

Editorial

We write curriculum documents that are full of good intentions – ambitious musical aims, the highest educational aspirations and holistic principles that place the learner at the centre. Yet, in many ways, curriculum writing is an exercise in asserting control of what and how we might teach. The notion of the intended curriculum, that is, explicit goals to determine the outcome of learning, has its roots in what became known as the *Tyler Rationale* and has continued to influence curriculum inquiry, planning, development, test construction and learning outcomes to the present day (Schubert, 2008). In *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*, Ralph Tyler (1949) formulated a deceptively simple structure that has guided curriculum developers and researchers for over fifty years. This entailed: (i) Defining appropriate learning objectives, (ii) Introducing useful learning experiences, (iii) Organising experiences to maximise their effect; and (iv) Evaluating the process and revising the areas that were not effective. According to Schubert (2008), many curriculum scholars and developers ignored several other aspects of Tyler's work and many of his other recommendations were lost in the tendency to follow his curriculum 'recipe' in schools, state departments or ministries of education. What Tyler had argued was that perspectives be sought from other philosophical and psychological positions, and that the influences of society, the individual, and other disciplines also be considered. He also believed that learning experiences were more important than activities or content. Moreover, he asserted that non-school experiences of students and their active social lives were also worthy of study and finally, he believed that the four steps in his model should not be used in the order presented in his text, but according to situation need. However, only the bones of Tyler's message survived while his more embodied emphasis on careful attention to context and nuance in student lives was overlooked in the process (Schubert, 2008).

Were Tyler to drop into our schools and institutions today, I wonder whether he would still find evidence of his curriculum theory in action? I suspect that for music education, he would find many variations on his formula and a strong sense that students' musical learning experiences outside of school were contributing in very powerful ways to their in-school learning. However, the curricular and pedagogical process is far from reaching a state of equilibrium. Where once there might have been an exclusive focus on a particular 'canon' of musical works to be studied, the logical order of progression is more often than not disrupted when, unpredictably, a piece of music preoccupies the learners to such an extent that it begs inclusion in the formal course of study. Naturally, this happens quite frequently – consider how themes from the soundtrack of the *Harry Potter* films have appears in grade examination syllabi, or how young ensembles determinedly overcome any perceived challenges of technique just to recreate the musical atmosphere of the *Twilight* series.

More insidious perhaps, from a curriculum perspective, is not the unpredictability of external influences on curriculum, but the increasing *predictability* of commercial moments on a global scale where, at a designated time of year, far from the realm of education, or music education, these become the superimposed curriculum in schools. Here I am referring to what is known in commercial terms as 'the Christmas No. 1', typically the X-Factor winner, where a previously unknown singer will invariably perform a new cover version of

an existing pop song. The song then assumes a life of its own as children from a very young age are swept along by the commercial moment. School music is invariably caught up in the whirl, and any carefully planned curriculum may be relegated by the mighty commercial and cultural power of the popular musical moment – irrespective of its musical or contextual appropriateness. This is not a criticism of popular music per se, nor of informal learning, rather, it draws attention to the curriculum conflict that can occur for music educators when their programme of study is consistently displaced by other dominating forces that quash the agency and identity of both teacher and student in one fell swoop.

At the same time, one of the most interesting phenomena to observe in the past 12 months has been the emergence of the ‘Cup Song’ in a new lease of life through an American musical comedy film, *Pitch Perfect* (directed by Jason Moore, 2012). In idle moments, no cup was left unattended whilst youngsters broke into song, rhythmic clapping, and tapping with great dexterity. YouTube saw an explosion of variations, would-be instructors, and cute impressions. Interpretations included an Irish-language version performed by over 600 secondary students at an Irish language summer school on the Western seaboard that quickly went ‘viral’ with almost half a million YouTube views – although this pales into insignificance when compared with the viewing figures of other versions at 4, 8, 12 and 18 million views respectively, or the movie’s own 2-minute video clip with 37 million views (and counting).

With so many views, could it possibly have educational relevance? The song itself, ‘Cups (You’re Gonna Miss Me)’ is a recreation of an old folk song popularised in the USA, and more recently brought to light by a quirky, folk-pop British band, *Lulu and the Lampshades* (recently renamed the *Landshapes*), crossing the Atlantic a number of times until it was included in the aforementioned *Pitch Perfect* (2012). The age-old cup game also took on a new energy and endless forms of cooperative learning as youngsters endeavoured to build accuracy, speed and dexterity with plastic cups. From a music curriculum perspective, who could fault the tuneful singing of a pentatonic folk song, the creation of a strong sense of pulse, the fluency of rhythms, the variety of timbres created with a plastic container, and all sorts of attempts to duet, harmonise, and appreciate an a cappella sound?

Although a whole realm of music video is readily available to tech savvy youngsters on their own devices, the movie *Pitch Perfect* itself is not considered suitable for under 13s by the film classification boards in Britain, Ireland, Australia and the USA – and this leaves something of an ethical dilemma for music educators as curriculum makers in having to ride the wave of both predictable and unpredictable elements of curriculum. Some believe that pop music is inappropriate for young, impressionable minds and that it contributes directly to the increasing commercialisation and sexualisation of the young. The need to let children be children was carefully discussed in the Bailey Report (2011) and in academic blogging (e.g. Attwood and her colleagues, 2012). Elsewhere, McKenry (2011) argues that we need clear ethical frameworks to inform syllabi that include sexualised music content, especially where there is an expectation on the part of examination authorities that such syllabi are routinely used to shape the teaching of singing. This is also true in broader music curriculum contexts even in the absence of formal evaluation. To say the least, as music educators, curriculum planners and consumers of popular culture, we need to maintain dialogue on these issues – and stay on our toes.

We open this issue with Martin Ashley's paper on choral practice with boys where he draws attention to case studies of boys' changing voices. The author notes how popular culture has tended to impact negatively on understanding of how boys' voices develop and he emphasises the importance of establishing a research-based approach to boys' singing development.

Helping students to find more strategic approaches to their personal practice, as instrumentalists and vocalists is the subject of Kim Burwell and Matthew Shipton's action research study where the development of self-regulatory skills, generic practice strategies and tools for time-management and self-evaluation are found to have relevance for music learners at many levels and across domains.

Bringing a German perspective to the use of gesture and body-movement as pedagogic tools in the teaching of singing, Julia Nafisi reports on a survey amongst professional singing teachers in Germany and identifies categories of movements that voice teachers use to enhance explanation and/or demonstration, as well as the student learning experience as a whole.

Although his theoretical framework is informed by the scholarship of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Johan Söderman's paper is essentially one that touches on curriculum issues as he traces how American scholars talk about the academisation of hip-hop and how interest in this form of music has grown in universities over the past four decades.

Wendy Hargreaves conducts a careful profiling of the jazz singer and identifies five statistically significant characteristics which differentiate vocalists' experiences from other jazz musicians. Suggestions as to how jazz educators might respond to the findings are also discussed.

Finally, Kelly A Parkes and Ryan Daniel examine motivations impacting upon music instrument teachers' decisions to teach and perform in higher education. Their study draws from an international population of music instrument teachers from nine countries and therefore the findings have relevance in many parts of the world.

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