the most worthy of mention. Working on 'Apologise', they struggled to identify the opening chords. The use of accented passing notes in the opening melody seemed to add to their difficulties here so by the time of the first Time Out rendition, only the singer and the instrumental melody could give strong performances. In mutual silent consent, the teacher and researcher declined to offer direct help but the teacher subsequently remained close, scaffolding the aural explorations.

Group A continued searching and their perseverance paid off at the end of the session with some excellent violin countermelodies added at the

very last minute, once the chord scheme had been established. Their final rendition worked well producing smiles of relief and satisfaction all round.

The concluding classroom activity, an exciting if somewhat chaotic *tutti* 'mash-up' of the three songs, began with a strong iteration of the harmonic ostinato and ended with a few exclamations of 'Ah!' It was only at this point that some of the students understood the harmonic relationship of the three songs!

In their considerable and comprehensive feedback the Harmony 3 students caught the fundamental nature or the essence of group 'musicking' (Small, 1998) 'It was more practical... and fun that we got to perform what we worked on' (Group C), and 'We enjoyed getting to play the different chords and see what would and wouldn't work'

They were also aware of the independent paths allowed to them.

I liked that there was no right or wrong answers. (Group B).

'Nice to be able to be in charge and form our own pieces. (Group A)

...to try and listen to what I'm writing rather than following a formula or set way to do harmonies. (Group B).

Perhaps most importantly, the terms 'fun' and 'enjoy' featured frequently in the comments.

'You can have fun while doing chords.' (Group A)

I enjoyed actually playing the chords we wrote. (Group C).

This is a reflection of the accounts of joy and satisfaction recounted in the focus group discussions and will be revisited in Chapter Nine.

On her part the Limerick teacher commended the way

Students were working with familiar songs in a way that they hadn't done before. With minimal help from me [the teacher] they were scaffolding their own learning in as practical a manner as is

possible ...completing a harmony (exercise) through practice. They did this while having fun and learning productively.

In her discussions of further developments, it is possible that she articulated the essence of this research problem when she stated:

Although I may be fully aware of the intricate links between theory and practice, for my students there exists a huge gap between them... something I will strive to reduce with every lesson.

6.3 Part Three: The Composition Classes

At first glance the design of the Composing class seems to involve more non-directed learning than either the melody writing or harmony class. However this plan, as outlined in Chapter Five, familiarises the students with composing techniques found in the prescribed works from Leaving Certificate syllabus²⁰ and it is envisaged that through authentic engagement with the 'real' performing practice, the students' listening skills and understanding of the musical works on the programme might be illuminated.

Composing 1: Cork

Composing 1 was organised early in the action research itinerary in a small town in County Cork. In the secondary school there, a class of seven music students was engaged in the final quarter of the Leaving Certificate music course and their music teacher had organised them in two music-making teams. They played a variety of instruments including piano, keyboard, violin, guitar, chime bars and xylophone. In conversations prior to the visit, the teacher had indicated her approval of 'the practical approach to composing...one not rooted in notation' and she had agreed that as in the

²⁰ In this cycle of the Leaving Certificate Music Examination, the prescribed works were:

J. S. Bach, Cantata Jesu, der du meine Seele BWV 78

Tchaikovsky, Fantasy Overture *Romeo and Juliet*

Gerald Barry, Piano Quartet

Freddie Mercury/Queen, Bohemian Rhapsody

Melody 1 session, emphasis should move away from students' performing skills and focus on the actual *process*, in this case one of composition. So the working themes involved simple unsophisticated nursery rhyme melodies with short and regular four-bar phrases. Within a short time, with group decisions made, Team A opted to work with 'Mary had a Little Lamb' and Team B elected to use 'Frère Jacques'.

Much interaction now ensued, consisting mostly of discussion rather than group music-making, the students seeming self-conscious about making the first move to actually play their instruments. In due course one of the team A piano players began to experiment softly and all gradually followed suit, rehearsing their version of the chosen tune. The atmosphere lightened noticeably as this performing involvement with the task progressed.

After the first relatively lengthy working session, Time Out was called and Team B began by performing a two-part rendition on keyboard. In the opinion of the others this performance was judged, as 'just needing the practice to get the rhythms right'. A similar lack of cohesiveness in team A's demonstration caused the B group members to look at each other and exclaim, 'Oh, the timing!' So it emerged that many of the students had been working in isolation, almost as soloists. They now realised that altogether different skills would be required to synchronise and perform effectively as a group.

Following this first Time Out session it seemed as though the experience of performance and critical discussion had lifted both groups onto another working plane. Both teams were now concentrating on the implementation of retrograde as a compositional technique. In feedback, Team A had commented that one the most difficult things was, 'To get the timing and playing of both the melody and the retrograde in sync' and they also discovered that notation could be really useful!

If we didn't have the score it would have been impossible to work out the timing and rhythm of the two pieces when played together.

As the tasks were worked through, significant roles continued to emerge within each music-making group. For example Joan the violinist from Team A was leading the team and concerned to sort the various entries. Helping her xylophone-playing friend, she asked 'Do you need bar-lines? Cause you'll know when to come in then' and turning to the piano player, she continued 'and then you can start playing the piano... Will we try it then?'

At the same time, Christine in team B was showing Riona how to manage her chime-bar contribution. Interestingly, the design of this group composition had been altered to include a new composing technique: canon at the distance of two beats and Riona, with Christine's help, was now performing her contribution with more enthusiasm.

The overall patchwork plan of creative composition, group demonstration and critical reflection continued in a dynamic mix of unrelated sounds, both teams seemingly absorbed in the various roles within their own group. At this point, possibly due to the concentration and growing sense of 'flow', musical initiatives began to appear from new sources. For example, Gerard the guitar player from group A momentarily became a confident director as he visualized a complete arrangement:

We all do it first, then you do the retrograde, then I'll play chords and the two girls could play the tune...then we could do it all again like a string quartet.

Then, seeming to become aware of the potential of this composing activity to move in independent directions, he turned to his teacher and asked 'Could the rules be bent'? The teacher responded, pointing to group B, 'They're kinda breaking the rules as well!'

As the final Time Out advanced, and the energetic approach to all composition activities increased, the buzz of group music-making was especially nudged along when the teacher announced that she would record the final performance. For the final rendition, Team A produced a two-part version of Frère Jacques, playing the original and the retrograde simultaneously with Gerard's improvised dissonant guitar interlude as a

centrepiece. The teacher, surprised by this quite dissonant middle section to the piece, stated: 'I felt like correcting Gerard but didn't!'

Group B now comprised three music-makers and were working well together as the comments in their feedback illustrate.

Figuring out the notes to play was really enjoyable.

We learned that doing these techniques and actually playing them out made us understand them better.

Group A had this to say:

We learned how using retrograde can make a piece sound interesting. How working in a team and using different instruments...a simple melody like 'Mary Had a Little Lamb', can be transformed into an interesting piece of music.

Composing 2: Mayo

A well-established convent secondary school in a small County Mayo village was the venue for the second 'Copy the Composer' research visit. Poised and ready for an early afternoon mid-week double class a group of ten senior-cycle girls was already organized in three separate composition teams by the time the researcher arrived. There was a piano in each group, one guitar and a variety of single-line instruments including recorder, piano accordion and bodhrán.

The Composing 2 music teacher was looking forward to 'this active involvement, not just talk and chalk' and she had adopted some suggestions from the previous Composing 1 session, so the choice list of working themes now included some well-known classical excerpts as well as Irish traditional dance tunes. As in the Composing 1 session, the class began with the researcher's illustration of various composing techniques and in a very short time the three teams had settled their choice; team A working with Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', team B selecting a traditional 'Kerry Polka', and team C choosing 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'.

This was a very conventional classroom arrangement with the students, seated at desks and the teacher standing at the front by the board. She introduced the composing technique, canon, and then asked the students to arrange, compose and illustrate their versions of this technique in their music-making groups. At the mention of 'play it' the girls responded with nervous side glances and giggles.

All groups elected to work with canon in two parts, and for a short while it seemed that the decision to locate all three teams in the same classroom was less than wise. Teams B and C remained quiet appearing over-awed at the prospect of the task in hand and looking over their shoulders at team A who almost immediately could give a confident and fluent rendition of the 'Ode to Joy' theme. However group B, with the help of the piano-accordion player playing the Irish polka with style, soon became immersed in their traditional arrangement. Team C meanwhile continued in quiet discussion around the keyboard, their only movement involving a decision to abandon the guitar.

Work continued with team A introducing some arpeggio accompaniment, team B moving into a balanced two-part version of the traditional polka and team C gradually beginning quiet experimentation with a piano duet and two descant recorders. After 15 minutes, when the first Time Out was called, the apprehension seemed to have returned, illustrated this time by a quiet but intense and audible exclamation of 'Oh God!'.

In the first group music-making demonstrations the Team A arrangement linked strongly to a current pop song 'Someone Like You' by Adele. In critical response, the team C girls thought the piano was too loud, the whole performance too short and they pinpointed the thinning texture at the end. The researcher at this point had noted the overbearing nature of such a strong chart hit and in later feedback this team commented on the difficulty of 'coming up with a good way of playing the piece without ruining it'.

After the critical response, team A had a second music-making attempt, and this time produced a much sweeter keyboard rendition and a full textured G major arpeggio extension at the end of the canon. As a tool for refining the performance standards among student peers, the critical response was working well here!

The criticism of team B's bodhrán playing showed more social sensitivity, striking good balance between compliment and criticism. Referring to the unchanging and slightly tedious crotchet rhythm pattern, the ukulele player tempered her criticism with a compliment:

I like the bodhrán ... but maybe a bit more than just 1-2.

Group C, the least demonstrative of the groups, produced a steady canon of 'Twinkle Twinkle', and as affirmation from the rest of the class followed, they smiled in relief. Team A's suggestion that they 'put something with the recorder at the end' was obviously born of their earlier experience with the ending of 'Ode to Joy'. It was apparent that this group could now solve the musical problem concerning the thinning texture but moreover they could spot the same feature in another rendition and make suggestions for improvement.

At this point, to open up the creative composition experience, the researcher drew attention to the possibility of using other compositional techniques and interestingly, it was team C, (considered the least confident in the teacher's assessment), who now moved into new directions with retrograde. As the work progressed the atmosphere relaxed, Team A continuing their struggle against the strong character of their adopted 'pop' tune and group B's bodhrán contribution had developed beyond the confines of intuitive rhythmic beat-keeping.

Looking at this session in general, the most significant development was the transformation within group C who moved from a tentative approach laced with an obvious sense of perceived inabilities, through the process of 'figuring out how to do it', to working through the affirmation of successful attempts to carry the theory into the practice. As they state:

It was hard to accompany the retrograde because it sounded different. - It is possible to make a simple piece complicated.

We learned how easy it is to completely change a simple tune.

In the words of the teacher:

I felt the group who I thought would be the strongest, (group A) actually ended up having difficulty in their performance and the group I thought was the weakest, (group C), ended up being the strongest and including three compositional techniques in their performance.

Moving to the end of the session the students were aware of the social significance of the activities. Team C describe how they enjoyed 'When it started to come together at the end ...seeing how it turned out and listening to the others. For Team A it was simply 'Seeing how other people worked'.

Composing 3: Donegal

The Composing 3 research visit to County Donegal was scheduled for the final double class on Friday in mid-winter, 2013.

In collaboration with the previous Composing 1 and Composing 2 teachers, two important suggestions had emerged. The Cork Composing 1 teacher had advocated the use of more 'material that the students think cool' and the Composing 2 teacher thought it would be affirming for the students, if 'the presentation of something polished', could be included in the lesson design.

A third suggestion had emerged in pre-visit conversations with, the Composing 3 teacher. She had described a successful group performance class where the popular song, 'Love Story' by Taylor Swift had been used as an aural-skills and backing-chords exercise and she depicted her ten students performing their own arrangement of this song using guitars, keyboards, violins, banjo, piano and percussion. In the subsequent research reflections, the collation of these three suggestions spawned the design of the lesson plan for Composing 3: First, the students would perform their

'Love Song' arrangement. Then they would dismantle the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements therein and utilize various composing techniques, to re-form these ingredients into a new arrangement.

The Donegal teacher was happy with these plans stating that:

A little familiarity makes things easier for the students and gives them ownership of the music and confidence with the material before they begin to develop it.

So it was decided that a polished group performance would provide a useful stepping-stone into the compositional work involved in the group music-making class. With worries of instrumental technique and concerns about notation hopefully overcome, the students could move straight into the creative compositional activities.

In the event, the proceedings began with a confident group rendition of the chorus of 'Love Story' and within minutes, as was illustrated by the students' body language and facial expressions, the teacher's hunch was proved correct. The students were producing ample evidence of their musicianship and their performance had been affirmed with energetic applause. They were now ready to tackle the creative use of compositional techniques. So to this end, the researcher demonstrated various compositional techniques such as canon, retrograde, augmentation, melodic improvisation and ostinato and the overall focus was on having musical fun with familiar elements. Armed with the knowledge that they were free to choose compositional techniques and other working modes, the two groups then embarked on their creative task. They were given approximately five minutes to explore before the first 'Time Out' rendition.

Team A consisted of five students playing various instruments: keyboard, violin, triangle, voice/keyboard and guitar. Their teacher, who also played guitar, joined this group. Team B, a smaller group, comprised a piano, a banjo, a violin and a singer. There was remarkable concentration all round considering the cacophony of unrelated musical sounds all in the same room.

Although working well together, Team A struggled somewhat to move away from the original performance. Team B made a strong start and immediately launched into enthusiastic planning with the piano player demonstrating a retrograde of the tune. This retrograde later proved something of a stumbling block to the banjo and the fiddle player who, having played mostly traditional Irish music by ear, realized that in this instance, notation was quite useful!

When the researcher called Time Out, a first presentation of progress was delivered in group music-making mode. Occurring only six minutes after the start of work the performed pieces were short and were played self-consciously. However the groups' responses to these renditions were already proving useful. For example the banjo player had identified in the team A performance, what he described as 'the same chord repeated' 'or was it the same note' he queried. Another student in Team A had commented that the retrograde played by Team B produced a 'completely different piece.'

As is expected in any group composition, the pathways of creativity did not run smoothly. For example, after a strong response to the retrograde version of the tune, Group B seemed to 'get stuck', languishing in a dearth of new ideas. Team A who had initially struggled to move away from their performed version were now experimenting with bass lines played in high register on keyboard, syncopated guitar chords and confident triangle rhythms. This team were 'gelling' as a group music-making community and included in their ranks was a student with academic difficulties who was contributing wholeheartedly on triangle, and also the music teacher who was treated as an equal as she played on rhythm guitar.

Significant outcomes from this session include the observation that Time Out reflections proved a useful break from the activities of group composing and they contributed to the development of both aural and literary skills as the students voiced their critical responses to each other's music-making progress. Throughout the group interaction a 'bit of competitiveness,' as described by the teacher, proved a motivating factor. In

the return to music-making after the Time Out sessions, fresh efforts seemed nourished in some way with new ideas (such as the two-note banjo ostinato in Team B).

After the third Time Out, when the researcher asked both groups to move towards the final rendition, it was now apparent the compositions were not complete. On one hand this situation suggests inadequate planning but on the other hand, it is important to be aware that compositional responses do not flow to order and that the actual length of each group's journey to completion is impossible to pre-determine. As part of their unpredictable pathway in the closing moments of the class, with about three minutes to go, Team A experienced a flurry of musical response to new ideas. First, a very musical vocal improvisation was appearing and also, in their discussion of the form, a vision of the overall piece seemed to be crystalizing. At this point the researcher was bringing the composition class to a close and asking for the final rendition when the singer from Team A singer responded with, 'Oh no. We've just figured it out!'

As the feedback forms were being completed, this groups' engagement with the compositional ideas did not stop. The bell rang for the end of the school week and they were still experimenting at the piano and asking the music teacher for more lessons to continue the work. In the feedback questionnaire she describes how this evolved:

In the very next class we developed some more ideas on the theme and inputted the parts into a Finale Notepad programme.

Elements of the students' response were carried forth in the words of the Donegal teacher:

'I found it a joy to watch my class participate...they (even the weaker student who played triangle) were engaged from the beginning, -they 'got' the idea they really got involved in trying to compose a good melody and work through the various compositional ideas.'

When asked what they had learned from the activities, the response of Team A was: 'You can do scary things with one tune!'

Composing 4: Dublin

The fourth and final Composing class was located in a large city-centre Dublin all-girls school. Like the Composing 3 session it was arranged for Friday afternoon and this group had also decided to open with a pre-rehearsed performance. Their music teacher, reflecting on the pursuit of classroom composition, remarked enthusiastically:

I think it is great and will open up students minds as to the possibilities and ways to access composition.

For this Dublin class the material chosen from the current pop chart was a recent single entitled 'Little Talks' performed by the Icelandic band Monsters and Men. The music teacher had arranged sections of this song to suit the considerable talents of his senior cycle music class and the instrumental line-up included a selection of flutes, clarinet, violins, viola, piano, glockenspiels, xylophone and drums. As it transpired, the music in this arrangement had acquired its own musical character, quite distinct from that of the chart single, with energetic chords repeated in the manner of a minimalist Steve Reich composition.

With the teacher's enthusiastic opening 'will we show what we have done?', this class arrangement was performed with aplomb producing the same smiles of affirmation as in Composing 3. Three teams were then organised and got to work. For a short while fragments of the previous opening arrangement were the only audible working idea but gradually the teams moved into more creative territory. Team A were considering a bi-tonal approach involving flutes and clarinet, team B were embarking on an unusual 'transposition' where the pitch of the melody (C major) would be held but the accidentals of the new key (D major), would be introduced. Team C with an inventive pianist had chosen semitone clusters and octave changes.

It is perhaps important to note that at this point in the class, there was a noticeable lack of the silent hiatus which in the other sessions the students had seemed to need in order to gather performing confidence. Also

significant was the inventive nature of the creative pathways taken by these groups, which in all cases veered away from the composing techniques first demonstrated by the researcher. These students possessed considerable instrumental skills. Even the cacophony of multiple efforts in their group music creating was dominated by soaring flute tone, tight rhythms and rich viola timbre.

After the first Time Out demonstration, the clarinettist in team A was clearly unhappy with her rendition of the discordant line in the new key. As she sat shaking her head, affirmation appeared from team A:

I liked the sound of the clarinet with everything else; I thought the dissonance was really cool!

In the midst of this supportive discussion, the move away from *performer* to the *music performed* and the techniques implemented was having its effect. The sense of embarrassment connecting to imperfect renditions was being quelled and Sara slowly stopped shaking her head.

Team B's rendition sparked a discussion on the relationships between instrumental timbre and dissonance. 'The violin makes it sound funny - though it kinda went nice with the glockenspiel'. It also included very perceptive musical response that had identified an unusual transposition. 'With the added accidentals, it (the C major melody) sounded really different'.

Team C was ploughing a distinctive path and confidently described their plan before their demonstration. This short performance was rounded off with some moments of pure musical communication as the players improvised an ending to their ideas. The pianist's comment: 'I didn't think it was going to go on for that long', was affirmed by the music teacher's statement, 'it was just happening!'

At the end of the class and after two more cycles the transformations were organised in a 'Three Variations with Theme' performance. Although the composing process had been emphasized at all times, the anticipation of moving towards a final performance was in the air.

Team A after listening to Team C's ideas had expanded their own, adding a free-style introduction to their bi-tonal section A and a sweeping Glockenspiel announcement to their B section. Team B had adopted the teacher as a conductor/member and gave their short rendition that included interesting dynamics and varied tempo. In the third group, melodic interest was maintained by the piano and viola and here the chime-bars and xylophone provided stylish rhythmic ostinato.

In their feedback it was clear that the girls found this group composing experience affirming.

It was great for giving confidence in your own composing instincts ...
You were able to offer ideas and reject them without judgment
because everyone was doing the same thing. (Team C)

It's ok to think outside the box. (Team A)

Improvisation was very useful, having the confidence to play
whatever, even if it goes wrong. (Team B)

In his turn the teacher also responded positively,

Composition is something they find difficult to get a handle on-they
see it as an isolated event, only useful for getting marks in the
composition paper - this shows how 'real' composition can be, how
open it can be, and how varied it can be. - They loved it!

Chapter Seven: Flexible Learning Pathways in Group Music-Making

Introduction

This chapter examines the inherent flexibility and the rich variety of the learning pathways within the practice of group music-making in second-level classrooms. Aspects relating to this topic were first discussed in the focus group meetings and subsequently encountered in the action research journey; an experience just recounted in the previous chapter. This exploration relates in particular to the flexibility of group music-making as a pedagogical tool in the diverse teaching and learning pathways as experienced in the action research. This multiplicity, or as Jorgensen defines it, the 'situatedness' (2003, p.118), or potential to adapt, relates to the classroom pursuits in general and similarly to the experiences of each music-making group within the twelve music classes. Also to be considered are the varied responses of the music teachers, the nature of the teachers' and researchers' collaborative partnership and the diversity in negotiations of meaning engendered by the tripartite design of the classroom activities themselves. Other significant aspects include variations in the size of music class, the ambience in the music rooms and the availability of teaching and instrumental resources. Most significant of all however was the diversity of the students' experiences as members of group music-making teams within second-level music classes.

There is a sense in which learning is a lone process, each of us a self-taught individual and 'every lively person is to some degree an autodidact', (Swanwick, 2008, p.11). There is also the corresponding theory where the social and musical praxis of group music-making becomes an experiential melting pot from which equally meaningful learning may emerge. Wenger discusses the manner in which, within education, individual perspectives can shape what learners perceive and correspondingly what they do (1999, p. 225). If such a set of unique and individual perspectives may be brought together in the group music-making experience, it follows that each group

(of which there were 34 in this study) might develop a distinct 'working team' or micro-community identity engendering in turn a unique response to the learning situation.

As the discussion continues, this concept of flexible learning pathways in music education is sub-divided into three areas; first, teaching methodologies and management strategies in the group music-making classroom, second, responses within the course of the group music-making class and third, educational trajectories.

7.1: Methodologies and Management Strategies

The following section will examine the nature of the teacher researcher partnership, then outline the teaching patterns and the nature of the methods utilized by the music teachers in various directive, supervisory or participatory modes, and finally discuss the approaches utilized by the students in their responses to the group music-making activities.

The Music Teacher- Researcher Team

In the earlier focus group strand of the research, a relaxed but not informal atmosphere, conducive to the interaction of teaching colleagues had emerged. While in conversation the teachers' opinions blended with accounts of their practice, the dialogue flowing easily with no awkwardness or reticence. To illustrate the overall tone of the discourse, Sabina, at the beginning of Focus Group Three, outlines what group music-making in the classroom means to her.

It's everybody involved... in my music class in particular that's essential. I think the kids get a great kick out of feeling 'I'm part of this', no matter what your ability, that you can play or participate at whatever level within that group.

Some members of the focus group discussions had elected to continue their contribution and participate also in the classroom action research, so the ambience of relaxed collaboration and mutual respect was maintained throughout the second research component also. That said, during the

course of the twelve classroom sessions the partnership of music teacher and researcher unfolded in a variety of ways.

Before each classroom visit, a class management plan was organised in collaboration with the teacher and from this pre-session discussion various working combinations emerged. In the majority of cases, for example Melody 1, 2, 3 and 4, Harmony 1 and 2 and Composing 2, the teacher was in complete charge of the group music-making session and the researcher observed the work, taking field notes and operating the video camera. Sometimes, as in Composing 1 and Melody 5, the teacher and the researcher collaborated openly, sharing the supervision, musical direction and discussion. Alternatively, both teacher and researcher were involved in the music-making practice as in the performed demonstrations of the 'mash up'¹ in Harmony 3. At other times the researcher introduced and directed the session and the teacher assisted or participated, performing within a particular student music-making group. For example in Composing 4, the teacher conducted one group and in Composing 3 the music teacher played rhythm guitar as a group member.

Music Teachers' Pathways

From the first focus group discussions, diversity in the music teachers' response to classroom music-making sessions was apparent. For example some teachers were very happy with their conventional roles while others commented that within their group music-making performance the conventional student teacher roles might be sometimes reversed, with the teachers learning from the students. Nicola from Focus Group One describes her class of music-makers thus:

As a teacher you wouldn't be involved all the time because some students come to the fore in class ... obviously they're better performers, be they piano players, or 'trad' (Irish traditional)

¹ Mash up: the simultaneous performance of two or more popular songs. This is musically possible because the two songs share a common harmonic structure.

players...and they tend to lead...sometimes you're not even required...and they'll make suggestions to others...you could leave it to them. (Nicola, Focus Group One)

This situation pertained especially to performance in certain genres, notably Irish traditional music and certain instrumental techniques, for example rock style guitar playing.

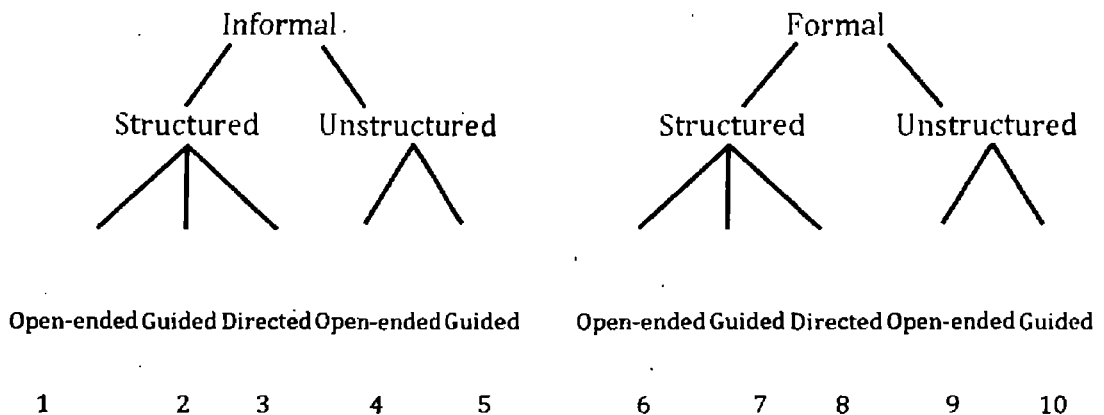
Towards St Patrick's Day we have a little session and that's very much the kids telling me and showing me, "Oh this is a great tune. This'll work really, really well!" So I found they're teaching me and that is great.' (Sabina, Focus Group Three)

Other teachers described how they joined in their group as performing peers and still others how they remained in supervisory mode, some quite happy with this arrangement and others surprised and perhaps even somewhat disappointed that their skills were not required.

In the talent show this year I was shocked with how much I *didn't* have to do, they were so good I couldn't get over them. It was just the solos that I had to help. (Sarah, Focus Group One discussing her rock groups)

This pattern continued during the subsequent action research visits and flexibility in each music teacher's engagement with the group music-making activities was also apparent. At this point it is useful to refer to the work of education scholar John Elliott who in his discussion of teaching models and classroom practice in the 1973 Ford Teaching Project outlines a 'typology of teaching patterns'. This framework is couched in the following terms: formal/informal, structured/unstructured, directed/guided/open-ended, and it constitutes ten different teaching pattern models which link quite closely to experiences in the classroom music sessions. In the following figure (2007, p.39), Elliott illustrates the various possible interconnections.

Figure 7.1: Typology of Teaching Patterns: Elliott, (2007)



The atmosphere was quite relaxed in the first examples of the classroom research with the music teacher remaining in full control of the delivery of the planned set of outcomes and often working essential curricular activities as outlined in the Junior or Leaving Certificate syllabi. This pattern in Elliott's terms would be described as no. 8, 'formal, structured and directed'. Such a plan was used in the Melody 3 class where the students were given a synopsis of the relevant exam question with attendant assessment criteria and then began working the rhythm and melody as a silent exercise before the music-making started. The Melody 4 session was slightly different. In this class the teacher used melodic stimulus from a Leaving Certificate examination paper but the music-making groups chose their own working methods, hence the link to Elliot's no.6, formal, structured, and open-ended pattern.

The teaching focus on examination material was sometimes dictated by the immediacy of class tests or the proximity of the certificate exam itself, as for example in the Melody 5 melody class. This class began informally with the boys singing of a theme from the Robbie Williams chart hit 'Candy'. When the music-making groups began to work the melodic composition, they were continually reminded to revise features and adapt emerging ideas in order to conform to the stipulated melodic design for the forthcoming

Leaving Certificate examination question. Such a teaching pattern might be described as no. 3, informal, structured and directed.

In the second set of pathways, the teachers from Melody 1, Melody 2 and Harmony 2, utilized a mixture of delivery. These classes would begin in the conventional manner with the teacher positioned at the head of the group or the centre of a circle and often working beside a blackboard or whiteboard with the students seated behind rows of desks. Then at the onset of the music-making activities, the approach would become less formal and the teaching pattern would move gradually to a more supervisory approach corresponding to No. 10. In all of these classroom instances there was a dual focus, some of the work linking to examination activities and some, especially those later on in the creative work cycle, making occasional excursions to independent musical pursuits. For instance, the Harmony 3 class plan involved the currently popular informal 'mash-up' or quodlibet idea, but towards the end of the class the teacher linked the student's performing activities to the written format of a Leaving Certificate composing examination question. This pattern would conform to No. 5 in Elliott's typology: informal, unstructured and then guided.

There were some cases where, although the work of the exam curriculum was a central impetus, the music teachers allowed their students to travel a self-directed learning pathway in their response to the stipulated task. In these instances (Composing 3 and Composing 4), though the teachers utilized elements from both the class design and the music syllabi, topics related to examinations, exam questions or assessment criteria were never mentioned. These more autonomous sessions linked to the Composing classes and could be described in Elliott's terms as informal, structured and open-ended, no. 1. It is significant that this third type of teaching pattern also tended to occur later in the schedule of research visits. At this juncture in the study the lesson plans had evolved through repeated action research cycles and they now contained successive contributions from music teachers as well as some ideas from the students themselves.

Students' Pathways

Within the student music-making body there were numerous and varied responses ranging from complete adherence to an outlined task to totally independent self-direction. Though the researcher's field notes on this topic comment that those involved in composing classes could employ and therefore enjoy the most creative freedom, students involved in the more formally organized melody and harmony classes also sometimes moved independently away from the specified task and at other times remained with the familiar specifications linked to the Leaving Certificate written paper.

Students Working to the Plan

In the first instance, there were occasions where students, fully in cooperation with the stipulations of the task, worked methodically according to plan. This adherence to the pursuit of a preconceived remit usually linked to Leaving Certificate examination material, though interestingly the student response was not always dictated by the teaching pattern. Such awareness of examination dictates and attendant concern with assessment had first been highlighted in the focus group meetings. One teacher in particular remembered a melody writing class where her student, not content with verbal praise had reacted thus:

It's a great melody. You know your climax is great and you've modulated there. (Teacher)

Yeah, but what did I get out of 40? (Student)

The teacher felt pressure that she described as 'sociological' and 'coming from outside of us'. This is a strong reference to what is described in Irish second level education as 'the points system': the accumulation of points generated from Leaving Certificate examination results, required to gain entrance to third-level education. In the same discussion another teacher, Paul had expressed the worry that his students, especially towards the approach of the Leaving Certificate examination, might dismiss creative composition work as 'not being on the course'.

In the action research the student awareness of the exam tended to appear in the melody sessions within a more prescriptive class plan as for example the Mayo Melody 3 class. In other sessions student awareness of the examination stipulations was unspoken, as for example in Melody 4 where, despite the teacher's exhortation to 'do what their ears were telling them', the music-making groups all followed the '16-bar melody' route prescribed by the Leaving Certificate syllabus. It seemed however from the student feedback in this class, that other seeds might possibly have been sown. When asked what they learned from this practical group approach the teams responded with:

It's better to use your ear too instead of strictly following a plan
(Team A)

The more risks you take, the better you know what works best'
(Team B)

Perhaps if given the opportunities for more classroom group music-making, these students might have gathered extra creative courage in their practice. This emerging issue and the need for further longitudinal study will be revisited in the final chapter.

While working to plan, some students' first reaction was to move towards a written contribution. In the Melody 2 session for example, the student groups penned their rhythm and melody before beginning to experiment with group performance. In other groups, (Composing 1 and Composing 2), the activity of writing seemed to serve another purpose and the field notes record an apparent nervous anticipation of the 'new ground' of exploring musical ideas through performance. There are a number of explanations for this awkwardness including the worry that inadequate instrumental skills might be measured, the consciousness of the video camera and the presence of both the teacher and the researcher. Most likely of all however is a fear of negative peer assessment, as outlined by Hunter and Russ, (1996). The question of peer response to group music-making and

adolescent performing identities will be further examined in the following chapter.

Students Responding Independently Within the Plan

In the second instance, the students followed the plan of the task but did so in their own working manner. This approach was to be expected in the Composing sessions but interestingly, it also emerged within the more prescriptive tasks, as for example in the Melody 2 and Melody 4 classrooms where all groups involved in the same Leaving Certificate melody writing task used individual composing methods. In their feedback, the four Melody 2 teams outline their varied methods:

We sang the ideas...it is easier to create when you hear it back.' (Team D)

We didn't write the melody till we finished working on it. We played it on piano to figure it out and remembered it by ear. (Team B)

We wrote out our melody on the staff...we also had ideas in our head. (Team C)

We wrote it (the melody) into our manuscript on the staff. It is better when we use the instruments...as we get a better idea of how the melodies will work because we can hear them as we create them. (Team A)

The three groups in Composing 4 session also invented or selected independent composing techniques and this occasion proved the most creative of all. Here the chosen composing techniques differed both from each other and from those outlined by the researcher at the beginning of the session. For example group B decided on a pattern where the original pitch of the given theme (C major) would remain but the accidentals of D major (F sharp and C sharp), would be added. Thus in the purest sense of acquiring knowledge through musical exploration, team B by a circuitous route had

moved their theme into the Locrian² mode. Issues relating further to this context and to the manner in which ideas ‘happen’, student autonomy and ‘flow’ with performance will be revisited in both Chapters Eight and Nine.

As the classes progressed, more independent musical ideas would sometimes emerge while the creative impulse continued to assert itself. For instance in the melody-writing pilot class, the guitarists in one group decided to lengthen the modulating phrase within their melody beyond the stipulated four bars simply because they liked the effect in performance. Similarly in the Melody 5 class, despite being guided by their teacher to include a modulation to the dominant, (this being one of the exam stipulations), team B chose to dispense with the said modulation and then at other times to include it at their own volition, thus leading to a spontaneous aural ‘spot the difference’ game with the remainder of the students. In their discussion of this manner of musical thinking and ‘problem solving as an integral aspect of composing’ (2004), Burnard and Yonker outline the need to stay mindful of the value of situations such as these and they advocate the kind of musical education that acknowledges and promotes just such ‘individual composing realities’ and ‘the development of the students’ voices’.

Students Responding Independently

A third set, the student groups who elected to or were given freedom within the class design to work in their chosen manner often found this a most rewarding aspect of their group music-making activities, as the following quotes attest:

It was nice to be in charge and form our own pieces. (Harmony 3)

We enjoyed the freedom of being able to change the music ourselves using our own ideas. (Composing 4)

² Locrain Mode: Originating in ancient Greek musical theory and practice, the Locrian mode may be considered to be a minor scale with the 2nd and the 5th degrees of the scale lowered a semitone. The Locrian mode may also be considered to be a scale beginning and ending on the seventh degree of any major scale.

It's OK to think outside the box. (Composing 4)

With the more independent directions, the course of the creative music-making did not always run smoothly or progress according to plan. Some students arrived at what seemed for them, shaky ground. Such was the dissonant bi-tonal demonstration of team A in Composing 4 where the clarinet player felt distinctly uneasy with the bi-tonal effect created by her performance in C major. In some teams the creative energy seemed to dissolve for a time as in the case of Composing 1, or languish in a dearth of musical progress as in the Composing 3 group. It seemed that useful ideas however conscientiously pursued, often eluded the very students who searched most assiduously. When these 'new' ideas did appear and an easier flow of creative concentration did emerge, the activity was often situated in the working explorations immediately after the Time Out. This was the time when the students re-entered the three-part cycle again.

Other stimuli such as the teacher's decision to record the proceedings or the encroachment of the final bell for the end of class seemed to have the same effect, inducing a type of musical adrenalin that propelled creative ideas into existence (Melody 1 and Composing 3). Further examination of this phenomenon, the spontaneous and sometimes unpredictable rhythms of the creative process, the subconscious connections between ideas that seem to 'pop out into awareness', and the link to the 'flow of creativity', (Csikszentmihali, 1996, p.104) will be explored in Chapter Nine.

As previously mentioned, in the Composing 3 and 4 sessions, teachers integrated completely with a particular music-making team, as performer and a conductor respectively. In both cases the teacher's contribution was acknowledged without fuss, the Composing 4 teacher becoming quietly enthusiastic alongside his teammates and the Composing 3 teacher relinquishing her 'teacher' identity completely. In both groups the pursuit of composition and arranging became a process of mutual discovery; in effect a practical illustration of Murray Schafer's succinct maxim, 'There are no more teachers. There is just a community of learners' (1976).

There was also something of the encapsulation of Wenger's ideas on 'mutuality of engagement' in his discussion of the cycle of learning and teaching.

It is the learning of mature members and of their communities that invites the learning of newcomers. As a consequence, it is as learners that we become educators. (1999, p.277)

In contrast, the students in another Composing 4 group, team C, relished their independence and were forthcoming in their desire for more scope and individual space to continue travelling this self-directed learning route.

We would have less external suggestions from the teacher.

We would have more isolation, so we don't use ideas from the teacher or other groups.

7.2: Responses within the Course of the Group Music-Making Class

The discussion now moves to the narrative outlining the course of the group music-making class. This involves descriptions of diverse methodological approaches and accounts of the happenings in the working sequences within the group performing sessions. It will incorporate analysis of the students' responses to the three-part cycle of planned activities, including accounts of their music-making in both exploratory and performing modes and also their critical responses in listening and discussion. This 'story' of the students' experience and their changing patterns of practical engagement in response to the stipulated tasks is closely connected to the varied pursuits in the class design.

Enlarging on this, the class plan involved a cycle of three key activities, two of which involved group performance and the third that constituted whole class listening and discussion of the group performances. Earlier in the focus group discussions some teachers had highlighted the distinction between the process of music-making and the performed product.

You're trying to illustrate something by doing group performance

You're doing it for it's own sake as well

(Ciara and Amy, Focus Group Two)

Subsequently in the design of the lesson, this distinction was developed and group music-making as a pursuit was deployed in three separate ways. The initial group performing, Activity One, would be an exploratory process involving student collaboration, instrumental deliberation and problem solving, extending towards the creation of new musical ideas. These pursuits executed through performance, would constitute an auditory lens through which both teacher and researcher could aurally discern the creative working responses to the given task. The second group performing activity would involve a demonstration of the work in progress and include renditions of ideas and partially solved musical problems while the remainder of the class listened. The third activity would involve appraisal and discussion, in critical response to the various teams' musical demonstrations. It was intended that the conversational interactions might affirm and encourage the music-making as well as generate suggestions which could be utilized as the cycle repeated itself.

Group Music-Making Activity One: Musical Exploration

At the introductory mention of 'performance' the field notes record a selection of different student reactions. The first constituted an apparent willingness to engage with the music-making right from the onset, as in the Melody 1, Harmony 3, Melody 4, and Melody 5 sessions. Soon after the start of class, these student groups would begin warming up their instruments and experimenting with musical ideas in a relaxed manner. There appeared to be little or no musical self-consciousness and the working relationship with group music-making evolved as though it were a normal occurrence. A similar merging of musical activities often occurs in traditional Irish or folk concerts and sessions where musicians tune and check or change strings, often trying out fragments of the forthcoming piece as they talk through the introductions. In these classes there was no silence, groups moving gradually into a cacophony of playing (Melody 1 and Harmony 3) or into more

meditative experimenting (Melody 2) with increased concentration and often immersion in group music-making for all.

In the second instance for example in Composing 3, Composing 4 and Harmony 2, the group music-making commenced with a pre-rehearsed performance involving the whole class. This introductory activity had been pre-planned using material suggested by the students or the teacher and in the event, it proved to be an effective icebreaker, bolstering students' confidence and enabling a smooth move into working group performance. As the Composing 3 teacher stated:

A little familiarity with the class work makes it easier for them-giving them a little ownership of the music and confidence before they try to develop it and change it around

On the other hand, a pre-worked piece, enabling though it might emerge, was also a comparatively comfortable 'performing place' and some students needed to relocate to the much less predictable process of creating through performance. In the Harmony 2 and the Composing 3 classes, the student groups travelled this pathway with comparative ease. In the Composing 2 group however, the character of the Adele 'pop' song, which had been introduced by the group A themselves, seemed to spread a dominating blanket from which the original creations of the music-making team never quite emerged. As the student group commented:

We found it difficult to come up with a good way of playing [*re-arranging*] the piece without ruining it (Composing 2)

Speaking in a similar vein after the Composing 4 session, the music teacher remarked on the length of time it took his student groups to emerge from the 'safe ground' of their pre-rehearsed performance before they could engage with and employ original composing techniques.

In the Composing 2 (group B), Melody 2, and 3 sessions, a third and very different response to this opening group music-making activity involved a 'shying away' from singing or playing instruments altogether. If it

is remembered however that countless performances are associated with assessment in education systems, grade examinations and competitive festivals, and that 'perfect' performances are sought after, downloaded, purchased and pursued at a myriad of concert events, this is hardly a surprising reaction. At the invitation to 'play the instruments' or to 'create through group music-making', some students may have presumed such a perfectly formed musical product was required, since their response was to react nervously with hushed exclamations like 'Oh No!' (Composing 2), or glances of trepidation, (Melody 2). Further issues relating to adolescent models of self-evaluation (Dweck, 1999), the importance of peer response to performance (Hunter and Ross, 1996), and the motivational patterns of young adolescent musicians (O'Neill, 2002) become significant here and these concepts focusing on performing identity will be addressed in the following chapter.

Group Music-Making Activity Two: Demonstration of Progress

The second music-making activity, distinct from the first, involved group performance of a type that constituted a demonstration illustrating the progress or the evolution of musical ideas. The diversity of these actual renditions reflected the rich variety and the unique 'situatedness' (Jorgensen, 2003) of resources in each second level classroom.

To begin with instrumental resources: each music room had a piano, several music rooms also held a number of keyboards and on occasion, there was also a drum-kit. In other sessions collections of classroom percussion including bongo drums and bodhráns³ were augmented with found sounds such as pens hitting desks or triangle beaters hitting other metals. There was no uniform collection of classroom instruments, and students regularly provided their own, bringing them to school on the day as required. Accordingly the general impression was of a rich collection of ensemble

³ Bodhrán: An Irish traditional percussion instrument made of goat skin stretched over a circular wooden frame and played with a stick.

performances involving instrumental combinations that were certainly distinctive if at times unconventional; for example the combination of acoustic guitar, keyboard, recorder, violin and euphonium in Harmony 3 or piano, viola, xylophone and two glockenspiels in Composing 4.

Some performances, especially those in the melody sessions, would retain a single line texture while other demonstrations moved into thicker textured rock style with the melodic lines accompanied by up to three guitars and drums. The renditions in Composing 1, 2 and 4 were concerned with the imitation of composing techniques from the Leaving Certificate Set Works programme and these developed in a more sophisticated manner involving three or four-part polyphonic texture. Finally, there were renditions developed along their own musical trajectory with considerable originality. The instrumental arrangement of 'With you Without You', in group A Harmony 3, involving recorders flute and keyboard and the melodic improvisation of the fiddle in Melody 4, are cases in point.

In the first round of demonstrations, the self-conscious aura associated with the initial exploratory music-making persisted and the group performance might flounder for a variety of reasons. For example the students in Melody 2 had problems sight-reading their written ideas while those in Composing 2, Composing 3 and Melody 4 struggled to remember ideas that had not been notated. Both composing groups in Composing 1 had problems synchronising their individual parts because although presenting as a group, they were in fact operating as soloists. Sometimes also a saxophone or trumpet player might need more time to transpose on the spot. There were also more confident renditions, for example group C in Composing 4 group began their demonstration with an entertaining and perceptive spoken introduction. In the same session, there was evidence of well-developed instrumental technique, while in others, for example Composing 1 and Composing 2; indications of emerging instrumental skills were more common. It is interesting that even in the comparatively short one-hour sessions, progress in this area of instrumental technique and

performing skills was also aurally discernable as the cycle of activities proceeded. (Composing 1 and 2, Melody 1 and 3).

The more confident demonstrations were often connected to the student's predilection for a particular genre, for example the Irish traditional character of the fiddles and concertina melodies in Melody 4 and the similarly ornamented traditional tin whistle melody in group A of Melody 3, the minimalist character of the Composing 4 orchestral renditions, or group B's fluent rock style guitar riffs in Melody 5. On occasion an individual aptitude might shine through, especially where the group performance needed musical support or the composed rendition had not been completely worked through. This was obvious in a Composing 4 demonstration where despite the incomplete ending; a jazz improvisation involving the piano and the xylophone first extended and then brought the performed 'progress' to a very satisfactory close. In a similar manner in the Melody 4 class, the traditional fiddler extemporized a spontaneous traditional style musical ending to bring her groups' melody to the required 16-bar length. It is noteworthy that by the second rendition of group B in Composing 4, the team had absorbed elements linking to these individual contributions. As the Composing 3 teacher comments:

Even the weaker students got involved – they really wanted their group performance at the end to be good.

In a few renditions an apparent inability to solve the problems presented as a shy and stilted performance (group B Harmony 3) but there was also commendable persistence and a capacity to keep going despite these problems encountered, as for example in the harmonizing of the One Republic popular hit 'Apologise'. Here the Limerick HH3 students struggled with inaccurate and confused responses for most of the class but finally could smile in relief when at the very end of the class, their understanding of the involved harmonies clarified and their performed demonstration began to sound good. In the Composing 3 group A, had also languished in their struggle with retrograde techniques but half way through the session, they

found the tenacity to begin the complete piece again and move in a completely new direction.

Given that the three classroom activities were cyclical, performing demonstrations usually ran to a second attempt at least and in many of these second cycle renditions there were notable improvements in the students' performance. The social implications of the students' engagement in this context and their performing identity will be further discussed in Chapter Eight. To return to this musical context, as the smooth running of the piece grew in consequence, a corresponding awareness of 'self' and performing awkwardness receded. For instance, in both Composing 1 groups the lack of synchronization obvious in the first demonstration had all but disappeared by the second rendition. In the Melody 2 second performances, more percussion instruments had joined the central keyboards, while in Composing 2, the 'quiet' group B had dispensed with the guitar and found their performing *métier* with a piano and recorders ensemble.

This transformation of the student performing response within the course of the class was most amply and physically illustrated in the youngest group music-making session, Melody 3. Here is a narrative excerpt from the field notes.

At the start of the composing activities, while the other two members of his team moved to the piano, Oliver remained seated behind his desk, nowhere near his teammates or his guitar. Nearly three minutes into the group composition he quietly moved taking his guitar to the others beside the piano. For the first Time Out rendition however he chose to watch, silently fingering some chords on the fingerboard. Then for the second rendition he showed he could manage the three primary chords in D Major and he played along quietly. By the end of the performance session it was Oliver's contribution that clearly outlined the shape of his group's melody.

Within the playing of the demonstrations, an important consideration was the standard of performing and the technical skills. When these were perceived as less than satisfactory, they diverted students' attention from the

musical experience of the piece itself. In the classroom sessions, considering the variety of instruments involved and the diversity of musical genres, it is perhaps surprising that there was only one instance where this struggle interfered with the musical progress of the group. This instance related to the vocal contributions. As the Melody 4 teacher commented:

I noticed how singers took a step back from composing in comparison to the instrumentalists. They were less likely to experiment with developing material.

In Composing 3, though the melodic creation of the group A singer was excellent, the vocal contribution emerged for the first time towards the end of class, and only then, after the group had struggled with retrograde and effected a complete compositional turn-about moving into improvisation.

The group B boys in Melody 5 included five vocalists with one guitar and they seemed at a creative⁴ loss, unable to move their melody beyond a reproduction of the given four bars. Without an instrument to situate the awareness of pitch in their melodic development, they eventually decided to work a rhythmic development with tambourine, guitar chords and found sounds. The Melody 5 teacher also commented on this situation and he identified the need to monitor the instrumental profile of group music-making teams and to support those student vocalists involved in creative composition

In general however the musical developments in the various group demonstrations constituted positive experiences at all levels of ability. The technical acquisition of a single-line nursery rhyme melody, (Composing 1), an arpeggio figure on keyboard (Melody 1) or an energetic rhythm on bongo drums (Melody 5) gave as much satisfactory feedback to the students as more musically sophisticated pursuits in Composing 4 and Melody 4. This situation points towards the potential of such a pursuit as group music-making to operate satisfactorily at diverse ability levels simultaneously. As

⁴ Creative: This term is used frequently in this chapter and it relates to the imaginative or original production of musical ideas or arrangements.

previously recounted, this musical task-orientation was often most apparent immediately after the first Time Out interludes when music-making groups had taken a break from exploring and creating to demonstrate and discuss their progress. The analysis will now focus on this time of musical attentiveness, critical response and discussion that constitutes the third music-making activity.

Group Music-making Activity Three: Listening and Discussing

The interaction that occurs when groups of music-makers listen to and then respond critically to each other's progress has musical connotations and it also involves learning pathways in social discourse. In this section however the focus will remain with developing musical pathways. Examination of the relationship between listening, critical response and group or individual social interaction will be considered in the following chapter 'Musical Becoming'. In the present chapter, the listening will be discussed first and examination of the manner in which listening informs the discourse will follow.

The Listening

The activity of listening to music and then discussing and criticising the performance may seem at first to link rather tenuously, if at all, to the group music-making pursuits signified in the paragraph heading. Indeed, 'listening and discussing' might be more accurately defined as a combination of activities. Furthermore listening could be construed as a covert pursuit, and not an activity at all in the physical sense.

On the other hand, if as in this research, musical thinking and awareness are combined with the activity of listening, and then the pursuit becomes a type of 'thinking-in-listening' a concept discussed in considerable detail by David Elliott under the heading 'listenership'. (1995, p. 80). Alongside composing and performing, listenership is an integral component in the development of musicianship, a process Elliott has coined as 'musicing' and which is central to the paraxial philosophy of music education.

Stating that 'Musicing always includes a kind of doing called music listening' (p.78), Elliott describes listenership as a co-joining of thinking - in - action and knowing - in - action. In his publication 'Creative Music Making' (2005, p.49), William Cahn, founder member of the contemporary percussion group Nexus, agrees, maintaining that:

Good listening (audiating) is the key to well-rounded musicianship. In a cultural environment where physically active 'doing' is valued highly, it is sometimes necessary to draw attention to mentally active 'doing' which is what good listening is

In 2005, Cutietta and Stauffer revisited of Elliott's concept of 'listenership' and introduced two different ways of listening entitled respectively 'inside listening' and 'outside listening' (p.124). For the activity of 'inside listening', the listener and the music-maker are one and the same individual, for example a classical soloist, a conductor or a member of a rock band and the listening is 'embedded in the act' (*ibid.*). With the second type, the 'outside listener' is observing aurally and 'not actively engaged in music-making during the act of listening'.

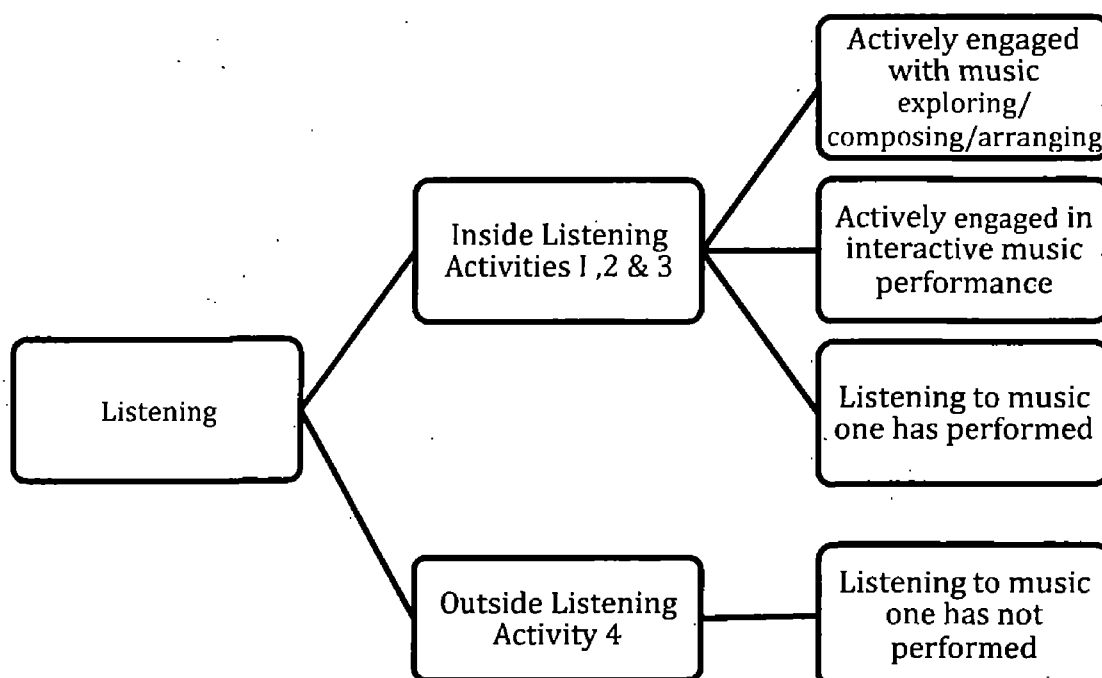
When these ideas are located in the classrooms of this research study, the first point to bear in mind is that a variety of creative and active listening pursuits both 'inside' and 'outside' are being interchanged a number of times as the class progresses through its tri-partite cycle of activities. To take a sample class, in the first group music-making activity, students listen as they explore and make composing decisions. During the second demonstration activity, they listen as they execute their own performance, interacting musically with the playing of their teammates. Thirdly, as audience members, they listen again to the products of the 'musicing' (Elliott, p.41), in the renditions of the other class music-making groups.

This third activity, listening, as an audience member can be further expanded if findings in the comparatively recent studies on music perception in the field of neuroscience are considered. Overy and Molnar-Szakacs (2006,

pp.235-241), outline the discovery of 'individual mirror neurons in the macaque brain that fire both when an action is executed and when that same action is observed or heard'. Whilst further investigation in the contexts of both neuroimaging and the biology of creativity are outside the remit of this study, it is possible to consider the significance of this research in relation to the connection between listening to music and motor function in all aspects of group music-making.

When students are listening to a piece of music that they can perform, not only is there a response to an auditory signal but also an 'intentional, hierarchically organized sequence of expressive motor acts behind the signal' (*ibid.*). In most of the action research classes, the opening working themes were all performed or sung by the students, so there exists, in the listening to the demonstrations of other class teams, some physical experience of the music-making. Correspondingly, there is ground for the outlining of an additional and fourth type of active listening: listening to music that one has previously performed. The following table illustrates this suggestion that within group music-making pursuits in the classroom, the learning pathway includes a total of four types of listening activity

Figure 7.2: Listening Activities



In the above figure, the first group music-making activity involves 'inside listening' as a composer, making musical judgments, assembling and discarding ideas in the process of creating something new. The second activity concerns 'inside listening' as a performer, either in the interpretative response to one's solo music-making or in interaction with members of one's music-making group. The third type of listening as an audience member has two aspects: the first, 'inside listening' to music with which one has had previous performing experience and the second, 'outside listening' to music with which one has had no performing involvement.

The Discussions

The verbal interactions that follow are generated from these various listening activities and form a logical extension of the pursuits. When these discussions relate to the music demonstrated, they become conversational pictures illustrating the manner in which the students have identified musical features and negotiated the meanings of the music within their 'listenership'. Put another way, students who comment on the demonstrations have aurally evaluated the musical evidence within these performances and their conversational observations and suggestions indicate that they have made decisions regarding the solving of the musical problems therein. Additionally, in the group music-making scenario where each class divides into at least three small groups, this care for the musical outcomes extends beyond one individual music-making team, becoming a matter of responsibility for the entire class since all pieces can be affected by a suggestion or an observation. In this context therefore, the listening, the response to the listening and the subsequent related discussion become locked in one comprehensive, all-inclusive music-making pursuit.

In this area of group music-making activity three, as the students make observations and suggestions, two aspects become important; one, the nature of the dialogue itself wherein ideas require clear and succinct verbal illustration and two, the subsequent performing responses; musical activities which have been motivated by the appraisal in the dialogue.

In the numerous 'Time Out' periods of reflection the conversational responses were varied. At times there were light-hearted, comments across the room, for example when group A spotted to the introduction of minor tonality in group B's melody. In contrast following the teacher's encouragement to discuss the musical features of a demonstration, there was complete silence, (Composing 2, Melody 3). Sometimes the students might simply be in enjoyment of the practice as specified by a guitar player in Harmony 2, 'I got to play music...just play music'. They might need more than one hour to acquire the skills for such a mode of dialogue or the class might lack confidence or the experience in an unfamiliar cycle of activities (Melody 3).

In instances such as these the teacher would step in with varied conversational strategies such as encouragement. 'Lovely! Now you can get to the modulation' (Melody 4), or comments leading to developments in musical terminology, 'Why should you open the melody to higher or lower notes?' (Melody 5). Often however the conversation just flowed casually, illustrating diverse responses to the performed demonstrations. As just mentioned, this response had elements of critical thinking where the musical content of the performance was evaluated and probed for musical meaning. The subsequent suggestions then constituted attempts to solve the problems presented within the as yet incomplete musical renditions. This method of critical peer feedback relates to elements of the Critical Response Theory, a process formulated by Liz Lerman (Lerman and Borstel, 2003).

Introduced in the 1990s and linking originally to community dance projects in Illinois, USA, this approach to group critique became a popular method of obtaining useful feedback for a work in progress. It involves the dialogue and interaction that takes place after a presentation of an artistic work, short, long or (as relates specifically to this study), at any stage in its development. Critical response involves four stages: the presentation of the work, the artist questioning the responders, the responders discussing with the artist and opinion time. In the music classrooms of this study, the student groups or the artists did present their musical work (stage one). However in

these classroom sessions the performers lacked the confidence or presence of mind to question their peer listeners or responders (stage two). The listeners and the teacher, on their part, did discuss and did offer opinions and these interactions included varying degrees of adherence to the conventional teacher questioning - student responding typology. Very often the teacher was a third participant, a leader facilitator who kept the progress on track and worked to help the other two parties. More research would be needed to ascertain if developments in student confidence would move their critical reflection closer towards the Lerman model.

Regarding the choice of language, the extent of related vocabulary and the manner of offering spoken contributions, the following scenario would often emerge. As in the instance of Melody 1, the music teacher would initiate the discussion setting out the subject matter and nature of the discourse that would focus on methods of composing, musical features and instrumental characteristics. Then, over the course of the class and through repeated cycles of creating, 'Time Out' demonstrations, listening and responding the students' spoken contributions would increase as they gradually registered the significance of their opinions and the supremacy of the musical process over any performed product. This process was very gradual in some classes and given the brief length of the one-hour sessions there are most likely spoken contributions that students never plucked up the courage to utter. One student in the MM2 class illustrates this point perfectly with his quiet observation given three minutes before the end of class.

The long note just before it (the melody) finishes ... I liked that!

Often it was the first critical discussion episode that felt most awkward and stilted, for example in the Melody 4 group and the young Melody 3 class there was silence. In other instances, appraisals, though offered in a relaxed manner, sometimes lacked clarity. The commentary might be constructive but given in informal teenage vernacular for example 'The piano was good' or 'the rhythm was cool', and lacking in incisiveness.

Alternatively an observation though musically perceptive, might lack interesting detail

The piano went up higher to develop the A phrase.(Melody 1)

It was sometimes couched in terms of likes and dislikes with no other detail.

I like the bass jumpy thing. (Composing 2)

While in some classes the observation was largely unspoken. Here Oliver from MM3 is responding the 'spikey' shape of the melodic line he has just heard.

It went up.... then... (He gesticulates sharply downwards in silence)

Some other students however had just the correct amount of detail

I don't think bar 6 linked to the rest. (Melody 4)

Sometimes, in reflection of the Lerman ethos of care for the musicians, the dialogue was very sympathetically couched showing as much concern for the feelings of the performers as for the quality of the musical effort.

The rhythm was good but the modulation didn't sound like it was... It wasn't natural (Melody 2)

An implied criticism of the pedantic crotchet rhythm in the traditional polka composition was balanced with an opening positive statement.

I like the bodhrán ... but maybe more than just 1-2 (Composing 2)

Wenger (p.8, 1999), outlines the importance of adequate vocabulary in making sense of concepts which 'we use to make sense of the world' and 'direct both our perceptions and our actions' and in this context the examination now moves to the second aspect of the critical discussions; the active response of the various groups to the musical observations. These actions demonstrated care for the resulting musical pieces and corresponding developments in musicianship.

Response to the Discussions

Discussing successful learning, Claxton states:

Learning *when* to use what we know is as important a form of learning as increasing *what* we know (1990, p.150)

In the Melody 5 session with group A, there was no question of 'when'. The reaction of the team to the critical response was instant and in addition, it was peer instruction that had dictated this action. To explain: team C had reported that the texture in the group A demonstration was thin. 'It was good but all of the group could have been a bit more involved.' This critical response highlighted the fact that two group A members had indeed been on the periphery and somewhat detached from the composition activity. They were promptly brought into play by their teammates, the pianist helping one boy with a xylophone part and the guitarist fetching a set of bongo drums and demonstrating a suitable rhythm for the second student to try.

The issue of thin texture and occurred also in Composing 2 where an interesting thread of critical discourse had begun with a question regarding the tailing off towards the end of team A's canon.

Can you put something with the recorder at the end?

This criticism not only prompted a re-arrangement of the said canon but also the highlighting of texture as an important feature entered the chosen language of the same group in their subsequent, and very valid, criticism of team B's piece.

In the Composing 1 first demonstration, problems with synchronisation were sympathetically judged as 'just needing the practice to get the rhythms right' and following some practice with notated parts, there was a noteworthy improvement in the musical coherence by the next demonstration.

7.3: Educational Trajectories

As outlined in Chapter Five (p.109), the group music-making activities in the classroom sessions were linked to examination syllabi and planned with projected learning outcomes connected to melody writing, harmony and composition. In practice however the nature of involvement in such a pursuit as group music-making (indeed the central nature of learning itself), generates its own scenario of encounters, not only propelling the students' response to the task towards independent approaches, but also to providing the impetus for exploration and discovery in completely different areas. Small's discussion of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge refers to the 'fuzzy areas at the edges of subjects' (1980, pp.186-187) where 'the most interesting and rewarding speculations are liable to take place' and Wenger paints a picture of autonomous learning alongside delivered activities and procedures as 'learning which seeps through the cracks' sometimes even 'creating its own cracks' (1999 p.225). In the twelve classroom sessions while much of the focus related to melodies, chords and compositional techniques, a significant proportion of other experiences appeared alongside the planned design, creating learning pathways on their own terms.

Pathways with Instruments

In addition to the practical satisfaction, fun, and social interaction engendered through group music-making, engagement with instruments on purely technical and mechanical levels provided impetus for some interesting learning experiences. Preparation and warming up as well as the physical operating of musical instruments became itself a process inductive to learning. Violins and guitars needed tuning. There were flutes, clarinets and saxophones to be assembled and reeds moistened, the warming-up of the voices was necessary and the flat notes of the euphonium showed clearly the dangers of 'going in cold' for members of the brass family. The idiosyncrasies of trumpet, saxophone and euphonium that might only be experienced by orchestra or band members were now experienced first-hand as students observed their teammates prepare and perform. In addition, some of these intricacies found their way into idiomatic

compositional developments, for example, the open chords or arpeggios on the piano (Melody 1), pizzicato on the violins the atmospheric timbre of high-pitched strings (Composing 3, Composing 4), glissandi transferring from the glockenspiels to xylophones in an (Composing 4), stylish rock riffs on guitar (Melody 5) ornamental slides, rolls and cuts on the traditional flute, tin whistle and fiddle (Melody 2, Melody 4), even a viola strummed like a ukulele (Composing 4). All were providing instruction by aural and visual osmosis in the authentic 'doing'.

Regarding the capacity of an instrument to illustrate and illuminate musical learning, the piano arguably tops the list and fortunately there was always a piano and often three or four electronic keyboards in each classroom session. The physical layout of keyboard provided a central hub around which students would gather, sometimes playing with one finger, or playing together in octaves, (Composing 1) exploring musical ideas and features and communicating visually and physically as well as aurally. This capacity of the piano to clarify a melodic idea, a composing technique a chordal accompaniment or even a whole musical creation (Melody 2) was particularly apparent in the 'activity one' experimental group music-making sessions.

The teacher in this class had reflected on this in her preparation, and stated:

In choosing the groups, I assigned a "strong" leader who was also a keyboard player... the use of a keyboard is a visual aid so it should be beneficial when they are doing the modulation.

In this Melody 2 class, the field notes record

For the first working session, all music-making was centered on keyboard performance. Ideas were discussed, suggestions offered and as the teacher had hoped, the students were engaging with the emerging melodies through the 'visual aid' of the keyboard.

When the communication of an idea from another instrumentalist, (one who was not a piano player), was emerging, often the student would put down their own instrument and illustrate, sometimes with one finger, on the piano keys, (Composing 1, Melody 4). The music teacher in Melody 4 recalls:

In one particular case Ciara who was playing the violin demonstrated what chords she wanted Aoife to use on the piano. I was delighted to see how open they were at giving each other direction. In the first performance of the melody, Aoife didn't get the chords but on the second performance, she played them (correctly) and it showed how much they were learning from each other

There was similar keyboard-based group collaboration in the Melody 5 all boys' class. Here the group C xylophone player with obvious guitar skills first demonstrated on xylophone then mimed his musical idea on the fingerboard of his teammate's guitar while the other three guitarists watched, (25:32). The peer instruction of this particular student was further demonstrated (37:16) when in response to the class criticism, 'We don't think they developed it (the melodic phrase) enough' and the teacher's declaration, 'The second phrase owes little to the first', the lead guitarist moved again to him for help. His musical explanation was again illustrated on the xylophone.

Pathways with Transposing Instruments

Performing alongside transposing instruments was a new and rich experience for some of the students. In small groups of players they could watch, often in closer proximity than if they were members of an orchestra, and in these instances they could become aware of struggles. For example in the Melody 1 class where the tenor saxophonist was exhorted to 'just play it' by his guitar playing team-mate, he responded explaining that he was 'transposing in his head'. In the Harmony 2 session (where the focus was on the bass line, the chord inversions and the voicing), two trumpeters were left to their own transposing devices and, chatting quietly, they managed considerably well, joining the performance after their initial flurry of transposition was complete.

In Composing 4 a difference of opinion between two students in the same group eventually highlighted the fact that the clarinet's home key was a tone lower than concert pitch and it was in fact a transposing instrument,

Flautist: Oh wait, we have it in D major as well

Clarinetist: No it's C major

Flute: That's D major

Clarinet: No it's C major

Sometimes an encounter with the vagaries of transposition was the impetus for original invention such as the instance of the above clarinetist working with flute and glockenspiel, who chose not to transpose but to read at concert pitch thus producing a dissonant bi-tonal effect in the composition arrangement. Similarly, in the Melody 1 class, the traditional tin whistle player with his diatonic C major instrument had a problem with the stipulated melodic phrase in B flat major. His eventual response was an attempt to develop the given melodic phrase by removing all the B and E flats and his comment at the end of class: 'I've learned how to transpose from B flat to C major'

At times the practical encounters with musical instruments were simply good fun as in the quest for a suitable muted sound for the overpowering euphonium in Harmony 3. A school tie was inserted in the bell and the resulting muffled tone intrigued the girls who decided to experiment further by inserting a pink scarf. The resulting shift in pitch of almost a minor third, as well as becoming a learning process for students, teacher, and researcher alike, reduced all in the room to giggles!

Other Musical Trajectories

In the Melody 5 class, the teacher was guiding the creative work so the team B students were very aware of what was required in the writing of a Leaving Certificate melody exercise. They demonstrated how they could adhere to the stipulations and employ a modulation to the dominant but also, without

straying too far musically, they also performed another version illustrating how their musical ideas could travel in independent directions.

In some cases (Melody pilot, Composing 3 and 4 and Melody 5), a musical idea seemed to take over the practice providing stimulus for completely independent and often improvisatory response as for example the ending of team C's demonstration where the Composing 4 teacher exclaimed, 'The music was just happening!'

To the music student involved in analysis, the three chords involved at the end of 'Stille Nacht' constitute a common harmonic formula entitled the cadential 6 4. For the vocalists in Harmony 1 who explored various combinations of tonic and dominant harmony, and who deliberated about what 'sounded right' the emergence of this second inversion tonic chord was a discovery, its existence revealed through the group vocal practice. As the teacher put it:

The introduction and discovery of 1c⁵ was unexpected but it worked out great. This is a great way to develop student's ability to harmonise naturally.

At the beginning of the Composing 1 class, both groups were working without notation and as previously mentioned they experienced problems in synchronising the original and retrograde melodies. Here they describe their realization that notation, in essence a memory aid, was in fact very useful.

The rhythm was really hard to get between the main melody and the retrograde. When we wrote the retrograde down in notation this really helped.

⁵A three-note chord has three possible configurations with any one of the three notes (the root, the third and the fifth), becoming the bass note respectively. These different chord shapes are called inversions and are referred to as a, b and c respectively. Hence chord one or the key chord has three inversions 1a, 1b and 1c.

Furthermore, they realized that these techniques can totally alter a common or a simple tune.

A simple melody like 'Mary Had a Little Lamb can be transformed into an interesting piece of music.

The Teacher's Trajectory

The process of group performance brought new abilities to the fore and the teachers stated that they were often pleasantly surprised by the various responses of their students. In the Melody 4 melody class, the teacher was impressed by her pupils' ability to remember 16 bars 'by ear' and in a similar vein, the boys' aural skills impressed the Melody 5 teacher. The Composing 3 teacher thought 'The vocal line Sarah came up with was fab'.

There was also a personal trajectory of discovery for the teachers themselves, who in the feedback, reflected on their own class management skills and also their discovery of areas in need of their attention. The Melody 2 teacher commented on her discovery that her class were 'good on rhythm but weak at writing' The Composing 4 teacher remarked on his students' lack of relevant vocabulary for the critical discussion feeling he 'could have prepared them more' and reflecting on the nature of group music-making, the Harmony 3 teacher stated:

This lesson made me even more aware of the possibilities for performing listening and composing in every class. It also made me very much aware of the fact that although I may be fully aware of the intricate links between theory and practice, for my students there exists a huge gap between them, something I will strive to reduce with every lesson.

The Melody 2 teacher comparing the group music-making melody class with her more usual approach spotlighted her own attitude, 'How much I take over! ... I should stand back more!' Meanwhile in Composing 1, to the teacher's surprise, the guitarist produced a very dissonant middle section to the simple 'Mary had a Little Lamb' rearrangement. Resisting the impulse to

become the directing teacher, she states 'I felt like correcting Gerard but didn't!'

Conclusion

Overall, the strongest impression relates to the flexibility and the potential of group music-making activities to enhance a variety of learning situations in the Irish second-level classroom. This concept, first documented in the focus group discussions has emerged equally strongly in the action research classroom music lessons.

Throughout the sessions, the group music-making activities remained relevant to the core pursuits in the Leaving Certificate syllabus, connecting as much to listening and composing as to performance. The cyclical three-part class plan was utilized in a variety of creative and positive ways regardless of the diversity in teaching management strategies. The response of the mixed ability students was equally wide-ranging, though diversity in their methods of work often emerged more clearly in the smaller groups. Even within a single teaching management strategy, (see *Melody 2* and *Composing 4*), student group music-making activities could diverge richly within one class and yet remain relevant to the outlined task.

In the lessons, Group Music-Making Activity One generated an exploratory practical and musically interactive experience. The response of the music-making teams varied and in some cases the actual working of this pursuit took some time to establish satisfactorily. However, once in process, it became dynamic in the vast majority of cases. Activity Two indicated on many levels what was required in the instrumental and vocal arrangement, and the implementation of a musically satisfactory demonstration. This activity was a particularly significant experience when the group performance was 'in process' since the aural, visual and physical engagement could point the way in an authentic and practical manner towards what might be necessary for improvement. Activity Three, a period of listening, reflecting and responding, gave opportunity to move away from the group music-making action into the pursuit of listening and reflection.

There was now space to engage with the significance of the more physical actions and to process learning outcomes relating to instrumental techniques (where improvement was needed), literacy (where new terminology and syntax could be absorbed ready for use), and the development of performing identity (especially relating to developing confidence).

Due to the cyclical design there was then immediate opportunity to make the ideas 'real' to absorb, to implement or discard, in other words to reap the significance of the musical and social consequences, no matter how small. Particularly notable within the varied activities was the emergence of a framework of four separate listening experiences and the particular significance of 'Inside Listening Activity 3', where the listener had some performing experience of the piece being played.

In their flexibility, these group music-making sessions fulfilled the conditions of vital engagement in three capacities: firstly, in the musical exploring, secondly, in the linking of these exploratory processes to performance-based consequences and thirdly, through listening, in the connecting of the performed demonstrations to the critical discourse immediately afterwards.

This manner of flexible group music-making pertains to both the advancement of musicianship and also the social and personal development of the students. The advance of these more social aspects additional to and alongside growing musicianship will form the subject matter of the following chapter.

Chapter Eight: Musical Becoming

Introduction

'Musical becoming' as it relates to the activity of group music-making in second level education is a multifaceted concept, elements of which can be approached from many different angles. In this chapter the examination of group performance as a pursuit concerns firstly the 'praxis' or the practical interactions on musical, social and personal levels. In addition, as Wilson and MC Donald observe (2012, pp.567-569), it becomes an aesthetic experience, further open to numerous interpretations by listeners and observers as well as by performers and teachers.

The source of the gerund 'becoming' is John Blacking's lecture on '*Humanly Organised Sound*' (1974, p.28), a discussion of structures and systems in the music of the Venda tribe. Talking about powerful shared experience he had this to say:

'Man is man because of his associations with other men.' Venda music is not an escape from reality. It is an adventure into reality, the reality of the world of the spirit. It is an experience of becoming, in which individual consciousness is nurtured within the collective consciousness of the community'

The ideals of this statement can be transported to the Irish music-making classroom experience of this study. To paraphrase Blacking, in the action research sessions the 'association' of music students with other students, is 'an adventure into the reality of the world of music-making'. Such energetic, human interactions have already been described in the focus group discussions. In addition, the 'experience of becoming' where individual consciousness, both personal and musical can be nurtured within the collective consciousness of small musical communities, is encapsulated the unique interlocking of the social, the musical, the individual and the group in a musically interactive team experience.

8.1 Musical Becoming

Musical Becoming

This discussion will begin with a semantic consideration of the term 'musical becoming'. These two words as they are juxtaposed in the above title can suggest the on-going pursuit of and participation in a musical activity that engenders a transformative process for both the music group and the solo performer. This procedure is concerned essentially with human development, and it can be personal, inter-personal, emotional, social, and may involve interaction at both individual and group levels.

When it is situated in the learning environment of the second-level classroom it involves various parties: the body that constitutes the complete music class, the smaller music-making teams within that body and the individual musicians that make up the various performing groups. Also to be considered in these musical interactions are the varied practices of the teachers who interrelate with both performing teams and individual students. A further consideration connects to 'collective musical behaviour' as designated by Cross, (2007, p.36), to the 'high degree of coherence' (ibid.), the correspondingly strong sense of group identity, and even the 'eliciting of forms of inter-subjective experience' (Benzin, 2001, p.19).

Becoming Musical

When the two words 'musical' and 'becoming' are turned around to form 'becoming musical' there emerges the central concept of Elliott's paraxial philosophy; the progress of the student who, whilst participating in group music-making, can advance musically and personally through involvement in the pursuits of composing, listening and performing. There is the additional consideration of the musical advancement of the performing group and the various means, both spoken and unspoken, through which relevant musical meanings and understanding may be negotiated and disseminated within the musical practice of the ensemble.

Aspects of developing musicianship through music-making practice have been discussed in the previous chapter with particular focus on the

advancement of musical skills, but it is the personal and social implications of such emerging creative abilities that are examined here. Since what the students learn and the manner in which they learn can be absorbed in their musical identity, it follows that classroom group music-making is a transformative activity in which concepts of 'self' and 'self-other' are foremost, (see Lamont 2002, p.45), and corresponding elements of group and individual musical identity can be constructed.

The Music-Making Group in the Classroom

In the action research visits one feature common to each classroom plan was the division of the student class into small music-making groups. Each set consisted of four or five players who operated as a self-contained musical unit. Working in a three-part cycle of activities, the teams first responded to the creative task through exploration of various musical ideas. They then performed renditions of this progress and finally they listened to and discussed these demonstrations in critical response.

Early in the research, an important consideration, one generated from the focus group data, outlined the significance of the performing platform as a socially inclusive stimulus that could strengthen identity through group music-making. Nicola from Focus Group One, talks about her performing groups.

The more opportunities they get to perform for an audience...if they get that forum...with Graduation, end of year masses, Christmas, even the Practicals ... they get to get up there and you know - just get some recognition (Nicola)

Group music-making demonstrations were subsequently embedded in the lesson plan design and it was envisaged that the experience of collective music-making would motivate both musical and social developments within particular teams. In the words of Cross (2007, p.36), students in these music-making groups would be 'coordinated within a temporal framework' and a set of working relationships would be formed. Within these relationships it was envisaged that shared activities such as exploring musical ideas,

performing musical demonstrations and peer instruction would inhibit preoccupation with 'the self', lessen concerns with individual musical or technical inabilities and move the focus towards the musical and social good of 'the group'. Christopher Small, coining the term 'musicking'¹ to describe this aspect of performing together, captures its essence as a unique melding of musical and social experience.

The act of 'musicking', establishes in the place where it is happening, a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies. They are to be found not only between those sounds which are conventionally thought of as the stuff of musical meaning but also between the people who are taking part in whatever capacity, in the performance, (1998, p.13).

In this chapter, such 'musicking' as it relates to 'musical becoming' is examined from four viewpoints: firstly, from the perspective of the group music-making class as a whole and secondly, from the interplay of the different music-making teams involved in each music class. It will then examine interchanges between individual students, and finally consider interactions between the music-makers and their classroom teachers. In these accounts of classroom experience, other aspects relating to 'self' and 'self-group' (for example musical ability, genre of musical material, personality of the performers and choice of instruments) become additionally significant. Each of these four concepts is closely related to identity or as James Paul Gee puts it, 'the kind of group or individual one is recognized as being'. (2001, p.99) In the flux of adolescent classroom encounters, such identities can be numerous, varied and ever-changing. As Gee observes, 'people have multiple identities connected not only to their internal states but to their position in society' (ibid). In this research, the students in the music class become a type of micro society and activities

¹ 'Musicking' 'To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, and the meaning of musicking lies in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance.'(Small 1999, p. 9)

within the music group in particular dictate the kind of performing musicians they are recognized as being within the class.

8.2 Group with Group Interaction

Music-Making: The Complete Group

In the group music-making sessions, becoming known as a social unit with a particular team character or 'getting recognised', to quote music teacher Nicola, emerged as a significant concept in a variety of ways. If we begin with the idea that as humans we are all members of some category or social group, a concept that links with elements of the social identity theory (see Tajfel, 1981; Tarrant North & Hargreaves, 2002,) then it follows that all second level students are automatically part of the social group which is their school and they are further ascribed categories according to their various study and subject choice levels. Hannah in Focus Group Three gives the most pictorial account of such developing sense of affiliation with her choir.

I got badges on-line... big red badges with 'Choir' on and they wear them with pride and every visitor who comes to the school...'what are all these red badges?' ... Oh you're in the choir' ... so they're singled out, without being put on the spot ... and its lovely. (Hannah)

The students in each complete music-class could be thought of as one large category and this discussion begins with a model of one such large group that remained in this formation throughout the class: the Harmony 2 session. This was a conventionally managed class where the teacher remained in directing role and the students, though engaged in a creative activity remained constantly the 'in group' of school pupils, their behaviour 'dictated by the micro system' (Lamont 2002, p.44), i.e. the direction of the class teacher.

Harmony 2 had been divided into smaller music-making teams as planned but in the actual working process, the students did not operate or interact as differentiated groups. Instead the teacher-pupil interchange remained dominant, with the nature of the music-making activities, the working of the task and the rate of work all being managed by the teacher.

With regard to advancing musicianship or 'becoming musical', the activities in the Harmony 2 classrooms contributed to a rich and creative process. An interesting selection of practical and theoretical material was being visited and the fast pace guided largely by the teacher-pupil working relationship. For example, the vocal warm-up involved musical ideas which, as is the norm, ascend a semitone on each reiteration. In the warm-up performance, the teacher encouraged his accompanying guitar and banjo group to provide chordal backing to these ever-modulating patterns. In this manner a vocal warm-up became practical encounter as the students worked to harmonize with and perform primary chords in a continually changing set of major keys.

Moving to a consideration of 'musical becoming', evidence of intergroup behaviour or group with group interaction in this class was not so obvious here. Students tended to focus on and react to the teacher either individually or as one large body and interaction among peers materialized only in almost inaudible whispers. Gee's discussion of identity in education (2001, p.101) outlines four perspectives on what it means to be recognized as 'a certain kind of person'. First, we are what we are 'because of our natures'; second, we are what we are because of 'the position we occupy in society'; third, we are recognized by 'our individual accomplishments' and fourth by the experiences we have had with certain 'affinity groups' Relating this framework to the Harmony 2 session in particular and to group identity in general, the identity of these students was strongly connected to the second perspective, the positions they were occupying in the classroom society of pupils. Their sense of belonging to a separate and smaller 'affinity group' and developing a characteristic set of working relationships or individual accomplishments did not develop to any great extent and individual opinions when they did emerge, were found post-session, in the written feedback. This situation could be attributed to the fact that the class session was comparatively short, in this case just under an hour, but it perhaps relates more directly to the fact that all were participants in a strong and conventional teacher directed session.

Music-Making Groups within the Class

The Harmony 1 class constituted a working collaboration with singing groups and herein there ensued an experience of a very different kind. Early in the class, it became apparent that the four teams were too small to operate efficiently. They could not survive as unaccompanied (or *a cappella*) vocal groups with any working ease since their ability to hold pitch accurately was not totally secure. One student, Paul, very quickly became aware of shortcomings in this area and he offered to play his contribution on the piano. The class teacher, upon seeing this, promptly re-organised her students into larger groups, and gave them a less sophisticated set of singing tasks. The atmosphere was transformed and the group harmony session then progressed much more successfully. The complete class was now divided into three singing groups and performed together as a whole group to sing each chord.

With regard to 'musical becoming', both the honesty of the student Paul and the adaptability of his teacher were significant here since, in response to the unplanned situation, they allowed regrouping of the performers and reorganization of a much more satisfactory class activity. Coincidentally, as the vocal harmonization progressed and the newly formed vocal groups moved to the last phrase of their 'Stille Nacht' harmonization, they spontaneously discovered the second inversion tonic chord, a progression so often used in the approach to the final ending or the perfect cadence of a piece. At this point, the musical development ('becoming musical') was finding its own direction and uncovering what was, for these students, previously untouched theory relating to the rearranging of the three notes in a major chord. Simultaneously, the teacher, on her own 'musical becoming' pathway, was deftly filling in the knowledge gaps, not as she had outlined them in her plan but as she newly encountered them in the moments of the discovery.

Musical Identity

In general, within the classroom sessions the majority of the music-making groups worked efficiently and within these activities, numerous musical identity models emerged. These involved many processes of interaction, some subtle, some unspoken, and group performing identities which ranged in various degrees from energetic and noisy to shy and quiet, able and enthusiastic to awkward and disengaged. For example, the young orchestral instrumentalists in Composing 4 group C confidently outlined their composing progress in a short introductory talk even before they played, displaying an apparently ready-made sense of group working identity. In the Melody 1 class and two of the Harmony 3 groups, there were equally enthusiastic if more informal approaches to performance. Here a strong performing identity, where playing seemed as natural as talking, led the students progress easily into interactive working groups that embodied the blend of musical meaning and personal interaction as described by Small (1988).

Since all the groups were working in the same classroom opportunities for comparisons were rife. These were both negative and positive and occurred in musical, social and personal spheres. Lamont in her discussions of adolescent musical identities in school environments (2002 p. 41) outlines this concept as the developing sense of 'self' and 'self-other understanding' involving increasing awareness of comparisons, both psychological and social. In these group music-making sessions comparisons from group to group, though wordless, were often very apparent with body language illustrating both positive and negative responses. For instance the rock group in Melody 5 moved stylishly as they performed their melodic variations, while the girls in Composing 2 (at the beginning of the class), huddled with recorders over their keyboard, their backs to everyone, seemingly afraid that perceived inabilities might seep out and become obvious.

Other groups, in a similar manner to the Composing 2 girls, also displayed unease at the mention of performance. This issue had been a focus

in the pre-session planning for Composing 3 and it was considered that these groups needed help and support to physically establish a performing identity. In the event, the teachers who were involved in the Composing 3, Harmony 3 and Composing 4 sessions managed the problem. They decided to include a pre-rehearsed whole-group performance at the onset of the class. This music constituted what the students liked and 'thought cool' (Composing 1 teacher) and it was something they could 'own' (Composing 3 teacher). When enthusiastically received, as invariably happened, it affirmed the students' performing processes and enabled the music-making teams to embark on their creative group music-making with more confidence.

It is interesting to note that with the exception of the atmosphere in one group, Melody 5 team B, states of nervousness, unease and subsequent inactivity never persisted for the complete group music-making session. In the Composing 1, Composing 2, and Melody 3 classes, performing awkwardness seemed to lessen after the first Time Out juncture following the first peer critical response discussions. In these classes the students' fragile performing identities were gradually superseded by a motivation to help the team and to contribute in whatever performing mode might prove useful. In the noisy cacophony of musical experimentation and discovery, the actualities of technique and the quality of the playing seemed to shift progressively from a focus on 'self' and the perception of weak performing identity towards contribution and constructive performance within the group. Students seemed to respond especially well if their efforts were deemed useful (see Riona in Composing 1) and their music-making activities could be applied to improvements in the overall performance. These contributions might be unsophisticated like the triangle performance in the Composing 3 team, or musically uplifting like the saxophone contribution in Melody 1. The significant factor was the potential of the input to add to a particular group's musical response.

The following field diary account of the nervousness and weak identity at the beginning of Composing 1, pitted against the feedback of the same students at the end of the class, illustrates one account of this

development. Here is the description of the student's attitudes at the beginning of the class.

Lots of interaction now ensued - but consisting mostly of discussion rather than group music-making, - the students seeming self-conscious about making the first move to actually play their instruments. In due course a piano player from team A broke the ice and began to experiment softly with a high-pitched melody.

The following comments are extracted from the end of class student feedback.

Seeing the techniques come together in our performance was the most enjoyable and rewarding part of the piece. (Group A, Composing 1)

Figuring out the notes to play was really enjoyable. (Group B, Composing 1)

Performance Goals – Learning Goals

The move away from judgments of musical style and perceived measurement of instrumental skills towards the process of musical creation and the awareness of compositional techniques links clearly to what Elliott and Dweck (1988, p.5), describe as the transfer from 'performance goals' where evidence of adequacy or inadequacy is measured, towards 'learning goals', situations which are perceived as opportunities to increase competence. In this case such 'learning goals' related to an increase in the understanding and demonstration of the musically creative processes and this was affected through the group music-making activities. The significant transformation constituted a move from perceived pressure to 'prove' ability towards that of improving the understanding of the musical processes behind the performed piece. It seemed that in this scenario, the group music-making activities were a smooth conduit for such a change.

In the Composition 2 class a different model of group with group interaction was apparent. Here the three music-making teams were categorized distinctly and had obviously found separate performing

identities since each groups' working musical material was in a different genre. Group A, a confident team, were re-arranging 'Ode to Joy' the main theme from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, group B were re-working melodic themes from an Irish traditional Kerry polka with equal energy and group C, a quieter ensemble, had opted to use the nursery rhyme 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'. In this session, the progress of group C proved most noteworthy. Near the beginning of the class the field notes record the response of this team of girls.

They appeared over-awed at the prospect of the task in hand, looking over their shoulders at team A, who it seemed, could immediately work new ideas with fluency and confidence

For group C, the choice of 'Twinkle Twinkle', safe though it seemed, also brought other connotations. Lamont (2002, p.56) discusses how in the school environment, music is a means by which young students 'define themselves in relation to others'. Bearing this in mind, a foray with a nursery rhyme probably had 'uncool' overtones. To add to this, the group also abandoned their guitar and were playing quietly on recorders and keyboard. However over-awed they may have been, the girls did persist with their task and the field notes describe their first rendition as a 'steady canon with recorders and keyboard.' Smiling with an apparent mixture of relief and fulfilment, their performing identity had grown to the extent that they were able to build on this basic polyphonic texture and add a retrograde version to their arrangement.

Mind Sets in Group Music-Making

In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* Carol Dweck outlines two attitudes linked to motivation, personality and development, (2006, p. 6-7). The first, called the 'fixed mindset', involves the belief that success is based on innate ability and that 'qualities are carved in stone' (ibid). The second entitled the 'growth mindset' concerns the belief that success can be cultivated and it is based on hard work, learning, training and persistence. In this classroom session it seems that a 'growth mindset' was developing.

Group C maintained their efforts despite their perceived inabilities and unsophisticated nursery rhyme material. Even by the team's first music-making demonstration the progress was enough to both encourage and generate subsequent and more creative application. Later in the class the same team responded constructively and confidently to criticism from group A that, as musical canons often do, their piece tailed off in thinning texture.

One of the teams, group B in the Harmony 3 session, was in a similar situation grappling with perceived inabilities. For a large part of the class they had struggled to identify and arrange suitable accompaniment for their melodic theme. In contrast to the other two groups who were progressing well with instrumental arrangements, the pace of their progress seemed to languish. The demonstrations of all three groups in the Time Out performing sessions and the subsequent critical response discussions seemed only to accentuate this problem. However, this team persevered with their efforts, maintaining a 'growth mindset' and, just minutes before their rendition at the end of the class, they finally succeeded. The tenacity of this group to keep trying, to keep applying their musical abilities and 'become' more through the experience was matched by the advancement of their musicianship. In this case they discovered firstly, that not all melodies begin on the key chord and secondly, that accented passing notes² can sometimes mislead the student of harmonic analysis into the implementation of unsuitable harmonic accompaniment.

A third example of group with group interaction can be found in the Melody 5 classroom, a situation concerning three melody making groups who were clearly differentiated by very different working patterns. Group A, a quiet all boys team were following what seemed a conventional and well-

² Accented passing note: An accented passing note is one that occurs on the strong part of the bar or beat. It is more strongly accented than the note that it proceeds. and if it moves by step it may be a non-harmony note. This was the case with group B in the Harmony 3 session. They were treating this note as a harmony note, hence their confusion.

trodden methodical pathway deliberating with their ideas on manuscript then trying them out on piano and guitar. Although this group displayed the strongest desire to identify as pupils responding to the teacher or as Lamont (2002) describes, to work within the 'micro -system of the music classroom', they could also accept criticism of their first demonstration from group C to the effect that not all their team were contributing equally. To this situation they responded as an 'affinity group', with prompt efforts to rectify the situation and by the second demonstration, the performance constituted an all-inclusive instrumental arrangement with newly introduced xylophone and bongo-drums.

In the same Melody 5 classroom, the rock group identity of the second group C was apparent from the outset. Immediately following the initial working through of the Robbie Williams 'Candy' theme, the boys had moved into informal rock rehearsal mode, trading short guitar riffs with sporadic drum accompaniment and accompanying stylish body movements. Despite the fact that this ensemble included xylophone and chime bars the significant instrumental identity of three guitars and drums dominated and all the boys responded to melodic composing as a rock group (see O Neill, 2002). This team could have been a working 'garage band', albeit with instrumental extras, and their informal and enthusiastic interaction seemed to yield results with comparative ease.

In contrast, team B a group consisting of five vocalists and a guitarist, were having a very different composing experience as they struggled to establish a working musical identity. After the initial confident vocal rendering of the theme, the progress of this group lagged and their musical identity seemed to sink in apathy with a 'fixed mind-set' that seemed to suggest 'we can't do this!' In comparison to the other class groups this team of boys appeared disengaged with their task in hand, oscillating between laughter, inactivity and looking over their shoulders at the progress of the other two teams. By comparison, they appeared to sink in helplessness and so did not produce any demonstration of progress for the first Time Out session. One explanation for this situation might be that the boys feared to

try in circumstances where their perceived abilities might be further measured or criticized. In their approach to motivation and achievement (1988, p.5), Elliott and Dweck describe such a response as a 'defensive withdrawal of action' and outline the reason that 'continued effort might document low ability.' It can also be suggested that perhaps the predominance of singing was not an authentic enough form of participation for these boys. The teacher himself noted that more instrumental skills would have been useful and that the performing profile of such creative music-making groups is very important.

Furthermore, bearing in mind that singing is the most accurate illustration of 'audiation' (hearing accurately in one's musical imagination), and a consequent clear marker of musical development, the make-up of the groups in Melody 5 could perhaps have been rearranged with more instruments joining the vocalists in the same group. In the event, for the next Time Out session, the situation was resolved to a degree with the groups' rendition of a rhythmic development. Significantly however, some very swift questioning glances that seemed to seek approval from both teacher and researcher signalled that for some students in this group, a rhythmic response to a melody writing task was not totally adequate.

Group with group interaction sometimes appeared to travel from group to group in purely musical banter involving aural awareness and responses to created ideas. For example in Melody 1 the new and interesting minor tonality of group B's melody was recognized and noted by team A and discussed in the second Time Out session. In Composing 4, a very impressive glissando idea seemed to migrate, travelling from the xylophone in one group composition to the glockenspiel in another. The group in question recognized this phenomenon of roving musical ideas, they were protective of their material and they expressed this ownership in the feedback after class. 'We would have more isolation, so we don't use ideas from the teachers and other groups'.

In one sense this situation is an authentic real life replication since in many amateur music circles, absolute originality may be a rare phenomenon since ideas 'found and adapted' rather than created originally are nonetheless valued and cosseted (see Green 2008, p.26). In this instance the group creativity that emerged as juxtaposition, re-organisation, tweaking and melding of already existing ideas constructed nonetheless a fresh musical experience for the majority of the students.

In practice, the working conglomeration of musical ideas in one classroom was very successful although some musical ideas and information did leach from group to group. It is also interesting that of the 34 teams, only two made comments regarding the need for more space and silence. Such interaction seemed to solidify the 'affinity' of each performing ensemble and in addition often encouraged raised standards in the overall group performance. As the class progressed, the best rendition began to matter for many of the small teams. As Marion in Melody 4 stated, 'Having to perform it in front of your peers, makes you want to work to make it sound nice'. This motivation to 'make it sound nice' also resulted in the solving of creative and minor technical problems within the performances.

Though it appeared that in the cacophony of sound that constituted the musical explorations and rehearsals, no musical idea might issue, in fact for some it was precisely this blanket of sound that provided a sonic safety net. Within the clamour of the various musical performing endeavours, budding ideas of first-time instrumentalist composers could be explored without self-consciousness and students finding themselves in this interactive and creative scenario for the first time could grow. The girls in Team C, Composing 4 describe this sense of security in their creative group music-making.

It was great for giving confidence in your own composing instincts. You were able to offer ideas and reject them without judgment because everyone was doing the same thing.

This type of sonic blanket provided a useful environment in which ideas could strengthen before emerging in the demonstrations. For some students whose social and musical skills were still developing, this seemingly jumbled and noisy space proved a useful place in which to solve musical problems. Team A in the same Composing 4 class tell how they learned 'what changes are possible and what changes make certain effects' and their teacher commenting on the overall plan for the composition lesson had this to say.

They see composition as inherently difficult to 'get right' and this will help show a new approach to composition.

8.3 Group with Individual Interaction

Amongst the music-making groups, one of the most positive motivating factors became the impulse to work together to make the music better for the team. This inclination is linked to social identity theory and 'intergroup behaviour' (Tajfel, 1978), and the feeling of belonging to the 'in-group' as depicted in the impulse to 'sustain, maintain and create positive evaluations' (see Tarrant, North and Hargreaves, 2002, p.138). In the classroom sessions it translated into the compulsion to provide musically coherent performances (see Green 2008, p.123), an impulse that was especially notable in the group music-making after the first Time Out performing session. This process gave rise to interchange of individual (sometimes multi-instrumental) talents and skills, peer instruction and unspoken trading of musical ideas. The results were then poured back into the musical development or the 'becoming musical' of the performing groups, exerting constructive influences, for example on instrumental techniques (Melody 1 and 4) and rhythmic synchronisation, (Composing 1). At the same time other activities linking to support for students with special physical and academic needs were occurring in a number of classroom sessions.

These examples of peer instruction and support from within various teams were both spoken and unspoken and spread out in diverse ways through the music-making groups. For instance in the Melody 4 session the traditional fiddle player, Ciara was not totally satisfied with her friend's

piano accompaniment towards the end of the melody so she quietly played a pattern of suitable chords on the piano in an unspoken keyboard demonstration. Then as she worked her own violin contribution, she observed the performance of Breda, her piano playing teammate. Improvements in the piano accompaniment were expected but they were not immediately apparent until the last rendition when Breda's playing showed she had absorbed the necessary information. The Melody 4 teacher having silently observed this, commented

Ciara demonstrated what chords she wanted Breda to use on the piano. I was delighted to see how open they were at giving each other direction. The first performance of the melody Breda didn't get the chords but by the second performance she played them correctly and it showed how much they were learning from each other.

Ciara's experience of passing on her musical knowledge was defining her musical identity (see Lamont 2002 p. 56), but there was another concurrent development. When she resisted the impulse to comment on Breda's seemingly measured progress, the illustration of her patience and sensitivity was helping define her social role in the group. Here it seemed both 'musical becoming' and 'becoming musical' interlocked in one mutually beneficial interchange. While Ciara, the peer instructor was passing on her knowledge in a socially sensitive and unspoken manner, her teammate Breda, working to provide a more musical accompaniment, was advancing in aural and harmonic understanding.

Within the Composing 4 class, musical ideas travelled in a similar unspoken manner between two members of team B; the pianist working on a cluster chord idea and the viola playing along 'like a ukulele'. Even by the first demonstration, these ideas had raised the overall standard of the composition arrangement and had been absorbed by the other members of the group. For the first demonstration this material was used by viola, piano and xylophone to generate an improvised ending to the piece.

During this ending where according to the teacher 'the music was just happening', it seemed there was no centralised control. The group however was operating as a system and they did have a working musical identity. The aural experience of performing the music seemed to be shaping the emerging music-making or in other words, the 'becoming musical' of the players. This musical tailpiece, sitting at the end of a performance which had yet to be fully planned or organized, gave rise to spontaneous musical interaction which in turn affected and encouraged the participation of the four players for the better, also raising standards towards the final performed ending of the piece. Sawyer discusses this element of creativity as it happens in the moment of the encounter (2006 p.148) and he identifies three characteristics of this form of group creativity, namely: improvisation, collaboration and emergence. These aspects of emergence and 'flow' in creativity will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Joining In

For various individual students, the human impulse to join in the group performance was nowhere more obvious than in Melody 2. In this class the teacher's initial perception had centred on the composition of a melody and her well-organised set of four groups were each collected around the 'visual aid' of a piano or keyboard with a leading player. The performing identities of the keyboard players in this session were strong since they had been chosen in advance by the teacher to lead the team. As the group music-making ensued however, more students signalled a significant desire to be included in the actual group music-making and to acquire equal performing identity. This class had not been planned with other instrumental players in mind but in the course of the exploratory music-making, these students became 'trigger happy' tinkling ideas on the top octave of the piano, conducting or beating rhythms on the wood of the piano. Sometimes these ideas were accepted and sometimes they were rejected wordlessly. In the event, the teacher responded to these creative and individualistic performing impulses and distributed some classroom percussion instruments along with bongo drums and bodhrán.

Often the 'joining in' behaviour was guided by the dominant musical identity of the group and this might involve the character of the particular instruments used, (see O Neill, 2002, p.92) or the genre of the created ideas. This phenomenon sometimes produced coherent and conventional musical ensembles, as for example in Melody 4 where the identity of the traditional instruments, concertina, wooden flute and fiddle dominated the music-making. In this class the Irish traditional influence was never far away with stylish, ornamental wooden flute cuts and fiddle rolls and slides emerging almost imperceptibly in all the performed melodies. As in Melody 2, this teacher had also chosen leaders but was surprised at the manner in which within the same room three different social units emerged (see Chapter Six, p.133).

At other times the 'joining in' made for interesting instrumental ensembles, engendering both social and musical interaction. In Composing 4 for example the orchestral flutes and clarinet of group A had a somewhat formal orchestral approach in contrast to team B who performed as budding minimalist composers with a jazz character. As previously described, the Harmony 3 group with the euphonium had a 'becoming musical' experience relating to transposition and muting. Team C in the Melody 5 session experienced both 'musical becoming' as they matched a rock ensemble with a xylophone and chime bars, and 'becoming musical' development as they sensitively managed the behavioural issues of one of their team mates.

Returning to social identity theory, the presence of an 'affinity group' or an 'in team' is often premised on the existence of an equally significant 'out team'. In all of the sessions there was no sense of one definitive style, the cool technique or best method to be emulated and utilised above the others. The variety of instrumental ensembles, of musical material, and creative approaches within the classrooms precluded any introspective and potentially negative perceptions of standardizing. This diversity provided a further comparative safety net in a multifaceted musical experience. In other words there was no 'like' to compare with 'like'. To take the example of Composing 2, one group were working three-part polyphony

with recorders, another was reworking a popular Beethoven theme and in a third corner, team C were re-arranging elements of an Irish polka.

Responses to Individual Needs

There were instances of peer instruction and support within various teams involving students helping each other, often through demonstration on the keyboard (Melody 1, Melody 4), through unspoken support for their peers with special needs (Composing 3, Melody 5), through the introduction of new percussion instruments and suitably created musical ideas (Melody 5), and in one case a complete reorganization of the team's composing techniques, (Composing 1). In addition, sometimes the morale boost of a thoughtfully placed comment or a reflection in the critical discussion affirmed both the helpers and those being supported. The resulting advance in musical inclusiveness also had significant implications for the social practice that group music-making entails and in particular the 'musical becoming' involved.

Discussing mutual engagement in a shared practice, Wenger describes 'an intricate process of fine tuning between learning experience and competence' (1999 p.214) and in this group music-making context the group response to the individual and the individual response to the group played out on many levels. Sometimes the group response was affirming as for example the Harmony 1 group who although grappling with unaccompanied vocal pitching, complimented the talents of their team mate Joan, a soprano who could pitch even the 7th notes of the chord with ease. In Composing 3 the solo vocalist was ill at ease with her group's retrograde ideas and took a long while to produce her improvised contribution. When she did, accompanied by the traditional musicians in her group, it was praised by all.

Sometimes the group was supportive of an individual who was lacking in experience or competence. For example in Composing 1, the small group B were engaging with retrograde versions of their simple theme in a very absorbed manner. Two keyboard players were in turn, experimenting

and notating their efforts. Riona the third member of the team was hovering, seemingly disengaged and in her own space. Though she may have understood the retrograde composing technique, she was struggling musically with her performance on the glockenspiel. The group was very small and Riona sitting on the periphery had perhaps no place to hide her lack of technique or understanding. The response of the group was to rearrange the framework of the composition, substituting three-part retrograde with canon at the distance of one beat. Riona showed she could now manage her contribution and she moved from a disengaged stance to one of happier communication as she played alongside her teammates. In the following Time Out activity, the emergence of her performed demonstration became a matter of confidence and she could laugh as she made small mistakes in her performance.

Again, the interlock of 'musical becoming' and 'becoming musical' in this session involved empathy and sensitive support in both musical and social contexts. In general, records of these multi-level interactions remained unspoken and students did not comment. The teachers did not highlight the situation either but did sometimes comment in their feedback.

In Melody 5 Frank found himself also assisting Dara, a student with psychological needs who needed constant encouragement to stop rearranging the chime bars and play some music. This interchange remained unspoken and was absorbed in the spirited and stylish playing of the rock group. In a similar manner James, the tenor saxophone player in Melody 1, spotted his team-mate Cian's struggle with a keyboard chord and quietly supported him suggesting a less taxing arpeggio shape while in Composing 3, Teresa's special needs were absorbed without fuss or comment as she contributed wholeheartedly with her triangle to a darkly atmospheric arrangement. At the other end of the scale, the music teacher's contribution to the same performance though of much higher musical standard was also accepted without fuss.

8.4 Individuals within the Music-Making Groups

Cases of individual personalities being affected or affecting the course of the creative music-making also appeared in the one-hour sessions. In Composing 4 after her contribution to the first demonstration, Claire seemed quite unhappy with what she deemed her 'bad sounding' clarinet part. However her statement 'so wrong!' and her self-depreciating head-shaking body stance was transformed by the reaction of her team mates who stated, 'I liked the sound of the clarinet with everyone else' and 'I thought that was really cool dissonance'. Claire's demeanour gradually altered and a small smile of acceptance appeared. Praise from peers it seemed was praise indeed.

In Melody 1, Seamus also had a problem. His diatonic tin whistle only played notes in the key of B flat major but his group's task included the development of a melody moving from B flat major to F major. In contrast to Claire's lack of confidence, Seamus's good-humoured banter and the 'growth mind set' with which he grappled in this challenge sent a 'let's have fun', message to his group as he produced a melodic phrase with no B flats or E flats.

In Seamus's case, his confident initiative instilled the purpose to rectify the musical problem giving him power over the situation, an aspect of confidence referred to as 'a complex, changeable belief in one's ability that is inextricably linked to particular situations and contexts' (O'Neill 2006, p. 469). He perceived the musical problem with keys as an opportunity for action to develop a new melody, one that he could play, showing his 'mind set' moving in an upward spiral towards a remedy for the musical problem. Such confidence, outlined as a component of beliefs values and musical behaviours (see Villarruel et al., 2003), is complex and changeable; as Claire's low self-evaluation illustrated. For her performance, she needed affirmation that was honest, and which connected specifically to the particular musical context, in other words 'heavily linked to contingent feedback' (O'Neill 2006, p.469) and happily this is what transpired spontaneously in the Composing 4 session.

Group Leaders

Linking to the confidence issue, on some occasions the individual could take the lead bringing the group in a new musical direction. Again this phenomenon was complex and ever changing, all relating to the potential of group music-making to accommodate the transfer of the leadership role in the musical tasks involved (Green 2008, p.132). In some instances the teachers had planned ahead with the team leaders chosen (for example Melody 2) but as the Melody 4 teacher explains, these arrangements did not always pertain:

I was surprised at how differently all the groups reacted. I put an experienced musician in each group. In some groups the experienced musicians emerged as leaders, in other groups they worked collectively as a team.

In Composing 1 Cormac, a quiet guitarist was somewhat self-absorbed as his three teammates deliberated on their retrograde arrangement with piano, violin and glockenspiel. Ellie was assisting Valerie with notation since the group had deemed this necessary for the synchronisation of their performance. Her exhortation to her friend 'you'll need bar-lines cause you'll know when to come in then' was confirming her role as leader. The other team member Cormac then became fired with a vision for the whole piece and, in the process, momentarily usurped Ellie's role.

We all do it first - then you do the retrograde then I'll play the chords, then the two girls do the tune or something ... then we could all do it again ... more like a quartet' (Cormac)

In a subtler mode, other individual performers led the performance to new levels (see the discussion of Ciara in Melody 4 earlier in this chapter) and at other times through unspoken communication when the music moved into improvisation and was 'just happening' (Composing 4 teacher), it seemed that the musical ideas were themselves the true leaders. This phenomenon and the concept of absorption in creativity will be further examined in Chapter Nine.

8.5 Student and Teacher Interaction

A variety of interactions in teacher pupil relationships appeared in the action research study and many of these connected with the narratives that emerged from data in the focus group phase. A number of teachers had recounted performing together with the students and they referred to the 'easy atmosphere' and the special nature of the developing personal and musical relationships. Sarah in Focus Group One observed, 'They feel your support...you're both creating something.' Nicola continued:

You're both doing something they really like and enjoy... they can get something real and tangible out of it ... they can hear the results of their practice, whereas writing stuff on paper ... it's more hands on ... it's more human (Nicola)

Also in these discussions, teachers Sabina and Nicola described being instructed as students by the strong performers in the Irish traditional groups; a perfect illustration of Wenger's 'life-giving power of mutuality' (1999, p. 277).

We have a little session and that's very much the kids telling me and showing me. 'Oh this is a great tune, this'll work really, really well', so I found they're teaching me and that is great (Sabina).

If we take Wenger's statement, 'What students need is contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into their adulthood', (ibid.) and turn the situation around; what teachers have in this instance is a unique situation where in their supporting role as musical accompanist or musician in the team, they are invited to participate at a significant time in the 'studenthood' of the young musicians.

In the action research there were instances where the teachers joined in this 'studenthood' becoming fellow performers in one of the music-making groups. In Composing 3 the teacher joined the composing group B with her guitar and discarding her teacher identity, she donned an attitude similar to that of her peers in the team. Her musical contributions were paced to allow creative space to the other students in the group and on two

occasions when more expert direction would have illuminated their deliberations on tonality and atmosphere, she resisted the impulse to lead.

The teacher in Composing 4, after supervising and circulating, eventually settled as a peer and prepared to conduct group B. The nature of the impulse that guided the teacher to this particular group (the one with the most tentative composing response), sits at the crux of teacher Nicola's statement (top of p.216) and Small's depiction of 'musicking', namely the potential of group music-making to foster very different layers of human interaction. The Composing 4 teacher responded to what he deemed the sinking morale of group B. In joining the team he had the delicate job of synchronising the performance without dominating as a teacher-conductor. In the event, while the both the music-making morale and the group identity strengthened, the students were involved in becoming more musical while the teacher maintained his complementary path of musical becoming. In this instance, to paraphrase Schafer once again, 'there were no teachers, just a community of learners' (1975, p.2).

Sometimes the conventional teacher student roles were maintained throughout the class with unchanging teacher and student identities (see the discussion of Harmony 2, and Melody 2 at the beginning of this chapter). On other occasions the student teacher interaction altered when the students embarked upon the activity of group music-making. At this point the teacher would relinquish the directing role and become a type of supervisor, fading in and out of the group music-making action and participating only when necessary (see Melody 1, Melody 2).

At other times in the classroom sessions, it was important for the teacher to remain totally 'on the edge' of the music-making, standing by and observing progress and the struggle. The focus group discussions had also touched on this issue, highlighting some teachers' difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that their formal teaching skills were not required. This experience also has close links to the teachers' experience in Green's new classroom pedagogy linking to informal learning (2008, pp.27-31). It further

connects to the concept of self-directed learning that is examined in the Educational Trajectories section from Chapter Seven in this study (pp. 185-190).

In Harmony 3, the teacher who observed team B search for correct harmonic accompaniment could have, with a spoken phrase or a performed fragment on piano, ended their search. Instead, she stayed close by this team for most of the session, punctuating their struggle with encouraging remarks. During the performed demonstrations, though the students experienced the downside of intermittent comparisons with the other more successful groups in their class, they maintained their efforts. In this experience of 'musical becoming' they were also, as the understanding of the correct harmonies dawned, simultaneously 'becoming more musical'. Alongside this the restraint of the teacher on her individual 'becoming' pathway provided the students with space to experience the downside of the struggle and the corresponding upside of their eventual achievement.

Teacher Support

In some cases (Melody 1, Melody 4 and Melody 5), the teachers' specific mode of discourse was effective in propelling discussion in the appropriate direction and creating an optimal space for developing use of new vocabulary. Again this was especially noticeable during the critical response activities after a group music-making performance. Phrases like 'transposition', 'melodic development' and 'modulation to the dominant' would be introduced and in some cases the implementation of such terms in the subsequent student interaction would grow. In other cases, for instance Composing 4, the engagement with the critical response contributed to the teacher's realization that specific vocabulary was lacking and the discourse not fluent. 'I would like to give them more vocabulary to explore what they did'.

The cyclical nature of the class plan also supported developments in musical terminology since in the ebb and flow of action and reflection; students had time to absorb the significance and meaning of newly

introduced vocabulary as they prepared to implement it. Sometimes the conversation was specifically directed. In Melody 1 for example, when Cian, with considerable effort, successfully played an arpeggio figure, the teacher spotted this and drew the attention of her class thus effecting the whole group affirmation of a Cian's contribution. In a similar vein the Melody 4 teacher interjected with carefully placed compliments that assured the groups of her attentive ear to their progress, in other words her care for the music (Swanwick, 1999), 'that's lovely... now you can get to the modulation ...lovely'.

At other times the communication was linked to exam criteria (see management strategies in Chapter Seven). In Melody 5 for example idiosyncratic and creative images such as 'wedges' were used to illuminate the concept of melodic development. In Melody 1 the expressions 'five to one'³ or the 'tonic to dom' constituted a mathematical reduction of the chords needed to modulate to a new key. At other times the atmosphere was easy and informal with good-humoured banter at times between teacher and students (see Melody 1, and Harmony 1).

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the potential of group music-making activities to foster the capacity for interactive social and musical growth. To this end the terms 'musical becoming' and 'becoming musical' were employed and the main deliberations involved an inquiry into the manner in which these performing activities could engender the interlock of social, personal and musical development. The ensuing interactions involved group with group, group with individual and individual to individual interchanges. The classrooms accommodated up to four

³ 'Five to one-' dom to tonic': Five refers to the fifth chord (V) in the major key, otherwise known as the dominant (hence 'dom'), and One refers to the key chord or first chord (I). The two-chord progression chord V to chord I represents a perfect cadence or a stopping point in the music. This progression is often used to effect a modulation or a key-change.

performing groups at one time and involved as many working spaces concurrently. The group music-making also operated in its own optimal space and within each class of small music-making teams, a variety of such spaces, each specific to the small group in question, co-existed in simultaneous music-making.

Notwithstanding the diversity of the performing groups, the cyclical plans of music-making pursuits, operated well, functioning symbiotically regarding both the 'musical becoming' and the 'becoming musical' of both second level students and teachers. In this context, one of the most significant findings constitutes the students' shift in perception away from 'the self' and 'measurement of perceived abilities' to the understanding of the musical processes and the awareness of learning goals in the group context. In addition, group music-making revealed a potential to cocoon developing musicianship at its most fragile developmental stage: that is when students' performing identity was so weak they were disinclined to play. In the musical explorations and demonstrations, growing musicianship could sit alongside encounters of developing confidence and central to this process was the significance of Music-Making Activity Three: the Time Out. This combination of activities including listening and discussing, seemed instrumental in the re-alignment of the student away from self-conscious measurement of performance towards awareness of the creative processes involved.

In these pursuits the able student could advance socially as well as musically through peer instruction, subtle musical demonstration (where needed), and empathetic interaction. Though the class design stipulated small music-making groups, students could experience both the individual and the group social praxis within the team endeavours. Often the transfer from one to the other was lightning fast and students with educational or other needs could receive individual peer support and instruction, in an unexposed environment, in one moment; and contribute more securely in

the group at the next. These students were neither excluded nor exposed but supported within both the 'musical becoming' and the sonic blanket of 'becoming musical'.

The group music-making activities related to the curricular goals involved in the Leaving Certificate syllabus but they were also an authentic replication of performing situations in current Irish amateur practice. Such experiences; arranging music, solving technical problems and interacting as a small community constituted a socially created reality which could carry the music-making through to continued engagement with music beyond second level (see Finnegan, 1989, pp.327-341).

In the focus groups the teachers had recounted their experiences as fellow performers and learners, sharing in the construction of knowledge. They had performed together with their students in practical examinations, they collected suitable Irish traditional dance tunes from the students and they had learnt that their teaching expertise wasn't always needed. These occasions were often extra-curricular sessions beyond the confines of the time-table but they were nonetheless 'authentic teaching and learning situations involving teacher peer learning and identity formation at its best' (see Pitts 2011, p.237). In the action research sessions, although all of the music-making was sited in the classroom, these instances were frequently mirrored. In addition, because of the different social and musical construct of each performing group, the teachers developed the capacity to differentiate their management strategies according to the unique qualities in each small team.

Cabedo-Mas and Diaz-Gomez (2013) discussing music as social praxis, suggest that, with particular reference to the integration of musical diversity, the creation of optimal spaces and environments is very necessary. In these research sessions there were many individual small music-making groups, working in three or four different locations within each classroom. Further and more longitudinal research is needed to validate the finding that one classroom is an optimal space for such work but what *has* emerged is

that group music-making (at this level), has the potential to operate creatively and concurrently in many directions; the conventional class, the informal class and indeed, the classroom as a single location. Different groups with diverse group methodologies and various broadening identities both musical and social can become absorbed in their own creations concurrently, in the same room. Groups can interact in musical and conversational discourse, and in this melting pot the individual student musician can still find space to 'become' both musically and socially.

With regard to the social ambience within the small performing group, the diversity of the group performing activities themselves often fostered a changing rota of musical leaders and followers. For example in *Composing 1* the strongly voiced vision of the guitar player momentarily usurped the progress of team A and the violinist leader's position as he enthusiastically outlined his vision of the framework of their composition (see Green, 2008, pp.132-147). This type of social and musical interchange involving group co-operation worked since it related to the musical tasks involved, the immediacy of the problem and the ultimate musical good of the group.

To affirm and celebrate our relationships through musicking, especially in the company of like-minded people, is to explore and celebrate who we are, to make us feel more fully ourselves (Small 1998, p.142)

Within the workings of the group it seemed there was often no centralised control, each team as a system had a working musical identity and the aural experience of the music was shaping what emerged in the group music-making. Just as interactions among birds give rise to flocks (Resnick 1994, p.5); the musical pieces, even when they had yet to be properly planned or organised, gave rise to a spontaneous growing and developing group interaction which affected an individual player or a section of a group engendering stronger identities and also at times raising standards in the overall group.

These powers of unspoken communication, albeit at a relatively unsophisticated level, could be observed well in Composing 4 as the piano, viola and xylophone continued their demonstration in an improvised manner and the glockenspiel player was carried along with them in the flow of the music, the intense glances saying it all. The pull of such group music-making was supporting trajectories to new musical and social places for the students involved. The sense of occasion produced by these musical demonstrations cannot be denied but it constituted a supportive environment rather than a competitive or a boastful one. In these renditions of progress what emerged was sometimes greater than the sum of the technical, musical, academic and social components that were included in the first place. The combination of the group musical practice and the 'musicking' interaction of the students brought the performance and the contributing performers through unspoken communication to a new educational event.

Chapter Nine: 'Jouissance' and 'Flow' in Group Music-Making

Introduction

This chapter connects experiences of 'jouissance' and 'flow' as first described in the focus group discussions, with encounters involving group performance in the second-level music classroom. The investigation of these occurrences of joy and the character of the concentration involved in such group pursuits reveals multifaceted aspects. For example it can entail a straightforward examination of accounts of absorption and attentiveness while students are involved in music-making, the feelings of satisfaction during the pursuit, and experiences of well-being or simple joy after the music-making event. Alternatively the two terms 'jouissance' and 'flow' could be perceived as aspects of the same phenomenon; an experiential state occurring within the activity of group music-making that makes the moment memorable.

There are four sections in this chapter. The first of these examines the nature of musical behaviour within group music-making activities. It relates to pursuits that were recounted in the teachers' focus group discussions and to those experienced in the subsequent action research classroom sessions. This section also discusses the particularities of producing qualitative data linked to unspoken group and individual response both within the music-making and in the related interactions.

The second area involves the use of the word 'jouissance', pertaining to and sitting alongside a second French term 'plaisir'. The approach to this concept was prompted by accounts of deep joy, satisfaction and fun relating to the activities of music-making as they emerged in the teachers' focus group discussions.

The third section explores 'flow', a state of optimal experience where the intrinsic reward is connected to absorbed engagement, self-propelled motivation and the disappearance of sense of 'self'. In the classroom performance activities, this state is often distinct from that of 'jouissance' but on other occasions, the two merge. Accordingly the final

section of the chapter ends by bringing the two states together and citing the work of Csikszentmihalyi, (1996) in a discussion of 'jouissance' within the creative 'flow' of music-making.

9.1 Interpreting Musical Behaviour

In his discussion on the meanings of musical behaviour, Ian Cross refers to a 'strangely malleable and flexible phenomenon... the significance of which can rarely be pinned down unambiguously', (2007, p.30). He links this description of both music and musical behaviour to Suzanne Langer's designation of music itself as 'an unconsummated symbol'.

Articulation is its life, but not assertion: expressiveness not expression. The function of meaning, which calls for permanent contents, is not fulfilled; for the assignment of one rather than another possible meaning to each form is never explicitly made.
(Langer, 1942, p.195)

In the group music-making class, the researcher may make legitimate note of what seems a very apparent response, or record a reaction that seems clear and obvious. If however, the students' or the music teachers' reactions remain unspoken, it is often the music itself or the body language that communicates the meaning of the behaviour. Consequently, the observations of these interactions linking to joy and flow are doubly elusive and often constitute an impression or a perception of an internal process. In this instance then, what may be presented as a finding, however qualitative it may be, is essentially a perception of a perception. As such, it needs other legitimate modes and sources to secure its reliability. MacDonald, Byrne and Carlton in their investigation of student anxiety levels with regard to creativity and flow in musical composition, mention a similar situation and emphasise the difficulties in recording either positive feelings or anxiety levels other than by emphasizing that the process was more important than the product' (2006, p.296).

In the context of this research, where evidence of 'flow' is difficult to identify, monitor and differentiate since it is often neither physically obvious

nor disclosed in any other way at the time of the happening, the feedback of both students and teachers is invaluable, affirming impressions and transforming the 'hunch' within the extracted data into a reality. In relation to this Csikszentmihalyi states,

'When we are in flow, we do not usually feel happy...we feel only what is relevant to the activity. Happiness is a distraction. It is only after we get out of flow, at the end of a session, or in moments of distraction within it, that we might indulge in feeling happy' (1996, p.123)

Consequently, the concepts of both 'jouissance' and 'flow' in the music-making activities within the classroom sessions are linked to the researcher's field notes, the narrative accounts and the students' and teachers' retrospective statements. They have been traced from their first mention in the focus group meetings, through the lesson-planning processes detailed in Chapter Five and the accounts of the action research sessions, to this final data collation. For now, the analysis will begin with a working definition.

9.2 'Jouissance'

The dictionary definition of the French verb 'jouir' means to have pleasure in, to enjoy, to savor, or to delight in and there is a secondary meaning constituting the right to have or to use something. Similarly 'jouissance', the derived noun, has among its meanings in French the idea of extreme joy or bliss, deep sexual pleasure and having lawful access to various rights and benefits. The primary definition of the term: that of deep enjoyment and delight relates in the closest manner to the activities in this chapter. However the subsequent critique of the Leaving Certificate music examination framework in the following chapter will include an additional discussion of the alternative meaning: having the right to use or to benefit from something.

Jacques Lacan first developed his ideas on the difference between 'plaisir' and 'jouissance' in his seminar 'The Ethics of Psychoanalysis' (1959-

60). The concept was subsequently adopted in many areas, among them philosophy, (Žižek, 1989; Deleuze and Guattari, 1986), feminist theory, (Kristeva, 1980) and was later expanded to denote both excessive pleasure and transgression. For the purpose of this study however the most pertinent areas are that of literary theory and the work of both Barthes, (1973,1976) investigating the human reaction to the written word, and Middleton's phenomenological study, *Popular Music*, (1990).

Discussing literary theory in *The Pleasure of the Text*, (1973), Barthes examines the effects of reading and the human response to text. Denoting 'plaisir' first, he describes a text, which gives pleasure but does not challenge readers as subjects. This he labels as a 'readerly' text. The second instance, a 'writerly' text, has, in his view, the effect of 'jouissance', that is making the readers react emotionally, providing bliss and causing them to break out of their subject position. It is significant that Barthes relates the physical and creative activity of writing to the engendering of 'jouissance' since in relation to music-making, the phenomenon connects to the same human, creative and often times kinaesthetic response. Within the activity of group performance, the state of 'jouissance' pertains to a situation where the subjects or the performers lose themselves in the music-making. In the case of the classroom sessions, this state has two further aspects: one, the active intent within the processes of exploring, creating or making the music and two, the more responsive absorption experienced while performing and listening to the music.

An examination of the discourse in the focus group discussions reveals numerous instances that mention 'pleasure' (see Chapter Four, pp. 93-95). In Focus Group One, the first response to the opening question querying the nature of successful group music-making was 'when they're enjoying it.' Activities were frequently described as being 'fun' or 'what they (the students), really like' and in some cases the language denoted a special pleasure.

Our Glee Club, after school for one and a half hours ... it's nearly like a different job. But they love it ... what they're getting out of it...-they love it! (Ciara, Focus Group One)

I did group work, where they all had to be arranging a piece of music for all the instruments in the class...They were really into it...It was unbelievable! (Aoife, Focus Group Two)

This talent competition is the buzz, the business. This is where they want to be. (Amy, Focus Group Two)

These descriptions of deep joy did not pertain solely to the students.

One of my favourite activities with the juniors was the twelve-bar blues... It was fantastic and I was thinking I really, really enjoy this! (Sonia, Focus Group Three)

In some cases this joy was transporting both teacher and students to a peak experience which, when it appeared, altered the sense of time and also seemed often autotelic.

Sometimes you go, 'Oh my God! I have this practice after school! But when they all come, there's an energy...I think you know...and it's just brilliant...I'm in such a good mood when I come out ...to when I go in. You know it definitely has energy to it ...and they're (the students) the same... 'Is it over already?' 'They do love it when they're performing ...you can't beat it. (Aoife, Focus group Two)

In the action research sessions, the frequency of the word 'fun' in the student feedback was equally significant, relating sometimes to a process of musical discovery, to a free response to the task or to the sheer joy of being together and 'just playing music', (see Chapter Six, p.144). Sometimes this joy was revealed in short, off the cuff comments, which would provide glimpses of a reaction to the music-making. For instance, the exclamation, 'Oh no we've just figured it out!' when the bell to signal the end of class sounded, attested to the interruption of what seemed a very satisfying spell of composition.

Sometimes the joy or the satisfaction was not apparent at all and only surfaced in the written feedback. This phenomenon can be linked to

particular states of concentration and 'flow' and the complete intermingling of both the joyful feelings and the satisfying actions. The idea of 'jouissance' being more emotionally affecting than 'plaisir', especially when the perceiver and the perceived intermingle, translates, in the group music-making context, to the merging of the performer and the performance, (see 'Lost in Music' Middleton 1990, pp.247-267). In this instance, the players, (in an absorbed state) and the music that they perform, become one entity and their awareness of the experience emerges only in retrospect.

French phenomenological philosopher Merleau-Pony's insight on the 'primacy of embodiment' (1945), neatly captures this occurrence with his view that the body is the 'primary site of knowing the world'. In a similar vein, Cross outlines a 'collective engagement in the synchronous production and perception of complex patterns of sound and (in the case of some non-western cultures), movement' (2007 p.29). Turning to this research, an examination of the musical processes of listening, particularly 'inside' listening (see Group Music-Making Activity Three, Chapter Seven pp.180-183), or improvising, where the music was 'just happening' (Composing 4), and seemingly effortless melody-writing (Melody 4), uncovered certain elements of 'jouissance'. Moreover, the merging of these experiences with other forms of performance, composition and reflection, formed a melting pot of activity wherein for other students, fleeting touches, or flavours of 'jouissance' permeated regularly. These reactions were not always clearly apparent, but were elusive and revealed in short statements such as, 'can we do this again Miss?' or responses such as the impulse to remain absorbed in the musical exploration though the class had officially ended.

Returning to elements of Barthes' theory, his neologism 'writerly' denotes a text that possesses features that contribute to the emergence of 'jouissance'. The semantic transfer from writing to music-making requires clear procedural outline in order to dispel any sense of contrivance so an account of the process will begin with the word 'music'. It then involves the introduction of the verb 'to music' and mention of two previously discussed coined gerunds emerging from this: 'musicing', (see Elliott, 1995) and

'musicking', (see Small, 1998). Following on, the noun 'musicer' describes the person who makes or experiences the music. Swanwick employs this term and he refers in particular to the 'musicer 'as a performer who uses 'a purely oral and aural response' (1999, p.55). For the purposes of this discussion however, the definition of 'musicer' has more general musical reference.

The verb to write, transforms, through the noun 'writer', to the adverb 'writerly' and the writings of Barthes consider this neologism as denoting the features of a literary text that contribute to the emergence of 'jouissance'. In a similar manner, the verb to music, now relates to the noun 'musicer' as delineated by Elliott and Small, and used by Swanwick. In the final step, when the term 'musicer' is treated in a similar manner to 'writer', we arrive at the term 'musicerly'. Keeping in mind the connections between the work of Barthes on one hand and the educational concepts of Elliott and Small on the other, this single term, 'musicerly', may serve well to encapsulate the multifarious and absorbing nature of the activity of group music-making. A 'musicerly' pursuit produces and induces deep personal pleasure while simultaneously supporting corresponding feelings of intense involvement and absorption. The following table, 9:1, demonstrates the above discussed semantic journey.

Table 9.1: Towards the Term 'Musicerly'

to write	to read	to music
writing	reading	musicing, (Elliott,1995) musicking, (Small, 1998)
writer	reader	musicer, (Swanwick, 1999) musicer
writerly, (Barthes ,1973)	readerly, (Barthes, 1973)	musicerly

In order for a group music-making activity to have 'musicerly' features, various conditions must be in place. The location must be a setting where the players are involved in 'musicking', the creative task must have the capacity to encapture the students in the music-making team and it must have the potential to progress into a pursuit where they can become 'lost in music'. For this reason, as will be discussed in the next paragraph, the awareness of joy or 'jouissance' only surfaces in retrospect, as for example in the written feedback, and in other indirect ways, such as the students' obvious desire for the activity to be maintained or repeated soon.

In relation to the experiences recounted in the focus group discussions and recorded in the action research, it appears that students can be involved in a 'musicerly' response by a variety of means. For example they may be exploring ideas in a compositional activity, while listening creatively to the engagement of their teammates formulating similar relevant contributions, (see Cross 2007). They might be attending to the musical features of another group's demonstration, listening both as audience members and also in an 'inside' manner, firstly, because they have had a kinaesthetic experience of the musical theme and secondly, because they are formulating opinions for use in later critical response. They might be engaged in listening to their own music-making while simultaneously contributing to the team's performed demonstration a state evocatively described by Blacking (1974, p.28), who outlines the nurturing of 'the individual consciousness' by 'the collective consciousness'. This many-sided, often simultaneous synchronisation of rhythm, melody, harmony, interpretation, memorisation, musical and social interaction, which can generate intense absorption in the group music-making, is what this study delineates as 'musicerly'.

9.3 'Flow'

The condition of being fully immersed in the group performing pursuit can also be linked to 'flow': an optimal state of heightened consciousness where skills and challenges are balanced, where action and awareness merge and where the sense of time becomes distorted. This concept has been

introduced, researched and discussed since the late 1970s by psychology scholar Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Writing with Le Fevre (1989, p.189), he states:

When both challenges and skills are high, the person is not only enjoying the moment but also stretching his or her capabilities with the likelihood of learning new skills and increasing self-esteem and personal complexity.

In relation to this study, the concept pertains mostly to feelings of concentration and deep involvement inherent in the educational music-making processes, which have the potential to make the moment special. In the second-level class, the group music-making task will be most positive and conducive to 'flow' if the environment, in this case the music-making endeavour, contains sufficient opportunities for action (music-making, creating, appraising and analysing), and challenges (performing, demonstrating and formulating critical responses), which are matched with appropriate musical, academic and social skills. When the concept of 'flow' is connected to classroom group music-making in this manner, the overlying educational concept constitutes the two-sided aspect of 'musical becoming', since in the progression of the class, no levels are static. Therefore the students' responses to levels of skills and challenges must adapt correspondingly as their capacity to interact socially and musically develops.

In the focus group discussions, the instances that involved descriptions of intense joy, stimulation and involvement related very often to competition and talent shows. Green discusses this type of group performance among peers (2008, p.183), and she outlines both positive and negative aspects of the students' response but she also acknowledges the teachers' opinion that 'the sense of competition and comparison engendered by performance increased both focus and motivation'. For the purposes of this action research study however, in the classroom the goal remained clearly focused on the *processes* of perfecting composition and performance skills. Ideas of success achieved whilst surpassing, winning or becoming better than other opponents and teams in this competitive sense were not

entertained. In the event, within the classroom sessions, the in-built variety in the demonstrations of each music-making group removed such overt competitive atmosphere while something of its kinder and more positively interactive shadow remained. As the groups performed for each other and as the students listened, they became involved in the musically engendered comparative interest as much as in their developing musicianship.

9.4 'Jouissance' and 'Flow' Together

To merge the concepts of 'jouissance' and 'flow' this study turns again to Csikzentmihalyi who, in a 1996 longitudinal study of the unfolding of creativity in a lifetime, interviewed over one hundred creative individuals. From the transcripts of this project, which repeatedly connect creativity with 'flow' and enjoyment, he formulates what he describes as the nine main elements of such enjoyment, which many of these respondents experienced when engaged with their professional work. A list of these nine components comprises: clear goals every step of the way, immediate feedback to one's actions, a balance between challenges and skills, the merging of action and awareness, exclusion of distractions from consciousness, no worry of failure, disappearance of self-consciousness, distortion of the sense of time and the autotelic nature of the activity.

Given that this research location is a second-level school music classroom, some of these nine components resonate more than others to the activities therein. Also in relation to the students' responses, some of the components seemed to overlap. For example, during the group music-making, it was the students' musical response to the feedback (component two), that constituted a clear indicator of their understanding of the goals, (component one). Also, when the students became totally absorbed in their own music-making activities, (component four), the pursuits of the other music-making teams ceased to distract them, (component five). For this reason, although the nine elements of enjoyment will be included, for the purposes of this discussion they are re-arranged in six areas. Table 9:2, illustrates this process of transfer as it connects to responses within the music-making teams.

Table 9:2 Towards 'Flow' and 'Jouissance' in Group Music-Making

Nine Components of Creative Enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)	'Flow' and 'Jouissance' in Group Music-making
1. Clear goals	1. Clarity of goals in group music-making
2. Immediate feedback	2. Feedback within the group music-making class
3. Balance of challenges and skills	3. Challenges and skills with group music-making
4. Merging of action and awareness	4. Absorption in group music-making classroom activities
5. Exclusion of distractions	
6. No worry of failure	5. The group music-making pathway from self-consciousness to creativity
7. Disappearance of self-consciousness	
8. Distortion of sense of time	6. Group music-making for its own sake - the disappearing sense of time
9. Autotelic nature of the activity	

Before relating these elements to accounts from the classrooms, it is important to state that not all the complete cohort (nor even a majority of the students in the groups) seemed to experience this heightened state. Moments of supreme happiness did not abound in each music-making team. Rather, it is to record that instances and glimpses of such reactions were observed and documented and that correspondingly, the potential for such optimal musical experience exists in the environment created by group music-making at this level. In this context, the value of more specific and

longitudinal study becomes very significant and it will be discussed in the final chapter. The subsequent section provides accounts of 'jouissance' and 'flow' in the six specified areas.

One: Clarity of Goals in Group Music-Making

The goal of an activity is not always easily found, especially if the task involves the unpredictability of original and creative approaches. According to Csikszentmialhyi 'the more creative the problem, the less clear it is what needs to be done', (1996, p.114). In each group music-making session there were clear tasks outlined at the beginning of the class. These activities, including the completion of a melody, the working of a harmonic sequence, and the arrangement of a short composition, related in many ways to the familiar specifications of the Leaving Certificate music composition and listening papers. However, in relation to the specified goals, the response of the various groups and of some individual students in the groups varied considerably.

Some groups (see Melody 1 and Composition 4) responded as a unit, moving into absorbed work and a type of concentrated musical 'flow' with seeming ease. They seemed propelled by a clear understanding of the task and their almost immediate absorption with instrumental exploration in a light-hearted atmosphere signified both familiarity with this mode of classroom music-making and a vision of the musical end-product. Other groups, (see Melody 2 and Melody 4), though quieter and less outgoing, responded with equal intensity and musicality, demonstrating almost from the first notes, their comprehension of the goal. Within other teams, as befits the composite nature of the music-making teams, there were a variety of responses. For example, two students might be deep in creation at the keyboard while others from the group were only vaguely engaged, waiting around at the edge of the action, (see Melody 5).

In other instances there was a much slower rate of response by the student teams. As has been acknowledged in Chapter Eight (pp.210-211), motivation to become involved was multifaceted and concerns such as

musical and social identity or measurement of perceived performing and academic abilities seemed to cloud the awareness of the goals. In some cases, because of the creative nature of the musical task, it appeared, especially at the onset of the class, that no clearly cut sequential method could be outlined (see Composing 1). As Csikszentmihalyi states, 'the muse' often moves in mysterious ways or 'communicates through a glass darkly' (p.115). In the same vein, one of his respondents, the poet Györgi Faludy, comments ruefully 'that voice has my number but I don't have his' (ibid. p.114). In the classroom situations, the developing young musicians would not be described as fully-fledged artists but their pathways towards the goals had similar pitfalls and the nature of their progress was equally eventful, often meandering (see Melody 2), or staggering (see Composing 2), sometimes needing to be restarted (see Harmony I and Composing 3), or, in one case (see Melody 5), never quite found.

Musical goals and emerging pathways needed to be clearly understood in order to prompt motivated group participation. In this context the experiences in Melody 2, with groups centered on a single piano or keyboard, were significant. The efficacy of a musical instrument to attract the student into creative and concentrated involvement and to transform the specified task through visual clarification of the goal was never so obvious as in this instance. At the start of this class there was only one keyboard or musical instrument per team. Gradually however, through the creative music-making, more 'would-be' players were enticed into performance mode, some playing high-pitched melodies with one finger alongside the pianist, others singing, or beating a rhythmic accompaniment on the wood of the piano.

As previously mentioned, these contributions also related centrally to, or overlapped into the impetus provided by prompt feedback to the musical endeavours. This component constitutes the second element of enjoyment in group music-making 'flow'.

Two: Feedback within the Group Music-Making Class

In the classroom sessions, from the start, the live sound of the instruments provided the most immediately obvious, aural feedback to all in the room. To anyone who listened, the articulation of the various groups' progress was traveling constantly at the speed of sound, engendering a myriad of responses, the processing of which was stimulating both aural and social development even if at times it seemed to tally as much with the acoustic 'chaos' so described by the teachers in Focus Group Two. In every classroom session there were between two and four groups all working simultaneous but separate musical plans. Notwithstanding the initial reticence of some groups, there appeared eventually in all the activities bar one (see Melody 5), a stream of aural and ultimately discursive feedback at both group and individual levels.

Linked to this process was the response of some of the teachers and their constructive comments but also the capacity of some students to be in charge of their own processes, working independently of the teachers' direction and providing feedback to each other. In this 'internalizing of the critical judgment in their particular field' (Csikszentmihalyi, p.116), the students could provide individual unspoken commentary for themselves (see Composing 4), give opinions to team members (see Melody 4 and Composing 1), or criticise other teams during the critical response activity (see Melody 5 and Composing 2).

Throughout the three-part lesson plan, this group music-making feedback process appeared at different developmental stages in the recurring cycles of the music-making. To illustrate, at the start of the class, in the exploration of musical ideas, the students' own 'inside listening' was providing constant internal feedback at both individual and group levels. Then at the next stage, group music-making activity two, the occasions of performed demonstration engendered immediate audience feedback and also provoked additional aural engagement as the students formulated musical descriptions or identified musical problems in readiness for the critical discursive feedback. Then at the third stage, the conversational

response was itself the most physical form of constructive feedback. In addition at this stage in the lesson (the ending of the first cycle), students were involved in the collation of all the feedback thus far as a pre-requisite for musical re-entrance into the group performing activities, as the cycle repeated itself.

Continuing in this context, because of the cyclical nature of the three-part lesson design, awareness of musical and discursive feedback was recurring generatively in the replicated cycles. When the classes progressed smoothly with repeated short cycles, (as they did on numerous occasions), many students were in a state of perpetual 'making ready', that is promptly processing feedback in preparation for insertion into the next activity. This assemblage of performing, 'musicing', listening and discussing developed uniquely for each group, becoming in essence a myriad of encounters with 'musical becoming' that combined social, aural, visual and kinaesthetic responses.

At times, the connection between these experiences and the aural skills specifications in the Leaving Certificate examination syllabus was clear but also, because of the rich authenticity running through the group music-making activities, some composing and performance components moved intuitively along more independent pathways, for example those in Melody 5.

Three: Challenges and Skills within Group Music-Making

In the reality of any educational environment, the terms 'high skill' and 'high challenge' are relative, so it follows that in this action research the context of 'optimal experience' was also moveable and adaptable. This is not to imply a dearth of opportunities for 'flow' in the music-making classroom; rather it is an exposé of the potential of 'flow' to occur at many different levels within second level group music-making. The response to 'flow' manifest in both individual and group music-making situations relates particularly to the inherent ambiguity of the act of music-making, (see Cross 2005), allowing for diverse responses to challenge at separate levels of musical and technical skill. Separate and distinct levels of 'jouissance' and 'flow' can thus be

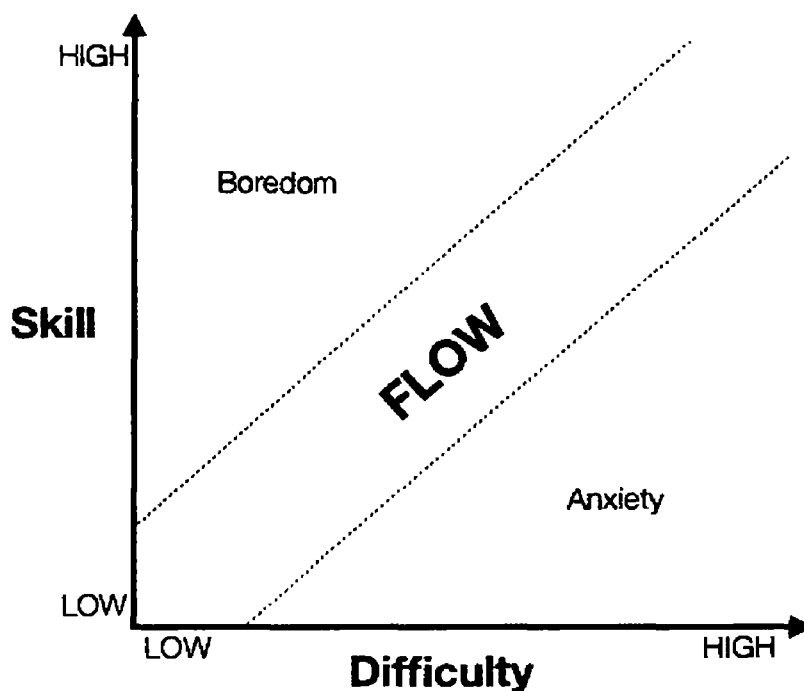
experienced concurrently within the same music-making group, (see Blacking 1974, p. 28).

The members of any Irish second-level music class are a collection of musicians with different abilities and the potential to engage at different levels simultaneously, (see Chapter Eight, p.213). Throughout the action research, this important balance between challenges and skills was discernable on a variety of levels. To take an example: in the Melody 1 class, team B, there were two guitarists, one collaborating with the tenor saxophone player in the creation of a melodic phrase, the second guitarist, working on the chords to accompany this modulating melody. At the same time, while the saxophonist was absorbed in the transposition of his melodic contribution up a tone, he interrupted this process to help his teammate, a boy with physical needs, who struggled to perfect the chords in a keyboard accompaniment to the same melody.

All the members of this team B were engaged with separate challenges and developing correspondingly diverse levels of skill that varied accordingly. For instance the multi-instrumental skills and the interpersonal awareness needed by the saxophone player were very different to the physical struggle of the boy with the keyboard or the apparent kinaesthetic enjoyment of the second rhythm guitarist. All boys were engrossed and seemed to be enjoying a process that might include 'focused immersion in a task', (Csikszentmihalyi, p.106). Indeed the young keyboard player continued with his music-making for quite some time after the school bell had signalled the end of class so for him perhaps, the reward constituted involvement in elements of optimal experience.

The following simple outline of the 'flow' chart (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p.74), illustrates how, with special relation to educational and group music-making contexts, 'flow' can be experienced at different levels.

Figure 9.1: The Balance of Challenge and Skills



Four: Absorption in Group Music-Making Activities

In the action research, one of the most significant observations was the capacity of the music-making groups to produce their own original work in the midst of what was often described as a cacophony of sound. Despite the fact that all of the action research sites used one medium sized classroom and there were usually three or four separate music-making groups, no teacher cited lack of practice suites or complained about a dearth of space or resources. In one session (Composing 4), there were two comments regarding the need for more space and in only one case out of the 34 different small musical groups (Harmony 3), did the progress of one teams' music-making distract the others. Indeed this particular instance, involving the dominating volume of the euphonium, became in itself a fun-filled learning encounter involving timbre and pitch as well as dynamics.

The degree to which the students became immersed in their groups' work followed a fairly regular pattern. At the outset when student groups were asked to begin music-making explorations, there was often a mixture of

self-conscious and more confident responses. Some students relished this melting-pot scenario focusing on the physicality of the performing, the explorations and the shared conversational interaction, in other words they seemed to enjoy the whole process. Some other quieter groups seemed, for a short while, frozen in inactivity (see Composing 1), afraid to sound a note, changing their instrumental line-up (Composing 2), writing copious notes, doing anything but performing. For them, the scenario was often modified after the first Time Out session of performance, reflection and discussion. At this point they seemed to move towards comprehension of the process and glimpse the goal. They would gradually become more absorbed in the musical task, immersed in their own group work and correspondingly deaf to the other musical journeys in the classroom. This aspect of becoming 'lost in the music' seemed to increase noticeably as the students approached activity two, the performed demonstrations, in the *second* cycle.

The use of one classroom as the sole venue for these varied group music-making activities could be seen as mismanagement of resources but in this instance, the phenomenon of all musical teams working in one space constituted an integral component of the lesson design which related particularly to Group Music-Making Activity Three. It was necessary to have the teams working in close proximity in order that this critical response pursuit could take place. Predictably, there were musical ideas that crossed between teams (see Composing 4), but there were also instances where one group learned from the critical reaction to another's performance and included this new knowledge immediately in their own critical response for the following cycle (see Composing 2). On another and equally significant level, some students simply enjoyed the musical riffs and ideas emanating from their classmates' teams and they seemed to learn as much from the critical response to these performances, as from the reaction to their own work (see Composing 4). The resulting opportunities for critical reflection, artistic development and the extension of relevant vocabulary linking to the verbal description of the observed processes went a long way to compensate

the students who may have wished for more space or time to expand, hone and develop original musical ideas.

In relation to the class design, the activities that stimulated most absorbed engagement were the first demonstrations and the initial critical response session. For some students, it seemed a working awareness of the musical aims of the lesson arrived retrospectively towards the end of this first cycle of activities. To explain; elements of the first activity, exploration and creation were often approached with reserve since they only assumed meaning for these students after the results of this work (in the form of performed demonstrations) had been experienced or after the constructive criticism had been encountered. For example, it was only at this point that both groups in Composing 1 became aware of their lack of performing synchronisation and set to work, as two musical units, to deal with the problem. In a similar response, group A in Melody 5 reacted to the first period of constructive criticism by immediately opening their circle of music-making and arranging xylophone and bongo drum parts for their two disengaged team mates.

In the end this interesting fact remains: out of all the processes of exploration, arranging, organizing, performing and discussing, only two student comments attest to the fact that the one-room arrangement was a distraction, (see Composing 4). It should also be noted that students who provided this feedback were in fact very able to carry out the stipulated task. Their understandable impulse was to perfect the performance and to safeguard their original ideas and it was for this reason that they requested more space, away from their teacher's advice and from the ideas of the other groups.

Five: From Self-Consciousness to Creativity

Following on from this discussion of absorption in the group music-making activity, the discussion focuses on the response of the individual within the music-making group. If, in the 'musicerly' moment, the student becomes lost in music, then the sense of 'self', the effect one is having and the perceived measurement of one's abilities must fade correspondingly. According to poet Mark Strand (speaking with Csikszentmihalyi), there are two aspects to this process; one the sense of being gradually 'caught up in what you are doing' and the other, the experience of becoming enthused or 'swayed by the possibilities that you see' (Csikszentmihalyi, p.121). In both these concepts, the focus moves from the person, the team, and even from the performed musical product, to the experience of the active pursuit and the possibilities within.

As has been documented in Chapter Six, for each action research session, all the class group were working in one room, so opportunities for comparisons in all spheres abounded. This self-consciousness has already been described as an awkward and often reticent reaction possibly linking to a perceived inability to deal with the task. In such instances, it was manifested in obvious, often physical, ways for example: glancing over one's shoulder, huddled whispering or a marked silence instead of the hub of music-making. The subsequent processes of transformation, constituting the fading self-consciousness, were equally obvious in both aural and visual ways. They included very quiet often disjointed instrumental beginnings, for example the gentle explorations on piano (Composing 1), the beating of a pulse on the piano lid, quietly at first, then pulsing and enthusiastic (Melody 2), or the progression of a left hand, fingers already in the chord shape, towards the fingerboard of the guitar in eventual readiness to play (Melody 3). Other indications of the disappearance of self-consciousness were musically audible, for example the vocal improvised line in Composing 3, or the simple three-part polyphony in Composing 2. All these clearly communicated the eventual ascendancy of the musically creative

consciousness over the fear of failure, of measurement or even of peer comment.

At this point according to Csikszentmihalyi, 'When the creative process begins to hum - all else moves into the background' (p.118), and in this study there was a definite sense that for some students, the growth mind set which was discussed in Chapter Eight (see Dweck, 1999) had been maintained. The pursuit of the musical creation was becoming increasingly important while other concerns were fading into the background.

In the music-making sessions, it is also worthy of note that progression towards this absorption in the pursuit was not always achieved within the first cycle of activities. In fact, in some instances, the 'flow' of the music-making and the consequent joy and satisfaction only appeared towards the end of the class after a whole session of endeavour. In the cases of Harmony 3 and Composition 2, this eventual arrival seemed correspondingly all the more welcome, but there were other instances (see Melody 5), where it proved totally elusive.

Within the rhythm of the cyclical activities, there were particular times within the comparatively short one-hour double class, when students seemed to forget themselves. Once the initial self-consciousness had passed, this state of being absorbed and not afraid of failure, censure, or measurement became apparent in the second cycle of group music-making activity one; the exploring and composing. After the class had ended and the final demonstrations of the session were over, it was this activity that still captured some students. In apparent involvement with the musical possibilities they could glimpse, they would continue exploring and tweaking musical ideas. In some cases, for example (see Composing 1), the surmounting of a musical or a technical difficulty and a corresponding sense of achievement also contributed to this persistence. In Melody 1 where the teacher was attempting to record the final stage performances, Cian remained working on the technicalities of his arpeggio accompaniment, which, significantly, he could now play successfully.

In Composing 3, just after the singer's idea had emerged, while the group were clearly in the 'hum' of the process and just beginning to visualise the form of the complete piece, the bell rang signalling the end of class. The singer, who through improvisation had just discovered her musical pathway, was clearly unhappy with such an interruption, exclaiming 'Oh no! We've just figured it out.' In this instance more additional and seemingly incidental detail becomes significant. This was a cold, mid-winter Friday late afternoon, in a most northerly part of rural Ireland, and the snow had just started to fall but, though the bell had signalled the end of class for the weekend, some students in this team remained on, by the piano in the classroom, still engaging with their musical ideas. Csikszentmihalyi, considering this loss of self-awareness, outlines the paradox inherent in such a situation stating 'the self expands through acts of self-forgetfulness' (1996, p.113). In this instance, because of engagement with a musical arrangement, for that moment at least the 'Friday feeling', so popular with second-level students, had faded to the background.

Six: Group Music-Making for Its Own Sake

There is a sense in which this final component, evidence of the autotelic nature of the experiences of group music-making appeared the most elusive of all. Among the significant aspects in the data are accounts of feelings such as satisfaction gleaned from the group music-making task itself when the activity felt right. For instance descriptions of the joy in just working on a melody together, the enjoyment and security of working a modulation with the whole team or of listening and being entertained by other teams compositions (see Composing 4 and Harmony 2). This type of engagement with group music-making activities purely for their own sake sometimes became more intense as the class progressed. In the words of the Composing 4 teacher, 'they warmed to it, they loved it and want more of same'. The feedback from the students in the same session was not dissimilar but it is interesting however that the reasons given by the girls for this 'feeling right' varied. For example team C stated, 'composing is more accessible than we

thought. It was amazing fun!' while a member of team A announced, 'Playing my instrument was the most enjoyable thing'.

The sense of a pursuit being the right thing with which to be involved follows on from the disappearance of sense of self and surroundings and the distortion of the sense of time. Group music-making involves a complex of elements varying from physical, aural, intellectual and social, and each of these could in their own way, engender this joy, satisfaction or feeling of achievement. The perception of time passing depends as much on the feelings we have about involvement in a pursuit as on the nature of the activities themselves (Csikszentmihalyi, p.113). In two particular sessions, Composing 3 and Melody 1, for some students the sense of time seemed to move.

Another aspect of the autotelic experience includes the phenomenon of the apparently effortless and automatic action in a highly focused state of consciousness. According to novelist Richard Stern, when the creative hum is flowing, 'There is no ego... I would use the word *pure*, it feels right... it all adds up' (p.110). In the classroom situation this did not always relate to musical perfection with all the notes in the proper place, yet the feeling that 'the music was just happening' did in some cases exist. In some groups it was obvious, for example the improvisation in Composing 4. At other times, groups or individuals seemed to experience it for a short while (Melody 4), and, as the sessions moved to an end, yet others appeared to glimpse this state, however briefly (Harmony 3 and Composing 3).

At such times the physicality of the musical activity and the concentration on the specific task seemed to merge completely. An aspect of this, the 'aha' moment, Csikszentmihalyi (p.103), describes as 'the subconscious connection between ideas that fit so well they pop out into awareness' sometimes seemingly effortlessly. In examination of all the action research sessions, there is perhaps one clear instance of this phenomenon and it involves the fiddle player, Ciara in team B, Melody 4. Towards the end of the melody-writing class, her team were working enthusiastically but

their ideas were confused and though the end of the class was rapidly approaching, there was, as yet, no composed ending to their piece. Ciara paused, with her friends looking on, she looked out of the window in a seemingly highly focused state and then, in apparent automatic and effortless creation, played a fluent and very musical ending to the melody.

This reaction was essentially an individual response to a group problem but there were also occasions when such musical responses were so group-orientated that the exact nature of the methods of musical creation could not be differentiated, (for instance the work of the three guitars in Melody 5). Blacking, discussing this state in relation to the music of the Venda tribe (1973, p.28), describes:

an experience of becoming, in which individual consciousness is nurtured within the collective consciousness of the community and hence becomes the source of richer cultural forms.

In the Melody 4 group, the collective musicality of the complete team was nurtured by Ciara's individual musical actions. Shortly afterwards, when the time of the final demonstration had arrived, elements of her seemingly effortless creation had been disseminated and the overall musical standard of the group performance had been enriched.

The above-mentioned melody was not the only successfully completed task in the research sessions but even when the activities remained incomplete, there was often a rush of wellbeing and satisfaction at the end of the class. According to the feedback the pursuits had engendered joy and they had been fun. The unfinished group music-making projects in these action research classes that recorded the terms 'enjoyable' and 'fun', (for example composing 3, melody 5), attest to the fact that it was the process or the pursuit that mattered most and not the arrival at an 'ineffable goal', (ibid. p.122). The essential finding here strongly suggests that it is the complexity of challenges that can be found within the group music-making that have an obvious connection to 'jouissance', and 'flow'.

Conclusion

In this group music-making action research, experiences of 'flow' and 'jouissance', purportedly the most intangible of states, had nonetheless emerged and developed, and were observed and recorded. In the music classes, each of the 34 groups worked a different itinerary, moving at different rates of progression and completing the research class at different stages in their musical creation. Nevertheless, a transformation could be recorded from the onset of the group performing sessions, where the 'creative hum' was decidedly non-existent, to the end of the classes where some students remained absorbed and needed repeated encouragement to cease engagement with the activities.

To enlarge, this pathway towards states of 'jouissance' and 'flow' often involved a three-stage progression. In the opening scenario there was little musical activity being undertaken for its own sake and in some cases there was even a silent awkwardness at the prospect of any performance. In the following stage some students were confident but others, still unsure, moved apprehensively into the performed demonstrations. The third and central experience in this progression: the moment when the creative energy would 'hit', arrived with the working understanding of the task and a glimpse of the emerging goal. This moment, a type of musical epiphany, was experienced in many different ways at different stages, and in different musical, technical, social and academic contexts. The result of these experiences often was much easier to identify than the states themselves. For instance, some groups had arrived at the point where they could begin collaborating creatively for the first time, at a stage when the class was nearly over. Other students, finally unaware of 'self' would reach the stage where they could simply play music with concentrated joy. Yet others, in both group and individual situations, were unaware of their state of absorption and needed to be coaxed and encouraged to cease engagement with the music-making activities.

At this stage, the edge of the class, when the demonstrations and the critical responses had finished, this absorbed state, with the student

remaining involved and exploring just for the sake of the music-making, was perhaps an example of 'flow' and 'jouissance' in its purest form. There is a statistical link between the process of 'flow' and high quality composing experiences (see Sheridan and Byrne, 2002) and though this study is not concerned with standards as such, accounts of similar experiences still emerged and were commented upon with surprise by quite a few of the students.

Seeing the techniques come together in our performance was the most rewarding and enjoyable part of the piece.

(Team A, Composing 1)

You can do scary things with one tune!' (Team A, Composing 3)

In the performed demonstrations, concentration on the kinaesthetic character of the live and physical movement, as well as constituting a useful support to the activity for its own sake, proved an additional and reliable indicator of the existence of a basic joy in movement and the perception that the pursuit 'felt right'.

The music-making activities themselves constituted a complex of activities ranging from melody-writing and harmonic arranging, composition using well-known and simple themes, to the implementation of tried and tested composing techniques. As such, these pursuits did not move away from or become irrelevant to the existing Leaving Certificate syllabus. In addition, the physical technicalities of the explorations, the sense of achievement in the demonstrations, the discursive broadening within the critical response, all related in an absorbing, creative and innovative manner to the pedagogical processes involved with the Leaving Certificate syllabus. If, as Csikszentmihalyi states, schools should teach the adventure of learning (see p.125), then there were elements of the novel and perhaps even adventurous for some of these students.

In the midst of the diversity a most significant finding was this sense of human achievement. Even though the group music-making classes were

using well-known themes and conventional composing techniques, after the participatory input of the group music-making teams, something new had been created. The students owned this music, in some cases they would praise the music of their neighbouring groups and in turn, they were proud of their own efforts. This phenomenon lent itself to the good feelings, the satisfaction and the 'moments of distraction within' that can engender happiness. (p.123).

Some students progressed from apprehension of the measurement of musical and technical standards, they forgot their lack of instrumental technique as they worked in pairs (Composing 2), helped and instructed each other (Composing 1), or sometimes they all worked around the piano (Melody 2). Something of a seeming effortless associated with autotelic experience appeared, often quietly and fleetingly and in small and subtle ways in these instances. It might, for example, present as an impulse to play in a different octave (Composing 1 and 3), to deconstruct a chord and perform it in new voicings (Melody 1), to produce a quirky and dissonant keyboard cluster (Composing 4) and even, in exploratory fun, to insert a scarf in the bell of a euphonium (Harmony 3). These experiences could be construed as sometimes tangential to the group music-making task. However, given the variety of instruments available, the diverse musical pursuits as have been documented in Chapter Seven, and the multi-layered social interactions as depicted in Chapter Eight, the potential to experience varied measures of 'flow' and 'jouissance' in flexible learning pathways was limitless.

The nature of these experiences often seemed somewhat accidental, occurring as they sometimes did at the edge of class, but they remain an important element in second-level music education and can be understandably overlooked in the stressful lead up to the Leaving Certificate music examinations. This creative and ultimately humanly beneficial working state, where 'nothing seemed to matter more', emerged during the sessions and for some students, through the activity of group music-making, it became an audible and visual part of their learning pathway. In this

context, it is the human response of the students in the form of joy and concentrated satisfaction, the process of warming to the essence of the musical activity through 'jouissance' and 'flow' that remains one of the strongest impressions in this research component.

Chapter Ten: Synthesis of Findings and Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter there are four sections. To begin there is a consideration of the nature of group music-making and its status in the Irish second-level classroom. This leads to a summary of the overall findings relating to the three main concepts: Flexible Pathways in Music Education, Musical Becoming, and 'Jouissance and Flow'. The implications of these findings are then threaded through a critique of relevant aspects of the current Irish Leaving Certificate Music syllabus in a framework involving the three essential activities: performing listening and composing. This discussion also includes reference to relevant specifications in other syllabi namely, the CCEA syllabus¹, the GCSE AQA syllabus², the WJEC syllabus³ and the Scottish Higher Music Syllabus⁴. The concluding section will revisit the research questions, make response to these in the form of a synopsis of the findings and the study will close with suggestions for further developments in both Irish and more general music education contexts.

10.1 Music-Making Experience in the Classroom

The impulse to include more group music-making practice in the second-level classroom was born of an overall approach that cites music as a human and authentic sound-producing activity (Small, 1999). This participatory pursuit had particular resonance with the premise that for learning to occur, experiences must be vital, relevant and memorable. In this Irish classroom practice however, one of the central issues constituted the academic status

¹ The Council for the Curriculum and Examinations and Assessment, (CCEA) Northern Ireland

² The General Certificate of Secondary Education, (GCSE), The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance England (AQA) England

³ The Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) Wales

⁴ Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Scottish Higher Music Syllabus

of group music-making and the rationale for its utilization in Leaving Certificate music pedagogy.

In this context, accounts of group music-making as described in the focus group meetings were dynamic and very positive. However the actual locations of these performances could not always be clearly defined since the teachers' descriptions involved a merging of both curricular and extra-curricular pursuits situated sometimes *in* and sometimes *out* of the official timetabled lessons. By contrast the action research was located solely in the classroom, thus enabling the teachers' attitudes to this situation to emerge more clearly.

In the focus group discussions, in an area described by Small as 'the primacy of the musical text and the subordination of performance to it' (ibid. p.11), different trains of thought had emerged. One argument implied that enjoyable though creative group performance might be, in classroom practice, it sometimes needed to be set aside to give time for the 'real' work. A re-visiting of Sarah's opinion illustrates this point clearly.

I find the Leaving Cert. set works very hard to get through. I want to do them in a more fun way but I wouldn't have time to do that... I don't think I've time to be creative. I'd love to be, and I'd love us all to be playing themes on the keyboards... but I don't have time. (Sarah, Focus Group One)

A second opinion considered group music-making as the embodiment of a true music education, but significantly, one that also remained separate from the routine remit of Leaving Certificate tasks. 'You stop teaching music and you're teaching the curriculum!' (Aoife, Focus Group Two). A third teacher, Celia, had stated that in her Transition Year class, theory was always taught 'through the instruments.' These views, connecting the educational status of group music-making with the pedagogical approach to certificate music examinations, constituted a strong stimulus for the design of the lesson plans in the second component of the research. They prompted the integration of group music-making pursuits such as musical exploration, composing,

arranging, practical demonstrations and critical response into *all* core activities of the Leaving Certificate syllabus.

In the research study, the basic inquiry was concerned with the effectiveness of such a practice-based pedagogical approach. Accordingly, aspects such as students' disposition to instrumental performance, teachers' response to the participatory strategies, the ease with which the 'musicing' class plans were absorbed into the classroom work and the relevance of the team music-making approach to the Leaving Certificate specifications were all considered.

There were occurrences of interesting music, some more fractured performances and in certain situations, very little sound at all. These experiences however only constituted learning pathways when they were complemented by the third group music-making activity: the 'Time Out.' This pursuit allowed space for aural, musical and discursive consideration of the musical processes involved. It illuminated the processes by which musical exploration could move towards satisfactory performance. Reflection on the manner in which this 'wave of consequences' followed the 'action' (see Dewey, 1916 p.150) was a vital component in this process of developing musicianship; incorporating as it did elements of the listening and the composition core Leaving Certificate pursuits as well as enjoyable performance for its own sake.

Furthermore, due to the repeated cycles of activities, 'the consequences' from a previously completed cycle could be 'acted upon' immediately with fresh practical application in the next round. This continuity of musical 'praxis' involved a sequential and potent learning experience and was the process that could claim the status of the activity as an enjoyable but also an academic pursuit – within the classroom. The action research sessions demonstrated that group music-making was an enjoyable way in which to engage students, but when this type of group performance incorporated careful listening and peer reflection, it became, as an

educational strategy, a dynamic and integrated embodiment of the three core activities of composing, listening and performing.

The active pursuits needed the complement of reflective elements in order to progress towards awareness of the nature of the musical change. Such awareness could only develop as a result of the students' careful listening as they formulated opinions for use in the peer criticism. In this context, the emergence of the multi-levelled nature of the listening activity itself, in particular the type labelled 'Inside Listening Activity 3' (when the students listen knowingly to a piece with which they have had practical performing experience) is especially significant.

In brief the main research question examined the extent to which practice in the second-level classroom might be enhanced by the inclusion of group music-making and the course of the action research revealed many such instances of both illuminating and enjoyable group pursuits (as chapters Seven, Eight and Nine attest). The discussions in the following section revolve around this central finding as they summarise, through the viewpoints of the three concepts, different approaches to learning within the group music-making experience.

10.2 Summary of Findings

Flexible Learning Pathways in Group Music-Making

Finding One

In Chapter Seven the research illustrated that group music-making activities had the potential to develop musicianship in a myriad of ways. The first and over-arching finding concerned just this: the inherent flexibility of group music-making learning pathways. Apart from the stipulation that group performing pursuits be implemented with the same basic lesson frameworks and involve music students in Irish second-level classes, there were few other constants in the research experience. The make up of each music-making group was unique both in social and musical terms. The location of the group music-making sessions, the size of the classrooms and the

availability of musical resources all varied. The responses to the lessons, constituting teaching strategies and the subsequent interactions of the students, were also very diverse. Indeed the nature of the implementation of the lesson plan itself (utilising the cyclical research process of planning, action and reflection) proved yet another evolving variable. In addition, even when a single teaching strategy was implemented, the methodological pathways of the student teams diverged in independent group approaches to the same musical task.

Finding Two

A second significant finding concerns the observation that within the classes, the cyclical ebb and flow of participatory and reflective engagement appeared on numerous occasions to be conducive to advancing musicianship. This development in turn manifested itself in boosted social confidence, improvements (usually slight) in performing skills and increased levels of musical communication, spoken, unspoken and performed.

The design of the lesson plan and the tri-partite cyclical nature of its implementation contributed significantly to this development. This plan constituted a revolving cycle of three activities briefly outlined here as: musical exploration, performed demonstration and peer critical response. In relation to the earlier discussion of 'active' and 'passive' elements and the premise that both are necessary for learning, this three-part lesson plan emerged with the following properties. Group Music-Making Activity One constituted a vital exploratory engagement with musical material using voices and instruments, and including a mixture of performing, social and musical interaction, and problem solving. Group Music-Making Activity Two, the performance of progress or the demonstration of the musical consequences comprised the beginning of the 'Time Out' session. This pursuit entailed a combination of active performing, both 'inside' and 'outside' listening, and the formulation of musical responses. Group Music-Making Activity Three, the peer critical response, involved a combination of

listening, consideration of the musical information absorbed from the demonstrations, and subsequent critical peer interaction.

Finding Three

An additional observation relating to the diversity of the group music-making classes, concerned the instrumental make-up of the performing groups. In some cases, as well as contributing towards variety in performance, the technical 'workings' of these instruments provided vital and practical affordance as 'visual aids' to clarify musical interaction and to aid audiation. The technical idiosyncrasies of the instruments also generated fun and enjoyment, as for example the struggles with the C major tin-whistle or the loudly blasting euphonium. In yet other situations, especially those involving a dominance of vocal performance, the lack of a melodic instrument to which the group could make concrete pitch reference presented an obstacle over which students' creative efforts could not always progress. The important finding here is that instrumental 'make-up' was especially significant in small performing groups and the inclusion of at least one single-line melodic instrument and one chordal instrument in the same small group allowed students to be more pro-active in their musical discovery and creation.

The above finding, the effectiveness of the instrumental stimuli in the joy of the music-making, the clarification of musical features and the refinement of musical ideas, has significant implications for the core and elective composing components of Leaving Certificate music examination and will be further examined in the next section of this chapter.

Finding Four

The fourth finding concerns the potential of the group musical 'praxis' to move in independent directions. Sometimes these trajectories, though self-determining, were in confluence with the remit of the Leaving Certificate syllabus and sat easily alongside the planned work. Instances in this context include the discovery (through performance) of a dominant seventh chord in the accompaniment of a melody, and the working engagement with the

transposing clarinet, the tenor saxophone and the trumpets. On other occasions, although the paths remained in musical orientation, they diverged completely from the examination remit: for example, the instances where the improvised compositions or the lead guitar melodic development dispensed with the stipulated modulation to the dominant. On these occasions although the students' journeys on self-directed trajectories seemed in some way to run counter to the remit of the Leaving Certificate work plan, there was no doubt as to the efficacy, the vitality and the appropriate musical 'feel' of the learning experience.

So to summarise, creative group music-making had the capacity to both illuminate core activities in the Leaving Certificate syllabus, and to nudge at the 'fuzzy edges' of the syllabus specifications (Small 1980, p.187), thus broadening the students' educational trajectory. This capacity was enjoyed and frequently mentioned in student feedback. It also has noteworthy implications relating to the framework of the core composing Leaving Certificate paper that will be discussed in the subsequent critique (p.272).

Amidst this diversity and flexibility, the capacity of the process of group music-making to pertain to musical learning remained strong and constant. Its ability as a pedagogical resource to bring both students with differing educational needs and their teachers on a learning pathway of musical development in listening, composition and performing was realised in a multiplicity of group performing practices.

Musical Becoming in Group Music-Making

In Chapter Eight the attention moved from the nature of the learning pathways to the symbiotic relationship between students' developing musicianship (becoming musical) and their personal and social developments within the group music-making pursuits (musical becoming).

Finding Five

The most noteworthy finding here was the emergence of group music-making as an inclusive stimulus, which could embrace the unique melding of the social and the musical, coined by Small (1998) as 'musicking'. Leading on from this, a variety of team constructions or affinity groups developed. Group leaders emerged and were re-absorbed as the leadership relocated in response to musical problems. Sometimes the students collaborated consistently as a team and sometimes the contributions varied with the groups splitting into 'workers' and 'onlookers'. Many different interactive combinations resulted; some involving group with group interaction, some concerning the group and the individual, and others involving the individual student and the teacher. At the onset of the music-making sessions there was often quite a divergence in student and group performing identities. There were confident groups who settled with ease into composing tasks, and quiet tentative teams who were well through their class session before any self-belief in composing and arranging abilities became apparent.

Finding Six

Very often however, during the progress of the sessions, these individual and group performing identities would alter. The nature of this transformation could be linked to the sixth significant finding: the capacity of the 'Time Out' session to shift the students' focus from their perceived musical abilities towards awareness of the musical processes being implemented.

For example, there was a growing motivation to contribute, to join in and to be involved in the social, musical and physical aspects of the performance. This inclination was especially noticeable following the first Time Out activity when the effectiveness of the process manifested in fading reticence, increased motivation to 'get the music right' and growing awareness of the importance of the creative processes.

As this shift in focus continued, the consciousness of 'self' or even of 'one's own music group' seemed to fade by comparison. Students stopped looking over their shoulders at the other performers and teams, as the

significance of their own emerging musical piece came to the fore. All the music-making sessions were comparatively short (approximately one hour) but the groups and individuals who strove to surmount seemingly insoluble harmonic, melodic, compositional, technical or even physical difficulties had by the end of the class (in all cases but one) arrived at some satisfactory halting point, if not the perfect finish. In some instances, the motivation to maintain this learning process was propelling them to organize the next class session.

The teachers for their part were also 'musically becoming' through the group music-making sessions. Some learnt to 'stand back' more, to observe and appreciate the students' struggle without interrupting. Some moved in unplanned directions following the students' uncharted learning pathways and some re-enacted the special 'performing together' routines that had been described in the Focus Group discussions. In this particular instance, student or teacher identities would disappear and new 'special relationships' would evolve as all the group members performed together.

Overall, it seemed that group music-making had the capacity to engender a 'growth mind-set' (see Dweck, 1999), often significantly advancing the music-making capacity of the group. At the same time it influenced the social and personal development of those in the group making the music.

'Jouissance' and 'Flow' in Group Music-Making

At the opening of some of the lessons, when all students were being invited to respond to a creative task through group music-making, it was difficult to imagine a one-hour progression of team performance that might approach states of 'jouissance' or 'flow' by the end of the session. As previously described, the starting modes of the groups varied between awkward reserve and a familiarity with the pursuit of group music-making which eased into relaxed performance. If noise levels constitute an accurate indication of such absorption along diverse creative pathways, then this type of auditory chaos developed relatively quickly in some classes, while in

others there was something closer to silence for what seemed a lengthy period.

Finding Seven

By the beginning of the second cycle however, following the critical response Time Out activity, there was much greater consensus of approach across the 34 teams. All the groups (bar one) were now becoming absorbed in their team creation. The musical onlookers in some groups were harnessed, not by the direction of the teacher but significantly, by their teammates' response to critical peer comments following the demonstrations. Those students needing musical, social or physical assistance and who in some cases had asked for it wordlessly were, on the whole, receiving what they needed. In this context the teachers' responses were alternatively energetic or quietly helpful. What is perhaps most significant is the extent of such peer instruction as the music-making progressed. These student interactions were often unspoken and involved technical demonstration, re-organisation of instrumental texture and the implementation of more accessible compositional techniques. The end result, and the essence of the finding was the capacity of group music-making to encourage students to become absorbed, in their own manner, with the performing activities of the musical set.

In contrast to what might be assumed, the lack of separate composing space for the different groups proved conducive to the learning experience (at this level and stage). In the single classroom a rich aural experience of different pieces could be offered to all the students involved in critical commentary. In fact this musical appraisal of *different* approaches to the *same* theme constituted a unique type of aural experience for all in the class. That said, this musical 'melting pot' of sound might have caused some problems with concentration, had not the capacity to 'tune in' to one's own team when necessary and remain 'lost' in the 'musicing' in a type of interactive group 'flow' been in existence. In this context additional research is needed to ascertain whether such a melting pot of sound would continue

to be conducive in the event of the performances developing into more polished and sophisticated music-making.

As has been previously discussed, the processes of identifying instances of extreme satisfaction, joy and concentrated absorption required nuanced interpretive reading. During the group music-making activities, conscious awareness of such aspects as enjoyment and the nature or degree of absorption, were neither measurable nor fully acknowledged in the moment. They emerged in retrospect in the written accounts of the students, in throwaway remarks, and in the field observations. Furthermore such experiences of 'jouissance' and 'flow' were often seamlessly intertwined (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, pp.107-113). In such cases, it was the phenomenon of the state of 'flow' in the musically creative activity that produced the enjoyment.

Finding Eight

Instances of 'jouissance' or 'flow' surfaced in unexpected places, as for example an exclamation of 'Ah!' at the end of a (one hour long) harmony class when the significance of the chord sequence had become clear for the first time, or a loud giggle of laughter betraying not only the joy of joining in, but the relief at being observed to make significant and worthwhile contribution. On these occasions, the students involved in the peer support often betrayed nothing more than a swift glance or a hint of a smile. It was the feedback statements such as, 'we enjoyed that we were not alone' and 'we worked as a team' or 'its more achievable with the help of others in the team' that contributed towards the evidence.

These interactions were group-based but it was significant that within this scenario, there was, at all times, the freedom to move imperceptibly from group to individual response. In fact there were sometimes split-second transfers from one mode to the other, organically subtle and shifting yet proving vital to the 'success' of the group performing experience, especially from the perspective of the students who needed support. These players could receive empathetic assistance at a one-to-one

level at one moment and be absorbed without fuss or comment into the energy of the group performance at the next. Interestingly, when the bell rang indicating the end of class, it was often students such as these who remained to perform the riff yet again, or hone the idea for one last time.

Following this outline of research findings, the critique of the Leaving Certificate music syllabus will incorporate samples of group music-making activities extracted from the action research data and the pedagogical implications of future developments in this area of practical group performance will be discussed.

10.3 Group Music-Making within Leaving Certificate Music

Towards Performance in Leaving Certificate Music

In the 1996 redesign of the music syllabus the performing component was transformed, moving from a predilection for music in the western art tradition and instrumental specifications similar to orchestral instrument grade examinations, to a syllabus inclusive of all varieties of music-making.

This framework is now continually updated with new and current performing activities, rigorous monitoring of the practical assessment schemes and continuing professional development courses.⁵ The Irish music student can now avail of the opportunity to perform music in any genre, on any musical instrument and in solo or group ensemble combinations.⁶ It is significant that over 99% of the candidates sitting the examination chose the performance elective, worth a potential 50% of the total marks in the examination (see Chapter 1, p.8). Preparation for this 10-20 minute practical recital can relate clearly to classroom 'musicing' as well as to listening and

⁵ PPMTA The Post Primary Secondary Teachers Association: a national association formed by and for second level music teachers, provides teacher support, participatory workshops, revision courses for certificate examinations, presentations in addition to online teaching resources.

⁶ In the group music-making options, the Leaving Certificate examination criteria specify a maximum of two instrumentalists or singers per musical part.

composing pursuits (ibid). The unprepared tests in this component also provide interesting choices, ranging from conventional playing and singing at sight to harmonic improvisation worked from various stimuli, and melodic and rhythmic aural recall. However, whilst the choice of activities is broad, the specifications outline that only one of these activities is necessary for examination and furthermore the assessment weighting for this unprepared performing activity is just 5% of the marks for the total exam.

Implications of the Research Findings

In the light of findings from the action research sessions, it is immediately possible to make connections between the group performing pursuits as recounted in the study and the learning approaches implicit in the Leaving Certificate examination specifications. Group music-making, as practiced in the action research music lesson plans, emerged as an integrated learning experience which linked with the core composing exercises in melody writing and harmony as well as with the original composition elective. In addition, the group performing pursuits illustrated the potential for further incorporation in the practical component of the examination and as illustrated in the action research sessions, they had the potential to be implemented in a variety of ways by the music teacher and the students in the classroom.

To take an example, the Melody 4 Irish traditional melodic composition, with its stylishly improvised ending could, with further (minimal) arrangement and some expansion, have formed a group performing activity for the practical examination. Similarly, the minimalist piece in Composing 4, after barely one hour's collaboration was, even within its first demonstration, already transforming into an original group composition worthy of merit for assessment in the composition elective and/or a group performance in the practical exam.

These instances, two of many (though admittedly the two possessing arguably the most potential), resonate with the original aims of the syllabus: 'to encourage the development of musical creativity, sensitivity and potential

through active involvement in performing, composing and listening to music' (1996, p.1). Because small teams of musicians were involved, they also embody the ideal of 'socially shared musical activities' (ibid.) as outlined in the general aims of the syllabus.

These music-making activities also link clearly to some comments in the DES⁷ music inspectors report 'Looking at Music'. Here the inspectors observed that successful lessons involved a synthesis and integration of the three curricular areas of performing, composing, and listening. Appropriate links were made within and outside the music curriculum, the more powerful being where material was 'introduced aurally, manipulated by the students, reinforced through performing and subsequently consolidated through a composing activity' (2008, p.24).

In the classroom sessions a keen comparative interest in all the teams' music-making was encouraged. This phenomenon, though akin to the engagement with music talent competitions that had featured strongly in the focus group discussions, was altogether more resourceful. The critical discourse that followed the performed group demonstrations was frequently alive with absorbed interest and discussion on the nature and consequences of the musical sounds just created (See Harmony 3, Composing 3, Composing 4). The students' absorbed interest was engendered by the immediacy of the performance and the awareness of the unfolding musical processes. Such musical considerations, termed 'appraisal', are included in the Northern Irish CCEA music examination and in that syllabus students are given the opportunity to make considered and written 'commentary' on their original compositions and to 'discuss points arising from their performance and associated vocal/instrumental repertoire' (CCEA, 2007, p.26).

While it is true that there is no occasion for students to make such commentary on the music they have produced and created in the Irish Leaving Certificate music examination, there are numerous opportunities to

⁷ DES Department of Education and Science

respond in a written manner to recordings of the prescribed works, recorded excerpts in the Irish Music question and recordings from the Aural Skills section of the Listening paper. The critical response (Group Music-Making Activity Three) in the classroom sessions constituted a dynamic opportunity to appraise recently performed or composed music. This intense and dynamic musical response to live group music-making could then be channelled towards the questions in the Leaving Certificate listening paper.

A return to the Irish performance in the Melody 4 class as a sample will further illustrate this point. With subsequent practice, the arranged Irish melody would become a more polished rendition. All students in the class could then respond with a combination of discursive and written critical response to the performance. The vibrancy of visual and physical practicalities in this group music-making would induce more memorable response than any recording. Furthermore, as was illustrated in the Harmony 2 session, the group music-making performance would constitute a human re-playing library of music that could be accessed in a multitude of ways. As a sample musical excerpt (similar to a Leaving Certificate examination recording) this music could be deconstructed, reproduced in any dynamic or textural variation, or have any musical feature extracted in order to illuminate a musical problem. In addition, the students performing these different versions would gain as much as those for whom the performance was provided. This integration of aspects of performance with all types of listening⁸ has unique potential to assist in the development of responses to the Aural or Irish questions in the Leaving Certificate examination.

⁸ For a brief outline of the four types of listening as outlined in Chapter Seven, see pp.180-183.

Towards Listening in Leaving Certificate Music

In common with the examination boards in Britain and Northern Ireland, the listening component in the Irish Leaving Certificate music paper⁹ includes a stipulated number of 'prescribed works', the additional study of Irish traditional music and the development of general aural skills including 'knowledge of musical notation and the ability to perceive aurally and identify musical features including form, style, harmonic progressions and textures' (An Roinn Oideachais, 1996, p.12).

The manner in which this listening component connects to the group music-making pursuits, as recounted in the action research data, is also strong and resonant. In effect, because live performance was the central focus throughout all the classes, the activity of listening to musical sounds, whether live or in the musical imagination, was almost constant. A detailing of the various listening experiences will illustrate this point. Group Music-Making Activity One involved listening to and assessing musical explorations and creations. Group Music-Making Activity Two incorporated both listening to and listening while playing in the performed demonstrations. Group Music-Making Activity Three, the subsequent critical comment, provided an auditory experience that was vivid and immediate and which melded conversation and performed fragments seamlessly. In the classroom sessions this aural recall of the recent live demonstrations then engendered a stock of relevant (if sometimes unsophisticated) musical comments. Even within the short one-hour class, this musical 'praxis' was enhancing the 'musical knowing' within the listening as well as developing specific vocabulary with which to express the aural response.

Of particular note is the finding that the activity of listening was expanded into four distinct but related pursuits: 'Inside Listening 1' - while

⁹ The Leaving Certificate Music Listening Paper: This paper consists of three sections: the first question relates to the four prescribed works (55%), the second relates to Irish traditional music (25%) and the third constitutes a general aural skills question (20%).

creating and exploring, 'Inside Listening 2' - while interpreting and interacting in performance, 'Inside Listening 3' - listening to a performance or recording of music one has created or previously performed, and 'Outside Listening' - listening as an audience member.

Implications of the Research Findings

All these listening activities were utilised in the classroom music-making. The third type however, the opportunity to listen knowingly and to respond either in conversation (as in the critical response) or in a written account (as in the examination) has significant implications representing perhaps the most dynamic potential addition to classroom musical engagement at this Leaving Certificate level.

There is a sense in which we can only hear in the imagination what has been put there beforehand through musical experience. 'Inside Listening 3' as a musical experience, has grown from a direct and practical involvement in the music. It employs connections between the actual *performance* of the music and the *immediate internalization* of that performance. Accurate internalization or audiation involves precise analysis of the music that is being experienced (musical dictation being the written correlate of this response). In a memorable situation such as the performance for one's peers in the classroom (or even the examination room), there is opportunity to internalize such recently experienced music while it is still fresh in the musical imagination, and when the corresponding ability to hear in one's head is at its most vivid. This learning activity can then translate to the written melody writing and harmony exercises aiding the physical memory of the real event.

In these classroom sessions there were many examples of the embodiment of Elliott's paraxial approach to music education, namely the integration of performance with the written approach to the Leaving Certificate specifications. A harmony exercise was performed before it was written (Harmony 1 and 3). A melody was composed, perhaps arranged with accompaniment, perhaps written out completely, notated in fragments, or

not at all (Melody 1, 3, 4 and 5). In this manner the group music-making incorporated a mix of composing and performing with listening. This experience of sound before symbol was on occasion directed to exact Leaving Certificate examination specifications (Melody 5), or sometimes allowed to move more freely (Composing 3 and 4). Through the classroom group music-making therefore, the students could use their experience to complete the exercises in the composition paper and they could also, on occasion, enjoy a musical foretaste of the original composition elective.

In the classroom sessions the processes of assessing and interpreting through listening were helped by the visual and the physical experience. Music-making was closely observed, instruments were touched-even tried out in an authentic, on-the-ground experience. Auditory pictures were constructed with sounds that could then be placed more efficiently in the musical memory thus assisting the development of audiation.

Towards Composition in Leaving Certificate Music

There are two activities in the Higher-level core composition component. Melody writing is the first of these and in the examination, the student chooses one of three options:

First, the writing a 16-bar melody as a continuation of a given opening, second; the writing of a melody as a setting of a given text, and third; writing a melody using a given dance rhythm. (Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus, 1996, p.8).

Harmony is the second of these activities and here also the candidate chooses to complete one exercise from three options:

First composing a melody and bass notes from a given set of chords; second, composing a supportive bass and backing chords to a given tune and third; adding a countermelody or descant and chordal support to a given tune (ibid.).

In this core composition paper the skills honed in the completion of the melody and harmony exercises involve essential musical knowledge.

However, while accommodation is made for creativity in the students' response, it rests to a large extent within the given structures and the styles of the musical material provided.¹⁰ As a result, the students are working with musical ideas to complete convincing melody and harmony exercises rather than demonstrating creative artistry and originality. Though musically educational in themselves, these activities represent a process of crafting rather than an authentic bridge to music composition as it is currently practiced.

These exercises require completion in silence as part of a written exam and as has just been discussed, the importance of the ability to accurately internalise sound as it appears in (usually) conventional notation is one of the most precious attributes for any musician. It must be noted however that such ability exists in various stages of development during students' involvement with second-level music programmes. During the action research this phenomenon was illustrated in the experience of Melody 5 (a group of five singers with guitar), and also in the all-vocal harmony session. Because of a wavering sense of audiation, these students struggled to hold pitch, to voluntarily produce a pitch and to produce a consciously vocalized melodic development or idea.

There are no silent composing options in the English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish syllabi, all of which specify the presentation of an original portfolio. Also to be considered is the fact that current modes of music composition have broadened considerably, and while some composers still work in silence creating music in their imagination, others work with the sound first, beside a piano, keyboard, guitar or computer notation programme. All of these methods offer instant playback facilities so the sounds can be heard before the composer makes the final choice.

¹⁰ There are excerpts in a particular style provided for all of the harmony and melody writing exercises in the Leaving Certificate composing paper.

It must also be stated clearly that the option to compose original music *is* available as an elective. This component is very inclusive and students may present compositions using 'conventional, traditional, popular, ethnic, *avant-garde* or electro-acoustic approaches' (1996, p.9). However the State Examinations Statistics reveal a very low (less than 1%) uptake of this creative strand of the examination.¹¹

As acknowledged by the teacher in Composing 4, composition has a 'difficult to get right' reputation and the significant fact remains that, of the three electives on offer (performing, listening and composition), the performing activity dominates the system. The student uptake of this option is now over 99%. With regard to practical music-making, this predilection for performance seems a positive state of affairs but in a syllabus that promotes the integration of three core activities equally, such a dominating popularity of one option seems in some manner out of balance and a situation that warrants at least further examination.

Returning to the core composition component, the students learn the craft of writing melodies and harmonies in this activity but because there is no engagement with the composition elective, most students have no authentic classroom experience or practical engagement with original composition. Moreover, since there is no elective component in the Ordinary Level music paper, there is no opportunity at all for the ordinary level student to become involved with original composition at examination level.

In this research study, one third of the sample of twelve schools included students with special needs in different areas. In addition, various other music classes included those with the abilities best suited to the Leaving Certificate music Ordinary Level syllabus. On no occasion were any of these students excluded from the process of creating original music through group music-making by virtue of perceived abilities or levels. In fact,

¹¹ This information was updated by email from the State Examinations Commission 14/05/14.

on one occasion (Melody 1), an admirable musical idea appeared after the surmounting of a physical difficulty and, for the student in question, it seemed all the more satisfying for this.

As discussed in relation to this research project, the process of creative music-making is a life-affirming pursuit. Joy and satisfaction were mentioned frequently in the student feedback and additionally, the element of independence and self-direction was often pinpointed as the crux of such enjoyment. This discussion now returns to one of the original dictionary definitions of 'jouissance' (as mentioned in Chapter Nine, p.229) as the *right* to enjoy. In the Leaving Certificate programme all music students have the right to experience involvement in the creation of a new musical piece and such optimal states as this pursuit might engender. This argument resonates with terms enshrined in the Leaving Certificate syllabus aims: 'to allow students to practice listening and composing with greater proficiency and interest' (1996, p.4).

Towards Original Composition in Leaving Certificate Music

According to the discussion so far, there is a sense in which the Leaving Certificate core component, while entitled Composing, could be perceived as having little to do with creative and original group music-making. Yet in this research a different picture has emerged. The action research lesson designs were initiated in close relation to the specifications of the Leaving Certificate syllabus. Group music-making was encouraged from the outset of each lesson, and the tasks were born of the composing paper specifications or composing techniques from the prescribed works. Small music groups played the melodies and harmonies while they were being composed. They explored the effects of retrograde and canon while listening to the sounds made by their instruments. In the recurring peer criticism, an awareness of the musical processes was continually engendered. In this manner (albeit with comparatively simple themes and short tasks) some students moved unconsciously into original creative composition mode. These students were involved in states of intense interest; often absorbed in the technicalities of

the performance, in the nature of the improvisation or in the melodic composition and interestingly, according to the feedback, these particular occurrences contributed to the understanding of the prescribed pieces. As Team B in Composing 1 stated:

We learnt that doing these techniques and actually playing them out made us understand them better. We study Barry¹² for Leaving Cert and I don't think any of us has ever really understood 'retrograde' or 'inversion' until we played them out today.

Also, according to the feedback, these activities could be enjoyed.

It was nice to be in charge and to form our own pieces. We got to have fun while still learning and understanding harmonies. Music is not just theory. It's about practice and playing. (Team A, Harmony 3)

The classroom teacher working with a leaving certificate examination class in this situation might well struggle with such an apparent conundrum. On one hand there exist the understandable pressures of teaching the Leaving Certificate course and keeping to examination specifications within the core and elective options. On the other hand, the teacher might feel a strong compulsion to support the development of independent trajectories and the creative musical impulses of the students.

One answer to this situation, as suggested by the research, lies in the nature of classroom engagement with group music-making. Within the creative endeavours of the small music-making groups, these seemingly opposing directions can be accommodated simultaneously. As shown in Melody 5 and Composing 4, a response to exact examination specifications can develop *at the same time* as a freer or more original response. Often this phenomenon occurs in the same classroom but more significantly it can occur within the same team performance. (See the modulation to the dominant key alongside the freer more original response in Group C Melody

¹² The 'Barry' refers to one of the prescribed works on the Leaving Certificate listening syllabus, The Gerald Barry Piano Quartet.

5). In these group performances, the students' awareness of both musical approaches can develop through physical and instrumental as well as discursive interaction with musical styles, features and composing techniques.

The central finding here is that the student working in the group performing musical environment can complete a Leaving Certificate task to exact specifications and can also move freely and with enjoyment into the creative area of original composition. In this seemingly contradictory yet ultimately symbiotic learning experience, the existence of one approach (free and improvisatory) confirms the actuality of the other (following the musical plan).

Such contradictions were evident in the student feedback - for example in the Melody 4 session; all the teams firmly adhered to their 16-bar remit, yet they commented with phrases such as: 'its better to follow your ear rather than sticking to the work-plan'. The Melody 5 group B, who struggled with melodic development and compromised with a developed rhythm instead, stated: 'There's more creative ways to write a melody', while the vocalists in Harmony 1 who didn't manage to hold their pitch for a dominant 7th chord responded with: 'it was difficult but it made us understand the chord and learn about it rather than just listening.'

Through engagement and struggle with composition in group music-making, the students had moved beyond their perceived inabilities to see the learning possibilities.

10.4 Suggestions for Further Development

Within the interactions and the musical activities individual and group identities modulated constantly but what Wenger describes as the 'opening of identities' (1999, p.263) did not always operate within the hour-long time frame. While some groups moved very quickly from silence to a reasonably confident mode of musical and social communicating, in other cases involvement in the critical peer response activity and other related pursuits was only beginning to emerge as the class came to an end. In this context one

double class seemed a short time for the development of trust building processes between individual players, performing groups and the teacher.

On other occasions also, time seemed to pass too quickly and the class would close with a sense of unfinished work. In some cases this phenomenon propelled the music-making forward into subsequent classes and though the researcher was not present at these sessions, the teachers gave subsequent positive accounts of the continued group music-making.

A more longitudinal series of classes, incorporating further research and continued commitment from participating teachers and students would provide valuable insights into these practice-based situations. More extended written feedback from both students and teachers would also illuminate developments in teaching and learning through group performance (see Wenger 1999, pp.266 -267).

Within the group music-making teams, the instrumental 'make-up' of the ensembles proved to be a very significant factor. It was found that instrumental scaffolding was needed to support singing in particular. This related especially to the students' ability to pitch accurately and to improvise vocally. A related action research study incorporating keener consideration of the variable instrumental groupings of these small teams is needed to determine which conditions positively affect the students' learning pathways thereby enhancing their ultimate experience of group music-making.

In the music-making lessons sessions the creative ideas were sometimes flowing beyond the examination specifications in self-directed learning pathways. This vital engagement has potential links to lifelong engagement with music-making and in addition it has implications relating to the currently low uptake of both the listening and the composing electives in the Leaving Certificate examination. As the data from Chapter Nine attests, group music-making can be satisfying and joyful, engendering memorable occasions which sometimes involve 'flow' and 'jouissance'.

In this context, an examination of what Green puts at the heart of her classroom pedagogy (2008, p.185); the activity of 'observing how young

people learn, particularly when they are *enjoying* learning', would also prove very interesting. A critical examination of the conditions in which the sense of fun transforms to the state of heightened awareness, or becoming 'lost in music,' would benefit music education on many levels and education in general. Case study comparisons between this Irish approach and the now internationally successful Musical Futures project, linking differences and similarities in teaching and learning strategies (see Chapter One, p.46), would also prove very edifying.

Related to this is an area untouched by this study, the socioeconomic differentiation of the twelve schools involved in the research. Two of these schools were private and possessed fully equipped practice rooms and instrumental resources as well as a supportive bank of instrumental tutors. The situation in other schools was very different. Interestingly enough, this research has shown that teachers were pragmatic and resourceful and for the students, optimal experiences could sometimes ensue despite the lack of much needed resources.

Some themes that surfaced in the focus group discussion did not re-emerge in the action research. These include the link between the group music-making class and the community and the benign influence of involvement with music-making on disaffected students. In the twelve sessions there were no instances of disaffected behaviour. This could be due to the novelty of a single research class with an observer and a video camera in situ or it could also link to the short length of the sessions. More longitudinal study is needed to validate this focus group data and link it to Green's work with disaffected students involved in informal learning classroom pedagogy (see 2008, p.139).

10.5 The Teachers' Contribution

The researcher is indebted to the 28 teachers who undertook the deliberations in the focus group meetings. The candid and honest nature of their descriptions of second-level group music-making activities provided a rich and comprehensive view of current practice. In addition, their enthusiastic responses set a precedent for the energetic yet relaxed atmosphere that permeated the subsequent action research sessions. Some of these teachers had volunteered their participation in both areas of the study thus creating a connecting collaborative channel which further strengthened the connections between the two areas of data gathering.

The teachers involved in the action research as well as giving feedback before and after the sessions, allowed the researcher to access their classrooms to observe their different teaching strategies and to make video and audio recordings. Because of the continuous 'Plan – Act – Reflect' cycle, the nature of the research process itself contributed to easy collaboration and the teachers were in regular communication with the researcher. They pointed the research forward with suggestions as to how the sessions could continue, what could be implemented differently and the lesson plans were then adapted accordingly.

These teachers operated from a position of collaborative commitment to improving the quality of students' music-making experience. Throughout the study, their contributions were versatile and resourceful. More collaboration with such a body would illuminate many related contexts in the area of group music-making in the second-level classroom. For example, following the 'practitioner-led collaborative' model espoused by O'Connell (2012, p.i), a series of group music-making classes could be implemented with teachers giving feedback in questionnaire, or focus group format.

Some other suggestions from the feedback of this study would also be suitable for adoption in this continuing project; for instance the provision of opportunities to 'play with musical ideas freely, especially for the younger

students' (Melody 2 teacher), or the sequential implementation of the lesson plans starting in first year 'the earlier the students are introduced to this learning style, the better' (Harmony 3 teacher).

10.6 Concluding Comments

To conclude, there is a sense in which the sheer physicality of organising a group music-making class with all the associated setting up, tuning and positioning of performers might seem the antithesis of an efficient and ordered approach to learning. This study has found however that in practice, this multi-levelled collection of group music-making pursuits, situated in an often noisy, one-room ambience, is precisely where the rich learning happens. In the study, small groups performed pieces ranging in style, complexity and length. Integration of group music-making into the Leaving Certificate core curriculum activities was diverse, adaptable and flexible. The classroom activities involved the authentic application of skills in melody writing, harmonising, arranging and basic composition, as well as capturing the essence of social 'musicking'.

At the opening of the research, the inquiry focused on the potential of such group music-making to enhance learning and teaching practice in Irish second-level classrooms. The findings as they are now summarised relate to the three concepts and can be stated thus:

Group music-making is a dynamic and flexible tool with the potential for implementation in a wide variety of Irish second-level classroom music-making situations.

'Musical becoming' and 'becoming musical' form an educationally productive interlock in second-level group performing activities.

'Musicerly' experience, an optimal human state, can occur in a variety of contexts in Irish second-level classroom music-making.

In a creative subject such as music an examination framework can never truly reflect or assess the diversity of educational pathways that transpire in the learning situation. Yet in the midst of these musical interactions, a

dynamic approach to the development of audiation also emerged; an applied form of listening where the experience of both making and hearing the sounds, brings the musical imagination to another level. Some musical teams enjoyed simply 'just playing music,' others became increasingly lost in the 'musicerly' experience and at other times, it seemed that the excitement described by Blacking was there, in the physical understanding of the performance, in the student's dawning belief that 'you can do scary things with one tune' and in the looking forward to continued engagement with the pursuit of group music-making.

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Appendices

Research Phase One: Focus Group Research

Appendix A: Letter to PPMTA Chairperson

Cloverpark,
Headford,
Co.Galway.

Dear Ethel,

As part of my postgraduate work in the department of music at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra under the direction of Dr. John O'Flynn, I am conducting doctoral research that focuses on group music-making in second level schools. The title of my study is: 'Towards a Theory of Group Music-Making in Second Level Education'.

The first phase of the research involves a series of three focus group discussions, each comprising 8-10 music teachers. These teachers will be invited to locations in three areas: Dublin, Cork and Galway/Mayo and following the completion of a short questionnaire, they will spend approximately 50 minutes discussing the study topic. Thus each of the meetings will last approximately 60 minutes in total.

In order to recruit a suitable number of participants, I will need the personal emails and work addresses of practicing music teachers. So I am therefore writing to ask for your assistance in obtaining permission for the release this personal information from music teachers in your area.

To this end, I enclose a second letter for distribution to music teachers on your mail and I would be very grateful for your help, both in circulating this letter and forwarding the responses to me. This would enable me to make official contact with prospective participants to arrange suitable times and

venues for the discussion groups. As my work schedule dictates, I am hoping to organise these discussions before the end of the secondary school year.

As a second level teacher in Presentation College Headford, I do understand how busy this time of year can be. However, your participation is very important to me and I am really grateful for your assistance in this work.

All replies and information will be held in the strictest confidence. Should you have any queries you can contact me by e-mail at maireadberrill@gmail.com.

In anticipation, thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Mairéad Berrill

PhD in Music Education Candidate, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra (a College of Dublin City University)

Appendix B: Letter from the PPMTA Chairperson to Local Representatives

Newtownpark Ave.,
Blackrock,
Co. Dublin.

Dear colleague,

I have received the following communication from Mairéad Berrill, a music teacher in Presentation College Headford, Co. Galway.

Mairéad is currently a postgraduate student in the department of music at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra under the direction of Dr. John O' Flynn, and she is conducting research that focuses on group music-making in second level schools. The title of her study is: 'Towards a Theory of Group Music-Making in Second Level Education'.

For the first phase of her research she is hoping to work three discussion groups each comprising of 8-10 practicing second-level music teachers. The participating teachers will meet in three areas: Dublin, Cork and Galway/Mayo and following their completion of a short questionnaire, they will spend approximately 50 minutes discussing the study topic. Each meeting should last approximately one hour.

Mairéad needs to recruit practicing music teachers for these discussions, and she has asked me to obtain your permission for the release of your work address and email details so she can contact you officially with more information.

She is hoping to complete the discussions before the end of the current school year so if you could please fill in the consent form and reply promptly to this request, it would be very much appreciated. She understands how busy this time of year can be and she will be deeply grateful to all the music teachers who consent to participate in this study.

With many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

Appendix C: Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

(For all prospective music teacher co-participants)

Please complete the following

(Circle Yes or No for each statement).

I understand the information provided.

Yes/No

I agree to the release of my personal contact details to Mairéad Berrill for the purposes outlined in the attached letter.

Yes/No

Signature:

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement

(For all adult participants)

This study is centred on group music-making in Irish second level education. It will examine both performance in the classroom and extra-curricular music-making. The research is in two sections, (1) focus group discussion and (2) action research in the classroom.

First the nature, the prevalence, and the variety of group music-making will be examined in focus group discussion. Two or three separate groups, each comprising of eight to ten second level music teachers will participate. The resulting data will then inform the development of a framework to be utilised in the classroom as an action research project. Finally, it is hoped that details generated from both sections of this study will support the development of group music-making as a powerful pedagogical tool in second level curricula.

Contribution to the focus group discussion involves being available for approximately one hour at a public/professional venue such as an education centre. During this time a short questionnaire will be completed and the ensuing discourse will last approximately 50mins.

Participation in the action research involves the working of a developed model of group practice in the classroom. More details relating to this section of the research will emerge following the development of data generated in the focus group discussions.

It is hoped that the teacher participants will benefit from the process of social and professional inter-action experienced in the discussions and also from subsequent reflective practice following their contribution to the action research.

There are no known risks to participants other than those encountered in everyday life.

All proceedings taped with recording equipment and transcriptions of discussions will be kept in safe confidence for a minimum period of 2-5 years. Thereafter a copy of the transcriptions and the audio-recordings will be retained in perpetuity in St Patrick's College Drumcondra. Before relevant contributions are used in the final thesis, all participants will be given opportunity to check this material for contextual and factual accuracy

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

- Do you have an additional postgraduate qualification in music and/or education or in another field?

When:

Where:

- What is/are your main instrument(s)?
- Is/are there any other instruments that you also play from time to time? Please list as appropriate.
- On your main instrument(s), what styles do you play?
- Do you perform regularly occasionally hardly ever
- As an instrumentalist where do you perform?
At school events outside school in various situations
- As a vocalist do you sing Solo in an ensemble in a chorus
- Are you involved in any other type of music-making?

Please list as appropriate.

Appendix F: Experience and Skills Statement

The principle supervisor Dr. John O Flynn and the co-supervisor Dr. Patricia O Flynn are members of the music department of St Patrick's College and as such and in the opinion of the programme director, have the necessary qualifications, experience and skills to lead this student project.

I Mairéad Berrill, the investigator on this project which is to be submitted as part of the requirements for the award of the degree of PhD, have by virtue of having been accepted for this programme (research in music education), and in the opinion of my supervisor and head of department, the necessary qualifications experience and skills to conduct this project.

I have over 20 years' experience as a post-primary music teacher. My special interest is the utilisation of group music-making as a dynamic learning tool in the classroom. Directing various music student ensembles, I give regular demonstration workshops for the Post-Primary Music Teachers' Association of Ireland and also perform frequently at arts-festivals, conferences, inter-school competitions and fundraising events. In 2008 I was awarded an MA in Music Education. (University of Limerick)

Action Research: Phase Two: Action Research

Appendix G: Letter to the School Principal

Cloverpark,
Headford,
Co. Galway.
8th January, 2012

Dear secretary,

I am a postgraduate student in the department of music at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra, under the direction of Dr. John O' Flynn and I am conducting research that focuses on group music-making in second level education.

The second part of my study, action research in second-level classrooms, involves a specially developed framework of lessons that focus on the activity of group music-making. I am writing to ask the members of your Board of Management for permission to conduct this project in your school with music teacher, Siobhan Cavanagh.

All this work is linked to strands of the Leaving or Junior Certificate courses. Also I undertake to conduct this work in accordance with the regulations of your school.

As a second-level teacher in Presentation College Headford, I understand how busy this time of year can be. However, the participation of qualified music teachers and their students is very important to the success of the study.

All replies and other information will be held in the strictest confidence. Should you have any queries you can contact me by e-mail at maireadberrill@gmail.com.

In anticipation, thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix H: Teacher's Consent Form

Research Study Title

Towards a Theory of Group Music-Making in Second Level Education

Purpose of the Research

To support the development of group music-making as a powerful pedagogical tool in second level music education

Requirements of Participation in Research Study

Qualified experience teaching music in second level Irish education

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all the stages of the research study have been completed.

Arrangements to Protect Confidentiality of Data

All recorded data will be kept in safe confidence for a period of 2 to 5 years. Thereafter any copies of transcriptions and recordings will be kept securely in St Patrick's College Drumcondra. Other raw data will be destroyed.

Participant-Please complete the following (or an appropriately phrased variation)

(Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? Yes/No

Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study? Yes/No

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No

Signature:

I have read and understand the information in this form. The researchers have answered my questions and concerns and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's signature:

Name in Block capitals:

Witness.....

Date:.....

Appendix: I Letter from the Researcher to Parents/Guardians

Cloverpark,
Headford,
Co.Galway.

Dear parent/guardian,

I am a postgraduate student in the department of music at St. Patrick's College Drumcondra, under the direction of Dr. John O' Flynn and I am conducting research that focuses on group music-making in second level education.

This part of my study, action research in second-level classrooms, involves the implementation of three lessons that revolve around the activity of group music-making. All the classroom work is linked to strands of the Leaving or Junior Certificate courses and it is hoped that the participating students will benefit from the experience of a performance-based approach to their musical studies.

I am intending to conduct this project in St John's Secondary School, with the music teacher Mary Jones and her music class. As this group of students includes your daughter Joan, I am writing to seek your approval of her participation in this project.

Practical involvement for Joan may include clapping, humming, singing, conducting as well as the other musical activities such as listening, musical observing, composition documentation and writing a musical commentary.

I wish also to remind you that sections of the proceedings will be audio taped or video taped for the purposes of research only. All anonymity is assured and parents not wishing their child to partake of this recording should let the office staff know so that alternative activities within the class can be organised.

I am a practicing second-level teacher in Presentation College Headford and I understand how busy this time of year can be. However, the participation of your daughter as a music student is very important to the success of this study.

I enclose a statement outlining the exact nature of my research work and a consent form for your completion.

All replies and other information will be held in the strictest confidence. Should you have any queries you can contact me by e-mail at maireadberrill@gmail.com.

In anticipation, thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Mairéad Berrill

PhD in Music Education Candidate, St Patrick's College, Dublin.

Appendix J: Letter from Music Teacher to the Parents/Guardians of Students

Presentation College
Headford,
Co. Galway.

Dear parent/guardian,

Over the coming weeks I will be joined in some of my music classes by my colleague Mairéad Berrill. In addition to assisting with the classes, Mairéad will record sections of these lessons for the purpose of her music education research. These recordings will not be aired publicly and will be used only as part of her PhD study in St Patrick's College Drumcondra, under the supervision of Dr. John O Flynn.

I would be very grateful if you would read and sign the attached consent form and return to the school as soon as possible. If you require any further information on this research project please do not hesitate to contact Mairéad Berrill at maireadberrill@gmail.com.

With thanks for your co-operation in this valuable work,

Yours sincerely,

Appendix: K Parents' Consent Form

(For the parents/guardians of all prospective student co-participants)

Please complete the following

(Circle Yes or No for each statement).

I understand the information provided.

Yes/No

*I permit the participation of my son/daughter-----
for the purposes outlined in the attached letter.*

Yes/No

Signature:

Appendix L: Sample Lesson Plan: The Melody Class

(Draft Teachers Notes)

Group Music-Making - the 'Melody Class'

A composition session for teams of melody writers, working with instruments and voices

Linking to the melody-writing question on the higher-level music Leaving Certificate paper

Lesson Plan:

1. Cycle One- Activity 1A

Teacher plays 4-bar theme and students learn it by ear

(Clapping/Singing/Playing)

A possible plan or form for the melody, for example (A A1 B A2) is written on the board and discussed. Students can refer to this plan or defer from it in their performing activities. (For the Leaving Certificate written exam, more disciplined response to the exact question could be stipulated).

2. Activity 1B:

In small groups or teams of 3-4, students develop this opening 4-bar theme. They can explore musical ideas including modulation, addition of harmony, introduction of dynamics and percussion. Any musical arrangement of this phrase is acceptable. The teacher circulates, observing, encouraging and scaffolding.

3. Activity 2:

After approximately 8- 10minutes, the teacher calls 'Time-Out' and each team performs a short instrumental/vocal rendition, (approximately 8 bars), of their progress.

4. **Activity 3:**

At this stage musical comments and criticisms of all the renditions are encouraged and the groups are given time to collaborate and offer musical suggestions.

5. **cycle Two - Activity 1:**

The teams then explore the B phrase, with the teacher again circulating/supervising/encouraging and scaffolding.

Students can refer to a plan (the one the board, or their own plan). and then try to understand it in performance.

Cycle Two Activity 2:

After 10-15mins, another 'Time-Out' is called and the student teams again perform for each other. During these demonstrations, teachers should encourage the aural awareness of musical features such as

- 1) The melody returning to the home key
- 2) The presence of sequential material
- 3) Any dynamic/musical build up or
- 4) Any unusual treatment of the musical material.

Cycle Two Activity 3:

This time the students, encouraged by the teacher, comment on each of the 12-bar demonstrations

Since these performing /composing /listening activities are likely to last for an unspecified time (perhaps longer than a double class,) the teacher may need to bring the performing activities to an end, and arrange for the completion of the melody in a subsequent class.

6. **Final Activity 1:**

The student teams work to complete the melody. They are encouraged to remember the importance of the final cadence and to remain aware of the

instruments that they are actually playing while they add phrasing and dynamics.

7. **Final Activity 2:**

The teacher calls the final '**Time-Out**' and asks for performances

The student teams make final appraisals of the work and complete questions in the feedback sheet.

8. **Further Developments Activity 6:**

Each performance is recorded twice:

- 1) As a solo melody, to be used in a subsequent class for development of dictation and conventional notation skills.
- 2) As a more polished arrangement with all members of the various teams participating.

Further Developments (for subsequent classes)

The performances of the melodies could be:

- 1) Recorded and (the single-line version) used for practice in dictation and the development of conventional notation skills.
- 2) Extended into a 'theme and variations' type composition.
- 3) With lyrics, dynamics and atmospheric accompaniment added, the melody could become an original song.
- 4) Finally, students could comment critically on all melodies, choosing the most musical demonstration and providing reasons for their choice.

Appendix M: Teacher Feedback Forms

Before the Action Research

Q. Before you work this Melody/Harmony/Composition class, can you say what appeals to you in the overall framework?

Q. Are there elements in the plan that you might remove and could you give your reasons for doing so.

Q. Have you any suggestions for adaptations or some 'tweaking' of the material?

Q. Can you give reasons as to why these changes might make for more satisfactory work in *your* classroom?

Q. Did you/and if so, how did you prepare your students to participate in this group performance/Melody/Harmony /Composition class?

Q. Do you think you might continue in the same vein with follow-up group performances as an aid to the understanding of Melody writing, Harmony and Composition?

After the Action Research

Q. What activity did you feel worked best in the melody writing class?

Q. What areas would you change/develop in subsequent group performance classes?

Q. Would you discontinue any of the work and could you give your reasons for doing so?

Q. In this class session, were there any surprise outcomes for you or, in your opinion, the students?

Q. Do you think this approach might apply to all levels in second level, from 1st year to Leaving Certificate music students?

Appendix N: Sample Student Feedback Form

Limerick Harmony Class

School:.....Team:.....

Date:.....

1. What is a chord?
2. Name the 3 important major chords in the key of your music
3. What is a cadence?
4. Why is a perfect cadence so called?
5. What is your favourite 2-chord progression and can you give a musical reason for your choice?
6. What did you find challenging about this activity?
7. What did you enjoy about it?
8. What would you change about this classroom activity - and why?

9. In your opinion, what was the most effective series of chords/ performing style musical demonstration in these activities? Can you give a musical reason for your answer?
10. What do you think you learned from *playing* these chords in a group rather than *listening* to them?
11. Can you as a team suggest at least 2 other songs or melodies which you would like to work in this manner
12. Would you like to make suggestions for another lesson similar to this one?

Thank You!

Mairéad Berrill

Appendix 0: Overview of Emergent Themes and Concepts

Themes	Concept One
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra-curricular music-making • Curricular Music-Making • Independent trajectories • Variety in teacher and student response • Competition within group music-making 	<p>Flexible Learning Pathways in Group Music-Making</p>

Themes	Concept Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Musicking' as social Praxis • Self Identity /Group Identity • Special relationships • Behaviour-altering activities 	<p>Musical Becoming</p>

Themes	Concept Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable experiences • Informal atmosphere • Autotelic experience • The joy of joining in 	<p>'Jouissance' and 'Flow'</p>