



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY
Andrea Schiavio,
University of York, United Kingdom

REVIEWED BY
James A. Gutierrez,
Northeastern University, United States
Bridget Rennie-Salonen,
Stellenbosch University, South Africa

*CORRESPONDENCE
Jane Southcott
Jane.southcott@monash.edu

†These authors have contributed
equally to this work

SPECIALTY SECTION
This article was submitted to
Educational Psychology,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Education

RECEIVED 20 June 2022
ACCEPTED 13 September 2022
PUBLISHED 13 October 2022

CITATION
Southcott J and de Bruin LR (2022)
Being and becoming instrumental
musicians and teachers: A
post-qualitative exploration.
Front. Educ. 7:974184.
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2022.974184

COPYRIGHT
© 2022 Southcott and de Bruin. This is
an open-access article distributed
under the terms of the [Creative
Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](#).
The use, distribution or reproduction in
other forums is permitted, provided
the original author(s) and the copyright
owner(s) are credited and that the
original publication in this journal is
cited, in accordance with accepted
academic practice. No use, distribution
or reproduction is permitted which
does not comply with these terms.

Being and becoming instrumental musicians and teachers: A post-qualitative exploration

Jane Southcott^{1*†} and Leon R. de Bruin^{2†}

¹Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC, Australia, ²Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, Australia

In trying to understand the complex interplay between effective learning and personal experience in instrumental music education we look to our own histories of becoming instrumental performers trained in conservatoires. We seek a collective fusion of horizons of possibility to explore the relationships of musicians, both learners and teachers, with each other and their environments. We adopt the post-qualitative turn, as it offers space and place for simmering curiosities, introspections, evaluations, and yearnings. As pondering individuals, we question how we were pulled and prodded through the acquisition of instrumental expertise. We are a trumpeter and a clarinetist; we are performers. We are also music educators who both re-enact and resist what was given to us as gospel. We hope to find within our thick and layered experiences, understandings of the better teacher we hope to become. We look beyond our “training” to our becoming both musicians and pedagogues, a work that remains in progress. We offer this pathway to our students—how can we/they become the better music educator?

KEYWORDS

post-qualitative, music education, music teaching, pedagogy, instrumental music education

Introduction

In music education, the instrumental one-to-one lesson is a “site of negotiated interactions, and behaviors of awareness and focus, frustrations, disappointments and epiphanies” (de Bruin, 2018a, p. 2). This is a relational and temporal space of physical modeling, dialogic scaffolding and coaching that is unfolded in a sequence of preplanning, action-reaction, and post-performance evaluations. In this, practice and performance coalesce in the cascading moment-to-moment interactions between teacher and student that may reveal evolving understandings of self and other (Bruner, 1996; Folkestad, 2006; Galenson, 2006).

We draw on recollections of learning incidents using Barad’s (2007) concept of “agential realism” (p. 132) that address how human nature and experience is agentic. It is through acts, and how those actions have consequences, of boundary riding between maintenance, stasis and change, that the “openness and amorphousness of post-qualitative inquiry” provides (Gerrard et al., 2017, p. 384). St. Pierre (2017, p. 2) describes post-qualitative enquiry as “both provocation and challenge,” that “asks

that we push forward the intensive, barely intelligible variation in living that shocks us and asks us to be worthy of it” (p. 5). We respond to calls for post-qualitative “inquirers to articulate an overt ethical orientation toward change, one animated by the work of standing at one’s post, mapping the contemporary terrain, arranging newly productive relations, and generating different effects” (Kuntz, 2020, pp. 1–2). This allows and exhorts us to ponder, question and investigate our creative and experiential stance toward places and practices known, and to that which we wish to make better from this knowingness. As a consequence, we inhabit our post-qualitative perspective educationally, ethically, and empathically. Using our understood experiences maps what was and still is, urging us toward new ways of becoming for ourselves, but also for other music educators who come within our sphere.

Instrumental music learning has previously been delved into and sifted through various knowings, most noticeably socio-cultural perspectives that inform understandings of individual, interpersonal, and collective learning (Rogoff, 2003; Wertsch, 2008). Teacher work is emotional, somatic, and personal (O’Connor, 2008). It is shaped by often uninspected held perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching that are formed by professional, educational, and personal experiences across a lifetime (Bukor, 2011). Teachers teach and student-teacher relationships may evolve and endure, building inclusive ecologies that engage others in expanding relational arrays. Sometimes relationships dissolve and perish. Relationships may be characterized by continuities and interruptions, built shared histories, interactions and changing understandings. All these elements impact the reciprocities of instrumental teaching and learning which are lived through the body (de Bruin, 2018b). Our teachers told us that our instrument becomes a part of us that is mobile, animate, and responsive. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), p. 213 gave primacy to the body through which we perceive, discover and know. Sheets-Johnstone (2020) extended this primacy to the moving body which is doing what is needed. The embodied instrument-learning self can be a site of multiple ways of engaging, including growth, resistance, and subterfuge.

We, a trumpet player and a clarinet player offer curated reminiscences of our music learning experiences to capture the spontaneous somatic “to and fro” of play, teacher action, reaction and response. We approach this from a post-qualitative stance that “nurses bubbling curiosities and yearnings which it aspires to explore and negotiate in an unprecedented manner” (Singh et al., 2021, p. 2). We embrace the entanglements of self (the auto of autoethnography) as subject, as subjective reviewer and as post-qualitative collaborators “with each intra-action, the manifold of entangled relations is reconfigured” (Barad, 2007, pp. 393–394). In creating these vignettes, we critically reflect on our beliefs, assumptions, personal experiences, educational understandings, and knowledges which have impacted on our practices as musicians and teachers. We consider personal reflection and reaction, considering all these factors as we

engage with a discursive practice. In this, the words we choose capture emotions and their embodiment, becoming themselves part of our negotiated reality (Zembylas, 2005). As perceiving people, we each hold a “historical thickness” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012, p. 248). Through self-reflection we investigate and focus our “analytic attention to an array of material-discursive forces through which bodies realise their capacities to act, connect, move (or become stuck, fixed, rigid)” (Fullagar and Taylor, 2021, p. 38). We hope to find within our thick and layered experiences, understandings of the better teacher we hope to become. What we find are things that could have been better, moments we have held onto for decades that colored how we grew as music learners.

Initially as learners, then teachers, then researchers, teacher educators and academics in music education, we have lived the entanglement of becoming throughout our careers, and we continue to do so. We disconnect ourselves through the ontology of the nature of our reality progressing through these prisms of profound learning events in our lives. Through short, curated vignettes that offer snapshots of past instrumental learning, we unfurl our processual philosophy of becoming through these events in our lives, each of us providing reflection, re-reflection and meaning-making through each other’s perspectives through these incidents. Our conversation flows between story-teller and critical friend, engaging with our reminiscences so as to create an assemblage of understandings, questioning of our attachments, and an introspective yet reflexive realism as a guide to inquiry that provides portentous narratives for music teachers of the future. One recounted memory draws forth resonant cascades from both the teller and the hearer. Although taking different paths, we find that we share small outrages, frustrations, and triumphs. What follows are a shared gathering of curated memories connected by bi-constructed understandings of events and slowly burning realizations, epiphanies that lead to aspirational journeys to becoming better/best. We begin with our first moments and memories of instrumental learning.

First moments in music-learning

I brought my first attempt at writing music, shortly after beginning to learn the trumpet—a carefully scribed rendition of “Mack the Knife” that I heard off the radio, and that my father played repeatedly on his piano accordion, until I had it. Lesson time at school came, and I eagerly showed the teacher my creation—“What is this? That’s not how you write it, that’s all wrong” (Leon).

Returning to that day, I (Leon) had offered my teacher the product of my cherished music-making with my father. I recall my teacher’s response as being an affront, a shock to my senses as I balanced my internal feelings of effort, collaboration,

pride, and accomplishment, with the denigrating negativity felt from the teacher's comment. I feel the anguish then as now, as my shared father and son creativity was smashed and ridiculed. I now sense the passionate teacher not wanting his student to stray, to "play the exercises over and over" and "maintain a steady tone." I sense two worlds disconnected, yet each seeking to assist to develop learning and a love of music-making with others. I feel a relational disjunction between the teachers' words chosen, and what he may have intended to say or correct; a leap back into the realms of empathy, insightfulness, and intuitive guidance rather than bombastic humiliating directive.

The need to be right and to be in charge drives many teachers. We share stories between ourselves that repeatedly speak of rigidity and control, of feeling powerless in the relationship. Our teachers knew they were the rule for right learning and playing. As their students we transgressed their imaginings of us, thus our cognitive and somatic musicking (Small, 1998) was wrong and they were right. We had to be fitted into the mold of "student" not fellow musicker. We were not required to think for ourselves, just comply with the unspoken pattern held in our teachers' heads, a pattern often beyond our ability to grasp.

First experiences with a new teacher

I was first in the state for the clarinet exams. I changed teachers, moving to the best teacher at the university. He wrote the book on scales (literally). He discovered that I couldn't play scales without the book before me. Every week he set more and more scales. Every week I practiced but couldn't commit to memory. He would take the book away and they would fade from my memory both in my mind and under my fingers. I could play Mozart, but I couldn't memorise scales. I tried to make myself but the harder I tried, the more elusive, they became. My inability seemed to be a personal challenge to him. He stopped me playing pieces until I could play the scales. Eventually my mother rang him and said, she is about to give up the clarinet. Finally, after a year, we stopped trying to make me do what I apparently couldn't. With reflection, I can play scales if they make musical sense to me. I like scale passages. I just cannot remember them in what to me is non-musical isolation. The book of scales nearly broke me (Jane).

This battle between teacher and student situated both of us in crenelated bastions. Teacher unable to back down and student unable and unwilling to do what he demanded. He was Teacher (with a capital T), an unassailable expert who knew more than me and to whom I (Jane) must make obeisance. I was student (no capital S) who must be shaped to fit the mold. After a year we reached breaking point. One of us would break or we could negotiate a different way of being.

Shared memories and understandings

We began with our first wonderments—what is the better music educator that we would be? There is an implicit criticism in our retrospection. We both remember repeated mantras, "get it under your fingers" (as if the body was a separate thing to be controlled), we were taught to "start at page one and keep going," we were faced with technical studies to be played "10 times without a mistake and then do it 10 times again, faster," and we were exhorted to "think creatively" but given no steps to follow, just the threat of critique. Instrumental music learning exists in a complex ecological web that begins within the body (we are repeatedly told "the instrument is an extension of your body"), and advances to the relational—those we musick with in every sense (Small, 1998). This constant and iterative experience of the merging of musician and musical instrument becomes an enabling attunement "of the extended body to the musical environment [that] enables the musician to freely and expressively communicate [their] artistic intentions on the basis of the corporeal articulation of the moving sonic forms" (Nijs et al., 2009).

We construct and curate our vignettes to reflect the patterns of activity that were emblematic of what occurred during both formal and informal learning episodes. Written vignettes capture remembered crystallized images (or short videos in our minds) usually of a short duration, that are representative of typical events (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Our curated vignettes are often vivid or even heightened reflections of the "sights and sounds" of typical occurrences (Erickson, 1986). In these, we perceive entrenched pedagogical approaches which we critique through the receptiveness and responsiveness of the post-qualitative (Gerrard et al., 2017).

In this study we seek to trouble "visibility and hold up blind spots as productive sites toward the risk of a new relationality" (Berlant in Davis and Sarlin, 2008, p. 642). This approach to research values "identifying and explicating the connections that enable understandings always to be more expansive than the identities or events they are seeking to explain" (Bhambra, 2014, p. 156). In negotiating between experience, critique, and reflection, we act responsively in the moment, our movement of thought embracing the dualities of the singular and collective, past, and present. We continue our becomings to reflect on our own teachers and our own learning.

Becoming our own teachers

Over time, as learners moving from apprentice to journeyman, we took matters into our own hands, pacifying and to some degree deceiving teachers to give ourselves space to become better. It would

have been preferable that we could do this with our teachers, not despite them. Jane offers a memory of resistance:

Why is it that a new teacher finds fault with the old teacher's influence and goes "back to basics" to replace technique? I could play quite well. Nobody noticed my odd tonguing until when asked, I explained. Shock! Horror! It is all wrong. We must go back and start again—long slow notes with deliberate, different, awkward feeling tonguing. Eventually my playing was deemed acceptable. Funny thing was, I never changed, I just pretended to because 10 years' technique could not be undone and personally, it served me well. I could see no need to change. (Jane).

I (Jane) recount the all too familiar trope of stripped back and rebuilt technique—so many musicians have told me similar stories—possibly a reflection of the first idea that the teacher knows what is correct and nothing else will do. But in this story is also my growing ego and confidence—I chose not to do what I could not (rather like the scales) but this time, it was not an external battle of wills, rather a play of subterfuge. My technique remained; as did my non-acquiescent self. I note my growing confidence in believing that I knew what worked for me. I must have been annoying to teach to someone who thought they knew better.

Leon too found teachers unhelpful:

One year I had three different teachers in the one year, each with their own peculiarity to describing breathing. . . "breathe through your diaphragm, it's here below your lungs" (remonstrating furiously), "take in air like you are yawning—cold air in hot air out, come on, breathe!" "breathe to the bottom of your toes. . . all the way down. . ." A year of uninspired analogies led me no closer to breathing "correctly" which I discovered for myself some years later (Leon).

I (Leon) questioned what I was doing all the time, rarely being "at one" with playing music but intent on directing attention to the physical sensations that I was meant to be feeling if I was doing "it" correctly. Sensations from the top of my body, and then the very opposite as I strived to iterate the "right" way of doing things. I placated a procession of teachers, leaving lessons all the more confused by their highly colorful yet clouded metaphorical descriptions of breathing. Actually, playing music with better musicians, listening to their sound (rather than their words) and watching their body provided the insights I needed to facilitate my own embodied sensating of an effective approach to improving.

Shared reflections

A post-structural critique allows us to "dig deeply . . . and make the intelligible appear against a background of emptiness . . . to make a truly unavoidable challenge of the question: What can be played?" (Foucault, 1997/1981, pp. 139–140). It allows us to interrogate what may be taken for granted and offer a better and more enlightened path to teacher fulfillment. Our questioning of what is, or what becomes good teaching is transacted through our crystallized memories and critical reflections about our experiences. We relish the conversation, savoring the moments of camaraderie and sympathy, but then wondering what we learnt (or did not learn). These provide weights and measures as to what may be best in terms of the musical occurrences and the intra-active knowingness between teacher and student. In critiquing these, we maintain a "civil disobedience" derived from our constituted experience (Rajchman, 1985, p. 6). Oscillating between remembered incidents, our reactions then and now, we attempt to free ourselves, and in so doing find freer and more thoughtful teaching pedagogy, approaches, and philosophy for teaching.

St. Pierre (2014) makes the point that much post-structural qualitative work resides in theories posited that are then attached to descriptions and treatments of unique and idiosyncratic voices. We have taken heed of this by applying both an interpretivist and analytical voice to each of our captured memories. The overriding supposition we carry throughout our curated memories and surrounding writing is that of intent, reception, and "better"—by better we imply in the teaching and learning of music, that which is done with passion, care, empathy, and enthusiasm. We have become our own litmus test of better. We easily find stories of hurdles and interruptions. It is telling that we find ourselves working to recall the best. Having found them we try to imagine future selves as best (or at least better).

Ultimately, we found other teachers—sometimes others who did not even know they were teaching us and ourselves. It was not always our single teacher but sometimes it could be a host of teachers who both taught us (knowingly or not) technique and how to be.

Becoming journeymen

Gradually we moved inside the walls of professional playing, often encountering both gate keepers and guides along the way. Leon captured an experience of the dualism of becoming insider while still feeling outsider,

"You must always watch the conductor"! said our ex-military bandsmen director in a stern but calm manner. The

award-winning symphonic wind was going through its paces, preparing for triumph at the forthcoming Bands Festival. We rehearsed as darts and flashes of collective and soloistic brilliance flashed about. A sudden pause—a missed cue by an overzealous young musician (not me). . . “I’ve killed a man for less than that” muttered the army colleague sitting beside me in the trumpet section (Leon).

We rehearsed, and then we rehearsed again, polishing the remaining jagged bits until they were silky and gleaming. All 60 of us, attuned, willing each other to get it right as our conductor sternly waved his hands around. We were just happy to be there, reveling in the sounds we made, the individual moments of brilliance but also the collective, collaborative sense of community. The comment jarred and reverberated within me as I (Leon) tried to make sense of it—the gravity implied that was intended to shock and agitate for compliance and agreeance but also a disconnect between its implied military sentiment and the situated learning environment we were actually working in. I felt a detachment between the leaders, the gatekeepers of this community, and how we were meant to act and feel within the community. At the same time, I felt that by being allowed to hear this comment about someone else, I had been accepted.

Sometimes this progression to insider is afforded by a mentor who lights the way. Jane describes encountering just one such:

I was dragooned into playing clarinet in the pit band for the university review in second year of my music degree. I was an expert sight-reader who, with enough “dots” could play most things. In the band led by my friend Ben (an expert jazz saxophonist and not his real name) there were no dots, just “lead sheets” and I was adrift. Ben first wrote in the notes of the chords and said, “use these on the strong beats and play around between.” This was a lifeline to which I clung, but we never struck out from the shore. After the show, the band hung around jamming. I longed to join but didn’t know how. Ben said, “when you hear a note no-one else is playing, that is your note.” Finally, I heard that Cheshire cat of a note, grinning at me and I grabbed it. I found the next note and the next. Without Ben’s lead, I would never have begun (Jane).

Ben opened the door for me (Jane)—he was my guide and teacher who offered no correction, no one way of being, but rather he gave me stepping-stones to a beginning, a way into a community of musickers I wanted to join. His were the casual words of a best teacher that I have held close.

We continue to share memories between ourselves. As we each moved from apprentice to journeyman, we began teaching others—a familiar pathway for many instrumental musicians. We began to observe ourselves and others, thinking, if I were teaching, I would do things differently, I would attend to the person before me, not to the stereotype held in the mind unseeing. Leon spoke of this:

The trumpet teacher compiled a 30-minute routine that all students had to do daily without variation, developing tone, endurance, and volume. Whilst an initially satisfying task, enhanced by a brotherhood of others within the trumpet stable, most found it gruelling and ultimately stultifying. It left me wondering how I could more mindfully organise my practice fulfilling my goals that supplemented my aspirations, and not my teachers. The next teacher was a past student which ensured the same thing—achieving a rolling stasis of established rote routine. When by myself, I studied method and technique books looking for something more. Gradually, I found a trove of texts that enlightened me; offered other ways of learning, and of considering the challenges faced by others (Leon).

I (Leon) recall religiously attending to practice but feeling unrewarded and unimproved by the process. I gathered as many different books as I could thinking about the range of technical problems students could possibly have, and ways to approach providing development and strengthening of technique. I saw the failings of an unchanging, prescribed approach and considered a lens of understanding that took a personalized and differentiated way of helping a student. I became adamant that this was a quality needed for impactful and sustained teaching and guidance of a student. I was transitioning to teacher while still evolving as a musician.

Ultimately, we both become our own best teacher; we do for others what we needed others to do for us. The sudden revelation that meant something to the musician in the making was so rare that it sits enshrined in our sense of evolving self. That best teacher of ourself becomes the model for the better teacher of others. We teach what we would have liked. Leon recounted another experience,

Performing overseas, I met with a trumpeter-educator. We shared our performing experiences, tastes, as well as experiences in education. He realised I was a qualified teacher who could actually play, and that liked teaching. He implored me to consider what my calling in life was- which area could I make the biggest impact. For the first time I contemplated teaching as a career (Leon).

This was a serendipitous moment in my life (Leon) when the “fallback” of being a teacher to supplement my professional performance collided with the beginnings of identity work as placing my efforts, desires, and aspirations into teaching others. In this moment, a teacher can be a fellow traveler who offered a lesson that I was ready to accept; temporality—there are times we can hear things and other times we can’t. My heart and mind were ready to hear that message and it set a train of events that was to drive me to establishing music departments, teaching hundreds, and eventually being a teacher in initial teacher education.

Hindsight and realization

There becomes a point where we are more than students and when our teachers become more than our teachers. The scales once weighted unequally begin to balance. Those who were our teachers become colleagues and fellow musickers—we have moved to be with them on the inside looking out. We see before us the students we once were. We seek to afford them what we wanted for ourselves. We acknowledge that there are things that must be taught. There are masterworks to conquer, technical exercises to attain, and skills to acquire, perfect and then take further. We learn from self and others, we set our own routines, we meet our own expectations and sometimes we fail. We make music by ourselves and with others. We form connections social and musical that are stable and fluid. We explore other musicks, consolidating and expanding what we know ourselves capable of being. The instrument has become us, no longer an “extension,” it is us. We are part of an ecological web of musicking and we traverse these rhizomatic connections predictably and surprisingly.

An ecological perspective recognizes the intricate connectivities and contexts where-in and when-in instrumental musical-social networks may evolve and grow as “music is in essence a social medium predominantly experienced in social, interactive and mediated settings” (De Bruyn, 2012, p. 17). We have interrogated distilled moments of social and musical interactions that promote, inspire, motivate, reward, and afford meaning from experiences that at times in our musical upbringing did quite the opposite. Turning backwards to our student selves, and then forwards to our current stance of teacher and teacher educator, we acknowledge successes as learners derived from senses of satisfaction and equilibrium through immersive and entrancing experiences with our learning environments, whether because of teachers, or in spite of them.

Such empirical research on music education forefronts self-regulation, motivation, self-efficacy, and similar constructs as significant ways of understanding music education (Perry et al., 2018). These atomistic understandings discount the interpersonal and relational aspects inherent in teaching and learning events that promote enjoyment, engagement, and enduring curiosity in learning music. We believe that there are attributes to which we aspire in our quest to be the better teacher in every sphere of our engagement. We utilize experience and wisdom gained from teaching. We realize that the actual experience of music is not necessarily driven solely by structural objectives or propositional-representational orders of mental activity that allow them to be schematized. Rather, “it is the holistic experience, the shifting relationships, and affective-emotional contours that we attend to” that mark the teaching experience for us (Schiavio and van der Schyff, 2016, p. 371).

We seek what we would have liked to find as we were pulled, prodded, pushed, shattered, reconstructed, and rearranged on

our quest to acquire expertise as performer and hopefully musician. We wanted to be seen, to be heard and to be respected. Although this is not what we always found, we did find moments that fueled our journey. We now think ourselves no longer apprentices, sometimes still journeymen, and we hope to create our masterworks in the ways that we foster and inculcate the next generation of learners. We think ourselves better teachers but never anticipate becoming best. Becoming is a constant turn, a rhizomatic exploration of possibilities, and pursuit of what we might be (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

Trying to capture what we hope to become

The better teacher is many things that we circle round, hovering with hope that this is what we as students encounter and critiquing ourselves that these attributes are what we become. We have recounted things that repelled and drove the apprentice from the chosen path, sometimes demanding that students forge their own paths in abeyance of their teacher. We share attributes that we wish to be as learners and teachers, acknowledging the musical and dialogic space that is built as we learn our craft. We offer these attributes in no particular order, as we shift between them constantly in our practice. Teachers are not just the holders and gatekeepers of required knowledge, they should have the skills and wherewithal to bestow this knowledge in impactful ways (Ardelt, 2004).

A good teacher is respectful of each student’s qualities and needs, and that these will evolve over time. Teachers should have the capacity to grasp the essence of a student’s personal learning trajectory (whether articulated or enacted) and enter into it with understanding and respect. A good teacher acknowledges learning about the student through multiple means and is able to come to “know well who the student is in front of them today and in so doing create what the student might achieve in the future” (de Bruin, 2021, p. 11). We acknowledge the temporality of learning episodes and opportunities—both student and teacher change, and assumptions should not be made. A good teacher gives respect for progress made and work accomplished, seeing both process and product as valuable learning opportunities. They understand the learning journey of each student and how it may be different across a bevy of students. They celebrate both small and large moments of musicking.

A good teacher doesn’t make comparisons between their students (particularly not aloud) as they realize such comparisons gain no traction and may actually harm student sense of capacity and self-worth. The good teacher can recognize and interpret learning in diverse ways and differentiate ways of learning, and of demonstrating this through process and performance. A good teacher is not an autocrat or a tyrant

who makes you cry by the end of the lesson. They don't prod or pull their students to fit their procrustean frame of technique. Good teachers are not just adept at how knowledge and skill is transmitted, but in the "qualifying senses of sustained affinity and confluence between teacher and student that promotes effective and more enriching learning" (de Bruin, 2021, p. 4). A good teacher listens and entrains positive and supportive feelings and connection. They can promote spoken, embodied and musical respondings to discoveries, epiphanies, and joy. A good teacher sees and senses student growing awareness; perceptions, discernments, and doesn't just emphasize skill and knowledge but also growth and maturity (Halstead, 2004).

A good teacher listens with their eyes, observing embodied learning. Through embodied interactions, the better teacher offers space for the "refinement of musical expression, instrumental techniques, or other concurring factors" (Schiavio and Höffding, 2015, p. 18). A good teacher builds and utilizes an array of intra- and inter-personal strategies that enhance learning opportunities (Pedder et al., 2005). These strategies are based on experience but have been sharpened and attuned to become acts of wisdom. A good teacher is "comfortable in the situated emergence of thought and action as a phenomenon nurtured and encouraged between teacher and student" (de Bruin, 2021, p. 4).

A good teacher guides empathically becoming a companion, a fellow-musicker, and guide from apprentice to journeyman to master. An empathic teacher is aware of seeing and hearing through the senses of another; they can recognize this need, position, and evaluate their thinking and actions in responding for the now, as well as to make better the possibilities and feelings toward improved learning. A good teacher has the capacity to understand through observation and interaction, thinking in and of/upon actions that promote a developing functional relationship. They utilize a reciprocity that invites an empathic "knowing each other's minds" (Bruner, 1996, p. 12) and ways of musicking. This functionality is built upon social and collaborative foundations that are not just musical (Dillon, 2009).

A good teacher creates a dynamic space that feeds the dyadic teacher-student relationship. They understand that "the interpersonal relationship acts as a conduit through which the teacher identifies and personalizes processes involved in a task to make them visible, understood and achievable" (de Bruin, 2021, p. 12). Teaching is more than just passing information, skill, and know-how, it is the in the moment calibration, an improvisatory feat of finding calm communion and confluence between at times very different people. Sennett suggests that "we frequently don't understand what's passing in the heart and minds of people with whom we have to work" (Sennett, 2012, p. 274). Teaching within the

one to one music lesson offers an exciting, exhilarating environment where these marvelous qualities can come together to produce even more wonderful music. The music lesson will always be a site that nurses bubbling curiosities and yearnings, explorations and negotiations by both teacher and learner.

A good teacher allows agency by nurturing ability and aspiration, guiding the learner from apprentice to journeyman to aspired master. Better teachers have the capacity for dialogue and multiple perspectives to a solution. They provide a learning space and place that allows students to feel safe to engage in being who they are as nascent and evolving musickers and they permit themselves the same possibility and freedom. It should be possible for teachers to act and talk in ways that provide spaces to foster and support increasing independence in their students, even in the constrained traditions of the nineteenth century conservatoire where teacher is master and student is indentured apprentice (Gaunt, 2010), and deviations from established guidelines are rarely tolerated (Moore, 1992).

The journey to aspirational best

The journey is a series of turns, often around corners of uncertainty that open new ways of being and becoming. It never ends and we return to where we began, hoping that we have captured the complexities of becoming the better teacher. Through our own histories of learning, then teaching, we realize that as teachers we try to be what we sought but rarely found. We shape our praxis as educators in trying to match the ideal best that we can never quite grasp. We know we are better. We are responsive, empathic, generous, allowing agency, and individuality (at least that is what we hope we are). We constantly seek to imbue this in all modes of our engagements in teaching and learning spaces, allowing curiosities and explorations (we would never announce something to be baldly wrong), we hope we never seek to control and break, rather we provide space and provocation for reflection and growth.

As pondering individuals, we question how we both were dragged and pummeled through the acquisition of instrumental expertise. We extend this to encompass our evolution as teachers and then teachers of others. We draw on Kuby and Christ (2019) as we consider the "entanglement of us. We are not I as teachers; we are we already-always entangled with our students and the non-human materials. . . we are entangled in/as/becoming us" (p. 967). We are no longer solely a trumpeter and a clarinetist. We are performers and we are teachers who select from what we were given, and craft our practice shaped by embodied being, feeling and thinking. As we began, we continue, remaining works in progress—becoming is not finite but lasts a lifetime. We aspire that our becoming had taken us to better—we will never achieve "best." We hope that this is what we ultimately give our students, the notion of the aspirational best music

educator and that the realization that this will always be just out of reach.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are the result of distilled essences and reflection of the authors' learning journeys. Queries should be directed to the corresponding author.

Author contributions

Both authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work, and approved it for publication.

References

- Ardelt, M. (2004). Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept. *Hum. Devel.* 47, 257–285. doi: 10.1159/000079154
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Carolina, USA: Duke University Press. doi: 10.2307/j.ctv12101zq
- Bhambra, G. K. (2014). *Connected sociologies*. Australia: Bloomsbury Publishing. doi: 10.5040/9781472544377
- Bruner, J. S. (1996). "Frames for thinking: Ways of making meaning," in *Modes of thought; Explorations in culture and cognition*, eds D. R. Olson and N. Torrance (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 93–105.
- Bukor, E. (2011). *Exploring teacher identity: Teachers' transformative experiences of re-constructing and re-connecting personal and professional selves*, Ph D thesis, Canada: University of Toronto.
- Davis, H., and Sarlin, P. (2008). On the risk of a new relationality. An interview with Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt. *Rev. Cult. Theory* 2, 7–27.
- de Bruin, L. R. (2018a). Dialogic communication in the one-to-one improvisation lesson: A qualitative study. *Austral. J. Teacher Educ.* 43, 1–16. doi: 10.14221/ajte.2018v43n5.1
- de Bruin, L. R. (2018b). Shaping interpersonal learning in the jazz improvisation lesson: Observing a dynamic systems approach. *Int. J. Music Educ.* 36, 160–181. doi: 10.1177/0255761417712318
- de Bruin, L. R. (2021). Instrumental Music Education in the time of COVID: maintaining connection, community, and relationality with students. *J. Music Health Wellbeing* 11:624717. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.624717
- De Bruyn, L. (2012). *A social and embodied perspective on musical development and music learning: Towards social embodied applications for music education and auditory rehabilitation*. Available online at: <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/3258783> (accessed on 18 June 2022).
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (2004). *A Thousand Plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. New York: Continuum.
- Dillon, S. (2009). *Music, meaning and transformation: Meaningful music making for life*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Erickson, F. (1986). "Qualitative methods in research on teaching," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd Edn, ed. M. C. Wittrock (New York: Macmillan), 119–162.
- Folkestad, G. (2006). Formal and informal learning situations or practices vs formal and informal ways of learning. *Br. J. Music Educ.* 23, 135–145. doi: 10.1017/S0265051706006887
- Foucault, M. (1997/1981). "Friendship as a way of life," in *Ethics, subjectivity and truth*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: The New Press), 135–149.
- Fullagar, S., and Taylor, C. A. (2021). "Body," in *A glossary for doing postqualitative, new materialist and critical posthumanist research across disciplines*, ed. K. Murriss (London, UK: Routledge), 38–39. doi: 10.4324/9781003041153-20
- Galenson, D. (2006). *Artistic capital*. London, UK: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203700044
- Gaunt, H. (2010). One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal students. *Psychol. Music* 38, 178–208. doi: 10.1177/0305735609339467
- Gerrard, J., Rudolph, S., and Sriprakash, A. (2017). The Politics of Post-Qualitative Inquiry: History and Power. *Qualit. Inq.* 25, 384–394. doi: 10.1177/1077800416672694
- Halstead, M. (2004). An Islamic concept of education. *Comp. Educ.* 40, 517–529. doi: 10.1080/0305006042000284510
- Kuby, C. R., and Christ, R. C. (2019). Us-ing: Producing qualitative inquiry pedagogies with/in lively packets of relations. *Qualit. Inq.* 25, 965–978. doi: 10.1177/1077800419843563
- Kuntz, A. M. (2020). Standing at one's post: Post-qualitative inquiry as ethical enactment. *Qualit. Inq.* 27, 215–218. doi: 10.1177/1077800420932599
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1945/2012). *Phenomenology of perception*, D. A. Landes, Trans. London, UK: Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203720714
- Miles, H., and Huberman, M. (1994). *Quality data analysis: A sourcebook*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moore, R. (1992). The decline of improvisation in Western art music: An interpretation of change. *Int. Rev. Aesth. Sociol. Music* 23, 61–84. doi: 10.2307/836956
- Nijs, L., Lesaffre, M., and Leman, M. (2009). "The musical instrument as a natural extension of the musician," in *The 5th Conference of Interdisciplinary Musicology 132-133*, (LAM-Institut jean Le Rond d'Alembert).
- O'Connor, K. E. (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teach. Teacher Educ.* 24, 117–126. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2006.11.008
- Pedder, D., James, M., and MacBeath, J. (2005). How teachers value and practise professional learning. *Res. Papers Educ.* 20, 209–243. doi: 10.1080/02671520500192985
- Perry, N., Mazabel, S., Dantzer, B., and Winne, P. (2018). "Supporting self-regulation and self-determination in the context of music education," in *Big Theories Revisited, 2*, eds G. A. Liem and D. M. McInerney (North Carolina, USA: Information Age Publishing), 295–318. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0232711
- Rajchman, J. (1985). *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

- Schiavio, A., and Hoffding, S. (2015). Playing together without communicating? A pre-reflective and enactive account of joint musical performance. *Music. Scient.* 19, 366–388. doi: 10.1177/1029864915593333
- Schiavio, A., and van der Schyff, D. (2016). Beyond musical qualia. Reflecting on the concept of experience. *Psychomusicology* 26, 366–378. doi: 10.1037/pmu0000165
- Sennett, R. (2012). *Together: The rituals, pleasures and politics of cooperation*. London, UK: Allen Lane.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2020). The Lived Body. *Human. Psychol.* 48, 28–53. doi: 10.1037/hum0000150
- Singh, K., Southcott, J., and Lyons, D. (2021). From our post qualitative kitchen: a Langan meal of knowledge. *Int. J. Qualit. Stud. Educ.* 30:2021. doi: 10.1080/09518398.2021.1982051
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2017). “Post qualitative inquiry: The next generation,” in *Qualitative inquiry in neoliberal times*, eds N. K. Denzin and M. Giardina (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage), 37–47.
- St. Pierre, E. S. (2014). A brief and personal history of post qualitative research: Toward “post inquiry”. *J. Curric. Theoriz.* 30, 2–19. doi: 10.1037/prj0000109
- Wertsch, J. V. (2008). From social interaction to higher psychological processes. *Hum. Devel.* 51, 66–79. doi: 10.1159/000112532
- Zembylas, M. (2005). Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotional rules: A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching. *Teach. Teacher Educ.* 21, 935–948. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.005