Chapter 11

Perspectives on musical creativity: where next?

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11.1 Introduction

In this final chapter some overarching themes emerging from the volume's contributions are discussed. The themes identified, which are interconnected, are not exhaustive but capture broad issues that resonate across creativity studies in music education research and related areas. The first two themes concern the definition of musical creativity and the provision of musical creativity practices across different countries. Subsequent themes relate to the importance of emotional engagement for the effective implementation of these types of activities and with implications for practice. As most of the previous chapters focused on formal education settings, the contexts of musical creativity discussed here often refer to formal education. In light of the emerging themes the chapter concludes with a consideration of issues that would need further research.

11.2 Understanding musical creativity

The increased dissemination of all styles of music and musical practices through the globalized media and the internet has not facilitated a clearer definition of the concept of creativity in music. There seems to be at least two opposing views among people's general understanding of musical creativity: the *systematic* and the *romantic*. These views seem to correspond with the discourses of 'mastery' versus 'mystery' or 'absolute expertise', identified in research with advanced performers (Creech et al., 2010; Wilson & MacDonald, 2005). The *systematic* view involves a good deal of effort and persistence, where creative work is seen as a rational everyday affair. For instance, adult musicians follow an intense daily working schedule when preparing a new recording (especially if the recording studio is paid for by the day!). This is in opposition to the *romantic* view of creativity characterized by irrationality, mystery and unconsciousness. But a relevant idea for developing musical creativity emerging from this volume is that a period of focused effort is required in order to consider a musical problem. The final contestants in student music competitions, for example, are likely to have rehearsed for months prior to impressing the panel of adjudicators and the audience. This is not acknowledged

in *romantic* explanations of the creative process, perhaps due to successful musicians not seeing this type of sustained effort as hard work – see, for instance, the mystical explanations of Harvey's composing in Deliège and Harvey (2006) and of Mozart's in Vernon (1970). Musicians' accounts of sustained creative work appear underpinned by motivation (e.g. McCutchan, 1999). While engaged in focused activities, highly motivated individuals' perception of time is minimized, a situation described as being in a state of *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

Even though social psychologists have defined the creative product as something that is assessed as novel and valuable (Amabile, 1996) there will always be a degree of paradox in defining musical creativity. The paradox is illustrated by the fact that a similar musical product could be assessed as novel for one learner and not very novel for another, depending on the learner's previous experiences. This may turn into confusion if we try to apply adult assessment criteria to children's work. It is the facilitator or teacher who would need to develop particular criteria for each learner or group of learners. Novelty and usefulness, nevertheless, would need to be seen as internally related rather than independent requirements. A creative musical product would need to be 'useful in a particularly novel way' for the learner and 'novel in a useful or appropriate way' for the activity (Klausen, 2010, p. 356). Therefore, not any combination of sounds and music structures will do: even if they are novel for the learner, they have to be useful in an appropriate way, determined by the parameters of the activity.

In the opening chapter Burnard argues against the limitations of a historical understanding of creativity linked with high-art orthodoxies that praise individual geniuses (reinforcing the romantic view). She advocates instead for an understanding of musical creativity *as it is practised* and considers the differing values and features that apply to different modes of creativity, including individual, collaborative and performance creativity. She suggests that teachers and students need to learn about musical creativity as a situated social activity, recognizing the existence of various modes in which musical creativity can be practised. Educators and learners would not need to define what creativity *is* but rather explain what constitutes the practices on which multiple creativities of music are based, asking *which* music, from *what* social and activity system it arises, and *who* are the artists or groups that inform and support it.

In contemporary music curriculum guidelines, creativity is seen as a skill to be developed by all students and is generally linked with composition and improvisation activities. Although the teachers' perceptions of creativity appear to be evidenced during these types of activities, performing and appraising are also activities in which students can develop their musical creativity skills (Odena et al., 2005). A situated understanding of musical creativity, shared with all those involved in the learning interaction, would be more useful than a romantic definition of creativity characterized by mystery and linked with the exceptionality of geniuses. Although there are still many unknowns about how musical ideas come into being, neuroscientists in recent years have uncovered how the musical brain works (Altenmüller & Gruhn, 2002; Hodges, 2006; Patel, 2009).

What seems clear is that the learner needs a strategy to preserve new ideas and a sustained period of effort to refine them, and that some ideas only come about while working (individually, collaboratively or alternating periods of individual and collaborative work). Despite all the complexities outlined above, a working definition of musical creativity may be explained as the development of a musical product that is novel for the individual and useful for the situated musical practice. For example, a professional musician repeating without emotion a pre-learned jazz solo during a concert would not be developing his or her musical creativity a great deal, whereas a student in a school jam session arriving for the first time at some of the same musical ideas as the professional performer would be doing something novel at an individual level and useful for the situated musical practice.

11.3 Musical creativity practices across countries

A number of different musical creativity practices are reported in the countries that form the context of the previous chapters. The variety of practices appears to be linked to the history of provision of these activities in and out of schools and with the pedagogical and teacher education traditions in each country – socio-economic factors are also relevant but would fall beyond the scope of this volume; interested readers can find an excellent introduction to the sociology of music education by Wright (2010), which features in the same series as this book.

Chapter 6 illustrates the comprehensive music school system of Minas Gerais, as well as some of the styles of the rich musical environment in which young people grow up in this Brazilian state. At the same time the author observes that generalist schools choose whether to offer music or not, resulting in some students not receiving any formal music education. Likewise, in Chapter 4 some recent developments in the provision of musical opportunities for children in Portugal are outlined, such as the Curriculum Enrichment Activities. However, the contributors explain that these after-school activities are non-compulsory and suggest that the children who are not attending could be lacking music education experiences at school as some classroom teachers rely on the after-school activities for this provision. Interestingly, at community level, musical activities in Portugal appear to be alive with a diversity of folk groups and philharmonic bands reported in the literature, which provide opportunities for musical engagement outside formal education settings (Boal-Palheiros & Resende, 2010; Ferreira et al., 2006). The students' personal music preferences in these two countries are not very different to other contexts and seem to be influenced by global trends (Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001, 2004; LeBlanc et al., 2002). But in the cases above the children's communities could be providing additional opportunities for engaging in musical creativity practices outside school. Without trying to suggest a cause–effect relationship, it appears that in some places where young people have greater exposure to informal music-making activities in their communities music has less relevance as a formal school subject.

Musical creativity practices in schools seem also related to the pedagogical tradition in each country. In England, where there has been a strong tradition of creative music-making activity since the 1960s, secondary schools often have a number of rooms for the music department and a collection of instruments, allowing for whole classroom, small group and individual work – Mills and Paynter (2008) and Pitts (2000) offer detailed accounts of the development of creative music-making activities during the second half of the twentieth century. As exemplified in Chapter 2, secondary music school teachers in England generally have a music-related degree and a one-year postgraduate music education qualification, and they tend to bring their preferred practices and styles into generalist schools. Music is compulsory until age 14 and students can choose to continue afterwards, following a number of progression routes. For instance, they can take the A level course at ages 16-18, whose requirements include developing a portfolio of composition exercises and an original piece. In other English-speaking Western countries such as the United States and Australia opportunities for the development of musical creativity in schools seem to be facilitated by a long tradition of music provision coupled with a degree of freedom for educators to develop their own activities. In the United States music school provision is linked to the state and local financial conditions, which results in dissimilarities among schools. Some schools have well-equipped music technology rooms and composing as a regular activity, as in the school described in Chapter 5. In others, the emphasis leans more towards ensemble performance, an activity that drives many programmes focused on preparing orchestras, choirs and marching and jazz bands for competition in adjudicated festivals (Campbell, 2008; Radocy, 2001).

In countries where music is a recent introduction to compulsory education, the opportunities for developing musical creativity in formal settings appear to be more limited. For example, in Spain, following the 1990s education reform, music was made available as a curriculum subject until age 16. The government sent some percussion instruments to schools to promote student-centred practical activities, but teachers are still reported to continue with their teacher-centred pedagogy, characterized by a 'declarative knowledge' tradition and the widespread use of textbooks (Rusinek, 2008, p. 13). Teachers obtain a life contract once they have passed the state theory-based exams (*oposiciones*), after which they have few incentives for long-term personal development. Nevertheless, educators have a considerable degree of freedom when developing curriculum guidelines and some of the work reported is encouraging (see, for instance, the book on creativity in music education by Díaz and Riaño, 2007). Practices such as collaborative composition projects are being employed to engage disaffected adolescents, including some of the studies reviewed in Chapter 10, suggesting that the possibilities for creativity in the classroom are ultimately driven by the individual teachers. As observed in the previous chapter, composing in groups in the classroom opposes the accepted pedagogy in countries that have a teacher-centred education tradition. This type of activity allows for increased student autonomy, which may go against conventional school practices or, in the best-case scenario, be perceived as an innovation.

11.4 Emotion and purpose in musical creativity practices

Regardless of the education system tradition, a common theme that emerges across the chapters is the significant role of emotion in musical creativity practices. Chapter 4 explains how any musical activity is embedded in an emotional context and suggests that teachers would benefit from being aware and making use of the children's emotions when planning classroom activities. Chapter 9 reviews previous studies in music therapy and outlines the importance of establishing and enjoying shared narratives of emotionally expressive activity between child and adult for successful and meaningful music sessions. The author also explains Stern's notion of *affect attunement*, which in music therapy settings is not simply the adult imitating the child's gesture but attempting to read empathically the feelings that lie behind any gestures. This concurs with the notion of *empathetic creativity* described in Chapter 7. One of the outcomes of empathetic creativity would be the emotional link that emerges among musicians when they play and/or improvise together, sometimes generating a 'musical spark'. This spark can appear when groups of players, no matter what style and technical level, perform listening to and interacting with each other instead of just playing alongside each other.

In individual rehearsal and solo performances, the use of emotions may be linked with the player developing and communicating a personal meaning. It has been reported that a degree of rhythmic variation (or rubato) is linked to increased positive assessment of musicality in classical music performance (Johnson, 1997; Madsen et al., 2010). Similarly, in jazz improvisation a degree of variation when developing musical phrases or motifs is preferred to performing those motifs exactly as recorded by other players. The classical rubato and the jazz motifs may be developed by students working out their own emotional link with and understanding of the music and trying hard to communicate it. This requires internal (or intrinsic) motivation, to maintain the will while working towards the improvement of a musical product, in this case the different nuances in the student's own rubato or motifs. A driver of the individuals' motivation may be the sense of fulfilment in the pursuit of something novel and useful, even if the final outcome cannot be clearly defined from the outset.

Gardner (1983, 1993) in his theory of Multiple Intelligences described a number of capacities that he called intelligences. To the more familiar mathematical, linguistic, bodily, musical and spatial intelligences – which are traditionally developed in schools as Maths, Language, Physical Education, Music and Arts and Design – he added *personal* and *interpersonal* intelligences. The latter would be the capacity to perceive the emotions and intentions of those around us. *Personal* intelligence (which he called intrapersonal) would be the capacity to perceive our own feelings. These two capacities converge in Goleman's concept of *emotional intelligence* (1995) and have been used when planning and implementing activities in education and professional development. It is argued that (a) the intelligences can be developed when two or more are used in combination with the personal and the interpersonal intelligences, and (b) such combined activities are more

memorable. For instance, using drama strategies while studying music scores has been employed to enhance learning and decrease performance anxiety. A study by Odena and Cabrera (2006) reports how a group of five conservatoire students assigned five operatic characters to the melodic patterns of a difficult clarinet concerto and invented a short play for the characters. In subsequent sessions they rehearsed and performed the short play and the concerto, each student dressed up and performing only the melodic part assigned to the character (Cabrera et al., 2006; Odena, 2007). These activities, combining musical, personal and interpersonal intelligences, resulted in the participants' development of emotional links with the score and a reported decrease in performance anxiety.

Emotional links developed in group composition activities have been used as a tool to promote inclusion among students from different communities in post-conflict environments (Odena, 2009, 2010) and to facilitate the inclusion of socially vulnerable adolescents in conflictive neighbourhoods (Hesser & Heinemann, 2010). These examples illustrate the strong relationship between music and the emotions, which are particularly relevant during musical creativity practices and can impact on behaviour. Additional other-than-musical benefits include the importance of musical creativity practices such as sound play and experimentation for the development of emotionally rounded and healthy children (Welch, 2010). Educators may be more likely to make full use of this potential by including the musical features of the students' musical cultures and their practices as elements for classroom discussion from which to build on and develop music skills (Barrett, 2005). For instance, the electronic gadgets used by some musicians to build their song arrangements in real time while singing can be analysed in terms of musical features such as pitch, timbre and rhythmic patterns. The combination of these features with the accompanying voices may be the starting point to discuss harmony and arrangements, and this understanding may be later transferred to other practices, with the assistance of the students' emotional links with the music. Potential challenges may revolve around increased student voice, which may interfere again with accepted school practices, and with the need for educators to be curious and open to any new musical developments.

11.5 Implications for practice

Chapter 2 put forward four themes to take into account when thinking about musical creativity: (1) the personal characteristics of those involved in creative activities; (2) the environment most conducive for the development of creativity; (3) the creative process; and (4) its products. In this section some implications for practice are presented, broadening suggestions for secondary schools outlined elsewhere (Odena, forthcoming). Figure 11.1 includes points for consideration when facilitating the development of musical creativity presented under the above four themes, in view of this volume's contributions and recent literature (Burnard, 2007; Hallam, 2010; Hickey, 2009; Philpott, 2007; Sawyer & DeZutter, 2009; Shirley, 2009; Webster, 2009).

PERSON: DIFFERENTIATING FOR PERSONAL NEEDS
Level and type of challenge: individuals require suitable stimulating challenges in relation to their own previous learning. We do better when the activity fits how we think. It is important for facilitators to know the learners, to design activities with scope for developing all their potential. For instance, offering a variety of additional open-ended and challenging tasks (more instruments, different musical materials, extended structures), which will also facilitate the learners' ownership of their creative development.

ENVIRONMENT: THE CONTEXT FOR CREATIVITY
Resources: the potential for creativity may be enhanced by building rich and stimulating resources, which can be used to both initiate and support the creative process. These resources can be musical and extra-musical: a variety of recordings, instruments, films, computers and music software.
Time: individuals require time to satisfactorily complete their work, yet creativity in music cannot be given limitless time. Facilitators need to be sensitive to the learners' needs and flexibly adapt the expectations as an activity or project progresses.
Emotional environment: individuals need to feel capable of taking risks and sense that their contributions are respected and valued. This positive environment can be built and sustained through dialogue with constructive positive feedback.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS
Levels of structure: it is advisable to include various levels of structure when promoting creativity, depending on the task and the desired musical learning. For example, facilitators might set learners a free choice about which problems to solve and how to do it, open-ended tasks that channel the work through particular stimuli (a poem, an object) or structured problem-solving with a limited set of expressive and structural ingredients. All of the above may be done individually or in groups, where participants may learn from each other and generate a product in which no single individual determines the result. To increase efficiency, collective activities need to be carefully planned, combining them with individual thinking time and preserving the work produced along the way.
Students' support: facilitators need to assist the learners' technical development by questioning, prompting, modelling and setting up opportunities for other models to be heard, such as external musicians. Facilitators need to be creative, for instance 'jamming' with learners, and have to encourage further development of musical ideas, as novice musicians are likely to be satisfied with their work after a basic exploratory phase.

THE CREATIVE PRODUCT
Assessment: sharing the assessment of work and developing assessment criteria with the learners facilitates the emergence of further ideas and the development of self-assessment skills. For instance, in a composition project, asking participants to come up with musical examples that match each of the assessment criteria and letting them give constructive feedback to each other at different stages of the project.

Figure 11.1   Facilitating the development of musical creativity. Developed from Odena (forthcoming)

Although the recommendations in Figure 11.1 may appear to focus on composition they could be used for all types of musical activities, for instance when exploring the use of musical elements (tempo, dynamics and so on) to give different emotional qualities to the performance of a song or when appraising

these qualities in other people's performances. Intrinsic motivation appears to be a driver for successful students (Odena, 2001) and this could be facilitated rather than inhibited by offering learners a degree of choice in terms of activities and materials. The role of the facilitator should be to fire up the individuals' curiosity to learn, developing rather than inhibiting their interests.

The learners' development of music-making skills can be assisted by appraising how music and sound is made and used by others. The components of sound and music permeate most daily human activities. Music and sounds are used in audiovisual marketing as well as many other contexts to add an emotional dimension to objects and social phenomena, from consumer products to sports, political and religious gatherings. Music can be a tool for manipulation when used 'in conjunction with an intellectual message, adding new and powerful emotional dimensions to it' (Strandberg & Wallin, 2006, p. x). For example, rhythm and volume can induce a wide range of emotional reactions, including calmness and stress. Harmony combined with instrumentation is often used in the media to support emotions such as joy or sadness, while melodic themes or leitmotifs are linked with characters (Gustems, 2005). Developing an increased awareness to critically listen to these uses of music in daily live seems very relevant for education in the internet age and has the potential to assist learners' development of their own musical creativity.

11.6 Issues for further study: where next?

It is hoped this volume has contributed to the understanding of musical creativity, drawing on current debates in music education research and closely related areas. As in other social sciences, systematic inquiry often produces more questions than answers. Nevertheless, it is this process that suggests what questions need addressing and how to frame them better. For example, some music therapy inquiry lines focused on emotions have not yet been fully explored in mainstream education settings. In Chapter 9 there are references to sessions in which participants found that some activities evoked feelings of regret and loss, relating to earlier musical experiences or unhappy musical memories. Such results highlight that educators need sensitivity and care in order to avoid early negative musical experiences that may hamper future musical creativity development. For instance, imposing songs that evoke happy feelings to the facilitator but not necessarily to the students or imposing activities that assist the learning preferences of a majority but not all of the participants may inhibit the development of musical creativity.

An overview of general creativity studies by Sternberg suggests that people with creative abilities who are 'never taught or assessed in a way that matches their pattern of abilities, may be at a disadvantage in course after course' (2006, pp. 5-6). The subsequent labelling of the minority as 'non-creative' could result in lower self-esteem and unhappy memories linked with formal music education. Cases of 'lifelong perceptions of musical disability' due to teachers' negative

comments and public humiliation in front of peers have been documented in studies of signing development (Welch, 2001, p. 15). How to best assist the growth of musical creativity skills in learners of all ages who may have lacked previous opportunities for musical engagement or may have had early negative experiences is an issue that requires further study.

Musical creativity development in informal settings and what may be learned from it for formal education (Green, 2008) is also a topic with scope for further inquiry, particularly in countries where opportunities for informal musical engagement abound outside schools. The impact of teacher education developments on the pedagogical traditions of different countries is another area for continuing exploration. Comparative music education is a field that is relatively underdeveloped but has the potential to increase awareness of good practice internationally (Tate, 2001). Other questions to explore further include what may be learned from studying musical creativity practices across genres (Chapter 8) and from projects that succeed in apparently unsupportive environments. Exploring success factors in unsupportive settings with a lack of resources could be useful for advancing practice in places without a strong tradition of creative music-making activity.

Public forums such as the publications and conferences organized by the International Society for Music Education (www.isme.org) and other national and international professional associations around the world offer good opportunities for exchange and collaborative studies across different countries. How current and future educators may develop their own pedagogy for creativity, taking into account their local needs and personal aspirations in an increasingly globalized world, is a challenge for all those involved in music education. This is one challenge that we should rise to and cherish.

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