THE INCLUSION OF AURAL COMPREHENSION IN THE VICTORIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION MUSIC PERFORMANCE STUDY DESIGN

ROBERT JACOB

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SUPERVISOR: DR JANE SOUTHCOTT

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Abstract

This research is principally concerned with the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). This curriculum was trialed in 1987 and was fully implemented in 1992. The political and educational context of this change as well as the role of aural comprehension in this music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced will also be investigated. An examination of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE music classroom also forms part of this research. The researcher has had an abiding interest in this area since beginning his career, which has been concurrent with the introduction and development of the VCE. The impact of this curriculum reform on the critical area of aural comprehension has been dramatic and for this reason this research examines the area of aural comprehension from the perspective of what is asked of the students and how teachers currently address this area in the classroom.

In order to examine these matters, a multifaceted research approach is taken utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study. The approach employed will be described and placed in a methodological framework.

This approach will provide a detailed picture of the introduction of the VCE Music Performance study design (initially called Music Craft) and the significant differences between this curriculum and the most frequently undertaken music credential immediately prior to this, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Group 1 subject Music A. The political and educational context of this curriculum change and an examination of current teaching practice with respect to aural comprehension skills in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Unit 3 and 4 Music Performance (Group) and Music Performance (Solo) will also be described and explained.

Statement

I declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. I affirm that, to the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Name: Robert Jacob

Signature: 

Date: 30 January 2012

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To undertake a task such as this requires a lot of support. I would like to express my appreciation to all the participants in this research. Helen Champion and Roland Yeung were both very generous with their time in allowing me to interview them and their insights enhanced this research enormously. A large number of VCE music teachers also offered their time (anonymously) to complete a survey providing information about the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE classroom. These data were of crucial importance in this research and their time is sincerely appreciated.

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List of abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AMEB	Australian Music Examinations Board
CAT	Common Assessment Task
CRDI	Continuous Response Digital Interface
CSF	Curriculum Standards Framework
fMRI	Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging
FOSC	Field of Study Committee
GAT	General Assessment Task
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
KLA	Key Learning Area
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
SAC	School-Assessed Coursework
TOP	Tertiary Orientation Program
VBOS	Victorian Board of Studies
VCAB	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Standards
VOP	Vocational Orientation Program
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Issue

This research is concerned with the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), beginning in the late 1980s with full implementation completed by 1992. The study also encompasses the political and educational context of this change as well as the role of aural comprehension in this new music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced. An examination of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE music classroom is also undertaken. The place of aural comprehension in the VCE music curriculum has been chosen for a number of reasons. Aural Comprehension has always been a significant part of much music education as it is a crucial part of developing musicianship but, in Victoria it was largely ignored in the dominant practical HSC music course. Although its importance is undeniable, the way in which aural comprehension skills are framed in curriculum documents, taught in courses, and assessed, is frequently contested and debated in music education circles. This makes it an important and interesting aspect of the curriculum change to consider in some detail. In order to examine these matters, a multifaceted research approach is taken utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study. This chapter will outline the approaches employed and, in an introductory discussion, place these in a methodological framework.

Specifically, the enquiry will provide a detailed picture of the introduction of the VCE Music Performance study design (initially called Music Craft) and the significant differences between this curriculum and the most frequently undertaken music credential immediately prior to this, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Group 1 subject Music A. There will also be an exploration of the political and educational context of this curriculum change and an examination of current teaching practice with respect to aural comprehension skills in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Unit 3 and 4 Music Performance (Group) and Music Performance (Solo).

Long history of aural comprehension instruction

The teaching, curriculum, evaluation and assessment of aural comprehension skills in the education of musicians is an old problem. One of the first people in recorded history to develop a system of training in this area was Guido d'Arezzo (c. 995 – 1050). Guido's aim was to devise a system to train singers to pitch. Importantly, the desired end of this process was and continues to be the development of aural comprehension skills to assist in the performance of music (Miller, 1973). It is beyond the scope of this research to examine in detail how Guido's system has been modified and applied throughout the world, suffice to say many of the principles he employed are still widely used to this day. Miller (1973, p. 240) outlines Guido's contribution as an educator as being primarily around the invention and/or development of:

> (3) placement of staff lines as used to the present day, so that they signify intervals of thirds;
>
> (4) rudimentary development of solmization as a memory aid and a means for learning to read new music printed according to his notation;
>
> (5) use of instruments and the hand as space frames or tactile references for visualizing, hearing, and singing accurately the distances between consecutive pitches.

As far as Guido's long-term influence, and the contribution he made to problems of musical pedagogy still present today, Miller (1973) contends, "there is little doubt that he was a true pioneer of music education. Music, as far as notation and the staff are concerned, still lives in the Guido era" (Miller, 1973, p. 245). Considering that music educators have been addressing issues of the inclusion of aural comprehension in music pedagogy for a millennium it seems surprising that the topic remains contested.

Theories of listening

Effective aural comprehension relies on meaningful music listening. Dunn (2011, p. 52) reminds us that "engaging in music in a way that is personally meaningful is a part of being human". Given the persistence of the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of aural comprehension skills it is not surprising that many of the major music educators and

researchers throughout the world have developed theories around what might broadly be termed 'listening'. One of the difficulties of exploring this area of human experience is described by Dunn (2011, p. 3) when he states that "when we listen and are captivated by what we hear, we know what we are experiencing and respond in a very real way. But when we are asked to describe our music listening experience, to translate it into words or explicit rules, we quickly find that aspects of the experience are difficult to communicate".

The terminology used in the literature in this area of music education gives an indication of the diversity and breadth of thought as well as the interest this area has elicited over many decades, even centuries. Terms such as aural comprehension, listening comprehension, aural perception, audition, audiation, aural skills, thought-full listening[1], attentive listening, mindful musical listening have been coined. And the related tasks of aural instruction, aural education, aural perception development, 'syllabus of listening' and 'teaching listening' demonstrate that this crucial areas of music and music education has occupied the thoughts of generations of musicians, educators and scholars. An examination of these various theories around listening is foundational to an understanding of the problem confronting educators in incorporating this area in music education curriculum programs and assessment regimes. It is beyond the scope of this research to closely examine all the theories of listening espoused by theorists, composers, musicians, researchers and educators over the centuries. Such ideas have influenced music curriculum writers, including those in Victoria. The ideas of a selected number of what might be considered the most influential theorist will be outlined in the following brief discussion, namely Edwin Gordon, Keith Swanwick, David Elliott, John Paynter, and Bennett Reimer.

Gordon's work in the field of listening and aural perception is long-standing and highly regarded internationally. He defines the concept of *audiation* as occurring:

> when musicians assimilate and generalize in the mind sound of music they have just heard performed or have heard performed sometime in the past. They also audiate when assimilating and comprehending in the mind familiar or unfamiliar music they may or may not have heard but are reading in notation, composing, or improvising (Gordon, 2011, p. 4).

[1] David Elliot's concept of 'thought-full' listening is explained later in this chapter

Of note in this definition is that sound does not need to be immediately present, or have ever been actually present, for this process to occur. Gordon (2011, p. 4) succinctly differentiates audiation from perception by stating: “Hearing is to perceive. Listening is to audiate”.

Gordon’s definition contrasts with many others that appear to require the presence of sound for processing, perception, comprehension, and the like, to take place. For example, Swanwick describes what he terms audition as ‘attentive and responsive listening with aesthetic understanding’ (Swanwick, 1979, p 51). Clearly from this definition the sound itself must be present for audition to happen, but equally this process involves intellectual engagement, some understanding of the context of what is being heard and implies the construction of meaning. Given the influence that Swanwick had on the initial and subsequent VCE Music Craft and Music Performance study designs, his concept of audition is significant (Miles, 2006). This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

The concept of being attentive to sound also features in Elliot’s notion of listening as a ‘thought-full’ activity (1995, pp. 78-79). He states that although it may seem that, as humans, we simply ‘take in’ the sound around us as passive receptors of aural stimuli, there is a conscious process of filtering that effects what we give our attention to. It is in this way that Elliot conceives of listening as a ‘thought-full’ activity. Another aspect of this notion of listening is related to the distinctiveness of the task of listening to music. Elliot describes how, when listening to music, we must perceive it in time, unlike, for example, the way in which one can perceive a piece of visual art. To explain this point further he states that “our understanding of aural events depends on what we capture in a continuous “moving” stream of information. Accordingly, listening is a context-dependent process” (Elliott, 1995, p. 81).

As pointed out by Stevens (2002), Paynter is best known as being a part of the so-called ‘creative music’ approach. This approach made use of non-skill-intensive forms of musical creativity and performance that utilized many of the ideas of contemporary composers such as the use of graphic notation, every-day as well as traditional sound sources, and unconventional performance practices, electronic music (particularly *musique concrète* and tape recorders. Paynter has much to say about curriculum design. For him, creativity and especially the making of music should be at the centre of the students’ musical experiences and therefore at the centre of the curriculum also. Paynter advocates curriculum design that features a ‘syllabus of listening’ with particular emphasis upon the development of aural

perception (Miles, 2006, p 36). He also "favours approaches to teaching and learning that cultivate and develop 'attentive listening' which is not focused to any great extent upon 'peripheral information' (for example, abstract descriptions of musical elements and forms, lives and times of composers, etc.), rather with an emphasis upon regarding listening as an aspect of creativity" (Miles, 2006, p. 36). In short, Paynter argues that actually listening and engaging with the music in a creative way should be the focus of the 'syllabus of listening' he proposes that students' attention should not be distracted from the music by peripheral information about the composer or other socio-cultural matters. This aligns with Swanwick's use of the acronymn CLASP in which he states that central to music learning should be Composition, Audition and Performance, whereas Literature (information) and Skills, although important, are not the core of music engagement (Swanwick, 1979).

Reimer passionately argues that in order for music education to remain relevant, music educators must continue to offer excellent ensemble music-making opportunities, thoroughly integrate improvisation from a variety of cultures and traditions into our pedagogy, embrace the increasing opportunities for meaningful musical composition using new enabling technologies and, most importantly in Reimer's view, "we must, finally, eliminate the embarrassing and destructive gap between the major way people partake of music in their lives - listening - and our neglect of, and disparagement of, the teaching of listening in our music programs" (Reimer, 1997, p. 35). He goes on to argue that the myth that listening is passive must be addressed, claiming that:

> Mindful musical listening is among the most complex and most challenging acts of human cognition. It requires high levels of perceptual acuity in the extremely intricate realm of sounds. The making of musical meaning requires that the mind not only constructs the relationships among the sounds of which music is made, but also feels those relationships subjectively and sensuously if musical meaning is to be grasped.

In addition to these educators and researchers, there is a flourishing and increasingly sophisticated area of the sciences dealing with the cognitive activity associated with the act of performing music and that of listening to music. This field has developed considerably in the last thirty years, most recently aided by increasingly sophisticated technology used, notably magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and functional magnetic imaging (fMRI). At present, these studies have shown that the brains of musicians are different in a considerable number

of ways from non-musicians. These include the parts of the brain activated while listening to music, see Schmithorst and Holland (2003) and greater development of pathways between the two hemispheres of the brain, see Jäncke (2002).

The authors mentioned above all consider listening to be fundamental to music engagement and all emphasise the importance of listening as underpinning effective music teaching and learning. This emphasis would seem to have been carried over to the revised VCE study design with its considerably increased focus on listening and aural comprehension. As will be discussed, it appears that these leading thinkers in music education influenced the development of the initial and subsequent versions of the VCE Music study designs. Having mentioned the most significant ideas underpinning the curriculum reforms it is important to contextualise these changes.

Context

There were a number of imperatives for change that provided the context of the curriculum developments represented by the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) by 1992. This credential replaced a number of diverse credentials, as will be explained. There was a strong desire to simplify the curriculum offering in Victoria as, over many years, secondary schools across the state offered various over-lapping and potentially confusing credentials. Amongst these offerings were the Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1), Technical Year 12 Certificate (T12), Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP), Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC, later called HSC Group 2) and Vocational Orientation Program (VOP). All of these credentials were originally introduced to meet a specific need in educational provision. However, by the 1980s and early-1990s, it was difficult for parents and students to understand what options would best serve their needs and there was also a considerable duplication between different courses and units. Music was not the only area in which there was such a plethora of offerings. For example, “prior to the new VCE of 1998, there were hundreds of Maths subjects... in the apprentice courses, there were Maths subjects that were basically just to do with the cash register” (Yeung, 2009, p. 42).

There was a general desire to modernise the curriculum to address the changing labour market needs and the demands of late twentieth-century as well as to enhance the clarity, coherence and consistency between units. The Honourable Joan Kirner, the Victorian

Minister for Education (1988-90) at that time, outlined the characteristics of the new VCE as "a curriculum of greater coherence, quality and consistency of standards, an improved range of studies, improved and consistent methods of assessment, and expanded employment and education pathways" (Miles, 2006, p. 74). It is clear that this education reform was focused on the world of work as well as more liberal ideals of education. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) stated in their VCE options paper that the goals of this curriculum reform included the need 'to provide the foundations for a better educated society and a more flexible, highly skilled and productive workforce ... The curriculum must be structured so as to ensure that all students have access to the major areas of culture, and to programs of study which are balanced and which lead on to post-school study, employment and citizenship' (VCAB, 1987, p. 1). It is important to recognize that the changes in societal expectations of education were not merely limited to Victoria but reflected a much wider trend.

The changes in the labour market referred to above were to a considerable extent the result of two broad changes in the world economy. Firstly, the economy was becoming more global in the sense that regional and national markets were steadily being exposed to global market pressures. International competition in most markets was increasing and international trade in many industries was also growing. Secondly, the capital of the economy was moving from a heavy reliance on manufactured goods to a greater emphasis on knowledge. This change led to the use of the expression 'knowledge economy'.

A detailed examination of the development and consequences of the globalization forces at work and the development of a knowledge economy is beyond the scope of this research, but an understanding of the global economic and societal forces at work at the time of the introduction of the VCE is crucial for a full understanding of the imperatives for change that form the background of this significant curriculum reform. There are a few key factors that are characteristics of the knowledge economy and differentiate it from the industrial revolution that preceded it. All sorts of information and knowledge were codified or, more precisely digitized, and this has had a powerful effect on the ability of people to share and instantly retrieve information for very little or no cost, the music industry being no exception. Houghton and Sheehan (2000, p. 11) argue as compared to the introduction of machines in the industrial revolution that frequently had the effect of replacing human labour, work in the knowledge economy will "increasingly demand uniquely human (tacit) skills – such as

conceptual and inter-personal management and communication skills". This is almost counter-intuitive, as digital technology is often represented as being de-humanising, but in a sense it has made these peculiarly human abilities more important as a point of differentiation since information is so widely available to all.

Advances in information and communication technologies have also had the effect of strengthening global competition in many industries. Equally important in the knowledge economy (and crucial with respect to education) is the importance of the ability of organisations to learn and innovate. Houghton and Sheehan (2000, p. 21) also argue that success in the knowledge-economy will rely, in part, on "much more investment in the production of people with broad-based problem solving skills and with the social and inter-personal communication skills required for teamwork, along with the skills and attitudes required for flexibility". Such understandings permeate the thinking that was behind the introduction of the VCE.

Contentions

The researcher came to this research with a variety of contentions regarding the introduction of the VCE as a curriculum reform and the teaching and learning of aural comprehension skills.

The first contention of this thesis is that the teaching of aural comprehension is best done within the context of a holistic and broadly-based program of listening and not in a narrowly-defined 'exam training' regime. True aural comprehension skills are developed in students if there is a clear pedagogical framework and a thorough, well sequenced and 'real-world' program of listening presented to the students. Teaching and learning that becomes narrowly focussed on specific and highly prescribed assessment tasks will rarely provide genuine skills that are transferable to authentic musical contexts and are, as such, little more than training to pass an exam.

The second contention of this thesis is that much aural comprehension teaching is founded on pragmatic factors such as the availability of resources, what 'seems to work' and the methodology and activities with which the teacher is familiar, either through exposure as a student or the influence of colleagues. There are rarely utilised links between the well-established theories of listening as articulated within the research literature, current research

on the cognitive processes involved in perceiving musical stimulus, and the teaching of aural comprehension skills in schools. These data further support the concept that scant attention is given to what research may offer the teaching and learning process. This may be due to factors such as research information not being made available in accessible ways to teachers or to the view sometimes held by practitioners that research literature is not grounded in or helpful to the practical task of teaching in schools. Butler (1997) has examined this issue and has found that there is "little evidence that anyone in aural training classrooms was reading much of what was in the music cognition journals" (p. 39). He concludes his article with the following statement: "Aural training is an obvious potential beneficiary for the application of findings in music perception research – what is aural training, after all, if it is not the acquisition of cognitive skills in music – but the real connection between research and the classroom is yet to be made" (Butler, 1997, p. 47). This comment was made about North American college-level aural training classes, but could equally apply to the Victorian music classroom. There is a gulf, at present, between what we know from research about the development of aural comprehension skills and the work of music educators. In many cases the provision of in-service education and resources is founded on the ideas of experienced practitioners in the education field and other pragmatic factors.

Related to the last contention is the point that pedagogical practices in aural comprehension could benefit from an awareness of theories of listening and more recent research in the field. Teachers and researchers need to work together to enable and encourage a conversation to be carried on between both parties to learn and share information in this field. Teachers could benefit from knowledge of research about effective practice and researchers could benefit from an awareness of the kinds of concerns that teachers need more information about and are of interest in the field.

The third contention of this thesis is that the current curriculum and assessment model in aural comprehension in the VCE is inconsistent with respect to the stated intention to make the curriculum student-centred and the assessment authentic. In a variety of ways, the VCE curriculum and assessment strategies present an increasingly conservative, prescriptive and rudimentary conception of aural comprehension. Conservative in the sense that there remain parts of the Aural and Written Examination that are not in-keeping with a student-centred or twenty-first century curriculum. Conversely, there are elements of aural comprehension skills that are excluded that would both modernise the curriculum and challenge very able students

allowing these students to be differentiated from the larger numbers who can perform well on the assessment instrument as it stands. Prescriptive, as the details of the task on the examination are narrowly and precisely defined, potentially encouraging teaching 'to' the examination and rudimentary in the sense that rather than pushing the concept of aural comprehension in new, modern and challenging ways, the requirements of the course are being rendered simpler and narrower with little content that might be regarded as modern in any sense.

The fourth and last contention of this thesis is that the introduction of the VCE in the last years of the 1980s and the first years of the 1990s was a product of pedagogical and political imperatives driven by global changes, itself influenced and in part brought about by technological change. In the past, the introduction of laws forbidding child labour impacted on education by increasing the number of children in schools, to which schools had to respond. Similarly, more recent changes in the labour market whereby most growth in employment opportunities occurred in knowledge-intensive areas, combined with the gradual increase in the compulsory schooling age, forced schools to address their programs to a larger number and a less homogeneous cohort of students. These changes and very high youth unemployment combined to produce the context of this political reform. A brief examination of the changed political climate that surrounds the introduction of an Australian Curriculum provides an interesting contemporary contrast.

The Researcher

Southcott (1997, p. 2) contends (with Franklin[1]) that the curriculum researcher should ideally be a specialist within a specific domain, not "historians of education *per se*" as "such specialist knowledge and experience informs the formation of questions and problems for exploration". The researcher is a music teacher of some twenty years experience whose professional career is essentially concurrent with the history of the VCE[2]. From a highly pragmatic point of view, the researcher was from the outset immersed in the teaching of the VCE. During pre-service training, information about the, then new, VCE curriculum was

[1] Franklin, B (1977)

[2] Commencing full-time teaching in 1992, the first year of VCE Music Craft implementation (aside from schools that trialed the new curriculum).

presented. As a new teacher, considerable professional development was devoted to dealing with the teaching of the new curriculum, and as the curriculum has been refined and changed over the years, the researcher has dealt with the changes through further professional development. In addition to this continuous professional interest, it is perhaps unsurprising that the researcher has reflected on the changes this new curriculum has brought to music education as compared to his own experiences as a student, undertaking HSC Music A and B as subjects in the late-1980s. This earlier curriculum did not feature any significant aural comprehension instruction[1]. The assessment in Music A was made up, almost entirely, of a solo recital. Music B was assessed largely through a written examination. Music A and Music B both included optional units that were assessed internally, some of these units had an aural comprehension component, but most did not. It was possible to complete these subjects without undertaking any formal studies in aural comprehension.

Prior to commencing university, the researcher had no experience of aural comprehension. The recognition, transcription and identification of chords, rhythms and melodies were completely unknown aside from token preparation for Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB) practical examinations[2]. My degree, a Bachelor of Music Education, included a total of four hours of aural comprehension instruction per week. These aural comprehension lectures were conducted using hand-signs and tonic sol-fa and seemed to assume at least a passing familiarity with aural comprehension. The researcher can still remember the feeling of being completely out of his depth and of hoping not to be chosen so that my lack of expertise would not be obvious for all to see! With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that this was something of a privilege and a significant opportunity to improve my quite poor aural skills. Despite the fear and trepidation with which nearly every class was faced, the

[1] Aural comprehension skills, as we shall see in Chapter 4, were at best peripheral to the study of music. There was one optional unit that students could undertake dealing with aural comprehension to some extent and some small components of aural comprehension study present in other optional units. It was certainly possible, indeed given the range of options possible, even probable, that an HSC (Group 1) Music A student would undertake no aural comprehension training and this was the case for the researcher. Music B (a subject that deals with musical styles and history) was taught largely as a history subject, or, to think of it in a slightly different light, as English, where the text under study was a score. This subject also had optional units, chosen from the same list as in Music A, with the same chance of undertaking some aural comprehension within it.

[2] Usually, this preparation was undertaken exclusively in the last few weeks prior to an exam. Anecdotally, the researcher has spoken with many other musicians who had a similar experience.

researcher's aural skills did improve and was consequently better prepared to teach VCE music upon graduation.

Through these experiences, the researcher's interest in both significant curriculum reform such as the introduction of the VCE, and the teaching and learning of aural comprehension skills that became so important in the senior music classroom as a result, has been a long-standing professional one.

Structure of thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced the issues addressed in this thesis concerning the inclusion of aural comprehension in the VCE Music Performance Study Design, its significance, and the context of these issues. The contentions that underpin this research have been explained and there has been a brief introduction to the researcher.

Chapter 2 focuses on the relevant, substantive research literature bearing upon this research. Significant theories of listening are outlined followed by an overview of music education curriculum in Australia and Victoria. Given the focus on aural comprehension in this research, the place of aural comprehension in the curriculum and an analysis of the research on effective teaching of these skills is also included in this chapter.

The methodology used in this research is the focus of Chapter 3. As stated previously, to examine these matters, a multifaceted research approach has been taken utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study. This thesis is therefore placed within the qualitative and phenomenological research traditions, but it also calls upon some quantitative and historical research techniques to inform the issues under consideration. The approach taken will be outlined in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 4 deals with the political, societal and economic context of Australia at the time the VCE was being developed and introduced. This necessarily brief overview provides important insights into the imperatives for change and what drove the agenda for change in education at this time. Chapter 4 also examines the history of secondary education in

Australia and specifically Victoria before focusing on the history of music education in Australia and Victoria, specifically music in secondary education.

The initial development and introduction of the VCE is examined in Chapter 5. The structure of the course and requirements of the overall credential is outlined before an explanation of the specific areas of study, work requirements, assessment requirements and criterion for the award of grades for the Music Craft (later called Music Performance) study design. Special attention is given to the aural comprehension requirements of the study design and the Aural and Written examination because of the importance of this area of study in the development of young musicians and as an example of the significant change brought about by this curriculum reform.

Chapter 6 presents the data on the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the contemporary VCE classroom. Survey data presented in this chapter addresses the approaches of the respondents to teaching this area of the curriculum, the activities used, the amount and proportion of time devoted to activities specifically aimed at addressing aural comprehension skills and the resources used.

A discussion of the methodological approach, issues, contentions and findings of this research is undertaken in Chapter 7. Included in this chapter is consideration of the similarities and differences between the curriculum reform of introducing the VCE and the introduction of the Australian Curriculum.

Chapter 8 examines each of the contentions raised by the researcher before suggesting some possible lines of related further research.

Chapter 2 - Review of research literature

Introduction

There are two main components to this discussion of the relevant, substantive research literature related to this enquiry concerning the inclusion of aural comprehension in the VCE Music Performance Study Design. The first is a brief consideration of research into aural comprehension, music listening, the use of technology in the teaching of aural comprehension, and other related matters. The second explores prior research into curriculum development in Australia, particularly in Victoria.

Research into Aural Comprehension

In examining the research literature on aural comprehension there is a clear divide between those approaching this topic from a cognitive/psychological perspective (who usually use the term aural perception), and those approaching this area from an educational perspective (more commonly, although certainly not exclusively, using the term aural comprehension). Researchers from a cognitive/psychological perspective frequently employ atomistic tests – that is, tests of very small and well controlled aspects of music, these tests are somewhat removed from 'real-life' composed and performed pieces of music. The major reason for this use of 'artificial' stimuli in aural perceptual research is about control of stimuli. As Rasch and Plomp (1999, p. 90) assert: "It is impossible to obtain well-controlled psychoacoustic stimuli by manual means, such as playing tones or chords on a musical instrument. The precision of the ear in distinguishing fine nuances is much greater than our ability to produce these nuances". "The term 'musical perception' is preferable to the term 'aural perception' – to emphasize that the important principles we want to discover are not those of the ear, but more properly the mind" (Rasch & Plomp, 1999, p. 334). Given the impossibility of achieving in school situations accurate aural examples to the standard considered by these researchers, such research is of limited assistance to music teachers in 'real-life' situations.

Research examining listening to music in various contexts

The cognitive and aesthetic experience of listening to music is complex and multi-faceted and, as such, it is difficult to come to a thorough understanding of it. To attempt this would be beyond the scope of this enquiry. As a consequence of this complexity, how people learn to listen to music presents the researcher with significant challenges. As Dunn (2011, p. 3) puts it:

> How we learn to listen to music is also difficult to probe and understand. What we "know" about this process is limited by observation, what questions researchers ask, and what they are able to operationalize into research measures.

The skills associated with being able to recognise, transcribe, identify, describe, analyse and discuss musical stimuli are a fundamental part of the Victorian Certificate of Education Music Craft (Performance) study design. The elevation of these skills from a position largely on the periphery, and sometimes completely absent, from previous senior secondary credentials was a significant reform and is a major focus of this research. An overview of research in the area of listening forms part of the relevant substantive literature pertinent to this research.

The ability to listen to music and glean insights of various types from the aural material presented is one of the ways in which some believe natural musical ability or aptitude can be identified. Kirnarskaya and Winner (1997, p. 3) state that:

> The Seashore measures, as well as most other musical aptitude tests (e.g., Bentley, 1966; Gordon, 1976; Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel, 1981; Stankov & Horn, 1980), are based on the assumption that individuals with musical talent have an excellent "analytical ear" for music... Thus the core of musical aptitude is assumed to be the ability to detect pitch, duration of pitch, and rhythm.

The authors contend that these particular discrimination tasks focus on aspects of music that are captured in the notation, referring to them as 'notational' aspects of the music. They contrast these skills with those concerned with what might be termed sensitivity to music's expressive or affective qualities. They argue that sensitivity to the expressive character of music may well be a better predictor of true musical ability than the 'notational' aspects of music that are the focus of music research on musical ability and talent (Kirnarskaya &

Winner, 1997, pp. 3-4). One of the difficulties presented by this notion is the problem of how to measure these skills compared with the more concrete skills many studies focus on such as rhythmic and pitch perception and musical memory. Kirnarskaya and Winner used a set of communicative archetypes derived from ethnomusicological studies of the social context of music making. The four communicative archetypes used in the research are: invitation, request, play and meditation. The authors then exposed eight groups of subjects to musical stimulus[1], the eight groups representing different ages and those who were trained in music and those who were not. The findings of this research indicate that musical training may have the effect of focusing the listeners mind on the notational aspects of music at the expense of the expressive elements. This research is relevant as the VCE Music Craft (and the subsequent Music Performance study design) Aural and Written Examination[2] as the tasks students are required to undertake in this examination focus to a considerable extent on those 'notational' aspects of music. It could be argued that this characteristic of the exams is also becoming more pervasive as the study design and the assessment tools change over the years.

Research in the field of neuroscience is beginning to yield evidence that there are generalised benefits in students' listening skills when musical training is undertaken. Kraus and Chandrasekaran (2010, p. 599) state that:

> In the course of training, musicians increasingly learn to attend to the fine-grained acoustics of musical sounds. These include pitch, timing and timbre, the three basic components into which any sound that reaches the human ear – including music or speech – can be broken down.

This research points to extra-musical auditory processing benefits that may result from musical training and also point to physiological changes in the brain of musicians as a result of musical training. The authors go on to discuss the educational implications of this research, arguing that:

> The results of these studies suggest that the benefits of music training may be accessible to everyone and not just to those who show an aptitude towards music … it seems imperative that we afford all children an equal opportunity to improve their listening skills through music training (Kraus & Chandrasekaran, 2010, p. 603).

[1] The musical stimuli were taken from a range of genres and, notably, were 'real-world' examples of music, not prepared or 'abstract' stimulus materials.

[2] See Appendix 2 for examples of this common assessment task.

The study of the relationship between musical processing skills and language-based processing skills has developed in the last decade. Another study examined this relationship by means of a series of language-based intonation tasks (Dankovicova, House, Crooks, & Jones, 2007, p. 211) and concluded (with some reservations) that "musicians outperformed nonmusicians across nearly all tasks".

An interesting and very early research study on expression in music uses the mechanism of a dial to record aesthetic response. The device, a Continuous Response Digital Interface (CRDI), makes use of a dial that moves along a continuum to measure perceived aesthetic level from positive to negative as defined by the user as she/he listens to music. The use of this type of device is one way of dealing with the difficulties of exploring aesthetic responses. As explained by Meyer (1956, p. 8):

> It may well be that when a listener reports that he felt this or that emotion, he is describing the emotion which he believes the passage is supposed to indicate, not anything that he himself has experienced. Finally, even where the report given is of genuine emotional experience, it is liable to become garbled and perverted in the process of verbalization.

One example of more recent research using the CRDI device to record aesthetic responses simultaneously as the subject listens to the stimulus was undertaken by Madsen, Brittin and Capparella-Sheldon (1993). Subjects were chosen from a music faculty and were either graduate students or faculty staff. No attempt was made on the part of the researcher to define what an aesthetic experience was and the dial was simply labeled positive or negative. This research was a trial of using this type of technology to 'track' subjects' aesthetic experience while listening to an example of famous classical music[1]. The results of this research indicated that there was good reliability of responses when subjects were re-tested, but the main interest in this research is as an example of a study that attempted to explore the non-notional, expressive elements of music in real time, whereas most such research is reflective and relies entirely on the written or verbal attempt of subjects to relate what they experienced when listening to music. As the quotation above states, this is an imprecise process.

[1] The music used was an excerpt from Act 1 of Puccini's *La Bohème* of approximately 20 minutes duration.

Dunn (2011, pp. 16-17) describes the work of a number of researchers[1] looking at the place of listening in everyday life and the differences between such listening and what might be described as more structured listening in an educational environment. One important distinction that many students make, and of which educators should be cognizant, is the notion that listening to music for young people is done for a variety of reasons. One of the significant reasons amongst these was to change or effect their mood, including compensating for negative or undesired moods. Dunn (2011, p. 20) states that "sometimes musicians or music educators may devalue music to regulate our moods". Behne (1997, p. 157) argues that "musical experts tend to think of a 'compensating' listening style as an inappropriate behavior towards a piece of music as a work of art" and, later, states that "adolescents use *Musikerleben*[2] to help cope with their problems and this, perhaps, is why to very many adolescents music is one of the most important things in the world" (p. 157). Another major result of this study is the finding that the role of music in moderating mood "was greater when persons had power over the listening choices" (Dunn, 2011, p. 17). The relevance of this type of research is that one of the major thrusts of curriculum reform at the time of the introduction of the VCE was on making the curriculum student-centered. As one of the writers of the curriculum explained:

> It had to be relevant to kids today. Not so much looking back at past papers and saying "let's replicate" ... probably an exam of that would be in the aural comprehension where all the theory is based on major and minor scales and all the chords were triads, yet the music the kids were listening to were non-functional, cadences were not relevant, four-note chords or five-note chords were everywhere, tonality, lots of modal stuff used, typically Rock music using mixolydian, not major, flattened 7th all the way through – the studies didn't recognise it, so that is an easier one to bring up to date, but the starting point had to be 'what was in the student realm', so it was student-focussed and that was probably the biggest thing about the

[1] Specifically, the work of Boal-Palheirios (2001) and Hargreaves (2004) examining the differences between music listening at home and at school and the related work of Sloboda, O'Neill, and Ivaldi (2001)

[2] *Musikerleben* is defined as "the sum of psychic processes which accompany the experience of music in situations when music is the focus of interest: When a person is not hearing, but listening to and appreciating music. *Musikerleben* is involved with aesthetic experiencing but does not need to be an intense, subjective experience, as the term is sometimes used. It must be thought of as having many varying degrees of intensity and attention (Behne, 1997)

> VCE it became more, 'what does a student have to do?', not 'what does a teacher have to teach?' (Yeung, 2009, p. 5).

When a curriculum bears no relation to the music in the students' 'world', the 'disconnect' between listening to music in everyday life and experiencing music in formal learning settings is exacerbated. Typically, the formal listening experience (for example, in a music appreciation class) not only presents music that is chosen by the teacher, it often focuses the listeners attention on aspects of the music that would not ordinarily be a significant focus of the listening. Dunn (2011, p. 45) illuminates this point:

> For discussion, and in very simplistic terms, it appears that the focus of such formal listening would fall under cognitive responses: spending most of the listening time and energy in having students looking for, identifying, and responding to things about the elemental, formal, and factual aspects of the music ... what may often occur is a separation of the other aspects of the intuitive listening experience ... Inherent, too, may be a devaluing of these other responses involved in the intuitive music listening experience. Perhaps it is here that school music and life music begin to diverge.

Research examining the use of technology in aural comprehension instruction

It hardly needs to be said that technology (particularly computer technology) is becoming more and more widespread in virtually all fields of human endeavour. Education has certainly felt considerable effects of technology, particularly from the late-1980s to the present day. Music education has not been an idle bystander during these changes. As Higgins (1992, p. 483) points out, "the use of computers in music education parallels the introduction of the use of computers in general education, with music educators playing an active role in computer-based instruction since the late 1950s".

Stevens (1994, p. 34) identifies three distinct roles that the computer can take in a pedagogical setting: that of a learning environment, an information environment and as a personal working and/or production tool. The use of technology in aural comprehension has

historically been in the role of learning environment. Typically, the computer plays or generates aural stimuli which the student must respond to by providing some type of input. The computer then gives the learner feedback on the response provided. This type of learning is often called 'drill and practice'. Indeed, aural comprehension has historically been a significant area of computer-aided instruction. "Computer-based instruction in the areas of music fundamentals, elements, and ear training constitutes the bulk of the available software in music education" (Higgins, 1992, p. 484).

Woodford (2000) provides an intrinsic case study about one such learning tool – in this case, a web-based learning environment – AuralOnline. This site was specifically developed to assist VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) students in preparing for the VCE Aural and Written examination. Woodford's research examines the students' interactions with the website based on their responses in a feedback form completed on-line. The data from this research indicated that AuralOnline was an effective aid to many students wishing to work on their aural comprehension skills at their own pace and either from home or school. The major drawbacks to the system were technical glitches that caused frustration to the students (and, no doubt, the developer of the website). Also falling into the previously identified of the computer as a "learning environment" (Stevens, 1994, p. 34) is the Musical Auditory Skills Training & Test, designed and developed by Guetl and Parncutt (2008). While it is too early to comment in detail on the effectiveness of this program, the authors conclude that they have "implemented a flexible and easy to use training and testing tool which is applicable for various application scenarios and diverse learning settings" (Guetl & Parncutt, 2008, p. 8).

In another recent study, Jeanneret and Britts (2007), highlighted the use of technology[1] to support students in writing about musical stimuli. The authors employed a program specifically used to display musical pitches in a 'piano roll' format. This format of presentation has the potential to make the observation of pitch relationships and patterns less reliant on the complex decoding of conventional notation. The authors give the examples of a chromatic and a whole tone scale and how the key characteristic of these scales (i.e., the uniform pitch relationships) is much clearer in this type of format then in ordinary,

[1] Their research was not solely dealing with the use of technology. They also examined the use of other mechanisms to assist students by 'scaffolding' the task. 'Scaffolding' is used by the authors in the Vygotskian sense; a cognitive developmental view of learning by which an event that is unfamiliar or beyond a learner's current ability is organized so as to support the learner in carrying out a task (Jeanneret & Britts, 2007)

treble/bass clef notation. Equally, the separation of the melody and accompaniment from a J.S. Bach Klavier Prelude was also made clearer by use of this presentation.

Other research examining the field of aural comprehension

Aural comprehension has so often in the past been the missing link in music education. With respect to instrumental teaching, the way in which many students are prepared for external examinations (set by a variety of bodies, chiefly the Australian Music Examinations Board) frequently divorces musical practice from musical theory and (worryingly), both from sound. As Rosevear (1996, p. 11) states: "In many traditional 'AMEB-type' programs, it is possible to concentrate on cognitive aspects (such as theory) in isolation from aural aspects". As Mainwaring (1951, p. 107) suggests that:

> It would be possible to train someone deaf from birth to gain 100 per cent on a typical paper on 'Musical Rudiments', ... [and that] this would not matter if the process of training which would have to be employed for someone deaf from birth were not so frequently applied to children who are capable of genuine musical experience.

The reasons for this style of instruction (specifically, that which separates aural comprehension and theoretical knowledge from musical performance and, indeed, from sound) do not lie entirely with examination bodies or with instrumental teachers or with examiners who may (in some cases) give little attention to non-performance components of the syllabuses. There are very many reasons for this style of teaching and these are (perhaps) the topic of another paper. The intention in discussing these lessons is to give some insight into the instrumental lessons, and the aural comprehension component of these lessons, likely to be a part of all VCE Music students. Aural skills are particularly important in the performance of jazz, folk and contemporary popular music styles, as they are improvised or semi-improvised forms of music with limited reliance on the written notation/chart/changes. Consequently, instruction in some instruments closely associated with these styles (for example, guitar), would likely not conform to the pattern of instruction outlined above.

In studies comparing students who have had ensemble experience with those who have not had any musical training one clear finding emerged. This was, that students with ensemble

experience achieve more highly on a variety of musical perception and discrimination tests than the control group [e.g., Stewart, 1961; Erneston, 1961; McCarthy, 1969; Horner, 1973; Hoffren, 1962; and Zimmerman, 1971] (Humphreys, May, & Nelson, 1992, p. 659). Remembering that the control had had no musical training, this finding is not a surprise, but does confirm what one might call common sense.

Humphreys, May and Nelson (1992, p. 659) report on research examining the relationship between years spent in an ensemble program and achievement on a variety of discrimination and perception tests. Researchers both found a statistically significant (direct) correlation between years spent in an ensemble (including choral) program and achievement on general musical discrimination tests. This research was done without a control group, and so improvement related to age, increased concentration span and/or maturity has not been considered.

Heritage (1986, cited in Colwell, p. 659) "found that the ability of junior-level college music majors to hear musical intervals was related to their high school choral experiences and that the students rhythmic discrimination ability correlated with their high school band experiences". Positive correlations were also found between ensemble experiences and error detection in intonation, tone quality, interpretation, ensemble techniques and in complex rhythmic perception (Humphreys, May & Nelson, 1992). As in the previously cited studies, no control group was used in these studies.

It is important to note that the research evidence does not all support a correlation between ensemble experience and improved musical perception achievement. A number of researchers [e.g., Rubin (1952), Deihl (1963), Haack (1969), Madsen, Duke and Geringer (1984)] all reported ambiguous or statistically insignificant correlations in their research (Humphreys, May & Nelson, 1992).

When examining the spoken responses of school-children from elementary (primary) and secondary school while listening to music, Bundra (1994) concludes that "words are one way to access, understand and ultimately, refine the musical experience of listening" (p. 388). Perhaps unsurprisingly, she found that there was generally greater depth and sophistication in

the responses of older students[1] and that those students who had studied music exhibited greater "accuracy, analysis and level of attention" (Bundra, 1994, p. 388).

Hannan (2005, p. 70) questions the strong link that often exists between aural comprehension and musicianship studies and conventional Western musical notation. This is highly relevant to this research, as the aural and written examination that has formed part of the assessment in VCE Music Performance since its inception, rely heavily on skills in reading and writing conventional Western notation. This was the case even for the Group Performance branch of this study design in which the majority of students came from musical traditions that do not rely heavily on the use of notation in their performance practice. Hannan (2005, p. 70) bluntly states:

> A continuation of the musicianship training tradition of aural comprehension of pitch and rhythm and its transcription into traditional Western classical music notation is outmoded and seems pointless if there is no real use for it other than to demonstrate that one can do it.

As an interesting corollary to this comment, Hannan (2006, p. 153) surveyed tertiary music students from contemporary music backgrounds about their views as to what the term musicianship actually means to them and what skills they believed to be of most use to them. He found, in the second part of his survey a "strong commitment to music literacy skills, traditional aural skills, and harmonic theory".

These research findings relate to the VCE Music study design and inform the discussion of issues surrounding the aural and written examination in Chapter 7.

Curriculum development (secondary) in Australia and Victoria

While there is some research exploring the place of music in education in Australia and specifically in the state of Victoria, there is much less addressing the place of music in the secondary school curriculum. It is interesting to note that music was listed amongst the subjects for study from the earliest times in primary schools, sometimes for an additional fee and on occasion as part of the basic course of instruction (Badcock, 1973, pp. 49, 61, 126,

[1] Bundra notes that there was a wide range of developmental differences between subjects at all age levels/grades (Bundra, 1994)

etc). The place of music education within the educational landscape in the secondary context has been somewhat volatile, as this examination of the research literature will show.

A number of authors have explored the place of music in the Australian curriculum landscape throughout the nation's history. The contribution of a number of prominent authors will now be examined to provide context for significant curriculum reform central to the present research, namely the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in the late-1980s to early-1990s. The research is comparatively disjointed with various writers focusing on particular states. There is no overview that encompasses the development of school music in Australia, let alone the place of aural comprehension within various school music curricula and syllabi. Much of the research detailed below has been the product of doctoral studies.

The research interests of Robin Stevens include the role of technology in music education and the history of school music education of colonial Victoria and New South Wales. His thesis examined music education in state-supported schools between 1848 and 1920 (Stevens, 1980). Aside from his work on music technology in music education, much of his more recent work has been on the relevance of music curriculum history on contemporary reforms and debates. Stevens (1993) states that music was one of the essential elements in the ancient Greek system of education and has a long history as part of all education of young people up to the present day. Music's early place in education was largely based on the positive effect it could have on children. He also contends that part of this positive effect was a humanising and civilizing influence. Additionally, singing[1] was regarded, as being useful in the service of other ends, be they religious, moral or patriotic.

Music education changed and developed over the subsequent decades with the introduction of the gramophone and radio broadcasts as well as 'movement to music' activities (from the 1920s), drum and fife bands and percussion groups (late-1920s), recorder playing (1940s) and, later, the creative music' movement (1960s). With the addition of these other activities an eclectic music curriculum emerged and became quite well established in schools from prep to Year 8 in many cases by the 1980s.

[1] Music in the curriculum at this time was referred to as 'vocal music' and was comprised of singing in the classrooms

In the late-1980s, curriculum reforms resulted in a move towards greater integration of curriculum in the Arts, whereby music would be considered one of the subjects in the Arts rather than a discrete subject in its own right. Not just this, but according to the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia (Ministerial Council for Education, 1989) music educators will need to:

- Relate their particular curriculum areas to other 'non-Arts' areas of the curriculum;
- Relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures;
- Accommodate gender equity and the needs of the physically-disabled, economically-disadvantaged and geographically-isolated students;
- Promote verbal language and literacy skills, relate to environmental issues and to technology, promote social, cultural and economic awareness; and
- Promote self-esteem, a sense of ethics and the specifically Australian socially – and historically – critical context

The movement away from music being a discrete subject towards a generalised Arts curriculum structure coupled with this broad focus on wider goals beyond music education (however worthy) must surely lead to a reduced emphasis on music education in the compulsory years of schooling.

With the current discussion about the introduction of the Australian Curriculum (after a long and difficult gestation), Stevens (2005) returns to the theme of the relevance of history to the contemporary situation. He states that "a number of mutually-dependent factors have combined to produce almost cyclic patterns of ebb and flow in the status, provision and quality of music education" (p. 257). One of these factors has been the lack of musical training and expertise of general classroom teachers. This continues to the present and yet has been acknowledged as a serious impediment to the provision of adequate music instruction since the earliest colonial times in Victoria. Directly linked to the matter of insufficient training of general classroom teachers in music education is the consequent lack of provision of quality music education to in government schools. The proportion of students receiving music education in government schools has varied depressingly little from approximately fifteen to thirty percent in the early period of the department of education in the late nineteenth century to approximately thirty percent in the recent past (Stevens, 2005, p. 257).

In a similar vein, Stevens (2001) argues that in one sense music curriculum matters in Victoria have been in a state of change and in another stasis[1]. Evolutionary change in terms of the place of music curriculum in schooling over the past one-hundred and fifty or so years and stasis in terms of the provision of suitably qualified general classroom teachers to provide quality music education to children in government schools in Victoria.

This notion of the past informing, or more precisely *potentially* informing, the debate surrounding contemporary music issues is the aspect of Stevens' work of most relevance to this research.

Amanda Watson and David Forrest are two other significant researchers in the field of music curriculum {see (Watson, 2007); (Forrest & Watson, 2006); (Watson & Forrest, 2005); etc.}. Their recent work of most relevance to this research surrounds the place of music education within the context of current political agendas – government initiatives such as values education, moves towards a national curriculum and music's inclusion in an Arts curriculum (a key learning area structure) and the implications of the introduction of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).

Whilst the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (Ministerial Council for Education, 1989) is often cited as the first official document grouping the Arts into one Key Learning Area (KLA), Watson (1999) points out that there was a significant curriculum document published some nine years earlier entitled Core Curriculum for Australian Schools: What it is and why it is needed? (Curriculum Development Centre, 1980). This document "described nine areas of skill and knowledge; Arts and Crafts being one of that group" (Watson, 1999). Interestingly, the disciplines included in Arts and Crafts were quite different from those that made their way into the Hobart Declaration on Schooling (Ministerial Council for Education, 1989), including such disciplines as literature and wood, metal and plastic crafts. Watson points out that not all Arts educators were against this new structure, some claiming that it "encouraged teachers to broaden the current content of each Arts form and focus on a more holistic, relevant study of the Arts" (Watson, 1999). This positive attitude, looking at the possibilities such an approach might yield is contrasted by those who see this combining of

[1] Stevens attributes the use of the word 'stasis' or 'non-change' in this context to Jane Southcott's PhD Thesis entitled *Music in State-supported Schooling in South Australia to 1920.*

Arts disciplines as a means for schools and other educational bodies to cut the provision of Arts education by viewing the individual disciplines as analogous and easily interchangeable. Another criticism of the combined Arts structure Watson outlines is around the uniqueness of specific Arts experiences. She contends that although there are similarities between art forms and it is possible to equate, or at least relate, the making of a piece of visual art with the composition of a piece of music and the appreciation of a piece of visual art, with listening to a piece of music. This approach ignores the uniqueness of these experiences (Watson, 1999, p. 6). The differences between these activities are profound and fundamental to the disciplines.

Watson explores some of these differences in her work dealing with the development of the *Curriculum and Standards Framework* (CSF) (VBOS, 1995). As a result of interviewing a number of staff involved in writing the CSF she exposed some of the compromises and difficulties such a document presents. The first general issue that Watson addresses is the use of plain-English descriptions of the music curriculum and the avoidance of Music technical language. She argues that this makes reading the document simultaneously easier to read for non-musicians and far more difficult and less useful for musicians (Watson, 1997). She interviews a number of the musicians on the Arts Key Learning Area Committee who argued that consistent and appropriate use of language was essential to make the meaning clear. By using generic language, unlike that used by musicians, the meaning intended was frequently obscured.

In another example of the shifting tide of government policy affecting education, Watson and Forrest (2008) examine the impact of the national debate around values education and specifically the place of music in this debate and the funding and resources that followed. In 2005 resources to support values education in schools were distributed to all schools in Australia. The nine values featured in these resources were: Care and Compassion, Doing Your Best, Fair Go, Freedom, Honesty and Trustworthiness, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, and Understanding, Tolerance, Inclusion (DEST, 2005). Having detailed the primary and secondary units in these resources that either refer to or rely on the Arts KLA, the authors go on to point out a number of pieces of music that could easily have supported units of work around the values listed above. In fact a discussion of the background to any number of musical works could be used to enrich a discussion of values. Watson and Forrest conclude that it is now up to music educators to “promote and encourage the awareness of the

potential to use music and the arts to illustrate, emphasise and advance values in education, for the benefit of the individual, society and the larger national and global networks" (Watson & Forrest, 2008). So, policy keeps focusing on extra-musical issues whereas successful school music programs should focus on what is essential to the discipline such as listening, composing and performing. Although the 'values in education' debate has largely shifted from the national agenda now, it could be argued that this matter was another example of the marginalisation of music education in the national curriculum agenda.

Two other researchers examining the changing state of music curricula in the early twenty-first century are Jane Southcott and Kay Hartwig. In their paper (Southcott & Hartwig, 2005), they examine the music curriculum in two Australian states undergoing significant curriculum reform. After briefly describing the curriculum landscape in Queensland in the second half of the twentieth century, the authors then examine the newly implemented Arts syllabus. The document was written from a Kodály perspective[1] and some educators feel that this approach "did not suit all educational contexts" (Southcott & Hartwig, 2005, p. 143). Another short-coming identified in this research is the strong Western Art Music emphasis[2]. On the positive side, unlike many other curriculum reforms, each of the five Arts strands of the syllabus (music, art, drama, dance and media) will be compulsory in years one to seven. In addition, in years eight to ten it will be compulsory for students to study one of the arts strands for 180 hours.

The authors trace the development of curriculum in Victoria also with a clear change from the early eighties to the introduction of the Curriculum and Standards Framework (VBOS, 1995) and Curriculum Standards Framework II (BOS, 2000a). These two documents are much less prescriptive in terms of what is required to meet the Arts standards statements and what particular Arts disciplines are required to be offered (when compared to the Queensland curriculum outlined above). Southcott and Hartwig then move on to the introduction of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). They maintain that lack of specificity in these documents make it entirely possible for schools not to offer any music at any level and

[1] The Kodály philosophy and methodology is founded on the ideas of the Hungarian composer and educator Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967). It is founded on singing as being the foundation of all music education. As part of the Kodály concept, sol-fa syllables and rhythm names are employed.

[2] Including but not limited to strong emphasis on traditional Western notation conventions and no reference to more modern conventions such as graphic scores

still meet the requirements of both the CSF II and VELS. This is a significant diminution of the status of music education in government schools. In conclusion the authors argue:

> There are many arguments as to why music is a necessary part of the education of the whole child. It is enough to assert that music is the right of every child. If music was then a given, a curriculum should be available for teachers that gives guidelines as to what should be taught at every level. This does not need to be prescriptive but it does need to say something (Southcott & Hartwig, 2005, p. 147).

Southcott's doctoral thesis (1997) closely examines the development of music education within government schools in South Australia. She argues that the absence of change (which she terms 'stasis') is common and that a motivated, skillful and sufficiently influential advocate is crucial in the establishment and continuation of music in schools. In agreement with Stevens, Southcott also argues that music's place in schools in South Australia up until 1920 was seen as being significant for its extra-musical benefits to the students and the wider society.[1]

As well in her thesis, Southcott reviews the history of music education in Australia, including descriptions of the English educational system that the colonies inherited and largely adopted. Important in this tradition was singing and the use of sol-fa syllables as advocated by John Curwen, Sarah Glover and many others. Interestingly, the use of sol-fa syllables remains a common tool used to this day in the teaching of aural comprehension skills in VCE classrooms. This usage is today more closely aligned with the music education approach of Kodály however it should be noted that Kodály's methods utilized much of the tonic sol-fa approach. The use of this tool and other resources in the classroom will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Two significant and systematic reviews of the state of music education in the state of Victoria and Australia respectively are those by Cameron (1969) and Bartle (1968). These authors both wrote at a time of considerable interest in music by young people with unprecedented popular success of rock and pop groups. These two studies will be examined in some detail,

[1] These benefits included improvement in the speaking tone of students, the enhancement of discipline and good order and the singing of texts aimed at reinforcing good morals and patriotism.

being both relevant to this research and comprehensive surveys of classroom practice at the time, of which there is paucity.

Bartle's survey (1968) was very broad in its scope examining many aspects of music in schools of all kinds. He sent questionnaires to a total of 613 schools (five percent of primary schools and ten percent of secondary schools around the country) and received replies from 363. In addition to these survey responses, he also visited a total of 111 schools across the country speaking with principals and music teachers, observing classes and rehearsals. A small number of the schools Bartle visited had returned surveys, but the majority of those visited had not. Further information was gained by speaking to or writing to university lecturers and others involved in the training of music teachers.

One of Bartle's observations is that music making in the secondary school can be and often is organised at a student level. This is in addition to any opportunities that may be provided by the school. At a primary-school level, with possible rare-exception, music making opportunities will be organised by the school on behalf of the students. This makes the work of the primary school teacher crucially important in the quality of musical experiences of young children (Bartle, 1968, p. 4).

The aims of teaching music according to the curriculum documents available include such things as participation, enjoyment and understanding. Pleasure, it is claimed, can be derived by performing music alone or in groups and by listening to music (Bartle, 1968, p. 5). In statements that could easily be directed at music programs in many schools (particularly state-supported schools) in the early twenty-first century, Bartle found that many of those responsible for the delivery of the music curriculum are often completely unprepared to do so due to lack of teacher training and/or musical background. He contends that the reality of such programs often falls short of the aims of the curriculum documents (Bartle, 1968, p. 7). The reasons, he contends, for the poor quality of much music instruction in schools are very similar to issues raised today:

1. Lack of finance available within the state education departments to the supervisors of music.
2. Lack of finance available within the school for purchase of equipment (sometimes basic)

3. The way in which music is organized within the state systems, especially in secondary schools where requirements are dictated by public examinations
4. The organization of music within the school where the head teacher's attitude to the subject is often reflected in that of the pupils
5. The widespread use of untrained teachers on the one hand, and/or untrained musicians on the other, to take music classes.
6. Courses of study which emphasize one or other aspect of the total music experience possible in the classroom and exclude others.
7. Teachers emphasizing one or other of the subsidiary aims and neglecting the larger goal. (In some cases, fortunately few, I was tempted to doubt the existence of any aims at all.)
8. Differences of opinion, between those responsible for the training of teachers and those responsible for music supervision in the school system, as to the means of achieving the aims. In its extreme form this may result in a confusion of means with ends among trainee teachers.

(Bartle, 1968, p. 8)

Concerning Victoria, Bartle finds that, when he undertook his research, there was a clear link between examinations conducted by the Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB) and the leaving certificate (a Form V/Year 11 credential offered in some Victorian Schools, particularly Technical School that often do not offer /Form VI/Yr 12 studies). However, the matriculation (Form VI) credential is independent of the AMEB examinations. The Victorian Universities and School Examinations Board (VUSEB) conducted these Form VI examinations for the purposes of university entrance (Bartle, 1968, p. 103).

Bartle summarises the curriculum content of the Victorian syllabi under the headings of rudiments, vocabulary, aural training and music reading. Following is a list of some of the key components of aural comprehension instruction as outlined in the curriculum documents (Bartle, 1968, pp. 113-117):

Use of French time names or other suitable mnemonic syllables

- Relative note values, rests and time signatures
- Aurally and visually recognised syncopation
- Sol-fa syllables are universally recognised as being an helpful aid

- Awareness of staff, clefs, accidentals and the major scale
- Minor keys (initially aurally recognised) are introduced in later secondary years
- Melody reading from a staff (with sol-fa to assist)
- Aural recognition of pitch sequences and repetitions, cadences, known songs, binary and ternary structures, intervals and simple harmonic structures

Interestingly, many of these areas of aural comprehension have survived through to the most recent revision of the VCE Study Design (taught for the first time in 2011). Finally, of interest from Bartle's survey of music teaching in Australian secondary schools is the comment that "integration of music reading and aural training with the listening programme is advocated in the New South Wales and the Victorian High School syllabuses" (Bartle, 1968, p. 121). This holistic view of aural comprehension skills, music literacy and score-reading and analysis and appreciation is to be commended and is a feature of the highly regarded International Baccalaureate Diploma music course which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Focusing as it does on Music teaching in Victorian Secondary schools, rather than the broader focus of Bartle's survey, the research of Alexandra Cameron is of particular importance. Her examination of classroom music teaching in Victoria from 1905-1955 (Cameron, 1969) is amongst the most relevant studies to this research.

Cameron points out that in the early history of state education in Victoria, after the Education Act (1910) and the subsequent establishment of the broadly representative Schools' Board (1912), the place of music in the curriculum appeared to be never in doubt.

> The very significant fact remains that the Board, in carrying out its first deliberations on the curriculum for secondary schools, not only confirmed the inclusion of Music (Practical and Theoretical) but, accepted the time-honoured cultural subject, class-singing, as part of the curriculum for all secondary schools. Indeed this acceptance of music does not appear to have ever been in doubt. The significance of this becomes even more telling when one recalls that this Schools' Board was representative of the University of Melbourne, the Education Department, the Registered Secondary Schools and the business community" (Cameron, 1969, p. 130).

Cameron also explores the impact of several technological and societal changes. Technologies such as gramophones and the wireless became more common-place and, she speculates, may have led to some reluctance to put in the vast effort to play a musical instrument (even to only a mediocre standard), when one could more and more easily play a recording of music performed by professionals. This also led to perhaps the first category of music education dedicated to the 'consumption' or reception of music – listening to music with discernment and discrimination, often referred to as music appreciation (Cameron, 1969, pp. 141-142). Cameron discusses in some detail the influence of the music appreciation movement, starting in the United States and Great Britain and becoming established in Australia, particularly through the British influence. Worthy of mention in the context of this are the set of books by Macpherson and Read called *Aural Culture* (Macpherson & Read, 1912). This text would have been known to all the major figures leading music education in the first half of the twentieth century and was influential in the teaching of appreciation, listening, musicianship and aural comprehension for generations in the United Kingdom and Australia. Rainbow (2006, p. 261) argues that, with the formation of the Music Teachers' Association, Stewart Macpherson "assumed leadership of the Appreciation movement in Britain". Macpherson taught at Streatham Hill High School for Girls and "went on to build up music in the school until he was able to use it as a centre for the training of those of his pupils … who wished to make music teaching in schools their career" (Rainbow, 2006, p. 261). One of the unfortunate and unexpected consequences of the so-called appreciation movement in music education[1] was that it was sometimes used by teachers, especially if they were not well trained in music themselves, without the necessary guidance and direction. Hence they were of negligible educational value.

Another influence on music education in Europe in the early decades of the twentieth century, that later came to be employed in Australia, was the "system of co-ordinating music and bodily movement" (Rainbow, 2006, p. 263) developed by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze and later referred to in English-speaking countries as Dalcroze Eurhythmics. Just as Macpherson and others leading the appreciation movement in Great Britain were motivated to develop the understanding (including aural comprehension), appreciation and enjoyment of music beyond

[1] The appreciation movement was effected by the increasing availability of recorded music (giving the teacher the freedom to present a wide range of professionally performed music to the students in the class) and, later, by concert broadcasts on the BBC.

simply learning to play a small number of pieces, Dalcroze, "finding that his pupils were unable to 'hear' the chords they wrote … began to question conventional methods of training them" (Rainbow, 2006, p. 263).

To conclude his summary of music education development in Europe, all of which had some impact on the music education context of Australia and Victoria, Rainbow (2006) outlines the major curriculum developments of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1960s saw a variety of figures introduce innovative and contemporary ideas into the classroom including, notably, Peter Maxwell Davies, Brian Dennis, George Self and R. Murray Schafer. Despite their musical and pedagogical differences, these four figures all attempted to promote creativity in the classroom and were influenced in so doing by the contemporary composers and other influences of the period. Aside from what might be described as contemporary 'art music', the worlds of jazz and popular music impacted on music generally and, most especially, the taste and attitudes of the students. Two major reports into music education in the United Kingdom schools in the 1970s illustrated a sharp division that still forms part of the classroom music landscape in Australia to this day. Swanwick (1977, p. 63) described the situation as "a house divided". He was referring to the importance of teaching notation skills in the classroom. Bentley's report, as expressed by Cox (2000, p. 49), expressed the view that "the importance of the transmission of musical literacy skills was paramount". The opposing view regarding the major emphasis of classroom music teaching was expressed clearly by the author of the other major report at the time, John Paynter in his book *Music in the Secondary School Curriculum* (Paynter, 1982, p. 28)

> Classroom work should be based upon music-*making* (performing, improvising, composing) and, in the forefront of all activities, the development of aural sensitivity and awareness. Keeping our ears open to sounds – all sounds, any sounds – is the most basic and therefore the most 'real' of musical skills.

The debate about the place of music literacy skills remains, and has been one of the points of contention, around the VCE Aural and Written Examination, especially where students from Contemporary Popular Music settings are enrolled in the study. This aspect of the assessment within the VCE will be discussed in Chapter 5.

As has already been alluded to, there is little research of significance in this specific area. In this paucity of relevant research material the most relevant is the thesis *Towards an improved*

model for senior-secondary music education: A multi-faceted perspective (Miles, 2006). This broadly-based research focuses on a large number of issues surrounding the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) music curriculum and specifically the assessment associated with this study design from the perspectives of all key stake-holders. Amongst the issues addressed are:

> Attracting enrolments, devising relevant and engaging curriculum that is rigorous and capable of satisfying a range of future aspirations of music students, dealing with the disparity of students' prior learning and experience levels, issues affecting pedagogy in an increasingly outcomes-driven environment, and so forth. (Miles, 2006, p. i)

Dealing as it does with issues around curriculum change in Victoria, the requirements and the assessment of aural comprehension and dealing with the these matters across the state in a wide-ranging case study makes this research especially relevant to the present study.

Miles (2006) devotes one chapter of his thesis to the ways in which five prominent authors in the realm of music education and curriculum design conceive how of upper-secondary (also referred to as post-compulsory) music curricula should be devised. He states that these authors were influential in the formulation of the initial VCE study design in the late-1980s and that some of their more recent writings have also made a contribution to the subsequent revisions of the study design, up to and including the 2005 document (Miles, p. 16). The five authors are Bennett Reimer, Keith Swanwick, David Elliott, Estelle Jorgensen, and John Paynter. It is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the contribution made to the VCE study design(s) in detail. However the relative importance given to aural comprehension is relevant and will be briefly examined.

The work of John Paynter has been briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, but in his influential book *Music in the secondary school curriculum* (Paynter, 1982), he alludes to two unspoken assumptions that beset music in schools. One, that the teaching of classroom music may be 'templated' by the basics of the curriculum:

> Although there seems not to have been much doubt about the basics, literacy and numeracy, in areas beyond these basic skills, curriculum content is largely the result of opinion and historical accident. Moreover, as far as these other areas are concerned, we have been influenced largely by the procedures adopted for those

> already agreed 'basics' … there would appear to be an unwritten assumption that all subjects worthy of a place in the curriculum should be seen to operate and to be studied in the same way, and that the prime task is one of imparting information, inculcating clearly defined skills, and testing to see if the imparting and inculcation has been successful. (Paynter, 1982, pp. 20-21)

This phenomenon was a factor in the introduction if the VCE in Victoria in the late 1980s. One of the writers of the Music Craft/Performance study design, Roland Yeung, commented:

> For example, the first studies to go off were English, Mathematics and History and the way those three were set up, really templated all the studies that followed in the second phase … which presented a lot of difficulties because those subjects are not performance subjects and they are not Arts subjects so the way that they would be looking at the assessment tasks would be quite different, so there's lots of battles there, lots of misunderstandings and lack of understandings of the rigidity that was put in place. (Yeung, 2009, p. 4)

Although not historical research *per se*, Jorgensen offers a vision of what music education could and should be at the end of the twentieth century. She lays out a philosophically guided vision for music education in her book *In Search of Music Education* (Jorgensen, 1997). She sets out a vision for music education that offers the music educator general principles to apply to their own particular educational context (Jorgensen, 1997, p. xv). One of the relevant principles that Jorgensen draws out is the difference between training and education. She defines training as "the methods or ways whereby a person is taught or learns skills, know-how or procedural knowledge, that is, how to do something, in contrast to propositional knowledge by which one 'knows that' such and such is the case" (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 8). Training has its place in music education of course. It has always been a significant part of the attainment of proficiency on a musical instrument for example. She contrasts this with the notion of education. "The word *education* means to draw out, elicit, or develop. Education implies that a student's potential needs only to be drawn out by a teacher who skillfully arranges the external conditions such that growth and development naturally follow" (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 13). This statement implies that education is not something that one does to a child (or an adult), it is something they must do. The distinction between training and education is an important principle particularly when it comes to aural comprehension instruction for two reasons. As we will see in the survey data, discussed in Chapter 6, many

teachers approach the teaching of aural comprehension as 'training' rather than 'education' and the development of these skills is frequently narrowed further to focus almost exclusively on the requirements of the Aural and Written Examination in Unit 4 of VCE Music Performance at then expense of developing genuinely high level aural skills which may be of greater long-term benefit to a young musician.

At about the same time, David Elliott was promulgating influential ideas about music engagement. In his book *Music Matters*, Elliott (1995) devotes a chapter to the notion of listening in music. Initially he contrasts the ideas of thought-less and thought-full listening, arguing that although it may seem that we as humans simply 'take in' the sound around us as passive receivers of aural information, there is a filtering and other active and conscious processes affecting what information we do and do not give our attention to. The same applies to visual and other sensory information. He argues that listening is therefore a thought-full activity (Elliott, 1995, pp. 78-79). Elliot also argues that listening is fundamentally different from perceiving a piece of visual art. In perceiving a piece of visual art, all the parts of the art work are present simultaneously and although we may not be able to give each part our attention concurrently, all the components of the art work are present and able to be re-evaluated, reviewed and re-examined at any time. As music is presented and perceived in time the way we perceive must be different. "Our understanding of aural events depends on what we capture in a continuous "moving" stream of information. Accordingly, listening is a context -dependent process." (Elliott, 1995, p. 81) The fact that music takes place in time and consequently that all constituent elements cannot be examined simultaneously is one of the principle challenges of aural comprehension. To be successful, students need to have well developed perception skills as well as good musical memory.

The writings and ideas of both Jorgensen and Elliott influenced curriculum developers even if it rarely reached practitioners in the classroom. As such their inclusion is important to offer a contextual understanding of the changing perceptions of just what school music education, in particular concerning aural comprehension, should and could be.

Chapter 3, will detail the methodological paradigm of this research. As described in Chapter 1, the research is ethnographic and uses a multi-case study method to describe the introduction of the VCE in Victoria from 1988 until 1992 and, as an example of the curriculum reform undertaken, the area of aural comprehension in the revised curriculum.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, this research is principally concerned with the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the political and educational context of this change as well as the role of aural comprehension in this new music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced. An examination of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE music classroom also forms part of this research. In order to examine these matters, a multifaceted research approach is taken utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multi-case study. This chapter will outline the approaches employed and place these in a methodological framework.

It is hoped that this approach will provide a detailed picture of the introduction of the VCE Music Performance study design (initially called Music Craft) and the significant differences between this curriculum and the most frequently undertaken music credential immediately prior to this, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Group 1 subject Music A; the political and educational context of this curriculum change and an examination of current teaching practice with respect to aural comprehension skills in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Unit 3 and 4 Music Performance (Group) and Music Performance (Solo).

The most appropriate methodology to employ was not one, but many methods. This research can be categorised as predominantly qualitative, with a small amount of quantitative data providing a snapshot of current practice in aural comprehension instruction in upper-secondary music classrooms in Victoria. The research is ethnographic, providing a richly detailed picture of aural comprehension instruction presented as a narrative. The research is a large-scale case study of the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Music Craft curriculum and the place of aural comprehension in this curriculum.

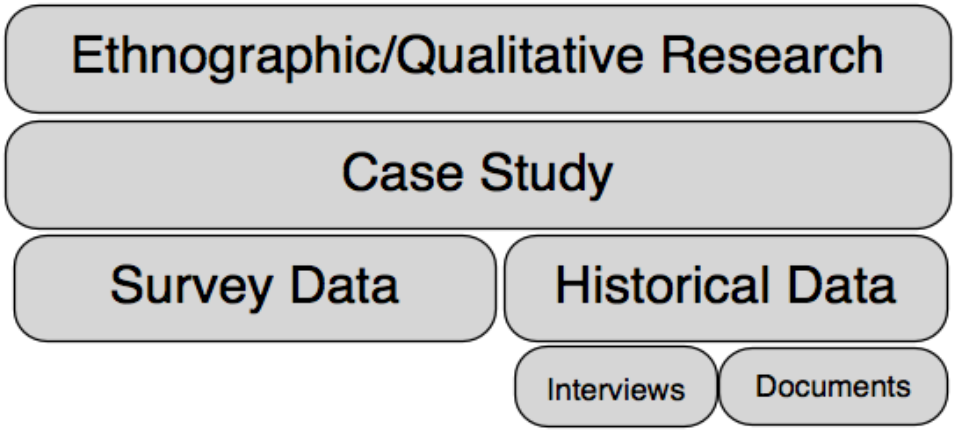

Figure 1 - Research organisation

The diagram above outlines the overall structure and conceptual organisation of this research. This research is ethnographic in the sense that it is phenomenological and naturalistic in nature with a considerable emphasis on observation and no attempt to manipulate variables. It also draws on a wide variety of data sources. It is essentially qualitative in nature although there is also some quantitative data collected and analysed. The research can be viewed as a multi-case study comprising the following two categories of data collection: survey data (quantitative data on the current teaching of aural comprehension skills in Victorian music classrooms) and historical data, itself comprising interviews and documents (concerned with gaining an understanding of the significant curriculum reform the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education represented). For this reason, this chapter also summarises historical research strategies.

A more detailed look at the philosophical underpinnings of this research and the processes involved in the each component of the data collection and analysis will follow. However, it should be clear from the above diagram that this research makes use of a mixture of methods. The researcher has chosen the methods most appropriate to the research problem for each segment of the research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 15) "contend that epistemological and methodological pluralism should be promoted in educational research so that researchers ... are able to conduct more effective research". This type of research "mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17).

Qualitative Research

Aside from the part of this research dealing with current classroom practice in the teaching of aural comprehension skills, the approach taken in this research is qualitative. Qualitative research is associated with several other terms some overlapping and some more specific than the broad expression 'qualitative'. These terms include case study, field study, ethnography as well as naturalistic, phenomenological, interpretive and descriptive approaches. It is often contrasted with qualitative approaches that are closely associated with the sciences.

Wiersma (2000, pp. 198-199) considers the epistemology of qualitative research to include the following components:

- Phenomena must be viewed holistically, in context
- The setting for the research should be as natural as possible and the researcher should remain open to an evolving research design as the research continues
- The perceptions of those being studied are important. 'Meaning' is as perceived or experienced by those being studied, it can not be imposed by the researcher
- Assumptions and conclusions are subject to change as the research proceeds

Two of the principal researchers in qualitative methodological approaches are Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln. These authors give priority to the research paradigm and make the point that the decision to use quantitative or qualitative methods of research is secondary to the research paradigm to be used (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). The research paradigm is defined as the basic worldview that guides the researcher.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that the increased interest in what many consider to be qualitative approaches can be attributed to a number of issues posed by the positivist (usually related to terms such as empirical, experimental and 'scientific') paradigm, namely:

- Precise quantitative approaches that focus on certain variables and seek to control others necessarily strip away context from the matter under investigation
- Human behaviour cannot be understood without knowledge of the meanings and purposes assigned to the behaviour by the protagonists
- The etic/emic ('outsider'/'insider') dilemma. Theories applied to research settings by the researcher may have little or no meaning to those within the context being studied.

- Data collected from a variety of cases, even to the point of being statistically significant, may not be relevant to specific individuals or contexts.
- The positivist paradigm is concerned with proving or disproving a priori hypotheses and is not designed or equipped to deal with posteriori hypotheses that may arise from the data during the investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p 107).

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) readily admit that their commitment is to constructivism and naturalistic enquiry, so this must be considered when weighing up their critique of positivism and their descriptions about the advantages of other paradigms and methods. In addition to the critique outlined above which they term 'intra-paradigm', the authors also discuss various 'extra-paradigm' critiques focussing on any fact, is only a fact within a theoretical and values context. Essentially, these critiques focus on the nature of facts or knowledge.

Bresler and Stake (2006, p 271) describe qualitative research as having four main characteristics:

(1) *non-interventionist* observation in natural settings,
(2) emphasis on *interpretation* of both emic issues (those of the participants) and etic issues (those of the writer),
(3) highly *contextual description* of people and events, and
(4) validation of information through triangulation

Bresler and Stake (2006, p. 276) state that researchers from the positivist paradigm seek to apply methodology applied to the physical world, to the social and human world, and that they regard their investigations to be neutral activities whereby all bias, emotional involvement and value-laden preconceptions should be laid aside for research purposes. By contrast they claim that "understanding cannot be pursued in the absence of context and interpretative framework" (Bresler & Stake, 2006, p. 274).

Although this research does include some quantitative data, the research paradigm is qualitative in nature. Meaning is constructed from the data, particularly from the interview data and this happens throughout the course of the research.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnography "refers both to a research process and the product of that research" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 237). The product of ethnographic research is a richly detailed written account describing the phenomena under investigation within its context. It relies on observation, description, judgements and interpretations. Wiersma defines ethnographic research in an educational context as "the process of providing scientific descriptions of educational systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 15). Bresler and Stake (2006, p. 274) state that ethnography has roots in the anthropological research of Malinowski who spent considerable time in New Guinea before and during the first world war observing village life. He also spent considerable time outlining and reflecting on his data collection process. Krueger (1987, p. 69) in her article dealing with ethnographic research in music education states that ethnography "allows the researcher to investigate contextual questions beyond the reach of methodological approaches in which particular variables are isolated". Data collection processes include "participant observation, in-depth interviewing and a variety of other research strategies that allow the investigator to obtain first-hand knowledge about the problem in question" (Krueger, 1987, p. 71). This research made use of the ethnographic technique of in-depth interviews to examine the introduction of VCE Music Craft and the role of aural comprehension skills in this new study design.

Phenomenology

The researcher's emphasis on qualitative data reflects a phenomenological approach to research. Phenomenology is a movement founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in his book *Logische Untersuchungen* published in 1900 and later translated by J. Findlay as *Logical Investigations* (Husserl, 1970). Bresler and Stake (2006, p. 272) trace back the intellectual roots of phenomenology to Immanuel Kant who claimed that:

> Immediate experiences and sensory observations are always interpreted or classified under general concepts. Their appeal to phenomena is therefore not an appeal to simple, uninterpreted data of sensory experience. Meaning is the target of phenomenology. Phenomenologists do not assume they know what things mean to others.

Phenomenology influenced many other philosophical and cultural movements, such as hermeneutics, structuralism, literary formalism and deconstruction. In essence there are "three major themes of phenomenology: parts and wholes, identity in manifolds, and presence and absence" (Sokolowski, 2000). In terms of the present research, the notions of 'whole and parts' and 'presence and absence' are the most relevant. When one is examining an entity, it is only possible to see the entity from a single perspective at a time. Equally, each person examining the entity will, to some degree, see something different because of his or her own unique perspective. Similarly, whatever the entity under investigation, there are elements, facets or components of the entity that are present and some that are absent. The relevance of these concepts to this research is clear. Each person examining a phenomenon can only do so from his or her own perspective thus only perceiving a part of the whole. Equally, some aspects of a phenomenon will be present (be they documents or voices) while others will be absent. These themes of phenomenology remind the researcher of the importance of gaining multiple perspectives of the matter under study in order to gain as full and complete a picture of the entity as possible.

Case Study

The most common form of enquiry in qualitative enquiry is a case study. This is an appropriate methodology to use in this study as what is sought is a holistic, in-depth picture of the case (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). Merriam (1988) states that "research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p. 3). Education takes place in a temporal and context-rich environment and if removed from these contexts, is no longer the same phenomenon. As Merriam (1988, p. 7) explains, "the case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated". If education as a process is either taken out of its context (for example in an effort to control variables in the way an experimental or quasi-experimental research paradigm would) or if it is even repeated, it is no longer the same phenomenon. Teaching is a rich tapestry of interactions and classroom behaviours of students and staff and, as such, can never actually be controlled or repeated. This, in part, accounts for the large amount of qualitative research in all facets of education.

The research area, setting(s) and the research questions of this research make a multiple-case study the most appropriate research methodology to use.

Merriam (1988) discusses four qualities of case studies that highlight the suitability of a multiple-case study to this research. He says that case studies are particularistic (that is, they focus on a particular phenomenon), descriptive (the end product is a rich 'complete' description), heuristic (illuminates understanding) and inductive (relies on inductive reasoning - generalisations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an examination of data). In summary, "the qualitative case study can be defined as intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. x).

As outlined below, a variety of data sources will be used. Case study is known as a triangulated research strategy and multiple data sources make it possible to use data source triangulation. Triangulation of data is ensures accuracy and offers alternative explanations (Stake, 1995). The picture produced will be more thorough and complete than any one approach would yield and this approach will also allow the researcher to triangulate the data thus assisting in authentication of the data (see Denzin, 1989 and Merriam, 1988). Obtaining data from a restricted range of sources may produce difficulties in terms of the reliability and validity of the study. For example, the use of official documentation could be compromised by missing or unavailable documents as well as bias in documents. The memory of interview subjects may be somewhat unreliable and they also bring their own biases to their responses. They may also feel unable to be completely open in their responses regarding their employer (and/or the VCE, given that their work is moderated by these agencies). When all the data is taken together, the consequences of many of these issues are minimised.

Ethical approval to interview staff of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and to survey staff from Government, Independent and Catholic schools has been received from the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) (see Appendix 1).

Historical Method

Components of this research will comprise collecting data from individual interviews, using a semi-structured interview format, and accessing a range of historical written sources, such as official VCAA documents. This research will place aural comprehension skills in the context of its place in the VCE studies. This will comprise historical research dealing with the political and educational agenda behind the original VCE (and specifically the Music Craft study design) and the significant reviews and changes that have been undertaken since that time. This will include the latest study design produced by VCAA, that was taught for the first time in 2011.

A significant part of this research makes use of historical method. The development and implementation of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) as a single certificate to replace a large number of post-compulsory credentials previously offered was a radical change in the philosophy, content and assessment of this level of education. The transition from previous credentials, notably the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Group 1 course has been examined in this research using historical method.

Cox (2006, p. 80) argues that the place and role of music education has always been contested and debated and that "we require some historical compass to make sense of it all". Stevens has long argued this point in this country too (see Stevens, 2001; Stevens, 2003; and Stevens, 2005). He argues that teachers, children and parents often assume that the school curriculum is consistent and immutable rather than dynamic and frequently contested, especially in areas such as the Arts, which are considered peripheral in some educational debates at certain times.

In discussing curriculum history, a number of authors including Franklin (1977) and Cox (2006) speak of the strong social control factor in curriculum design in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and in Australia. This issue will be discussed in the chapters dealing with interview data and in the chapter examining the context of the curriculum change leading to the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) as it is significant in this research.

Cox (2006) also contends that, although teachers are central to teaching and learning in schools and the implementation of the curriculum that is so contested, relatively little is known about these educators. Documents are usually available to outline the curriculum at any point in history, but the educators delivering this curriculum and their work in the classroom is often not investigated or described (p. 82). To address this potential pitfall, this research examines the role of teachers in delivering the VCE Music curriculum by means of a survey of staff teaching VCE Music in secondary schools in Victoria from the three main school sectors (Catholic, Government and Independent).

Tosh and Lang (2006) contrasts the individual and collective memory, which is part of human experience that helps us to make sense of the "unfolding life story" (p. 1) with the disciplined historical enquiry undertaken by historians. Modern historical scholarship is founded in historicism a movement that began in Germany and then spread throughout the Western world in the first half of the nineteenth century. The historicists held that "each age is a unique manifestation of the human spirit, with its own culture and values" (Tosh & Lang, 2006, p. 7). They believed it to be important to be respectful of the uniqueness of the past and not to impose our modern values and priorities. This was the first of the three principles of historical awareness - that of the difference between our own time and the time being studied The others being the importance of the context of the events under consideration and thirdly that of process - "the relationship between events over time which endows them with significance" (Tosh & Lang, 2006, p. 11).

Wiersma (2000) defines historical research as "a systematic process of searching for the facts and then using the information to describe, analyze, and interpret the past" and emphasises that "interpretation is central" to historical research (pp. 218-9). He also concurs with others that there is no one clearly defined methodology of historical research (p. 221). Historians work in different ways, just as writers of others genres have unique methods of working.

One of the fundamental distinctions made by historians is that of primary and secondary sources of data. Wiersma (2000) states that, "a primary source is an original or first-hand account of the event or experience. A secondary source is an account that is at least once removed from the event" (p. 221). Tosh and Lang point out that even this relatively simple distinction is can be problematic for the historian: "This sounds simple enough, but what of

records of events one year later? Or ten years later? At which point do these accounts cease to be original or primary sources?" (Tosh & Lang, 2006, p. 61)

All relevant and available Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB), Board of Studies (BOS) and Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) documentation will be accessed to develop a history of aural comprehension in the VCE Music Performance study design. These bodies have all had responsibility for the VCE curriculum and assessment over the period of the VCE. No detailed history of the formulation and development of the VCE Music curriculum has been written and the present research will address this lack in the extant research literature to some degree.

Historical research seeks data that has the distinct advantage of, for the most part, being created contemporaneously with the event (Heller & Wilson, 1992, p. 105). Documents such as Music Craft Study Design VCE Administrative Handbook, Course Development Support Material and so forth, being produced before the teaching is conducted, provide and limit the structure, scope and terminology of the teaching and learning. The purpose of examining these documents is to trace the development of the VCE from its first incarnation to the present curriculum and, particularly, to trace the changes made to the aural comprehension requirements from the pre-VCE curriculum to the present. These documents will inform the interviews and the interviews will shed further light on the motivations, policy positions, and other factors affecting the changes made to the curriculum documents. Some of the relevant documents may be unavailable, so it may be necessary to use interview data to clarify some points that are not made clear in the documents. The documents themselves will also inform the interviews. Curriculum documents can be very detailed or very broadly written, the latter offering only a framework within which teachers should develop their programs. It is hoped that the interviews will explore how various curriculum documents were understood and constructed.

Research using historical documents brings with it certain responsibilities for the researcher. Merriam (1988) points out that "it is the investigator's responsibility to determine as much as possible about the document, its origins and reasons for being written, its author, and the context in which it is written" (p. 151). All documents must be subjected to external and internal criticism. External criticism evaluates the validity of the document whilst internal

criticism evaluates the meaning, accuracy, and trust-worthiness of the content of the document (Wiersma, 2000, pp. 225-6).

The information for this part of the research will also come from interviews with relevant VCAA personnel – namely Roland Yeung and Helen Champion. These interview subjects have been chosen for the following reasons. Roland Yeung was contracted by VCAA to write the original and subsequent study designs according to VCAA guidelines. Helen Champion has been involved in advising on behalf of VCAA for some years and has been involved in the entire history of the VCE Music Craft/Performance. These interviews will focus on the place given to aural comprehension skills in the study design and the assessment of these subjects, but will also deal with some other elements of the development of these subjects. The curriculum, pragmatic and musical considerations that led to the decision taken will also be explored. These interview subjects gave approval prior to giving their interviews to be named and identified in this study.

The data arising from these interviews are referred to, in historical research methodology, as primary sources. In this research, interview subjects can provide information about the VCE on a first-hand basis, as they were themselves involved in its formulation and oversight. Wiersma (2000) identifies the several advantages of interviews when compared with surveys, the first two of which are particularly relevant to these interviews: "If the interview is granted, there is no problem with non-response. The interview provides opportunity for in-depth probing, and elaboration and clarification of terms, if necessary" (p. 185). As Merriam (1998) points out "the purpose of interviewing ... is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (pp. 340-341).

To ensure a full an accurate account of the interview, the subjects' permission was sought to audio record the interview. This allowed full transcripts to be produced and their contents confirmed by the participants. This is an appropriate way to record these interviews due to the semi-structured nature of the questions. That is, it is not possible to precisely predict the exact questions to be asked and therefore possible answers cannot be predicted. This fact would make noting questions and answers in an unobtrusive way very difficult without the use of a recording device. These interviews focused on the imperatives for change and the goals of the curriculum reform, particularly with respect to the out-working of government policy as well as a detailed discussion about the place of aural comprehension in the revised

curriculum. Aural comprehension as a skill set was moved to a position of vastly greater importance in the move from HSC (and other Yr 12 credentials) to the single VCE Music Craft unit structure. This position has been retained through the various reviews and changes to the curriculum. It was important in this research to gain insights from those involved in the change and not rely solely on documents to describe the changes made in detail and with insight.

Surveys

Another component of the research examines teaching and learning within the present VCE Music classroom. In this way, this research is somewhat similar to that of Bartle (1968) which also included a broad survey followed by interviews. Wiersma (2000, p. 157) comments that survey research "is probably the single most widely used research type in educational research". Staff teaching VCE Music Performance (Unit 3 and 4) were surveyed regarding their classroom practice, use of resources, and pre-service and in-service education provision. This data source has provided some breadth to the study as many staff teaching the subjects listed above were invited to participate. The main purpose of this quantitative data, as Merriam (1988, p. 68) states, was that quantitative "data from surveys ... can be used to support findings from qualitative data. The survey in this research is 'cross-sectional' in design as it samples the population at only one point of time and therefore does not measure changes in individual respondents. It can be useful to compare different sub-groups within the sample population. The researcher used a web-based survey instrument. The survey instrument itself (in terms of the questions and the types of responses available to the respondents) was completely definable by the administrator of the survey. The instrument was hosted and distributed, and the responses were monitored and summarized by the web-hosting service. This made tracking responses to the survey easy and time-efficient. In order to maximise response numbers, the time taken to complete the survey instrument has been carefully managed.

There are several sampling methods available to a researcher making use of survey instrument depending on the size of the population under study, the purpose of the survey and the research questions. The sampling most closely aligned with this research is referred to as comprehensive sampling. As Wiersma (2000, p. 285) notes "comprehensive sampling is used when every unit is included in the sample". In the case of this research the survey was distributed through a VCE teachers mailing list held and managed by a professional

association. This means that not every VCE teacher in the state would have had the opportunity to respond to the survey, as only those teachers who subscribe to this mailing list would have received the invitation. That being said, membership of the mailing list used is very widespread across all school sectors and the survey therefore reached a large number and diverse range of teachers. The final number of respondents (92) and the range of geographical locations and educational sectors represented a healthy cross-section of those teachers offering VCE Music Performance throughout the state.

The survey was constructed to aid easy and quick completion, specifically through the use of "structured items" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 171). The survey instrument was piloted prior to mailing. The piloting of the survey was conducted using several teachers of senior music classes who are not presently teaching Unit 3 and 4 Music Performance (Solo or Group). These teachers had sufficient understanding of the VCE requirements and the teaching of these skills to answer all questions meaningfully, but were not part of the cohort surveyed as part of the research.

The questions included on the survey focused on particular teaching and learning strategies employed by the teachers in teaching aural comprehension skills and the way in which aural comprehension instruction is planned for and integrated into classroom practice. Underpinning the questions is a belief on behalf of the researcher that aural comprehension skills are best taught in a sequential manner and not simply through exposure to 'exam-type' questions. A copy of this survey instrument is included as Appendix 3.

Data analysis

The various data sources and data collection methods outlined above, produced a diverse range of data, all needing different analysis techniques.

One such analysis tool that was used for analysing interview transcripts and some of the historical documents was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The aim of this tool is "to explore in detail the participant's view of the topic under investigation" (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 53). Although IPA is commonly associated with studies of

present situations, the strategies and emphases in IPA resonate strongly with historical methods. Sometimes this form of analysis is confused with discourse analysis, however,

> By contrast to discourse analysis [Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis] is concerned with cognitions, that is, with understanding what the particular respondent thinks or believes about the topic under discussion. Thus IPA, while recognizing that a person's thoughts are not transparently available from, for example, interview transcripts, engages in the analytic process in order, hopefully, to be able to say something about that thinking (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 219).

Commencing with a text/transcript, the IPA researcher reads and re-reads the transcript looking for themes and "anything that strikes you as interesting or significant" (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 220). The next stage of the process involves looking for connections between the themes that emerged initially. It may be noticed that certain themes are linked to larger themes and can thus be grouped accordingly during this stage of the analysis. The major themes to have emerged are then tabulated and again compared to the original transcript. At this point care must be taken "to ensure that each theme is represented in the verbatim transcript and not to let the researcher's own bias distort the selective process" (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 222).

The next step in the process (although this actually happens concurrently to some degree) is the writing-up of the findings. Having outlined the process, above, IPA also provides insights into the process by which findings are communicated. Of course, "we are now concerned with translating the themes into a narrative account. What are the interesting or essential things to tell the audience about the respondents and how can we present this in a compelling way" (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 227). This resonates strongly with historical research. As Heller and Wilson (1992) note: "As important as research is, it constitutes but one-third of the task. Music education historians assume three obligations: telling the truth, telling it in an interesting way, and making it available to others" (p. 107).

Reliability and validity

There are several concepts tied to the notions of reliability and validity, some of which are problematic in qualitative research and cannot be considered in the same way as quantitative research.

Wiersma defines reliability as "the extent to which studies can be replicated" (2000, p. 285). The concept of replication of studies is crucial to researchers from the positivist paradigm who seek to measure the effect of certain variables by controlling others. The ability to replicate the experiment and produce the same or similar results is a foundation of this type of research, however, in the case of qualitative research, acknowledging as it does the importance of the specific context being studied, the individual participants and the role of the researcher as an involved part of the research, it is not possible, necessary or desirable to do so. Reliability can be applied to the quantitative component of this research.

However, this research is primarily descriptive in character. The goal is to describe the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in Victoria in the late-1980s and early-1990s, with a particular emphasis on the music curriculum. Yin (2003, p. 259), referring to appropriate applications of case study research states that "a second application is to *describe* an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred" [emphasis in original]. In order to describe this process a number of research methods have been employed, as outlined in this chapter. The purpose of this research is not to identify causality – what brought about this curriculum change, as my contention is that this is an inappropriate and somewhat simplistic notion in the context of this change. It is hoped that by using mixed methods (such as historical methods and selected quantitative methods) a rich and detailed description of this curriculum change can be constructed.

Conclusion

The use of mixed methods in research has been, at times, somewhat controversial for a number of reasons. As Denzin (2010, p. 4) points out, arguments have ranged from the incongruence and incompatibility of combining paradigms from the quantitative and qualitative research approaches in the same research to post-positivist views that no enquiry is value neutral leading to the conclusion that positivist inquiry itself is not possible. The methodological tools used in this research do come from different research traditions, however the research approach is firmly within the phenomenological paradigm. This approach is summarised by Jorgensen (2006, p. 188) by paraphrasing Husserl:

> Regards consciousness as an integral part of reality rather than as a 'given', and holds that one cannot describe what one perceives without also describing one's consciousness of what one experiences as one perceives. One therefore intuitively

> engages in introspection about one's experience of the empirical world with a view to gaining knowledge of self and the world.

The tools used are less important than the philosophy the researcher chooses to use. The goals of this research are to use mixed methods to create a detailed picture of the introduction of the VCE with a particular emphasis on the VCE music curriculum and the area of aural comprehension within this curriculum in Victorian secondary schools. Through this whole process, since the research will yield predominantly qualitative data (from the interviews and historical research) the role of the researcher carries with it significant responsibility. Merriam (1988, p. 115) highlights this when he argues that "tracking down leads, being open to new insights, and being sensitive to the data are the same whether one is interviewing, observing, or analysing documents. Since the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering data, he or she relies on skills and intuition to find and interpret data from documents".

Combining the data obtained from a large number of schools (from survey data) with the qualitative data comprising mainly documents and interviews, this comprehensive picture will be created. This breadth and depth will ensure that the research will be of interest to those investigating curriculum reform and the introduction of the VCE and to a significant number of music educators, particularly in the area of the teaching of aural comprehension skills.

The next chapter will examine the societal, political and economic context for this curriculum change. This will inform the imperatives for change and aid in understanding some of the policy agenda that shaped the VCE curriculum and assessment.

Chapter 4 – Context

Political Context

Introduction

Education has, for many years, been one of the key areas of provision for all levels of government. An examination of how and why this has become the case is beyond the scope of this study. However throughout the decade and a half preceding the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) the political and social climate changed in a variety of ways and at a rapid rate. These changes all forms part of the context in which the significant curriculum reform of the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) took place. An examination of the key aspects of this political, economic and social context is essential to a thorough understanding of the imperatives for change and therefore is essential to this research.

The knowledge economy

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there is a large body of research dealing with changes to the labour market and economy, particularly the impact of new information and communications technologies on these. Many of these papers make comment on the impact of these changes on education, particularly the area of post-compulsory education.

The concept of a knowledge-economy was first used by Fritz Machlup[1] and was later made more widely known by Peter Druker in his books and popular articles. Those discussing the economy and the labour market, now use this term, and other related terms such as knowledge-worker and information-economy, frequently. Amongst them, Jarl Bengtsson, in his analysis of the changes to European Labour markets and the effect of these changes on education argues that "many OECD[2] countries are rapidly moving towards a more knowledge-intensive economy based to a large extent on a new techno-economic paradigm"

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[1] Machlup, F. (1962). *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[2] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(Bengtsson, 1993, p. 135). In their analysis of the knowledge economy, Houghton and Sheehan (2000) offer the following insight into these large-scale economic changes that have had such a profound impact on society and education:

> It is not a new idea that knowledge plays an important role in the economy, nor is it a new fact. All economies, however simple, are based on knowledge about how, for example, to farm, to mine and to build; and this use of knowledge has been increasing since the Industrial Revolution. But the degree of incorporation of knowledge and information into economic activity is now so great that it is inducing quite profound structural and qualitative changes in the operation of the economy and transforming the basis of competitive advantage (p. 1).

This high level and unprecedented incorporation of knowledge and information into the economy necessitated a response from governments if a competitive advantage was to be found. Part of the response needed to be focused on education if long-term competitiveness in this type of economy was to be possible.

Several factors lead to the development of the so-called knowledge economy and mark it as different from the industrial revolution that preceded it. The information revolution has led to a vast increase in the codification of information and the ease of sharing this information for very little cost and almost immediately anywhere in the world. This ability to share information easily has many positive implications for economic growth and has continued to change the world in which we live. As a consequence of this change "the skills required of humans will increasingly be those that are complementary with information and communication technology; not those that are substitutes" (Houghton & Sheehan, 2000, p. 11). They also argue that as compared to the introduction of machines in the industrial revolution, that frequently had the effect of replacing human labour, work in the knowledge economy will "increasingly demand uniquely human (tacit) skills – such as conceptual and inter-personal management and communication skills" (Houghton & Sheehan, 2000, p. 11). Another consequence, hastened by deregulation of various markets and advances in information and communication technologies is the strengthening of global competition in many industries. Companies are also finding it necessary to work together with others because of rising cost, increasing complexity and widening scope of technology. Partnerships are thus becoming increasingly common and important in global business. Equally important in the knowledge economy is the ability for organisations to learn and innovate. A leading

expert in the knowledge economy states: "a key to success in the knowledge economy is a trained labour force. It is not surprising that so many countries have focused on improving their educational systems" (Stiglitz, 1999, p. 51). With knowledge and information so readily accessible and widely and virtually immediately available, a significant area of advantage to business is to have work force that is highly skilled in working with knowledge and information. Stiglitz also states "success in the knowledge economy requires creativity, higher order cognitive skills *in addition to* basic skills. Those countries that find ways of fostering this kind of creativity will, in the long run, have more success in competition in the knowledge economy" (1999, p. 51). Finally, Houghton and Sheehan (2000) argue that success in the knowledge-economy will be helped by "much more investment in the production of people with broad-based problem solving skills and with the social and inter-personal communication skills required for teamwork, along with the skills and attitudes required for flexibility" (p. 21).

The economic context of much of the second half of the twentieth century was one in which countries recognised that the world was changing economically and that those countries that adapt best to these changes will be stronger. The rapidly increasing impact of information and communication technologies, which are still being felt today, have swiftly changed the conditions under which we work and workplaces and tertiary, vocational and secondary education systems have felt and continue to feel these effects. The awareness of the need to change our education system was an important part of the context of the introduction of the VCE in Victoria.

These changes can be seen in the light of societal changes in the nineteenth century, as Barcan (1980) succinctly puts it:

> In the 1880s the ability of the labour market to dispense with the labour of children had encouraged legislation for compulsory education. Now the labour market was able to dispense with the labour of adolescents. A society rich enough to keep most adolescents at school faced problems which only a few countries, such as America, Canada or Sweden, had encountered (p. 323).

In Australia, the problems of the participation of young people in this changing labour market have been a significant focus of government reports, programs and policies. Bessant (2002) has written about the government response to the problem of poor youth participation in the

changed work environment of, particularly, the 1980s and 1990s which are highly relevant to the imperative for change surrounding the introduction of the VCE. She points out that education institutions have become important to the management of youth 'at risk' of unemployment (Bessant, 2002). Sweet (1988) gives examples of a number of government programs aimed at keeping youth at school for longer and helps to explain the rationale for this:

> This priority has seen substantial effort and expenditure put into successive initiatives such as the Australian Trainee Scheme, Career Start Traineeships, the Australian Vocational Certificate, the Modern Australian Apprenticeship and Trainee System and New Apprenticeships ... Successive governments have been increasing access to such employment based structured training opportunities as a key strategy in increasing young people's access to vocational education and training and in combating the difficulties that they face in the labour market (p. 12).

This link between youth policy, labour policy and education policy that makes an examination of unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, in the 1980s and 1990s is an important point of context to this research. No education reform happens in a vacuum and the political and economic situation, as well as changes in society more broadly impact on the direction of educational reform. To put it another way, education needs to serve the needs of society and as these needs change, education must respond. This was certainly the case at the time that the VCE was introduced with many changes occurring in society and in the economy, notably the rapid expansion of information technology into many aspects of life and the increasing importance of information and knowledge in the labour market and economy all having an impact on the imperatives for change.

Unemployment

Surrounding all educational institutions is the wider question of youth in society. Significant within this is youth unemployment. The global recession of the 1980s impacted seriously on youth unemployment in Australia that was, in the early 1980s, more than double the rate of unemployment for the overall population at over 20% (Sweet, 1988). To a large extent this phenomenon was being driven by changes in the workplace environment and the economy. Kennedy (1988) states "young people did not feature prominently in the fast growing occupational areas such as professional and technical workers or clerical workers. They did,

however, take a significant share of jobs among process workers and labourers which was the slowest growing occupational area" (p. 361). The Australian Government was not in a position to avert this, no matter what policies were put in place as Australia's economy is not sufficiently large to have a large impact on the overall economic context of the world and the recession was a worldwide phenomenon. The sheer numbers of those categorised as unemployed do not tell the full story of the deterioration of labour market conditions which looms as a very significant factor in the context of curriculum change in the mid to late 1980s, including the introduction of the VCE. Two other factors that help to elucidate the severity of this problem are the average duration of unemployment and the 'hidden' unemployment rate (necessarily an estimate). By both of these measures, the deterioration of labour market conditions from the early 1970s to the early 1980s was little short of catastrophic. Kirby (1985) explains that:

> The average duration of unemployment increased alarmingly, from 7.3 weeks in 1970 to 45.5 weeks in 1984. It is important to stress that this measure relates to the length of time spent in unemployment at the time of interview for the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Labour Force Survey. Thus all the unemployed counted here were only part way through their spell of unemployment. (p. 115)

Precisely how the jobless are counted can also have a big impact on the overall numbers considered to be unemployed. If people are only considered to be unemployed if they are registered for unemployment benefits, this will give a smaller result than, for example, looking at all people not in full-time education and also not in work. How many hours of work per week is considered to be employed and other factors all have a bearing on the final unemployment figure.[1]

In summarising the severity of the labour market issues in Australia in the 1980s, Kirby states that "... the adverse consequences of the deterioration in the Australian labour market affect a

[1] The results of the latest ABS survey of those not in the official labour market, which was conducted in September 1983, indicated that the total level of joblessness in Australia had reached almost 1.5 million people at that time ... indicate a jobless rate of 18.6 per cent" Kirby, P. (1985). *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Labour Market Programs*.

far greater number of people, and are far more deeply entrenched, than is commonly believed. Second, improvements in employment levels and in the general health of the Australian economy will not result in marked reductions in recorded unemployment unless the improvements are substantial and sustained" (Kirby, 1985, p. 31).

This distressingly high level of unemployment was also closely linked to the changes in the labour market and the economy was that "there are fewer and fewer routine and low-skilled or unskilled jobs left, while remaining and newly created jobs tend to be more skill-demanding" (Bengtsson, 1993, p. 139). This change was quickly noticeable in manufacturing as improved information technologies made it possible to automate many routine and simple tasks. Coupled with the aforesaid global recession, employment conditions were deeply troubling for government and for society.

School retention

One of the most effective ways of keeping the unemployment rate down while at the same time having a positive long-term impact on the job prospects of young people was to increase school retention rates. Students remaining at school beyond the compulsory attendance period will not just have an improved chance of finding work in the future (due to higher levels of educational attainment and, under most circumstances, improved employability), they will also not be part of the unemployment figures while they are still at school. Education policy has the potential to have a further impact on this. Of course, very high youth unemployment, in and of itself, in all likelihood encouraged adolescents to remain at school and the trend towards greater retention was quite a long-term trend, well established prior to present government's policy changes.

Aside from the acknowledgement that the workforce, indeed, the world, was changing and that education needs to be reformed to accommodate this, there is another more political aspect to the context for this educational reform. In his paper considering how labour market changes may effect post-compulsory education, Sweet (1988, p. 33) claimed that one of the demands on post-compulsory education is "to delay young peoples' entry into the labour market and, by the consequent reduction in the fraction of the age group in the labour force, to effect a reduction in levels of youth unemployment". While it would be very cynical to

suggest that Government was only interested in an 'on-paper' reduction in the (very high) level of youth unemployment at the time, it would be naive to suggest this was not a consideration.

The benefits of providing our young people with a quality education should have benefits for the broader society as well as for the individual concerned. Sweet (1988) argues:

> Education is one of the most important ways in which societies seek to develop the creative and productive potential of the individual, both for leisure and work. It can contribute to productivity in many ways: through teaching attitudes and values expected in the workplace; developing an ability to make independent choices; fostering a capacity for co-operative action; developing intellectual skills which increase understanding of the production process; and, as a consequence, developing the capacity to contribute to the shaping of economic and cultural activity. (p. 331)

Curriculum and retention

The passage above focuses on the economic context of Australia in the years prior to the introduction of the VCE, with some comments on the educational issues bound up with those; specifically the issue of the relevance and attractiveness to young people of the post-compulsory curriculum offerings in Victoria. Underlying these issues are the societal factors that caused school curricula to be critically examined by a number of groups in society. Control of the curriculum has never completely been in the hands of educators, or any other group, however this was certainly a time when other groups sought to influence and drive curriculum reform for a variety of reasons.

Since the 1960s, the last two years of secondary education (Form 5 and 6, later referred to as Year 11 and 12 - for students aged 17 and 18 in most cases) were focused on preparation for external examinations. Universities used these examination results to determine which students would be offered places in courses and which students would not. University did not, by and large, rely on other mechanisms (such as interviews or other testing) to determine placement in courses. The university-focus of some curriculum offerings, particularly the most common upper-secondary curriculum offering in Victoria – Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) did not offer the breadth that some students desired and were not seen as

being appropriate to encourage students who did not intend to attend university to remain at school through to Year 12.

Kirby (1985) notes that the curriculum offerings in the early to mid 1980s did not always provide the appeal or the relevance that many young people sought. Much was now being asked of the curriculum being offered to young people. It must be both appealing and relevant if it is to encourage students to stay at school longer if it is to be a catalyst for improved employment prospects and a generally more productive and creative life.

In her article on the policy context of curriculum reform in Australia in the 1980s, Kennedy (1988) argues that this period was a time when "the scope of educational concerns was seen to be such that there was some reluctance to accept that professional educators were competent to deal with them" (p. 358). In 1987, the Federal Government released a report (Department of Employment, Education and Training) dealing with upper-secondary, post-secondary education and changes in the workforce in Australia. One of the significant findings of this report (pertaining to the changes in senior schooling) was that the Australian workforce was becoming more skilled and, further, that this change was considered essential to Australia's international competitiveness. Data also revealed that the young people of Australia were not participating as much as might be desirable in this growth area of the Australian workforce (namely, that of the skilled worker). These findings echo similar sentiments present in the Ministerial Review on Postcompulsory Schooling (Blackburn, 1985). The committee's report contends that "in the face of uncertainty, the best policy is to ensure that as many young people as possible have a sufficiently high level of initial educational achievement to possess a flexible basis for the acquisition of specific skills, to have some conceptual understanding of technology and of productive processes, and to take place confidently as participants in the work environment" (p. 4). The uncertainty referred to in this report was the economic uncertainty resulting from the global recession of the 1980s.

The decade leading up to the introduction of the VCE, was a period where school education was being scrutinised closely by government. VCAB (1989) has noted that there were 21 major reports on education in the years 1981 and 1987 as well as other reports that made comment on education. Government, as ever, saw education, as hugely important, and as a tool for achieving policy outcomes.

One of the most significant considerations, as the VCE was being developed, was the issue of retention. The goal of providing curricula that were relevant and appealing to a diverse range of students was clearly and explicitly stated in a variety of government documents and reports in the late-1980s and into the early 1990s – for example Blackburn (1985) and VCAB (1987 and 1990). One could easily conclude that having students attend school for a longer period of time is in and of itself a thing to be encouraged, but many of the reports and other documents identify some of the reasoning for this goal. It should be noted that the trend of students remaining at school for longer was well established before the introduction of the VCE or any of the discussions or reports about re-shaping post-compulsory education. As noted in the Blackburn report, "this trend of increased retention has been pronounced since 1981 and indicates that we are now entering a third phase of education in which most students will complete the full secondary span" (Blackburn, 1985, p. 3). Later in the same report, the author asserts that: "it is time to reappraise the post-compulsory years of schooling as they become a stage of education in which the great majority of students participates" (Blackburn, 1985, p. 3).

In the paper entitled 'Developing the VCE: Options Paper' (VCAB, 1987), the following quotation alludes to two of the primary reasons:

> The VCE is central to government's policies in education directed towards increasing the proportion of young people who complete twelve years of schooling. The government has agreed to support the changes necessary to encourage the great majority of young Victorians to complete Year 12, thereby helping to provide the foundations of a better educated society and a more flexible, highly skilled and productive workforce (p. 3).

The reasons retention rates were continuing to increase were many, however, the government was most pleased to take the credit for this, as the following quote shows. "In 1985, the Government endorsed the target proposed by the Ministerial Review of Post-Compulsory Schooling in Victoria to have a 70 per cent retention rate to Year 12 by 1995. That target has been reached this year - four years early - with retention rates reaching 75 per cent in Government schools and 79 per cent in all schools. On the basis of age-grade comparisons, this is the highest retention rate of any State in Australia" (Victoria - Education for Excellence 1991, p. 5)

History of secondary schooling in Victoria

The history of government schooling in Victoria begins in earnest with The Education Act of 1872 (Parliament of Victoria, 1872). This provided for free, compulsory and secular education for children older than six years of age and less than fifteen. Subsequently, The Education Act of 1910 (Parliament of Victoria, 1910) "authorized the Governor-in-Council to establish higher elementary schools and district high schools; continuation classes; and preparatory trade classes, trade schools and technical schools" (Badcock, 1973, p. 459). The description quoted above shows that the purposes of these post-primary schools were to meet a variety of needs, often some kind of bridging education program between primary school and either further work training or employment. As a side-note, in this cursory examination of the development of secondary schooling in Victoria, the list of subjects for students completing the third and fourth year preparatory professional course of secondary school which was "designed for those looking forward to the profession of teaching, to University courses, or to employment in the Public Service" (Badcock, 1973, p. 467) included the following subjects: English, Second Language (French, German or Latin), Mathematics, Science, History and Civics, Drawing, Manual Work, Physical Training and Hygiene and Singing. Clearly some musical training was considered necessary for those aspiring to professional work or public service, particularly those continuing on to teacher training.

Prior to the acts of parliament referred to above, there was a somewhat separate process of establishing private schools following the establishment of The University of Melbourne in 1853. The Government provided funds to the Church of England, Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholic Church to establish boarding schools to educate the children of wealthy families who might otherwise have sent their progeny to England to be educated. These schools were primarily established to "prepare future undergraduates". (Barcan, 1980, p. 81)

The post-second world war period was a time of transition in secondary education (Barcan, 1980, p. 296). An increase in birth rates, the raising of the school-leaving age[1] to fifteen, increased affluence allowing families to support their children in education for longer, along with an increase in 'white-collar' employment opportunities meant that numbers of students in secondary school grew and provision for these numbers had to be made. Some other

[1] This was decided in Victoria in 1943, but it was decided to enact this after the end of the second world war.

countries, including New Zealand, the United States and, later, England adopted a broader approach to secondary education.

> In these countries, comprehensive high schools obtained all their pupils from the local area, no matter what their range of ability. They attempted to provide a wide range of subjects to match the abilities and interests of the pupils (Barcan, 1980, p. 296).

The concept and ideals behind comprehensive schools did not take hold uniformly across the country and Victoria was one of the states that maintained a 'two-tier' technical school and high school model (the former catering for those students interested pursuing employment in a trade and the latter for the more academically inclined and especially those wishing to attend university) until the 1980s. Some politicians, educators and others, were disappointed that the comprehensive school model was not adopted in Victoria[1] although Victorian schools were obliged to cater for a large range of students with differing ability levels whether or not they had specific facilities to do so. One strategy used was streaming of students into ability groups (Badcock, 1973, p. 538). To what level this was achieved is beyond the scope of this research. The notion of separate high schools and technical schools will be further considered in Chapter 5, as this was a factor when the single-certificate VCE was introduced.

In the years immediately after the introduction of the Education Act high schools could be established where there was sufficient demand, but on occasions schools could be classified as 'higher-elementary' (Victoria, 1910) functioning essentially as extended primary schools. These schools could then be re-classified as high schools when and if demand became sufficient. In the first Ramsay report[2] (Badcock, 1973, p. 462), an attempt was made to plan for staffing and other resource needs over the coming decade. These estimates were based on three years of enrolments (1947-9). The estimate for 1960 was 55500 students whereas; the actual figure was 91503 (see figure 2 below), over sixty percent above expectations. This illustrates how much the growth of secondary education took administrators by surprise.
Beginning in the 1950s and increasing in pace in the 1960s, other types of post-primary schools accounted for less of the growing enrolment in the secondary division and high

[1] Amongst those that were disappointed were two Chief Inspectors of the Secondary Division, Alex McDonell (1953-1958) and his successor J W Mills.

[2] Alan Ramsay was the chair of two committee reports on the state of secondary education in Victoria, in 1949 and also in 1960.

schools came to account for ninety-eight percent of secondary students in government schools.

Enrolments in Secondary Schools Division 1960-1969									
1st August	Central Schools and Classes	% of enrolments	Higher Elementary Schools	% of enrolments	Girls Secondary Schools	% of enrolments	High Schools	% of enrolments	Total
1960	4459	5	2558	3	6410	7	78076	85	**91503**
1961	3988	4	1734	2	6451	6	87123	88	**99296**
1962	3977	4	1198	1	6610	6	97599	89	**109384**
1963	3662	3	960	1	6850	6	105415	90	**116887**
1964	2872	2	1068	1	7334	6	112559	91	**123833**
1965	2765	2	543	0	7771	6	120242	92	**131321**
1966	2439	2	524	0	2105	2	131375	96	**136443**
1967	2145	2	572	0	1901	1	137050	97	**141668**
1968	1917	1	576	0	1330	1	144057	97	**147880**
1969	1840	1	599	0	231	0	151623	98	**154293**

(Figure 2, Jacob, 2011, from data in Badcock, 1973, p. 548)

External Examinations

To measure students' level of achievement at secondary school, a variety of examinations have been implemented since the beginning of secondary schooling in Victoria. Successful completion of these examinations usually marked the point at which students progressed to the next level of education (where the examination was completed satisfactorily) or on to work. The examination of greatest significance to this research was the new matriculation examination, established in 1944 (Badcock, 1973, p. 515) and (much later) the higher school certificate (HSC) beginning in 1970 (p. 572). It was this credential that was replaced by the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) gradually from the later 1980s to the early 1990s.

The university established the new matriculation examination after changes were made to the intermediate certificate to include non-academic subjects (such as woodwork and sheet metal work and other craftwork) rendering the intermediate certificate unsuitable for use a university entrance examination. This examination, beginning in 1944 would be taken one year after the leaving certificate and "would form the normal channel of entry to the University from 1945 onwards for pupils at school" (Badcock, 1973, p. 516). Joining Melbourne University on the tertiary education landscape in the 1960s were Monash University admitting students in 1961 and Latrobe University in 1967 (Badcock, 1973, p. 571) illustrating the increased demand for upper-secondary and tertiary education at this stage in Victoria's history.

The pre-VCE curriculum specialist music offerings in schools

Prior to the introduction of the VCE single certificate in 1992, there were a large number of options available to students who wished to study beyond the compulsory period of education. Historically, from the mid-60s, technical colleges, later called Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Colleges, Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) and schools (particularly private schools) were responsible for the provision of post-compulsory curricula. This approach gave rise to a somewhat bewildering array of options with little clarity in terms of equivalence and comparison between them. Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1), Technical Year 12 Certificate (T12), Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP), Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC, later called HSC Group 2) and Vocational Orientation Program (VOP) were all originally offered to meet a specific need in educational provision, but, by the 1980s and early-1990s, the result of this 'scatter-gun' provision was a plethora of confusing options for students and parents. This plethora of choices gave rise to some significant issues. There would have been significant cost associated with administering all of these separate courses each, (with the exception of some of the HSC (Group 1) subjects) with quite low student numbers. There would undoubtedly have been some duplication of material in some subjects. Certain topics that were common between different courses would have been developed and documented in isolation from each other with the attendant waste of resources and inconsistencies and the variety of options must have resulted in confusion to both students and parents with no clear comparison possible between the different offerings.

The HSC was by far the most popular of the post-compulsory options. For example, this graph represents the statistics from the early 1980s:

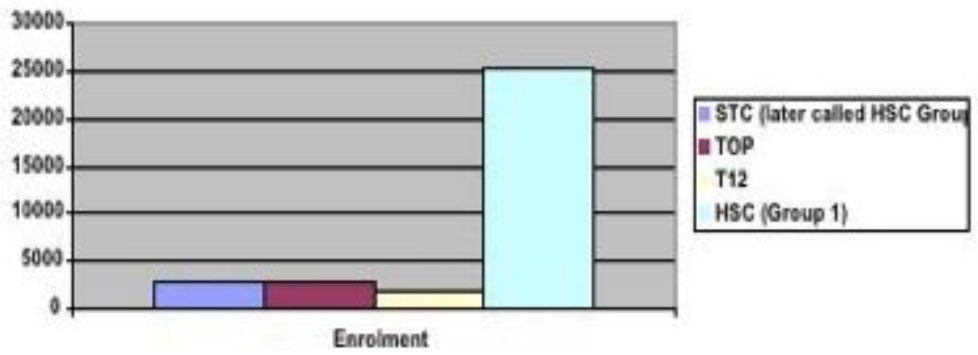

Figure 3 - Comparison of enrolments in post-compulsory credentials in Victoria (Kirby, 1985, p. 49)

Given the large number of students undertaking HSC (Group 1) prior to the introduction of the VCE, we will now examine this course so as to compare this to the VCE. This will help illustrate the changes made with the introduction of the new credential.

The HSC (Group 1) Music Curriculum

For many years prior to the introduction of the VCE, the most popular upper-secondary credential was HSC (Group 1). This certificate was primarily aimed at students who were intending to pursue education at tertiary level. The HSC (Group 1) course (hereafter simply referred to as the HSC) was divided into Music A and Music B. Music A was a practical course, essentially comprising a recital, a presentation of prepared technical work and one optional unit chosen from a list of ten. Aside from the optional unit, this course was very like an external performance exam, such as those offered by various examination bodies such as Trinity College (London) and the AMEB. In Victoria, the AMEB was very widely used and recognised. The HSC course even refers to AMEB examinations as appropriate preparation. Like the AMEB, students had to prepare certain technical work pertaining to the instrument being studied (such as scales and arpeggios), to be presented under exam conditions and several pieces chosen from lists representing different stylistic periods. The lists (A, B and C) gave the students a larger selection than many equivalent AMEB lists, but in other respects, these lists were very similar to the AMEB lists for an equivalent standard. These lists represented different stylistic periods (and, in some cases, whether the pieces were to be played with or without accompaniment).

The nature of the music in AMEB examinations

A further part of the music education, and aural comprehension landscape in Victoria is the availability of external music examinations such as those offered by the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB) and Trinity College (London) and other bodies. These organisations offered practical music examinations as well as musicianship and music theory examinations, with the AMEB becoming increasingly popular and influential. These long-standing and widely used examinations present an interesting and influential counterpoint to the formal curriculum reforms that are the major focus of this research. AMEB practical music examinations are offered in a wide variety of disciplines and instruments. Large numbers of music students throughout Victoria (and across the country) undertake these exams. Aside from the major focus of the exams, which is the presentation of a number of pieces and set technical work including scales, arpeggios and other technical requirements, there is an aural test. The exact details of these tests vary depending on the level of the examination, but include the ability to undertake such aural perception tasks as recognising the meter of a melody played, clapping back a rhythm that has been clapped, humming or singing a short melodic phrase or identifying chords. Anecdotally, and through experience as a student through this system, the preparation for this aural test would often involve a few short sessions as part of a lesson outlining what might be asked and a few drills on questions like the test itself. In many cases, although undoubtedly, not always, the aural comprehension requirements of many teachers treated these exams as an after-thought.

In addition to the practical examinations the AMEB offered exams dealing with music theory and musicianship. The music theory examinations test students' ability to do such things as write notes in treble and bass clef, remember and write key signatures, and, at more advanced levels, harmonise melodies or compose melodies to given words. The presentation of the learning materials and delivery of these exams was such that the link between the actual sound and the theoretical concepts learnt was not made explicit. Theory teachers may have made this link in lessons, but this was not required or particularly well support in the material.

The elevation of aural comprehension to a significant role in Victorian upper-secondary music education has meant that the issue of teaching and learning of aural comprehension skills continues to be an area of challenge for teachers and students and of research interest to

those of us interested in music education and the possibilities of such research informing teaching practice.
The works on these lists could be described as 'traditional' in many respects. All the music, regardless of musical style, was to be performed completely from notated music. The vast majority of the music on these lists was broadly 'classical' in nature. Whilst it is true that in some cases this music was jazz style or other non-classical styles (such as folk), importantly, it was all notation-based.

The significance of the music being notation-based was that musicians from a jazz or contemporary-popular background were unable to participate in these examinations. This was also the case in the HSC course. Only musicians from a traditional (notation-based) background could complete this course.

The instruments catered for in the HSC curriculum were: pianoforte, pipe organ, singing, violin, viola, violoncello, double bass, flute, oboe, clarinet, E flat alto saxophone, B flat tenor saxophone and E flat baritone saxophone, bassoon, recorder, French horn, trumpet, trombone (tenor), bass tuba, harp, percussion, classical guitar, band instruments (referring to brass band instruments such as cornet and flugelhorn), piano accordion, electric organ.

In addition to the technical work and pieces for assessment, students undertaking either Music A or Music B had to complete an optional unit (one optional unit per study, so if a students was enrolled in Music A and Music B, he or she would need to do 2 optional units. The ten optional units available were: Music in Elizabethan England, Seventeenth Century Music, The Romantic Period in Music, Jazz History, Music in the Theatre, Solo Performance (only for students undertaking Music B, or could be completed on a second instrument for students enrolled in Music A), Ensemble, General Musicianship, Jazz Theory and Original Composition.

The HSC Music B course comprised a unit on twentieth century music, a unit on eighteenth century music and an optional unit chosen from the same list of optional units as for Music A (above).

With respect to aural comprehension, very little was present in the HSC Music A or Music B course. It was necessary to aurally recognise and then comment on the works set for study (in

Music B). A number of optional units require as part of the internal assessment "aural perception questions requiring written and/or spoken responses to works heard live or on recording" (Department of Education, 1980, p. 51). Aural comprehension (or perception) skills were most prominent in Optional Unit H – General Musicianship. This optional unit was made up of 3 segments – writing skills, reading and performance skills and aural perception skills. This optional unit included some elements removed from other areas of the course. For example the reading and performance skills was included "partly to restore the area of sight-reading dropped from the Music A course ..." (Department of Education, 1980, p. 51). The description given of the aural perception skills segment reads:

> Segment 3 (Aural perception skills) is a further new area of skill development made possible by the internal assessment scheme operating for the optional units. It requires the development of specific listening skills and the ability to translate what is heard into written responses. This is quite distinct from the skills required in the history core units of Music B, where the ability to recognise is from the printed score, and where the aim is to gain an understanding of a musical work, form, style and orchestration. For this reason students taking core units in music history should not be at an advantage over those doing Music A core (Department of Education, 1980, p. 51).

As an out-working of the curriculum reform agenda of the government, VCAB had clear policy in a number of areas to ensure that the new VCE curricula met the government's objectives. The revised curriculum was to offer access to a broader range of students. In setting a 65% retention rate as a goal for the early 1990s, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training states that "achievement of this target will require new approaches to make the final years of secondary education more attractive and relevant to a wider range of young people. Curriculum reform will be an essential element in this process" (Department Employment, Education and Training, 1987, p. 18). This goal was met in part through a thorough recasting of upper-secondary education in Victoria that led to the development of the VCE.

Before examining the policy positions and the out-workings of these policies in the curriculum documents, we will outline the structure of the VCE study design using the Music Craft/Music Performance document as an example. Miles (2006) outlines the position of the VCE in Victorian Schools:

> In the State of Victoria, Australia, since 1991 (1990 at some schools), the credential for the completion of post-compulsory secondary school is the Victorian Certificate of Education (comparable to a diploma/certification of graduation from secondary or high school in other countries, states, provinces or regions). It is important to note that all aspects of the VCE programme (curriculum and assessment in particular) are administered by the Department of Education of the State of Victoria, not devised, managed and/or awarded by individual schools, school districts or affiliations" (p. 104).

This credential therefore replaced the many other post-compulsory credentials, which existed previously. In the following chapter, the introduction and structure of the VCE Music Performance study design is examined including the assessment details with a particular emphasis on the aural comprehension requirements.

Chapter 5 - VCE Inception and Introduction

Introduction

In Chapter 4, an overview of the political context of the introduction of the VCE was examined, and an outline of the history of secondary education in the state of Victoria with a particular emphasis on the development of the upper-secondary years of schooling and the external examinations used for these students was provided. The place of music education in the secondary education landscape was also outlined.

In this chapter, the introduction and inception of the VCE will be examined. This will include descriptions of the VCE study design and an overview of the assessment. How student achieved was reported will also be described.

The Comprehensive Secondary School model was largely rejected in Victoria during the 1950s and 1960s (Barcan, 1980, p. 311), despite the rapid increase in enrolments during this time[1] due to increased birth-rates and post-war immigration to Australia. Barcan claims that the reason for Victoria retaining the technical school/high school model (rather than embracing technical schools was "a succession of conservative governments, a rather more emphatic class structure, and a well-embedded liberal-humanist tradition" (Barcan, 1980, p. 311). Whatever the reason for it, this entrenched model presented a difficulty for the government when it was decided that Victoria would adopt a single upper-secondary credential for all students, as the teaching and learning in these two types of schools was intentionally different in nature and kind.

As stated earlier, over the decades a potentially confusing array of post-compulsory credentials was offered in Victoria (prior to the introduction of the VCE) and this range of certificates, course and units had also led to administrative and other issues caused by the absence of an over-arching framework or any real systemic clarity. The *VCE Planning Guide* (VCAB, 1989, p. 1) states:

[1] Secondary enrolments in government schools (as an example) increased in Victoria from 35, 218 in 1950 to 82 004 in 1959 and to 154 293 in 1969 Barcan, A. (1980). *A History of Australian Education*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

> Overall, the certificates included some 2000 units of study but there was a significant degree of overlap and duplication between them. Nevertheless, differential status was accorded to studies depending on the certificate to which they belonged.

The VCE study design

An essential difference between the VCE and the range of offerings prior to the VCE was that the new course used a study structure approach in "an attempt to accommodate diversity without sacrificing commonality" (VCAB, 1989, p. 1). As discussed previously, the size and diversity of the cohort undertaking post-compulsory years of secondary education was growing and this structure, allowing significant school-based decision making and variety within a common study structure was seen as more administratively efficient and less confusing for parents and students than the large range of different credentials offered prior to the introduction of the VCE. As one of the curriculum writers put it:

> It is not a rigid course, it is not a syllabus in fact, it is a way of teaching and an idea about qualities and particular things that students should do, but the actual content is the thing that schools put in (Yeung, 2009, p. 30).

The VCE was made up of units of study of approximately one hundred hours each. Of this duration, 50-60 hours were to be offered in formal class time. Each unit of study was usually one semester of work in one subject. Sixteen units of study was the minimum number of units to satisfactorily complete the VCE, including at least three units of English and three two-unit sequences of 3 and 4 level studies other than English[1]. Assessment at Unit 3 and 4 level was to be gradually transitioned (between 1988 and 1992) from the current arrangements as specified by the subjects undertaken towards a model of common assessment tasks (CATs) that could be either internally or externally assessed (VCAB, 1989, pp. 1-3). The nomenclature of Level 3 and 4, later referred to as Unit 3 and 4 subjects, was used to identify subjects that were normally undertaken in Year 12 (the final year of secondary education) although it was (and still is) possible to undertake these subjects at Year 11 level. Importantly, these subject units were to be taken as a sequence in which Unit 3 was followed

[1] Semester 3 and 4 level studies would previously have been called Year 12 subjects. The reason these were called sequences was that it was necessary to complete these as a pair in sequence. Other units (level 1 and 2) could be taken as one-off units – that is, a student could complete only one unit if they so wished. This allowed students to 'experiment' with subject choices without being locked-in to a particular subject for a whole year.

by Unit 4, whereas Unit 1 and 2 subjects could be undertaken individually, with no pre-requisites, and without material from any other unit being required or expected.

The range of VCE subjects were drawn from a total of thirteen fields of study. Each field of study was responsible for more than one VCE study (or subject) and in some cases were responsible for a considerable number of discrete studies (for example 'The Arts' field of study encompassed all visual and performing arts studies and the 'Languages other than English' field of study would be responsible for all the non-English languages offered in the VCE). The thirteen Fields of Study were: The Arts, Australian Studies, Business Studies, Earth Studies, English, History, Human Development, Information Technology, Languages Other English, Mathematics, Science, Social Education and Technology Studies. The arrangement of subjects into fields of study, overseen by a Field of Study Committee (FOSC) comprising around twenty members from a variety of educational sectors and industries, was designed to "encourage the development of a comprehensive and coherent curriculum" (VCAB, 1989, p. 1). It was also hoped that such a structure would make it:

> Possible to adopt a more coordinated approach and to overcome many of the structural problems inherent in the current program: problems such as significant overlap and duplication between studies and lack of coherence within and between studies.

The desire to develop a curriculum that was comprehensive and coherent speaks to the intent to ensure that there was consistency in structure, terminology and expectations between VCE units and that there was as little duplication as possible. All of these things can easily be compromised if units are written in isolation from each other, which is what often happened when a range of upper-secondary credentials were offered prior to the VCE.

The government saw the VCE as meeting a number of their policy objectives, which is apparent from some of the statements made and the descriptions used in the documentation. Statements such as "the government is committed to the realisation that all young Victorians are entitled to a full secondary education of the highest quality" (VCAB, 1989, p. 1). The government policy implicit in this statement is that the VCE should, amongst other things, encourage young people to remain at school until the completion of Year 12. Other policy objectives are apparent when the VCE is referred to as a single certificate that "prepares students for post-school study, employment and citizenship" and that units within the VCE

should be studies that "are seen by the students to be intrinsically attractive and useful" and "are worthwhile, challenging and of enduring relevance" and that "contain a balance of theoretical and practical work" (VCAB, 1989, p. 3). The government realised that due to the increasing numbers and diversity of students undertaking post-compulsory schooling, it was essential that the VCE was not a narrow certificate leading to a particular post-school outcome (such as university or work). The credential needed to be flexible enough to be attractive and useful to students moving in to a range of post-school outcomes, it needed to equip students for the world of work, a range of tertiary study options, and for the world of late-twentieth century more broadly. To do so, amongst other things, it needed to give students practical and theoretical knowledge where possible as Champion (2006, p. 5) explains:

> There is an underlying principle around the whole thing about a balance between theory and practice and it has been understood from the beginning that this doesn't necessarily mean 50% of each but it is a balance appropriate to the body of knowledge

This presented some challenges for Victorian schools as they tended to be either more academically inclined high schools, or technically/practically orientated technical schools, not the comprehensive schools common in some other states.

Assessment in the VCE

A very significant change that came with the introduction of the VCE was that assessment was no longer purely for tertiary entrance as this single certificate was now to be used for a broad range of students with differing aspirations and exit pathways. The two components of assessment were Work Requirements and Common Assessment Tasks (CATS). Work Requirements had to be completed to the standard required by the classroom teacher to be considered 'satisfactory'. Students had to complete all work requirements satisfactorily to complete the unit. In the early stages of the VCE it was not uncommon for some students to only aim for satisfactory completion of the unit by completing work requirements and to not undertake the common assessment tasks, or not complete all of them (Yeung, 2009, p. 10). The fact that the curriculum and assessment was to be student-focussed was a point of difference with most previous curricula. This focus was apparent in the example of the Music Craft/Performance Study Design in least two ways – firstly, the body of knowledge was based, at least in part, on what students were listening to and playing. Secondly, the writing

in the curriculum documents was from the point of view of what students had to do (skills, abilities), rather than what had to be taught (content). This is made clear by the following quotation:

> It had to be relevant to kids today. Not so much looking back at past papers and saying let's replicate ... probably an exam of that would be in the aural comprehension where all the theory is based on major and minor scales and all the chords were triads, yet the music the kids were listening to were non-functional, cadences were not relevant, four-note chords or five-note chords were everywhere, tonality, lots of modal stuff used, typically Rock music using Mixolydian, not major, flattened 7th all the way through – the studies didn't recognise it, so that is an easier one to bring up to date, but the starting point had to be 'what was in the student realm', so it was student-focussed and that was probably the biggest thing about the VCE it became more, 'what does a student have to do?', not 'what does a teacher have to teach?' You might remember the Music A lists, they were all about what the teacher had to do, but the VCE is all about what is required of the student. And that evolved into outcomes … what does the student need to show in their studies in terms of the teaching that the teachers do and the learning that they do, what do they have to show? That became much more enlightening when you follow through the consequences of that. (Yeung, 2009, p. 5)

Aside from the Work Requirements, the common assessment tasks, were more specifically defined as they were used to compare students across the state in terms of performance in the subject. This meant that the way that common assessment tasks were to be completed was less open to school-based decision-making and could be more standardised across a class and across the state. Common assessment tasks could be internally or externally assessed. In the case of music performance/music craft, the common assessment tasks were of three distinct types: a written report (internally assessed using criteria for the award of grades), an aural and written examination (externally assessed) and a musical performance, either in a group or solo context (externally assessed). Students' achievement in these three common assessment tasks was then statistically moderated[1] to give the student his or her study score in this

[1] Statistical moderation is a process for adjusting the level and spread of each school's assessments of its students in a particular study, to match the level and spread of the same students' scores on a common external score. Because the external score is based on examinations done by all students across the State, it is a common standard against which schools' assessments can be compared. Each VCE study includes at least one external

subject. Each student's performance in all Unit 3 and 4 sequences undertaken, are then combined to produce a tertiary entrance score. This score has changed name a number of times, but has served the same purpose over all the years it has existed (and continues to exist). The purpose of this score is to rank the students across the state in terms of their overall performance in the VCE. The processes leading to this rank are complex and include an evaluation of the relative difficulty of each subject compared with others. The body that administers the VCE[1] does not undertake this process; it is completed by an agency that manages tertiary admission, known as the Victorian Tertiary Admission Centre (VTAC).

Overview of Common Assessment Tasks[2]

The common assessment tasks chosen for inclusion in VCE Music Craft (later, Performance) study design dealt with three very different aspects of the study of music. One was a written analytical task, one was a performance and one involved listening. Music Performance was a branching study whereby a student would choose to study Solo Performance or Group Performance at Unit 3 and 4 Level. The Common Assessment Tasks of these two branches of the study design will be examined in turn. The merits and some issues associated with each of these common assessment tasks will be addressed in Chapter 7.

Common Assessment Tasks in VCE Music Craft/Performance (Solo)

The three common assessment tasks in the VCE Music Craft/Performance (Solo) study design were:

Common Assessment Task 1 – Analysis of Works

Common Assessment Task 2 – Solo Performance Examination

Common Assessment Task 3 – Aural and Written Examination

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examination and the VCAA will use the examination scores in each study as the basis for statistical moderation of schools' assessments. The VCE assessment program also includes the General Achievement Test (GAT). Rather than using examination scores alone, statistical moderation will use students' GAT and examination scores in studies where in doing so a better match with schools' assessments throughout the state is achieved. In all such cases, the examination scores will always be the major influence. (http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/exams/statisticalmoderation/statmod.html)

[1] Variously known as VCAB, VBOS, BOS, VCAA over the period of the VCE's existence.

[2] This overview of the common assessment tasks for VCE Music Performance (previously called Music Craft) is paraphrased from the 1994 study design. The precise wording of these tasks has been changed somewhat from the initial introduction of the study in 1992, but the essential character and type of common assessment tasks remained the same until other, more significant, reviews of the study design in subsequent years.

The Analysis of Works task (Common Assessment Task 1) required students to produce a written report on two to three of the works being prepared for performance (ie works that the students intended to include as part of their program of works for Common Assessment Task 2, the Solo Performance Examination). The report was to be 1500-2000 words and was to include:

- a list of the works with full title and composer or origin
- a discussion of sociocultural influences relevant to the works selected
- a broad musical analysis of the works
- a discussion of significant characteristics of the works, related compositional devices, and the styles
- a comparison of styles
- a discussion of performance strategies to realise and interpret these characteristics, and
- a critical response to the works

Students were given a grade for this task on the basis of the extent to which they had met the following criteria:
Criterion 1: understanding of the structure of the selected works
Criterion 2: knowledge of compositional devices used in the selected works
Criterion 3: comparison of the styles of the selected works
Criterion 4: understanding of sociocultural influences relevant to the selected works
Criterion 5: ability to make critical responses to the selected works
Criterion 6: understanding of strategies to overcome technical difficulties in performing the selected works
Criterion 7: understanding of strategies for the artistic interpretation of the selected works
Criterion 8: skill in the use of music examples to support points made
Criterion 9: coherence of presentation.
Each criterion contributed equally to the overall mark given for this task. This school-assessed CAT represented twenty-five percent of the total score for the subject.

Common Assessment Task 2 – Solo Performance Examination, represented fifty percent of the total score for the subject and was therefore clearly the most important factor in determining the level of achievement in this subject. The criteria for the award of grades were

developed with great care as these criterion needed to be robust enough to be of use in establishing the level of performance regardless of the instrument or the style of performance. The range of styles that could be performed was much wider than in most previous upper-secondary music curricula. In addition to the requirement that these criteria accommodate a range of musical styles, it was also necessary for these criteria to be appropriate for all instruments assessed, including string instruments, brass and woodwind instruments, keyboard instruments and percussion instruments. The use of non-idiomatic terminology was essential in this context. As one of the writers of the VCE Music Craft/Performance study design says when discussing these criteria. Yeung explained, "I think that has been very stable and has been well accepted, it has been honed over the years. I think they do a very good job of discriminating the very top players and the season of excellence is a very good public example of how people can be amazed by the A+ performances on the contemporary instruments just as much [as traditional classical music performance]" (2009, p. 5).

The criteria for the award of grade for CAT 2 (Solo Performance) were:
Criterion 1: compliance with the requirements of the task
Criterion 2: accuracy of performance technique
Criterion 3: control in performance technique
Criterion 4: skill in using a range of performing techniques
Criterion 5: quality of tone and variation of tone
Criterion 6: skill in articulation and phrasing
Criterion 7: understanding of a variety of styles
Criterion 8: understanding of the structure of the works
Criterion 9: skill in historical and conventional interpretation
Criterion 10: skill in personal interpretation
Criterion 11: skill in presentation appropriate to the styles represented in the program.
Marks are awarded on an eight-point scale of 7 - 0 ('Outstanding' to 'Not Shown') with each criterion being equal. A mark out of seventy-seven is awarded.

A concern raised by some music educators prior to the introduction of the VCE, was that by discontinuing the previous HSC Music A course and introducing a completely new curriculum, that required a classroom component in addition to the intensive preparation required to perform to a high standard in the performance component, would be a deterrent

for students to complete the subject.[1] Depending on one's perspective, this could be considered a success or not. Some may argue that the change to the curriculum when the VCE was introduced has led to fewer of the students who historically would have chosen the subject doing so. It was possible to do HSC Music A (Group 1) with no classroom component and this was a common option for excellent young musicians who could still do a full complement of subjects and use Music A as an extra subject to boost their university ranking (called the Anderson score). One of the disadvantages of Music A was that it restricted entry to classically trained musicians and only solo musicians. As Roland Yeung, the principal writer of the VCE Music Craft/Performance study design, says:

> Looking back 20 years, I can say that we were successful. Because looking at enrolments in Music Performance is at 1200 students. Now, that has not dropped. The fear was: 'You are changing, you might loose some students'. You might have lost some students from some traditions, the violists might not be coming through as many as before, and the pianist, not as many as before, but the interesting thing is that of that 1200 now, this is a trend over the last 8 year, half of them are contemporary popular styles. So, this is contemporary piano, contemporary voice. (Yeung, 2009, p. 6)

VCE Music Performance (Solo) is sometimes seen as being somewhat similar to AMEB music examinations. As established VCAA staff member Helen Champion said, this relationship was "relatively tenuous, because it always had, it has always been, a broader body of knowledge because it has always had the non-performance components" (Yeung, 2009, p. 9). In addition to the broader body of knowledge the fact that students could present programs of contemporary music (such as the contemporary piano and contemporary voice mentioned above) is another distinction from the AMEB system at the time[2].

[1] HSC Music A only required performance of a program of music selected from a prescribed list of works towards the end of the academic year and completion of an 'option' chosen from a range of possible options – the options did not usually require a huge amount of additional work.

[2] Since the introduction of the VCE, the AMEB now offers a series of somewhat more contemporary syllabi known as the 'for leisure' series. In addition, the AMEB offer a music theory and aural comprehension course known as Music Craft that is more modern course that integrates aural skills with music theory more than the music theory course that has been offered (largely unchanged) for decades.

The Aural and Written Examination (Common Assessment Task 3) is of particular interest to this research. The focus on aural comprehension in this research is driven by the fact that this is such a major change in music curriculum brought about by the introduction of the VCE. Aural Comprehension skills, despite being vitally important to all music making of all styles, had very little currency in previous curricula and swiftly moved to a position of great prominence upon the introduction of VCE Music Craft/Performance. It is for this reason that the data arising from interviews and document study has been further extended by use of a survey instrument examining the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the Victorian Secondary classroom. The data arising from this survey instrument is detailed in Chapter 7. The requirements of this common assessment task will now be examined in detail.

The Aural and Written Examination was (and still is) a ninety-minute examination (with fifteen minutes reading time) that students undertake during the end-of-year examination period[1]. The examination requires the students to provide written responses in a printed examination booklet by selecting correct answers from a range of options, transcribing music and writing short-answer questions in response to aural stimulus. In the aural and written examinations in the early years of the study design, there were no questions in the paper that could be referred to as 'music theory' questions. It was, however, necessary to have music theory skills in order to understand and correctly answer a number of aural comprehension questions. In other words, the knowledge of music theory was implicit in the question types used and the types of responses required. Interestingly, of more recent years, particularly in the last two versions of the study design[2], there has been an increased emphasis on examining students' understanding of musical theory explicitly (with specific music theory questions), as well as implicitly (by writing examination questions that require an understanding of music theory to complete. This change and other revisions of the aural and written examination will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

The criterion for the award of grades follows:
Criterion 1: recognition of intervals
Criterion 2: recognition of changes in melody

[1] Typically, this examination period is concentrated in the first three weeks of November, with some exams slightly earlier or later.

[2] The Study Design taught for the first time in 2011 and the previous version, in use between 2006 and 2010.

Criterion 3: transcription of melody
Criterion 4: recognition of chord types
Criterion 5: recognition of chord progressions
Criterion 6: recognition of rhythm
Criterion 7: transcription of rhythm
Criterion 8: reading music
Criterion 9: notating music

The precise number of questions, types of questions and marks allocated to each question has been consistently refined since the examination was instigated: however there have been several common characteristics. The overall aim of the examination "requires each student to recognise and transcribe music. It is designed to assess students' ability to perceive the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements commonly found in music" (Miles, 2006, p. 393).

The examination has always contained some questions that require use of conventional Western musical notation, a characteristic that some may argue undermines the stated intent to make the study accessible to musicians from non-classical backgrounds, such as Jazz musicians and (especially) Rock musicians. The appropriateness of using Western notation in an Aural and Written examination aimed at a cohort of musicians from a variety of traditions (particularly in the VCE Music Performance (Group) study design, discussed below) will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Common Assessment Tasks in VCE Music Craft/Performance (Group)

The three common assessment tasks in the VCE Music Craft/Performance (Group) study design were:
Common Assessment Task 1 – Aspects of performance
Common Assessment Task 2 – Group Performance Examination
Common Assessment Task 3 – Aural and Written Examination

The Aspects of Performance (Common Assessment Task 1) required students to submit a report within the range of 1500-2000 words. The written report is to include:

- an outline of the two selected factors affecting group performance

- an outline of the type, style and composition of the music group relevant to the investigation
- evidence of an examination of relevant equipment, personal factors or resources used or involved in the group performance
- strategies for maximising the performance impact and minimising performance problems associated with the selected factors
- a graphic representation, e.g. a schematic diagram of equipment used, a plan of the venue with the stage set-up and access points marked, etc., and
- a bibliography of references consulted.

Students were given a grade for this task on the basis of how well they had met the following criteria:
Criterion 1: knowledge of relevant resources of the group
Criterion 2: knowledge of the two selected factors
Criterion 3: understanding of the effect of the two factors on the group's sound
Criterion 4: understanding of the effect of the two factors on the student's own performance
Criterion 5: analysis of a range of issues related to the two selected factors that enhance or detract from performance
Criterion 6: knowledge of strategies used by the performers in the group to enhance performance impact and minimise problems in performance
Criterion 7: skill in the use of graphic representations to support points made
Criterion 8: coherence of presentation
Each criterion contributed equally to the overall mark given for this task. This school-assessed CAT represented twenty-five percent of the total score for the subject.

The Group Performance examination is Common Assessment Task 2. This task was designed to assess students' ability to perform accurately and artistically in a group context. Students present a live performance in a musical group (the group comprising between one and six assessed performers[1] and two and eight performers in total). Quite sensibly, one performer

[1] Assessed performers are those performers who are enrolled in VCE Music Performance (Group) and are performing in the group as such. In addition to these assessed performers, groups could also have other performers (student and/or professional/adult) participate but not be assessed. There are restrictions and rules around who is permitted to act in this way and under what circumstances, how many professional musicians may be used, etc.

per musical part is permitted, to ensure that the work of each individual musician can be assessed with accuracy. Marks for this task are awarded on the extent to which the student's performance in the group demonstrates:

Criterion 1: accuracy of performance technique
Criterion 2: control in performance technique
Criterion 3: skill in using a range of performing techniques
Criterion 4: quality of tone
Criterion 5: skill in articulation and phrasing
Criterion 6: skill in placing the instrument (or voice) appropriately within the group
Criterion 7: understanding of a variety of styles
Criterion 8: musicality through creativity and individuality
Criterion 9: skill in performing as a member of the group
Criterion 10: skill in the presentation of the program.

This externally assessed CAT, like Music Performance (Solo), represents fifty percent of the total score for the subject.

The Aural and Written examination task (Common Assessment Task 3) requires each student to recognise and transcribe music. The criteria for the award of grades follows:

Criterion 1: recognition of intervals
Criterion 2: recognition of changes in melody
Criterion 3: transcription of melody
Criterion 4: recognition of chord types
Criterion 5: recognition of chord progressions
Criterion 6: recognition of basic beat patterns
Criterion 7: recognition of rhythms
Criterion 8: transcription of rhythm
Criterion 9: recognition of the characteristics of an arrangement
Criterion 10: reading music
Criterion 11: notating music

This externally assessed CAT represents twenty-five percent of the total score for the subject.

Comparison between VCE Music Performance (Solo) and VCE Music Performance (Group) Aural and Written Examinations

The criteria above are different to some extent from the criterion for VCE Music Performance (Solo), as the following table shows.

Criterion	Music Performance (Solo)	Music Performance (Group)
1	Recognition of intervals	Recognition of intervals
2	Recognition of changes in melody	Recognition of changes in melody
3	Transcription of melody	Transcription of melody
4	Recognition of chord types	Recognition of chord types
5	Recognition of chord progressions	Recognition of chord progressions
6	Recognition of rhythm	Recognition of basic beat patterns
7	Transcription of rhythm	Recognition of rhythms
8	Reading music	Transcription of rhythm
9	Notating music	Recognition of the characteristics of an arrangement
10		Reading music
11		Notating music

Figure 4: Table comparing aural and written examination criterion for VCE Music Performance (Solo) and VCE Music Performance (Group)

This difference in emphasis was necessary because, as Yeung explains, "the aural side had to be different because if you have two Unit 3 and 4s, you can't have the same common assessment task for both because the requirement is that if you do something for one unit in one study you can't use that anywhere else. So, what would you make different from one to the other. So the group one became 'contemporary' and the solo one became 'classical'" (Yeung, 2009, p. 18). Notably, the Group students were required to respond to a wider range of question types and also that the Group examination had a slightly higher emphasis on the ability to recognise musical elements (64% of Group criterion compared with 56% of Solo criterion) and a slightly lower emphasis on the ability to transcribe (18% for Group, compared with 22% for Solo). The Group Aural and Written examination emphasises those skills required of a group musician, particularly a musician from a Jazz or Rock/Pop tradition. Although VCE Music Performance (Group) was not a study design specifically for

musicians from non-Classical traditions, it was one of the key ways in which the policy priority of allowing access to VCE study to a broader group of students was achieved. Prior to the introduction of the VCE, musicians from Jazz, Rock or Pop traditions had no way to continue their music studies in the formal environment, or to receive any recognition for the skills that they had developed from the point of view of their studies, within the dominant HSC (Group 1) music subjects. One consequence of this emphasis on 'contemporary' skills in the Group Performance Aural and Written examination is that group musicians from a Classical tradition may be somewhat disadvantaged in this examination. The foci of the respective examinations will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Miles (2006) explored many aspects of assessment in his thesis. One of the relevant findings concern the preparation of students who had completed VCE music in recent years and had now gone on to study music at a tertiary institution. Specifically, tertiary students who had completed VCE Music Performance (Group and/or Solo) were asked about the extent to which they felt they were prepared for the aural and written examination. This examination was originally called Common Assessment Task 3 (CAT 3), but is now simply called aural and written examination. The data deals firstly with students who were studying Music Performance (Group). Of these students approximately half thought they had received adequate preparation. One interesting cross-tabulation of data compares the extent to which students felt their preparation was adequate with whether they were offered this subject in a classroom including students doing Music Performance (solo) simultaneously. Sixty-five percent of students who experienced situations where more than one VCE music subject was being taught in the same classroom at the same time did not feel prepared adequately for the Group Performance CAT 3. Miles concludes:

> Given that the Group Performance and Solo Performance CAT 3s (the aural and written examinations) are different by perhaps as much as forty percent, it is reasonable to assume that these students were not taught to differentiate between the subtleties of each of the aural comprehension examinations (CAT 3s). (Miles, 2006, p 160)

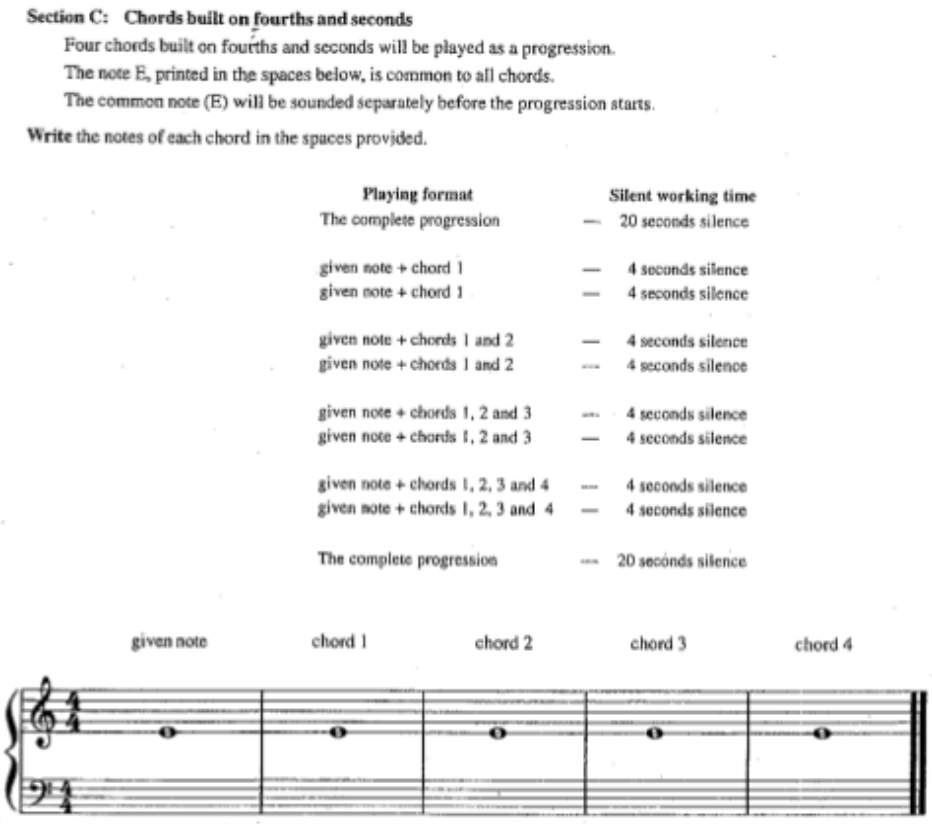
Miles played a significant role in the VCE Music Performance, specifically as Chief Assessor for CATs and Chair of the examination setting panel for some years so he was able to see 'first-hand' the result of students being taught in the same classroom with another subject. The overall number of students in the sample is small (only 30 students in total across all music subjects) and so the data and findings and the extent to which these results are

representative are open questions. Miles also found that students who completed Music Performance (Solo) who had also completed theory and/or musicianship examinations felt more prepared than those who had not. This contrasted with students who completed Music Performance (Group) who had also completed theory and/or musicianship examinations who, on the whole, did not feel more prepared than their peers who had not. The author speculates that this may indicate that the common music theory and musicianship examination syllabi are more closely aligned with the Music Performance (Solo) study design, compared with the Music Performance (Group) study design.

Another interesting finding of relevance to the present study deals with whether teachers of VCE Music Performance (Solo) and Music Performance (Group) targeted their teaching towards the specific requirements of the Aural and Written Examination or "a style of instruction intended to deliver more generalisable competence in the discipline of aural comprehension" (Miles, 2006, p. 187). Data for teachers of both Music Performance (Solo) and Music Performance (Group) show very clear bias towards teaching specifically to examination requirements rather than a broad program of instruction in aural comprehension competence.

Miles (2006) goes on to critique the present Aural and Written Examinations in Music Performance (Group) and Music Performance (Solo) in his ninth chapter. He draws a distinction between examinations that measure the students' ability to complete specific tasks (like the existing examinations) and those that provide a more valid and authentic measure of students' genuine level of understanding. Miles advocates an examination that features questions replicating 'real-world' or authentic musical contexts, not 'artificial' tasks that may not provide evidence of genuinely high-level aural comprehension skills. He believes that an examination that features these more authentic tasks would be more useful to students in developing their aural comprehension skills in ways that would be helpful in either tertiary study in music or in a variety of performance environments. Further, he believes that such changes would lend greater credibility to the results of the Aural and Written Examination in terms of their value to tertiary providers in making judgments about the true level of aural comprehension skills of Victorian students entry tertiary music study.

One question in the Solo paper that was somewhat controversial was included to represent the musical language of the twentieth-century. It was a question dealing with non-tertian chords; specifically, chords built on the intervals of seconds and fourths (see figure below).



Section C: Chords built on fourths and seconds

Four chords built on fourths and seconds will be played as a progression.
The note E, printed in the spaces below, is common to all chords.
The common note (E) will be sounded separately before the progression starts.

Write the notes of each chord in the spaces provided.

Playing format		Silent working time
The complete progression	—	20 seconds silence
given note + chord 1	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chord 1	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1 and 2	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1 and 2	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1, 2 and 3	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1, 2 and 3	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1, 2, 3 and 4	—	4 seconds silence
given note + chords 1, 2, 3 and 4	—	4 seconds silence
The complete progression	—	20 seconds silence

Figure 5: Chords built on seconds and fourths questions from VCE Music Performance (Solo) Aural and Written Examination 1995 (Miles, 2006)

This question required students to use conventional notation to record the notes that were added to the given note to form chords built on the intervals of a second or a fourth. The chords were cumulative so each new chord added one note to the previous note or chord (ie Chord 1 was a two-note chord, Chord 2 was a three-note chord, etc) The primary challenges of this question for most students and teachers was the unusual sound of these chords and the fact that each new added note could be any type of fourth or second above or below any of the notes present in the previous chord.

The appropriateness of using a question such as this is the most obvious attempt in the exam to ensure that the body of knowledge was contemporary, at least in one sense. It is certainly true that Western Art Music in the twentieth-century made use of a variety of chords based

on intervals other than the third[1]. It is also true that chords in Jazz and Contemporary Popular music make extensive use of added notes such as seconds and fourths as well as other non-tertian harmony. The presentation of such sophisticated harmony in a formal examination does present difficulties. The precise format of the question outlined in the figure above is quite an abstract and dry example of such harmony, but the fact that it is highly structured does offer the advantage of some predictability and some limitations on what may be examined for the benefit of both students and teachers.

Yeung (1999, p. 18) explains that "the chord progression task was much more complex in group performance because typically that cohort were very strong on chords and they could perceive that very easily. So the content was developed, probably to the extent that the Shostakovich String Quartet group were disadvantaged. So their course would need to include styles of music they were not going to perform. This goes back to access. What sorts of things do you put into it? What is central to their work?"

This brief discussion has shown that although there was a genuine attempt made to modernise the curriculum and assessment in the VCE compared with previous music credentials, there was at times an uneasy balance between what the curriculum writers and contemporary thinkers in this area may have seen as desirable, and the historical music curriculum that had to be considered and to some extent accommodated when undertaking this reform.

Reporting in the VCE

The reporting of student progress was to be undertaken in the VCE in two parts: a statement of results was to be issued indicating the VCE units satisfactorily completed and those that were considered not satisfactory also. In addition to this grades were to be reported (on an A – E scale) for each common assessment task undertaken as part of a level 3 and 4 sequence.

The Music Craft study design was divided into six units. Unit 1 and 2 could be taken in isolation or together and were units written to develop students' performance skills in both solo and ensemble (group) musical contexts. There were two Unit 3/4 sequences offered. One

[1] Vincent Persichetti's famous and authoritative harmony text (Twentieth Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice) devotes chapters four and six to harmony built on fourths and seconds respectively.

focusing on group (or ensemble) performance and one focusing on solo performance. Each of the six units comprising the VCE Music Craft study design was written to take one semester (or approximately half) of the school year. Every VCE Unit was divided into four areas of study. The areas of study are shown below:

Unit 1 Areas of study	Unit 2 Areas of study	Unit 3 (Selected program[1]) Areas of study	Unit 4 (Selected program) Areas of study	Unit 3 (Group Performance) Areas of study	Unit 4 (Group Performance) Areas of study
Performance Skill Development	Performance Skill Development	Performance Skill Development	Performance Skill Development	Performance Skill Development	Performance Skill Development
Creative organisation	Creative organisation	Creative organisation	Creative organisation	Creative organisation	Creative organisation
Music responses	Music responses	Music responses	Music responses	Music responses	Music responses
Aural Comprehension	Aural Comprehension	Aural Comprehension	Aural Comprehension	Aural Comprehension	Aural Comprehension

Figure 6: Areas of study for VCE Music Performance Units 1992

The areas of study were consistent across all six VCE Music Craft units. Performance skill development was the term used to refer to the students' efforts to improve their ability to perform on their instrument(s). Creative organisation was the reasonably broad term chosen to refer to improvisation, composing and arranging. This breadth of terminology allowed for schools, teachers and students with particular interests in one of these areas to tailor the course to the individual requirements of the context. Certain teachers may have, for example, a strong emphasis on improvisation in their teaching practice, and this could be accommodated in this area of study without the need for all teachers to teach improvisation, which for some teachers, would be outside their interest or expertise. The difficulty of

[1] Selected program was the name applied to the branch of the VCE Music Craft Study Design focused on Solo Performance. It was later renamed Selected Study and subsequently, Solo Performance quite early in its development and has retained that name up to and including the present study design.

allowing such freedom within the study design is that it becomes more difficult to assess and compare students who undertake this area of study in widely divergent ways. The criteria for the award of grades must be extremely robust to cater for this.

Each unit had a number of work requirements. These were specific tasks that the students were to undertake. The following diagram shows the work requirements for each unit of the Music Craft study design[1].

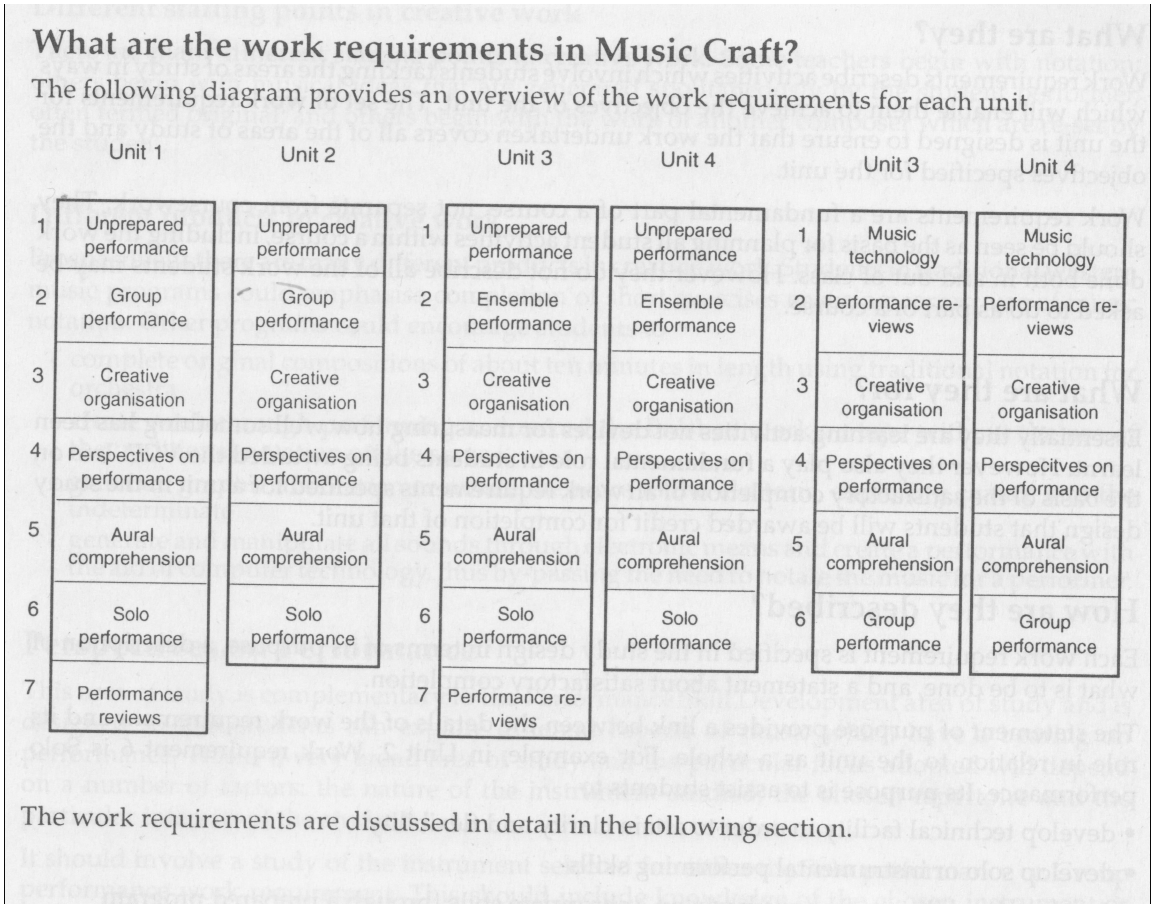


Figure 7 - VCE Music Craft Work requirements (Board of Studies, 1995, p. 9)

The two columns on the left list the work requirements for Unit 1 and 2. These two units could be taken individually or sequentially. Students were able to undertake Unit 3/4 music without completing either Unit 1 or Unit 2.

[1] The middle two columns refer to Solo Performance and the two columns on the right refer to Group Performance (the study branches from a common Unit 1 and 2 into two separate unit 3 and 4 sequences, a practice discontinued for the latest study design taught for the first time in 2011)

Throughout all six units of the Music Craft study design aural comprehension was present. This represents one of the largest changes in terms of the content being taught.

Curriculum writers developing the VCE were given clear policy guidance on goals and principles that were to inform their work. These included some things that were overarching principles relevant to all key learning areas as well as some specific advice for their key learning area or discipline. Guidance relevant to all areas of the curriculum included such things as working within the key learning area[1] structure established by the Curriculum Frameworks documents (published by the Ministry of Education (Schools Division) in the mid-80s), providing curricula that made possible greater access and success to post-compulsory education, producing curricula that represented a contemporary body of knowledge and ensuring that the focus of curriculum was on what students had to do, rather than what had to be taught (an important change in focus) and key learning area-specific principles, such as, in the Arts, a balance between theory and practice.

Turning first to the principle of there being a balance between theory and practice in the new VCE. This was an important one in the development of VCE Music Craft Study Design, particularly as the two HSC (Group 1) subjects. In an interview conducted in 1996, Helen Champion, who has held a variety of positions at Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority over many years spoke of some of these principles. "There is an underlying principle around the whole thing about a balance between theory and practice and it has been understood from the beginning that this doesn't necessarily mean 50% of each but it is a balance appropriate to the body of knowledge" (Champion, 2006, p. 5). Roland Yeung also emphasised the significance of this repeatedly in our discussion, especially in how this principle (and others) were constantly presented in consultation and reference group meetings (Yeung, 2009). This principle was well established and whatever changes or considerations the discussions led to, the policy positions were not negotiable. Aside from being pedagogically sound, the VCE has stayed true to this principle to the present (despite numerous revisions since its initial development and implementation).

[1] The key learning areas identified in this document were: The Arts Framework, The Commerce Framework, The English Language Framework, The LOTE (Languages Other Than English) Framework, The Mathematics Framework, The Personal Development Framework, The Science Framework, The Social Education Framework and The Technology Studies Framework.

A new approach was taken to the focus and attendant terminology of curriculum documentation in the VCE also. The structure of the new study design was notably student-focused. Expressions such as "the student will" and "the student is required to" feature prominently in the wording of the study design indicating the extent to which the study was conceived in these terms. This focus and attendant terminology was also a significant and notable feature of the Arts Framework: P-10 document which was one of the significant curriculum revision documents that immediately preceded the development of the VCE (Champion, 2006). The opening statement in the 'Learning in the Arts' chapter (Ministry of Education, 1988, p. 13) states "learning in the arts is essentially students centered and values the differences in perception, insight, knowledge, needs and capacities of each student"

The following diagram illustrates this point also:

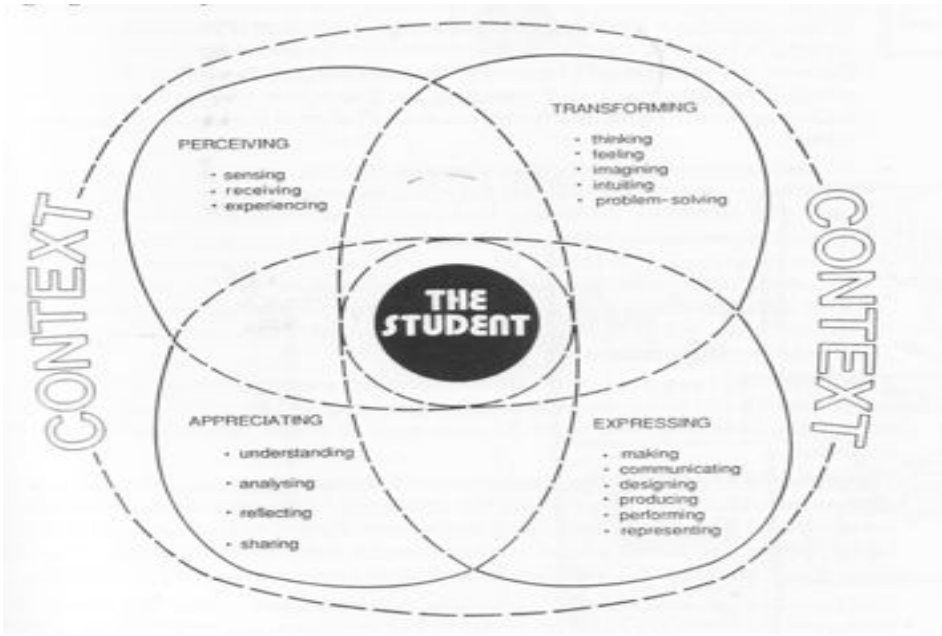


Figure 8 - The Arts Learning Model (Ministry of Education, 1988, p. 13)

One paradox of the move to a single certificate for Year 11 and 12 at this time was that the increased numbers of students going on to post-compulsory education came from more diverse backgrounds and had more diverse aspirations and post-schooling intentions. Yet, this single certificate was intended to meet all of these diverse needs. A detailed examination of the ways in which this paradox was dealt with is beyond the scope of this research, however some of the more significant measures will be examined.

A significant change ushered in by the introduction of the VCE to address the broader range of students who would be completing this credential (due to increased retention and the consolidation of curriculum offerings to a single certificate) was the change from a single grade leading to university entrance and satisfactory completion of the subject, to a separated two stage process, whereby satisfactory completion and the level of achievement in the subject were separate. Satisfactory completion of a VCE unit was to be achieved by the completion of all work requirements of the unit to a standard considered satisfactory by the classroom teacher. These work requirements were in a broader range of areas than the Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) and were school-assessed rather than externally examined. This was quite distinct from the level of achievement in the Common Assessment Tasks (CATs), some of which were internally and some externally examined. The intention and, at least initially, the practice at times was that some students (perhaps those with relatively little musical background, would complete the work requirements but not undertake the CATs. This would give the students the ability to undertake the subject (and potentially receive a satisfactory completion for that subject) without receiving a measure of achievement in the form of a grade. This was one way that the students from diverse musical backgrounds and levels of experience (now encouraged and perhaps attracted to the idea of studying music and remaining at school for longer) could be catered for in a meaningful way.

The aim of the 'success and access' policy was that students could enter the study, wherever they were in the state, with whatever resources they had and whatever tradition they were following, they would have a feeling that they could access this study – they can get access to it. And that they could achieve success, they could complete something. So this was the purpose of the two layers of completion – one was just satisfactorily completion and one where you got graded. This was an innovation for post-compulsory music education in Victoria. As Roland Yeung points out (2009, p. 10) "It was very new, and in fact some of the issues were put in the terms of 'some students will only go for satisfactorily completion and won't do the grades'. In the early stages, that was a fairly common outcome. Not common, but for some schools they took up that outcome."

Perhaps the most significant change, and one of the other ways in which these students were catered for in the new VCE study design, was in the provision of a post-compulsory music subject which did not require notation-based or what is broadly termed classical musical

training. For the first time in Victoria, students from jazz, rock and contemporary popular musical backgrounds could pursue music at senior secondary level alongside their classically trained peers. This was a very significant innovation allowing the possibility of access to, and success in a senior secondary music certificate to a large group of students who previously were unable to pursue music as part of their subject choices at this level.

The reasons for this change were founded in the previously mentioned policy of being student-centred and also on the concept that the VCE should be a contemporary body of knowledge. These two ideals will now be examined in more detail.

The VCE was a significant curriculum reform. It was not just a consolidation of the disparate curriculum offerings in the post-compulsory landscape. It sought to be a late-twentieth century curriculum relevant and useful to young Victorians who would live and work in a world that was fundamentally different from the one the previous generation had inhabited. The fact that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that had to be a part of every study design is one way the directive to ensure that the VCE represented a modern curriculum and dealt with a modern body of knowledge was addressed.

Roland Yeung was well aware of this agenda and recalls both the intent to deal contemporary musical practice and recognises that this was a radical shift from the status quo. “I was interpreting current practice and the sorts of knowledge and the sorts of skills that we used in music and this is what it needed to be - how far could we move it” (2009, p. 10).

Helen Champion also recalls that one of the requirements of the VCE curriculum was that it had “to be capable of generating the assessment tools, has to be appropriate for a wide cohort of students, so we can’t write you know a course that just suits those who want to go to tertiary course, or come from this secondary schooling context” (2006, p. 5)

One of the other approaches to addressing the need to have a unified curriculum (single certificate) and the need to be relevant and appropriate for a wide variety of students was used throughout all subjects in the VCE. The Study Design (the curriculum document to be used by all schools) was not in itself a course of study. It was a prescribed set of areas of study and work requirements and provided a common vocabulary and conceptual framework, but local school designed the course within these parameters. This allowed schools the

opportunity to tailor the course to the resources available, expertise of the staff and, in keeping with the student-focus of the VCE, the needs of the students. This meant that the wording of work requirements had to be carefully considered so as not to require or imply specific equipment or for a particular approach to be necessary to complete the work requirement. Roland Yeung points this out with respect to the technology requirement in the initial draft of the VCE Music Craft study design.

> Technology is a tool, and I know that, but people at the time were resisting the tool and the Board felt that technology was something that we had to bring schools up to date on like ICT is the focus now, well 8 years ago, ICT was the focus and at that time, a similar idea was done in the same way – everything had to have some technology in it to show that it was 20th/21st century. So the idea of putting technology in was a, how to do that, the resource implication, my school does not have that CD player, how can you? How can we do this particular work requirement? And so the answer was, this was not me, because this was the Board following through policy, the Board doesn't supply equipment, it can't specify something that all schools can't have access to, so if you read the wording for technology, you find that it is really quite open, it doesn't mention a DX7 or anything specific like that, it just mentions a particular sort of manipulation using electronics to create sound, so it was a modification, a thing to modify sound" (2009, p. 26).

The same principle was apparent in the area of creative organisation of sound. This task allowed for, but did not require improvisation to be taught. The criteria for the award of grades were written in such a way as to suit a variety of approaches.

The study design had to allow quite a bit of flexibility to deal with the variety of students, staff and the resources available at school level. "The Study Design is not a course. Schools were ... this is a nice structure isn't it? It is not a rigid course, it is not a syllabus in fact, it is a way of teaching and an idea about qualities and particular things that students should do, but the actual content is the thing that schools put in" (Yeung, 2009, p. 30)

One of the guiding principles (as defined by Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board) was that each VCE study had to represent a contemporary body of knowledge. This was reflected in the VCE Music Craft study design in a number of ways. The Solo Performance

students had to choose their program of music from a prescribed list of works that featured twentieth century music prominently. Requiring the use of technology as part of the study design was another way in which the modernity of the material was manifest. In terms of aural comprehension, the requirements were a mixture of familiar material and some new material.

The focus of this research is on the teaching of aural comprehension in Victorian secondary classrooms. The significance of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in Victorian senior music classes was vastly increased with the introduction of the VCE Music Craft study design. Aural comprehension skills were at best peripheral or otherwise completely absent from the assessment requirements of students prior to the VCE depending on the options chosen by the student.

The decision to make aural comprehension such a central part of the VCE curriculum represents a considerable change of focus for upper-secondary music curriculum, placing aural comprehension in a central position as a skill that formed a very significant part of the assessment for all music students.

This decision can be justified in a number of different ways. It is a skill that is relevant to all musicians regardless of their preferred style, instrument or musical background. It can generate a common assessment task that is relevant (at least to an extent) to all students. This same broad skill can be differentiated to suit Group and Solo musicians, thus generating different common assessment tasks for these two subjects.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the introduction and structure of the VCE Music Performance study design has been described. Significant in this description has been the common assessment tasks for both Music Performance study designs, with particular emphasis and discussion around the assessment of aural comprehension. The most important changes in the reporting of student achievement have also been examined.

The next chapter presents the survey data relevant to the teaching of aural comprehension in the VCE music classroom.

Chapter 6 - Presentation of Survey Data

Introduction

The purpose of this cross-sectional survey is to provide a snapshot of how aural comprehension is taught in Victorian VCE classrooms and to ascertain teachers' approaches, attitudes, and resources used. It provides a 'real-world' contemporary picture of how the area of aural comprehension is being approached in classrooms. This is instructive for a number of reasons. The curriculum documentation examined in this research provides only part of the picture of teaching and learning taking place in classrooms across the state. The statements in the documents may not always be reflected in the classroom setting as the manner in which various tasks are undertaken and completed will vary widely from school to school and from teacher to teacher. The interview data provide a glimpse of the intentions and motivations, the influences and aspirations and the difficulties and joys of effecting curriculum change and reform, but in the same way this will not always be reflected in classroom practice. The anonymous survey data discussed below gives another insight into how VCE music, and specifically VCE aural comprehension requirements are being met 'at the coal-face' as it were. This data provides a glimpse into the classroom where philosophy, assessment theory, aims, intentions, statements, work requirements and assessment tasks are enacted in a variety of contexts across Victoria. The value of these data is to provide a real world context for this significant curriculum reform. It is hoped that a survey of the current practice of curriculum as it is enacted in schools could identify change or a lack of such when compared to the historical data also presented in this study.

Information about the survey

A twenty-three item on-line questionnaire was distributed to a significant number of Victorian teachers in schools offering VCE Music Performance in 2008. The survey dealt with a number of factors to do with the teachers' experience, educational training, musical training, school, approach to teaching aural comprehension, and the range of resources used. The purpose of this survey was to obtain data on how aural comprehension is being taught in secondary schools across all sectors of education. The data yielded are predominantly qualitative, with a small amount of quantitative data. These data are analysed below.

The survey used was distributed through a commonly used email list through a subject association. The email list used is specifically for VCE Music teachers and is well supported in Victoria across all school sectors. Distribution through such a popular subject association mailing list was a convenient and time-efficient means of obtaining information from a large number and broad range of respondents from all school sectors when compared with a mailed questionnaire. The convenience and anonymity of this type of distribution means that it was convenient and simple for teachers to participate if they decided to do so. Clearly, teachers who decided not to participate for whatever reason would also be able to simply delete the email or just not reply. There is no sense in which teachers would feel manipulated or pressured into completing the survey. One of the negative aspects of this means of distribution is that not every VCE teacher teaching VCE Music Performance Group and/or Solo was offered the opportunity to respond as there is not a one hundred percent subscription rate to this mailing list. Another potential problem with this questionnaire is that it is an on-line tool. Some teachers may be uncomfortable completing this type of instrument either due to lack of familiarity, reservations about this type of process, privacy concerns or other considerations. The data shows that there was a quite large number of responses from a variety of geographical locations and school sectors, such that the picture that emerges from the data is quite representative of VCE teachers throughout the state. The simplicity of participating by simply clicking a web-link in the teachers' email made teacher involvement easy. The workload of VCE teachers is such that this kind of interaction is likely to produce a higher response rate than a posted survey, which could easily be overlooked under the marking and preparation pressure of VCE. Especially considering that the survey was to be completed in October, an especially busy time in the year for VCE teachers.

Information about the respondents

A total of ninety-two responses to the survey instrument were received. This represents a response rate of approximately 30% of the total number of teachers providing one or both of the VCE Music Performance subjects under discussion.

The initial questions asked about the educational background of the teachers. The length of time since respondents completed pre-service training was varied, ranging from two to forty years. The average length of time was eighteen years. This average clearly shows that many VCE Music classes are currently being taught by teachers with considerable teaching

experience. Whilst beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to compare this to other subjects. It would be interesting to note if a similarly experienced teacher cohort would be found teaching other VCE studies. Significantly, teachers who completed their under-graduate music education qualifications eighteen or more years ago, did so before the VCE Music Craft Study Design (with its significantly increased emphasis on aural comprehension skills) was a consideration of the tertiary providers. Given that the programs offered at various tertiary institutions may have changed over the years, the data represents significant breadth of tertiary programs, particularly when viewed together with the large number of institutions represented in the data (see below).

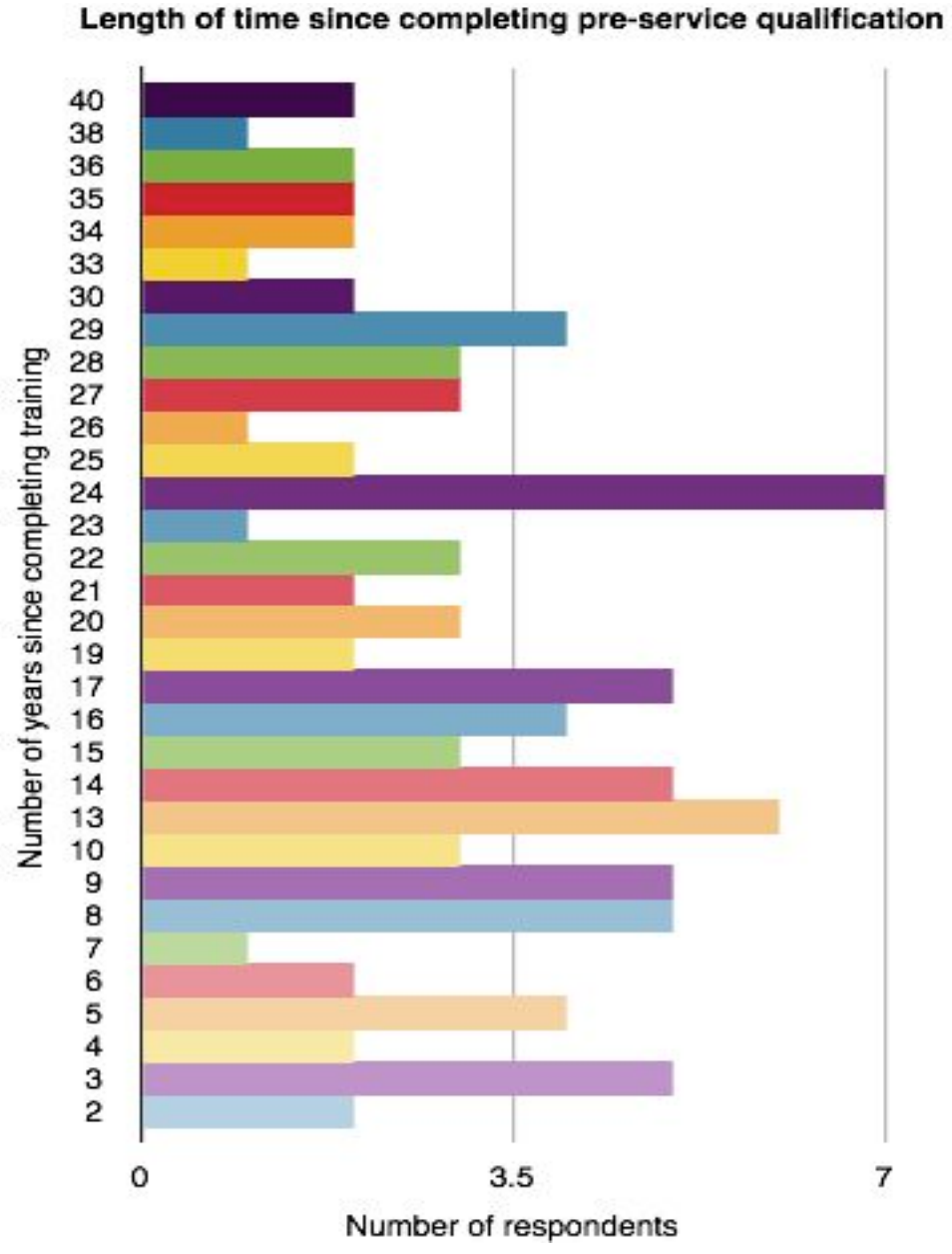


Figure 9 - Length of time since completing pre-service qualification

The vast majority of the respondents completed their pre-service training at the University of Melbourne (either the Conservatorium or Melbourne State Teachers' College - also known by various other names, such as The Institute of Education or the Victorian College of the Arts, part of the faculty of music for some time). Of the ninety-one responses to this question, fifty-four indicated that The University of Melbourne was the institution that delivered their pre-service education. This represents nearly sixty percent of respondents. The next most frequently named institution was Monash University with nine respondents indicating this (nearly ten percent). Other institutions identified were both Australian and international. The Australian institutions were the New South Wales Conservatorium, Deakin University (Victoria), Australian Catholic University, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (Victoria), University of Adelaide (South Australia), Queensland Conservatorium of Music, University of Western Australia, University of New England (New South Wales), Latrobe University (Victoria), Victoria University of Technology, and Charles Sturt University (Northern Territory). The international institutions identified were the Music Academy of Budapest (Hungary), the University of London (England), and the University of Edinburgh (Scotland). With nearly sixty percent of respondents coming from one institution, the University of Melbourne, it is important to consider that over the last twenty years or so in the tertiary sector there has been considerable change, particularly with institutions merging under some of the Federal Government reforms to higher education. During this time of change some institutions, notably in the context of these data Melbourne State Teachers' College and the Victorian College of the Arts were at times considered part of Melbourne University whilst offering quite different teacher education programs to other parts of the university. Therefore the teachers from these institutions would in many cases have quite different experiences despite them being nominally part of the same institution. The main significance of this information is that responses about pre-service education represent quite a broad perspective of institutions. The range of institutions and the range of dates when pre-service training was undertaken mean that this data provides a varied insight into tertiary education in this area.

As one would expect with the length of time since pre-service qualification data, the teaching experience of respondents is similarly varied, as shown in the following graph. The average teaching experience for the respondents was 16 years. Once again, the data produced is representative of teachers with a broad range of teaching experience.

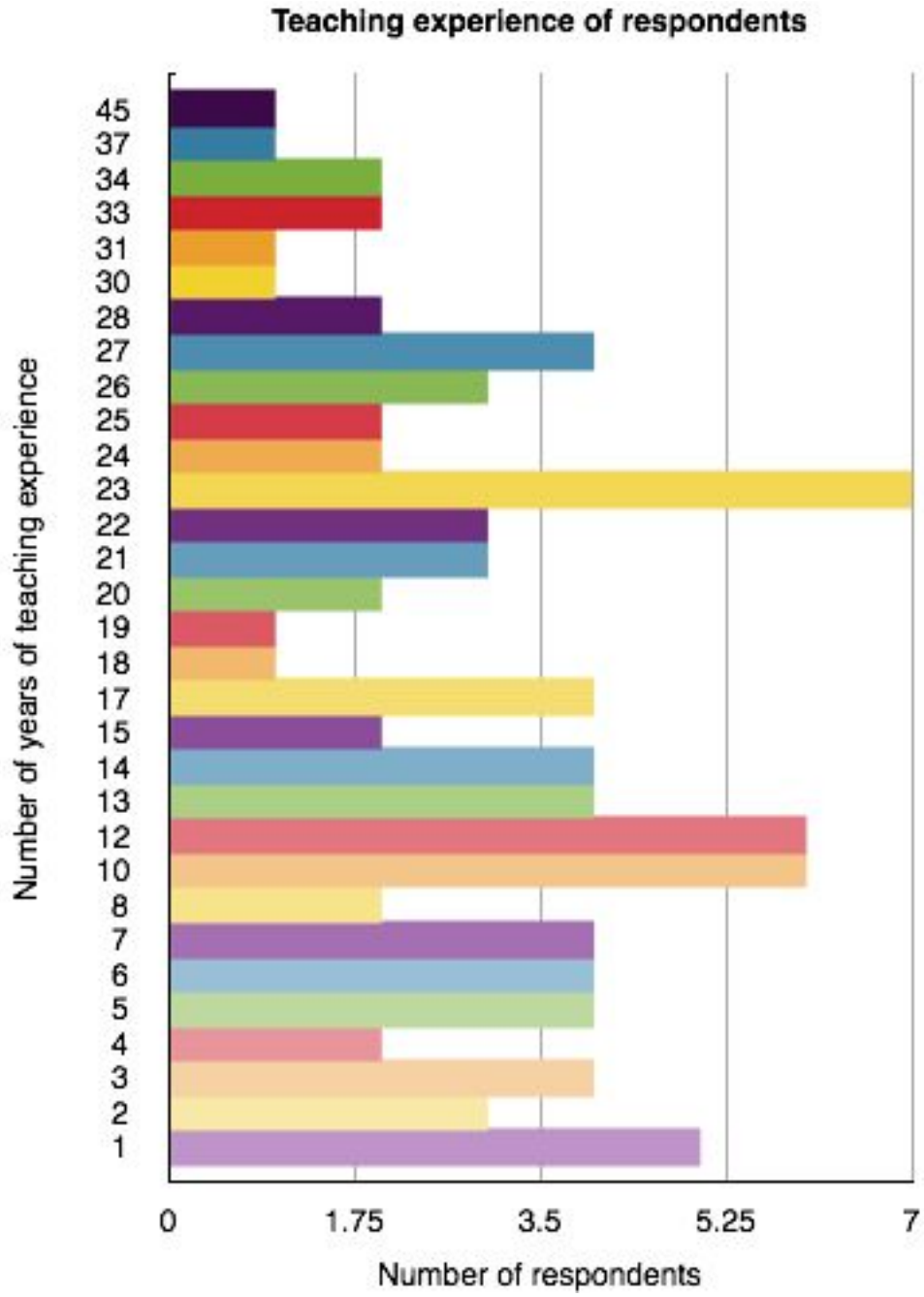


Figure 10 - Teaching experience of respondents

Equally relevant as the years of teaching experience of those completing the survey is the teachers' experience teaching VCE Music. The following graph displays this information. As the survey was completed in 2008, sixteen years is the maximum experience as this corresponds to teaching the VCE since its inception. The average experience teaching VCE Music is eight years. Interestingly, the mode of this data (with seventeen respondents) is sixteen years experience teaching VCE Music. This means that nearly nineteen percent of respondents have been teaching VCE Music since its inception.

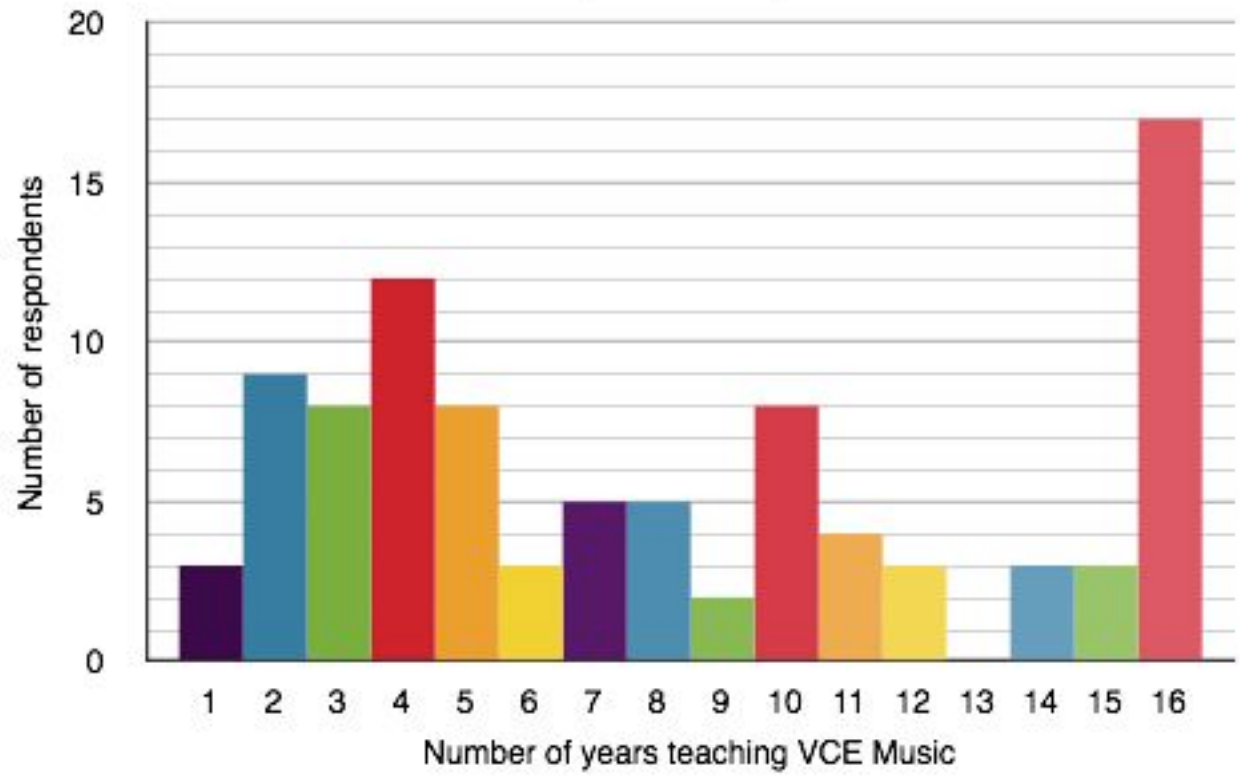


Figure 11 - Number of years respondents have taught VCE Music

The teaching experience and educational training of respondents undoubtedly has a strong impact on their teaching practice. In the case of music teachers another major factor effecting the way that they teach music is their own musical background. Issues such as the significance of musical memory, improvisation and the importance of aural comprehension skills in these musical styles may have a bearing on the teachers' approach to aural comprehension instruction. If, on the other hand their musical training emphasised musical notation to a large extent, the teachers' approach to the teaching of aural comprehension may focus on theory and written material. One survey item asked respondents to nominate the musical style or styles they felt they had the greatest expertise in. Over eighty-two percent of teachers surveyed indicated expertise in classical music. More than double the percentage of any other style. Roughly similar percentages of teachers indicated expertise in rock, pop and/or jazz. This indication of what one might call specialities was completely self-rated by the teacher concerned. It was possible (and quite common amongst respondents) to indicate more than one area of expertise.

Responses to the survey came from teachers from Government, Independent and Catholic schools. These three sectors represent all schools in the state. Government school receive virtually all of their funding from the state government (although the federal government contributes to some large projects). Independent and Catholic schools are funded by a mixture of state and federal government funds as well as fees paid by parents. These data show that the subject association mailing list used to contact potential participants is subscribed to by teachers from all school sectors. This is important in terms of the validity of the data as there may be differences in resourcing, time allocation and other factors relevant to teaching and learning present in schools from different sectors. Having representation from all three school sectors increases the external validity of the results (Miles, 2006). The percentages of school sectors represented in the data were as follows.

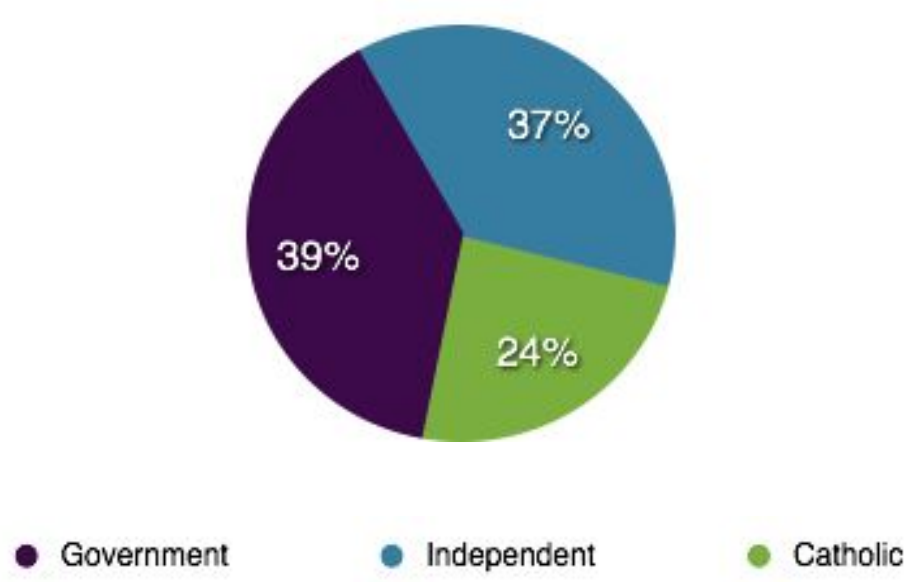


Figure 12 - School sectors of respondents' schools

As the above chart shows, the data has good representation from all three school sectors (State, Independent and Catholic). In comparison to the proportion of schools in each sector offering VCE Music (shown below), you can see that the data has a higher proportion of Independent and Catholic school sector respondents and a correspondingly lower proportion of respondents from government schools. So, although each school sector is well represented in the data set, the results may be effected by the relatively high numbers of Independent

schools and, to a lesser extent, Catholic school contribution to the data and the relatively low State Government representation.

The percentages of Government, Independent and Catholic schools offering VCE Music (2009 figures) is shown below:

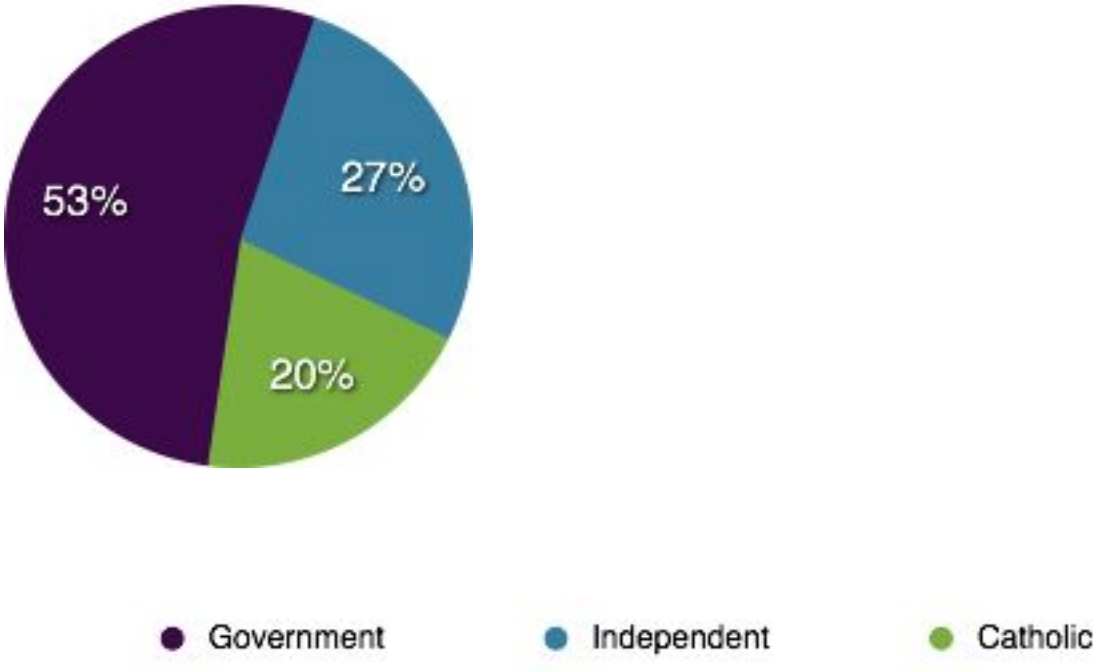


Figure 13: Distribution of schools from various school sectors offering VCE Music (2009 data)

The representation of metropolitan and regional schools in the data (as chosen by the respondents) was as follows.

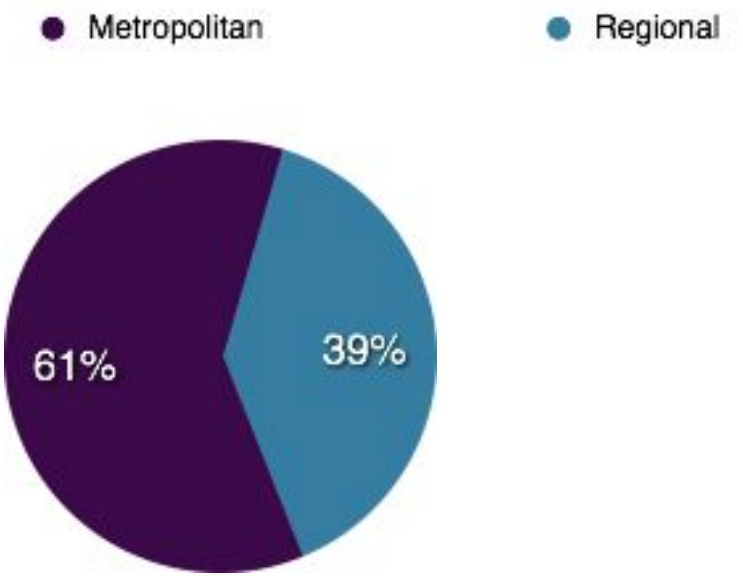


Figure 14 - Distribution of respondents' schools by region

The distribution of metropolitan and regional schools offering VCE Music (2009 data) was:

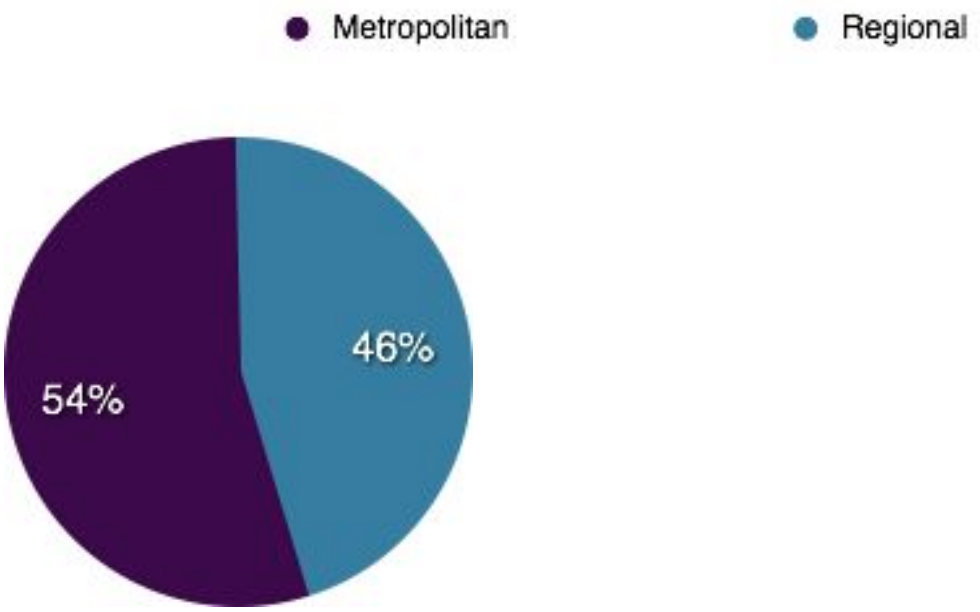


Figure 15: Distribution of schools offering VCE Music by region

It is clear from the two figures above that proportionally more teachers from metropolitan schools responded to the survey instrument compared with those from regional schools. This

could reflect the pattern of the mailing list subscription, or could be caused by some other factors, however, responses were received from significant numbers of both metropolitan and regional teachers.

The respondents teach all the VCE Music Performance units available in the following proportions (remembering that it is possible to teach any or all units):

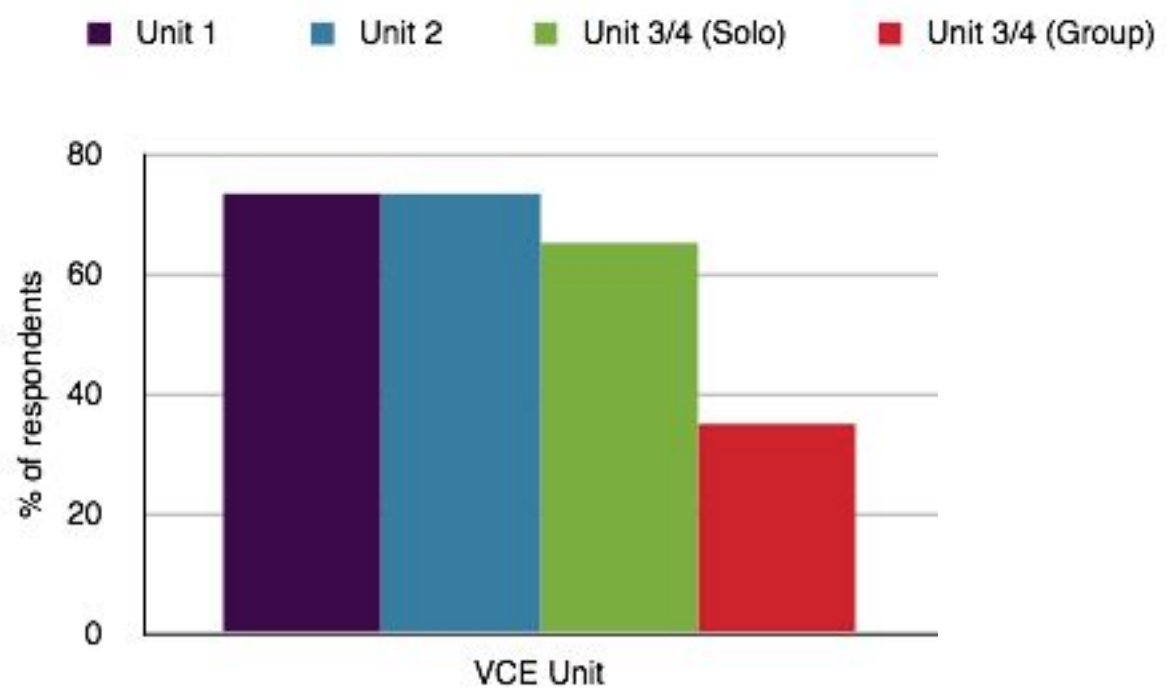


Figure 16: Number of respondents teaching each VCE Music Performance Unit

The higher proportion of respondents teaching Unit 3/4 (Solo) compared with Unit 3/4 (Group) is reflective of the higher proportion of schools offering Solo compared with Group.

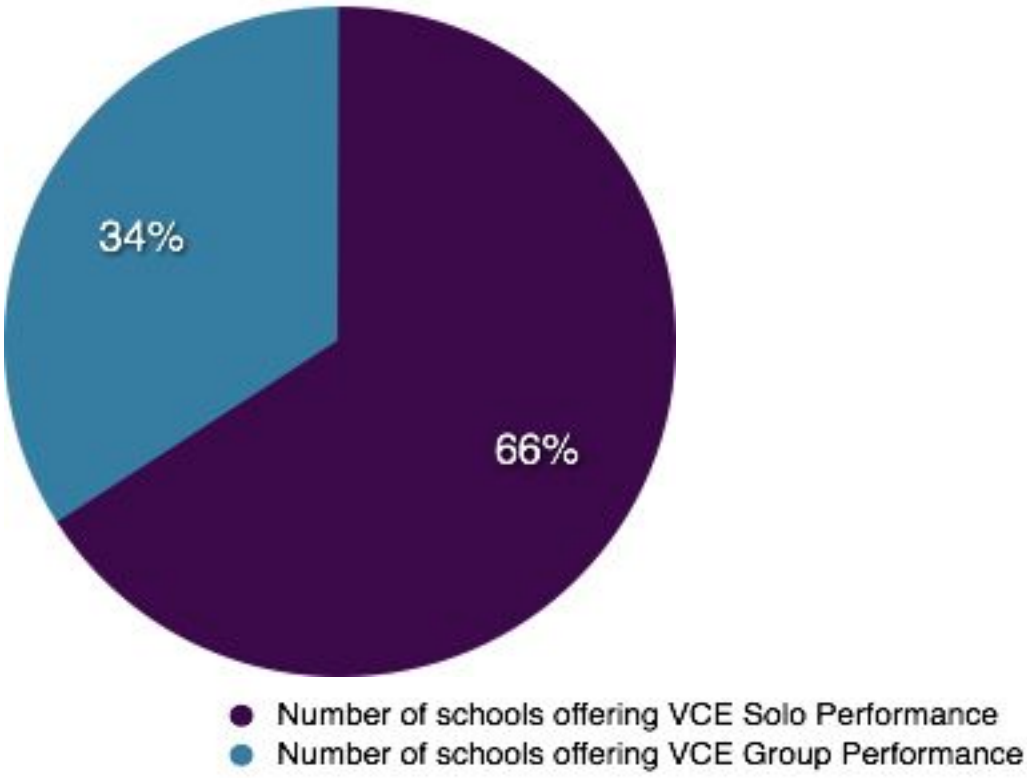


Figure 17: Proportion of schools offering VCE Music Performance (Solo) and (Group)

Information about the teaching of aural comprehension

Respondents were asked various questions about their teaching practice with respect to the inclusion of aural comprehension instruction and the resources they employed in their teaching.

There was a considerable variation in the proportion of class time devoted specifically to the development of aural comprehension skills present in the data. This chart shows this diversity.

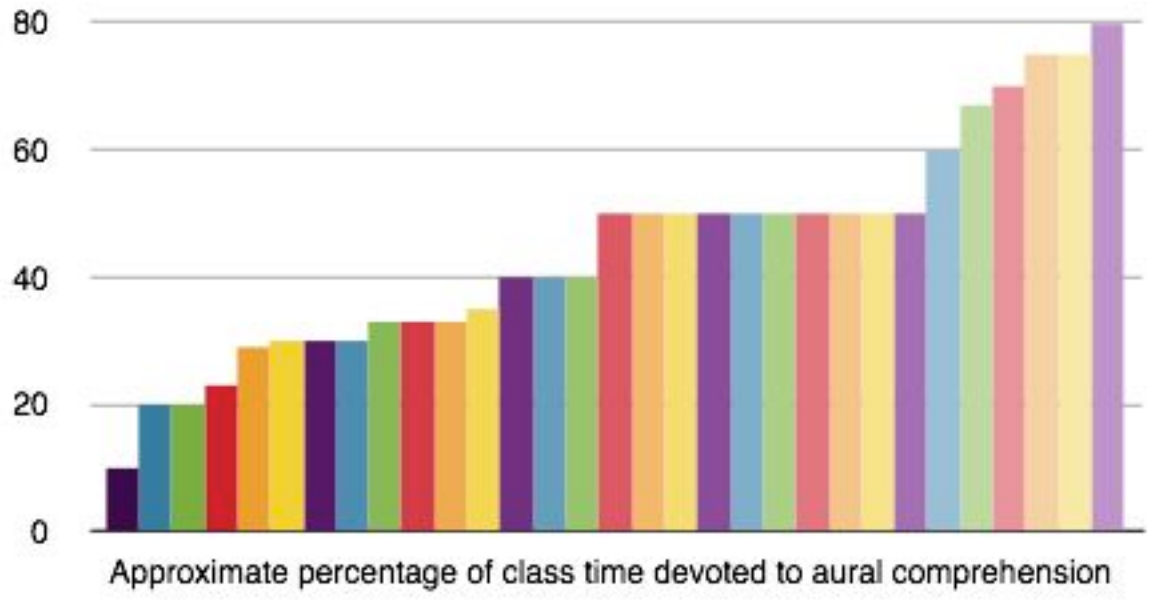


Figure 18: Approximate percentage of class time devoted to aural comprehension

As the graph above shows, one respondent estimates that only 10% of class time is used for aural comprehension. The highest percentage recorded was 80%. The average percentage of all respondents was 44%. Importantly, of the sixty-nine respondents who answered this question, more than half gave responses that could not be expressed as a percentage or proportion of class time. The data above is therefore based on thirty-one responses. The fact that thirty-eight responses were unable to yield the data requested is regrettable. The calculation of this percentage was dependent on both an estimate of the classroom time used to teach aural comprehension skills and the total amount of time devoted to the subject. In some cases the amount of class time available was expressed as a number of classes with no indication given of the lengths of these classes. According to the study design (Miles, 2006) each unit in VCE Music Performance involves fifty hours of scheduled classroom time. If a school provides this amount of classroom time, the average amount of time devoted to aural comprehension development would be twenty-two hours of instruction per unit.

In the initial design of the six units of Music Performance (Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3-Group, Unit 4-Group, Unit 3-Solo and Unit 4-Solo) there was an awareness that in some cases teachers would be offering multiple units simultaneously in the same classroom and this awareness

was catered for through the construction of the areas of study and work requirements of each unit.

Teachers were asked about the specific learning activities that they used to teach aural comprehension skills in the classroom and to prepare students for the aural and written examination. A large range of activities was used to cover the various aspects of aural comprehension as discussed in Chapter 5.

Of the ninety-two responses to the survey instrument received, sixty-eight responded to the item dealing with particular classroom activities used to teach aural comprehension - 74% of the respondents. The reason around a quarter of respondents did not answer this question is unclear. However, as this item required somewhat more time to answer, perhaps some respondents were reluctant to commit the time to the answer.

One of the most striking results to emerge was that no fewer than forty-eight (over 70%) specifically mentioned singing. This was clearly the single most used activity employed in the classroom to help students to develop their aural comprehension skills. Some respondents also gave more information about specifically what types of singing activities were used. Activities such as singing canons, rounds and part-singing songs, singing intervals and chord progressions (either in groups or arpeggiating each chord), sight-singing, singing in sol-fa and using songs as a mnemonic device to assist in the recognition of intervals, were all included in the data.

Many teachers indicated that they made use of practice questions as a means of preparation. This type of activity involves material similar to the exam in terms of format and parameters, but not specifically questions from formal practice exams or past exams. These activities would often be devised by the teacher, but may include exam like material from other resources. Forty-two respondents made use of this type of material (62%).

Twenty-nine respondents (43%) made use of past exam questions in the classroom. This figure is quite low given that many schools have a formal ‘practice exam’ program prior to the VCAA exams. The exact wording of the question was “what are some of the classroom activities you use to help your students develop aural comprehension skills?” Given that the question focuses on classroom activities it is quite likely that the low percentage of

respondents using past exam questions can be accounted for by teachers indicating only whether they use past exam questions in their regular classrooms, not as part of the students' preparation immediately prior to exams.

Twenty-two teachers (32%) made use of the students' musical instruments in developing skills in aural comprehension. Specifically, teachers indicated the use of instruments to "work out rhythms/melodies/chords". This is one way in which the development of aural comprehension skills can be made concrete and arguably more relevant to the students' musical experience and broader development.

Given the long history of using computer technology to teach or train aural comprehension skills, it was not surprising to note that forty of the respondents who answered this question (just less than 60%) indicated that they used software. A further five teachers made reference to various other web-based resources such as podcasts and on-line drill and practice sites.

The use of technology has a relatively long history in music education. As Stevens (1995, p. 78) points out "the evolution of music as an art form has been shaped to a very large extent by the contributions that technology has made to the development not only of musical instruments and genres (electronic/digital music, for example) but also to the recording of its products".

Composers such as Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) and Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) and many others have made use of modern recording technologies in the creative process (including composition and performance) and this continues to the present day with composers and singer/songwriters in all forms of music making use of technology in the composition process and/or in the performance of music.

The first generation of music education software was developed during the 1960s and early-1970s to run on mainframe computers. This software was principally focused on the teaching of aural comprehension, music theory and conventional music notation. This software was only available to students who had access to such computers - for the most part, these were students of tertiary institutions as these organisations were amongst the only ones to have such computers other than big business.

The introduction of personal computers in the 1980s made possible the access to music education software, which continues to this day.

Repetitive tasks such as constantly reinforcing and practicing particular skills are ideally suited to computer-aided instruction. “Many of the basic elements of musical literacy, such as remembering key signatures, the order of sharps and flats in key signatures, names of notes in various clefs, note durations, and many others, lend themselves to computer-aided instruction (of the ‘drill and practise’ variety) as the rote learning style is well suited to the task” (Jacob, 1999, pp. 9-10).

The use of rhythm names was not wide-spread with only 20 of the teachers who responded to that item on the survey indicating that they made use of this tool (less than 30%). A total of 27 respondents (nearly 40%) made use of tonic sol-fa when teaching pitch-based activities (such as interval recognition, chord recognition, chord progression dictation, melodic dictation, and the like). These figures are not surprising when considered together with the questions regarding use of resources (to be addressed later) as the most widely used resource is founded on Kodály principles including the use of rhythm names and tonic sol-fa and this type of resource is used by a similar proportion of respondents.

Rhythm reading is a task not easily classified as coming from a particular pedagogical background or philosophy. This activity was employed by 21 teachers (just over 20%), and represents one of several ways of addressing rhythm including dictation and recognition activities.

Respondents were afforded the opportunity to list other activities and strategies used in the classroom to assist students with the development of aural comprehension skills and a wide range were included in responses. A total of 21 respondents specifically mentioned using ‘Deb Smith resources’ as well as some others referring to such things as ‘aural book and CD’ that may or may not be made by Deborah Smith. In short, the use of the ‘Musicianship and Aural Training’ and other associated resources appears to be adopted by over 30% of teachers responding to the survey - the single most commonly listed resource. These resources are strongly based on Kodály music education principles and this clear foundation has probably contributed to the high incidence of rhythm names and tonic sol-fa amongst VCE teachers.

As mentioned previously, singing was widely used by teachers responding to this survey instrument. Some further information was provided by some respondents in terms of particular singing activities. Singing chords, scales and progressions (either individually by arpeggiating chords, or in group singing) was mentioned by a small number of teachers. Part-singing, singing rounds and canons and singing other 'simple' melodies were also mentioned by some respondents. Mention was also made of the use of singing songs as a link to particular intervals was also used by teachers. Information on what particular singing activities other teachers' employed was not available.

Other resources used were Ricci Adams' ear training site, internet aural programs (sites), theory exercises (including the popular Australian Music Examination Board theory examination preparation texts by Dulcie Holland), eLearning resources (not specified), auralonline.com, musictheory.net, 'Big Ears' aural book and CD. In summary, there are a large number of resources and strategies used in the classroom with

Respondents were also asked about the reasons for using particular activities within the classroom, a variety of responses were given.

Reason given	Number of responses
Own experience	26
Student background	8
Training/reading/research	5
Time efficiency	7
Effectiveness	6
Availability of resources	5
Lack of resources (forced choice)	2
Diagnosis of student needs	1
Assessment requirements	1
Student engagement	1
Link with co-curricular program	1

Figure 19: Pedagogical decision-making pertaining to aural comprehension

As the table above clearly shows, the strongest reason given for using particular learning activities to teach aural comprehension skills was the teachers' own experience.

As previously mentioned, this data is based on responses from teachers trained over a considerable period of time and at a large number of institutions. Respondents were asked about the extent to which their pre-service training prepared them for teaching aural comprehension skills in the classroom. The chart below shows their responses.

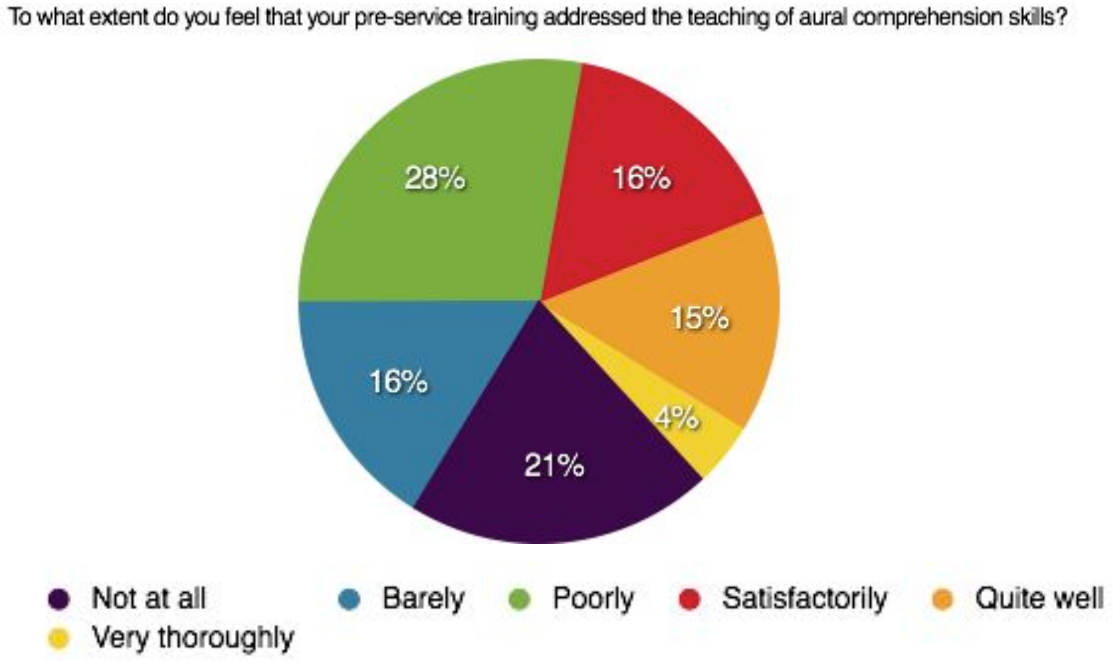


Figure 20: The extent to which pre-service teacher training addressed the teaching of aural comprehension skills

It can be observed from the above chart, a large proportion of respondents found their pre-service training insufficient as preparation for teaching aural comprehension skills. Approximately 37% stated that their pre-service training prepared them for the teaching of aural comprehension 'not at all' or 'barely'. Only approximately 19% stated that their pre-service training prepared them 'quite well' or 'very thoroughly' to address the teaching of aural comprehension skills. Looking at the answers at the extremes of the range of multiple choice responses available shows that only four percent of respondents considered their pre-service training 'very thorough', compared with twenty-one percent who considered their pre-service training did not prepare them for this area of their work 'at all'.

Resources

The survey also asked teachers about what resources they used in the teaching of aural comprehension. There were a large number of resources named and referred to in the data. Of 66 responses, 44 mention Deborah Smith Musicianship and Aural Training specifically - (67%). Several other references to 'aural comprehension books' may include this resource also. Most responses indicate that a variety of resources are used. A total of 17 of 66 (26%) responses specifically mention sight-reading or sight-singing as a tool to prepare students for aural comprehension tasks. Significantly, 29 of 66 (44%) of respondents specifically mention use of Auralia software. This software (now part of the Sibelius education suite) has been available for a long time and is continually being developed. Online resources - musictheory.net and auralonline.com - are specifically mentioned by a few respondents (as well as several general references to online tools). AMEB resources are used by a considerable number of respondents (11 of 66 - 17%). Ten responses (of 66) refer to using resources devised and produced by the teacher.

The reasons given for using particular resources were many and varied but several characteristics of resources used emerged from the data. Foremost amongst the reasons given for certain resources being used was ease of use. A total of 18 (of 65) respondents directly referred to ease of use as being one of the primary factors in choosing to use certain resources. This proportion (nearly 28%) was clearly the most important factor mentioned in responses to this survey. The effectiveness of the resources was the next most frequently mentioned factor in choosing resources for classroom use (12 respondents listed this characteristics, approximately 18%). It may be surprising that only this small proportion listed effectiveness as being a factor in deciding which resources to use in the VCE classroom. One possible reason this may be, is that some teachers responding may have taken this as a 'given' when listing reasons. In other words, they may have felt that it did not need to be said that the resources needed to be effective - if they were not effective, naturally they would not use them regardless of any other attributes they may possess. Nearly the same number of teachers (11 of 65, 17%) stated that the extent to which the resources were tailored to suit the VCE requirements was a factor in them making use of resources. This is in many ways not surprising and can indeed be linked to the notion of 'ease of use' mentioned previously. Clearly one of the characteristics of a resource that is easy to use is that it features

activities well suited to the examination, therefore removing the need for teachers to adjudge whether certain activities are suitable, helpful and relevant to the students learning needs.

Other factors mentioned included support for underlying pedagogical approach, recommendation, availability, cost effectiveness, thoroughness and the practical nature of some resources. Some teachers also referred to using a variety of resources in the teaching of aural comprehension skills in their classes.

Another of the key reasons given, and probably one of the main reasons the Deborah Smith 'Musicianship and Aural Training for the Secondary Student' is used so widely, is the importance of a strong program of professional development to support a resource's use.

Teachers were also asked to discuss where they saw a need for further resources in the area of aural comprehension. A number of themes emerged from these data. The fact that many students have little or no aural or music theory background prior to VCE resulted in a call for resources that 'assumed nothing' - or, to put it another way - 'started from scratch'. Although the widely used Deborah Smith resources, mentioned above do start from quite rudimentary material, they do assume some knowledge of music theory and conventional notation which is a significant barrier to students without good skills in this area. Of course the problem confronted by students without a solid background in Western musical notation are not simply a question of appropriate resources - these student will find the examination material very difficult with or without appropriate resources. The lack of any pre-requisite level of aural and theory also means that teachers face the situation of students with all sorts of levels of notational and theoretical expertise being in the same classroom.

Of course, all teachers face classes with students who have different levels of understanding. However, in a subject like mathematics, the experience of primary school and middle school in the discipline of maths is much more uniform than the primary and middle school music experience. A number of researchers (notably Stevens and Lierse) have investigated the extent to which classroom music programs are provided throughout Victoria and Australia. In his significant national report on trends in the provision of music education in schools, Stevens (1995, p. 78) estimates that "a state-wide average of 25% for the number of schools offering a sequential classroom music program for years 7 to 12". Lierse (1999) and others similarly have found that the provision of school music education in primary schools and

secondary school in all sectors and regions is inconsistent varying from virtually no music to high calibre and comprehensive school music programs in the classroom and in the co-curricular realm.

Another component of students musical instruction is also frequently provided in instrumental tuition be it through one-to-one or small group lessons. The extent to which instrumental tuition contributes to students' understanding of music notation, theory and aural skills, whilst certainly formative for many students undertaking VCE music, is beyond the scope of this research. Suffice to say that students' background in music theory, notation and aural comprehension through instrumental tuition would also vary enormously. Some instrumental teachers incorporate music theory and aural comprehension skills systematically into instrumental lessons, but others would not do so at all.

Teachers identified other resource needs in the area of aural comprehension, theory and notation:

- Books (and/or CDs) suited to musicians from a jazz background
- Non-VCAA practice exams (ie practice exams that are not VCAA exams from previous years)
- Resources employing non- Kodály approaches
- Rural/regional student workshops covering aural material
- Online/computer software resources
- an integrated resources that does not treat melody, harmony and rhythm as separate chapters (ie unlike the Deborah Smith texts)
- Resources that take in to account students' instrument (ie targeted to drummers, or guitarists, etc)

The survey data presented above provides a snapshot of how teachers throughout Victoria are undertaking the task of improving students' aural comprehension skills and understanding of music theory and notation. Specifically, the data gives some insight into how teachers are preparing students for the aural and written examination that has been a part of the revised VCE music curriculum since its inception. The specific requirements have changed from revision to revision and from exam to exam but some of the features that have been consistently examined are:

- Some form of melodic dictation activity (either with a given starting note, meter or time signature, length and key signature or with other scaffolding such as provided rhythm or other ensemble parts playing simultaneously)
- Some for of rhythmic dictation or recognition activity (in an ensemble context or in isolation as part of a melody line or played on a drum)
- Some form of harmonic recognition or dictation task (selecting the correct progression from a list, identifying the progression within certain parameters - such as key and allowable chords, dictation involving root position chords only, or inversions, progressions involving non-Western, non-triadic harmony)
- Some form of listening or analysis task

Requiring this level of aural comprehension skills (and the attendant familiarity with certain music theory concepts and conventions and familiarity with elements of Western musical notation) from VCE students represented a seismic shift in the importance given to these related areas of music curriculum. Compared with the token level of aural comprehension skills required from all previous post-compulsory credentials in Victoria teachers along with their students were faced with a great challenge in undertaking this. The resources, classroom time and teacher preparation devoted to this has undoubtedly impacted on the level of aural skills students completing VCE music possess and therefore their general musical ability.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the survey data relevant to the teaching of aural comprehension in the VCE classroom has been presented. This data, along with the other data presented and the findings and contentions of this research will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 - Discussion

Introduction

This research is principally concerned with the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the political and educational context of this change as well as the role of aural comprehension in this new music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced. As a detailed example of this curriculum change, the introduction of the VCE Music Craft/Performance study design including the aural comprehension requirements and the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the music classroom are also examined. In order to examine these matters, a multifaceted research approach has been taken, utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study. This chapter will discuss some of the major issues arising from the data.

Methodology

This research has used a variety of data types and analysis techniques to examine the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education and, more specifically, the music performance curriculum. This curriculum reform has been explored by contrasting the dominant credential offered prior to the VCE (the Higher School Certificate – Group 1) with a special emphasis on one of the largest changes this brought about, a vastly increased emphasis on aural comprehension skills. Principally, these research areas have been explored through historical documents and interviews with a survey of VCE music teachers providing additional information.

There are a number of advantages to using a variety of data sources. Each type of data brings a different perspective to the issues being explored. These rich perspectives cannot be achieved using, for example, only survey data or only interviews. It is important in research that draws on a variety of research traditions to ensure that the research framework is clear. In the case of this research, the multiple data sources have been used to examine different aspects of the research issues. Namely, the use of historical document and interviews to understand the imperatives for curriculum change and the process of effecting that change

and the use of a survey instrument to gain a broad understanding of the ways in which a range of music educators approach the complex and imperfectly understood process of acquiring aural comprehension and listening skills. The overall purpose of this research is descriptive. A description of the context and process of curriculum reform at a particular period of social and political history with a particular political agenda being served has been produced. As an example of the out-working of this curriculum reform, an analysis of the changes wrought on music curricula in Victoria and a contemporary snapshot of how one of the most significant changes in that curriculum, namely, the elevation of aural comprehension skills to a position of prominence in the curriculum, is being addressed in the classroom twenty years after the curriculum was first introduced.

The use of a broad-based survey combined with interviews to form a deeper understanding of a research area is similar to the methodology used by Bartle (1968) in his (comprehensive) survey 'Music in Australian Schools'. This work obviously looked at a broader sample of schools than this research, but his methodological approach involved a large-scale survey of Australian schools followed by visits and interviews of select schools. Another similarity between Bartle's research and this research is that the intent of both was descriptive.

Survey data findings – activities and resources

Part of the data gathered for this research came from a survey of VCE music teachers. A number of issues arose from these surveys. The details of these survey data were presented in the previous chapter. However, closer analysis of certain parts of the survey responses will elucidate some of the researcher's contentions. Specifically, information around the activities teachers used when teaching aural comprehensions skills and the methodological perspectives that informed their decisions to use these activities in the light of the theories of listening discussed in Chapter 2 will be examined.

Teachers were asked about the specific learning activities that they used to teach aural comprehension skills in the classroom and to prepare students for the aural and written examination. Many specific learning activities were recorded as being used to address the requirements of these examinations. The requirements of the examinations were outlined in Chapter 5.

The first point to make from the data on learning activities is that only 74% of the respondents answered these questions. The reason why a quarter of respondents did not answer this question is unclear, however, possibly the most likely answer is a lack of time given the many pressures on teachers, particularly those preparing students for VCE examinations. Another possible reason for not answering these questions is that teachers may have felt self-conscious about the narrow approach to the task of teaching this area of study upon reflection. It is possible, as a teacher, when faced with teaching students a particular skill that will be examined in an examination to become almost exclusively focused on precisely how those skills will be assessed, rather than to think more broadly about the area of study and how to develop genuine and broadly-based skills in that area. Students are prone to do the same. Most teachers have heard students querying whether certain material will be on the exam, the implication being that if it is not, it is not worth learning! It is my contention that this highly pragmatic way of approaching teaching and learning is commonplace in VCE music classrooms[1] Potentially exacerbating this, is the fact that over one quarter of the teachers who teach both VCE Music Performance (Group) and (Solo) do so in the same room. Given the challenges of teaching two separate study designs with different requirements, school-assessed coursework and criteria, staff could be forgiven for taking a pragmatic approach to teaching aural comprehension skills 'to' the exam, rather than more holistically.

In a related question about activities and resources used, many teachers indicated that they made use of practice questions as a means of preparation. This type of activity involves material similar to the exam in terms of format and parameters, but not specifically questions from formal practice exams or past exams. These activities would often be devised by the teacher, but may include exam like material from other resources. 42 respondents made use of this type of material (62%).

Forty-three percent (29 respondents) made use of past exam questions in the classroom. This figure is quite low given that many schools have a formal 'practice exam' program prior to the VCAA exams. The exact wording of the question was "what are some of the classroom

[1] Almost certainly this type of practice is commonplace in many VCE classrooms, but this research focuses on the teaching of VCE Music Performance as an example of a study design within the VCE and therefore will not explore this question further.

activities you use to help your students develop aural comprehension skills?" Given that the question focuses on classroom activities it is quite likely that the low percentage of respondents using past exam questions can be accounted for by teachers indicating only whether they use past exam questions in their regular classrooms, not as part of the students' preparation immediately prior to exams. Given the aforesaid prevalence of formal practice exams in many schools, it is highly likely that most teachers make use of past exam questions at some point of the year, especially in Term 4 as the end-of-year examination period draws near.

The use of 'exam-type' material raises a considerable issue for the teaching of aural skills. An over-reliance on using past-exam and exam-like questions can lead to students having a narrow skill-base, only really useful for performing on the specific examination they are facing, but not developing in students genuine, broadly based and real-life skills in the aural comprehension of music that should be our goal. This pedagogical decision has real learning consequences. Of course this doesn't just apply to the music classroom, or indeed to Victorian classrooms exclusively. One tertiary music provider states "their institution ... can identify the Victorian students because they do noticeably well with those questions on our written (aural, pre-commencement) examination that are similar to the VCE Aural exam" (Miles, 2006, p 319). We must bear in mind that the goals of the VCE were deliberately broader than purely tertiary entrance (as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) so whether or not they are serving the purposes of tertiary providers is only part of the story. This is to some extent also a symptom of the prescriptive nature of the examination itself. Although one of the goals of assessment in the VCE was for it to be "more authentic and less prescriptive than their HSC (especially Group 1) predecessors" (Miles, 2006, p. 321). Miles goes on to state:

> However, it appears that a number of VCE study designs established examination guidelines and formats that were more prescriptive and less authentic than the guidelines, methods and styles that they replaced. Many explanations for this may be proffered. One such explanation regarding the *Music Performance – Solo* study design is that aural comprehension was not an examinable component of any prior Victorian senior- secondary music subject. Therefore, music teachers faced with the prospect of instructing aural comprehension for the first time, and themselves commonly lacking in much (or any) formal training in the discipline, were perhaps re-assured or somehow mollified by comparatively prescriptive examination guidelines and formats.

This reasoning has some credibility when VCE Music Performance and the attendant aural comprehension skills were new, but that is now around twenty years ago, so it can no longer be argued that it is a new phenomenon. Many teachers teaching the VCE have now been through the VCE as students and have therefore had some aural comprehension instruction. Those teachers whose school experience is prior to the VCE have now had a considerable period of time to become familiar with the requirements and work on their own aural deficiencies for this to no longer be an issue.

It is perhaps unsurprising, but still worthy of note, that over 70% of respondents specifically mentioned singing as an activity they undertook with their students. This was clearly the single most common activity used in the classroom to help students to develop their aural comprehension skills. Some respondents also gave more information about specifically what types of singing activities were used. Activities such as singing canons, rounds and part-singing songs, singing intervals and chord progressions (either in groups or arpeggiating each chord), sight-singing, singing in tonic sol-fa and using songs to assist in recognition of intervals, were all included in the data. The use of singing in music education is likely as old as music education itself. In terms of formal music training in schools in the earliest times in Australia, music education was essentially synonymous with singing. "Music was introduced to Australian schools in the infant colonies of New South Wales and Victoria during the early 1850s. In Victoria, both the National and Denominational School Boards appointed itinerant singing masters initially to Melbourne and then to Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong" (Stevens, 2005, p. 254). These singing masters were following in the tradition of the English system of John Curwen and, before him, Sarah Glover in using teaching singing using a tonic sol-fa method, the roots of which go back to Guido d'Arezzo (as mentioned in Chapter 1). The Kodály Method and Orff Schulwerk approach to music education both employ singing as an essential and foundational element of students' exposure to music and as a key way to teach musical concepts. In short, it is a long-held tenant of music education that the teaching of aural comprehension is most effectively achieved through the means of singing. Despite this long history, the use of singing by so many VCE music teachers may also be due, in part, to the popularity of the series of texts produced by Deborah Smith. Founded firmly in the Kodály Methodology, these thorough and well-sequenced texts (supported by a strong

program of professional development provided by the author) are used by over two-thirds of VCE music teachers who responded to this question in the survey (44 of 66)[1].

The use of (French) rhythm names[2] was not as wide-spread as one might expect, with only 20 of the teachers who responded to that item on the survey indicating that they made use of this tool (less than 30%). Of these, 27 respondents (nearly 40%) made use of tonic sol-fa when teaching pitch-based activities (such as interval recognition, chord recognition, chord progression dictation, melodic dictation, and the like). The relatively high percentage of teachers who made use of tonic sol-fa is not surprising when considered together with the questions regarding use of resources as the most widely used resource is founded on Kodály principles including (the use of rhythm names and) tonic sol-fa and this type of resource is used by a similar proportion of respondents. There are a number of possible explanations for why the use of rhythm names is less common than tonic sol-fa. One possible explanation is that students find the rhythmic activities easier than pitch, so this kind of support may be less necessary. The researcher find this possible reason unlikely, based on nearly twenty years of teaching the Unit 3 & 4 VCE Music Performance Course. More likely, perhaps, is that the use of rhythm names may be closely associated with primary-school music programs and there may be some reluctance on the part of teachers to use this strategies for this reason as well as a certain level of reluctance on the part of the students for the same reason. The onomatopoeic function of these rhythm names provides a clear logical and aural link between the name of the rhythmic device and the sound and therefore a potentially powerful learning aid for students.

The survey data revealed that 22 teachers (32%) made use of the students' instruments in developing skills in aural comprehension in the classroom. Specifically, teachers indicated the use of instruments to "work out rhythms/melodies/chords". This is one way in which the development of aural comprehension skills can be made concrete and arguably more relevant to the students. This is also a 'real-life' skill for many musicians, particularly in the rock/pop

[1] It is possible that even more teachers are using this resource as a number of respondents provided ambiguous answers to this question.

[2] Although there is some variation of precise names, commonly the names ta, ti-ti, ti-ka-ti-ka are used to denote a crotchet (quarter note), pair of quavers (pair of eighth notes) and a group of four semiquavers (group of four sixteenth notes) respectively. There are other rhythm names used for other rhythms, but these three patterns serve as examples.

and jazz contexts. The researcher is not an experienced jazz/rock or pop musician, but it is certainly quite common in these contexts for performers to have the need to 'work out' a passage on their instrument, that is, both learning to play the passage and also (likely) memorising it. Arguably, this is more likely than having to transcribe it in the context of a working band. When questioned about this one long-standing VCAA staff member said that there was broad agreement amongst the early exam-setting panels that transcription skills were important regardless of style. A number of members of this panel were from jazz or rock/pop backgrounds. She states "the people who worked in those areas really forcefully felt that to be successful practicing musician, the tide had turned and that you needed [notation] skills" (Champion, 2006, p. 15). Interestingly, the argument also came from those setting the Aural and Written Examination for Solo. There apparently were those who felt that the transcription task was not necessarily appropriate for Solo students, despite the fact that they performed notated music and were consequently (almost without exception) familiar with many notational conventions. "The issue was just as much debated in the Solo discussion as in the Group discussion because Solo students, because they play from fully notated works, in a sense, 'why were they developing transcription skills?' was just as good a question as for the Group students" (Champion, 2006, p. 16).

The essential question that must be considered with respect to the Aural and Written Examinations (Group and Solo) is, do these examinations serve as a useful measure of the aural comprehension abilities of the students being examined? In 1995, a sample paper was devised that set out to address some concerns about the existing examination, especially around the issue of providing 'top-end discriminators' (that is, questions that differentiated between the best students in terms of aural skills), as well as altering the examinations so that they represented a truer test of genuine aural comprehension skills, partially by making the tasks generally less prescriptive and more related to real-music aural discrimination tasks.

It was decided that the basis of the new examination's design should incorporate the various types and purposes of assessment into one format so that the results might potentially be used to:

- Provide simultaneously evidence of the outcomes of learning (*summative* testing)
- Enable students to learn from the experience by (potentially) making their examination scripts available for their perusal, thus providing feedback which might be used as a tool for subsequent learning (*formative* testing)

- Furnish tertiary/post-secondary music providers with a suitable means of ascertaining a student's level of preparation for undertaking further study in the discipline (*selective* testing) (Miles, 2006, p. 323).

A close examination of the differences between these two papers is beyond the scope of this research (see Miles, 2006, Chapter 9, for a detailed analysis), however Miles makes some worthwhile suggestions around making greater use of 'real' music (music from the extant literature, rather than music composed especially for the exam) in an effort to make the examination a more authentic measure of aural skills. Another suggestion made, but not acted on at this point, is that aural and written examinations could be returned to students so that the examination is a more genuine learning opportunity. At present, the students complete the examination and simply receive a letter grade mark and an overall study score for the subject. As a teacher, it would be wonderful to be able to look at a students exam with them to see what questions caused issues and what might be put down to rushing or simply silly errors. This would also be most helpful as professional development as a staff member, to see what areas of preparation with students could be improved. Perhaps the most potential for transforming this area of VCE music education, is the steps that could be taken to make the examination less of a prescriptive recipe and more of a genuine measure of aural comprehension skills. This step is crucial if pedagogy can move beyond merely training students to perform on an examination. It should be noted that the suggestions made by the authors of the sample paper referred to above were attempting to make changes within the restrictions imposed by the ways the examination is delivered at present. Specifically, the sample paper would still be presented to the students on tape/CD, could be delivered to a room of students on one piece of playback equipment, remain within the time limit of the existing exam and still require students to respond to aural stimuli in an answer booklet. Many other suggestions for how examinations could be delivered are more resource intensive and therefore, however worthy or authentic as assessment tools, may be out of the question due to fiscal restraints.

Given the long history of using computer technology to teach or train aural comprehension skills, it was not surprising to note that 40 out of the respondents who answered this question (just less than 60%) indicated that they used software. A further five teachers made reference to various other web-based resources such as podcasts and on-line drill and practice sites. With these resources included, the percentage of respondents rises to over sixty-six percent.

The use of technology has a relatively long history in music education. As stated, Varèse, Stockhausen and many others have employed contemporary recording technologies in their creative processes (including composition, improvisation, and performance). This practice has continued to the present day with composers and singer/songwriters in all forms of music making full use of technology in the composition process and/or in the performance of music. The first generation of music education software was developed during the 1960s and early-1970s to run on large mainframe computers. This software was principally focused on the teaching of aural comprehension, music theory and conventional music notation. This software was only available to students who had access to such computers. For the most part, these would have been students attending tertiary institutions as such organisations were amongst the only ones to have such computers other than big business and the military. The introduction of personal computers in the 1980s, made possible the access to music education software that continues to this day.

As previously pointed out, repetitive tasks such as constantly reinforcing and practising particular skills are ideally suited to computer-aided instruction. The potential of technology to assist any learning where sound and symbol need to be associated (obviously applicable to the reading of music, as well as other areas) is considerable and the data clearly indicates that many teachers are making some use of technological tools. After approximately thirty years of the relatively widespread use of technology in music education, it is now finding its place as a useful tool within the repertoire resources teachers can draw on. It cannot and it does not 'replace' the teaching of aural comprehensions skills through other means, many of which are ancient and decidedly 'un-technological'.

'Rhythm reading' was one of the listed activities that teachers could indicate the use of in their classrooms. This type of activity is not easily classified as coming from a particular pedagogical background or philosophy. This activity was employed by twenty-one teachers (just over 20%) and represents just one of several ways of addressing the concept of rhythm. Other activities identified include rhythmic dictation and rhythmic recognition activities, to name just two.

Other resources used were Ricci Adams' ear training site[1], internet aural programs (sites), theory exercises (including the popular Australian Music Examination Board theory examination preparation texts by Dulcie Holland[2]), eLearning resources (not specified), auralonline.com, musictheory.net, 'Big Ears' aural book, website and CD[3]. In summary, there are a large number of resources and strategies used in the classroom. There is considerable scope for further research into how resources are used, as well as questions of the extent to which aural comprehension instruction is planned and delivered across the middle and senior school in various school contexts, the extent to which VCE classroom lessons focused on aural comprehension are made up of exam preparation or more holistic and generalizable skills. This area of further research and others will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

Survey data findings – pedagogical decision-making

Respondents were also asked about the reasons for using particular activities within the classroom. The table below indicates the responses provided:

Reason given	Number of responses
Own experience	26
Student background	8
Training/reading/research	5
Time efficiency	7
Effectiveness	6
Availability of resources	5
Lack of resources (forced choice)	2
Diagnosis of student needs	1
Assessment requirements	1
Student engagement	1

[1] Ricci Adams maintains a website called *musictheory.net* which includes a variety of exercises dealing with music theory and musicianship.

[2] Dulcie Holland's series of music theory instruction and workbooks (*Master Your Theory*) have been a staple part of music education for decades.

[3] The *Big Ears* program is the work of Michael Ossmann. The website uses the drill and practice methodology popular for many years in music education (www.ossmann.com/bigears/).

Link with co-curricular program	1

Figure 19 (shown again)

As the table above clearly shows, the strongest reason given for using particular learning activities to teach aural comprehension skills was the teachers' own experience. It is not possible from the data captured to 'unpack' the notion of what respondents meant by this expression. Some possible explanations of what could have been meant include some quite different and incompatible meanings. This is problematic for the interpretation of these responses with any certainty. It is possible that respondents simply meant that they had used these activities before and were therefore they continued to use them. It could mean that through exhaustive experimentation, they are using those activities they have found work most effectively. It could be that their experience tells them that there is really only one way of approaching the teaching of these skills (either as a result of pre-service training, professional development or a lack of knowledge of alternatives) and so it has not been so much the result of a decision, as the perception of a lack of any viable alternatives. Of course, there are many other credible interpretations.

Perhaps of greater concern than what may or may not be meant by 'experience', is the small proportion of respondents who indicated that they made these pedagogical decision based on 'training/reading/research'. If the combined total of respondents who used training (probably including professional development as this was not listed in elsewhere), reading (anything from professional magazines to peer-reviewed journals) and awareness of relevant research activities to guide their decisions about what activities would serve the learning needs of their students is five out of sixty-three (less than 8%) then there is some cause for concern. To be fair, teachers may be well aware of the theories of listening presented by Gordon, Elliott, Swanwick, Paynter, Jorgensen and Reimer (and others, refer to Chapter 2), however, it is highly likely that many do not. Even less likely to be considered by practising music educators is any of the much more recent promising research using fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) and the research examining aesthetic responses in real-time using the CRDI (Continuous Response Digital Interface) device. Research examining the functioning of the brain while performing and attentively listening to music - as well as research by Hargreaves and others examining the role of listening to music in social contexts

(also outlined in Chapter 2) - is at a fascinating point with the real prospect of helping musicians and educators to 'unlock' the formerly virtually impenetrable cognitive processes at work during these activities. Unfortunately, it seems likely at this stage that there is much work to be done by researchers and educators to ensure that the findings of this research over the coming decades have an impact on music teaching and learning. It would be a terrible shame if in ten years we were still finding that this quote was still relevant in another fourteen years. As Butler (1997) stated more than a decade ago, "Aural training is an obvious potential beneficiary for the application of findings in music perception research – what is aural training, after all, if it is not the acquisition of cognitive skills in music – but the real connection between research and the classroom is yet to be made" (Butler, 1997, p. 47).

As outlined in the previous chapter, this data is based on responses from teachers trained over a considerable period of time and at a large number of institutions. Respondents were asked about the extent to which their pre-service training prepared them for teaching aural comprehension skills in the classroom. The chart below shows their responses.

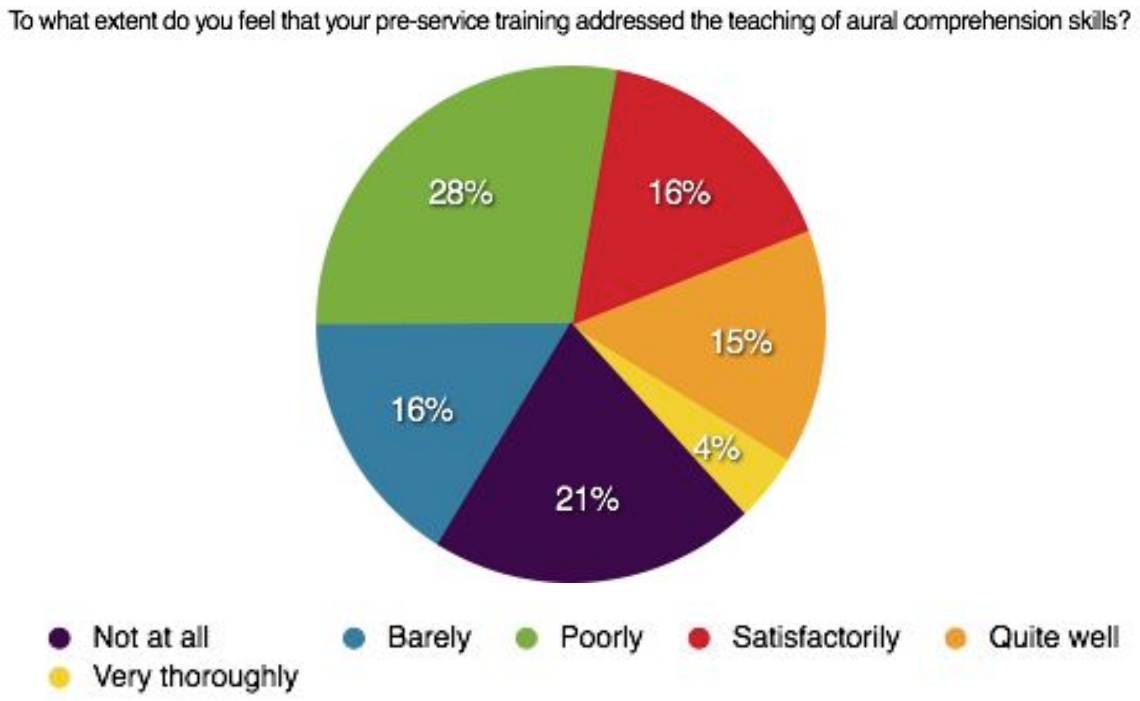


Figure 20 (shown again)

It can be observed from the above chart, a large proportion of respondents found their pre-service training insufficient as preparation for teaching aural comprehension skills. Approximately 37% stated that their pre-service training prepared them for the teaching of

aural comprehension ‘not at all’ or ‘barely’. Only approximately 19% stated that their pre-service training prepared them ‘quite well’ or ‘very thoroughly’ to address the teaching of aural comprehension skills. The focus of this research has been on the teachers’ activities in the classroom, and aside from gaining general information about the source of the respondents’ pre-service teacher training, there has been no examination of what their pre-service education involved with respect to aural comprehension instruction. No data were collected on ‘theories of listening’ or pedagogical principles addressed in the courses undertaken. It would be interesting to examine to what extent (if any) teacher education courses in music education have addressed this area of professional practice. Are new graduate teachers better equipped to teach aural comprehension skills in terms of knowledge of theories of listening, awareness of new and emerging research perspectives, knowledge of differing methodological approaches and learning activities that can be used to facilitate learning, than teachers who graduated some time ago? Some further research that could be pursued in this area will be briefly outlined in Chapter 8.

The conception of aural comprehension within the VCE was informed by many of the major listening theories outlined in Chapter 2. In an extended interview, the principal writer of the VCE Music Craft study design, Roland Yeung, discussed how he saw the concept of aural comprehension included in the original VCE study design as being quite radical for the time (approximately 1990) and how these changes were seen as only being a first step in transforming aural comprehension and listening in Victoria. Firstly, the importance of recognising patterns was discussed. Good readers of music are little different to good readers of text; they can decipher meaning at a glance without looking at all the detail of what is being read through the ability to recognise patterns. In a summary of research examining research on music reading, Gudmunsdottir (2010, pp. 334-335) notes, that “instruction promoting understanding of musical structure is more effective than mere emphasis on pitch identification. These findings have implications for instruction as they suggest that the focus of instruction should not be on individual pitches but rather on the structures the pitches form”. The same author also states “chunking of information in a musical score depends on the perception of identifiable clusters or entities such as tonal patterns or rhythmic patterns”. This concept of information in musical literacy needing to be conceived of as patterns “as a pathway for aural comprehension was why the pattern recognition was put there” (Yeung, 2009, p. 57)

Yeung (2009) goes on to say that combining the written responses about expressive elements of the music with aural comprehension in a seamless way would be the next step in the aural and written examination. He describes in some detail the integrated way this might be done:

> You play a piece of music and your response would be about words to describe the effect of the music and you would have your critical response, you would also be able to use notation to identify the key characteristic, that key chord at the climax point because there was something worth talking about. The particular shape of that melody, that significant melody that you just heard, you would notate that melody. OK. And IB music does that by the way. It has that part in that. They do 4 works in a three-hour exam. They have a CD player, they can play it as often as they like and they write a global response, which is expected to have notation in it (Yeung, 2009, pp. 57-58)

This type of aural comprehension question has the real advantage of allowing access to the question by virtually all students. Even if the students' aural skills are quite poor, they can respond to this type of question to the extent they are able. High-level students will be able to incorporate, in an integrated way, notation, analytical comments and expressive responses in one answer and therefore demonstrate the high levels of skills that they possess. The nature and type of the question allows for a wide diversity of student responses. This type of question is virtually the polar opposite of much of the current VCE Aural and Written Examination in the sense the students' responses are much more open-ended and much less prescribed by the question. Teachers preparing students for this type of examination question would have little choice but to educate their students very broadly about the skills and terminology of discussing and aurally analysing music as these works would be previously unheard. A very broad program of listening to music would be necessary for students to be able to comment stylistically about musical influences on whatever works were included in the examination. Contrasting with the existing VCE examinations, Yeung argues that, "it is not particular body of knowledge, but there are particular sorts of knowledge that they are expected to uncover in their response" (Yeung, 2009, p. 58).

What is interesting about the thinking that was behind the changes to aural comprehension ushered in by the introduction of the VCE was that a deep knowledge and high level of thought around what listening in music could be underpins the conception of aural comprehension and listening in the initial study design. The writers did not attempt to

introduce an ‘ideal’ model for the teaching of aural comprehension. They introduced some curriculum concepts that were radically new, but retained some that were familiar and commonplace in music education circles in Victoria, for example the recognition of chords and inversions as well as the identification of cadence. All of these elements of the exam would have been more or less familiar to teachers and students who had undertaken AMEB practical examinations or musicianship examinations. At the same time, the hope was that the introduction of some relatively radical concepts in aural comprehension within this study design would only be a beginning, with further innovation to follow subsequently. Yeung’s point of view is that what has happened subsequently is disappointing. “We have taken one step forward and we have taken several back, because we made room for theory and that of course waters down all the other things” (Yeung, 2009, p. 59).

Bartle, in his survey of music teaching in Australian secondary schools, comments that “integration of music reading and aural training with the listening programme is advocated in the New South Wales and the Victorian High School syllabuses” (1968, p. 8). This holistic view of aural comprehension skills combining such elements as music literacy, score-reading, analysis and appreciation (although what is meant by these terms is disputable) is to be commended and is a feature of the listening examination in highly regarded International Baccalaureate Diploma music course (briefly described above).

It is clear that certain attempts were made to make the requirements of the aural and written examination student-focused. One such example is the inclusion of modes, sometimes referred to as ‘church modes’ or ‘medieval modes’ some of which are used in jazz and rock/pop music. The inclusion of these modes, which has been a part of the VCE study design for some years, is an acknowledgement that the repertoire some student perform is not restricted to major and minor scales. Other elements of the examination might be described as ‘legacy’ components. In other words, they were retained, at least to some extent because they were familiar to teachers and some students (including those who had undertaken AMEB Music Theory examinations). Staple parts of these exams where cadences and chord inversions, arguably neither of which are particularly relevant to either contemporary popular music and jazz, or to modern classical music. To a guitarist, for example, the idea of chord inversions is a ‘non-issue’ as basically all the chords they play are inversions whereas the addition of modes resonates with guitar improvisatory practices

Roland Yeung shared a some suggestions about where aural comprehension might be developed in the VCE in an extended interview conducted in 2009 (Yeung, 2009). He suggested that:

- The aural and written examination included listening requiring a holistic response from the students incorporating analysis, stylistic comments, notation as appropriate and comment on key expressive characteristics in one detailed answer.
- The importance of structural thinking a conception of harmony and motion in music developed by Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) and further developed (pedagogically) and elaborated in the English language by Salzer (1982).
-

Yeung described structural thinking as "analysing the particular components that hold the thing together in terms of music and pitch. It is the aural comprehension of deciphering changes in music as it progresses so it is a structural thing as you are hearing (Yeung, 2009, p. 59). This level of focused-listening is quite challenging for students and teachers and moves beyond the relative safety and familiarity of giving most attention to discussion of musical elements. It would also be more difficult to assess as the types of answers provided could vary so much in type and form. The integration of aural skills and other related-skills such as critical response, aural analysis and expressive character in rich and open-ended aural tasks in examinations would allow students with very high level skills demonstrate these skills, encourages holistic teaching of the skills of listening and appears to offer a more genuine experience of applying aural skills to a real-world context.

Few musicians would argue that aural comprehension skills are a worthwhile addition to the assessment regime for VCE music performance. It is a sensible choice as it is style agnostic and significant to all musicians. The types of tasks examined and the manner in which they are assessed are more debatable and the direction of recent changes in aural comprehension assessment seem to be moving toward greater prescription and increased explicit evaluation of theory skills and arguably a more conservative approach to the whole area of listening and aural comprehension. These steps, particularly with respect to clear prescription of question types to be examined, will only discourage a broadly-based approach to the teaching of aural comprehension and encourage a narrow, exam-focused, 'training' model of teaching that will not assist the students to gain genuine, 'real-world' aural comprehension skills.

One of the real successes of the VCE was that this credential allowed musicians from jazz, rock/pop or other non-classical styles to present their performance and be assessed alongside the violinists and pianists. This was an out-working of the policy of 'success and access'. As Yeung put it "kids could enter the study, wherever they were in the state, with whatever resources they had and whatever tradition they were following and they would have a feeling that they could access this study – they can get access to it. And that they could achieve success, they could complete something" (Yeung, 2009, p. 10).

With respect to the aural requirements for both Group and Solo, more particularly the means by which students' learning is assessed, for a variety of reasons, a written examination is used to gauge student achievement. It has already been discussed that there are possibly changes that could be made without changing the structure and delivery of the assessment to make it more authentic. We have also outlined an exam type (or what might form part of an examination) that allows for higher level and more holistic listening responses incorporating critical response, notation skills, analytical thinking and broad stylistic comment that would be possible to employ with relatively minor changes to the examination structure and delivery.[1]

National Curriculum

Since the Curriculum and Frameworks documents from the 1980s (Ministry of Education, 1988, for example) many curriculum documents have dealt with 'The Arts' as a group of disciplines. It could be suggested this has led to terminology and conceptions of the Arts disciplines that 'force' similarities that compromise the true value and concept of individual art forms.

> Music is included as part of a generic Arts descriptor with levels of standards, indicating achievement also expressed generically. The fundamental Music content matter is no longer explicit for the teacher. In practical terms, teachers are not given sufficient support to determine what is considered to be Essential Learning in the discipline of Music. Non-specialist Music teachers in the primary school and beginning specialist Music teachers in both primary and secondary schools will be the

[1] Students would require their own playback equipment with headphones so that the music could be played and replayed as often as necessary. This has cost implications in terms of provision of playback equipment and in terms of production of aural stimulus materials (some or all of which could be overcome through technological means such as media being digitally delievered).

> most disadvantaged in these environments. An additional hurdle for all teachers is the incorporation of the relevant Essential Learnings, especially in the approach taken to assessment and reporting (Forrest & Watson, 2006, p. 38)

This problem is especially significant in terms of primary school educators. Many are charged with the provision of Music education despite receiving very little training in the field and language that is generic and not authentic to the discipline will make this difficult job much harder. The development of the Australian Curriculum provides an interesting contemporary context to the curriculum reform leading to the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education.

The Federal Parliament enacted the Australian Curriculum, Reporting and Assessment Authority in 2008. The functions of the Australian Curriculum, Reporting and Assessment Authority (ACARA), according to the act are to:

a) develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the Charter; and
b) develop and administer national assessments; and
c) collect, manage and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance; and
d) facilitate information sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management and analysis of school data; and
e) publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance; and
f) provide school curriculum resource services, educational research services and other related services; and
g) provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession; and
h) perform such other functions that are conferred on it by, or under, this Act or any other Commonwealth Act; and
i) perform such other functions that are ancillary or incidental to the functions mentioned in the preceding paragraphs

(The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority "Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008")

This is a broad and ambitious brief to reform education in Australia. ACARA has published a number of documents outlining the Australian Curriculum. Given the focus of this research, the most relevant documents are those dealing with The Arts.

As has already been noted, prior to the introduction of the VCE, one of the influential curriculum documents was 'Curriculum Frameworks' documents, and, specifically in the context of this research, 'The Arts Framework: P-10 (Ministry of Education, 1988). It is interesting to note some of the similarities between this document and the 'Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts' document (ACARA, 2011), produced over two decades apart.

'The Arts Framework: P-10' (1988)	**'Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts' (2011)**
"Each individual arts area offers its own distinct way of learning through the processes of perceiving, transforming, expressing and appreciating. Each has its own unique qualities, with its own area of skills, history and body of knowledge. (p 14)	"Each subject in the Arts is unique, with its own discrete knowledge, symbols, language, processes and skills" (p 5)
The Arts Learning Model focuses on: perceiving, transforming, expressing, and appreciating with the student at the centre and all learning 'surrounded' by context	The Australian Curriculum represents Arts practice as being founded on the activities of making and responding and that these linked processes are informed by ten concepts: cultures, histories, philosophies and ideologies, critical theories, institutions, psychology, evaluations, meanings, forms and societies.
Arts learning comprises the following disciplines: Art/Craft, Dance, Drama, Graphic	Arts learning comprises the following disciplines: Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and

Communication, Media Education and Music (p 4).	Visual Arts (p 7).
The Music Statement emphasises the importance of offering students the opportunity to listen, compose and perform music "so that students can be innovators, not just duplicators" (ACARA, 2011)	The Australian Curriculum states that "in music, students will use the concepts and materials of music to compose, improvise, arrange, perform, conduct and respond to their own and others' work" (Ministry of Education, 1988, p. 205).

Figure 21: Comparison of *The Arts Framework* document (1988) and *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts* (2011)

Each curriculum document acknowledges that each Arts discipline is unique with unique skills, history and language. The Australian Curriculum conceives of Arts practice as being centered around making and responding with a number of other considerations impacting on these practices. The Arts Learning model explicitly puts 'the student' and the context of the learning as over-arching concerns and divides the learning into the four overlapping processes of perceiving, transforming, expressing and appreciating. The differences between these two conceptions of learning in the Arts are a testimony to the fact that this learning is highly complex, context-rich, individual and not completely understood.

In terms of curriculum reform, the context for the introduction of the National Curriculum (now called the Australian Curriculum) is very different from the introduction of the VCE approximately twenty-five years ago. As discussed in Chapter 4, at the time the VCE was introduced the policy priorities were set, at least in part, in an effort to deal with historically high youth unemployment and undesirably low retention of students in school in the post-compulsory period. This situation was combined with a desire to equip children with the skills and abilities required for life in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century and the so-called 'knowledge economy'. The notion of a knowledge economy is still with us today. Two characteristics of the knowledge economy are "a reduction in industrial era jobs and the growth of knowledge era jobs" and, that "the workplace is becoming more fluid, with the workforce required to be more autonomous and proactive in creating and responding to employment opportunities" (Warner, 2006, pp. 1-2). The high unemployment rates in the 1980s (described in more detail in Chapter 4) are no longer the case with Victoria's (and the

nation's) unemployment rate the envy of many industrialised countries. Interestingly, although school retention rates were rising prior to and after the implementation of the VCE, these retention rates are now quite static as the following table shows:

Victorian Apparent Retention Rates (Yr 10-12)			
Year	Male	Female	Total
1997	73.6	86.3	79.9
1998	72.5	85.8	79.1
1999	71.9	85.5	78.7
2000	73.1	86.4	79.7
2001	76.1	87.2	81.6
2002	77.1	88.7	82.9
2003	77.4	88.4	82.9
2004	77.2	88.9	83
2005	76.6	87.9	82.2
2006	76.2	88	82.1
2007	76	87.7	81.8
2008	74.8	87.1	80.9
2009	76.1	86.5	81.2
2010	77	87.2	82.1

Figure 22: Victorian Apparent Retention Rates 2010 (Source: ABS Schools, Australia 2010 (Catalogue Number 4221.0)

Champion, when speaking of retention rates and specifically that the initial government priority around improving retention was no longer required said, "we have come a way. We are dealing with much bigger numbers and you know the fact that we are now over the 80% mark so it is completely different" (Champion, 2006, p. 12)

The political context in which the National Curriculum is being introduced is one of increased accountability and a strong drive to improve Australia's numeracy and literacy compared with other countries. This can be seen by the introduction of the 'My School' website (www.myschool.edu.au) as a tool to provide information to parents and greater accountability to schools, and the National Assessment Program (incorporating the National

Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy as well as participation in a variety of other national and international testing programs).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is considerable potential for further research into the cognitive processes taking place during the acts of listening to and performing music [see, for example, previously cited articles as well as (Johansson, 2006) and (Ullen, 2007)]. Much of the potential for new research has been made possible by the advances in technology allowing for the study of the brain, while engaging in musical activities such as focused-listening and performing. This has clear and powerful implications for music education as the ability to measure and more fully understand the cognitive process and changes that take place during musical learning could lead to a better evidence-base to inform our practice as music educators.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

The Issue

This research has principally been concerned with the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the political and educational context of this change as well as the role of aural comprehension in this new music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced. An examination of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE music classroom has also formed part of this research. A multifaceted research approach has been taken that utilises a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study.

A detailed picture of the introduction of the VCE Music Performance study design (initially called Music Craft) and the significant differences between this curriculum and the most frequently undertaken music credential immediately prior to this, the Higher School Certificate (HSC) Group 1 subject Music A has emerged. The political and educational context of this curriculum change and the an examination of current teaching practice with respect to aural comprehension skills in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Unit 3 and 4 Music Performance (Group) and Music Performance (Solo) forms part of this picture.

As stated in Chapter 1, the researcher came to this research with a variety of contentions regarding the introduction of the VCE as a curriculum reform and the teaching and learning of aural comprehension skills.

The first contention of this thesis has been that the teaching of aural comprehension is best done within the context of a holistic and broadly-based program of listening and not in a narrowly-defined 'exam training' regime. Data have shown that much aural comprehension teaching is undertaken without a great deal of knowledge of theories of listening or an awareness of the more recent research on the cognitive processes involved in the aural comprehension of music. Without this knowledge and often without a methodological framework for their teaching, many VCE teachers teach this material within a narrow paradigm of exam preparation and/or by approaching the task the way they were taught or the way colleagues have done so. True aural comprehension skills are developed in students if

there is a clear pedagogical framework and a thorough, well sequenced and 'real-world' program of listening presented to the students. Teaching and learning that becomes narrowly focussed on specific and highly prescribed assessment tasks will rarely provide genuine skills that are transferable to authentic musical contexts and are, as such, little more than training to pass an exam.

The second contention of this thesis has been that there is a weak link between the well-established theories of listening (from within the research literature) and current research on the cognitive processes involved in perceiving musical stimulus and the teaching of aural comprehension skills in schools. As noted above, very few of the VCE music teachers surveyed indicated that their practice was informed by training, reading or research. For a variety of reasons, much aural comprehension teaching is founded on pragmatic factors such as the availability of resources, what 'seems to work' and the methodology and activities with which the teacher is familiar, either through exposure as a student or the influence of colleagues. These data further support the concept that scant attention is given to what research may offer the teaching and learning process. This may be due to factors such as research information not being made available in practical ways to teachers or to the view that research literature is not grounded in or helpful in the practical task of teaching in schools.

It seems clear that teachers and researchers need to work together to enable and encourage a conversation to be carried on between both parties to learn and share information in this field. Teachers could benefit from knowledge of research about effective practice and researcher could benefit from an awareness of the kinds of concerns that teachers need more information about and are of interest in the field. Whatever the cause, be it overly prescriptive examination criteria, pressures of time in the classroom, a lack of knowledge and understanding of high calibre aural comprehension education, research knowledge not being presented in clear and practical ways, teachers mistrust of research evidence, or any number of other issues, something needs to change if teaching practice is to be positively impacted by the growing body of knowledge about how best to teach aural comprehension skills.

The third contention of this thesis has been that the current curriculum and assessment model in aural comprehension is inconsistent with respect to the stated intention of making the curriculum student-centred and the assessment authentic. In a variety of ways, the VCE

curriculum and assessment present an increasingly conservative, prescriptive and rudimentary conception of aural comprehension. Conservative in the sense that there remain parts of the Aural and Written Examination that are not in-keeping with a student-centred or twenty-first century curriculum that engages students in authentic and relevant music activities. Conversely, there are elements of aural comprehension skills that are excluded that would both modernise the curriculum and challenge very able students and allow these students to be differentiated from the larger numbers who can perform well on the assessment instrument as it stands. Prescriptive in that the precise nature of the questions is defined and, the listening and analysis short-answer questions mainly focus on matters pertaining to musical elements and little else. Rudimentary, in that some of the more challenging questions have been eliminated, such as chords built on seconds and fourths, chord inversions and the like, and that these more challenging elements have been 'replaced' by predictable music theory material that merely test memory rather than aural skill.

The fourth and last contention of this thesis has been that the introduction of the VCE in the last years of the 1980s and the first years of the 1990s was a product of pedagogical and political imperatives driven by global changes, in part brought about by technological change. The complex interaction between the societal issues of globalisation, high youth unemployment, advances in information and communication technologies and the development of a so-called knowledge economy provided an imperative for curriculum change that would not have been as strong without these complex of issues all contributing. Historically, the introduction of laws forbidding child labour impacted on education by increasing the number of children in schools requiring schools to respond. Similarly, changes in the labour market whereby the majority of the growth in employment opportunities was occurring in knowledge-intensive areas, combined with the gradual increase in the compulsory schooling age required schools to respond. Amongst other issues to be dealt with, schools had to address their curricula programs to a larger number and a less homogeneous cohort of students then had historically been the case. Very high youth unemployment (a politically 'poisonous' fact), also contributed to produce the political context of this reform. A brief examination of the changed political climate of the introduction of the Australian Curriculum provides an interesting contemporary contrast to the more detailed analysis of the context of the introduction of the VCE.

Further research

This research has focused on the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education and an examination of the aural comprehension aspect of the VCE Music Performance curriculum as a specific example of the large changes the VCE introduced. Necessarily, this research has left several aspects of these areas unexplored. This section of the research will focus on some of these areas of further research that might profitably be explored.

In terms of the introduction of the VCE, many aspects of the context explored in this research would warrant further investigation. It was necessary in this research to restrict the material under investigation, which provides a good deal of scope for further research. The history of secondary education in Victoria has already had books and sections of books devoted to detailing this development but naturally, other researchers who may have a different perspective could examine such a complex phenomenon. Equally, there were a large number of credentials offered in the pre-VCE environment of upper-secondary education in Victoria. The emphasis has been on the HSC (Group 1) in this research as it was the dominant choice in terms of student enrolments. Many other music course and units and other credentials have not been discussed and could usefully be detailed by other researchers. Clearly, this research has focused on music curricula, both pre-VCE and in the VCE as an example of the changes made with this curriculum reform. There is considerable opportunity to research this very significant curriculum reform from an overall perspective and also from the perspective of other disciplines.

Even within the field of music education, the data gathered for this research have included curriculum and other government documents, two lengthy interviews with key figures involved in this reform as well as broader data about the teaching of music through a survey of VCE teachers. Further research could explore the reform of music curricula in Victoria from other perspectives such as member of the music reference group, other writers, interviews with exam setting panel chairs, detailed interviews with classroom teachers and many others. It would be helpful for other researchers to examine this change in curriculum as each researcher would bring a different perspective to this phenomenon. Equally, the analysis of assessment within the VCE was principally concerned with the aural comprehension common assessment task. Miles (Johansson, 2006) has undertaken a detailed

examination of assessment in the VCE as part of his thesis, as well as providing suggestions for how it might be improved.

With regard to the survey, a number of questions arise that could be the focus of further research. The survey data revealed a variety of information about the teaching of aural comprehension skills in VCE music classrooms from a variety of different sectors, many of which could be further explored by means of interviews or follow-up surveys. Of particular interest, as discussed in Chapter 7 would be to explore the reasoning behind the pedagogical decisions teachers have made. When a teacher indicates that they used their 'own experience' to choose to use certain activities and resources and not others in their teaching, it would be very interesting to explore what they meant by this. Another interesting line of research could include investigating what impact teachers pre-service education (tertiary education and also secondary education) might have had on their approach to their aural comprehension teaching. Aligned to this line of research would be such questions as:

- Do teachers who have undertaken the VCE themselves as secondary students approach this teaching differently, or do they teach this material the way they were taught?
- How have teachers who did not have much aural comprehension instruction as students make the decisions they have made about how to teach aural comprehension skills
- Similarly, teachers who did not have much aural comprehension instruction at secondary school, or during their tertiary education have had to make thjese decisions based on other influences (be they mentors at school or during teaching rounds, the impact of professional development, musical and pedagogical beliefs, or other factors)

These questions were not explored as part of this research but would be profitable additional lines of enquiry.

The survey raised several resources as being used by teachers in the VCE classroom. There is considerable scope for further research into how resources are used, as well as questions relating to the extent to which aural comprehension instruction is planned and delivered across the middle and senior school in various school contexts, the extent to which VCE classroom lessons focused on aural comprehension are made up of exam preparation or more holistic and generalisable skills. The teaching of aural comprehension skills in younger year

levels would be very interesting to consider, especially when this information was compared with VCE outcomes for those schools. It may be possible from this kind of research to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of these programs for enhancing aural comprehension skills – at least those skills examined in the Aural and Written examination.

Outside the realm of secondary education, but also highly relevant would be an examination of teacher education courses in music education in Victoria. How are our tertiary providers addressing the question of teaching aural comprehension skills? Are new graduate teachers better equipped to teach aural comprehension skills in terms of knowledge of theories of listening, awareness of new and emerging research perspectives, knowledge of differing methodological approaches and learning activities that can be used to facilitate learning, than teachers who graduated some time ago? Research exploring this question from the perspectives of course outlines, discussions with lecturers and entrance and exit surveys with students would be illuminating.

This research has provided an historical account of the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the political and educational context of this change. As an example of this reform the changes in music curricula have been examined with particular emphasis on the place of aural comprehension in this new music curriculum compared with the dominant Higher School Certificate (HSC) (Group 1) it immediately replaced. To further explore this significant change in the place of aural comprehension, an examination of the teaching of aural comprehension skills in the VCE music classroom also forms part of this research. A multifaceted research approach has been taken utilising a variety of data sources and appropriate data analysis techniques within the context of a multiple case study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Ethics approval

MONASH University

Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans
Research Office

22 June 2005

Dr Jane Southcott
Faculty of Education
Clayton campus

[redacted]

2005/318 - The teaching of aural comprehension skills in Victorian schools

Thank you for the information provided in relation to the above project. The items requiring attention have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH). Accordingly, this research project is approved to proceed.

Terms of approval

1. This project is approved for three years from the date of this letter and this approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
2. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all information that is pending (such as permission letters from organisations) is forwarded to SCERH, if not done already. Research cannot begin at any organisation until SCERH receives a letter of permission from that organisation. You will then receive a letter from SCERH confirming that we have received a letter from each organisation.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by SCERH.
4. You should notify SCERH immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project:** Changes to any aspect of the project require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to SCERH and must not begin without written approval from SCERH. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. Please provide the Committee with an Annual Report determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. SCERH should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by SCERH at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

All forms can be accessed at our website www.monash.edu.au/research/ethics/human/index.html

We wish you well with your research.

[redacted]

Dr Andrea Lines
Human Ethics Officer (on behalf of SCERH)

Postal - Monash University, VIC 3800, Australia
Building 3D, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 2052 Facsimile +61 3 9905 1420
Email scerh@adm.monash.edu.au www.monash.edu.au/research/ethics/human/index.html
CRICOS Provider No. 00008C ABN 12 377 614 012

Appendix 2 – Example Aural and Written Examination

SUPERVISOR TO ATTACH PROCESSING LABEL HERE

STUDENT NUMBER

									Letter
Figures									
Words									

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

Victorian Certificate of Education 2001

MUSIC PERFORMANCE: SOLO

Aural and written examination

Friday 16 November 2001

Reading time: 9.00 am to 9.15 am (15 minutes)
Writing time: 9.15 am to 10.45 am (1 hour 30 minutes)

QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOK

Structure of book

Section	*Number of questions*	*Number of questions to be answered*	*Number of marks*
A	6	6	60
B	3	3	40
			Total 100

Materials
- Question and answer book of 20 pages.
- Data book of 10 pages for Section B.
- Audio compact disc which will run continuously throughout Section A ('Aural comprehension') of the examination. The audio compact disc will run for 36 minutes 14 seconds.
- At least one pencil and an eraser.
- Blank manuscript for rough working can be found on pages 5, 9 and 13. It is **not** a requirement of the examination that students use the blank manuscript paper.

Instructions
- Write your **student number** in the space provided on the front cover of this question and answer book.
- You may write at any time during the running of the audio compact disc.
- All written responses must be in English.

At the end of the examination
- You may keep the data book.

Instructions for Section A

Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided.

An audio compact disc containing musical examples will run continuously throughout Section A.

SECTION A: Aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals and melody

Question 1 – Recognition of intervals

A melody will be played **seven** times.

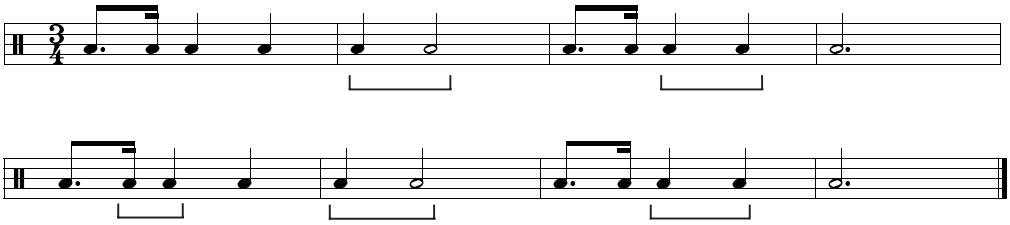
The **rhythm** of the melody is presented on the stave below.

a. **Identify** the **interval distance** (quality and number) between the bracketed notes.

- Intervals may be ascending or descending.
- You are not required to identify the direction (up or down) of the interval.
- Write your answers below the brackets beneath the stave.

b. **Identify** the **tonality** of the melody from the list below the printed excerpt.

Note: A count-in will precede each playing. Click to play sound file



Circle the correct **tonality** of the excerpt.

MAJOR DORIAN MODE HARMONIC MINOR MELODIC MINOR

5 + 2 = 7 marks

Question 2 – Melodic transcription

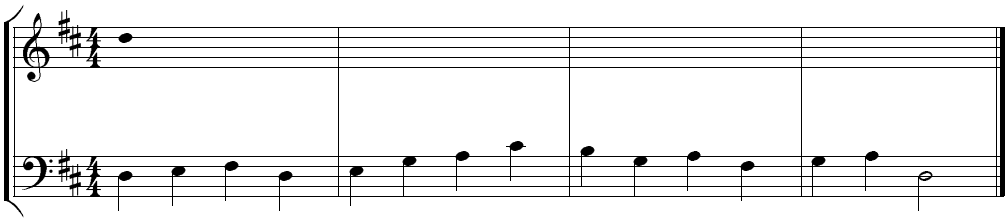
An excerpt of a work for flute and guitar (2 parts) will be played **five** times.

The time signature, key signature, the total number of bars and the pitch of the first note of the melody (upper part) are given below.

Note: 1. A count-in will precede each playing.

2. The pitch, but not the duration, of the first note is given on the stave provided.

On the stave provided, **transcribe** the **flute** (upper part) **only**. Click to play sound file



15 marks

Part 2: Chords and harmony

Question 3 – Recognition of chord types

Six chords will be played.

Each chord will be in **root position**.

Each chord will be played **three** times: harmonically, as an arpeggio, and harmonically again.

The chords played for this question will be selected from the following.

- Major chord
- Minor chord
- Diminished chord
- Augmented chord
- Dominant 7 chord [major triad + minor 7]
- Major 7 chord [major triad + major 7]
- Minor 7 chord [minor triad + minor 7]
- Half-diminished chord (min7 / flat5) [diminished triad + minor 7]
- Full diminished 7 chord (dim 7) [diminished triad + diminished 7]

Identify the chords in the spaces provided, selecting your answers from the list above.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

6 marks

Question 4 – Recognition of chord progressions

A chord progression will be played **five** times.

The first chord of the progression is the tonic (**I** or **i**) chord and is printed at the start of the progression.

All chords of the progression are **diatonic** to the key of the first chord and may be in **root position**, **first inversion** or **second inversion**.

- Using appropriate terminology, **identify** the other (following) chords.
- **Identify** the **cadence** that ends the progression.

EITHER

- Identify each chord, including its position/inversion, in the appropriately **numbered spaces** (2 – 5).

OR

- Fill in the blank spaces of the **harmonic grid** with the **bass note** and **character/quality/type** of each chord, and **identify** the chord and its **position/inversion**.

Note: Write only one chord name (or diatonic identification – Roman/Arabic number) in each numbered space provided **or** only one response in each blank space of the **harmonic grid**.

You may identify chords by writing the complete chord name or use diatonic identification (Roman/Arabic numbers) of each chord (see box below).

Use the chord terminology with which you are most familiar. Click to play sound file

Appropriate ways to identify chord progressions with inversions are

A minor – F major 7 / A – B diminished – E7 / B – and so on

or

i – VI – ii° – V – and so on

or

i – $VI^{\Delta 7}_{b}$ – ii° – $V\,7_{c}$ – and so on

or

I min – VI maj7~1st inv – II dim – V 7~2nd inv – and so on

EITHER

1. ***E minor*** **2.**_____ **3.**_____ **4.**_____ **5.**_____

Cadence: _____

OR

Harmonic Grid	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**
Bass Note	***E***				
Character / Quality / Type	***minor***				
Complete name of chord indicating position/inversion	***E minor (Root)***				

Cadence:_____

13 marks

SECTION A – continued

Part 3: Rhythm

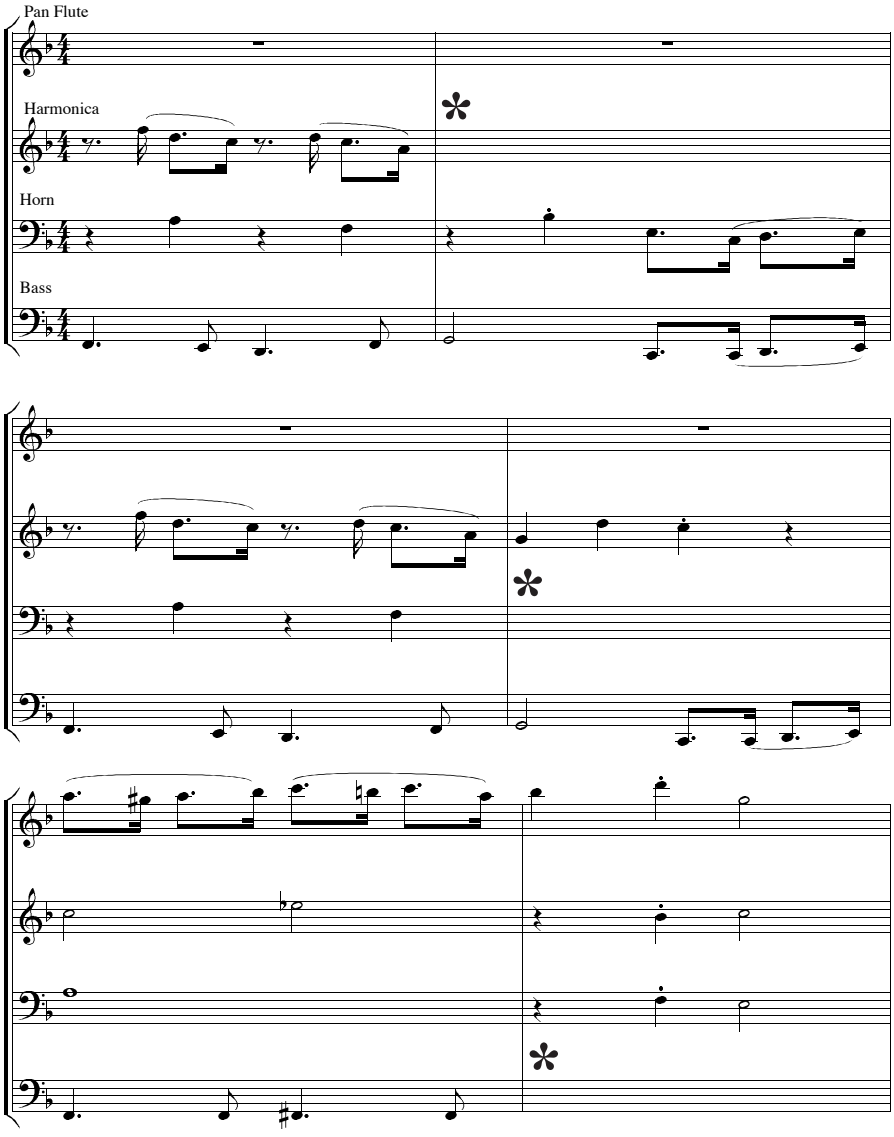
Question 5 – Transcription of rhythms

A short musical excerpt will be played **five** times. A four-part score of the excerpt, with notes missing from four of the bars, is printed below.

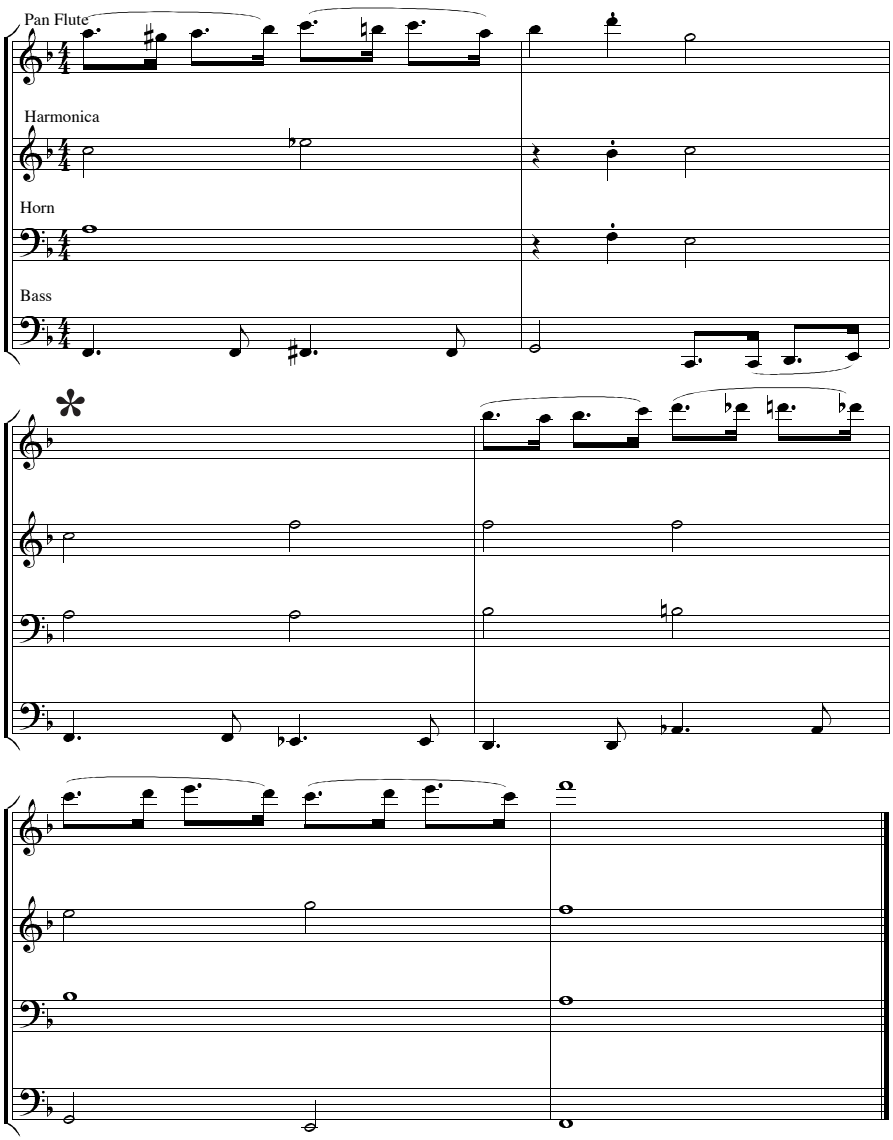
The bars with missing notes are indicated as beginning with an asterisk (*).

Write only the **rhythm** of the music into the blank bars where indicated (*) in the four-part score.

You now have 1 minute of silent working time to study the printed score. Click to play sound file



SECTION A – Question 5 – continued



8 marks

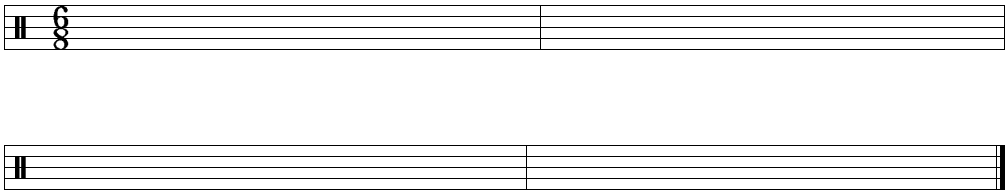
SECTION A – continued
TURN OVER

Question 6 – Transcription of a rhythm

A rhythm will be played **seven** times on a drum.
The time signature and total number of bars are given on the blank stave below.

Transcribe the **rhythm** in the space provided.

Note: A count-in will precede each playing. Click to play sound file



11 marks

SECTION A – continued

SECTION B: Prescribed ensemble works

Instructions for Section B

Answer **all** questions in the spaces provided.

Refer to the data book when answering this Section.

Your responses for Question 7 must be based on the score excerpt of music in the data book from the work that you have studied. In answering Questions 8 and 9 you may refer to the score excerpt of music in the data book but your response should not be based upon it.

Identify the work that you have studied by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate box. All of your responses must relate to this work, although you may refer to other works.

☐ *Clarinet Quintet in A major* K.581 (1st, 2nd and 4th movements) by W A Mozart

☐ *First Suite in E-flat for Military Band* (1909) Op.28 no.1 by Gustav Holst

☐ *Cantata no 140 'Sleepers, Wake'* by J S Bach

☐ *Antarctica:* Suite for guitar and orchestra (1992) by Nigel Westlake

☐ *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (omitting Tracks 8 and 10) by J Lennon/P McCartney

Score excerpts of music (produced in data book)

MOZART: 2nd Movement – 'Larghetto', bars 1–9 (opening theme of the movement)

HOLST: 2nd Movement – 'Intermezzo', bars 83–95 (from letter D)

BACH: 1st Movement – 'Chorale', bars 43–53 (chorus)

WESTLAKE: 3rd Movement – 'Penguin Ballet', bars 239–248 (change of time signature to 6/8 following a section of 9/8)

LENNON/McCARTNEY: *A Day in the Life*, bars 5–14 (from letter A – first entry of the vocals)

Question 7

Study the score excerpt from your chosen work and answer the questions below.

a. **Identify** the instrument(s) or voice(s) that perform the main melody at the commencement of the excerpt you have studied.

b. **Describe** characteristics of the melody introduced by the instrument(s) or voice(s) that you have identified above.

c. Select another instrument or voice that plays a supporting role and **discuss** how its part relates to the main melody.

1 + 4 + 5 = 10 marks

SECTION B – continued

TURN OVER

Question 8

Discuss performance style considerations in preparing for a performance of the **work** you have studied. Refer to at least **three** of the following to support your answer.

- instrumentation
- harmony
- rhythm
- texture
- phrasing and articulation

Your answer may refer to but should not focus upon the score excerpt printed in the data book.

Question 9

a. **Describe** two 'interpretations in performance' of the ensemble **work** you studied this year.
You should identify clearly the ensembles/performance groups that performed the two 'interpretations in performance' at some point within your response.

In your answer you may discuss live and/or recorded performances and any movement(s), section(s) or song(s) of the ensemble **work** you studied this year. Your answer may refer to but should not focus upon the score excerpt printed in the data book.

b. To what extent do the 'interpretations in performance' you have described in part **a.** differ, and why?

In your answer you may discuss live and/or recorded performances and any movement(s), section(s) or song(s) of the ensemble **work** you studied this year. Your answer may refer to but should not focus upon the score excerpt printed in the data book.

6 + 9 = 15 marks

END OF QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOK

Victoria
The Place To Be

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STUDENT NUMBER

									Letter
Figures									
Words									

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

Victorian Certificate of Education 2001

MUSIC PERFORMANCE: GROUP

Aural and written examination

Monday 19 November 2001

Reading time: 9.00 am to 9.15 am (15 minutes)
Writing time: 9.15 am to 10.45 am (1 hour 30 minutes)

QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOK

Structure of book

Section	*Number of questions*	*Number of questions to be answered*	*Number of marks*
A	6	6	54
B	2	1	27
C	1	1	26
			Total 107

Materials
- Question and answer book of 22 pages.
- Audio compact disc will run continuously throughout Section A ('Aural comprehension') of the examination. The audio compact disc will run for 43 minutes 40 seconds.
- At least one pencil and an eraser.
- Blank manuscript paper for rough working on pages 5 and 9. It is **not** a requirement of the examination that students use the blank manuscript paper.

Instructions
- Write your **student number** in the space provided on the front cover of this question and answer book.
- You may write at any time during the running of the audio compact disc.
- All written responses must be in English.

Instructions for Section A

Answer **all** questions in Section A in pencil.

An audio compact disc containing musical examples will run continuously throughout Section A.

SECTION A: Aural comprehension

Part 1: Intervals and melody

Question 1 – Recognition of intervals

A melody will be played **six** times.

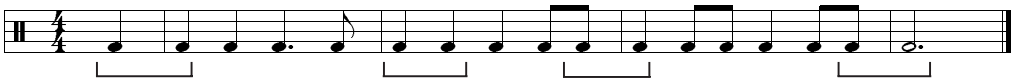
The **rhythm** of the melody is presented on the stave below.

a. **Identify** the **interval distance** (quality and number) between the bracketed notes.

- Intervals may be ascending or descending.
- You are not required to identify the direction (up or down) of the interval.
- Write your answers below the brackets beneath the stave.

b. **Identify** the **tonality** of the melody from the list below the printed excerpt.

Note: A count-in will precede each playing. Click to play sound file



Circle the correct **tonality** of the excerpt.

MAJOR HARMONIC MINOR MELODIC MINOR

4 + 2 = 6 marks

Question 2 – Melodic transcription

A four-part score of four bars length is notated below.

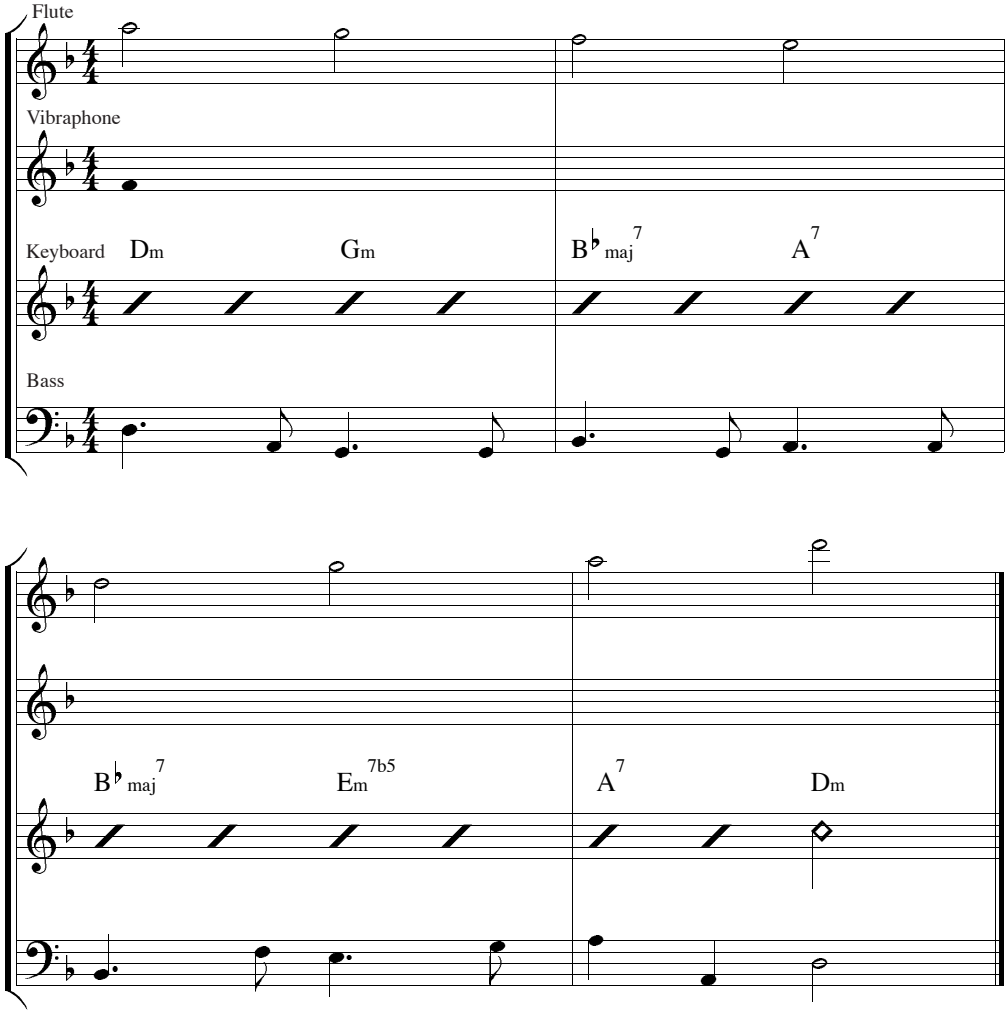
The stave for part 2 – the vibraphone melody – has been left blank.

The four-bar excerpt will be played **five** times.

Note: 1. The time signature, key signature, total number of bars and the pitch (but not the duration) of the first note of the part to be transcribed (the blank stave) are given.

2. A count-in will precede each playing. Click to play sound file

On the blank (second) stave, **transcribe** the **vibraphone** part at concert pitch.



11 marks

SECTION A – continued

Part 2: Chords and harmony

Question 3 – Recognition of chord progressions

A chord progression will be played **five** times.

The first chord of the progression is the tonic (**I**) chord and is printed at the start of the progression.

All chords of the progression use only the bass notes of the key of the first chord and all chords are in **root position** only.

Using appropriate terminology, **identify** the other (following) chords.

EITHER

- Identify each chord in the appropriately **numbered spaces** (2–5)

OR

- Fill in the blank spaces of the **harmonic grid** with the **bass note** and **character/quality/type** of each chord.

Note: 1. You may identify chords by writing the complete chord name or use the diatonic identification (Roman/Arabic numbers) of each chord (see box below).

2. Write only **one** chord name (or diatonic identification – Roman/Arabic number) in each numbered space provided **or** only **one** response in each blank space of the **harmonic grid.**

Use the chord terminology with which you are most familiar. Click to play sound file

Examples of appropriate ways to identify root position *chord progressions are*

C major, A minor 7, D minor, G seven, and so on

or

I – vi 7 – ii – V 7 and so on (in the key of C major)

or

I – VI min 7 – II min – V 7 and so on (in the key of C major)

EITHER

1. ***F Major*** 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

OR

Harmonic grid 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Bass note	***F***				
Character / Quality / Type	***Major***				

8 marks

SECTION A – continued

Part 3: Rhythm

Question 4 – Transcription of rhythms

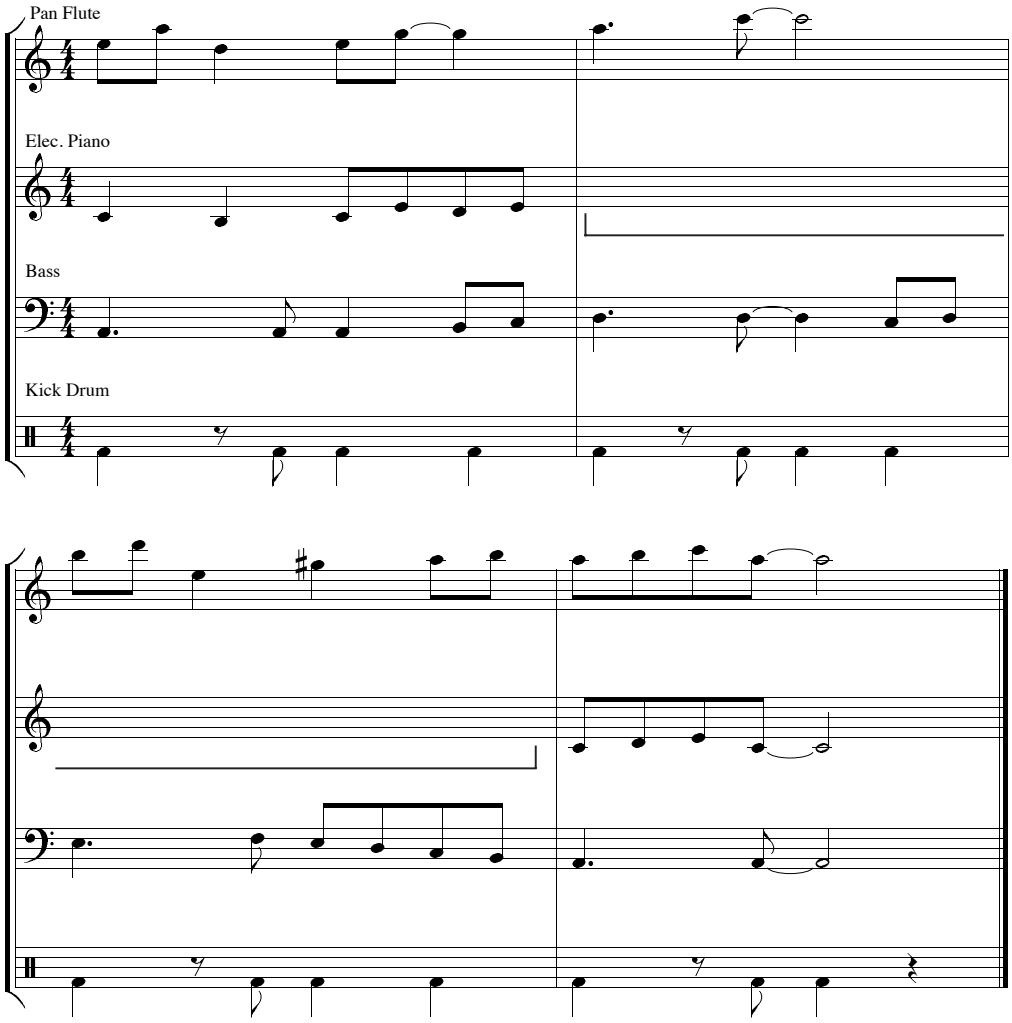
A short musical excerpt will be played **five** times.

A four-part score with notes missing from **two** bars of the electric piano part is printed below.

Write the **rhythm only** into the blank bars of the electric piano part of the four-part score.

Note: A count-in will precede each playing. Click to play sound file

You now have 1 minute of silent working time to study the printed score.



4 + 4 = 8 marks

SECTION A – continued
TURN OVER

Question 5 – Recognition and transcription of rhythms

Four bars of a score for a rhythm section are printed below.

The excerpt as printed will be played **once**.

A different excerpt of music similar to the one printed will then be played **five** times.

There will be **four bars** containing rhythmic differences between the printed music (the first excerpt played) and the different excerpt (playings 2 to 6).

Rhythmic differences may be in any of the four instrumental parts, but will occur only in one part within the same bar.

Note: 1. The total number of notes may change. That is, alterations may involve the addition or subtraction of notes, not simply their relative lengths.

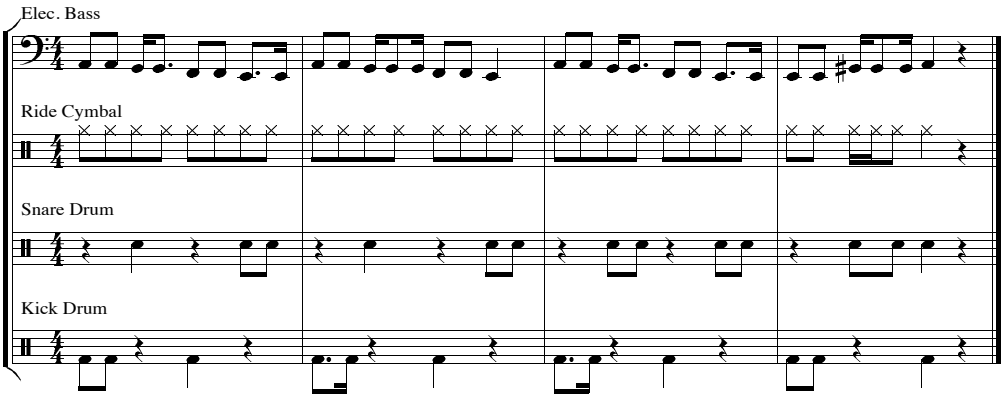
2. The correct positioning of notes within the beat or the bar may involve the addition or subtraction of rests, and/or the alteration of rest lengths.

3. A count-in will precede each playing.

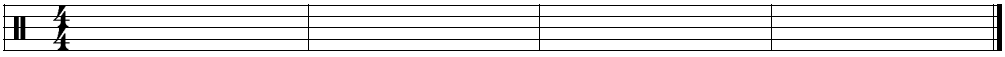
Where the rhythmic differences occur,

1. **circle** the notes that are different
2. **notate** clearly the **rhythm** (only) that was played by writing the altered rhythm(s) in the appropriate bar of the blank stave provided. Click to play: sound file 1, sound file 2

You now have 1 minute of silent working time to study the printed score.



Notate changed rhythms on this stave



8 marks

Part 4: Characteristics of a pre-recorded work

Question 6

An excerpt of music will be played three times.
There will be silent working time after each playing.

First playing	–	1 minute 30 seconds silence
Second playing	–	2 minutes 20 seconds silence
Third playing	–	3 minutes 20 seconds (recommended working time for completion of Question 6)

Excerpt: 'It's okay,' performed by Ruby Hunter on the CD *Feeling Good* (2 minutes 20 seconds).

a. Role of instruments Click to play sound file

i. Identify two instruments heard in the excerpt and **describe** their role.
Do not identify vocal parts in your answer.

2 × 2 = 4 marks

ii. **Describe two** ways in which the vocal parts are characteristic of the style(s) of the excerpt.

$2 \times 2 = 4$ marks

b. Rhythmic features

Two sections of the excerpt, the guitar solo and the rhythm solo, do not include vocals. Select either the guitar solo **or** the rhythm solo and **describe** its rhythmic features. You may wish to use a diagram to illustrate your answer.

3 marks

c. Use of chords

Comment on the use of chords in the excerpt.

2 marks

Total 13 marks

END OF SECTION A

SECTION B: Part-writing OR Improvisation

Instructions for Section B

Choose Question 7 (Part-writing) **or** Question 8 (Improvisation) according to the option that you selected for study in Unit 3. Answer **all parts** of **one** (only) of the questions in pen or pencil.

EITHER

Question 7 – Part-writing

During Unit 3 you harmonised a melodic excerpt to create an arrangement.

a. **Describe two** characteristics of the melody upon which your harmonisation was based.

$2 \times 3 = 6$ marks

b. **Describe** the treatment of musical ideas used in your arrangement. Refer to **three** of the following in your response.

- chord selection
- voicing
- voice leading
- basic arrangement technique
- the relationship between parts
- harmonic rhythm

$3 \times 3 = 9$ marks

SECTION B – Question 7 – continued

c. **Discuss** considerations that arose in the harmonisation of your melody with respect to any **three** of the following.

- instrumentation
- tone colour
- texture
- harmonic basis
- rhythmic relationships
- dynamics
- articulations
- register
- analyses of other arrangements
- use of digital technology

$3 \times 4 = 12$ marks

Total 27 marks

SECTION B – continued

TURN OVER

OR

Question 8 – Improvisation

During Unit 3 you prepared and performed an improvisation.

a. **Describe two** stylistic characteristics that formed the basis of your improvisation.

$2 \times 3 = 6$ marks

b. **Describe** improvisational techniques that you used to develop your improvisation.

Refer to **three** of the following in your answer.

- note selection
- melodic development
- rhythmic development
- realisation of stylistic characteristics

$3 \times 3 = 9$ marks

c. **Discuss three** musical issues that were important in the preparation and/or performance of your improvisation.

In your answer you may wish to select issues from the following list.

- scale forms/tonality
- rhythmic relationships
- harmonic progression(s)
- influences
- articulations
- use of the instrument(s)
- variation
- contrast

SECTION C: Aspects of performance

Instructions for Section C

Answer **all** parts of Question 9 in pen or pencil.

Question 9

During Unit 4 you analysed strategies and techniques for preparing and presenting ensemble performances that would realise the characteristics of a range of musical styles. Select one work that you have prepared for performance and identify it by name and composer(s). List the composition (line up) of your group/ensemble. Indicate the style of your group/ensemble. Identify one venue at which your group/ensemble presented a performance. (If it was in a school hall or regional venue, **do not** identify the school, suburb, city or township.)

Name of Work: _____ Performer(s)/Composer(s): _____

Composition of your group/ensemble: _____

_____

Style of your group/ensemble: _____

Venue: _____

a. **Describe** physical aspects of the venue that you identified on page 19.

In your response refer to **structural materials**, **stage dimensions** and **seating capacity**. You may wish to use a diagram to illustrate your answer.

$3 \times 2 = 6$ marks

SECTION C – Question 9 – continued

b. **Discuss three** strategies that were implemented in order to maximise the performance impact of the work that you identified on page 19. One of the strategies that you discuss in your response should refer to the realisation of the characteristics of the style of the work.

$3 \times 4 = 12$ marks

SECTION C – Question 9 – continued
TURN OVER

c. **Discuss two** technical considerations relating to the sound production and/or sound reinforcement of your group's performance within the venue that you have identified on page 19.

In your response you may refer to

- any work(s) in your performance program
- issues relevant to the presence and/or absence of an audience.

$2 \times 4 = 8$ marks

Total 26 marks

END OF QUESTION AND ANSWER BOOK

Appendix 3 – Survey for VCE Music teachers

Personal information:

Male/Female:

In what year did you complete your pre-service qualification?

From which university did you graduate?

In what year did you commence teaching music in secondary school?

For how many years have you taught VCE music (including the present academic year)?

In what particular style(s) of music do you feel your expertise lies?

Information about your School:

What sector is your school in? (ie Independent/Government/Catholic)

What Geographical region is your school in? (metropolitan, regional, remote)

What VCE Music Performance Units do you teach at present?

(ie Unit 1 and 2, Unit 3 and 4 - Group and Unit 3 and 4 - Solo)

Do you teach Group Performance and Solo Performance together in the same classroom?

Do you teach the class for all areas of the VCE course?

If not, for what areas of the course do you employ another specialist teacher?

Information about your teaching practice:

How much class time do you have to teach the VCE Music Performance course?

(for example 6 @ 75 min lessons per fortnight or 5 @ 40 min lessons per week, etc)

Of this class time, approximately how much would you usually devote to aural comprehension?

What are some of the classroom activities you use to help your students develop aural comprehension skills?

(for example: Singing, practice questions, past exam questions, working out melody, rhythms or chords by ear on your instrument(s), use of software programs, use of rhythm names, tonic sol-fah names and/or hand-signs, rhythmic reading, etc)

What factors helped you to decide to use these classroom activities in teaching aural comprehension skills (rather than others)?

To what extent do you feel that your pre-service training addressed the teaching of aural comprehension skills?

Not at all / Barely / Poorly / Satisfactorily / Well / Very well / Extremely thoroughly

Have you attended any professional development sessions dealing with the teaching of aural comprehension skills?

What resources do you use to enhance students aural comprehension skills?

(eg Aural comprehension text books, software, sight-reading books, choral music, Kodály resources, folk tune collections, AMEB resources, etc)

What factors helped you to decide to use these classroom resources in teaching aural comprehension skills (rather than others)?

Do you feel there s a need for more teaching resources in the area of aural comprehension skills?

If yes, what type of resources do you feel would be most helpful?

Appendix 4 – Semi-structured interview questions for Roland Yeung and Helen Champion

1. Describe your history with regard to VCE Music? When were you first employed or contracted by VCAA (or it's predecessors)?

2. Can you summarise the major policy guidelines from VCAA leading to the introduction of the original VCE Music Craft study design?

3. How, and by whom, was it decided that aural comprehension should become such a significant and compulsory component of practical music study in the new VCE?

4. The make-up of the Aural and Written Examination has evolved over time from the original (1992) examination to the present examination. What have been the factors leading to these revisions?

5. Some educators would argue that the aural comprehension requirements of the VCE have become increasingly conventional/Western – eg the removal of chords constructed on 2^{nds} /4^{ths}. Would you agree with this statement? Why/why not?

6. One of the major factors behind the introduction of the new VCE was the idea of a single certificate for all students. In the study of music, this meant that the one of the major requirements of the course was that it had to cater for students from a wide variety of musical backgrounds – notably from the worlds of Rock music and Jazz. To what extent did this effect the specific requirements of the aural comprehension work requirement (for Group and Solo)?

7. To what extent has the evolution of the VCE aural requirements been driven by input from teachers/educators?

8. To what extent has the evolution of the VCE aural requirements been driven by policy changes from VCAA?

9. To what extent has the evolution of the VCE aural requirements been driven by student achievement (ie how students appear to be coping with particular requirements)?
10. To what extent has the evolution of the VCE aural requirements been driven by the preference/choice of the expert(s) writing or designing the examination?

11. Given that the topic of aural comprehension is a large one, what considerations led to the specific tasks on the original VCE Aural and Written examination being selected? How has this examination been gradually refined over the subsequent years?