



Assessment in Music Symposium: July 16-17, 2013
Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University

Summary of presentations

DAY 1

D Royce Sadler: Backwards assessment explanations: Implications for teaching and assessment practice

Royce Sadler opened the symposium with his key note address in which he challenged attendees to approach the assessment of musical performance in ‘reverse’. Focusing on the assessment of complex creative works, Sadler suggested that specific criteria should not be provided to students in advance, as students do not have the same professional knowledge or experience in how to apply specific criteria as their teachers do. While holistic judgements of the quality of musical performances are still common in many areas of the creative and performing arts, many higher education institutions are now requiring that explicit criteria and standards be stated in advance. The provision of multiple, specified criteria is said to lead to greater objectivity in assessment, however, there still remains a considerable amount of subjectivity involved in such qualitative analytical judgements.

Sadler highlighted that there is an underlying assumption that if complex judgements of quality are broken down into a number of smaller-scale judgments that this will ensure greater reliability amongst markers. He debated the assumption that combining smaller judgements leads to less subjectivity. The creative and performing arts (and music in particular) should not be assessed in the same manner as other disciplines. Sensing how the whole performances ‘come together’ in a form of global appreciation is of great importance for arts students. Competent, highly experienced assessors still employ salient personal criteria in their judgements and may find it difficult to articulate the full extent of their appraisal knowledge. This is not to say, however, that assessors do not come to consistent professional agreement about the appraisal of creative works especially if they share similar linguistic frameworks as well as similar frameworks of experience. Sadler suggests that providing set criteria in advance denies students opportunities to develop the ability to see and appreciate their own work *as a whole*. This then leads to a reduced ability to monitor the quality of their work as it evolves. Allowing students to make holistic assessment of their own and others’ work and to then derive specific personalised criteria is the first type of ‘reversal’ Sadler promotes.

The second involves the one-way nature of 'feedback'. Learners do not always learn from receiving feedback, and often have difficulty applying suggestions to improve their performance. Providing students with opportunities to practice, discuss and debate the appraisal of performances allows them to experience differences in opinion and how to reach consensus. This in turn initiates students into the type of connoisseurship (involving both implicit and explicit knowledge) that their teachers have developed over many years. Encouraging students to recognise quality when they see it leads to more informed self-monitoring.

Mary Lennon: Assessment in music in the European context: The 'Polifonia' Project.

One of the symposium's key international speakers was Dr Mary Lennon who reported on the on-going work of the 'Polifonia' Working Group on Assessment and Standards in Higher Music Education in Europe, a reference group for the *Assessment in Music* project. Since its launch in 2004, the ERASMUS Network for Music 'Polifonia' has addressed European higher education policy and a range of issues related to professional music training in Europe. The network involves 55 institutions in the field of music training and the music profession in 26 European countries and four countries outside Europe.

Lennon explained that the main objective for the Working Group on Assessment & Standards is to support curriculum reform for competence-based learning by addressing assessment based learning outcomes. With regard to the benchmarking of standards within institutions the Working Group highlighted the necessity of ascertaining if assessments currently in place actually measure the expected learning outcomes and in a manner that can deliver a broad comparability of approach.

Initially a Europe-wide survey of existing assessment methods and procedures provided evidence of significantly varying practices and traditions in relation to issues such as grading scales, the use of criteria, the use of external assessors and the role of feedback, as well as highlighting innovative examples of assessment in competence-based learning. For example, the survey revealed that not all institutions have documented learning outcomes and not all use written assessment criteria. Of those institutions that did, not all made the criteria available to students. As a result of the survey, a benchmarking exercise was available to strengthen shared understanding of standards in European higher music education. This was followed by training seminars to expand the number of experts available as external examiners which has enhanced objectivity in assessment and the exchange of expertise.

In the future, the Working Group will continue to explore how the Association Européenne des Conservatoire (AEC)'s learning objectives can serve as standards for European calibration. As they currently serve as reference points, it is not always clear in practice whether they represent threshold statements indicating that which is required for a pass, or more inspirational standards.

Diana Blom, Ian Stevenson & John Encarnacao: Assessing music performance process and outcome through a rubric: ways and means

Diana Blom discussed the effectiveness of rubrics in the assessment of creative performance outcomes, describing the design and use of three different rubrics employed at the University of Western Sydney. As part of a criteria and standards-based approach, the use of rubrics is said to reduce marking time, provide better marking consistency and minimise student questions about results. The two areas detailed in this presentation were musical performance and sound technology, both which have performance skills development and creative outcomes.

The first subject examined is called *Collaboration and Live Music Performance*. As teachers observed that many students come into the university thinking that their technical music performance facility is the prime concern, the rubric used for this subject caters for three levels of professionalism which include the 'soft' skills of punctuality, instrument ready, and respect; contribution to the group rehearsal process which include preparation, contributions, leadership and initiative; and five levels of aesthetic aspects including sound quality, style and genre. Due to the nature of the subject, the lecturer responsible for developing the rubric felt that it would be advantageous to ask students to self-assess using this rubric and is considering a form of continuous assessment, not dissimilar to Riggs' spiral model, in the near future.

The second subject discussed was *Music Performance: Repertoire and Identity*, a final semester performance subject which focuses on the individual performer, firstly by expanding practice through visual, theatrical and sound technology exploration, and finally, by focusing on the identity of the performer. The subject requires students to draw on previous music performance subjects to consider how they create their performance identities through five parameters. It is the experience of the lecturer responsible for creating the rubric that it is a common trap for students to focus on the technical aspects of the music at the expense of other elements. This is why the rubric emphasises presentation, stagecraft, musicality requiring an attention to sound quality and timbre, and the further development from second year of a distinctive aesthetic. The application of the rubric in 2012 tested well, and there was a consensus that the rubric was fair and comprehensive, especially as the lecturer used every available pairing of markers in an effort to ensure that all four shared their understandings of the rubric as fully as possible and all projects would be marked with parity.

The final subject discussed is called *Sound Technologies and Machine Musicianship* which is a second year sound technology subject. Outcomes focused on five key aspects including the ability to understand and productively explore the creative potentials of digital music performance systems. One important feature of this rubric was that there was no 'global impression' criteria included. The lecturer surmised that debates in panel grading situations were difficult to resolve due to the absence of such a 'global impression' criterion.

In sum, the presenters believe that these rubric models attempt to empower and inform students at different levels with respect to the criteria used, the aesthetic boundaries of the work, and practical issues around their realisation. They note that working with an assessment rubric is, in many ways, the opposite of the Consensual Assessment Technique, and that this mark-only approach is out of touch with contemporary student learning in the creative arts.

Diane Hughes and Sarah Keith: Assessment practices and discipline specific capabilities in contemporary music studies.

At Macquarie University (MQ) music is offered as a Major pattern of study within a Bachelor of Arts program. Thus music education at MQ is approached from the ‘liberal arts’ perspective rather than through the conservatoire model, that traditionally emphasises curricula such as composition and instrumental performance. Students are not auditioned prior to acceptance into the program, thus staff must teach and assess students from a wide range of backgrounds with varying abilities. This presents particular challenges which requires the design of curricula and assessment tasks that will facilitate multi-dimensional student learning in both practical (musical) and academic (critical and analytical thinking, writing, and research) tasks.

Hughes and Keith explained the challenge of designing such appropriate assessment tasks. At the beginning of the process in 2009, assessment mentors were invited to attend a specific discussion forum on graduate capabilities. Mentors then worked to identify eleven potential benchmarking areas which included writing and communication skills, research skills, critical, analytical, and practical skills, listening skills, performance skills, group skills (collaboration), independent thinking, internationalism, creativity, business skills (organizational abilities, planning, and time management) and awareness of contemporary scholarly discourse. These benchmarking areas were then further articulated into eleven graduate capabilities for the music program.

Once developed, the capabilities were aligned to the BA graduate capabilities at Macquarie University, to the level seven AQF guidelines and to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education international standards for music. This mapping of music specific capabilities against national and international standards provided a level of quality assurance while simultaneously consolidating the grassroots approach. In 2011, following the publication of the Threshold Learning Outcomes for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA TLOs) the alignment process was further refined.

The presenters demonstrated the relation of music graduate capabilities to specific curricula, assessment tasks, and to unit learning outcomes through two units from the Contemporary Music program. *Advanced Virtual Studio Production* is the final unit in a suite of three units addressing creative audio production and music technology. *Musical Creativity and Performance* is the capstone unit for the Contemporary Music major. Creative practices are embedded in different ways in both the units discussed, however, it is the process of creative practice (e.g. research, consolidation, self-reflection, critical analysis and engagement with musical texts) that is common to both units. In the development of the discipline-specific capabilities, the music program’s strengths and goals were identified, while concurrently situating the program within the tertiary sector and differentiating it from other programs. Hughes and Keith note that informal and formal feedback provided by students, assessment results and graduate career achievements indicate that in this way, students can develop “deep contemporary musical understanding and abilities (authentic learning) without having prior formal musical or instrumental training”.

Don Lebler: The BoPMAT: Bachelor of Music Popular Music Program

Don Lebler presented a detailed description of an innovative assessment technique used in the Bachelor of Popular Music program at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. The Bachelor of Music Assessment Tool or *BoPMAT* is used in the Popular Music Production course, in which students submit a portfolio of original recorded material in each of the six semesters of the program. In this course, students are expected “to display high levels of self-direction and self-management, with very little micro management of students’ activities by teachers”. Through self and peer assessment tasks, students learn a great deal about the systematic evaluation of their own work through assessing the work of their peers, thereby enhancing their learning.

The *BoPMAT* was developed in 2009 to be a digital alternative for an already complex and expanding assessment system. The designers wanted to have the application look and feel like the sorts of applications students typically engage with such as iTunes and Facebook. To demonstrate, Lebler displayed screen shots of all aspects of the program, showing what the students see when they use the program.

Initially, students engage with the *Work in Progress* section, in which they can upload their recordings in order to get on-line feedback from teachers and fellow students. Students who upload a track for feedback “describe what they are hoping to achieve with the track, list their collaborators and are able to request feedback on specific aspects of the work”. Other users are provided written feedback and the recipient can rate the usefulness of the feedback. At the end of each semester, students upload their final recorded tracks for assessment using a similar interface. Marks for various aspects of individual tracks are awarded, including how well the track has met its stated intentions, how good the track is overall, and the quality of the submitting student’s contribution.

Students are then assigned to assessment panels consisting of seven or eight students and one teacher, however, students are not assigned to a panel that is assessing a track on which they perform. Through panel meetings, students are acculturated into the workings of panel assessment and how consensus is used in grading work. Close alignment between student and teacher marks demonstrates high reliability in the process. As part of the program a *Hot 100* is published to students every semester, constructed on the basis of the mark given for how good a recording is overall and is available through the course web site. The very best of these tracks each year are included on an annual commercial CD release called *Seed* which is available for sale through iTunes.

Heather Monkhouse: Bachelor of Music: purpose, desires and requirements

With consideration of the absence of formal accreditation for tertiary music degrees in the Australian context, Heather Monkhouse explored the ways in which the structure and expectations of international music degrees influence Australian Bachelor of Music qualifications. Monkhouse’s presentation examined the impact of recent changes to Australian regulatory requirements and focused on the ways in which music students’ future

careers can be supported through the development of a wide range of skills, and still satisfy current regulations. The Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Newcastle was used in this presentation as an example of an Australian qualification.

In reviewing similar programs in America and Europe, Monkhouse found that in addition to being able to perform to a high level and to have a comprehensive repertory knowledge, Bachelor of Music performance graduates are expected to be independent thinkers, informed about the ways in which music is situated within the broader community, work effectively with others, and possess the ability to create and evaluate their own, and others' work. Graduates should have gained a body of knowledge beyond the music discipline including ethical, moral and cultural expectations. These descriptions are very similar to graduate attributes in the Australian context. Monkhouse notes, however, the significant disparity between the time dedicated to formal learning for Bachelor of Music degrees internationally. Those in the northern hemisphere average between 30-40 weeks of study per year in a three or four year degree, however, Australian degrees generally average between 22-26 weeks per year. This disparity makes for a considerable impact on the total timeframe of formal learning dedicated to achieving very similar learning outcomes.

Australian tertiary degrees are required to align with national standards established by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and those of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). While neither provides specific explanations as to how each statement might be interpreted, Monkhouse notes that most Australian universities recognise the importance of developing skills to enable professional performance aspirations, but also the importance of catering for career possibilities in the music industry other than performance.

Scott Harrison: Musical Theatre assessment: Student perspectives on the efficacy of continuous assessment.

In his presentation, Harrison reported on student and teacher perceptions of continuous assessment in the Musical Theatre degree at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU), in which staff provide detailed feedback about student progress on a weekly basis. In this degree, a sliding scale has been adopted, with first year students marked almost exclusively on progress and third year students almost entirely on performance. Perceptions of the effectiveness of the assessment process was obtained through focus group sessions.

As Harrison notes, formative assessment and feedback is an integral part of learning in the arts, particularly in the master apprentice situation, although conservatoires tend to favour end-of-semester exams as summative accounts of students' progress through a course of study. The literature points to several positive aspects of continuous assessment including greater student motivation and increased class attendance rates.

The musical theatre program was introduced to QCGU in 2011 and comprises studies in acting, spoken voice, dance (jazz, ballet and tap), one-to-one singing, group singing, musicianship, music literature and performance projects. Teachers have provided useful feedback on the assessment process since its inception. Overall, staff feel that the assessment

process is clearly explained, fair, transparent, progressive and informative. Weekly assessment with immediate feedback encourages students to sharpen their preparation of specific learning activities for subsequent sessions, and assists in developing professional attitudes and behaviours.

One deficit revealed in the study was the time intensive nature of this type of assessment, both in marking and the inputting of data. In addition, more information was needed (such as a glossary) so that students had a fuller understanding of each of the criteria. In future, the course convenor intends to reduce the overall workload associated with implementing the assessment process, possibly by reducing the frequency of feedback or by implementing an online version of the spreadsheet that allows individual staff to enter and calculate individual student results.

Gerado Dirie: Assessments for music theory: Three situations

Gerado Dirie, lecturer in composition at QCGU presented a personal account of three different strategies for assessing music theory courses at the tertiary level, including analysis portfolios and computer generated multiple choice tests.

As a core subject at QCGU, students partake in both aural studies and music theory courses concurrently. In addition to traditional Western music theory, studies also include music theory of Middle Eastern music, Carnatic music, Asian musics, electronic musics, as well as computer music, contemporary music and chamber music. For the past 10 years, Dirie has responded to changes in the structure and timing of these courses and trialled different types of assessment tasks which incorporate student feedback and peer teaching. Changes have been made in direct response to a reduction in time allotted to music theory classes over the years. Excluding a few elective courses, a QCGU student graduates with a bachelor of music degree having hypothetically accrued 9,840 minutes (the equivalent of 6.83 days) of contact time between *aural studies* and *music theory*. This is in comparison to other international universities which dedicate between 20,000 and 25,000 minutes to music theory instruction alone.

The first assessment type discussed by Dirie covers a set of in-class quizzes, assignments and exams distributed over 12 weeks, or one semester. These tasks were designed to review music fundamentals from previous courses and included students teaching their peers on one of a variety of music theory topics. The quizzes were effective in both covering the most essential aspects of the topics presented in class and for promoting better attendance. The assignments allowed students to try their hand at small scale creative challenges and respond to different aural and notated propositions with increased accuracy, fluency and speed.

In 2007 several changes were made to the design of the Music Theory 3 and Music Theory 4 courses. The new assessment plan incorporated components based on different levels of student engagement and skill. Students choose a set of challenges based on their level of learning in order to build a portfolio. These included writing technical observations and emotional responses to a selection of works in their Listening Journal and a variety of analysis projects. Review summaries of their work showed students what aspects needed more attention in order to achieve a homogeneous portfolio at the end of the term. From about six hundred short analytical papers generated in this manner per semester assessed by only one staff member, it was clear that the use of this assessment type was simply not sustainable.

Dirie then addressed this challenge by maintaining in-class work with students focusing on musical analysis and building their confidence in confronting different musical situations. However, the challenge on how to assess the students' growing understanding required a different solution to the actual submission of analytical work. In response, Dirie designed a type of test and exam in which students are presented with analytical, interpretative situations in a manner of multiple-choice questions. This assessment seeks to replicate a situation in which improvising musicians consider the conditions of the performing context and how

musicians weigh different variations, changes, or embellishments of a fragment, and adds a crucial component of what substantiates a performance. With the reduction of contact time in tertiary music classes, Dirie relates that it has become very productive to transfer many aspects of training, drilling and overall learning by integrating them into the assessment plan.

Jim Chapman: An approach to efficiently delivered authentic assessment.

Jim Chapman was unable to present his paper as planned, however, the following is a summary of his proposed presentation.

Chapman addresses the twin pressures of academics having to improve efficiency in marking while providing specific, personalised and authentic assessment to students. Minimising the 'down time' for examiners while providing a structure for authentic assessment tasks with detailed, specific and timely feedback is a goal identified this presenter. Chapman describes innovative techniques in this area with reference to several offerings of courses in Jazz and Popular Music performance at the University of Newcastle.

The first part of Chapman's assessment design task was to address the potential efficiency of simultaneous marking - having two or more markers assess several students on different and explicit tasks while they performed in a band. It was anticipated that this approach would avoid some of the problems associated with group-marking of ensembles and still allow the marking to be incisive and individualised. In this approach, students are assessed on all aspects of performance and are required to learn at least three songs per assessment resulting in six songs in total across the two performances. A measure of the efficiency of this approach is that 25 students can be marked on all four criteria (100 separate assessments) in two hours (two hours of marking in two rooms = four marking hours). The second time saving component is the use of computer-based data tools to allow markers to easily access all the information they need to accurately assess each aspect of the performances. Through these changes, it was possible to give students full feedback and marks within hours of the completion of the exam.

Initial evaluations from staff and students after the use of this system were varied. Overall the staff found the changes very helpful and were enthusiastic, however, they stated that it was difficult to formulate and write down their assessment notes in real time. Students who provided feedback generally said that they liked how fair the system was and that they appreciated the quick feedback. A prior lack of experience in the system, however, meant that most students needed more support in preparing for the first assessment, and that they preferred that the staff should form their ensembles for them.

Further developments have occurred over four years leading to a demonstrated effectiveness in producing efficient, authentic assessment processes with detailed and rapid feedback, however, it can also be seen that this system introduces a level of interaction and involvement that exceeds the interest of many students to participate. The future success of these changes will depend on the development of strategies that engage students with the process.

Kelly Parkes: Evaluating Teacher Quality of Tertiary Music Faculty: Is it related to student learning outcomes?

DAY 2

Jonathan Holmes: Aligning the Threshold Learning Outcomes for the Creative and Performing Arts with the AQF accreditation requirements and HESP statements

Key note speaker Emeritus Professor Jonathan Holmes was ALTC Discipline Scholar in Creative and Performing Arts during 2010 and was closely involved in developing the nationally endorsed creative and performing arts graduate learning outcomes. In his presentation, Holmes provided a history of accreditation of higher education degrees in the Australian context in order to explain the development of the *Draft Standards for Course Design (Coursework)* and *Learning Outcomes (Coursework)*, published by the Australian Higher Education Standards Panel (HESP) in 2013.

Holmes emphasised the importance of these documents as establishing, for the first time, the principle that universities and other higher education institutions offering degree programs must ensure that each award has a clearly identified suite of threshold graduate learning outcomes - mapped against the individual units of study - that all graduates must achieve in order to graduate. HESP does not seek to be prescriptive by establishing a set of generic outcomes, or to standardise an approach, but provides guidance to providers and regulators through a set of 'reference points', giving institutions the freedom to establish and identify graduate learning outcomes for each coursework degree.

Standards are regulated by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). The learning outcomes for each course of study include a set of generic skills and attributes, the mastery of specific disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, and the requirements of employment related to the field of study. The onus lies with individual institutions to provide the evidence that graduates have achieved these standards. The threshold statements can be described as a baseline that provides transferability for students both at the national and international levels. This has been one of the underlying principles of the *European Tuning Project* and of the *Bologna Agreement* and *Dublin Descriptors* which have shaped European higher education quality assurance during the past decade.

Richard Vella & Helen English: Embedding creative and critical thinking in performance studies – the challenge.

Helen English presented this paper on the ways staff at the Newcastle Conservatorium of Music have embedded real time critical thinking experiences into all courses in the Bachelor of Music degree. This has been in response to a dilemma encountered with new students who enter the degree as a very mixed cohort, from those with a high school music background to

those who are already professional musicians. Both the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) outcomes and the Threshold Learning Outcomes for the Creative and Performing Arts (CPA TLOs) require students to develop analytical and critical skills throughout their degree, however, most new students are primarily concerned with learning to play their instrument and do not value critical listening, critical thinking and concept-based learning as an essential skills of good musicianship.

To address this challenge English and Vella have implemented self, peer and teacher assessment strategies using improvisation, creative problem solving collaborative practices, and lesson observation of group and individual classes. Analytical listening and creativity are used to engage students studying jazz, classical, pop and world styles. This is achieved by students creatively translating concepts introduced in class into their own musical practice. English described how through this experience students recurrently evaluate their practice against previous experiences. This process forces students to become both subject and object and engage in a continual process of redefining who they are and in relation to what they do.

The *Collaborative Music Making* course involves an improvisation component where students are required to create a work, learn to self and group evaluate a performance, and develop strategies to improve. The *Creative and Analytical Studies in Music* courses combine creativity, improvisation, collaboration, analysis, performance and listening skills which encourage students to focus on the ability to translate knowledge across different domains. In *Principal Study* courses a number of activities have been developed to engender critical thinking, including lesson observations, in which students fill out a structured response template about their own practice.

English and Vella believe that incorporating creative and critical thinking into the whole of the Bachelor of Music program provides their students with the ability for deep learning, self-assessment and critical thinking. Through employing creative thinking students are able to internalise and reconcile new ideas through incorporating difference into their musical identity.

Nathan Zoanetti & Helen Champion: Mitigating the halo effect: managing the ‘wow’ factor in music performance assessments.

Zoanetti and Champion, both from the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority spoke about a project undertaken to assist Victorian secondary music assessors with recognising how initial impressions of the quality of a performance unduly influence the scores assigned to subsequent marking criteria. The context for their presentation was the Music Investigation study within the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). VCE study provides a flexible pathway for students to “perform, compose and research diverse traditional, contemporary, classical and popular music styles using instruments ranging from voice, tabla, recorder and ud to orchestral and wind-band instruments, instruments typically found in rock bands and digital instruments in solo and ensemble performances”. With such diversity the Authority must ensure that issues of equity and rigour be addressed through valid assessment tasks and the reliable application of assessment criteria.

In order to minimise what is known as the ‘halo effect’ the Authority provided workshops for assessors. The aim was to raise awareness of this issue and provide suggestions for how to best counteract its influence in criteria-based assessment. In the workshops, assessors reviewed recorded student performances whilst annotating the performance evidence they referenced when allocating scores against each criterion. They were then asked to reflect on both the evidence they referenced and the judgement processes they applied. The goal of this approach was to increase the quality of discussion amongst assessors and to focus on the salient and personalised criteria applied by individual markers. It was clear from the workshops that assessors are often drawn in by initial positive impressions of high quality performances, and that the challenge was for them to move away from this preliminary impression in order to appropriately apply the prescribed criteria. Detailed discussions of performance evidence facilitated clear expectations of each criterion and thus assisted in overcoming the ‘halo effect’.

Kelly Parkes: Assessment in one-to-one music lesson studios in higher education

Don Lebler: Assessment in Music: Mapping outcomes for the creative and performing arts.

Don Lebler presented on behalf of the AiM project team (Don Lebler, Scott Harrison, Gemma Carey and Melissa Cain) on the progress of the project’s deliverables. *Assessment in Music* is a two year project funded by the Office for Teaching and Learning explores issues related to academic standards and the assessment of creative works in Australian higher music education, with a major focus on the constructive alignment between learning and assessment. Through the process of consensus moderation, the AiM project team has identified core, best-practice assessment processes and concrete examples of standards in musical performance by accessing and interpreting the experiences of staff and students at the host institution Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU). This has taken place across a range of programs and musical sub-disciplines — jazz, musical theatre, music technology, popular and classical music, and in consultation with the University of Newcastle and the University of Tasmania.

Lebler explained that the project’s main aim is to explore the degree to which assessment standards and practices in higher music education in Australia aligned with the Threshold Learning Outcome Statements developed for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA TLOs). In the first phase of the project, an extensive mapping exercise was conducted in which assessment tasks for all 350 core undergraduate assessment items were mapped against the CAPA TLOs and the host University’s Graduate Attributes (GAs). With the introduction of the new Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) (2011) regulations program level outcomes for the Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Popular Music and Bachelor of Musical Theatre programs at QCGU were then mapped to the AQF learning outcomes, the GAs, and the CAPA TLOs. The aim of this exercise was to identify if assessment tasks in these programs ensured that all Level Seven AQF outcomes are evident in each qualification, and that all graduates have an opportunity to demonstrate them through assessment tasks as required by the AQF. Results indicated that not only did capstone assessment in the four Bachelor degree programs at the QCGU ensure that all students were assessed for their

achievement of the AQF Bachelor Degree learning outcomes, but that a variety of assessment tasks in all years of these degrees also fulfilled the Bachelor degree learning outcomes, thereby fully satisfying the requirements of the AQF. The mapping process used provides a possible template for other institutions to emulate and may indeed apply in the evaluation of assessment practices in other Arts areas.

In order to obtain a general understanding of standards of student achievement and to identify current perceptions of assessment at the host institution, the project team conducted focus group sessions with students and teachers. Results teacher sessions provided insight into the perceived relationship and relevance of the six CAPA TLOs to current assessment practices, and indicate that the process of consensus moderation has been instrumental in developing consistency of marking and a common understanding of standards at the host institution.

The next major component of the project is to develop a collection of audio recordings of student work as tangible exemplars of standards at QCGU, and which is currently in process. The recordings will then be available to users on the AiM website and will provide a starting point for inter-institutional conversations about performance standards at Conservatoires in Australia. In the final part of the project, Lebler announced that the team will produce an edited book of papers from the *Assessment in Music* symposium available from Springer in 2013. Further information about the project can be found at assessmentinmusic.com.au

Daniel Ryan and Kelly Parkes: [Assessment and critical feedback in the master-apprentice relationship.](#)

Ryan and Parkes' presentation focused on the well-established and dominant tradition of one-to-one teaching in higher education music institutions around the world. This approach is predominantly one way, with the transmission of expectations from teacher to student and one in which teacher talk dominates, and students rarely lead the discussion or analysis of the lesson. With this in mind, the presentation examined the ways in which students can develop critical self-assessment of their own performance while part of the master-apprentice relationship.

Ryan and Parkes note that while most studio teachers at the higher education level are often high-level performers, few have formal training in pedagogy and curriculum relevant to this type of learning. Indeed, there is evidence that few studio teachers engage in any form of lesson planning or structuring, and are rarely formally evaluated by their students. A key overarching finding of the presenters' research relates to the nature of questions that teachers use and the extent to which these might scaffold student learning towards independent student self-assessment. Some students struggle with the pursuit of independence, preferring to rely on teachers for directing their learning. However, musical independence should be the goal for all students.

As part of a larger study, Ryan and Parkes examined the reflective data of 171 higher education music instrument teachers. Various themes emerged, such as the need to shift the emphasis from the studio teacher as expert to the student as developing independent professional. Thus, the presenters set out to conceptualise a possible new approach for the

learning of an instrument at the higher education level. This new approach reflects the concept of a community of practice as applied to a conservatorium or university music department where music students learn through social practices as per the theory of situated learning. A visual representation on this conceptual framework was presented with reflection at the centre of the model.

As a result the model places greater emphasis on a variety of forms of evaluation, such as assessing a student's capacity to plan, act and reflect on their development as a musician, rather than on exams or high-pressured performances that do not explicitly reveal the learning that the student has achieved over time. Studio teachers are also encouraged to spend greater time reflecting on their own teaching, either through formal study and learning about different formats for instruction, or alternatively through analysis of their own practice and role.

Diana Tolmie & Duncan Nulty: Aligning student attitudes, assessment, and curriculum design: A case study using "My Life as a Musician" vocational preparation strand.

Diana Tolmie detailed the development of a sequence of courses unique to Australian conservatoires which focus on students' personal career development as musicians and prepares them for the non-musical side of their careers. The *My Life as a Musician* (MLaaM) courses were developed following a review of the Bachelor of Music program at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU) and introduced to students in 2011. MLaaM, is a compulsory sequence of four courses offered for one semester each year for the duration of the Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Music Technology degrees. It includes a wide variety of vocationally based tasks ranging which include personal career development and planning, small-to-medium business enterprise skills, and creative entrepreneurship.

Feedback from students regarding what they perceived as being necessary skills for becoming successful musicians indicated that courses at QCGU needed to focus more on the business side of the music industry, and with this in mind, the Bachelor of Music degree at QCGU was restructured to include vocational preparation courses. It was proposed that such courses culminate in the production of a professional portfolio. The learning objectives for the third year MLaaM course include demonstrating a working knowledge of operational management, promotion and funding tools; the application of persuasive writing and speaking skills for self-promotion; and the creation of strategies to positively support career ambitions. With these learning objectives in mind, the assessment tasks in this course required students to produce a five-year business plan, an Electronic Press Kit (EPK) for self-promotion, and the writing of a scholarship or grant application.

The presenter proceeded to describe students' perceptions of the educational value and relevance of the third year MLaaM course assessment. Course surveys confirmed the importance students placed on such vocational skills as well as identifying three levels of student motivation and engagement relating directly to their perceptions of the relevance of the assessments and the course – those who felt they didn't need the knowledge, those who decided they would need it at a later date, and those who found this information pertinent and

engaged strongly with the course content. As such it was identified that the original course design did not take into consideration all students' career aspirations, developmental stage of career, and industry activity, and that assessment tasks and their percentage rating would require future reappraisal.

Diane Hughes: Assessment and feedback in curricula design for contemporary vocal studies

Diane Hughes describes another facet of the Bachelor of Arts program at Macquarie University. Her presentation focuses on a program of contemporary vocal studies that encompasses a wide range of students including music and non-music majors, experienced and non-experienced singers, and local and international students. With such diversity and the complexity of teaching contemporary vocals, unique challenges are encountered by teaching staff, such as developing effective techniques and strategies to assess student learning. This is particularly relevant in the context of group learning.

Diane described the use of a developmental continuum model in which multidimensional assessment and feedback strategies are aligned to learning outcomes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels of study. This model focuses directly on student achievement, being in stark contrast to a deficit approach where attention is centred on student deficiencies or inadequacies. In the context of sequential singing development, comprehensive assessment entails evaluation of technical, musical, expressive and performative components.

The model Diane describes employs reflective practices, critical listening and analyses, which engages students in ways that complement practical and creative components and support a degree of student autonomy in learning. Assessment tasks include vocal exercises, a reflective journal, ensemble process and reflection, an essay and a final summative solo performance. Students are offered a selection of set exercises and individual exercises suited to different levels of study from which they choose those appropriate to their individual needs and goals, thereby providing personalised vocal programs. Tutorial participation and discussion provides opportunities for informal feedback on exercises and programs prior to the actual assessment. The reflective journal facilitates a degree of autonomy or self-regulation, while acting as a visual memory for students. Vocal ensemble assessment tasks address both confidence in singing and collaborative learning.

Stefanovich Roberts: Student Self-reflection – Extravagant commodity or essential learning? Lessons from music teachers of students in the final two years of secondary schooling

In his presentation, Stefan Roberts addressed the scarcity of research relating to student self-reflection in music at the secondary school level. Specifically, Roberts explored teacher instructional and motivational perspectives of student self-reflection through the use of a parallel mixed methods study of secondary music teachers who had taught Year 11 (Preliminary HSC) and/or Year 12 (HSC) students studying the Board of Studies Music 1,

Music 2, Music Extension or International Baccalaureate Diploma courses in the past three years from schools throughout New South Wales, Australia.

Results revealed that almost all of the secondary music teachers reported that they implemented some form of student self-reflection performance learning activities in their classroom practice. However, the degree or frequency to which and range that secondary music teachers engaged their senior students in self-reflective performance instructional activities varied greatly. The vast majority (97.7%) of teachers reported that at some point, they asked students to analyse and grade their own progress, practice strategies and performances.

Roberts highlighted the real issue with student self-reflection and self-regulatory learning as being educators' motivation to acquire "a knowledge and understanding of, and belief in the value, benefit, usefulness, importance and being efficacious or having the confidence to implement and engage their students in a range of specific self-reflective performance instructional strategies, techniques and skills in their teaching practice". In conclusion, Roberts stressed the need for tertiary music educators to incorporate student self-reflective learning strategies and techniques into the design of teacher training courses for both undergraduate and in-service /experienced teachers.

Eve Newsome: A search for balance. The development of a performance assessment form for classical instrumental music in the tertiary context.

Newsome presented some of the challenges associated with the formal assessment of classical instrumental performance in tertiary contexts, especially with consideration of requirements to provide students with detailed feedback through objective measures. Newsome notes an increase in the demand for accountability, fairness, and general improvements in teaching and learning requiring music institutions to re-examine processes of formalised grading to include the implementation of assessment forms used in instrumental performance assessments. She then discussed two models of classical instrumental performance assessment currently in use, contrasting those focusing on subjective appraisal of artistic and technical mastery at conservatoires, and criteria based assessment of the knowledge acquisition and the application of ideas at schools of music.

The traditional conservatoire assessment relies on a panel of experts to come to a decision of global quality through discussion, consensus and formal justification. One limitation of this method may be that assessors may find it difficult to articulate such subjectives and that these may not relate to those of other makers. Newsome views the academic analytical model as providing a definitive rationale and justification for the marks assigned, however, a possible negative consequence of specified criteria is that there is a danger of an overly critical and analytical approach to performance.

She then discussed several assessment systems which aim to achieve some sort of balance between the two, such as the *Clear* Performance Assessment System, developed at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2001. This system complies primarily with the academic model of assessment as it is criteria-based in terms of numerical marking, but also accommodates the more traditional subjective approach by providing room for examiner

comments. No overall global mark is arrived at via the total aggregate mark of the specific criteria marks. Relating the results of research in Australia, Newsome explained that the number of factors in each model tended to suit various instrument groups. It was noted that models with three or more factors (such as Technique, Sound production/Quality, and Musicality/ Interpretation) significantly predicted the total global mark given. It was also noted that most examiners favoured musicality and interpretative aspects over technical aspects in their overall evaluation of quality.

Newsome therefore recommended that, in order to create an instrumental performance assessment form, a suitable balance is required between the traditional model of global assessment and the academic model of criteria-based assessment. The number of criteria in the technical and musical categories “should favour musical aspects and it is advisable to include aesthetic terms in the criteria”. The inclusion of the global view through a free comments section could represent aspects otherwise not possible through the application of explicit criteria.

Zhukov: Challenging approaches to assessment of instrumental learning

In her presentation, Zhukov contrasted the divergence of approaches and attitudes to the assessment of musical performance between Conservatoriums and Schools of Music in Australia. Zhukov noted that Conservatoriums typically rely on practical examinations as the main assessment strategy, while Schools of Music demonstrate a more holistic approach to assessment, which includes student participation in a wider range of activities such as performing in large ensembles, choosing composition or musicology electives and writing concert reviews and reflections.

Zhukov also highlighted the problems associated with subjectivity in holistic evaluations of performances versus the use of prescribed criteria. She then further explored a number of studies which examined the development and application of criteria for music performance, and examiners’ comments on the holistic/analytical debate. Zhukov noted that some examiners feel that having overtly stated criteria helps them to focus on important assessment issues while others believe such criteria interferes with their holistic assessments of music performance.

Innovations in the assessment of music performance in Australia were highlighted by Zhukov including self-assessment techniques such as critical self-reflections of videotaped performances, reflection in an online journal, and the use of rubrics to self-assess. The benefits of peer-assessment were also examined. While issues of inappropriate preparation and a typical lack of assessment experience amongst students was discussed, Zhukov noted that peer assessment has been demonstrated to significantly impact students’ critical abilities to assess musical performances, and that there exists a close correlation between peer-group evaluations and assessments made by expert examining panels. In challenging engrained attitudes to assessment of classical instrumental music learning through practical examinations, recitals and teacher reports, Zhukov suggests that innovative assessment practices such as those described be embraced by all tertiary music institutions.

Annie Mitchell: New Wine in Old Bottles: Aligning curricula, pedagogy and assessment through creative practice in classical and contemporary music

Annie Mitchell presented on the ways in which staff at Southern Cross University teach music theory, aural training, composition, conducting and performance traditions (*Old Bottles*) through contemporary repertoire (*New Wine*) in the Music Education major of the Bachelor of Contemporary Music degree. This approach demands more innovative ways of assessment in order to measure the acquisition of curriculum learning objectives, and their alignment to national creative and performing arts threshold learning outcomes.

Mitchell demonstrated this through describing assessment tasks currently in use including the composition of a fugue or sonata, the orchestration of a modern movie theme, and the performance of a fugal arrangement of a popular music example. These assessment artefacts are aligned with the specific unit objectives, the Bachelor of Contemporary Music's (BCM) Course Learning Outcomes, Southern Cross University's Graduate Attributes and the Australian Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) Threshold Learning Outcomes.

This approach was deemed highly successful as evidenced by student feedback of the course itself, as well as how applicable the application of the knowledge and skills gained from these curricula was to their formative school teaching experiences. Practicum students were able to competently and confidently arrange compositions, teach and assess composing, and direct and conduct student performances. The relevance of assessment task to real life practice provided valuable learning experiences for music education students aspiring to careers as secondary school music teachers as well as providing significant learning outcomes for students pursuing careers in music performance and composition. These processes were seen to bridge the gap between contemporary and classical music studies.

Melissa Cain: Students' perceptions of fair and valid assessment in tertiary Music education

Cain's presentation addressed the results of student focus group sessions as part of the *Assessment in Music* project at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University (QCGU). Regardless of the accuracy of their views, Cain stressed the importance of ascertaining the opinions of Bachelor of Music students as they impact their educational experiences and choices, and correlate with the approaches they take in tackling academic tasks. Her findings provide important insights into how current assessment practices influence student learning.

Sessions were held with students in the Performance, Musical Theatre and Composition streams and centered on their understanding and opinions of the *Threshold Learning Outcomes for the Creative and Performing Arts* (CAPA TLOs) and the extent to which they believe assessment at QCGU aligns with these outcomes and the Griffith University Graduate Attributes. Themes addressed in the focus group sessions included the role of teacher feedback, experience with self and peer assessment, the role of exemplars in standards-based assessment, balancing holistic and criteria based assessment practices, subjectivity in assessing conceptualization in creative works, and the role of tacit knowledge in students fully understanding and applying assessment criteria.

Results of focus group sessions with students in the Performance, Musical Theatre and Composition streams of the Bachelor of Music degree, suggest that assessment plays a key role in the students' journey to identify and work towards the highest standards of creative expression. The students were vocal about the place of assessment in enhancing their experience as musicians and as evaluators of their own work as professionals. QCGU students were seen to be capable of efficiently recognising quality in a holistic manner and then decomposing their judgments to extract relevant and valid criteria. The data suggests, however, that participants in this study tended to rely heavily on teacher-derived micro criteria as essential and autonomous; consequently diminishing their experience in developing critical appraisal skills, and ultimately their role as collaborators in the assessment process.

Interviewees viewed alternative forms of assessment (such as peer, self and progressive assessment practices) as positive alternatives to traditional authoritarian tasks, and identified them as effective ways for them to begin to develop skills in assessing quality in creative works. They also recognised the importance of being able to interpret teacher feedback and interlace this with their own self-assessment to work towards desired outcomes. Cain highlighted that taking note of how students perceive and conceive of traditional and innovative assessment strategies and the role they play in their learning and growth as evaluators of quality, is critical to designing more effective, relevant and valid assessment tools.

