ANOTHER KIND OF LESSON:

AN INSIDE INVESTIGATION OF RECONCILING

CLASSROOM MUSIC PEDAGOGY WITH PRIVATE PIANO TEACHING

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I declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: ………………………………………………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………………………………….

Abstract

This study commenced with an interest to improve my teaching and understand how pitch, rhythm and music reading were taught in the general music classroom of the school where I taught piano. The purpose of this study was to investigate the teaching and learning experiences by reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching using action research. Having had little communication with general classroom music teachers, the initial process therefore consisted of non-participant classroom observations, interviews with classroom music teachers and the collection of existing school documents. The study is divided into two phases. Phase 1 consists of eight 30-minute lessons and analyses the teaching and learning experiences for seven students ranging from Years 2 to 4. Here rhythm and pitch were taught through echo-singing, chanting rhythm in French time names and rhymes as observed in the music classroom. The focus was on singing and being able to reproduce what they played vocally before expecting students to read. Each piano lesson was videorecorded and later reviewed for further analysis and reflection notes. Phase 1 found that integration was difficult with the array of school activities and rehearsals interfering with the initial classroom observations. Furthermore, the expectations of students and parents made it challenging to consistently realise innovative teaching approaches in Phase 1.

Due to a fortuitous circumstance at the school, I was asked to teach Year 2 classroom music beginning in Term 3. This change was significant, and marked the primary difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2. The second phase no longer observed the seven students but specifically focused on the learning experiences of three of the students who participated in Phase 1 and who were also in Year 2. I was therefore piano and classroom teacher to these three Year 2 students, and during Phase 2, able to observe and document the teaching and learning processes for both teaching contexts.

The study found that students whose parents were present in the lesson tended to be more passive learners. Students who did not strategize pitch or rhythmic patterns during the imitation stage were unable to retain and reproduce more than two-bar musical or rhythmic phrases. Furthermore, singing in the piano lesson had positive effects on students' performance on the piano. Those students who could sing were better able to play by ear and self-correct performance errors.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My teaching background

I have been teaching piano for thirteen years, beginning with the children of family friends. Some of the reasons parents asked me to teach their children were that they knew me well, I was young and might relate better to their child, and that they appreciated my skills on the piano. As a teenager and student myself, this was a welcome opportunity to earn extra money. Consequently, teaching, though not my original career plan, presented an interesting challenge and was something that inevitably I would do.

My early experiences as a young and inexperienced piano teacher along with many discussions with other instrumental teachers, brought to light the fact that similar negotiations frequently occur in the business of private instrumental teaching and learning. This awakened the realisation that during my time as an undergraduate performance student teaching piano part-time, I had seldom reflected on teaching methods that would best meet the needs of students. Essentially I taught as I had been taught, often using the same method books that I had learned from as a student, and had become a "commonsense teacher" (J. Mills & Smith, 2003; Persson, 1996). Teaching was predictable because books such as Hal Leonard (Kreader, Kern, Keveren, & Rejino, 1998), Bastian (Bastien, 1987) or Alfred's beginner method books (Palmer, Manus, & Lethco, 1993) were used for beginner students. For the more advanced, repertoire from the syllabus of the Australian Music Examinations Board was certain. It became clear however that reliance on particular method books somehow impeded the tailoring of instruction to students with varying interests and levels of ability.

Specific problems encountered in the piano lesson

A typical piano lesson consisted of firstly listening to students play prepared scales, demonstrating correct use of fingering, and ensuring that students understood which sharps or flats belonged to the scale. Students' understanding was measured by how accurately they were able to imitate a passage on the piano. Following the scales, students played their rehearsed pieces, generally opting to listen to the entire piece before giving any form of feedback.

Feedback usually involved the following:

- writing the fingering in the music;
- correcting rhythmic errors by counting aloud and pointing to the rhythm hoping that this would amend the errors;
- modelling problem passages on the piano in order for students to imitate;
- pointing to a note from the music, explaining that it was a minim and needed to be held for two counts; and
- calling out "F sharp" whenever F natural was incorrectly played.

Despite the efforts to count aloud, point to the music or explain rhythmic errors to students, it seemed that little was resolved and the same rhythmic and pitch errors reappeared in following lessons. A common occurrence was students' inability to retain what had been corrected in the preceding piano lessons. Furthermore, having music notation appeared to make little difference with amending these errors. Students seemingly acquired their rhythmic and pitch inaccuracies from sources other than what was presented in the music. In order to decipher notation and learn a new piece, many students depended on writing the names of the notes in the music. While this was not ideal, writing the names of notes seemed like the most logical and easiest solution to the problem. Unfortunately this solution was temporary and needed to be repeated with every new piece. As a result it was easy to become frustrated with this approach, and students lost motivation due to the length of time it took to learn a new piece.

The old methods of teaching seemed concerned with highlighting the errors produced by students rather than understanding the root of the errors. Furthermore, they illustrated an emphasis on music notation, and an assumption that students could not be successful musicians without acquiring music reading skills. This heightened the feelings of frustrations and limitations of these teaching approaches. Consequently, it was thought to be worthwhile examining teaching methods of the general music classroom and explore the possibility of integrating private and classroom teaching methods.

Need for the study

Prior to the commencement of the study, I had been teaching piano privately in a musically renowned school[1], with little or no knowledge of what students learnt or did in the general music classroom. My position as piano teacher and coordinator of the keyboard department allowed me to witness the music reading difficulties by students and furthermore question my ability to strategise new teaching approaches with students. Discussions with the Director of Music heightened these concerns with music reading skills among students. According to the Director, the discontinuation of music learning was primarily a consequence of illiteracy. Despite the provisions and opportunities at the school, together with strong support from students' families, there were unanswered questions surrounding the teaching and learning of music reading in private piano lessons, as well as in the general music classroom.

It seemed worthwhile to discover how my teaching might benefit by having a better understanding of how pitch, rhythm and overall music reading skills were taught in the general music classroom, and whether integrating these aspects of the classroom into the piano studio would further the understanding of students' learning processes. Although the notion of bringing general classroom music methods to the instrumental class as a continuation of the general music program has been suggested (Burnsed & Fiocca, 1990; Chronister, 1996), there is little empirical evidence to suggest the implications for students' music reading abilities, nor the outcomes of integrating instrumental and classroom music. Research has tried to identify the relationship between private studio lessons and classroom music (Goddard, 2002), while also considering strategies to further promote a two-way relationship between the two learning contexts. One finding was that instrumental teachers were aware of the importance of classroom music education in their own teaching, but that a lack of communication with and isolation from schools inhibits the implementation of a mutually beneficial relationship (Goddard, 2002).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to understand how pitch, rhythm and music reading were taught to students in the general music classroom and to document the process of reconciling

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[1] For ethical reasons the identity of the school will remain anonymous. Where there is reference to the school it will be called "Mayfield School".

classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching using action research (Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The study investigated the learning process of primary-aged piano students, when general classroom music and curricular pedagogies were integrated into the private piano lesson in order to develop students' music reading abilities. The aim was to extend the published research from the existing *awareness* instrumental teachers have of the importance of communication between classroom music and instrumental teachers, to the actual implementation of communication and content in a real-life setting. It sought to identify and bridge the perceived gap between the two teaching contexts.

Research questions

The recurrent music reading difficulties among piano students led to the belief that more could be learnt from the general music classroom. The study was designed to find answers to the following questions:

1) What is the underlying philosophy of music education at the school?

2) How are students taught to read and write rhythmic and pitch notation in the classroom?

3) What are my students' learning processes for reading music at the piano?

4) What are the responses from parents, students, teachers and myself as a result of this action research study?

Research design

This study investigated learning processes of students and my teaching practice in a real-life school setting through action research (Cohen et al., 2007). The inquiry was not conducted by an outsider, but I, the piano teacher also acting as researcher, firstly investigated the teaching and learning environment of the school in order to apply teaching methods into my teaching practice. In keeping with the characteristics of action research (Cain, 2008), this study consisted of two main phases, each lasting approximately 10 weeks (eight lessons). Within the 10-week phase, each of the eight lessons was treated as a "mini-cycle" in order to facilitate weekly reflections and make changes based on them, rather than wait until the end of the 10-week period to make changes.

The rationale for choosing action research was that it allowed me to enquire and systematically document my own practice with the endeavour to improve it. Action research seeks to foster development and planned changes and solutions in a specific context rather than build a body of accumulated knowledge or generalisable findings (J. Elliott, 1991). In this case I sought answers and solutions to my own teaching practice and its effect on others (students, parents and the school) in the teaching and learning context.

Phase 1 occurred in Term 2, while Phase 2 during the period of Term 3. Seven students aged between seven to nine years participated in Phase 1. This first phase analysed the teaching and learning experiences of these seven students in their weekly piano lessons. Due to a fortuitous change in circumstances at the school, I was given the opportunity to teach classroom music to Year 2. This change was significant, and marked the difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2. The second phase no longer observed the seven students but specifically focused on the learning experiences of three of the students who participated in Phase 1 and who were also in Year 2. I was therefore piano and classroom teacher to these three Year 2 students, and able to observe and document the teaching and learning processes for both teaching contexts.

Before commencing Phase 1, teaching strategies were selected from the initial classroom observations for use in the private lesson during the first phase. In the second phase it was possible to use the same content in the classroom and piano lesson and attain a broader understanding of students' behaviours. Piano lessons were therefore an extension of what was introduced and learnt in the classroom. For both phases, each individual piano lesson was video recorded. These recordings were reviewed and observed after each lesson, where descriptive and analytical notes of students' progress and responses to the lessons were carefully maintained, as well as reflections of my teaching.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis endeavours to recount my journey in understanding how students were taught to read and write rhythmic and pitch notations in the music classroom and how this could be applied in the piano lesson. Consequently Chapter 2 reviews literature related to music literacy, the classroom and private instrumental teaching. Chapter 3 describes the process and methods used to accomplish the process of reflection and action in my teaching. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss and analyse the observations of the general music classroom and

how these affected the changes in my teaching during Phase 1. Chapters 6 and 7 are the action chapters – here the teaching and learning experiences during Phase 1 and 2 are presented through analysis and interpretation of the learning processes of students and my teaching. Finally Chapter 8 draws together the interpretations and experiences through the presentation of emerging themes.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The following chapter reviews literature related to music literacy, the relationship of music reading with other skills, piano method books, singing, the music classroom and private instrumental teaching.

Musical literacy

The term *musical literacy* has very broadly and generally been used to describe the ability to read or decode music symbols (Bluestine, 2007; Shehan, 1987), while a more holistic interpretation would suggest that musical literacy occurs when one is able to reflect and speak about the music one has engaged in and also be able to read, comprehend, create and interpret music notation (J. Mills & McPherson, 2006). In this manner music literacy has been compared to linguistic literacy (Capodilupo, 1992; Kendall, 1986; J. Mills & McPherson, 2006; Newman, 1989). Like language, music literacy requires aural comprehension and the ability to form mental images of the sounds represented by notation so that one can hear the notation inwardly before attempting to play it on the instrument (Bridges, 1984; Mainwaring, 1941). As a result, poor reading has been associated with poor aural skills and an inability to think in sound (Mainwaring, 1941).

Audiation

Gordon conceived and repeatedly refers to the expression *audiation*, which he describes as the ability to hear and comprehend music in the mind when it is not physically present (Gordon, 1997). This concept is difficult for researchers to assess because it involves an internal mental process. Gordon's method of measuring audiational ability is through his tests which asks students to compare two auditory presentations of a piece of music and to state whether they are the same or different. In this way he is able to see whether the test subject is able to retain that music in working memory and then compare the original with the second one. One limitation with this method of assessment is that it does not evaluate the longitudinal process involved in the acquisition of audiation.

Music educators agree that sound should precede the introduction of notation symbols (Choksy, 1988; Gordon, 1997; Hewson, 1966; Jordan-DeCarbo, 1986; G. McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). This process of teaching and learning, where students listen and

reproduce the music by ear rather than from notation has been referred to as *sound before symbol* (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). Moreover it is believed that children should experience the music before the explanation of symbols and deciphering notation (Hewson, 1966). Suzuki (1978) referred to sound as the *mother tongue* agreeing that "one would never teach a baby to read before it can talk". Kodály similarly believed that Hungarian folk music was the means to teach young children music, and referred to it as the mother tongue for Hungarian students (Choksy, 1988; Szonyi, 1973). One cannot expect a student to read music notation if they cannot audiate (Gordon, 1997; Newman, 1989; Sloboda, 1978).

Teaching notation

The concern for many music teachers lies in *how* and *when* to teach young beginner students to read music (Camp, 1992). For some, music reading should not commence until the student is "old enough to face daily practice alone at the piano" (Chronister, 1996, p. 114). Gordon's (1988) primary concern was not about when to commence music reading but instead to determine the readiness of a child to commence private instrumental lessons. He believed a child's musical age should influence their readiness. According to Gordon (1997) musical age is assessed by whether a student has passed the 'tonal and rhythm babble' stage. Once a student has passed this stage he/she will demonstrate a sense of tonality, maintain a steady beat, have developed vocabulary for tonal and rhythmic patterns and have gained the ability to sing what he/she has heard with reasonable intonation (Gordon, 1997). By overcoming the 'babble stages' and attaining these skills will a student be in a better position to understand music symbols.

The Suzuki method firstly focuses on developing physical and technical issues together with the acquisition of aural familiarity (Suzuki, 1978). Students are required to listen frequently to repertoire before playing the piece by ear on the instrument. In this manner students internalize the music and reproduce it without the aid of notation. Once the student has reached a level of mastery on the instrument music notation is introduced. In this manner the student is able to focus on one skill at a time rather than attempting to decipher aural, technical and physical problems at one time. This method of progression suggests that music notation can be a hindrance and is unnecessary for teaching repertoire in the early stages of music learning. Some have gone as far to suggest the irrelevance of teaching music notation in schools because only a small percentage of students will in fact use music-reading skills after they leave school (C. A. Elliott, 1982).

Kodály's approach teaches skills of music literacy to young children through a child developmental learning sequence using authentic children's folk music, the moveable-do system of solmisation, rhythm syllables and hand signs. Hungarian folk songs and sol-fa are used throughout the entire instrumental tuition so that instrumental tuition is complemented by vocal practice (Choksy, 1988). What sets Kodály apart from Suzuki is the close integration of vocal practice and performance.

Bernstein (1966) claimed that "the ability to read notation is the key to the personal, first-hand, active musical experience. Nothing can do so much for musical understanding as sitting down and playing music yourself" (pp. 23-24.). Furthermore, Todd (1976) found it necessary to begin teaching music reading as soon as possible as some will have difficulty integrating the knowledge required to read music when it is finally introduced, thus never achieving the same level of fluency as those who commenced earlier (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002). The belief that the reproduction of printed score is the only means of active musical experience is presumptuous. Bridges (1988) commended many self-taught musicians that lack 'formal' training and do not hold high music reading skills, for their ability to play by ear, improvise and experience music successfully and questions whether these skills are being taught to the many students who attend regular piano lessons.

Reading and other skills

Closely associated to musical literacy and music reading literature is *sight-reading,* which is generally defined as the ability to perform an unprepared score at first sight (L. Davidson, Scripp, & Welsh, 1988; A. C. Lehmann & McArthur, 2002). Research that has examined sight-reading has typically used quantitative methods to study the psychological processes of skilled sight readers (Waters, Townsend, & Underwood, 1998). Waters et al. (1998) confirmed that pattern recognition skills are largely related to sight-reading. They also demonstrated that 'auditory imagery' or the ability to see notation and hear it in the mind, facilitated simple sight-reading tasks. This form of audiation or inner hearing helped to predict sound, implying that music reading is a skill requiring the coordination of eyes, ears and hands instead of only eye to hand as conceived by many.

Researchers have investigated relationships between sight-reading and other skills (Kopiez & Lee, 2008; McPherson, 1995). McPherson (1995) studied 101 clarinet and trumpet high school students according to the ability to play by ear, improvise, sight-read and perform

rehearsed music. McPherson (1995) identified a close connection between the ability to sight-read and improvise. The study also shed light to the view that sole emphasis on music reading may hinder the development of audiational skills in beginner students. Kopiez and Lee (2008) revealed that the best predictor for sight-reading achievement was determined by the number of accumulated hours of sight-reading practice done up to the age of 15. 'Inner hearing' as described by Kopiez and Lee (2008) can be classified as a practice-related skill that predicts expert sight-reading. It is still unclear from the study how one can practise 'inner hearing'.

Other methods of studying how best to teach sight-reading and sight-singing were conducted through error-detection tasks (Killian, 1991; Kostka, 2000). These studies found that error-detection was relatively more accurate for low-scoring sight-readers than higher scoring readers and that it overall improved the sight-reading achievement on the piano. Student perceptions and conceptions were analysed according to invented notations by students in response to aural stimulation (L. Davidson et al., 1988; Elkoshi, 2007). By utilising student drawings researchers were able to determine that little of what is learned in instrumental lessons is transferred successfully to notation tasks, particularly related to pitch. Davidson et al. (1988) recommended that students create their own notation as a means of developing what they already know and perceive. For Elkoshi (2007) it is the teacher's goal to understand students' invented notations to make them literate.

Piano method books

Being a piano teacher in Australia commonly consists of utilising piano method books that are available in most music stores as the main source of teaching students. These method books emphasise reading and deciphering symbols from the very beginning. The teaching approaches used are likely to include: middle C, multiple key, intervallic, directional reading, landmark and modified versions of each (Bastien, 1977; Camp, 1992). In the middle C approach the middle C note serves as the starting point and both thumbs share the note (Bastien, 1987). The notes that are used revolve around the middle C, also known as C position in both hands and students read these notes. The multi-key method encourages students to sing, play and read five-finger patterns in varying hand positions on the piano. The intervallic approach involves reading the distances between notes from several landmark notes (i.e. seconds, thirds, fifths). Here students will identify the distance and hand position required for various patterns presented in the music. In directional reading, students

are taught to read from left to right (as with linguistic reading) and learn to identify up, down and same visually as a means to perform on the piano (Kreader et al., 1998).

Bridges (1984) critiques many piano method books stating that they fail to break down all the learning processes and deal with them one by one, and few have sufficient examples of activities for developing pre-reading skills. Modern piano method books apply pre-notation or directional reading exercises before introducing the staff and grand staff (Bastien, 1987; Kreader et al., 1998), nevertheless there is little time spent on pre-notation before the grand staff is introduced. As a result both concepts are found in the same method book targeted at beginners (Bastien, 1987; Kreader et al., 1998; Palmer et al., 1993).

Researchers who tried to integrate the Kodály syllabic rhythmic approach into piano teaching method books found that most of the piano method authors interviewed had not considered to include Kodály, but felt that the numeric counting method had been working well (Hill, 2008). If authors of piano method books show little interest in using classroom-teaching methods, then one would conclude that many piano teachers who faithfully rely on beginner method books do so without understanding other teaching strategies.

Singing and performance

Empirical studies on piano teaching and music reading of young children have tried to identify the hierarchical stages of learning to read notation with comprehension (Bluestine, 2007). McPherson (1995) and Kopiez and Lee (2008) suggested that sight-reading can be associated with other skills, while Bluestine (2007) claimed that sight-reading and sight-singing are virtually unrelated skills for beginner students and hence high achievement in one skill cannot predict high achievement in the other. Music educators have generally associated sight-singing with developing 'inner hearing' or 'notational audiation' skills (Gordon, 1988; Jaques-Dalcroze, 1972), yet little evidence has been able to demonstrate the nature of the cognitive processes in notational audiation. On the other hand Brodsky et al. (2008) suggested "that notational audiation elicits kinaesthetic-like covert phonatory processes such as silent singing" (p. 428) which would imply that the ability to sing a passage of music by looking at the notation is a method in which researchers can measure notational audiation.

Many of the popular beginner piano method books seem to encourage singing with the inclusion of text. Nevertheless, the practicality is questionable as sometimes songs are out of the child's singing range. Finding a relationship between singing and performance has interested music researchers. Particularly considering group piano lessons, students in the experimental group of the Hargiss (1962) study were instructed to sing everything they played, while singing was not emphasised in the control group. The study found that students from both groups demonstrated improvement in performance. Hargiss concluded that the addition of vocal practice and its motor imagery enabled students to develop the ability much more rapidly and effectively than without singing. Likewise, singing and movement were found to enhance keyboard performance skills of beginner students (Chen, 1998).

Private instrumental and classroom learning

The 'ubiquitous institution' of instrumental lessons (J. W. Davidson & Jordan, 2007, p. 729) typically consists of weekly private music instruction in western classical music (Campbell, 1991) and usually takes place in the teacher's house, a rented studio, the student's house, or a private studio in schools. In western countries this form of private instruction allows students who wish to sit for an exam on their instrument, to do so with the guidance of their teacher in their weekly lessons. Other terms used to describe this culture are private studio lessons (Campbell, 1991), private practice (Goddard, 2002), instrumental teaching and learning (J. W. Davidson & Jordan, 2007; Jorgensen, 2001; J. Mills & Smith, 2003), and one-to-one tuition (Gaunt, 2008; McPhail, 2010). It is a specific kind of culture carried out throughout much of the western world, but not being too different to the various forms of instructions in other cultures with a mentor and novice passing on skills.

In Australia many students who have weekly instrumental lessons will at some point sit for an examination with the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB). In the UK the equivalent is the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). These examinations assess the technical ability of students through numerous scales; students prepare three pieces from different musical styles within western music, demonstrating performance accuracy and fluency together with sound general knowledge; demonstrate the ability to perform promptly and accurately the aural tests outlined in the test requirements and finally students perform a previously unseen piece of music to demonstrate accuracy of notes, time and rhythm (Australian Music Examination Board, 2009).

The AMEB syllabus is essentially designed to offer a structure and systematic progression of piano (Australian Music Examination Board, 2009). It is desired that on completion of level one (Preliminary to Grade 4) students will demonstrate musical and aural awareness according to the objectives related to technique, repertoire, aural and sight-reading. The aural test requirements for preliminary grade students are very much focused on students' ability to imitate short rhythm and pitch patterns, while also focusing on keeping a steady beat. The objective of the syllabus is not designed to be a method for teaching the piano as some teachers may interpret it, but rather is indicative of the skills attained.

On the other hand, all schools in New South Wales (NSW) are expected to adhere to the curriculum of the Board of Studies (2009) in order to ensure consistency with general classroom music teaching. The Board of Studies requires students to experience Performance (MUS1.1), Organising Sound (MUS1.2) also known as composition, and Listening (MUS1.4)

In Stage 1 (Kindergarten to Year 2) students sing play and move to music, demonstrating an awareness of their own capability in using the voice and other sound sources such as instruments. They organise and create sounds into simple structures and begin representing creative ideas symbolically. This very broad description given for composition and notation alludes to students creating their own notation (L. Davidson et al., 1988) but also is unclear as to whether conventional notation is used and so is open to interpretation. Moreover, students will listen and identify simpler features of music and make judgements about musical effectiveness and preference (Board of Studies, 2009).

By Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) students should be able to sing, play and move to music demonstrating a basic understanding of musical concepts. They organise musical ideas into simple compositions and use understood symbols to represent these. Students listen to a range of music, identifying key features and they make some informed judgements about musical preference (Board of Studies, 2009). Stage 2 introduces elements of duration and dynamics in performance where in Stage 1 it did not. The difference between Stage 1 and 2 appears in the manner that students are expected to organise or create sounds, for example in Stage 2 improvisation plays an important role for students to explore musical ideas. Students are required to justify their choices for musical ideas where in Stage 1 they are not.

Both instrumental examination and classroom learning have requirements and stages for the acquisition of skills.

Empirical research in the classroom and private studio

Within the last decade, researchers have considered the pedagogies of the general music classroom such as Gordon's (1997) music learning theory and the Kodály method (Choksy, 1988). Here the pedagogies of Gordon and Kodály were analysed and adopted to create lesson plans suitable for private piano instruction (Choi, 2001; Hill, 2008; Hongsermeier, 1995; Whitlock, 2002). Although these studies have theoretically demonstrated that the pedagogies are viable in piano teaching, there is still limited research in the practice of a real-life setting.

Goddard (2002) identified the relationship that existed between private instrumental lessons and classroom music in the UK, while also considering strategies to further promote a two-way relationship between the two learning contexts. The study found that private teachers admit to the importance of classroom music education in their own teaching, but that a lack of communication and isolation from schools stunts their understanding and implementation. Likewise, Mills and Smith (2003) examined teacher perceptions about effective instrumental teaching in schools and higher education, and discovered that teachers believed differences existed between good instrumental teaching in schools and good teaching in higher education. While both studies reflect the rising interest and relationship of private and classroom music teaching, minimal knowledge exists on what aspects of teaching and learning need improving in both teaching contexts.

More recently, researchers have chosen to improve their practice by widening their perspectives among other educational approaches. McPhail (2010) acknowledged the purpose of his study was to self-critique and improve his practice within the one-to-one teaching context and that his teaching was enriched when other pedagogical approaches were considered. Fortunately, McPhail, was also an experienced classroom teacher and able to draw from his knowledge to plan and evaluate his lessons. The themes that emerged from the study are discussed in terms of the quality of feedback, teaching modes, which is the balance between musical and technical aspects within the lesson, and the challenges of monitoring change in action. Instrumental teachers can similarly benefit in understanding

classroom pedagogies so that those especially teaching at a school can feel integrated into the music program.

Summary

This review of literature has discussed numerous studies relating to music reading and the music classroom. Studies conducted on music reading have typically been in the context of either the classroom music or in the private lesson, but rarely have both contexts been integrated to form a holistic teaching approach. Little research has been undertaken within Australia where the teacher-researcher applies classroom methods into the piano studio. This study goes beyond speculation of what is involved in the general music classroom from an instrumental teacher perspective or lesson plans and applies observation and interpretations to real life practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter sets the context of the teaching and the school where the study was conducted, followed by a description of student participants. The procedures and methods used to collect data are discussed together with ethical issues and limitations. The chapter concludes with the process for data analysis.

Teaching context

The school where the study was conducted was at an all girls private school, renowned within Australia for its successful music department. Every two years the school prepares and performs a full school concert that showcases the ensembles of the school. These include choir, chamber choir, orchestra, chamber orchestra, sinfonietta, concert band, junior school choir, the full school choir and other smaller ensembles featuring senior student soloists. At this concert the ensembles perform works by Australian and non-Australian composers under the guidance of the Director of Music and music staff. Often works are especially commissioned for this special event.

As described in Chapter 1, the role of the piano co-ordinator was to see that all students learning privately at the school were allocated a teacher; to notify parents of upcoming performances and assessments; and to assess the girls' improvements twice a year as part of the school's internal assessment program. Besides their weekly private piano lessons, students were expected to attend two group lessons each term and participate in the mid-yearly piano festival, which requires each student to perform one piece to an audience of friends and families. Through this position as co-ordinator and liaising with parents and piano teachers, plus the experiences within the private studio, it was possible to observe that music reading was a concern for parents and other teachers. Consequently the piano lessons in this study were systematically documented in order to investigate how the pedagogies of the general music classroom could be used to develop students' music reading abilities and also improve the piano teaching. The discovery process was twofold, by examining and reflecting upon the teaching and studying students' learning.

Action research

Because the phenomenon under investigation was the learning process of students, and teaching practice in a real-life school setting it was only natural that a qualitative approach was suitable. The study was conducted at the school in order to gather information about the ways the music program operates in the junior school, and how the students learn (G. E. Mills, 2000). This particular method of inquiry is most effective through action research (J. Elliott, 1991). In other words action research sets out to improve the quality of one's professional practice through reflection and action (Ambrose, Lang, & Grothman, 2007; Cherry, 1999; Feldman, 2007). It provides the interplay between theory and practice (Cherry, 1999) in order to plan and implement the intervention for the perceived problem in the piano studio (Ambrose et al., 2007; Cohen et al., 2007).

Characteristic to traditional empirical research is the personal and institutional separation of reflection and action, however action research is characterized by closely and iteratively linking reflection and action (Altrichter, 1993). This study was not the end to the questions and reflexivity, but for the purposes of this study the reflection and cycle processes ended with the intention to continue in practice. It is for this reason that the discovery process of action research stops when the researcher ceases to revisit the questions and the answers to those questions (Cherry, 1999). Cain (2008) points out that most of the action research projects he analysed were not cyclical, but instead were treated as before-and-after studies. It was the intention of the study to use each piano lesson as mini-cycles within the scheme of two greater phases in the study, which would better suit the nature of the study. The mini-cycles included a process of refining starting points, collecting and analysing data and taking action according to the decisive evidences found in the reflective stages (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2008). The objective was to instigate research together *with* students, rather than research *on* students and this was best achieved through the action research method.

Koutselini (2008) stated that the procedures of reflection and introspection are merely external characteristics of action research and that research of this nature will not prove to be effective if teachers do not change their thinking and beliefs in an effort to improve the school environment. With this in mind Chapter 8 considers how the findings may be adopted into the junior school music program and how findings can be extended to the wider community of the school. As a result, this study does not seek to produce generalizable

findings for widespread consumption but rather find solutions to a specific context with the possibility of leading to further study.

The advantages of action research are that students are familiar with the setting of their piano lessons and the teacher does not pose any direct threat as an outsider would. The challenge as researcher lay in the varying abilities and skills of piano students, whereby each student was treated as a separate case in order to address individual needs. This study therefore involved multiple case studies. Phase 1 discusses all seven-student participants according to the emerging themes, while Phase 2 focuses primarily on three students in Year 2 – Georgia, Caitlin and Tamara. Burns (2000) describes the case study as involving the observation of individual units, such as students, a school or a class, which is usually done through observations and interviews, allowing the researcher to retain the holistic features of real life events.

The context of the school

The study was conducted at a Pre-Kindergarten to Year 12 all-girls' private school in the inner west of Sydney, with an average student intake of 1100 students per year. In 2005 the Community Relations Office conducted a parent population survey that would provide a medium of feedback for the families at the school. In it, parents were asked to express their perceptions of the school in relation to competitor schools, their reasons for choosing to send their daughter(s) to the school and suggested improvements. Families were demographically profiled after an analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The snapshot profiles found that 41% of families lived in the inner western region and 16.5% of families were from the Sutherland Shire. Demographically, parents are aged between 35-54 years, 74.2% are university graduates, 72.3% speak English as their first language, and most are white-collar professionals with 48% of respondent families having a household income of more than $150,000 per annum. The school holds an excellent academic record with 10% of Year 12 students scoring 99+ in the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) in 2009. In 2008, 92% of finishing Year 12 students stated that extra curricular activities are one of the school's strong points (Mayfield School, 2008).

The school has a music program that aims to integrate instrumental and classroom music learning. In Year 1 all students learn the violin and participate in one 50-minute group

violin/cello class and one 50-minute music class. In Year 2 students participate in one 50-minute classroom music lesson and one 50-minute instrumental group lesson. Only students who learn the violin or cello privately continue with group violin or cello lessons, while the remainder of the students not learning an instrument or who play the piano learn the recorder. In Years 3 to 5 students may choose a wind, brass or percussion instrument. Students who learn violin or cello privately continue with group lessons and join the junior school orchestra. The motive for these instrumental programs is to foster and develop proficient instrumentalists who will in the future join the main school orchestra.

Student participants

For the first phase of the study, there were seven piano student participants. They were chosen because they were in the junior school, were primarily at beginner piano level, and most of their parents had expressed concern about their daughter's music reading. Four of the seven girls learned a second instrument at the school – three learning violin and one cello (two girls in Year 2; two girls in Year 3). In the second phase of the study there we no new students introduced to the study, however instead of the seven students that originally participated in Phase 1, only three of the seven students were chosen as participants for the continuation of the study. Here students were selected purely because they were in Year 2. Lastly, alongside student participants, the teacher/researcher was also an important participant of this study seeing that the real life practice was under scrutiny during the entire processes of reflection and action.

Ethical issues

Whenever students become the focus of study by their teacher, ethical issues arise because of the nature of that existing relationship. Inevitably the concern for this study was that besides the role as teacher, by also assuming the role of researcher there would be questions of power. Parents and students create relationships with their teacher and in many ways trust is a major factor. It was important that students did not feel pressured to take part in this study nor for parents to feel that if they did not consent to the participation, their daughter would 'miss out' in any way. Approval from the ethics committee was received in the form of a letter in early 2009 (Appendix A) and parents were given the Parental Information Statement (Appendix B) and Consent form (Appendix C), which outlined that participation

was completely voluntary and that they would be free to withdraw at any time. Withdrawals of participation did not occur in this study.

Procedure

Following ethics approval, parents were given or posted the Parental Information Statement and Consent Form. While awaiting approval for the revised Parental Information Statement, the Teacher Information Statement and Consent Forms were handed out to teachers and the preliminary stages of data collection commenced with teacher interviews.

Being an insider at the school had its advantages. It allowed relatively easy access to school documents. The need to build new relationships with teachers for interviewing purposes was not paramount because of existing relationships, and most importantly communication with the Director of Music was accessible when necessary. Nevertheless, whilst there were advantages as an insider, it was clear that the limited understanding of the music program, the limited communication with classroom music teachers regarding the program, together with the inexperience as a classroom teacher meant that the position was also as an outsider trying to understand the way the school's music program operates – particularly the junior school. This position as insider/outsider brought about conflicting feelings.

It was the aim to understand the school's rationale, objectives and expectations of classroom music before any comparisons were made with the two teaching and learning contexts of private instrumental and classroom music. Teacher interviews and existing documents that outline Years 2, 3 and 4 music programs were analysed as a means of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007; G. E. Mills, 2000). Collection of data commenced by interviewing seven people: the Director of Music, Head of Curriculum, who is in charge of developing the music curriculum under the guidance of the Director of Music and five instrumental teachers (four specialising in violin and one in cello).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (Burns, 2000) were conducted in order to learn from one or more people what was considered to be important (Altrichter et al., 2008). A set of questions were pre-formulated (Appendix D), allowing flexibility to ask follow-up questions and paraphrase what was thought to be said in order to check and re-check understanding of the interviewee's statements (Burns, 2000). The interviews with the Head of Curriculum and

Director of Music involved very open-ended questions, having more dialogue, and requiring less prompting. The Head of Curriculum and Director of Music were questioned about the junior school music curriculum, what was taught in each classroom year, and in particular how the junior school instrumental program helped students develop their music reading in conjunction with classroom music. Interviews with instrumental teachers required them to be reflective of their own teaching, which proved useful because some had not considered the implications involved in exchanging pedagogical ideas and concerns with other teachers. Although it was not the intention to include the instrumental teachers as active collaborative participants, as a result of the interviews, the reflective stages were enhanced and provided a wider perspective from other teachers facing similar issues.

During piano lessons in Phase 1 and Phase 2, student participants were questioned about their thought processes during the piano lesson. By directly questioning students regarding certain aspects of the lesson they were able to express their thoughts and thus it was possible to reflect and respond accordingly. Post-study interviews were conducted with parents to obtain feedback about how they felt their child had responded to the study. Through these interviews it was possible to validate and confirm interpretations of data (see appendix D).

Besides the interviews conducted before and after the study, the Year 2 music program outline was treated as a key form of *existing data* (Altrichter et al., 2008). The interviews conducted with the Director of Music and Head of Curriculum together with existing documents were analysed as a means of triangulation (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007; G. E. Mills, 2000). Once these were examined, the third step of triangulation occurred – classroom observation.

Observations

Non-participant classroom observations were conducted to learn how music was taught in the classroom. Four 50-minute Year 2 music classes and three 50-minute Year 1 music classes were observed in Term 1. Furthermore, two 50-minute Year 2 recorder classes and three 50-minute Year 3 violin group classes were observed as part of the junior school instrumental program. These lessons helped in the decision process to change parts of the teaching practice. The purposes of the observations were also to confirm whether what was set out to occur in the classroom through existing documents and interviews, corroborated with the reality of the classroom as directly observed.

The following form of observation required the researcher to act as participant observer, so that the teaching practice was also systematically observed (Altrichter et al., 2008; Burns, 2000). This method of observation, along with the journal, was the main form of data collection. Some ethnographic studies require the researcher to be a non-participant observer or an outsider looking into the culture of the subject in question, while the other form of ethnography is to acculturate oneself into the lives of those one wishes to observe as a participant observer (Cohen et al., 2007). This study, while sharing characteristics of the latter, differs in that the researcher did not need to acculturate into the culture of the school but could use their position to improve the teaching within an already familiar context. A study that has the researcher as both observer and participant may conflict with objectivity, particularly when the researcher is an insider. It was necessary therefore that objectivity be kept through the continual communication and discussion with a "critical friend" (Altrichter, 1993; Somekh, 2006) who was the thesis supervisor and who critiqued every approach and decision process throughout the study.

Altrichter et al. (2008) believed that observations bring three drawbacks that wished to be addressed:

1. *They can lack clarity or precision* – this was addressed by creating systematic observation procedures and by observing something specific for a particular purpose. For example, during particular classroom observations, it was specifically considered how students were taught new songs, according to rhythm and pitch.

2. *It is biased and there is danger of seeing what one wants to see* – direct observations (Altrichter et al., 2008) in the non-participant classroom observations were used to test assumptions and confirm school documents and interviews with reality. In order to avoid bias in the participatory observations, a critical friend was asked to critique the interpretations. In this case, the supervisor who is also an experienced studio teacher helped to maintain an objective perception.

3. *It is held in the memory for a very short time* – In order to recall with as much detail as possible the situations, recollections of experiences and observations were kept in field notes. For the participative observations every lesson was video-recorded and thirty minutes were spent watching and analysing each piano lesson. Video recorded lessons served to counter bias and create more accurate accounts of lessons in the form of a journal. Video

recordings were viewed each day in order to further reflect and expand upon each lesson by conceptualising and comparing the journal entries with field notes and similar experiences with other students. This period was very reflective and comparative of concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Video recordings served as triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007; Delamont, 1992; G. E. Mills, 2000), providing a holistic record of each situation.

Data analysis

According to Cohen et al. (2007) data analysis involves "organising, explaining and making sense of the data, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities" (p. 461). Moreover, Corbin and Strauss (2008) indicate that in order for analysis to take place one must "break apart a substance into various components, then examine those components in order to identify their properties and dimensions" (p. 46). With this in mind, this section explains the process for organising and understanding the data relevant to the study.

Field notes and journal entries for each student participant were combined according to each student in the reviewing of video-recordings. Upon reviewing the video-recordings of piano lessons, sections that corroborated with interpretations of observations were transcribed. The transcriptions, notes and journal entries were thus later reviewed and open coded into general themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

According to Corbin and Strauss (2008) axial coding involves relating codes and concepts to each other via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. It essentially requires the researcher to reconstruct data that was separated during open coding and serves to determine how categories relate to each other. For example, on a very basic level certain categories were able to be determined as sharing some form of visual component in music reading, while other emerging categories related directly to pitch.

Theoretic coding (also known as selective coding) on the other hand refines the themes by organising them around a central theme "relevant to the evolving story line" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). Sub categories were identified in data and according to open, axial and theoretical coding.

Chapter 4: Observing the music classroom

Prior to classroom observations, it was necessary to understand the school's rationale and interpretations of the Board of Studies' broad curricular statements, as discussed in the literature review. The following chapter presents the observations of the music classroom that relate to pedagogical aspects such as singing, rhythm, pitch, notation, and performance.

The school's interpretation of the syllabus

Prominently emerging from school documents was the importance of singing at the school. This can be seen by the amount of time dedicated to choral training. The music program (Mayfield School, 2009b) states that all girls in Years 3 to 5 take part in two 45-minute lessons each week – one classroom period and one choir period. Years 3 and 4 perform as a group in addition to being members of Years 3 to 5 Choir, the Kindergarten to Year 5 Choir and the Years 3 to 12 Choir. Furthermore, the Director of Music expressed the significance of singing by saying that:

> The use of the voice correctly develops aural discrimination, which is vital to intellectual development. Developing vocal skills as the core of all musical training begins in kindergarten and continues in a sequenced programme throughout all the mandatory music programmes. Every girl until the end of Year 8 does a session of vocal training each week, learning repertoire, which develops aural and literacy skills.

In other words, the Director believes that the education of music should begin at the earliest age to extend through school progressively because music is an essential aid in intellectual development. Although research has discussed the commencement of formal music training in the early ages as common to most expert performers (Jorgensen, 2001), the Director's remark suggests that music education is not only intended for the development of musical expertise, but the benefits are greater for all who experience music first hand. Just as Suzuki (1978) advocated that all things are learned through the mother tongue approach, it would appear that the Director similarly emphasises aural discrimination as fundamental to music education. Alternatively, the justification for the school's emphasis of singing in the classroom could be as the Board of Studies (2009) states that "singing allows all students to be involved in making music by using the most accessible sound source – the voice". Music education at the school is therefore not only for the gifted and talented, but rather all girls are considered capable of developing and expressing themselves through singing. On the other

hand private instrumental teaching and learning is primarily focused on the acquisition of very specific skills on an instrument and unless a student is undertaking singing lessons, the need to sing is usually not evident until necessary in the aural test for instrumental examinations usually held by the Australian Board of Music Examination.

In response to the Board of Studies syllabus, the school has assigned each year from Kindergarten to Year 5 a music program that is designed for teachers to refer to in their lesson planning and that indicates the outcomes (Table 1). The school expects that by Year 2 students will demonstrate a good understanding of the concepts of music as described in the syllabus (see Table 2). The importance of movement and singing in performance-based activities is evident in Table 1. Unfortunately from the perspective as an outsider the outline provided little explanation to what is implied by the general phrase "moves to music". It was therefore unclear whether the nature of this movement was controlled or left to the discretion of students.

Table 1. Year 2 Music Outline

Music concepts	Year 2 outcomes
Performing	Sing, play and move to music using their voices, body percussion and percussion instruments
	Move to music
	Perform rhythms in text and rhymes
	Sing simple songs as a class
	Perform vocal ostinatos
	Perform pitched ostinatos to fixed notes
	Improvise pitch and rhythm ostinatos
	Perform rhythms using French time names
Composing	Create own ostinatos to form simple compositions
	Create ostinatos and simple sound scapes using percussion instruments
Listening	Observe important musical features of the repertoire used (e.g. repeated patterns, a regular beat, the contour of the pitch, sound sources, rhythmic patterns)
	Identify duration, tone colour, structure, dynamics and pitch

Table 2. Year 2 Focus music concepts

Duration	Pitch
Long and short	High and low
Sound and silence	Treble and bass clef instruments
Notes and rests (minims, crotchets and quaver using French time names)	Sol-fa: so, mi, la re, doh
Tempo and tempo changes	Ascending and descending pitches
Ostinato	Note names (all) – naturals only

Teaching rhythm

In the observations of the classroom the most prominent method of teaching rhythm was through clapping or vocally echoing rhythmic patterns (Gordon, 1988; Walters & Taggart, 1989). The main form of imitation, led by music teachers in all classroom activities occurred each time the teacher clapped a short 4/4 rhythmic pattern as a cue for the class to stop the activity and clap the rhythm in response. It was an interesting method of demonstration and imitation that may have also benefited the music teacher to use to introduce new short one-bar rhythmic patterns and possibly lead to music notation.

Teachers presented rhythms through rhymes or by chanting rhythms in French time names. Following repetitious demonstration and imitation, the class chanted the rhythms without any assistance from the teacher. At this point the teacher chanted and created body movements, also referred to as body percussion. These body movements were used in different activities to actively engage students with difficult rhythms and beat keeping. Students were always encouraged in every lesson to create their own body percussion according to the rhythm. These on-the-spot improvisational movements were reflective of Orff's teaching approach (Warner, 1991), usually commencing as simple concepts of imitation in the form of a one-bar 4/4 rhythm and gradually increasing in complexity, so that finally students repeat the rhythm through improvisational body percussion. These improvisational tasks allowed students not only to imitate what they heard but also continuously required them to be creative. In other words leading students to create or

compose their own rhythm was an important aspect in each classroom lesson. Once students had vocalised and moved to the rhythm they were encouraged to perform on percussion instruments.

The manner in which rhythms were taught, where students learnt to imitate before creating their own rhythmic patterns, concurs with how children remember and reproduce rhythmic patterns (Dowling, 1999), where by the age of seven children are able to reproduce more complex rhythms (through improvisation) than at five years old (Drake, 1993). Using a Kodály-informed approach the teacher clapped and verbalised part of a short rhyme and the class imitated, as seen in Figure 1. This rhyme was later used to assist students to draw the treble clef. Using the same rhyme the teacher patted his head and clapped his hands and the class imitated the rhythm and actions in unison.

	Start	on	the	se -	cond	line
	Pat	clap	clap	clap	clap	pat

Figure 1. Short rhyme

Frequently, teachers selected individual students to the front of the class and they too had to create their own body percussion for the class to imitate. The rhyme was repeated over and over again until the teacher described and explained that this was an ostinato. Taking turns, students then performed the rhythm on the tambourine and bongo drum as they chanted the rhyme and some only performed the rhythm without chanting. Following, the teacher tried to engage the class through a 'fun' guessing game by tapping the rhythm on the tambourine and then stopping in the middle of the phrase. The class was asked to guess which word he had stopped on. It was impressive to observe that the class answered correctly each time and that in some way this activity incited inner hearing (Field notes, 2 April 2009).

Majority of the class were able to maintain a steady beat as they clapped or chanted in French time names. As soon as some students transferred this onto the percussion instrument or an alternative rhythm such as the beat was introduced to the activity, accuracy in

performance became uneven and caused confusion. According to what is understood of cognitive development in children (Bruning, Schraw, & Ronning, 2004; White, Hayes, & Livesey, 2005), these activities demonstrate that students at this age are still developing independence in beat and rhythm. It was clear that musical concepts such as pitch and rhythm were taught progressively in the classroom according to their developmental age and hence the use of melodies and rhymes facilitated children with rhythmic tasks and was indicative of whether students could maintain a steady beat (Gerard & Auxiette, 1992). If they could not maintain a steady beat whilst chanting or clapping, then performance on the instrument would be challenging, especially if two differing rhythms were played at the same time.

On another occasion the teacher clapped his hands and chanted the following rhyme

Teacher: Ted - dy bear   Ted - dy   bear   turn   a   -   round

The class then repeated this one-bar pattern as they clapped their hands. The teacher drew the rhythm on the whiteboard and as he pointed to each note the class repeated the words "Teddy bear, Teddy bear turn around". Pointing to the music again the teacher chanted using French time names

Teacher: Ta - Te   Ta   Ta - Te   Ta   Ta   Ta   Ta

Class: Ta - Te   Ta   Ta - Te   Ta   Ta   Ta   Ta

The class was drilled a few more times using French time names and then students were invited to perform the rhythm on percussion instruments (bongo drum, tambourine or maracas). Not all the students were able to perform on the instrument, which was a little concerning as it seemed as a common occurrence in every lesson. Further troubling was that the simple rhythmic patterns were drilled at lengths in one lesson but were never expanded on in the following lesson, nor was it used to consolidate reading skills. One of the possible reasons why activities were not expanded in following lessons was that during this time some classroom lessons were interrupted or cancelled due to rehearsals for a major biennial

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concert. These rehearsals dominated the school's activities for at least a term and so consistency with classroom activities was near impossible during this time. Table 3 illustrates the interpretation of the process involved for teaching rhythm in the music classroom.

Pitch and reading staff notation

Pitch or the names of notes were often taught through singing, clapping and conventional notation. In one particular lesson the class had to sing the song to letter names whilst following the music notation that was on the whiteboard (13 May 2009).

Table 3. Stages for teaching rhythm expanded

Stages	How rhythm was taught
1. Vocal demonstration	Here the teacher spoke a rhyme or chanted a rhythm using French time names
2. Vocal imitation	Students imitated the rhyme or chant
Step 1 and 2 was repeated	
4. Vocal and Kinaesthetic demonstration	The teacher chanted and demonstrated a body percussion to match the rhythm
5. Vocal and Kinaesthetic imitation	The class imitated both body percussion and vocal chanting
6. On the spot improvisation	The teacher asked individual students to create their own body percussion so that the class imitated. This stage challenges students to interpret and process the information that they just experienced in the imitation stages.
7. Performance demonstration	The teacher demonstrated the performance of the rhythm on percussion instrument (tambourine or bongo drum)
8. Performance imitation	The student imitated the performance of the rhythm on percussion instrument

In general, the classroom approach for learning songs or pitch patterns follows the Kodály method of echo-singing and often adding texts (Walters & Taggart, 1989). Nevertheless, the use of hand signs or sol-fa to teach songs was not observed (Choksy, 1988); instead letter names were used.

The following vignette demonstrates a one-bar ascending and descending pitch pattern taught to a Year 2 class through repetitious demonstration and imitation without the use of sol-fa or hand signs in this specific example.

Teacher: [sang and pointed to the whiteboard]

G   A   B   C   D

Students then imitated and sang the ascending melodic pattern

G   A   B   C   D

The teacher pointed to the whiteboard and invited the class to sing in unison, by following the descending pattern

D   C   B   A   G

Without any prompting the teacher pointed to the notation and elicited students to sing the following – asking the students to state whether it was ascending or descending

G   A   B   C   D

In this sequence the teacher first demonstrated a pattern aurally via singing, before the class sang unassisted. When the class had difficulty executing the pattern, the teacher sang in

unison with the class and drilled this a few more times. This method of instruction that reinforces both words and visual for rhythmic retention worked well in the class because students seemed to enjoy repeating a fun rhyme and were confident when they had to transfer the rhythms onto percussion instruments.

Interestingly, the teacher chose to repeat and drill singing in unison together with the class rather than consolidating demonstration and imitation of individual students. This was insightful because the class was more confident singing accurately when in unison with the teacher, than when they imitated the teacher individually (Green, 1994). What really needed consolidating was individual pitch accuracy of students. A possible solution to the demonstration and imitation stage could have been for the teacher to choose a confident student who could sing in tune and model the pitch pattern or song to the class for accurate pitch matching (Green, 1990). These one-off activities somehow did not appear beneficial because they did not lead to further consolidation of pitch or transference onto an instrument.

Figure 3 illustrates the pitch patterns that were notated on the whiteboard by the teacher. The teacher sang each pattern and asked the class to repeat. Following the process in Figure 2 students sang each pattern to letter names by themselves. The class not only sang each pattern but also needed to identify its matching notation from the whiteboard. In other words, students were cognitively connecting the visual with the aural only moments after hearing and singing it – a concept not necessarily concordant with sound before symbol (Gordon, 1988; Suzuki, 1978). Despite introducing notation to beginner students very early, it was clear through the class' positive response that teaching notation to this Year 2 class was effective when sufficient time was spent singing before performing on an instrument. While it had a positive outcome, there was little association that students could make with a familiar song and so it was questionable whether or not they retained the four pitch patterns. Teaching new pitch patterns together with the presentation of notation in some ways reflects the sound before symbol approach. The difference of course is that there is a much shorter time lapse in the classroom method between aural and the presentation of notation.
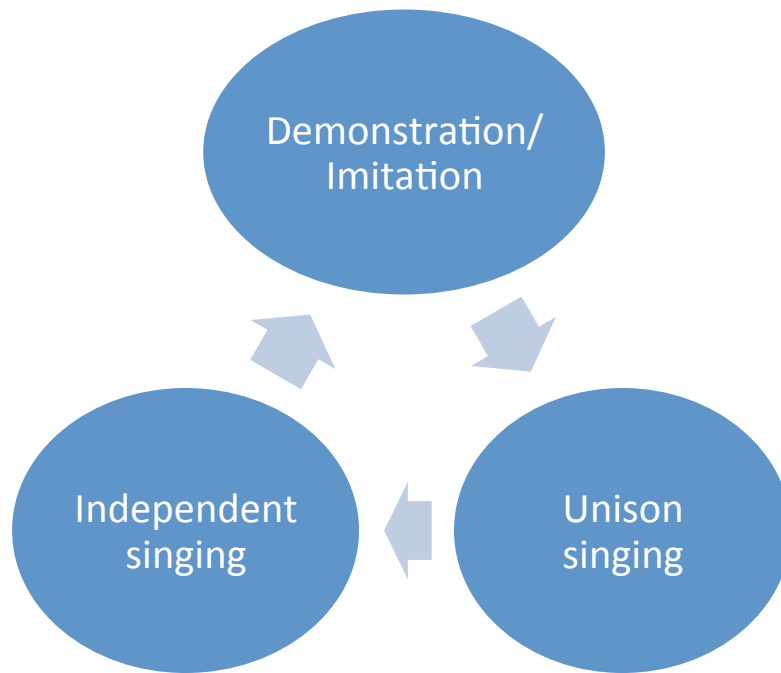
Figure 2. Stages for learning a short pitch pattern

Figure 3. Pitch pattern notations

Following note recognition from the whiteboard, the teacher took on a passive role and allowed the girls to sing and only assisted if they could not sing in tune or struggled to sing to the correct letter names (Stage 3 from Table 3). This rote-method of teaching can be found in western and non-western one-to-one learning traditions. A passage is modelled on the instrument and the student imitates the passage. In the case of the piano studio,

depending how much assistance a student needs, the process is repeated until accuracy and independence is achieved. The difference with the two teaching contexts lies with the fact that while classroom students are utterly dependent on their aural skills to repeat the pattern, piano students will often rely on visual or motor information and unintentionally disregard the aural. This rote method therefore did not seem like the best option for teaching the piano. Instead, similar to the classroom, an effective means would be to present notation according to what they are already familiar with aurally. The implication for this would mean that some students would require a longer period of time to become aurally confident before notation is introduced.

In the singing activities there were individual students in the class who were better singers and imitators than others. These few students seemed to carry the accuracy of the class' pitch when they sang in unison. It was difficult therefore to assess who needed help with matching the teacher's pitch in unison singing. The classroom seemed focused on ensuring the class sang accurately rather than assessing or assisting the inaccurate pitch of individual students. As a result the stronger singers were benefiting from these activities while the weaker ones just followed with little aural comprehension and improvement.

Students notating familiar melodies

There were few instances where students were asked to notate the song or part of the song they had learned to sing and play, in a manner analogous with dictation activities in language learning. In this particular case I observed the Year 2 recorder class focus on learning the letter names, the position of notes on the staff and finger position on the recorder. The class sang the following pattern to letter names.

Figure 4. Recorder pitch pattern

The teacher and students held out their hands and treated their hand as a stave by pointing to their fingers or the spaces in-between and sang to letter names as they pointed to each note. The teacher demonstrated the two-bar pattern on the recorder, particularly focusing their attention on hand position and asked the class to play.

They notated the notes on manuscript…Caitlin responded well to the notation instructions having little difficulty in completing the task (Field notes, 13 May 2009).

Although there was an emphasis on aural development through singing, the visual presentation of music was equally important. In this case the teacher chose a different method of presenting the concept of notation, through the use of the "hand stave". This kinaesthetic visual representation of notation served to emphasise conventional notation, and transfer it into their workbooks. According to the response from students to the task, it showed the confidence and familiarity that came with notation exercises. When they notated the song the class performed the pattern by looking at the recorder. Students played more confidently and were able to name notes when prompted by the teacher. It could be that students who are in the practice of notating what they play are at a greater advantage of being able to conceptualise and recreate the music confidently.

The performance imperative

The program outline for Years 2 to 4 were designed to allow the teacher flexibility when selecting short songs such as *A rhyme for ham jam, My dog Jed* to perform in the classroom. These songs were to extend the musical concepts such as duration, pitch, dynamics and expressive techniques, tone colour, texture and structure. Besides the songs outlined in the teacher program, many of the musical concepts as described by the Board of Studies were also taught in the music classroom through the vocal repertoire that students would perform in school events and concerts. This allowed the school to be very project-driven, where in fact everything in the classroom was for performance purposes. The Head of Curriculum expressed that "everything in the class is for the purpose of the concert/cross integration... they learn the music they will perform".

The school's emphasis on performance was most evident in Term 1 and 2 where majority of the music lessons were spent in preparation for a full school biennial school concert that dominates the school activities during one term. Classroom music switched its focus from teaching and learning simple songs and performing them on percussion instruments, to teaching the vocal repertoire for the concert. New songs were similarly taught through demonstration and imitation, tapping/clapping of rhythms, singing in rounds and repetition. While it was intriguing to witness the process of such an important school event, it was frustrating with the insufficient information obtained during this time. It seemed that the

whole school event was detracting students' musical education and that such focus on performance had potentially become a curse to music teaching and learning. Nevertheless, what is music making and learning if it cannot be shared with others? It soon became clear that performance truly is the essence of music education when correctly understood (J. Mills, 2003). There were expectations upon entering the classroom to find innovative teaching methods. Instead it was a simple realisation that children choose to learn an instrument in order to perform.

Summary

The classroom observations were central to the decisions made to change aspects of the piano lesson. This chapter observed and presented the interpretations of the stages employed to teach rhythm and pitch in the classroom. These were largely based on vocal and visual imitation and demonstration before the student was required to perform on an instrument. Finally, interruptions of weekly lessons were encountered, which meant that lessons were cancelled due to the major biennial school concert that dominated most of the school's activities. As a result the observations of weekly music lessons did not occur as planned.

Chapter 5: Another kind of lesson

The following chapter describes the decisions to change certain aspects of my teaching according to what was observed in the classroom, interviews, and a review of school documents. These changes affected the way that students were introduced to new pieces.. Normally pieces were taught sequentially as they appeared in method books and students were required to decipher notation through the help of visual demonstration and imitation on the piano. The most central change to my teaching was in the demonstration stage, which required students to vocally imitate what was demonstrated before they performed it on the piano. This chapter discusses how these changes were planned and why they were chosen.

Teaching rhythm in the piano lesson

As described in Chapter 4, the most prominent method of teaching rhythm in the classroom was through clapping and echoing rhythmic patterns using rhymes or French time names.
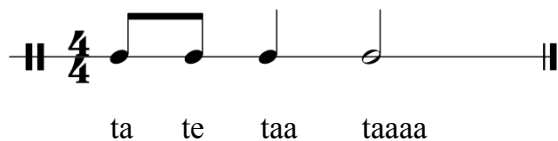
The use of French time names is not common in the piano studio; instead the use of metric counting is popular in many piano method books.

Metric counting vocalises the numbers that correspond to the beat within a bar such as:
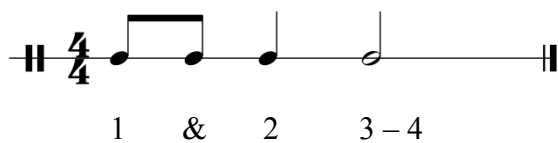
The other method popular in most piano method books has been termed as "unit counting", which vocalises the numbers that correspond to the value of the note (Hongsermeier, 1995).
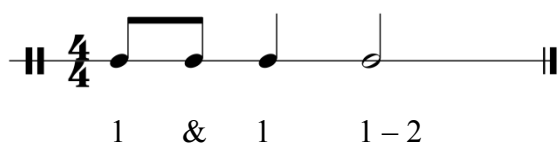
Also uncommon in piano lessons was chanting or moving – often because of limited space in the studio and because typically conventional piano lessons are primarily teacher-directed (Mackworth-Young, 1990). The thirty minutes each week were therefore specifically at the piano and not away from the instrument, which would imply a student-directed lesson. After observing the manner in which students were actively involved and enjoyed creating their own body percussion in classroom lessons, a similar approach would be incorporated into the piano lessons to consolidate rhythm. Presenting visual and aural cues through syllabic French time names or rhymes would serve as a memory aid to organise new information presented to students in the lesson and require them to transform and record any new information (Shehan, 1987). Movement and activities away from the piano would also encourage young beginner students, who may struggle to sit at the piano for an entire 30 minutes, to remain engaged for the duration of the lesson.

After chanting to French time names or rhymes students in the classroom performed rhythms on tambourine and percussion instruments. Similarly, movement, clapping, performance on percussion instruments, text in method books (Bastien, 1987) and the steps for teaching rhythm would be used in the piano lesson as a means of consolidating rhythm. By following the steps found in Table 3 it would be possible to assess students' ability to independently play the rhythm on the tambourine or perform it through body percussion before focusing on pitch. Rhythm and pitch were thus to be taught as separate concepts in the early stages.

Singing in the piano lesson

Chapter 4 discussed how singing was incorporated as a key tool for teaching in the music classroom. The Director of Music stated how singing helped to develop aural discrimination, which is vital to intellectual development (p. 25). Furthermore, the reasoning is that "everyone has a voice, it is easily accessible and generally students know how to use it" (Head of Curriculum). Private music on the other hand focuses on the "expertise" and the development of very specific skills on an instrument. Unless a student chooses to take private singing lessons, there is little to no singing that occurs in private piano lessons.

The importance of singing familiar folk and nursery rhymes in the classroom, as reflected in the school documents, interviews and observations, is representative of Kodály's teaching approach (Choksy, 1988). Like the imitation of short rhythmic patterns, students were also

asked to imitate simple songs, also known as echo-singing (Feierabend, 2003). Vocal imitation was a major tool for teaching students new songs, establishing pitch and confirming the understanding of students in the classroom, which many times led to performance on tuned percussion instruments.

There were students who were better imitators than others in the classroom, however it was unclear why this phenomena existed. My understanding of imitation in the past was merely to have a student strike the key correctly or play a scale using the correct fingering that had been demonstrated, without asking a student to imitate vocally. On the other hand, in the classroom there was little visual demonstration other than through body percussion, and so students naturally depended on their aural skills to transfer onto the instrument. As a result the new piano lessons would attempt to implement the stages described in Figure 2 which were used in the music classroom to teach short pitch patterns.

In the demonstration and imitation stage, songs would be presented to students as echo-songs. If the student had difficulty singing the correct pitch, like the classroom teacher, I would proceed to sing in unison and assess their ability to recall by asking them to sing independently. If independence were not achieved, stages one and two would be repeated. Once the student was vocally confident with the song rhythmic errors could then be amended using the stages previously mentioned. Finally students would be asked to play the song on the piano. In effect there would be little emphasis on notation even though they would still have the notation in front of them. The difference with this new approach would be that other measures would be taken to ensure that students were vocally and rhythmically confident instead of expecting them to *read* the music at home and in their lesson.

Notating in the piano lesson

While students had not been required to notate in their classroom music lessons, other than the one-off Year 2 recorder class, the Director of Music, who had been mentoring me throughout the study, and my supervisor who is also an experienced studio teacher, encouraged me on various occasions to give my students more direct notation tasks. The Director of Music experienced similar problems with students' reading skills and recommended that students notate sections or the entire piece they were learning. She said notation was something she wished to see more of in the classroom, so that students would

become literate, not only in their ability to read but also with the ability to create their own music through notation. Furthermore, by allowing students to create their own notation the teacher is able to view the students' "conceptual development" and students have the opportunity to organise and transform into symbols what they have experienced (McPherson & Gabrielsson, 2002).

In my past learning experiences, notation in the piano lesson was rare, unless it was an exercise from a musicianship book. Studying music theory was chore-like and unappealing. The challenge was to look beyond these biased feelings and set notation tasks and otherwise apply notation in the lessons as practically and attractively as possible. Considering that students were accustomed to following music notation on the whiteboard and identifying pitch contour, along with their experiences learning the piano, it was concluded that students grasped many concepts and had prior knowledge that could be used for notation tasks in the piano lesson.

In the classroom setting students needed greater opportunities to apply the knowledge learnt onto an instrument that they were familiar with – in this case, the piano. As discussed in Chapter 3, the school had an instrumental program that was part of the music curriculum, nevertheless there was little evidence to suggest that specific songs learnt in the music classrooms were later performed in the group instrumental lessons. In the case of my piano students, there were no opportunities for them to transfer the songs learnt in the classroom onto the piano – only onto tuned percussion instruments. This seemed a little strange, as it is difficult not only to decipher notes, but also to transfer this information onto a percussion instrument. As a result, with the advice of the Director of Music and my supervisor together with my own observations, I decided that in the first phase my students would need to notate parts of the songs they were learning on the piano by ear, and the rest of the song they could notate by directly copying from the original notation. I surmised that notation of these pieces would generate greater comprehension and relevance to their playing.

According to the interpretations of school documents, classroom observations and the talks with the Director of Music and thesis supervisor I chose to implement a similar process that was used in the classroom to teach rhythm and pitch in piano lessons. The use of rhymes meant that students could retain and associate rhythmic patterns more easily than if these

were only presented to them aurally. French time names would be the next step in requiring students to process and reorganise rhythmic information.

Pitch was taught in the classroom by identifying pitch contour, thus the use of my hands to visually represent pitch contour would be adopted in piano lessons. These hand signs are not the same as those developed by John Curwen or Kodály (Choksy, 1988) that portray tonality, but simply an indication of hands held up or down to demonstrate pitch contour. By using my hands to demonstrate pitch contour students would be able to recall and reproduce the up and down movements on the piano and by singing tasks by looking at the music. I wanted to ensure that my students could internalise the music through singing and reorganise this information into a visual representation of what was occurring in the music through hand signals so that when they went to play it on the piano they could have the means to recall the information.

Summary

The aim in Phase 1 was to personalise the lessons for my students so that instead of sequentially following the progression of pieces in method books I would discern the pieces they would learn, and accommodate these to students' individual needs through planning and reflection.

The changes that I therefore made to my teaching was to implement the stages for teaching rhythm in the classroom through the following methods:

- demonstration and imitation of rhymes;
- demonstration and imitation of French time names;
- visual demonstration and imitation using body percussion so that students would feel the rhythm through movement;
- performance on percussion instruments (tambourine or bongo drum); and
- performance on the piano.

In order to help students internalise the music I incorporated the stages used in the classroom to teach simple pitch patterns, which included demonstration, imitation and singing in unison before the student performed on the piano. This method would

also assist to correct performance inaccuracies better than the more customary visual demonstration on the piano. By using these stages to teach rhythm and pitch I would be able to establish whether a student had internalised the music and was thus in a better position to accurately perform at the piano. Finally, through the advice of the Director of Music and my supervisor I decided to ask my students to notate parts or all of the pieces that they were learning to play on the piano.

Chapter 6: Phase 1 – Innovation in action

The following chapter introduces the seven student participants. Three participants in Year 2 (Caitlin, Georgia and Tamara) are described according to their background and the teacher-student relationship because these students will later serve as the main protagonists of the study. The remainder four student participants are described in less detail, but sufficiently enough so that the reader may be able to identify them. The chapter proceeds to describe and analyse the learning experiences during Phase 1 of the students according to the themes emerging.

Student profiles

<u>Caitlin</u>

Caitlin was seven years old and in Year 2 when she participated in the study. Her extra-curricular activities included five different dance classes, swimming, chess, diving, and piano lessons.

Caitlin had been learning the piano as my student for over a year. Prior to this, Caitlin used the Suzuki Book 1 in her piano lessons yet was not taught in the "Suzuki way", which meant that she had been attempting to learn new pieces on the piano by reading the music first, before rigorously listening and internalising the repertoire (Choksy, 1988). Caitlin's older sister Nicole was also a student participant and the sisters had their piano lessons back to back each week. The mother was very supportive of both the girls' learning and sat through every lesson. As a result I was free to communicate on a weekly basis with her and gain feedback on Caitlin's and Nicole's practice habits at home. Caitlin being the younger sister, tended to want to follow in the footsteps of Nicole by learning the same repertoire or playing the same scales. Caitlin was more quiet and self-conscious than her older sister, and so required a more authoritative teaching approach.

Caitlin's weekly progress was generally consistent and she evidently enjoyed learning the piano because her mother mentioned on various occasions that Caitlin required less extrinsic motivation to practise than her sister and would practise independently. Caitlin's commitment to other extra-curricular activities, however, sometimes interfered with practice time, so that pieces took her longer to learn. Piano study was therefore not approached in

order to reach a high level of expertise but was for the enjoyment and overall educational development. The girls' mother believed that learning the piano would "assist their learning generally, their personal development and future interest" as well as compliment other extracurricular activities such as dancing and drama.

During our lessons Caitlin occasionally looked at the music and so she appeared to know how to read the music, yet when I went to correct fingering or asked her to start from particular sections of the piece she did not know what the name of the notes were. In the early stages of teaching a new piece I needed to spend most of the lessons carefully demonstrating on the piano and tried pointing to the music so that she would remember starting points. What helped Caitlin most was having fingerings written onto the music because in this way she was able to "read".

Georgia

My teacher-student relationship with Georgia commenced at the beginning of February 2009. Like Caitlin, Georgia was involved in many weekly extra-curricular activities, which included the following: Jazz dancing, private violin tuition, private piano tuition, swimming, Greek school, netball and gymnastics.

Unlike Caitlin, with whom I had already developed rapport and a teacher-student relationship, it was a little more challenging to pinpoint how best to approach my teaching strategies with Georgia, as we were still in the initial stage of our relationship. During the time of the study Georgia was also learning the violin privately at the school and her mother sat in on her weekly piano lessons. Despite her many extracurricular commitments, Georgia was always well prepared for her lessons and openly expressed her enjoyment of piano playing. Her mother on various occasions expressed that Georgia enjoyed practising the piano more than she did the violin.

In a short while it became evident that Georgia relied heavily on learning new pieces aurally and by imitation – hardly ever looking at the music. I felt frustrated and unsure of the best way to approach teaching Georgia new pieces. On every occasion her attention was directed to the music notation and often she would write the notes on the music. As I pointed to the notation her eyes followed along, however when she tried to play on the piano she could not remember which notes to play so I found it exhausting and eventually just felt it was easier

to teach the new pieces by rote. Her mother told me that Georgia always learned things from memory, that she struggled to get her to read the music at home and that she wanted Georgia to be able to read music.

It was difficult to gauge how to approach Georgia because I somehow expected all my students to read the music at home and then play the piece in the lesson. On the other hand each week it was necessary to demonstrate new sections of the piece to Georgia or correcting sections that she had memorised incorrectly. Georgia's ability to quickly memorise short pieces seemed to greatly compensate for what may have been lacking in reading skills. My hope was that in the first phase of the study I would be able to understand how to better approach teaching Georgia.

Tamara

Tamara was almost eight years old and in Year 2 at the time of the study. She started learning the piano with me in the beginning of 2008 when she was in Year 1. Tamara came from a musical background where her mother had learned the piano when young and she was highly involved with her Sri-Lankan community. Tamara is an only child and was classified by the school as a gifted student. Her weekly extracurricular activities included piano, violin, gymnastics, dancing, swimming, vocal training in Hindustani, Sri-Lankan dancing, Sri-Lankan language school and Buddhist school. According to her mother Tamara also regularly performed at weddings as part of her Hindustani training. Tamara learned the piano because according to her mother, "She really enjoys music… she wiggles her body and moves to the music every time", and because the mother learnt the piano when she was younger. Tamara's mother also wanted her to progress through exams.

Tamara progressed consistently each week through pieces and was quick to understand musical concepts and new tasks. Like Georgia, Tamara quickly memorised pieces by ear but struggled to identify where her hand should be positioned on the piano when any attempt was made at reading music. Tamara was confident and she always expressed whether she liked or disliked something in the lesson. Tamara responded best when taught by rote rather than by reading the music because her notation skills were still basic. As a result Tamara needed me to play through the pieces a few times in order for her to be able to practise at home. Her mother sometimes helped her with her practice but more often Tamara practised alone.

Nicole

Nicole was Caitlin's older sister and in Year 4 at the time of the study. Like her sister, Nicole was highly involved with extra-curricular activities and so consistent practice was not always possible. Nicole's mother had mentioned that Nicole lacked motivation to practise at home but that she wanted her to learn because she could see the benefits in learning an instrument. I tried on numerous occasions to change my approach with Nicole because she would get bored with some pieces. I tried introducing more engaging pieces and let Nicole choose repertoire. For a time this worked, but it was very difficult to witness progress when she did little practice at home.

Melissa

Melissa was also in Year 4 during the time of the study. She first learnt the piano with me when she was in Year 2, but discontinued for all of Year 3 because she was too busy with other extra-curricular activities. Melissa is involved in many sporting activities and competes regularly at state and national levels. Her parents thought it was a good idea for Melissa to resume piano lessons during Year 4 so that she did not forget her skills. Melissa had confessed to me in past lessons that she rarely did any practice at home because she was too busy. Consistent progress with Melissa was therefore very challenging and most lessons seemed to be a repeat of the previous week.

Zahra

Zahra was in Year 3 during the time of the study and also learnt the cello privately at the school. Zahra went to her grandmother's house to practise as she did not have a piano at the time and her grandmother helped her with her practice. Zahra came from a musical home, as her sister also played the piano and her grandmother played and taught a stringed instrument privately. Zahra waited for me to tell her exactly what to practise each week and did not practise any more than she was instructed. Zahra experienced difficulties with reading rhythm and having the music notation did little to help her correct the errors at home.

Demi

Demi had been learning the piano with me for two years and also learnt the violin privately at the school. She was in Year 3 at the time of the study. My relationship with Demi was very special because she was one of my first students at the school. Demi was given to me as

a student because other teachers refused to teach her due to tantrums and negative attitudes in the piano lesson. The first year teaching Demi was very challenging as she would sometimes cry and refuse to play in the lesson saying that she "hated the piano". Her mother insisted that Demi learn the piano and was supportive of any new changes in my teaching that might assist her learning. In the second year of teaching Demi her attitude towards the piano changed from negative to positive and she now enjoyed playing the piano. I was concerned however because Demi was very advanced with her aural skills but her reading skills were very basic and so she often felt frustrated. Her father, who also played the piano, helped her practice at home, yet she always expressed that she wanted to know how to read music in order to not have to depend on him.

Singing in the piano lesson

<u>Singing to letter names</u>

In the classroom students rarely sang pitch patterns to *la* but sang to letter names as they looked at the music notation on the whiteboard. I tried to encourage my students to sing to letter names in Phase 1. As my students' focused their attention onto letter names their pitch accuracy became faulty and they were unable to sing to letter names unless I sang with them.

I asked Georgia to sing *Stompin* to letter names. She looked at me blankly and so I sang in unison with her. When asked to sing on her own she only sang the melody and sometimes invented the letter names.

> Me: Is it difficult to sing to letter names?
> Georgia: [nods her head]
> Me: What about if you just sing to *la*. Don't worry about the letter names for now.

Similarly, when Zahra attempted to sing *Royal March of the Lion* to letter names as I pointed to the music, she could not do it without my help. I also asked Tamara to sing *Yankee Doodle* to letter names but she could not sing it as she was focused on trying to get the correct names of the notes and her pitch was compromised. It became evident that asking my students to sing to letter names was not very helpful in the early stages of learning a new song. My students could not process letter names, recall the melody and sing at the same

time. The best option therefore appeared to be asking the students to sing to a neutral syllable such as *la*.

Accurate singing and accurate playing

It was sometimes difficult to accomplish singing in Caitlin, Melissa or Nicole's piano lessons because they were self-conscious and nervous about singing on their own. When they did attempt to sing, I noticed a re-occurring pattern on my part with all my students. Every time a student had difficulty independently singing, I would sing with them. I did not spend sufficient time in the demonstration and imitation stage but instead moved on from this stage too early and focused on singing in unison with the student each time they could not independently sing the entire phrase.

> I asked Caitlin to sing the entire piece but she was unable to. I put the music in front of her to see whether this might help but after reviewing the video I noticed I was singing and she was just following me. Which means she was unable to sing independently without my help and having the music did little to help (Journal notes, 28 May 2009).

Students who could not independently sing the melody would rely on aural cues from me to correct their singing or playing mistakes. This was fine in the demonstration and imitation stage, however relying on this stage alone did little to develop aural independence, instead students were dependent on my aural cues. Once students were able to sing the song independently they did not need me to correct their mistakes on the piano as frequently as they did in the past. Rather, they self-corrected and tried to play passages by ear. I became less concerned with their ability to decipher notes on the music and more focused with whether they understood the song aurally. There were several occasions where Nicole, Caitlin, Tamara and Georgia had learned to sing parts of the song independently and as a result they played them correctly on the piano. When they could not sing a passage it was also reflected inaccurately in their playing. There were many times that I felt compelled to sing in unison with the student and reduce their independent singing time, however I made a conscious effort to follow the teaching stages from the general music classroom (see Figure 2) when my students had difficulty recalling the melody.

I asked Zahra to imitate singing *Royal March of the Lion* and then sang in unison with her. When she tried to sing independently she had some difficulty with singing the correct notes. I repeated the stages a couple of times and on the third repeat she said:

Zahra: Do we have to sing it again?

Me: Don't you want to sing?

Zahra: umm…

Me: Why what's wrong?

Zahra: [pointing to the music] I want to play

It was difficult for me to continue the process of singing without Zahra and some of my other students becoming restless. I felt a little unsure with my new approach to emphasising singing and whether it was appropriate in a piano lesson. Perhaps it did not belong in the piano lesson and was more effective in the classroom. It was tempting to abandon singing and simply teach by rote. As a result in Phase 1, in response to my students, the time spent singing was diminished and I felt frustrated at being unable to strictly adhere to my plans.

Pitch Contour

In the stages for teaching pitch I incorporated pitch contour after students could sing independently. The process therefore included singing to *la* and the hand to demonstrate up and down movement so that students became aware of pitch contour. In the lesson Georgia imitated sections of a song by singing to *la*. As we sang I demonstrated with my hands whether the notes were moving up or down and she also imitated the hand actions. After singing together with Georgia I asked her to sing and demonstrate with her hands the pitch contour of *Stompin*. She took her time and it was very slow because she was evidently concentrating on the direction of the pitch as opposed to concentrating on both singing accurately and pitch contour.

Understanding pitch contour helped to prompt my students when they forgot sections of the song. For example Georgia was playing through *Jig*. Rather than sing as she played I demonstrated with my hands whether the next note was up or down. From the corner of her eye she was observing my actions and continued to play the rest of the piece correctly. In this case my hand actions were functioning as a visual prompt and explaining this to Georgia could help her to understand that notation could also be treated as a prompt.

Caitlin became better at deciphering pitch contour by listening and without any demonstration of the hands. I sang a one-bar phrase without any hand movement and asked her to demonstrate the pitch contour with her hands. It was a little difficult for her, but as she

moved her hands she was also humming the melody. It became clear that in order to identify pitch contour my students needed to be able to sing the song independently in order to recall it. In the same manner then, music notation was difficult to master if aural independence and pitch contour were not understood. Incorporating the hand movements required my students to recall and reorganise the information that they already knew aurally into a visual representation, a similar concept required in the use of music notation.

By the end of Phase 1 students were successfully performing what they could accurately sing rather than being told to look at the music. Singing helped internalise the music so that it was easier for them to transfer it onto the piano after they had sung it. The connection between singing and performance on the piano was evident when students sang the mistakes they had played only moments before. This demonstrated their ability to retain short melodic passages and sing what they played, and points to the importance of learning to sing a phrase correctly in order for the performance to be correct.

Memory of rhythmic and melodic patterns

Memory played an important role in my students' ability to sing and play phrases in the demonstration and imitation stage (Lehmann, Sloboda, & Woody, 2007). On many occasions I became frustrated because my students could only imitate two-bar phrases at a time when learning a new song. It was difficult for them to retain and recall more than two bars. As a result I insisted on repeating the stages for learning pitch and increased the demonstration and imitation stage by two bars each time as they became more confident.

Nicole was unable to imitate more than two-bar phrases at a time. She was able to imitate straight after hearing the imitation, however, given a time lapse after the demonstration, she could not recall and reproduce the rhythmic or melodic pattern. She was evidently aware of this difficulty, saying, "I can't remember… it's too long" (14 May 2009).

I tried using the rhyme *Closet Key* to teach Nicole a short piece employed in the classroom, using the stages to teach rhythm as described in Chapter 4.

1. Vocal demonstration	I chanted the words
2. Vocal imitation	Nicole imitated the words

I have lost the clo - set key   in my la - dy's gar - den

3. Vocal and visual demonstration   I chanted and demonstrated a body percussion
4. Vocal and visual imitation   Nicole chanted and imitated the body percussion
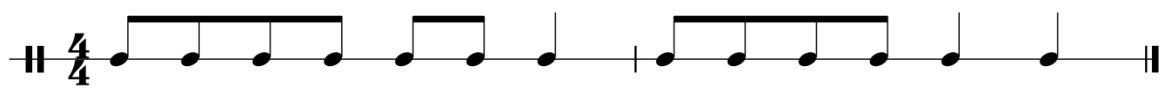
patsche patsche clap   clap   patsche patsche clap   head   head   clap   clap   patsche   patsche

5. On the spot improvisation   Nicole could not repeat the rhyme independently on the first go, so we repeated stages 3 and 4. The second time Nicole was able to recall and create her own body percussion as seen below.

Stamp stamp clap   clap   stamp stamp   clap   patsche patsche clap   clap   clap   clap

Similarly, I adopted this sequence for teaching the rhythm to the piece *Spring and Winter* that Nicola was learning. Here Nicola spent time chanting and creating her own body percussion, until I finally directed her to the notation because she wanted to play the piece on the piano. By having rhymes, Nicole was able to retain and recall more than two-bar rhythms than if she had no words. It seemed apparent that the process of demonstration/imitation and body movement helped to internalise the rhythm and assist recall when she then reproduced it on the piano.

On the other hand students such as Demi and Tamara were able to imitate four-bar phrases. And at first it was unclear why this was the case. What surprised me the most was that both students had the ability to recall the phrases a long time after I had demonstrated them,

which the other students had difficulty doing. I concluded that the reason Demi and Tamara remembered longer patterns was because they were able to internalise and hear the music even though it was still not present (Gordon, 1988). Zahra, Nicole and Melissa could not retain melodic or rhythmic patterns longer than two bars as they were still in the "babble stage" and were dependent on imitation to achieve accuracy (Gordon, 1997).

Naming notes and notation tasks

Singing to letter names or asking my students to notate the songs that they were learning were part of my plans to improve students' note-naming skills. I discovered that students' difficulty with naming notes was not the underlying problem.

Asking students to notate simple melodic patterns that they played provoked students to hum while in the process of notating. Humming was used as a means of working out pitch contour and sometimes the names of notes. This demonstrated that notating tasks are important in aiding the development of reading and aural skills and may be used more often in the piano studio and general music classroom. By asking my students to notate I could also assess their understanding of pitch contour and rhythm. The ability to notate when a note is higher or lower requires a similar process to that required to use hand movements to demonstrate pitch contour.

Georgia notated *This Old Man* by using dots in her invented notation. She demonstrated rhythm by circling the notes that were long (see Figure 5). On another occasion Georgia notated *Hot Cross Buns* (Figure 6). Here Georgia's notation is representative of pitch contour and rhythm and her understanding of notes C, D E in the treble clef.
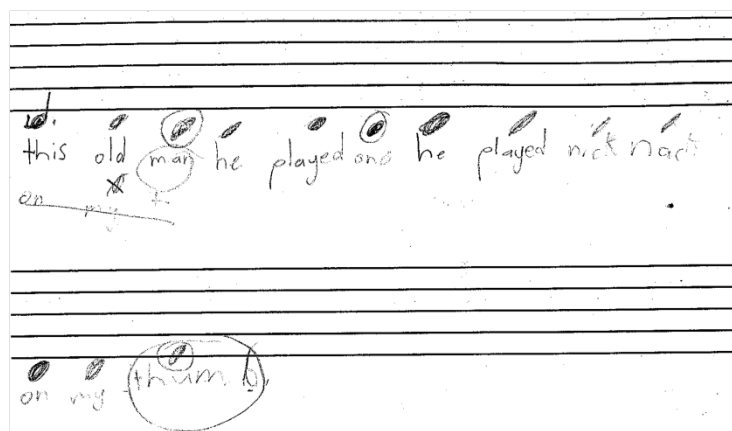
Figure 5. Georgia notates *This Old Man*
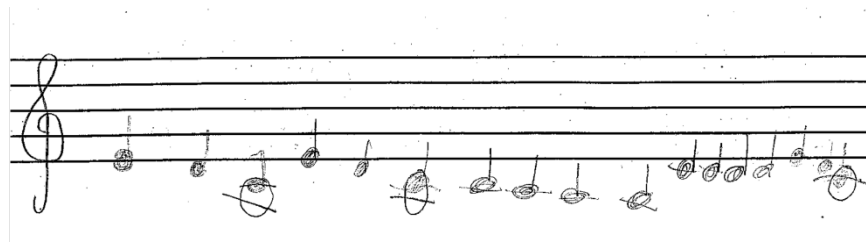
Figure 6. Georgia notates *Hot Cross Buns*

On another occasion I noticed that knowing the names of the notes had little impact. Tamara for example was one student who did not read music notation note-for-note. On various occasions Tamara played various songs by ear but began on different notes.

> It was most interesting because Tamara played the entire piece in a different key (the right hand). She played the whole piece in C major when it is in G major (Field notes, 7 May 2009).
>
> I asked her to play the song *Yankee Doodle* with her right hand and she played it all in C major instead of G major (Field notes, 19 June 2009).

These examples are indicative that Tamara depended on aural discrimination to play the melodies on the piano, or she read music notation by following the direction and contour of the music and not note-for-note, which is what a note naming method would require her to do.

Student expectations

The expectations of my students and their parents was never an issue that had emerged in my teaching prior to the study because I had never prepared lesson plans nor kept reflections and documentations of each lesson. It was through rigorous documentation and reflections that these expectations became a matter in question in my practice and I was unprepared to face them.

In Phase 1 students seemed more actively involved in their piano lessons by communicating their expectations and requests. Because my piano lessons were more directed and planned, the expectations were highlighted more than they had ever been before. My relationship with

Tamara, Zahra and Demi were open and communicative, so that each was active and engaged in the direction of their lessons.

I had planned to sing and do little playing in the first few lessons of introducing a piece, nevertheless Zahra, for example was very distracted and asked me twice in one lesson whether I was going to listen to her pieces. Tamara also had a few pieces that she wanted to play from last term and so the first half of some lessons in Phase 1 were spent listening and working through pieces that my students had practised.

It seemed that my new lesson plan affected how my students interacted with me because they openly expressed how they missed playing their pieces. Likewise, Caitlin and Nicole's mother, who was present in their weekly piano lessons, expressed similar feelings towards the change. She felt that Caitlin and Nicole needed to sing less in the lesson, learn more repertoires and continue with "the other way" of learning (that is, to learn a new piece, practise at home, play for the teacher and repeat the cycle each week) in order for Nicole to maintain motivation.

Mother:	Is it just repeating the same songs?... because the practice at home, it's getting a little bit monotonous and so it's getting a bit hard to get them motivated because they're not learning new songs. I know you're doing your stuff, but I want them still to be progressing in the other way as well.
Me:	Yes I understand… they are progressing in the other way…
Mother:	Like I understand and can see that they understand things better now in terms of rhythm but you see I don't sit with them anymore…. I don't know if they're speeding through or I don't know if they're concentrating… I just find it's a bit hard to get them motivated and see their progress without new pieces.

She expressed the decrease in motivation in Nicole's practice at home but similarly confessed that she could observe Nicole's improved understanding with my new method of teaching. Despite this, it would seem that "the unfamiliar" teaching approach made her feel uncomfortable and she did not quite know how to respond to the decline in Nicole's motivation at home. The mother was accustomed to associating many pieces learnt with progress in musical ability. My new method of teaching focused less on the number of pieces learnt and more on ensuring that students understood aurally, visually and physically what they were learning. I felt frustrated with not knowing how to explain what I was trying to achieve with students without making them or their parents feeling pressured to acquiesce. This feeling was compounded because my students also expressed that they

wanted to play more and sing less. It was difficult not to feel that the students were bored and uninterested with my attempts to individualise the lessons and incorporate activities away from the piano. I wanted to understand and respond to the expectations of parents and students, but also and more importantly, to be an effective piano teacher (Duke, 1999) by maintaining the motivation and interest of my students (Rife, Shnek, Lauby, & Lapidus, 2001).

Although Tamara wished to receive feedback on her pieces, as did my other students, it was quite comforting and refreshing to hear that Tamara had noticed the change in the lessons but also expressed that she liked the new approach.

Tamara:	It's really another type of lesson.
Me:	What's another type of lesson?
Tamara:	[pointing down]
Me:	This… what we're doing?
Tamara:	[nodding]
Me:	What do you mean?
Tamara:	Another type of lesson because we used to start by playing scales and then play the pieces… now we are playing some songs, but not really that much….I draw lots of notes [pointing to the workbook] and get to sing and clap.
Me:	Yeah… and do you like these types of lessons?
	[she nodded her head]
Tamara:	Yes.
Me:	Wow you actually noticed that.

Summary and conclusions of Phase 1

In Phase 1 I discovered that asking my students to sing to letter names was not successful in the early stages of learning a piece, because this distracted them from singing accurately. It appeared that a better approach would be to continue to ask my students to sing to a neutral syllable such as *la*.

It was difficult to get all my students to sing in the piano lesson because some were more nervous about singing on their own than others. Focusing too much attention on individual singing in the lesson was not always comfortable for each student and this would need to be considered in Phase 2, particularly if the student was unsure of the song. Perhaps singing as the Kodály method suggests is better suited in the classroom because the student does not feel exposed, but yet still learns the song in a group environment. In saying so, it was

insightful in the lesson to have applied singing, because through singing I was able to determine whether they would be able to recall and reproduce the piece on the piano – especially in their practice at home. The stages applied for teaching pitch and rhythm were positive for achieving success in performance, yet they were time consuming and students became restless and often wanted to spend less time singing and more time playing. Maybe in Phase 2 I would need to reduce the time spent in singing and instead employ singing for the purpose of assessing student understanding rather than spending periods of time teaching new songs in the piano lesson.

Asking students to notate their pieces was an interesting way to understand their perceptions and conceptions (L. Davidson et al., 1988) and one which I felt had positive effects. By notating in their workbooks, students demonstrated pitch contour more accurately than they did pitch. Asking students to notate the song by ear provoked some of them to hum and create vocal sounds in response to notation. On the other hand, it was sometimes difficult to maintain the engagement of the student in the lesson because at times the activity was time-consuming, particularly when they needed to figure out the notes pitch-for-pitch on the piano before they could notate. I needed to consider how best to approach notation tasks in the lessons during Phase 2 so that time at the piano was not compromised. I considered asking students to notate tasks at home.

The changes in my teaching methods made both parents and students feel uncomfortable, as they expressed to me during the lesson. I was unable to follow my plans strictly during Phase 1 and often reduced singing time in response to my students wanting more time to play their pieces. I could see the difference that the stages for teaching pitch and rhythm had in the understanding of my students, but nevertheless felt incapacitated to successfully communicate these with my students and their parents without making them feel pressured.

In conclusion, I attempted to employ the classroom methods of demonstration and imitation through singing and body movement in the piano lesson. It was difficult to employ substantial repertoire from the classroom lesson, because many of the lessons that I had planned to observe did not occur. As a result I found myself having to teach new songs in the piano lesson using the same stages used in classroom. As a result, more singing was spent in the lesson and less time was spent playing the piano. True integration would have

been best had the songs been learned in the classroom, leaving more time in the private lesson for playing the piano and developing other skills.

Chapter 7: Phase 2 – Classroom and piano teacher

Due to the major school concert that occurred during Phase 1, I was unable to observe every classroom lesson. Music lessons were always subject to change depending on circumstances that were beyond my control. In Phase 1 I adopted various aspects that I had observed in the music classroom, such as the processes for teaching pitch and rhythm, and also asked my students to notate the pieces that they were learning.

During Phase 1 I regularly conversed with the Director of Music to describe my observations for note naming and my students' inability to retain more than two-bar phrases. Through these conversations and a set of events, I was asked by the Director of Music to teach Year 2 classroom music during Term 3 as a replacement teacher. Fortuitously, three of my piano students participating in the study were in the Year 2 class. Phase 2 was therefore a more detailed study on the learning processes of the three Year 2 students – Georgia, Tamara and Caitlin – according to my experiences with them in the classroom and in their piano lessons.

I felt honoured to be given the opportunity to teach classroom music for the first time and very fortunate that three of my students would experience having me as their classroom and piano teacher. I decided that Phase 2 of the study would be a new learning experience in my quest to be a better music teacher, and that time in the classroom would resolve my problem with the use of singing in the piano lessons. Students would learn new songs in the classroom and spend less time singing in their private lesson.

Chapter 6 presented the integration of classroom pedagogy, which was founded upon my understandings and interpretations of existing school documents (Mayfield School, 2009a, 2009b) interviews and classroom observations, with my private piano teaching. In Phase 2, I no longer observed classroom music lessons as an outsider but through my new position as classroom music teacher became an insider in both teaching contexts. My new role as classroom teacher enabled me to plan the classroom lessons so that new songs were introduced and focused on for more than one lesson through group singing, echo-singing, body percussion, movement and performance on tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Phase 2 would now apply the group element of singing and moving that seemed time-consuming and uncomfortable for some students to do in the piano lesson.

My learning objectives for the second cycle were to teach my piano students the song *Angel Band* in the classroom and piano lesson through:

- Harmonisation using chords I and V;
- Transposition, so that students could perform *Angel Band* in five different keys;
- Rhythm activities that would help with bilateral coordination;
- Echo-singing;
- The performance of the song by ear before introducing notation; and
- The notation of *Angel Band* and other pieces they learned.

Harmonisation using chords I and V. During my observations described in Chapter 4, many of the classroom activities involved students playing two-note harmonic drones using chords I and V on tuned percussion instruments. Before the study I was unaware that basic harmony was taught in the classroom. I felt that these skills could easily be used in my piano lessons, as most of the beginner pieces are based around chords I and V. As it was now necessary to plan for both classroom and piano lessons, I chose the song *Angel Band* which I felt could be taught in group activities and the piano lesson. In order to integrate classroom and private piano lessons, *Angel Band* would be taught in the classroom through echo-singing, movement and on tuned percussion instruments. I felt that more time could be devoted to singing and developing aural familiarity in the classroom instead of the piano lesson. The piano lesson would therefore allow my students more time to transfer and explore chords I and V on the piano, which would otherwise not have occurred in the classroom.

Transposition. In the classroom I had observed how students sang simple songs in one or two keys but had not necessarily performed these in the classroom. In Phase 2 I would ask my students to perform *Angel Band* in five different keys: C major, D major, E major, G major and A major. I rationalised that it would require them to recall motor as well as aural memory of the piece.

Rhythm activities that would help with bilateral coordination. The classroom allowed many opportunities for students to vocalise rhythm through text and rhyme and transfer these rehearsed rhythms onto tuned and untuned percussion instruments. I rationalised that if the same could be done in the classroom with *Angel Band,* then less time would be needed in the piano lesson emphasising rhythm. Furthermore, by playing *Angel Band* on tuned

percussion instruments, students would develop hand coordination through the use of two mallets, and consolidate rhythm and beat keeping in ensemble playing. As a result I chose to ask the class to learn the melody of *Angel Band* using two mallets and learn to play the two-note drone using chords I and V. Caitlin, Georgia and Tamara would already be familiar with having to play melody and drone and thus play *Angel Band* hands together during their piano lesson.

Echo-singing. In Chapter 4 I discovered that pitch inaccuracies were rarely corrected in the classroom for individual students, so that some individuals would continue to sing out of tune or sing some incorrect pitches. On the other hand my experience with students' inaccurate playing in their piano lessons as discussed in Chapter 6 unveiled the importance of correct singing. It was not enough to sing to my students or sing with them; they needed to develop independent and accurate singing, which usually resulted in accurate playing. If pitch inaccuracies could not be corrected in the classroom in Phase 2, I would amend these in more detail during their piano lessons. In my Term 3 classroom lesson plans I chose to include echo songs in the lessons in order to constitute the oral experience necessary for my students' piano playing and strengthen the singing within the class.

Performance of the song by ear. I rationalised that once Georgia, Caitlin and Tamara were able to independently and accurately sing *Angel Band*, it would be easier for them to play by ear in the classroom and in their piano lesson. My observations of these students in Phase 1 demonstrated that they played by ear without the aid of music notation. As a result I felt that it was essential to know *Angel Band* aurally/orally for self-correcting. My aim was not only to direct and guide the musical experiences of the classroom and piano lesson but also to encourage active learning. I felt that active learning could only be achieved once aural/oral autonomy was achieved.

Notation of Angel Band. In Chapter 7 I discovered that by asking my piano students to notate the pieces that they played in the piano lesson, it provoked them to hum while they notated. I chose to similarly ask my students to notate *Angel Band* in Phase 2 in order to stimulate oral responses from them, demonstrating musical patterns and form, which did not necessarily require note naming.

In essence, the overall objective for integrating classroom and piano in Phase 2 was so that everything was transferable from classroom to piano and vice versa.

Classroom music lessons

I took the original Music Program (2009) Term 3 sequence chart from existing school documents (refer to Appendix E) and adapted it to become my lesson plans for Year 2 (refer to Appendix F). Originally, nine lessons were supposed to occur in the nine weeks of the Term 3 school calendar. However with classroom excursions and other school activities I was only able to teach six out of the nine lessons.

Rather than teach numerous songs that do not necessarily lead to notation and mastery on an instrument, as sometimes occurred in classroom music, only one song, *Angel Band,* would be taught through movement activities to produce accurate singing in the classroom. Also in the classroom students learnt *An apple for the King*, however this was not the primary focus for Phase 2. Moreover, during the nine-week teaching period students would have developed all the learning objectives set out for *Angel Band.* As discussed in Chapter 6, it was difficult to disregard other piano pieces altogether in Phase 1 without the concern of students and parents. Therefore as well as explore the learning objectives for *Angel Band*, I planned to employ a similar process of singing, notating and movement to teach other piano repertoires to keep the lessons familiar.

Caitlin

During the initial stage of the second phase Caitlin continued to be nervous about singing in her piano lessons. Initially I thought that the reason was due to the one-to-one context and that she would feel more at ease singing in the classroom setting. In keeping with what I was aiming to achieve in the lessons – that is – to not sing with students, I refrained from singing with Caitlin as I had initially done in Phase 1 to correct pitch inaccuracies. Nevertheless, rather than sing independently Caitlin would giggle and stop singing. Only when I sang or played the piano with her would she hum. It was easier to correct inaccuracies with Caitlin in the classroom because she sang more confidently with her peers.

In week 1, the song *Angel Band* was introduced to the classroom vocally using various movements and singing activities for familiarity. Employing an Orff inspired approach (Warner, 1991) I commenced by tapping the beat on my legs and asking students to imitate

as they sang. Then students had to choose another part of their body to tap while I continued to sing. Some chose to tap their head, others to clap their hands. I invited girls to stand in a circle and while singing the song I created my own body percussion which the class needed to follow. I then invited girls into the centre of the circle to create their own body percussion for the class to imitate. Unlike in the piano lesson, here Caitlin was a confident and highly engaged student who was enjoying performing actions in front of her peers.

Other forms of singing employed in the individual and classroom lessons were echo-singing and call and response. As opposed to echo-singing, which requires students to imitate exactly what has been sung, call and response involves the teacher singing one section and students responding with different pitch. Through individual echo-singing I was able to evaluate which students had difficulty singing in tune. I chose to use short one-bar phrases and increase the length of echo-singing (see Figure 7) as the song progressed. Because the words were not difficult and the song was quite repetitive, the words did not greatly affect accuracy of pitch. In the call and response students sang *Little Angels* and then as a class in unison we sang the last line (see Figure 8). Towards the end of the class Caitlin was singing *Angel Band* as she moved around the classroom without receiving any prompting from me.

In Caitlin's piano lesson, which followed, I tried to assess how well she remembered the song *Angel Band* and asked her to sing it. Because she struggled to sing out loud, it was difficult to assess her recall. Nevertheless, as time progressed Caitlin became more confident particularly with *Angel Band* and could sing by looking at the music without receiving any aural cues from me, which was characteristic of audiation (Gordon, 1997).

> I pointed to various notes from the music and instead of having to play it she needed to sing the note… I was so pleased to see that as I pointed to different notes in the music, her eyes commenced at the beginning of the piece until she'd get to the particular spot and then sing it correctly! (17 September 2009).

I tried the same task with another piece she had been learning, *Ode to Joy* in order to compare, but she could not do the same. I reasoned that she found it difficult to sing *Ode to Joy* "in her head" because not enough time had been devoted to singing it as was the case with *Angel Band* and so she was not aurally or orally confident with it. With *Angel Band,* most of the singing had occurred in the classroom so that little time was spent developing aural/oral familiarity in the piano lesson. It could be that in order for Caitlin to audiate and

understand notation, a period of at least five weeks were necessary – which was the length of time devoted to singing *Angel Band.*

Figure 7. Echo-singing of *Angel Band* with Year 2 Music class

Figure 8. Call and Response singing of *Angel Band* with Year 2 Music class

Caitlin was able to identify and associate the visual contour of pitch with her singing, whether it be using her hands to demonstrate highs, lows, step up, step down, or by creating her own graphic notation. In the lesson I asked Caitlin to notate *Ode to Joy* in the treble clef by ear (Figure 9). This took a few attempts because she sometimes referred to the piano to determine which notes to notate. After notating two lines I asked Caitlin to copy the last line directly from the music in order to speed the process. She then played the right hand as she looked at the music.

Pitch contour was the bridge between aural/oral familiarity and understanding music notation. Caitlin seemed to identify pitch contour before being able to audiate the song. Only when she was aurally/orally confident with *Angel Band* did pitch contour serve to assist her understanding of notation. The use of hands to represent pitch contour was a physical and visual means of demonstrating aural understanding. Caitlin was remembering the ups and downs and was able to associate the contour with the singing, and later retrieve this
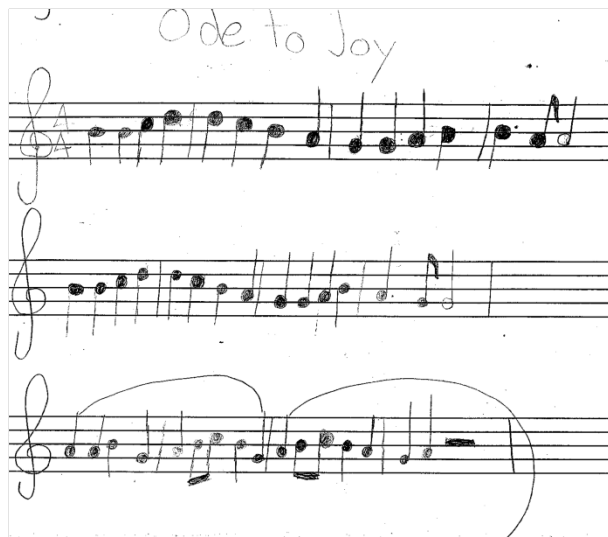
Figure 9. Caitlin's Notation of *Ode to Joy* in the treble clef

information in her playing. Rather than expect Caitlin to interpret the symbols of music notation from a sheet of music, here she was interpreting the aural representation to create her own visual representation, which in turn was easier to associate with the contours found in music notation. When I tried to introduce music notation before establishing aural and oral fluency, having the music in front of Caitlin made little difference and the task instead was a stumbling block. In Phase 1, Caitlin was able to identify certain notes from the music even though she did not always know the names of notes. During the course of Phase 2, it became increasingly apparent that she would know exactly where to place her hands on the piano and only be able to name notes by referring to the piano.

> We commenced the lesson with *Angel Band* and getting her to play and name the notes as I pointed to the music. She knew where to play the notes on the piano and when I asked her to name the notes she referred to the keyboard in order to know the name (28 August 2009).

Naming notes randomly as an exercise for teaching music reading did not have the same results as using a familiar piece of music and asking the name of notes from the score.

> When I took the context of the song away and just pointed to random notes I notated in the workbook, she found it a little more difficult to play and name them this way. As soon as I put the familiar piece in front of her and asked her the name she had no problem! (22 September 2009).

In most cases, Caitlin was able to name notes because she already knew the song and score well. She was relying on a schema (Cornish & Garner, 2009) to identify hand position, aural

familiarity and associate this with pitch contour of the music to recall the information needed to name notes. In other words, she needed to have all three components in order for note naming at this level to be achieved; otherwise she would revert to mnemonics without relying on familiar information. Furthermore, Caitlin became so familiar with the music that she could identify and point out the errors from the music.

I concluded that teaching Caitlin how to read music through mnemonics and note naming was less effective because these were not easily transferrable to the piano. In order for the teaching of music reading to be effective with Caitlin, the following steps were needed as seen in Figure 10. Here it demonstrates that notation was secondary to what was already learnt aurally. In essence Caitlin only needed notation as prompting as she had points of reference whenever she needed to start again by referring to the music. She was able to associate what she was playing back to the music score but not necessarily able to transfer the music score to the piano without aural competency.

It seemed evident that in order for Caitlin to understand notation it was vital that it not be taught as a separate skill, but preferably be presented aurally together with the piano. While learning the names of the notes was not be disregarded completely, it seemed more practical to play the piece by ear on the piano first before identifying names of notes. My perception of what it meant to teach music reading was redefined from what I initially concluded as students' ability to name notes, to a more practical conception, which enables one to master the piece aurally, and play by ear, so that once notation is introduced, it makes more sense because they can self-correct. Figure 11 illustrates my original conception for teaching and learning music reading, whilst Figure 12 shows the process I observed in Caitlin's music reading.

1. Aural Familiarity
Listening through song games to evoke singing

2. Oral reproduction
Aural familiarity was assessed by whether Caitlin could sing the song. Pitch inaccuracies needed to be addressed vocally through echo-singing and call and response.

3. Pitch contour
Singing and hand movements to demonstrate highs/lows/step/skip, which lead to symbolic representations of music direction and contour.

4. Pitch correction through imitation
Similar to echo-singing where the teacher plays a fragment of the piece and the student imitates. Traditional rote playing involves students carefully watching the teacher play the piano and then imitate on the piano either an octave lower or in the same register. Here I reason that this stage should incite both the visual aspect of rote and aural imitation found in ear playing. Aural autonomy was reflected when Caitlin was able to detect mistakes and self-correct her playing without visual aid.

5. Symbolic representation
Singing and pitch contour was linked back to notation through various singing exercises of following the music as she sang. Caitlin became familiar with the score despite not knowing note names. She was able to know exactly where to place her hands because of the aural/visual familiarisation.

6. Note naming
Caitlin was only able to name notes by looking at the music, knowing where to place her hands on the piano and referring to the keys on the piano for note names.

Figure 10. Steps for Caitlin to read music
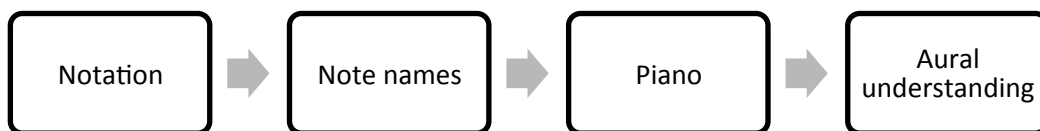
Figure 11. Original conception for music reading process
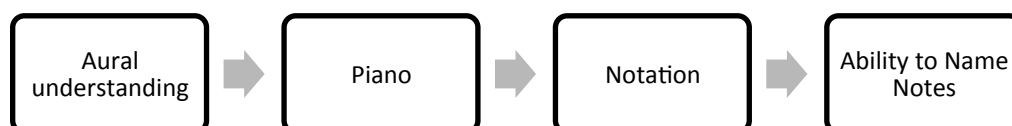
Figure 12. Revised process of Caitlin's reading

I inferred that Caitlin was not necessarily thinking of note names as she followed the music when she needed to play *Angel Band* and *Ode to Joy* in the transposed keys of C major, D major, G major, E major and A major. Here I played the tonic chord of D major and she was able to figure out how to play *Ode to Joy* starting on D. This was a combination of motor sensory and aural memory because she played using the same fingers but stopped when she realised that it was the wrong note and it needed to be a sharp note. Transposition was a useful means of determining Caitlin's aural fluency with *Angel Band* when she stopped to self-correct. The rationale was that transposition requires a high level of aural proficiency. As a result Caitlin demonstrated aural comprehension through transposition, confirming that she did not read music notation as individual notes, which was what note naming required. Regardless of which key she played *Angel Band* or *Ode to Joy* I could see that by understanding the contour of the music, notation assisted in prompting aural and motor playing.

Teaching Caitlin in the classroom as well as in the piano lesson gave me the advantage of being able to teach consistently and expand on concepts in her private lesson where time did not allow in the classroom. Nevertheless, in the classroom situation my attention could not entirely be focused on Caitlin and so there were moments where it was difficult to closely observe her response to various tasks without disregarding the other students.

Georgia

During the second phase of the study Georgia looked at the music notation more than she did in Phase 1, yet she still did not require music to learn new pieces. Similar to Caitlin, Georgia was able to play by looking at the music even if she did not know the names of notes. Reading at this level only occurred when she had mastered the piece orally/aurally. I noticed that learning a new piece was no longer merely by visual imitation as it had been in Phase 1. Instead, through a combination of aural, oral and visual imitation she was able to follow music independently.

Georgia continued to sing freely in both piano and classroom lessons, and projected confidence in many performance tasks in the classroom. I was impressed to witness how vocal she could be in the classroom – often taking on the role as leader when her peers did not understand certain tasks.

While having the additional time in the piano lesson helped Georgia's confidence and skills such as transposition and singing, it could not be concluded that learning the same song in both the piano and classroom lessons set Caitlin or Georgia above the non-participant students in the classroom when it came to performance on tuned percussion instruments. There were other students who also learned the piano privately outside the school, and who performed *Angel Band* accurately, demonstrating consistency in music reading and beat keeping. Students learning an instrument privately had the advantage of transferring and applying many musical skills in the classroom. During my time as classroom teacher I learned through the various activities which students learnt an instrument privately; particularly when a group of students excelled with notation and performance notation tasks, while the rest of the class needed plenty of assistance. Students who learnt an instrument privately found certain activities easier than the rest of the class.

There were often errors of performance in the classroom, which I could not leave uncorrected. The correcting of rhythm, pitch or performance mistakes was made to the whole class group rather than individually. If the class was singing inaccurately as a whole I stopped the activity and asked students for their attention through a call and response clap that was common in junior school classes. Every time the girls heard me clap the rhythm (Figure 13) they knew they were expected to stop their activity, clap the rhythm and listen to instructions. Sometimes in order to save time explaining rhythm errors, I would informally

clap problem areas in the call and response, so that students would naturally need to repeat without having to confuse them with too many rhythms (Figure 14). This was my way of assessing and correcting rhythms in certain passages.

Figure 13. Teacher's clap for classroom attention

Figure 14. Angel Band rhythm – "ten little angels"

The advantage of teaching Georgia and Caitlin was that I could correct any pitch or rhythmic mistakes in their piano lesson without the distraction of other students and hence their piano lessons were not entirely focused on singing as they had been in Phase 1. In Georgia's piano lesson shortly after teaching my first classroom lesson I chose to listen to the song *Go for Gold* (see Appendix G). This was a new piece Georgia had started to learn during the school holidays and that she wanted to play to me in the lesson.

> In this particular lesson I found that I was teaching Georgia in a manner that was not possible in the classroom. Similar to my experience in Phase 1 there was a long process of echo-singing to establish pitch accuracy and familiarity; demonstration and imitation, which enabled physical awareness and motor learning; and playing by ear.

Figure 15 illustrates Georgia's attempt to play *Go For The Gold* and demonstrates how she was confused and could not play the song. The reason for her mistakes was that she was not aurally confident and could therefore not transfer the song onto the piano. I decided to therefore use the process of echo-singing (Figure 16).

In her second attempt to play *Go For The Gold* Georgia was now able to play by ear and correct her mistakes. Nevertheless, Georgia still relied on me to give her aural prompting to play by ear.

Figure 15. Georgia's attempt to play *Go For The Gold* in the piano lesson

Georgia's first attempt at playing also reveals the small effect that music notation had in the early stages of learning the piece and the apparent connection of oral accuracy with accurate playing. I asked Georgia to sing the song and assisted her in the manner that I would have done in the classroom through echo-singing (Figure 16). It was interesting to observe that she sang the mistakes that she had played in

Figure 15.

After the lesson and based on my observations of Georgia's response to singing and playing, I realised that I possibly had not allowed Georgia to sing *Go for the Gold* sufficiently. Instead I instinctively sang throughout the entire lesson, giving Georgia aural cues when she probably would have benefited from receiving my aural cues followed by the oral support of her own singing.

On the other hand, although Georgia had difficulties playing *From the top,* in a following piano lesson*,* she only had to hear it sung once for her to play without difficulties.

> I observed again from the video footage that Georgia depends largely on my demonstration on the piano. However I would have thought that once I show her she would also maintain her eyes on the keys in order to copy me. Nevertheless instead of looking at her hands she looks to the music and plays the passage perfectly (Journal notes, 12 August 2009).

From this example it was evident that Georgia relied little on visual rote learning and more on the aural cues I transmitted to her. Caitlin could follow music by its contour and used the notation as prompting, whereas Georgia paid less attention to music notation and played more by ear. I concluded that at the early stage of learning a piece Georgia needed to either hear me sing the piece or hear it played on the piano for the initial stage of aural familiarity. Following would be the oral imitation (i.e. through singing) in response to what she had perceived aurally. If she had correctly perceived the song, then Georgia would be able to consolidate her perception through oral reproduction (singing) and thus be better able to play the song accurately on the piano because she would be able to self-correct and play by ear if

Figure 16. Georgia – *Go For The Gold* through echo-singing
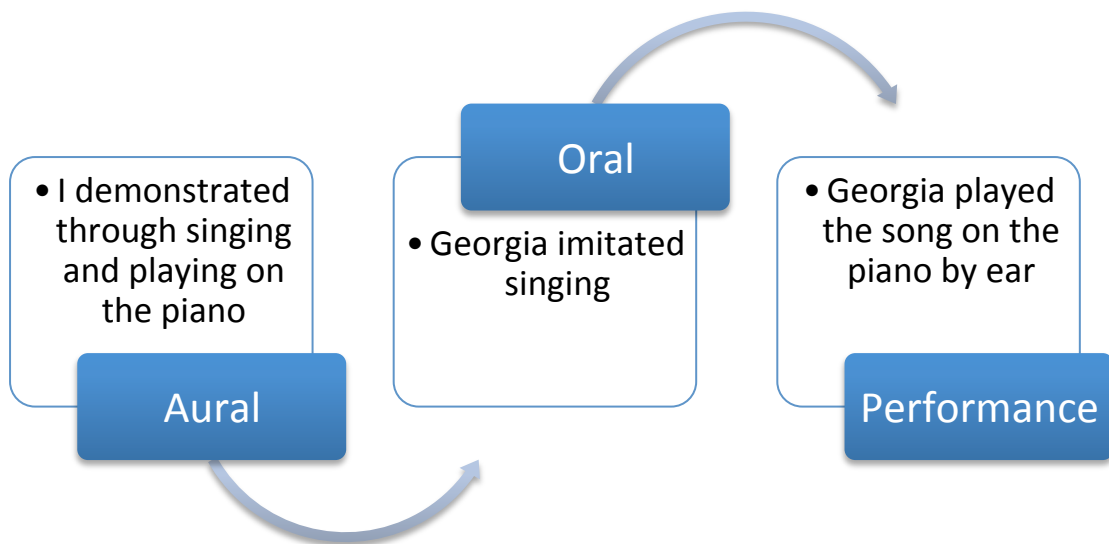

Figure 17. Early stages for learning a new song for Georgia

she needed to (see Figure 17). Hence, Georgia was developing her ability to self-correct her playing (see

Figure 15).

Figure 16 is a short transcription and shows how what she incorrectly played in

Figure 15 (bars four and five) is translated to her singing in bars two to four. It is only one note off, but enough to result in inaccurate singing and performance. In my week 3 classroom lesson plan the class was divided into pairs, so that one student performed *Angel Band* on untuned percussion instruments as the beat keeper, and the other played the melody on tuned percussion. The class performed this as I played the accompanying chords on the piano. Despite playing chords on the piano the class got faster in tempo so I stopped the class and asked them to sing the song as they played.

> [Singing] actually made a big difference in their playing. The girls could sing with a steady beat but once this got transferred to the instruments they tended to speed up (11 August 2009).

By singing students were naturally compelled to listen to each other more than they did when they only played on the instruments. It seemed that part of the reason they could maintain a steady beat while they sang *Angel Band* was that they had previously had to sing the song and move to body percussion. Furthermore, the lyrics somehow unified the class' tempo. Once the lyrics were subtracted each girl was more inclined to play in her own tempo because they did not have the unifying lyrics. The more I observed the class on this matter and also related it to how singing affected Georgia's playing I could not help but theorise that oral competence affected the accuracy of performance. There appeared to be more advantages to singing than developing aural discrimination. Particularly with young beginner students, accurate singing in either pitch or rhythm affected the outcome of their performance.

I had asked Georgia to sing many times in her piano lesson in order to familiarise or correct rhythm and pitch, but not to sing and play at the same time. This is because I had not found it necessary, as generally she did not have tempo issues. Those who pushed the tempo in the classroom were students who did not learn an instrument privately and therefore tempo was usually an issue with group performances. The students' playing was more positively

affected as I introduced more singing to my teaching, whether in the classroom or the piano lesson.

Georgia also exhibited some interesting learning behaviours in the Week 5 class when I sang *When the Saints go marching in.* I had not originally planned to teach the song in the piano lesson but instead to sing the song in the classroom music while students marched around the room to the beat (Week 5 in Appendix F). Nevertheless, I asked Georgia to tap the beat on the tambourine and sing in echo form (see Figure 18 below).

Figure 18. Teaching Georgia *When the Saints go marching in* through echo-singing

The first part of *When the Saints go marching in* is quite repetitive melodically so it did not take too many attempts for Georgia to sing the song. I gave her the starting note of middle C and asked her to play it on the piano by ear. It took a few attempts for her to play the entire piece. She would correct wrong notes and in doing so it was harder for her to maintain the continuity of the piece. I wondered whether having the music at this point would have made a difference in assisting her. After playing, I asked her to notate the song in the treble clef. It was interesting to observe that similar to Caitlin, Georgia referred to the piano to figure out the notes each time she notated a song. There were sections where she did not refer to the music but she would hum and know to repeat a bar. I believe that Georgia had identified the repetitions and therefore did not need to use mnemonics or the piano for notation. Georgia understood music in terms of melodic contour and repetition.

Moreover, to confirm Georgia's understanding, I asked her to notate by ear the song *An Apple for the King* that was learnt in the classroom, in week 8 (see Figure 19). In the classroom she also notated the song but had not completed it so I asked her to notate the song again in the piano lesson that followed. Here Georgia did not refer to the piano or mnemonics in order to know which notes to notate, but did so because she understood the melodic contour of the song and as a result was audiating (Gordon, 1997).

Figure 19. The song *An apple for the King*
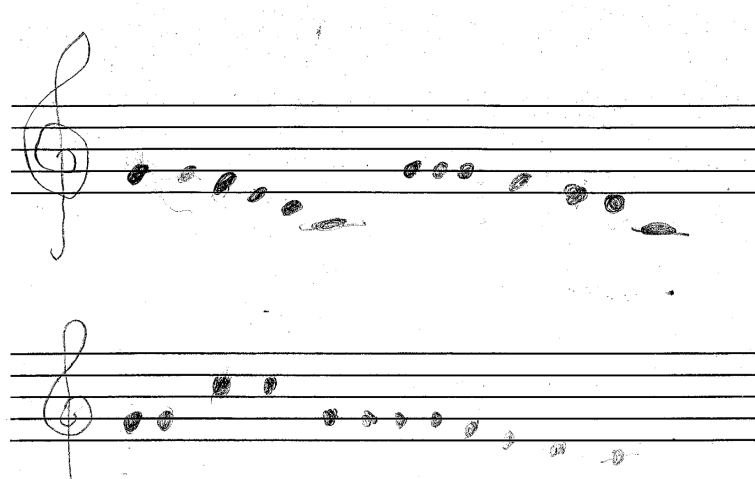
Figure 20. Georgia's notation of *An apple for the King*

The advantage of Georgia's aural skills were that when taught the accompanying chords for *Angel Band*, she naturally perceived the harmonic changes without any explanations or visual aid.

> I showed Georgia how to play using tonic and dominant chord... She played this very well… when I asked her to do the same in a different key it was incredible to witness that she played this on her own needing little help from me to show her where the chords were! (19 August 2009).

Similarly, Georgia was able to play other familiar songs with simple chords in the left hand.

I had asked her to practise *This old man* hands together and to add the left hand using chords C & G (I & V). After she played with the chords I asked her to add chord F (IV) into the piece. I am quite impressed at how well Georgia was able to adapt to a new task, especially with adding a new chord and to hear when the harmony changed... I asked her to play *Hot cross buns* now and to use the same chords C & G. I didn't tell her how to do it but she played this using the tonic chord and then added chord IV & V! (1 July 2009).

It was obvious that Georgia learnt everything aurally as did Caitlin, the difference being that Caitlin learned to rely on music and could relate the music notation to what she already knew aurally whereas Georgia did not. In the following lesson I asked Georgia to play the left hand chords of *Angel Band* (Figure 21) while I played the melody with my right hand in various keys. It did not matter which key we played, she was still able to aurally identify the changes in chords.
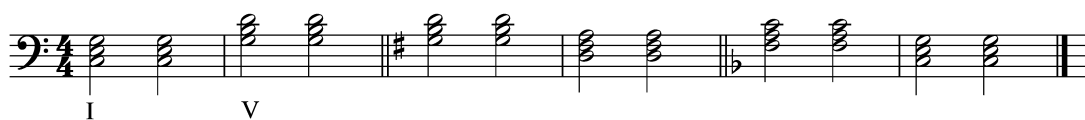
Figure 21. Chords I & V for Angel Band

By using chords in the lesson I was able to teach tonality and transposition. Furthermore, through the music learnt it was possible to teach note naming rather than expect Georgia to know the names of notes and then play. It was quite fascinating to similarly observe how differently my students learnt from each other even though I used the same piece with Georgia, Tamara and Caitlin. Georgia found playing *Angel Band* in different keys with the chords a lot easier than Caitlin and Tamara. Nevertheless, I did not find sufficient evidence to suggest that the use of chords improved her reading, but rather it showed other possibilities of teaching a song to Georgia that did not necessarily follow the structure of "read music and then play", instead with her it has been "play music and then read music".

Towards the end of Phase 2, Georgia was able to name notes because she was aurally confident, and like Caitlin claimed to sing the song in her head as a means of note naming.

Me: How did you know where to find that note?
G: because I was singing it in my head.
(16 September 2009)

Tamara

In the second phase of the study I realised how important it was for me to correctly demonstrate a piece on the piano. Tamara paid more attention to my hands at the piano than I had anticipated. I played through the piece called *Autumn* when I noticed she played with the incorrect fingering.

Me: Why are you using finger 2 instead of 1, like it's supposed to be?
Tamara: But I saw you using finger 1.

She appeared to rely on the rote approach more than Georgia did (Field notes, 31 July 2009). I felt a little confused with Tamara because in the first phase of the study I had struggled to understand her learning process for music reading because she more than often used mnemonics to name notes. Nevertheless, while using mnemonics facilitated her ability to name rotes, it made little impact on her ability to play.

Tamara had little difficulty singing *Angel Band* in her piano and classroom lessons. On one occasion she led the class in a two-part round of *Angel Band*. When asked to sing in her piano lessons she would likewise sing confidently, referring to *Angel Band* as being a Kindergarten song, "it's easy in the words" (31 July 2009). Figure 22 illustrates the first piano lesson following the classroom lesson when I introduced *Angel Band*. As can be seen, Tamara does not demonstrate any difficulty in singing. Where there were inaccuracies in pitch or rhythm, I went through a similar process of correcting pitch/rhythm as in the classroom. After singing *Angel Band* in the piano lesson she sang the last two notes of the cadence (V to I). Like Georgia, Tamara could internalise the tonality of the piece.

I observed her aural and oral abilities in being able to identify harmonic changes, wanting to play the harmonies in classroom activities and her ease with singing accurately in pitch and rhythm. I was unsure how to approach teaching *Angel Band* to Tamara because although she had a good aural skills, she found it most difficult to learn to play the melody by ear.

In Phase 1 of the study I observed how Tamara paid little attention to the notation. I therefore chose to not give Tamara the music for *Angel Band* in the early stages of Phase 2, but instead she would learn by rote and play by ear. I believed that if I eventually personalised the notation for Tamara by getting her to notate the song, she would understand

Figure 22. Tamara singing *Angel Band*

better. Unfortunately she did not show any improvements in her playing and often playing by ear was less successful than when she had the music in front of her.

> I was a bit concerned and frustrated because I haven't felt that using a piece that was used in class has actually helped Tamara learn to play it better on the piano. She is able to sing it however singing in her case hasn't made quite the difference as I had hoped. I just don't know what the issue might be. I think part of the reason has to do with fingering. Maybe if I had more time to work with the girls in classroom, I would've been able to do other activities in the class to revise note reading (3 September 2009).

After two weeks of learning *Angel Band* I introduced the music notation because she had been struggling to play by ear. I felt that I was spending far too much time singing and demonstrating at the piano and did not want to convert piano lessons into singing lessons.

> I notated the melody of *Angel band* in her workbook and she was quite pleased to see it.

> Me: Do you prefer it with music?
> Tamara: Yes!
> Me: Why?
> Tamara: I like it.
> Me: Is it easier to follow with music?
> Tamara: Yes.
>   (14 August 2009)

Here she expressed relief to have the music in front of her even though having the music in front of her had not appeared to make much of a difference in the past. It was interesting to observe how "having the music with the chords notated made more sense to Tamara and influenced her playing" (14 August 2009). When I pointed to the bass clef in order to draw her attention to the chords she said they looked like "biscuits piled up". Tamara created an imagery that she could associate with on the piano. She said she would play the biscuits piled up on the piano.

Figure 23 is an example of the notes that I wrote on the whiteboard and I asked Tamara to play starting on any note. The aim of this exercise was to understand if she could visually identify patterns and hence why in most instances she would play the song in a transposed key other than what was written. Tamara was hesitant to play the chords because she did not know what the notes were and kept asking me for the "secret" – that is, the mnemonic rhymes in order for her to decipher the notes and thus play them correctly on the piano.
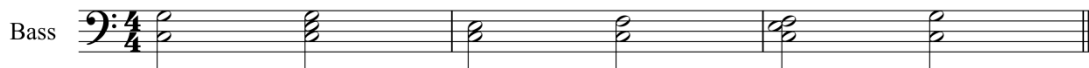
Figure 23. Bass clef chords in the left hand written on the whiteboard

On another occasion, I pointed to various notes from *Angel Band* and asked her to name them. The first time she immediately looked at the piano and correctly named the note. I asked how she knew. She pointed to the note on the piano, indicating that she knew where to play it.

Me:	How did you find it…. Did you remember the *Angel band* song on the piano to find the notes, or did you just go 'Every Good Boy Deserves Fruit?"
Tamara:	Umm…. I remembered.. but as well I used 'Every Good Boy'… just to check.
	(28 August 2009)

Certainly Tamara's learning was quite different to Caitlin and Georgia's. I could not understand how to approach teaching her a song using music, because no matter what I tried it did not appear to make a difference. I concluded that Tamara was still in the rote learning stage. Although Caitlin relied on both aural and rote, she could also associate it with the notation and independently follow the music. Tamara however seemed unable to relate the notation with what she played and so relied more on aural and visual cues.

Conclusion

In my new experience as a classroom teacher it was challenging to manage the various musical abilities of students in the classroom without focusing my attention on one student all the time. Performing *Angel Band* or singing in two parts was not always easy as some students could not keep a steady beat, could not maintain their part against another and had little music reading skills. I found teaching in this manner often limiting because I wanted to spend more time explaining and correcting pitch or rhythmic mistakes of certain individuals, but neither time nor circumstances allowed me to. Other classroom music teachers told me that coping with varying musical abilities in the classroom was a continuous issue which often required them to set various tasks for the different abilities.

In Phase 2 I was able to observe my students in both classroom and piano lessons. Caitlin responded better to singing and movement activities in a group and therefore I concluded that employing movement and singing for Caitlin in the piano lesson did not work well. In

Phase 1 it was difficult to integrate what was learnt in the classroom to the piano lessons for various reasons, while in Phase 2 the piano lesson became an extension of what was learnt in the classroom.

Phase 2 confirmed various aspects that were similarly applied in Phase 1 but that allowed me more time to observe, analyse and validate. Singing in the lesson helped me to assess how well my students knew the piece so that when they could sing it confidently they were able to self-correct rhythm and pitch inaccuracies. Georgia for example incorrectly sang *Go for Gold* and she then performed the same mistake on the piano. The stages that were common for most of my students are described as the stages for Caitlin. This describes how Caitlin was able to read the names of the notes by looking at the music and knowing where to place her hands on the piano and referring to the keys on the piano to name notes. Through notation it was possible to determine students' conception and perception of pitch contour and sometimes rhythm.

In Phase 1 I felt frustrated with my teaching because I felt that neither parent or student understood my intentions for employing the stages to teach rhythm and pitch, often because my students were not performing many pieces but focusing on learning few songs. In Phase 2, I encountered a similar response from Georgia's mother because she felt that Georgia needed to be "challenged more" by learning more pieces to practise at home. One of the disadvantages with my method of teaching in Phase 2 was that students did have less practice set for them. When I asked students to notate or listen to particular songs as homework tasks, these were not done.

Chapter 8: General discussion

This action research study consisted of two main stages in answering the research questions. Chapters 4 discussed research questions 1 and 2, while the following chapter draws together the experiences presented in Chapters 5 to 7 according to research questions 3 and 4 and emerging themes through analysis and interpretation.

3) What are my students' learning processes for reading music?

4) What are the responses from parents, students, teachers and myself as a result of this action research study?

The learning processes for music reading and my students

Visual and aural imitation

Children are imitators by nature, be it at home with their parents or in the school playground with their friends. Through the action part of the study (Phases 1 and 2) I discovered that the majority of my students found visual imitation easier in the initial learning stages of a piece, while only a few were better at visual and aural imitation.

Initially I had associated poor aural imitation with poor attention levels or distractions. While limited attention can be connected to the processes of short-term and sensory memory (Bruning et al., 2004) it would seem that aural and visual imitation requires higher cognition processes than sometimes considered. For example, imitation of a song requires the perception and processing of multiple stimuli, particularly rhythm, melody and text (Gordon, 1988; Lehmann et al., 2007). Similarly the imitation of a melodic passage on the piano requires students to process visual and auditory stimuli. During the classroom observation stage of the study I observed how demonstration and imitation played a major role in the manner that music was taught, particularly with singing and short rhythmic patterns on percussion instruments. With this in mind, demonstration and imitation of singing in my piano lessons – sometimes with text, letter names or the syllabic use of *la* were emphasised as a means of teaching new repertoire on the piano.

Teaching the piano through this means assumes that students will have the aid of both auditory and visual stimuli for recalling and reproducing (Bruning et al., 2004; Lehmann et

al., 2007). This approach however demonstrated the limited attention (Bruning et al., 2004) and unsuccessful processing of both stimuli at one time with some of my students. It seemed that visual perception superseded auditory perception (Lehmann et al., 2007). In response, emphasis was placed on echo-singing before visual demonstration was introduced (Choksy, 1988; Flowers & Dunne-Sousa, 1990; Walters & Taggart, 1989). The rationalisation for this was that students who could sing the song were in a better position to play it by ear.

Audiation

Echo-singing became an important feature of each piano lesson for learning a new song and later in assisting to correct performance inaccuracies. The students varied in their ability to aurally imitate more than two-bar phrases at a time. Psychologists refer to this type of behaviour in terms of memory and processing of information (Bruning et al., 2004; Lehmann et al., 2007; Miller, 1956), while in musical terminology, Gordon refers to memory and the ability to process and make sense of musical information as audiation (1988). In other words, for Gordon (1988), the ability to retain melodies in long-term memory (Bruning et al., 2004) is a consequence of audiation.

Taking into account such views, my students were taught new songs incrementally. I first demonstrated the piece in its entirety, and then two-bar phrases at a time for students to imitate. The same approach was implemented using rhythmic patterns as four bars proved to be too much information for the majority of the students to process and reproduce in the very early stages of learning a song. This method of teaching unfortunately was time-consuming and decreased piano playing time for students in the lesson. On the other hand, the advantage of spending time consolidating the song vocally with my students resulted in independence once they reached the stage of playing the song on the piano.

As discussed in the Chapters 6 and 7, students who had learned to sing the song independently needed no aural prompting in order to correct their performance on the piano. Instead students were able to self-correct inaccuracies in performance and were more likely to identify musical symbols that corresponded to the performance. On the other hand, students who could not sing the song independently needed aural prompting and were unable to aurally identify performance inaccuracies without guidance. In effect, singing had positive effects in the outcome of performance. Singing helped internalise the music and thus students were audiating (Gordon, 1988).

I asked the two students who did not have difficulty retaining longer melodic or rhythmic phrases to explain how they remembered rhythmic passages, in the hope to compare. I discovered that both students shared similar responses and metacognition.

Me:	I just wanted to ask you. How did you remember the rhythm? When I clap something to you and then I say "play or clap it back"… how do you remember it? What are you thinking?
Tamara:	I'm thinking [pause]… why do you need to know that?
Me:	I'm interested to know.
Tamara:	Hmm well I remember the *ta-te.*
Me:	Oh so you think *ta-te ta ta*??
Tamara:	[nods]
Me:	Can you say the rhythm?
Tamara:	[repeats the rhythm in French time names]
	(26 June 2009)

Me:	How did you remember it?
Demi:	Because I counted beats.
Me:	How many beats are there?
Demi:	Umm…. Because I went 1, 2, 3….. 1, 2…..3…. then 1, 2……1 2 3 4 5.
Me:	You mean you counted the notes?
	[I then tapped the rhythm again and asked her to show me. As I tapped she counted on every note. In my disbelief at how she remembered I said]
Me:	You counted like that?
Demi:	Yep.
	(29 May 2009)

The manner in which Demi and Tamara were able to represent the music to themselves influenced how well they remembered and performed it (Sloboda, 1985). Both were self-directed and strategic in retaining information aurally (Bruning et al., 2004). Furthermore, these examples are consistent with the process of *chunking* (Lehmann et al., 2007) or recoding (Miller, 1956), which is the ability to group information into meaningful units. Demi counted the number of notes while Tamara was able to reconstruct the rhythm into French time names based on her prior knowledge (Bruning et al., 2004). Furthermore, their responses correspond to the fact that no two students will derive the exact meaning from any experience or in this case, derive the same self-taught learning strategy (Cornish & Garner, 2009).

Students such as Zahra who were unable to recall phrases aurally were less strategic in aural cognition. Consequently, the tendency was for these students to firstly strategise visually (fingering and hand position) before aural cognition was developed. This would explain why the demonstration and imitation method of teaching at the piano was more successful than singing or playing by ear. It was clear that visual perception and cognition hindered the development of aural cognition with some students. I concluded therefore that only students who had developed aural cognition, were more likely to increase perception of a new song through both visual and auditory presentation (Bruning et al., 2004).

Musical cognitive development

The marked difference with my students lay in their abilities to perceive and process new musical information, which according to developmental psychology, has much to do with a child's age and cognitive development (Cornish & Garner, 2009; McInerney & McInerney, 2010). In saying so, I would infer that in the case of my students, musical cognitive development had much to do with their perception and cognition of passages, or as Gordon would say – musical age (Gordon, 1997). Prior musical experiences were essential in the development of perception and the encoding of information (Bamberger, 2006; Bruning et al., 2004; J. Mills & McPherson, 2006). As a result students who had not yet developed a self-taught method for processing musical information were less likely to retain longer phrases and imitate accurately. In essence perception influenced the capacity to process multiple stimuli. Students who strategised with higher order, such as Demi and Tara, tended to be students who were highly involved in other forms of musical experiences outside of the school.

Directed perception and the development of strategies

I found that my role as teacher was to scaffold by singing in unison with students (Cornish & Garner, 2009; Kennell, 1989; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) during the demonstration stage. This encouraged students to create their own auditory perceptual strategies as I stopped singing with them.

One of the advantages I discovered with classroom teaching was the ability to isolate and focus students' attention on rhythm, text or pitch in a more interactive manner before asking students to reproduce it on the instruments in the classroom (tuned percussion instruments).

This method of teaching worked well with most students because for some, the text assisted in recalling rhythm and it meant that students had more time familiarising themselves with the song without the pressures of performance. Furthermore, isolating stimuli and introducing them incrementally in this way benefited students' ability to perceive longer phrases.

I believed that if students perceived the song correctly aurally, this would automatically be translated in their ability to accurately sing or play the notes on the piano. However I discovered that while perception might be accurate in pitch and rhythm, the reproduction in singing or playing on the piano did not always follow. This was particularly evident in the ability to detect errors in the song, but not necessarily being able to play/sing correctly. External factors such as fingering and hand position obstructed accuracy in reproduction. In such instances, error-detection tasks before performance on the piano would be suitable in assessing students' perception (Killian, 1991). Moreover, the use of tuned percussion instruments in the classroom and piano lesson was effective in teaching new songs and assessing perception with students who did not like singing in the piano lesson. In fact, the use of other instruments bridged the sequential process of perception, singing, playing on other instruments and finally performance on the piano. As a result performance on the piano was last in the learning stages of a new song and was not a reliable indicator of accuracy in auditory perception.

Students' processes in learning to read music at the piano

This study raised some philosophical questions regarding music reading and young beginner piano students. *Do we learn to read in order to play, or do we learn to play in order to read?* The manner in which I approached my teaching in the past was that students must learn to read so that they could play. What I discovered in this study was that this could not be further from the truth. My students did not need music notation to learn a song but rather depended on visual demonstration and imitation, echo-singing and playing the piano by ear. Music notation was secondary, and in most cases served to prompt and provide points of reference.

The manner in which my students read music can be summarised according to their ability to follow the symbolic representation of the music spatially as a result of what was aurally familiar, rather than the mere ability to name notes. This study therefore suggests that

reading music should not be solely defined by the ability to name notes. When students were asked to name specific notes from the music, they recalled their hand position on the piano as a means of naming notes. In contrast, when asked to name notes outside the context of a familiar piece, or without the keys of the piano, the general response was for students to use mnemonics as a note-for-note reading method rather than spatial (MacKnight, 1975).

This natural approach of learning found in my students, suggests a learning philosophy from the general to the specific (Hewson, 1966). That is, from auditory perception and retention to the specifics of note naming. I concluded therefore that in order for my students to understand notation it was important that note naming not be taught as a separate skill, but instead be taught within the context of a familiar piece. Naming notes from familiar pieces provokes students to respond vocally and kinaesthetically. Notes that are learned as isolated pitch tend to use the specific to general approach of teaching music reading (Hewson, 1966) and be in danger of shortening students' span of vision (MacKnight, 1975). Note naming therefore as traditionally seen in most piano method books does not complement aural development.

Parent and student responses to the study

Change is never easy, especially when one does not comprehend the consequences of change. As teacher/researcher my underlying objective in this study was to change and improve my teaching practice. Noting that research generally supports the notion that musical achievement is a result of parental involvement (Creech & Hallam, 2003), I felt that by responding to parental concerns and student requests I was recognising that all parties are integral members in a triadic teaching and learning relationship. On the other hand, at times I felt frustrated and somewhat incapacitated to achieve my aims. Despite these feelings I knew that my objective was to observe and document what occurred in real life and not to create a controlled experimental environment.

Generally, students were more actively involved in their piano lessons by expressing their expectations and requests when a parent was not present in the piano lesson. Due to students' direct communication, often the lesson content that I had planned was changed and as a result I became reflexive as well as reflective (Somekh, 2006). On the other hand students whose mothers were present in the lesson did not communicate as openly as the other students. In these cases the mother became a mediator between student and teacher,

often conveying what she thought or perceived was irregular behaviour and attitude in the home practice.

In Phase 2 I wanted to limit the amount of time spent singing and notating in the piano lesson. As a result I set notation and listening homework tasks under the guidance and suggestion of my thesis supervisor. The problem with this approach was that many times Caitlin, Tamara and Georgia did not complete the tasks at home. It seemed that homework that did not involve practice time at the piano did not warrant the importance and so time was spent completing these activities in the lesson. My continual struggle to please both parent and student made me feel sometimes uneasy because I was not always free to follow through with my agendas without the input of students and parents.

The parents of the three Year 2 students, Caitlin, Georgia and Tamara, were interviewed post-study in order to strengthen my interpretations of students' and parents' responses to the study (see Appendix D for interview questions). In these interviews parents were asked if their daughter had expressed a better understanding of music reading since the study. All parents answered yes. When asked to expand on their answer Caitlin and Georgia's mother said that their daughters were able to name notes more easily. They also mentioned that they knew the names of notes very well for the pieces they had learnt but still found that they could not sight-read an unprepared score fluently. Tamara's mother on the other hand said that she could see the study had helped Tamara because she was starting to create her own music at home since being asked to notate in the piano lesson and she felt that this must be a positive result.

Parents were further asked whether they considered piano lessons as music lessons rather than purely acquiring piano mastery. Georgia's mother said that she had always thought a piano lesson was purely to learn the technique for piano, but that it was interesting to see how there are various skills needed before the production on the piano (13 January, 2010). Furthermore all three parents expressed that no teacher had ever explained to them what method of teaching was used to teach their daughter the piano or that various teaching approaches were possible. They stated that they thought piano lessons involved learning pieces to sit for an examination. All three mothers expressed their support of my efforts to openly communicate with them my intentions and my new teaching approaches through the use of singing.

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My response to the study

One of the underlying changes that occurred was my perception of piano lessons for beginner students. Through the study I was able to learn more about my students' learning process and observed how my teaching focused on developing basic music skills before addressing issues concerned with piano technique. I found that my role was that of a music teacher before a piano teacher. My students needed time developing basic music skills before coordinating many complex cognitive tasks at the piano. I concluded that it is essential for beginner students to undergo pre-instrumental study before commencing formal lessons at the piano in order to develop essential skills such as beat keeping, demonstration and imitation of short rhythmic and melodic passages and singing in tune, which all concede with Gordon's progression from the "babble stage" into their readiness to commence formal lessons (Gordon, 1997).

As a result of the study I was able to discuss my findings and concerns and created Pre-instrumental lessons for Kindergarten students who are interested in commencing private piano lessons. Students undergo a semester of group music lessons learning songs and focusing on rhythmic and pitch aspects that I would later teach in the private studio. Furthermore, through the popularity of these group lessons and formal instrumental lessons in Kindergarten, the junior school recently commenced a Pre-Kindergarten music program of which I am in charge.

At the same time, I have continued to teach primary classroom music at the school. The study has helped me to reflect and better strategise new approaches for individual students. My journey to understand the learning processes and how my students acquire reading skills has not ended but is a continual feature of my teaching. I continue to employ singing in the piano lesson and the use of body percussion and percussion instruments to consolidate rhythm with young beginner students. Lessons are personalised to suit the needs of each student. I continue to have piano students whom I also teach in the music classroom and am able to apply songs that are learnt in the classroom into their piano learning.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study was specific in context, with the intention to learn and understand the school where I had been teaching piano privately but with no knowledge of the classroom music program. Given that action research requires the researcher to revisit answers to their questions through various cycles (Altrichter et al., 2008), time did not allow for the occurrence of more cycles, which may have better reflected my students' improvements and ultimately strengthen the interpretation of data. Action research was quite limiting in being able to produce substantial evidences that could have been used for generalisation and my student sample size did not allow for testing but was quite specific in context. This study was limited to approximately two school terms (six months) for both action and reflection. The unanticipated missed or cancelled classroom lessons during the observation stage due to the major school concert may be a limitation as I was unable to observe all of classroom music lessons. My observations of these lessons may therefore not be entirely reflective and an accurate assessment of the general music classroom.

This study took on an action research model with the intention to not only conduct research on my students, but also to learn and improve my teaching, which would account as personal and specific to context and experience. As a result I was the only one who analysed and collected data. Conducting an action research study runs the risk of loss in objectivity, as one is both practitioner and researcher (McNiff, 1995; G. E. Mills, 2000; Somekh, 2006). In my experience I found it challenging to maintain objectivity and be critical of the school's teaching and my own teaching without being biased. In order to overcome bias, future research could utilise collaborative partnership with other piano teachers at a school who face similar questions and experiences with their students. While this will not necessarily be the solution to producing results that can be tested and generalised, it would certainly add to research and be inclusive of teachers in drawing a clearer picture of classroom and private teaching practice. Collaborative research may allow teachers to confront previously held assumptions about their teaching styles and practices and encourage them to be innovative teachers.

There is room for further research to understand the extent that music in the home influences a child's ability to strategise and process musical information. This knowledge would benefit teachers in their approach to teaching students of differing musical backgrounds and experiences.

Further research could examine the implementation of a structured and cohesive teaching program that enables piano student teachers to be part of the music education program of schools, rather than the "typical" approach of performers inevitably becoming instrumental teachers without any instruction in education. There is a need for piano teachers to be aware of other pedagogies, particularly that of young beginner piano students. Further research could examine the results of implementing a teaching program for piano student teachers that insists on teacher practice time under the guidance of an experienced mentor. This would help raise the status of instrumental teacher training (J. Mills, 2006) and discourage untrained teachers from practising and teaching in schools where there is potential to integrate both classroom and instrumental learning. Similarly schools that employ instrumental teachers could provide professional development for teaching strategies, so that teachers are progressive in their approaches to teaching.

Conclusion

This study opened up the lines of communication between experienced classroom music teachers at the school and myself, in order to learn and explore other approaches to teaching music in the piano lesson. This process of observation, reflection and action led me to consider private piano lessons as music lessons foremost rather than the acquisition of specific technical skills, particularly with very young beginner students who do not have basic rhythmic and aural skills needed to play an instrument. While my experience was positive because I also became the classroom teacher, there is still much to be said about teachers who feel the isolation of being an instrumental teacher, having little communication with and knowledge of what their students do in the music classroom (Gaunt, 2008). Instrumental teachers may consider openly communicating with other instrumental teachers of their school in order to address feelings of isolation and difficulties of lessons with each other rather than through the solace of personal reflection (Gaunt, 2008).

This study has demonstrated the shortcomings experienced by an instrumental teacher trying to create lesson plans and implement classroom pedagogies into the piano lesson, as it was impossible to observe all classroom lessons. The classroom operates to develop general music skills for the enrichment and appreciation of music, while instrumental teaching focuses on the development of expertise, and where the teacher-student relationship is more intense in the one-to-one setting (Gaunt, 2008). The use of classroom pedagogies such as Orff and Kodály demonstrated to be difficult when used in the one-to-one context. Singing,

chanting, moving and clapping had positive results in students' performance in the piano lesson, but the activities did not engage students in the manner that classroom music did through games and together with their peers. One thing is certain – this teacher will never tire in trying to improve and understand the learning of young beginner students, as this is the job of the teacher – to make all students literate (Elkoshi, 2007).

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

The University of Sydney

Human Research Ethics Committee
Web: http://www.usyd.edu.au/ethics/human

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Ref: DC/PE

12 February 2009

Dr. James Renwick
Sydney Conservatorium of Music - C41
The University of Sydney
Email: jrenwick@usyd.edu.au

Dear Dr. Renwick

Thank you for your correspondence received 20 January 2009 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). After considering the additional information, the Executive Committee at its meeting on **6 February 2009** approved your protocol entitled *"Teaching piano within a school: an insider enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading"*.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Ref No.:   *02-2009/11472*

Approval Period: *February 2009 to February 2010*

Authorised Personnel: *Dr. James Renwick*
                             Miss Lesley Cid

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007* under *Section 5.1.29*

The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.* We draw to your attention the requirement that a report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:

(1)   All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

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(2)   All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(3)   The HREC must be notified as soon as possible of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:-

- If any of the investigators change or leave the University.
- Any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.

(4)   All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 8627 8175 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8180 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).*

(5)   Copies of all signed Consent Forms must be retained and made available to the HREC on request.

(6)   It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

(7)   The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.

(8)   A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

**Professor D I Cook
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee**

Copy: Miss Lesley Cid lcid1540@mail.usyd.edu.au

Encl.   Approved Parental Information Statement
            Approved Parental (or Guardian) Consent Form
            Approved Teacher Information Statement
            Approved Teacher Consent Form
            Approved Letter/Email to School
            Approved Interview Questions

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Marietta Coutinho	Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
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Ref: DC/PE

15 September 2009

Dr James Renwick
Sydney Conservatorium of Music – C41
The University of Sydney
Email: jrenwick@usyd.edu.au

Dear Dr Renwick

Title:	**Teaching piano within a school: an insider enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading**
Ref. No.:	**02-2009/11472**
Authorised Personnel:	**Dr James Renwick**
	Ms Lesley Cid

The Human Research Ethics Committee, at its Executive Meeting held on 9 September 2009 considered and approved your request dated 27 August 2009 to modify the above protocol as follows:

- o To formally interview the parents of student participants.
- o To interview classroom and instrumental teachers and audio record the interviews.

The Committee found that there were no ethical objections to the modifications and therefore recommends approval to proceed.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:

(1) All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(2) All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

(3) The HREC must be notified as soon as possible of any changes to the protocol. All changes must be approved by the HREC before continuation of the research project. These include:-
- • If any of the investigators change or leave the University.
- • Any changes to the Participant Information Statement and/or Consent Form.

(4)	All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The Participant Information Statement and Consent Form are to be on University of Sydney letterhead and include the full title of the research project and telephone contacts for the researchers, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee and the following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement. *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney, on (02) 8627 8175 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8180 (Facsimile) or* human.ethics@usyd.edu.au *(Email).*

(5)	Copies of all signed Consent Forms must be retained and made available to the HREC on request.

(6)	It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

(7)	A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Yours sincerely

Professor D I Cook
Chairman
Human Research Ethics Committee

Copy:	Ms Lesley Cid	lcid1540@mail.usyd.edu.au

Enc.	Approved Participant Information Statement – Parents
	Approved Participant Information Statement – Teachers
	Approved Participant Consent Form
	Approved Teacher Consent Form

Appendix B: Participant Information Statements

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

Dr James Renwick

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PARENTAL INFORMATION STATEMENT
Research Project

Title: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

(1)   What is the study about?
The study is an enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano pedagogy in order to improve student's music reading abilities. Classroom music will be considered as an important learning context whereby the piano teacher will use in the private lessons to enhance musical concepts through consistent terminologies and practices.

(2)   Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Lesley Cid and will form the basis for the degree of Masters of Music (Education) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

(3)   What does the study involve?
Your daughter will be observed during her classroom music lessons from Term 1 to the end of Term 3 in order to identify what is being learnt and how this may be used in her private piano lessons, but also to monitor any changes of her learning during the entire study process. The weekly piano lessons of your daughter will be observed and monitored via video/audio recordings. Her teacher will question your daughter about her music reading during her lessons in the hope to improve the teaching and learning of piano music reading.

(4)   How much time will the study take?
The study will commence in Term 1 with weekly classroom observations through to the end of Term 3. Your daughter's weekly piano lessons in Term 2 and 3 will be observed and monitored. This will be a total of 16 lessons.

(5)   Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney, The School or her Piano teacher.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

Your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate will not prejudice you or your child's future relations with the University of Sydney or The School. If you decide to permit your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child's

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participation at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney or The School.

(6)   Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7)   Will the study benefit me?

The objective of this study is to find new ways of improving music reading skills with piano students who learn at a school. It is hoped that at the end of the 16 lessons you and your daughter will have felt the benefits of learning piano at a school.

(8)   Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you may.

(9)   What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Lesley Cid will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Lesley Cid (0421 811 466) or Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

(10)   What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

The University of Sydney

Version 2, 19 January, 2009 – Teaching piano within a school

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Lecturer in Music Education

PARENTAL INFORMATION STATEMENT
Research Project

Title: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

(1)   What is the study about?
The study is an enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano pedagogy in order to improve student's music reading abilities. Classroom music will be considered as an important learning context whereby the piano teacher will use in the private lessons to enhance musical concepts through consistent terminologies and practices.

(2)   Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Lesley Cid and will form the basis for the degree of Masters of Music (Education) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

(3)   What does the study involve?
The student researcher may conduct short interviews with you before or after your daughter's piano lesson for the remainder of Term 3 and will keep motes. A longer semi-structured interview will be conducted and audio recorded at the end of the study.

(4)   How much time will the study take?
The short interviews will only take 5 minutes before or after your daughter's piano lessons. The longer interview should take no more than 30 minutes.

(5)   Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney, The School or her Piano teacher.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

Your decision whether or not to permit your child to participate will not prejudice you or your child's future relations with the University of Sydney or The School. If you decide to permit your child to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your child's participation at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney or The School.

The University of Sydney

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(6)   Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7)   Will the study benefit me?

The objective of this study is to find new ways of improving music reading skills with piano students who learn at a school. It is hoped that at the end of the 16 lessons you and your daughter will have felt the benefits of learning piano at a school.

(8)   Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you may.

(9)   What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Lesley Cid will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Lesley Cid (0421 811 466) or Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

(10)   What if I have a complaint or concerns?

> **Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811 (Telephone); (02) 9351 6706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@usyd.edu.au (Email).**

This information sheet is for you to keep

Version 2, 19 January, 2009 – Teaching piano within a school

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TEACHER INFORMATION STATEMENT
Research Project

Title: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

(1)   What is the study about?
The study is an enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano pedagogy in order to improve students' music reading abilities. Classroom music will be considered as an important learning context whereby the piano teacher will use in the private lessons to enhance musical concepts through consistent terminologies and practices.

(2)   Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Lesley Cid and will form the basis for the degree of Masters of Music (Education) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

(3)   What does the study involve?
A short semi-structured interview that will be audio recorded.

(4)   How much time will the study take?
The interview will take no more than 30 minutes

(5)   Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6)   Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

The University of Sydney

(7) Will the study benefit me?

The objective of this study is to find new ways of improving music reading skills with piano students who learn at a school but to also look into integrating classroom music to private instrumental learning.

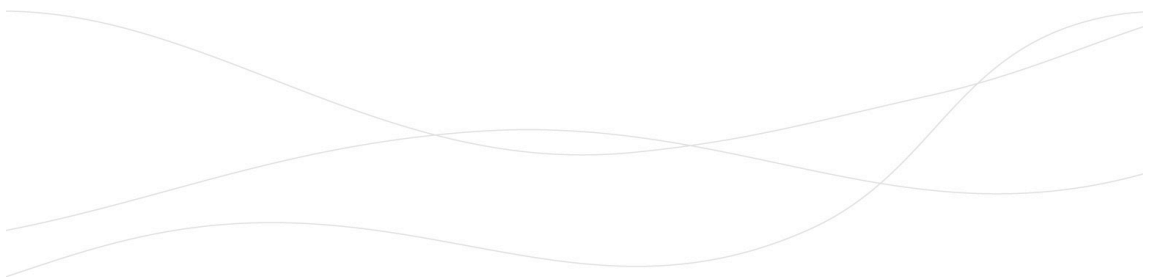**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you may.

(9) What if I require further information?

When you have read this information, Lesley Cid will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Lesley Cid (0421 811 466) or Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Senior Ethics Officer, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 8627 8175 (Telephone); (02) 8627 8180 (Facsimile) or human.ethics@usyd.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep

Appendix C: Consent Forms

Dr James Renwick

Lecturer in Music Education

PARENTAL (OR GUARDIAN) CONSENT FORM

I, ... agree to permit ....………......................., who is

aged .... years, to participate in the research project –

TITLE: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1.   I have read the Information Statement and the time involved for my child's participation in the project. The researcher/s has given me the opportunity to discuss the information and ask any questions I have about the project and they have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without prejudice to my or my child's relationship with the researcher/s now or in the future.

3.   I agree that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published provided that neither my child nor I can be identified.

4.   I understand that if I have any questions relating to my child's participation in this research I may contact the researcher/s who will be happy to answer them.

5.   I acknowledge receipt of the Information Statement.

....
Signature of Parent/Guardian

....
Please PRINT name

....
Date

Version 2, 19 January, 2009 – Teaching piano within a school

Macquarie Street
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Dr James Renwick
Lecturer in Music Education

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ...[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1.   The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3.   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney and the school both now or in the future.

4.   I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5.   I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6.   I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to: –

    i) Audio-taping   YES ☐   NO ☐

    ii) Receiving Feedback   YES ☐   NO ☐
       If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback Question (iii)", please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Address: _____

                  _____

    Email: _____

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

111

SYDNEY CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

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TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I, ...[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: Teaching piano within a school: An inside enquiry into the benefits of reconciling classroom music pedagogy with private piano teaching for the purposes of music reading.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1.   The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3.   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney and the school both now or in the future.

4.   I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

5.   I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6.   I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7.   I consent to: –

      i)   Audio-taping   YES   NO

      ii)   Receiving Feedback   YES   NO
           If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback Question (iii)", please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: _____

               _____

Email: _____

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

Appendix D: Interviews

Director of Music/Head of Music Curriculum
1) Is music reading part of the music curriculum for Yrs K-5?
2) What are your thoughts on music reading and teaching?
3) How is it accomplished?
4) Anything about the string integration program?
5) Is notation important in the school??
6) What is the philosophy for the role of private instrumental lessons at Mayfield School?
7) Are your expectations of the role of instrumental lessons being fulfilled?
8) What is your ideal instrumental program for this school?
9) Do you think students might benefit from integrating classroom and instrumental teaching from the junior school?
10) Any other thoughts?

To the Instrumental teacher
1) How would you describe X's music reading skills?
2) How do you assist X with rhythm?
3) How do you assist X in reading pitch?
4) What do you find works best for X?
5) Do you get them to sing in their lessons? Which songs?
6) Any other thoughts?

Parents
1) What other extra curricular activities outside the school is your daughter involved in besides piano (during the time of the study not in 2010)
2) For what reason does your daughter learn piano?
3) (i.e. belief of helping her progress in school, because she wants to, as parents you want her to learn, it develops her well being etc…)
4) Do you sit and practise with your daughter or can she practise on her own?
5) Has she expressed a better understanding of reading music since the study?
6) Have you at all noticed ANY changes to her attitude or progress since the study?
7) Have you any thoughts about the study?
8) How important is music reading to you and why?
9) Has any of her prior teachers ever explained to you the method of teaching that they use?
10) Do you feel that the piano lesson is foremost a music lesson or do you perceive differently?
11) Which is more important to you – being able to play by ear and developing aural skills or being able to read music really well but with little aural skills?
12) How would you note progress in your daughter's piano lessons?

Appendix E: Year 2 Music program sequence chart – Term 3

<u>Term 3 Week 1</u>

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – provide opportunities for students to explore musical concepts in their performing, organising sound and listening learning experiences (eg varying dynamics, experimenting with using different sound sources to perform repertoire, varying the tempo of the music)

• Revision Oz Opera and Musica Viva

• Assessment – Distinguishes different tempi and a change of tempo by physically moving at a different speed.

<u>Term 3 Week 2</u>

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – discuss with students and encourage students to discuss among themselves important aspects of the music listened to (eg What instruments/voices can you hear? What is the tempo of the music? Does the tempo change? How do the dynamics change in this piece? Put your hand up when you hear the melody repeated, is it the same as before?)

• Assessment – Identifies and performs notes and rests with the value of minims, crotchets and quavers.

<u>Term 3 Week 3</u>

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – discuss the roles of the performers and composers — how are they different?

• Row, Row Row your Boat, Make composition using classroom percussion

instruments to replace words over an simple bordun ostinato.

• Record

Term 3, Week 4

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – discuss their own musical activities — are they being performers, or composers, or both?

• Baidin Fheilimi; Sing and Play song

• Listen to song on recording and then learn Pronunciation Guide

• Tell the Shipwreck story

• Assessment – Distinguishes between loud and soft sounds and identifies p, f, mp, mf, pp and ff dynamic markings.

Term 3, Week 5

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – provide opportunities for students to discuss the reasons why they like different music (Is it because it is loud or fast? Is it because it is the same as Mum and Dad listen to? Is it because they like certain instruments or certain bands? What do they like about those bands?)

• Sing Kookaburra sits in the Old Gum Tree

• Create accompaniments using melodic motives and ostinatos

Term 3, Week 6

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and

movements)

T/L – provide opportunities for students to recognise that music is valued and appreciated in the world in a variety of ways (eg have visiting groups come to the school, discuss how people appreciate different styles of music)

• Sing What shall we do with a drunken sailor and create ostinato on BX, and recorder

• Sing Baby sardine creating accompaniment on BX, AX and sound shapes (Hand drums)

• Assessment – Demonstrates an understanding of crescendo and decrescendo through appropriate movement.

Term 3, Week 7

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – discuss and explain how music can represent different things (eg a circus, sunrise — as in 'Morning' from *Peer Gynt* by Grieg), how music can be a means of expression, and how its purpose can sometimes be to explore musical sounds.

• Row Row Row your boat

• Create accompaniments using melodic motives and ostinatos

Term 3, Week 8

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – provide opportunities for students to sing, play and move to music using their voices, body percussion and percussion instruments

• Michael Finnigan

• Create accompaniments using melodic motives and ostinatos

Term 3, Week 9

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – highlight important musical features of the repertoire used (eg repeated patterns, a regular beat, the contour of the pitch, sound sources, rhythmic patterns)

• Three blind mice

• Create accompaniments using melodic motives and ostinatos

Term 3 Week 10

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – continue to model the use of voice and other sound sources, and extend the range of sound sources that students are exposed to

• Frère Jacque

• Create accompaniments using melodic motives and ostinatos

Appendix F: Year 2 Classroom music lesson plans for term 3

Term 3 Week 1: 090728

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – provide opportunities for students to explore musical concepts in their performing, organising sound and listening learning experiences (eg varying dynamics, experimenting with using different sound sources to perform repertoire, varying the tempo of the music)

• Pitch exploration/Vocal warm up

Students will explore all registers of their voice, especially head voice, using movements and gestures to demonstrate High/low pitch.

This activity worked well and the girls created their own sounds by using hand movements to demonstrate high/low/short/long notes and the contour of the melody.

However some girls spoke rather than sang or were being silly by shouting, therefore I revised the different ways one can use the voice: i.e. sing, whisper, shout and talk.

• Fragment singing

Sing *Oh my, no more pie*

• Simple song – this song will be integrated into piano lessons so that students learn to sing and play this on the piano, but also develop the other skills of transposition and notation.

- Listening (to familiarise the class with the piece) – Sing to the class *Angel band* as story – class tap and click the beat on their thighs as I sing the song.

- Class echo short phrases collectively. And evaluate whether they are able to sing individually.

 - Call & response - class only responds singing "little angels" as I sing the rest of the song.

Term 3 Week 2 – 0908042

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – discuss with students and encourage students to discuss among themselves important aspects of

the music listened to (eg What instruments/voices can you hear? What is the tempo of the music? Does the tempo change? How do the dynamics change in this piece? Put your hand up when you hear the melody repeated, is it the same as before?)

Areas to look at this week – Singing/pitch direction/dynamics

• Pitch exploration/Vocal warm up

Students will explore all registers of their voice, especially head voice, using movements and gestures to demonstrate High/low pitch.

• Fragment singing

Sing *Oh my, no more pie*

• Simple song

Revise *Angel Band* – have a beat keeper play percussion instrument and demonstrate a body percussion movement while I sing the song. Choose another student to model new body percussion.

• Demonstrate with my hands the movement of pitch for the first phrase and students imitate.

• Can they identify something about the MELODY? – Repetitious

• Pretend to play the xylophone mirroring students so that they follow hand movements in the air.

• Demonstrate on the Xylophone and students play with fingers (no sound)

• With mallets play melody on tuned instruments

• Divide the class into groups and depending on ability, have one group play melody, another play a minim beat harmony drone and another group to play untuned percussion instruments on the beat i.e. with given rhythmic ostinato pattern

Term 3 Week 3 – 0908113

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – discuss the roles of the performers and composers — how are they different?

• Pitch exploration/Vocal warm up

Students will explore all registers of their voice, especially head voice, using movements and gestures to demonstrate High/low pitch. This week with emphasis on the dynamic range of the voice – loud – soft.

• Fragment singing

Sing *Oh my, no more pie*

• Simple song

Revise *Angel Song* with a beat keeper – singing game

• Demonstrate with my hands the movement of pitch of the first phrase.

Model movement and students imitate.

- Students play on instruments the melody.

- Demonstrate drone pattern using minims – girls play drone on instruments.

- Divide the class into groups and depending on ability, have some play melody, others minim beat harmony drone and another group to play untuned percussion instruments on the beat.

• In their groups they'll each have a turn at playing the harmony/chords using the notated rhythm while the rest play the melody and keep the beat.

• Introduce a new song for next week – *An apple for the King*

Term 3, Week 4 – 0908184

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – discuss their own musical activities — are they being performers, or composers, or both?

• Fragment singing – *The prettiest girl*

• This week we will look at notating *Angel Band.*

 In pairs students play through the song. Having to find the notes on the instrument and then notate pitch in the treble clef.

- Revise beat values: Crotchet, minim, quavers

- On the whiteboard randomly ask students to create 2 bars in 4/4.

- Divide the class into their groups again and have them notate the chosen rhythm (assessment of notation)

• The objective with pitch notation is to get girls aware of melodic contour. My piano students will be very familiar with this process of having to demonstrate with their hands and notating what they play. The other girls may find it a little difficult so I need to be aware of this.

• Sing to the girls *If I had a donkey* – As I sing, they will need to tap the beat and identify the meter (duple or triple).

• As I sing the girls need to see if they can show me with their hands the direction of the pitch.

• Sing in solfege – see how well they respond to solfege. I expect that there will be a few who will not be strong in this so I may need to demonstrate a few times with my hands.

• On tuned percussion instruments some girls play C & G with two mallets on the beat while the class sings along to the song

• Notate Doh to Soh on the whiteboard (in C major)

• Students sing the first 2 phrases and notate this on the hand out sheet.

Term 3, Week 5 – 0908255

OC – Selects and organises sound in simple structures (1.2)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – provide opportunities for students to discuss the reasons why they like different music (Is it because it is loud or fast? Is it because it is the same as Mum and Dad listen to? Is it because they like certain instruments or certain bands? What do they like about those bands?)

(THIS LESSON DID NOT OCCURR DUE TO ALLWELL ASSESSMENTS)

• Use *When the saints go marching in* as a warm up song… girls need to march around the room while I sing the song in order to familiarise them aurally with the song.

• This week the girls need to be introduced to the Musica Viva *Humming Bird* repertoire that will be performed to them in 2 weeks. The music class generally consists of learning and doing the different activities in the resources pack.

The main objective I will aim to do today using these resources will be:

1) Listening tasks:

• to identify how many sections the piece has?

• to identify tonality – major/minor – sad vs happy…

• to identify how many voices

• to identify meter – 4/4 or ¾

• Elicit what kind of song might this be for? What is the mood?

Answer: Lullaby and also discuss that it is in Spanish.

2) Rhythm Ostinato:

Using the body percussion have the girls tap the beat as they re-listen to the song.

• Teach the students the 4 speech rhyme ostinatos using body percussion

• in groups they represent each part and enter after the other, keeping the dynamic level soft and mood gentle.

• Transfer the patterns to non-melodic instruments and perform without words

Term 3, Week 6 – 0906016

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – provide opportunities for students to recognise that music is valued and appreciated in the world in a variety of ways (eg have visiting groups come to the school, discuss how people appreciate different styles of music)

Girls did not have lesson due to excursion to Bundeena

Term 3, Week 7 – 0906087

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – discuss and explain how music can represent different things (eg a circus, sunrise — as in 'Morning' from *Peer Gynt* by Grieg), how music can be a means of expression, and how its purpose can sometimes be to explore musical sounds.

Musica Viva presented *Humming Birds* as incursion day.

Term 3, Week 8 – 0909158

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Structure; Recognising that music is made up of large sections (verses, choruses and movements)

T/L – provide opportunities for students to sing, play and move to music using their voices, body percussion and percussion instruments

• Fragment singing – *The prettiest girl*

• Game to introduce new song *An apple for the King:* Standing in a circle, the girls

need to jump when I sing the words 'jump'. Selected some girls to sing parts of the song or all of the song as solo.

• Demonstrate with hands the melodic movement of the song and then sing solfege.

• Sight-singing: notate the notes on the whiteboard. Point to each note and the girls sing.

• Notation: girls to notate their version of the first melodic phrase in *Apple for the King.*

• Play the first melodic phrase on an instrument. In pairs girls play the first 2 phrases and swap. I notate the notes on the whiteboard and the girls need to follow my pointer and play the correct notes.

Term 3, Week 9 – 0909229

OC – Uses symbol systems to represent sounds (1.3)

MC – Tone Colour; Exploring how creating sounds from sound sources can be used in student's own work.

T/L – highlight important musical features of the repertoire used (eg repeated patterns, a regular beat, the contour of the pitch, sound sources, rhythmic patterns)

This lesson's focus is on rhythm and notation.

• Notate the notes on the treble and bass clef.

• Complete worksheet and perform *Angel Band* to a visiting audience.

• Allow piano students (Georgia, Caitlin, Tamara) to play the accompanying chords of *Angel Band* on the keyboard together with the class on Xylophones

• Piano performances to the class – many girls at the school learn to play the piano but get little opportunity to show others and even less to perform in ensembles. This was my way of discovering who in the class learns the piano.

Appendix G: Go For The Gold

Go For the Gold

Phillip Keveren

Angel Band

from Sing it, Say it,
Learn to Play it.

Arranged by
Matthew Perry (C) 1998

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Appendix I: Song list

1. Teddy bear

2. A rhyme for ham jam

3. My dog Jed

4. Stompin

5. Royal march of the lion

6. Yankee Doodle

7. Jig

8. Closet key

9. Spring and Winter

10. This old man

11. Hot cross buns

12. Angel band

13. An apple for the King

14. Ode to Joy

15. Go for gold

16. From the top

17. When the saints go marching in

18. Autumn