

## Digitally mediated collaboration: Composing 10,427 miles and 11 hours apart

Emily Wilson [1] and Pauline Black [2]

[1] University of Melbourne, Australia, [2] University of Aberdeen, UK  
emily.wilson@unimelb.edu.au

**Disciplinary background A.** Music education. One of the perennial problems of music education is building music teachers' skills and confidence to include more creative as opposed to recreative music making in their classrooms. There is a need to counter hegemonic thinking that privileges performance, restricts creativity and the ongoing development of new music (Fautley, 2015; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010), and recognise the everyday musical cultures of young people (Green, 2008). Drawing on participatory culture in media education (Jenkins 2006), collaborative co-construction of digital music projects can contribute to more culturally relevant pedagogy (Cremata & Powell, 2015) and the development of student voice.

**Disciplinary background B.** Ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicology takes a holistic and relativistic view of music making in its cultural context with the transmission of music from one context to another recognised as a cross-cultural phenomenon which is relevant to considering pedagogy across cultural boundaries (Campbell, 2001). Turino's (2008) theory of participatory music making is increasingly used in music education to understand experiences that involve all learners in engaging musical experiences irrespective of prior experience. Camlin (2014) suggests applying a dialogic frame to explore the continuum between Turino's (2008) presentational and participatory fields.

### Abstract

Our aim for this paper is to use Turino's (2008) theory of participatory music making to analyse a real-world collaborative online music and video creation project that we undertook with our music education student teachers in response to the theme: My Life in Isolation: A World Apart or Same Difference?

At the beginning of 2021, both Aberdeen, Scotland and Melbourne, Australia had been in extended lockdowns and prolonged remote learning. On opposite sides of the world, we noticed that our teacher education students were experiencing wellbeing and engagement challenges due to isolation. We decided to undertake a digital collaborative composing project so our students could explore a real-world music and video creation project that they could adapt for use with school students and participate musically with peers.

Using a cloud-based digital-audio-workstation the students worked in groups of five. Each student collected video that captured their experience of life in isolation. As a group, they combined and edited this footage into 1-2 minutes to depict their collective experience of lockdown on opposite sides of the world. Then, they collaboratively composed music to accompany their footage in the same way that film composers work.

Digital technologies are recognised as supporting students at all levels of prior musical experience to compose. The access to digital instruments and loops means that the process of creating music is not limited by people's skill in playing an instrument or being fluent in musical notation. The rise of low cost and accessible music software and hardware has meant that young people frequently create music in their lives outside of school. Bringing digital technologies into school classrooms promotes participation: it builds bridges between young people's inside and outside school musical lives, thus supporting their multiple and shifting musical identities and reducing alienation with school music (Spruce, 2015). Reducing the barriers to music making promotes access and inclusion. Composing

provides opportunities for individual voices to be heard and for young people to play and create ‘their’ music, using a pedagogy that draws on Green’s (2002, 2008) informal music learning principles.

**Interdisciplinary implications.** Our paper aims to highlight the commonalities between, and affordances of, drawing on theories derived from both music education and ethnomusicology to build the confidence of music educators to incorporate creative music making, digital technologies, and the musics that young people choose for themselves, in their classrooms.

### References

- Campbell, P. (2001). Unsafe suppositions? Cutting across cultures on questions of music’s transmission. *Music education research*, 3(2), 215–226. doi: 10.1080/14613800120089269.
- Camlin, D.A., (2014). Whose quality is it anyway? Inhabiting the creative tension between presentational and participatory music. *Journal of arts & communities*, 6(2–3), 99–118.
- Cremata, R. and Powell, B., (2017). Online music collaboration project: Digitally mediated, deterritorialized music education. *International journal of music education*, 35(2), 302–315.
- Fautley, M. (2015). Music education assessment and social justice: Resisting hegemony through formative assessment. In C. Benedict, P. Schmidt & G. Spruce (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of social justice in music education* (pp. 514–524). Oxford University Press.
- Georgii-Hemming, E., & Westvall, M. (2010). Music education – a personal matter? Examining the current discourses of music education in Sweden. *British journal of music education*, 27(1), 21–33.
- Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn*. Ashgate.
- Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning and the school: a new classroom pedagogy*. Ashgate.
- Jenkins, H., (2006). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century. An occasional paper on digital media and learning. John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
- Spruce, G. (2015). Music education, social justice, and the “student voice”: Addressing student alienation through a dialogical conception of music education. In C. Benedict, P. Schmidt, G. Spruce & P. Woodford (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook for social justice in music education* (pp. 287–301). Oxford University Press.
- Turino, T. (2008). *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. The University of Chicago Press.