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3. DELEUZE AND MUSIC EDUCATION

Machines for Change

INTRODUCTION

The philosophical oeuvre of Gilles Deleuze and his co-author Felix Guattari provides an interesting and provocative set of ideas that challenge prevailing thinking about music education. Deleuze and Guattari's writing on music is perhaps best embodied in their seminal text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). In this work music is described as a "rhizome", or weed, "that has always sent out lines of flight, like so many transformational multiplicities" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 11–12). The rhizome is a type of plant that spreads out over new ground forming a matrix of shoots and runners across the ground. Each new growth in the rhizome plant establishes a new direction of movement, transforming the ground cover with a new "line of flight" (ibid.). The rhizome provokes a different kind of thinking about education in and through music. It helps us rethink our prevailing conceptions of music and education. The rhizome provokes our preconceptions of music education and stimulates new thinking about how it can be thought about and practiced. In short, it is a 'machine' for thinking about change. This chapter explores this new kind of thinking inspired by Deleuze and the kind of disciplinary change such thinking provokes in music education.

In recent years the concept and practice of music has been the subject of inquiry in Deleuzian scholarship (Buchanan & Swiboda, (2004). In music education, the field of inquiry is now developing with Deleuzian thinking from both music and education writing coming together in provocative revisionary treatments of knowledge and practice. Leppänen (2011) reconceptualises the meanings of music engagement of young children in playschool environments. She uses Deleuze to rethink the child as an inventor who immerses herself in different becomings in music that is "apprehended as a participatory multimodal space" (ibid. p. 480). Gould (2007) uses Deleuze to re-envisage the positionality of minoritarian groups (sexual preference, ethnicity) in music education contexts that form new expressions of resistance and nonlinear becoming. Lines (2008) uses Deleuzian concepts to explore and critique the use of creativity in education, especially in neoliberal contexts, and to suggest innovative concepts of educational practice based on music improvisation. These and other

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bourgeoning studies are beginning to find Deleuzian expression in music education thinking and practice.

DICIPLINARY CONTEXTS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

Music education is a field that has well-established ideas about what constitutes effective learning in and through music. These ideas are embodied in music education research, teaching practices and the world-views of music teachers. Views of effective and successful music education practice are also connected to particular conceptions of music itself as a traditional and historical art-form embedded in the fabric of western society. Western music has a strong history of learning going back to the beginnings of the modern university and compelling traditions of composing and performing music pieces. The present day field of music education is vast and encompasses a wide range of contexts such as early childhood centres, schools, universities, community groups, institutional orchestras, private instrumental training, informal popular music settings, digital music communities and so on. Despite the fact that each music education context has its own unique conditions and musical expectations, music education thinking tends to be dominated by persistent and reactive ways of thinking that are based on certain conceptions of music, music pieces and musicians. The Deleuzian concepts explored in this chapter provide challenging alternative pathways to these persistent ways of thinking.

Schwarz, Kassabian and Siegel (1997, p1.) note:

The study of music is ancient, but the disciplined study of music dates back only some two centuries...In the course of the 20th century, musicology, ethnomusicology, theory, and composition have become separate disciplines, each to be mastered, taught, and perpetuated by their own professional societies.

As a field of study, institutional music education has in modern times been insular and introspective, in and of itself, remaining as it were untainted by the interests and provocations of other educational domains. The study of music has been primarily concerned with the demands of music itself as “tonal moving forms” (Hanslick, 1986) or “humanly organised sound” (Blacking, 1973) concentrating on both formalist and human-centred expressions of music study like performing, composing, and music scholarship. Within this has been further separation resulting in processes of rationalisation—a kind of inner ‘sorting and ordering’ of different subdomains of study. Music education has become very fractured in this way, perhaps in part due to the perceived need for concentrated study on specific aspects required in each subdomain. Along with the fields of composition and performance these subdomains are identified today with labels such as musicology (tending towards western, historical music study), ethnomusicology (non-western music study), music education (pedagogical concerns in music) and more genre-specific subdomains like jazz studies, poplar

music studies, rock studies and so on. While these separate forms of study are more obvious in tertiary music education, vestiges of them remain in primary and secondary school music education through the influences of teacher graduates working in those areas.

The problem with the present system of modular and insular music learning is that each music subdomain area tends to ignore the broader conditions of its own practice—and obscure the transdisciplinary connections that may be present. The end result of this is a very inward looking form of study that is confined to the mastery of certain music-centred goals and objectives. This kind of pedagogy can be highly attuned to functionality and pragmatic to the point of being machine-like in its delivery. The narrowing of the concept of music education to the technical pragmatics of the classroom can mean it loses its own natural interactive space with its own subject. In this educational environment a form of nihilism (Bowman, 1995) may become manifest, where the perceived values of music education become devalued and completely drained.

A key concept pivotal to modern music education is the idea of the music 'piece' or composed work. The piece (or 'track' as it is known in recorded music) is a central object of interest and focus for both the musician and educator. The idea of music pieces presupposes some degree of authorship (the composer), namely the person or group who conceives of the arranged selection of musical notes. Music pieces are often notated or coded in some way so as to preserve their specific detail and organization. They are also performed and recorded so that their explicit detail can be reproduced for an audience of listeners. The dominance of the concept of the music piece is readily apparent in music education¹. Music educators work diligently and obediently towards achieving high-quality reproductions of pieces played and sung accurately by their students. The need for quality music reproduction also produces demands for students to acquire performance skills. Many pieces demand high-level physical and musical abilities for playing and singing music. Similarly composition students of all kinds (in different genres) work hard to find new and innovative arrangements and assemblages of notes as they bring forward original compositions. Different compositions tend to fall into specific genre patterns and historical periods. Under the prevailing ways of thinking in music education, the existing repertoires of music provide a benchmark for learning about composing, performing and understanding music. Interestingly the rules guiding the formation and production of the music piece has suppressed more fluid forms of music production like improvisation practices, which have become more popular in recent years.

The problem with the dominant focus of music pieces is that in everyday thinking, music becomes first and foremost an object for public display. The emphasis in terms of study becomes chiefly concerned with creating, producing and appreciating each piece. In such circumstances the temporal flow of the music experience becomes less important than the weightier focus on the musical object—the piece—that is composed, performed, and appreciated (or not

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appreciated). As an object of study the music piece also becomes an object of inquiry, something that is studied most often in its notated form as an intricate system of note relationships and patterning. In its performed state it can be reflected on and evaluated for its emotional and formal qualities as an example of a fully formed, complete, authored work. These educational foci have been the mainstay of music analysis and aesthetics studies in western musicological contexts for decades.

A related pivotal idea in modern music education is the notion of the specialized skillful music performer. This is primarily the very individualized idea of the skillful craftsperson that spends years perfecting his or her craft. The emphasis here is on the developing individual musician. The required level of expertise demands hours of dedicated time working on this mastery—and this involves time not spent on other learning activities. The emphasis on the development of highly tuned technical skills in music is akin to that of sports training where repetitive drills build expertise and physical responsiveness. The development of technical skill forms a prime focus for many music educators who take their students through training regimes designed to perfect their technical playing and singing skills.

These dominant discourses and patterns of behavior inform the training of music students in many educational contexts. They lead to well-played music pieces and skillful efforts of well-trained musicians; we enjoy performances at school and in professional concerts and we buy hi-fi recordings of the music. The music school's emphasis on perfecting the craft of music making is understandable and defensible given that the reproduction of well-played and well-sung pieces requires a suitable amount of dedicated, systematic training. The problem of this unilateral approach lies not in the activity itself, but in the overall conception, predetermination and perspective of music learning. The emphasis on music pieces and skillful master-performers in music education is overstated to the degree that more nuanced understandings of music education are often left behind, forgotten, or even ignored. Today's educated musician is primarily seen as a technician, a skillful renderer of technical craftsmanship within the confines of genre-specific music pieces. The modern music technician learns pieces skillfully and then performs them to selective audiences. Under such circumstances there is little potential for crossover from genre to genre or audience to audience. As a result specialized technicians of music end up playing to selected audiences who have high expectations about what they are going to hear.

The domains and subdomains of music have flourished in and around the dominant ways of thinking that have pervaded music learning. Music students have been molded and shaped by the ruling disciplinary frameworks of the methodologies and ideals of institutional music education. Music students have been subject to this molding within a broader paradigm of modernism in education and the arts. These music students learn to play by the rules of their musical education systems. They submit to the dominant discourses of

individualism, performativity², aesthetic high art standards and technical-functionality in music production.

Such concerns within the discipline of music education become intensified in neoliberal educational frameworks that serve to atomise curricula and reduce pedagogies to methodical and linear presentations of new material. Students learn through these methods obediently complying with the forces of credentialism and risk management. According to Peters (2005, p. 123), the notion of a type of entrepreneurial self pervades the thinking and practices of neoliberal sites of education where the individual becomes a key player in an underlying philosophy of consumerism and life-long protectionism.

For many career music educators, the goal of rendering and facilitating quality learner performances and beautiful or innovative learner-compositions continues to determine their priorities as teachers. Despite this, there may be an imbalance between what is done and the reasons for the doing. In the extreme, while student performances are usually quite laudable, an overreliance on ‘excellence’ at the expense of ‘significance’ can have a weakening and disowning effect on those involved. In other words, well-performed pieces can be delivered in unethical circumstances where student performers are detached from the musical and cultural meaning of the musical episodes with which they are a part. Further, neoliberal educational policies and standards can push music education classes into repetitive task-modeling with atomistic assessment methods and within severe time restraints fuelled by school league tables and the related need for good examination grades. In such educational settings common in secondary and tertiary education, learning in music can become reduced to performative tasks—in getting work completed for assessment purposes and in responding to tightly framed criteria. In this sense, music can be a subject in education where ‘the tail can wag the dog’ as it were. These pressures impact on music teachers and call for innovative ways of thinking about music learning. Deleuze’s concepts assist in the revaluation of music teacher thinking and action within the context of contemporary music culture and neoliberal educational policy and practice.

MUSIC AND DELEUZIAN CONCEPTS

As discussed in the introduction of the chapter, Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the rhizome refers to the weed-like rhizome plant that grows in different directions across a garden depending on the circumstances of its structure, form and environment. The rhizome suggests a different view of music education than what is commonly presented in western culture. Rather than seeing ‘music knowledge’ as tree-like—what Deleuze calls aborescent—with a firm root structure, solid trunk and branches and leaves (as in disciplinary, institutional music education which draws its source from prevailing mentalities of music), the rhizome offers a contrasting stance on knowledge. A disciplined, rooted and rationally ordered music education system is one kind of thought system that may impact on a given music learning situation, whereas a

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rhizomatic pedagogy will embrace the different and emergent ‘shoots’ or characteristics that come forward in a given musical experience. As mentioned, rhizomatic knowledge is recognized by its “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 11), that is, by the directions of ‘intensity’ or ‘sensation’ that come forth out from a music event. What is important here are the directions of new flight rather than predetermined pathways of curricular flight. The Deleuzian music educator looks forward to the emergent and moving flight paths that come out of music learning experiences. This is one of the main ideas behind Deleuze’s rhizomatic provocation—to focus on the emergent new rather than the systematic old. Taking on the idea of the rhizome in music education means crafting a whole new vision of what is taking place in the music event.

Rhizomes have “neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Always in the middle, the Deleuzian music educator is aware of the historical past and the prospective future in relation to the immediate musical events they are immersed in. The emphasis here is on the receptivity of the musician-teacher to the changing historical conditions that work in synergy with musical affect. This way of thinking recognizes music more as a cultural machine of change than as a performance of musical ‘objects’ or pieces. It relates to an attitude or disposition that is about knowing music as a historical vector and about looking for new vectors of change; of looking for the growth and areas of ‘overflowing.’ This is a pedagogical disposition ‘of the moment’, where the music educator tunes into the changing music-learning landscape and undertakes pedagogical action in response to their attunement. The rhizomatic music educator identifies particularities and becomings in a music-learning happening and acts accordingly. This requires a certain kind of ‘active’ ethical disposition.³

Music unfolds in time and exemplifies to us the movement and fluidity of the musical event. The music piece then, as we know it, becomes an event that occurs at a given time, in a given environment. The rhizome can be thought of as a matrix of possibilities or a connection of a “thousand plateaus” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) unfolding in both singular and collective themes. In this sense a music piece is not an autonomous ‘original’ experience but is indebted to the historical vectors that have preceded its formation and the present connections that form its current constitution. These vectors and connecting features make music *musical*—they bring out the interesting differences in musical moments that cause us to take notice.

The mapping of a rhizomatic music happening carries with it the notion of territory. From each music event, a temporary musical “territory” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 316) draws out specific configuration of affect. Deleuze and Guattari write creatively about this, citing the expressive songs of birds as instances of territorialisation (p. 314). They also identify the processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation in the movements of territories. The emphasis is on the shifting nuances of musical connection. The function of deterritorialisation is the “movement by which ‘one’ [territorial element] leaves

the territory” (p. 508). Reterritorialisation is when the line of flight leaves the territory altogether transmuting and building another territory. There is autonomy and detachment in expression (Bogue, 1997). “Becoming expressive” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 316) intensifies the line of deterritorialisation leading to newer changes and developments. A bird could be said to become expressive and deterritorialised when its initial territorial bird song is transmuted and begins to take on an expressive function with new tone qualities in a line of flight away from the initial territorial function. With these Deleuzian notions in mind, one can envisage a concept of music without borders. In fact, what constitutes music thought in this way is its fluidity and translucence; its capacity to engage, process and transform its vectors of sound-induced meaning. This understanding of music has resonance for music education and liberates it from the inherent dualism: learning on the one hand and music on the other.

Returning to the previous discussion on music education we can see that a specific territorial concept of music has been in play in western music—the formal territory of the music piece. The formal configuration of the piece in modernist music is seen as being specifically pertaining to the systematic configurations of pitches, rhythms and harmonies. A music territory in the Deleuzian sense is something quite different and requires some conceptual adjustment. Music in this new sense is much more than the formal configurations of musical notes, it is much more expansive than that. Rather, the Deleuzian music territory is momentary and temporal and always moving into paths of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. A good way to understand this is to consider the *temporal musical moment* as the main point of educational focus. Further, musical moments establish relational alliances—between elements that make up the whole event. To understand this fully one needs to move beyond the formal configurations of music and establish and document what vectors of connection constitute the event.

A useful example is that of the community choir. Recently there has been a resurgence of interest in unaccompanied group singing mainly among adult singers who feel the need to participate in musical activities in social settings. For many community choirs, the emphasis and enjoyment of the music experience comes from not only note learning (ie. specific music pieces sung by the group) but from the social connections and sharing opportunities afforded by the choir. The musical territory of the choir includes the sounded melodies, rhythms and harmonies of the choir pieces, but also takes into account the motivational, communal, emotional and ritualistic aspects of choir practices and performances (eg. sharing wine together and performing at the funeral of a choir member’s friend). The territory also includes the physical demands of choir events, the mental learning patterns of rehearsals and the historical meanings embedded in choir pieces, be they gospel pieces, South African pieces, popular or commercial pieces and so on. The shades and nuances of each interactive moment constitute the configured territories and the changes to those territories

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and bring the participant into a fuller understanding of the dynamism of the choir.

A Deleuzian concept of music will also take into account his notion of “intensities”. They are what Deleuze calls the changing “modes of intensities” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 99) that help us “go beyond knowledge and resist power” (ibid.). Intensity is a virtual idea that helps explain moments of force when one force overcomes another force due to its level of intensity. As an ephemeral art, music has much synergy with this notion given that music as sound is unseen and capable of enacting on a situation and changing it by means of suggestive force or affect. Intensities also have no specific identity as such and thus break down any sense of disciplinary or historical characteristics that may inhibit an understanding of an educational field like music (for instance ‘music’ has a strong association with the idea of the ‘music piece’).

The idea of ‘sound’ or ‘sound-arts’ is perhaps a simpler way to think about music as modes of intensities. A focus on sound has certain advantages over more established and conventional educational investigations in historical music studies. One of the main advantages is the way sound study crosses disciplinary boundaries due to its more ‘general’ focus than specific studies in music. The interdisciplinary nature of sound, as a concept, thus provides more opportunities for alliances, links and connections to be discovered beyond the metaphysical or technical narratives that can plague established music disciplines. The key point here is to discover the potential of ‘sound study’ as an educational force that opens up prospects of interdisciplinarity and affect. Rather than focusing primarily on music in terms of subjects and objects, the study of sounds as modes intensities assists a less anthropomorphic conception of the music learning experience.

Sound study has much to offer education as a whole, notwithstanding its affinity with the places and spaces that predetermined disciplinarity never selects or finds. Sound has become a medium of immense significance given its presence in cinema and digital internet platforms such as YouTube on the internet. Whereas “sound allowed cinema to refer to other, more indeterminate spaces...within the visible space of the screen” (Connor, 2000), sound in education offers opportunities for the exploration of imagination and nuance in thought and perception. The “radical heterogeneity of sound” (ibid.) that is exemplified in Deleuze’s provocation of ‘intensities’ opens up opportunities to explore difference with a degree of affirmation and openness that is not always apparent in neoliberal sites of educational performativity. Sound, as “diffuse and intermittent bodiliness” (ibid.) has a budding inclination for elasticity and mutation; it offers the potential for different perspectives and identities to emerge in transient and changeable events that are commonplace today.

CONCLUSION

In Deleuze's book *Nietzsche and Philosophy* he discusses, in one section, Nietzsche's views on the nature of art. He says:

Art is the opposite of a 'disinterested' operation: it does not heal, calm, sublimate or pay off, it does not 'suspend' desire, instinct or will. On the contrary, art is a 'stimulant of the will to power', something that excites willing'. The critical sense of this principle is obvious: it exposes every reactive conception of art. (Deleuze, 1983, p.102)

Like Nietzsche, Deleuze has an interest in art as an active cultural force—as something that invents “new possibilities of life” (Deleuze, 1983, p. 103). As Deleuze notes, this is the opposite of what one might term as disinterested as aesthetic theory might hold. Deleuze holds a particular view of art and he is not reticent in critiquing commonplace 'reactive' conceptions of art that can serve to inhibit the stimulating and powerful attribute of art that affects life's moments. As an art form with a traditional history of art-making, music offers the prospect of stimulating new possibilities of life. Reactive music education—forms of music study that serve to shut down or systemize new learning possibilities—has been a dominant discursive block in traditional music. Deleuze's provocative and stimulating concepts offer fresh 'active' insights into what could be a more culturally resonant kind of music education, a music education that seeks out the connectivity between sound learning and other forms of learning.

Here in the statement above, art is not a detached object hanging on a wall ready for contemplation, or a composer's score yet to be realised in a musical performance. Rather, art is thought about in a particular and special and functional way. Deleuze's kind of art acts as a 'stimulant' or trigger—as something that is able to mobilise and action movement and change. According to Deleuze, art is that which comes forth and changes the world from which it arises—it forcefully challenges that which is normal or everyday. By embracing art as a stimulant of energies and forces, Deleuze exposes what he terms as 'reactive' culture, that is, cultural forms which respond conventionally to other more active, stimulating forces.

Deleuzian concepts discussed in this chapter provoke changes in thinking about music education beyond the disciplinary contexts common in music study today. They act as machines of change for the thinking musician and music educator. Concepts like the rhizome, territory and intensities force the reader to reconsider fundamental views about the nature and value of music. They assist the music educator in helping them to understand how to manage and work more imaginatively with music in diverse pedagogical contexts, such as urban diverse communities and virtual internet communities. These ideas seem to be more in tune with a forward thinking music education that is responsive to changing contemporary conditions of music and sound in the present day.

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NOTES

- ¹ See *Music Matters* by David Elliott (1995)
- ² Performativity is used here to describe the efficiency of inputs and outputs as defined by J.F. Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984).
- ³ See Semetsky & May (2008), Deleuze, ethical education and the unconscious in *Nomadic education: Variations on a theme by Deleuze and Guattari*.

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