

Informal music making in studio music instruction: A Canadian case study

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The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of how one classically trained musician adapted his pedagogical practices to accommodate the needs and interests of his students. A case-study methodology was employed to explore the perceptions and practices of this teacher, and data were collected over a two-year period through interviews and observations. Findings indicated that students were engaged in music-making throughout the lesson, and that many of the lesson characteristics aligned with Lucy Green's (2002, 2008) descriptions of an informal pedagogical orientation. The overarching aim of the teacher's instruction was to support students' development of musical knowledge and skills that would enhance their learning, and to expand their understanding of musical genres and performance practices.

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to examine the use of informal music-making techniques in the context of one-to-one studio instruction. Informal music instruction refers to a style of teaching that is responsive to students' interests (Finney & Philpott, 2010; Folkestad, 2006; Jenkins, 2011; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010).

Informal learning is the main process through which we acquire many skills: young children learn to speak or sing informally by listening and trying to replicate the sounds they hear in their environment (Deliège & Sloboda, 1996). And many musicians, particularly musicians playing pop, rock or hip hop music, have used trial and error to recreate songs or to find ways to replicate the sounds they imagine (Green, 2002; Soderman & Folkestad, 2004). Green (2008) argued that:

[T]here is something almost natural about informal music learning practices, [and] our society has for decades, or even centuries, alienated us from them by removing them from the realm of everyday life, as well as from that of formal music education, so that we are now in a position of having to teach them back to ourselves (p. 21).

Classroom music educators are introducing popular repertoire and composition informally to more closely resemble the ways in which many professional musicians

and songwriters practise their craft (Green, 2008; Karlsen, 2010). The teacher's role in this setting is to structure the learning opportunity and troubleshoot as necessary (Baker & Green, 2013; Green, 2008, 2014; Karlsen, 2010; Varivarigou, 2014). Though these activities have been criticized for not exposing students to new kinds of repertoire and for underutilizing the expertise of the teacher, informal types of learning activities do provide students with opportunities to learn repertoire of their choice in a self-directed manner (Green, 2008).

Incorporating informal music-making is possible in other educational settings, such as the music studio. Studio music instruction refers to one-to-one instruction, and this learning style has dominated western classical music education, which often emphasizes learning through written notation (Creech & Gaunt, 2012; Davidson & Jordan, 2007). Many have advocated for a music learning process that mimics learning in everyday life where replicating sounds that we hear is incorporated in the learning process. Music is a sound-based medium, and many have advocated for an emphasis on learning by ear along with, or instead of, learning by note (Mainwaring, 1941; Priest, 1989).

While many studio music teachers are primarily trained in Western Classical traditions, which may have primarily involved learning by note, their students may be interested in learning about other genres and may learn in a different manner from their teachers (Brook, Upitis & Troop, 2016; Upitis et al., 2015). How teachers incorporate student-chosen repertoire in their instruction and what pedagogical strategies and orientations they use requires further investigation.

The purpose of this research, therefore, was to gain an in-depth understanding of how one classically trained musician went about adapting his pedagogical practices to accommodate the needs and interests of his students. The research questions guiding this study were as follows: (a) What was the teacher's musical background? (b) In what ways did the teacher use his musical and pedagogical knowledge to meet students' needs and interests?

This paper contains four sections. First, we review salient literature related to an informal orientation to pedagogy and studio music instruction. Second, we describe the case-study methodology that was employed to explore the background and pedagogical practices of a teacher using informal instruction. Third, we present our findings, using Green's (2008) five characteristics of informal learning as a framework. Finally, in the fourth section, we discuss our findings.

Review of literature

Informal and formal pedagogical orientations

Informal teaching methods are often defined in relation to formal teaching methods. Folkestad (2006) asserted that formal learning situations focus on 'learning how to play music (learning how to make music), whereas, in informal learning practice, the mind is directed towards playing music (music-making)' (p. 138). Formal learning settings have been described as having a predetermined sequence of instruction, which is applied regardless of the students' needs and is ultimately underpinned by the assumption that students learn through an incremental attainment of skills and knowledge. Conversely, in

the informal learning setting, the activities emerge in response to students' needs (Folkestad, 2006; Green, 2008; Jenkins, 2011).

In her seminal book, *How Popular Musicians Learn*, Green (2002) described how popular musicians, who were often self-taught, developed their instrumental abilities using an aural process. These musicians developed appropriate playing technique by listening to, and copying, live and recorded performances. Their learning processes seemed to be haphazard, as they acquired technique through performing the repertoire. In spite of difficulties, these musicians were motivated to persevere in order to learn the pieces they selected. These research findings underscore how students are motivated by learning music they like and how the learning processes of non-classical musicians are different from those of musicians who are formally trained. Consequently, if teachers wish to incorporate popular music in their lessons, it would seem important that they also incorporate appropriate learning processes.

In a subsequent book, Green (2008) documented a study that examined the use of informal music learning methods in the classroom. To begin, Green (2008) outlined five fundamental principles of informal, student-directed music-making: (a) choosing the repertoire themselves; (b) learning the repertoire through aural copying; (c) working with peers during the learning process, so that they can learn from one another; (d) learning musical skills and knowledge in a haphazard way, so that students learn skills as they are needed; and (e) engaging in listening, performing, improvising, and composing throughout the learning process (Green, 2008).

Using these principles, Green led a research project involving 32 classroom teachers and over 1,500 students in 21 secondary schools in the UK. The project consisted of seven stages in which students applied the principles of informal learning as they learned a variety of popular and classical pieces and gained perspectives from their peers, professional popular musicians, and their teachers. Throughout the project, the music teachers' main role was to establish behaviour expectations for small-group work, to stand back and observe, and then to provide encouragement, and model or demonstrate, as necessary (Green, 2008).

Green (2008) observed that although most of the teachers were classically trained, they had also received training in a variety of music-learning strategies, including informal ones. This was confirmed during Green's research project when the teachers were able to learn a piece by mimicking a CD recording. Yet, at the outset of the project, 'every school teacher in the project found the [informal] strategies new, and in many cases radical and challenging' (Green, 2008, p. 27). Green attributed the teachers' trepidation to the risks that these informal strategies would bring to teachers' professional roles and responsibilities (Green, 2008, p. 29). Teachers in this project, like many teachers around the world, have the responsibility of delivering the curriculum in an engaging and effective manner for all students, despite their background. Teachers must conduct regular assessments and report students' achievement to parents and principals. Adopting a new type of pedagogy where students direct the content and the learning process could raise classroom management issues, as well as potentially limit the quality of the learning that ensues. The spectre of accountability may also impede teachers from adopting this type of pedagogy.

In fact, however, the students in this study were able to enhance their musical skills and knowledge in meaningful ways. At the end of the project, many of the teachers continued to incorporate informal strategies in their pedagogical practices, and it became

clear that teachers could support these types of student-directed learning outcomes, while still meeting their professional obligations.

Other studies have documented the incorporation of informal music education in other jurisdictions, including Wales (e.g., Evans, Beauchamp & John, 2015) and Canada (e.g., Wright, 2011, 2012; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010)

The aforementioned research findings illuminate how an informal pedagogy can be incorporated into the classroom context. This pedagogical approach may also be applicable within the studio context. However, before examining the application of this pedagogical orientation in the studio, one must also examine how the studio context is both similar to and different from the classroom context. These similarities and differences are explored below.

Teachers' incorporation of informal pedagogical orientations in the studio context

Studio teaching, like classroom teaching, is steeped in the use of a formal pedagogical orientation. Teachers often incrementally lead their students through a series of predetermined repertoire selections, which is complemented with a variety of skills-based exercises aimed at improving students' technical facility, sight-reading ability and aural acuity. While studio teachers are not bound by a formalized curriculum, as are their school-based counterparts, many still follow the syllabi of various conservatory or exam programs, such as Canada's Royal Conservatory (www.rcmusic.ca) or the UK-based Associated Board (www.abrsm.org) (Brook, Upitis & Troop, 2016; Upitis, Abrami, Brook, Boese & King, 2016), and supplement these programs' requirements with other repertoire or activities, such as composing or improvising (Brook, Upitis & Troop, 2016; Pike, 2013).

Recently, a pilot project that examined the implementation of an informal, ear-based-methods approach was undertaken by Green and her colleagues (Baker & Green, 2013; Varivarigou, 2014). Baker and Green (2013) documented a pilot study in which four teachers and 15 students engaged in ear-based learning within the studio context, and in which the methodology was reminiscent of the classroom-based, informal pedagogical approach described earlier by Green (2008). Teachers participating in the study found that the students' confidence improved (Varivarigou, 2014). Within the studio context, specifically, students engaged in three stages of learning: first students were asked to play along to a pop-funk track, where they were required to decipher the notes by ear. Students were expected to work independently to the extent possible, with the teacher providing support when absolutely necessary. After learning this track, students would apply their strategies to learn other tracks, again with teachers providing strategies to support the acquisition of the lines as necessary. In the second stage, this procedure was applied to the learning of one of a select set of classical pieces. In the final stage, the students were asked to bring in an audio file of a piece they wanted to learn. In all these stages, the students were asked to work out the music by ear and the teacher provided strategies as necessary in order to help them solve the problem of deciphering the music. Questionnaires and interview data indicated positive reviews of this method, as many of the students involved in the project aimed to be musicians who could play both from notation and by ear. Similarly, teachers commented on how this approach supported students' aural skills and memory (Baker & Green, 2013; Varivarigou, 2014).

Varivarigou (2014) examined the teachers' use of strategies during this process and found that humming along, singing prolonged notes, and encouraging the students to listen were the most popular strategies. She also noted that there were significant numbers of verbal interactions during these ear-based activities. Teachers also became more aware of how their students could start learning a piece aurally, and of how they could give the students more autonomy even within a one-to-one context (Varivarigou, 2014).

Using a pre- and post-test design, Baker and Green (2014) compared the student participants' aural skills (pitch, rhythm, contour, tempo, closure) with a matched group of students taking lessons from the same teachers, but not part of this ear-based study. Students in the ear-training group surpassed those in the matched control group in every category. This finding suggested that incorporating an ear-based approach in studio instruction can be an effective component of studio music instruction.

In another study, Robinson (2012) examined the pedagogical practices of two musicians who performed popular music. Both musicians featured in this case study had quit formal music lessons as children, disappointed in the content of their instruction. Later, captivated by new sounds, they had begun learning different instruments and choosing their own repertoire. They learned these new instruments by listening to and watching performers, and from time to time, seeking formal instruction. In short, these teachers were more successful learners when an informal approach was used. Using interviews and lesson observations, Robinson examined the pedagogical methods of these two individuals and found that even though they had similar histories as learners, they had very different teaching styles, and relied on informal methods to varying degrees and incorporated aspects from their formal learning experiences. These participants did not want their students to learn as they had, but rather developed an approach that was infused with strategies and activities they wished their own teachers had used, strategies that relied on both formal and informal approaches with the idea that their students could avoid some of their own shortcomings as performers.

Teachers are always looking for insights to help engage and motivate their students and help them develop skills to become more independent or more self-regulated (Hallam, 1997; Nielson, 2010; McPherson, Davidson & Faulkner, 2012; Upitis, Brook & Varela, 2015; Upitis, Abrami, Brook & Varela, 2015). Incorporating pedagogical practices that do not align with the goals of their students may limit student interest and engagement. Developing a different pedagogical approach, such as shifting from a formal to a more informal approach, which includes incorporating more ear-based playing, may serve students' needs more effectively.

Method

A case study methodology (Yin, 2014) was used to examine the pedagogical practices of one guitar teacher employing informal learning activities in the studio music lesson. A case study methodology allows one to 'retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.' (Yin, 2014, p. 4). This case study was part of a larger project that examined pedagogical practices of Canadian studio teachers (Brook, Upitis & Troop, 2016; Upitis, Abrami, Brook, Boese & King, 2016; Upitis, Abrami, Brook & King, 2016; Upitis, Abrami, Varela, King & Brook, 2016). Teachers in this larger study were randomly recruited, as part

of a study that examined studio music teaching, from a database of studio music teachers who had sent at least one student to an exam in the five years prior to the study and who lived in a large urban centre in Canada. The findings from the multiple case studies that examined curricular and pedagogical offerings are explored in other publications (Brook, Uptis & Troop, 2016). This present case study focuses on the pedagogical practices of one of those teachers who employed an informal, ear-based pedagogy that was unique.

This study provides an in-depth description of one teacher's pedagogical approach; thus the generalizability of the findings is limited. Nevertheless, focusing on a single-case study allows one to describe and provide an in-depth illustration of how an informal, ear-based pedagogical approach is applied in a Canadian music studio, thus increasing our understanding of the implementation and outcomes of this particular pedagogical approach.

Data were collected from the teacher and his students over a two-year period, using observations, interviews, and questionnaires. In the first year, a research assistant observed the lessons, taking time-stamped field notes. In addition, the research assistant videotaped components of the lesson to gather video evidence of the pedagogical practices of the teacher. In the second year, we asked the teacher to record consecutive lessons of a variety of students in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of how the teacher responds to and supports the students' needs over a period of time. In this way, we were able to capture a wider variety of pedagogical practices than would be possible by observing lessons at a single point in time. Two in-depth interviews with the teacher were conducted: the first at the outset of the study, and the second at the end of the study. The purpose of the first interview was to gain an understanding of the teacher's background and pedagogical ideas. The questions in the second interview were designed on the basis of our observations of the teacher's lessons, and explored his pedagogical decision-making processes in order to illuminate the challenges and successes he experienced in implementing his pedagogical ideas.

A two-step analysis was used to analyze the video data. First, we coded the lesson component (e.g., piece, technique) and pedagogical strategy (e.g., modelling). Secondly, we linked the pedagogical strategy with informal learning components outlined by Green (2008). Similarly, a two-step analysis was used to analyze interview data and field notes, which included analyzing the verbatim interview transcripts using emergent coding and then linking these codes to the informal learning components outlined by Green (2008). The informal pedagogical approach as outlined by Green and her colleagues (e.g., Baker & Green, 2013; Green 2008) was not known to this participant; nevertheless, this framework provided an appropriate means to analyse the findings in light of the other literature in this area.

The interview data were also used to triangulate the observation data. Two researchers with a background in education and music coded these data to enhance the inter-rater reliability of the findings.

Findings

Teacher's musical background

The teacher in this study, Viktor (pseudonym), grew up in Cuba, where he was recruited at a young age to become a musician. 'I was six-and-a-half and they sent teachers through

the neighbourhood, knocking door by door . . . I passed [the music tests] and my sister too, so we took to that right away . . . [and the instructors] said to my parents, "If you like, you can bring the kid to this school, and this will be a special program for him."

As a student in what turned out to be a specialist music school, Viktor was assigned to learn the violin and also played the piano. His instruction also included ear training, sight-reading, history, and theory classes.

I guess our school was . . . taking all general classes in the morning and then music in the afternoon . . . So back home in Cuba, you need to learn a primary instrument, and violin was my primary and then piano as a complementary [instrument]. [The program focused on classical music and techniques] . . . rudiments, techniques, you know, scales, and buil[t] for finer performance every year (and exams). At seven years old, I was at grade 3. You know, classical for both instruments.

While Viktor was receiving this comprehensive music training in classical repertoire and techniques, the training did not align with his equally rich, home-based musical environment. Here, pop music and Cuban dance music were prominent, although Viktor acknowledged that eventually he and his sister brought more classical music into the house. By and large, though, the music in his home had little resemblance to what he was learning at school.

We had popular music everywhere at home; popular like dance . . . we were listening to the Beatles. But you know, listening to music and always dancing, that was part of the house, family, and part of the culture, so it was a bit weird to be playing Mozart and then not really listening to it at home. It was a privilege to mix that at home and have the classical training, and my sister played classical guitar, but that was later. [M]y dad was more a construction engineer, so he listened to more Havana dancing music [than the type of music we studied at school]. So remember, this was in [19]77 or 78, so when people in the neighbourhood see you playing piano and violin, they think you are weird.

As a teenager, Viktor had the opportunity to begin performing in public at restaurants and barbershops. With limited access to sheet music, Viktor transcribed his own scores based on the recordings he found.

[W]hen I was in my late teens, I got the opportunity to play in the local restaurants and the local barbershop, something like that, so we never had Internet or [a] printer to get the music. We were transcribing the music we heard, just to play. You know, we didn't have a big library of music back in the [19]80s, so we had to transcribe everything by ear that we heard that was popular and that we wanted to play.

Pedagogical approach

In the subsequent section, we explore how the particular characteristics of the teacher's pedagogy, as evidenced by the lessons observed and interviews with the teacher, align with the characteristics of an informal orientation to music teaching, namely: having students

choose the repertoire themselves, learning the repertoire through aural copying, integration of skills and knowledge as needed, and engaging in listening, performing, improvising, and composing throughout the learning process (Green, 2008). While learning from peers is also an aspect of informal pedagogy outlined by Green (2008), this aspect was not part of our findings, which is consistent with the nature of the one-to-one instructional context.

Choosing the repertoire themselves

In the lessons we observed, students were playing pieces such as *Too Late to Apologize* (originally sung by Justin Timberlake), *Jingle Bells*, Latin repertoire, or Neil Young songs such as *Old Man*. Students chose their own repertoire, but were influenced by their parents and the teacher. In some cases, students chose a piece that was meaningful to other family members:

[A student] was asking her parents what type of music to choose . . . And it was interesting, because they listen to the Beatles and [19]60s and [19]70s music at home, and that was interesting and the music is all good . . . And the mom, she said, you know I think we will do that type, and we are happy to pick some songs from the Beatles like *Hey Jude*.

Viktor also had input into what the students focus on in the lessons, and strived to ensure that the complexity of the piece had components that could challenge the students musically:

I will tell them if there is nothing to gain from the music . . . if there is nothing there, we don't have the time to lose to that, so I just say no, you can go ahead and do that yourself . . . if you listen back to the Beatles, they work with four or five main chords, and that makes the music more interesting. But when you listen to music that only has one chord there isn't much that we can do with that.

In other words, Viktor did not discourage students from learning these simpler pieces, but told them that they could play these pieces outside of the lesson.

Viktor also enjoyed the fact that students would sometimes learn repertoire from a variety of genres. 'It is just to make people understand better music and how to affect it in different ways. You know I like jumping from Bach to Coldplay; you know, it is amazing.' He also illuminated how students are able to make connections between pieces of different genres. For example, he described how a student was able to elucidate similarities between a Bach Prelude and *Turning Tables* by Adele:

One of my students said that she could see the Bach Prelude in the Adele song. It is the *Turning Tables*, and you know, it is amazing. So the Prelude comes in C major, but [the Adele song] is from C minor, and the teacher at school and the mother were amazed that she could get to that herself. From classical, it can be a small change, from major to minor. And she is 11. And the mother was like 'WOW,' and that 'wow' means a lot to me, because they are connecting 18th-century music with today's music.

These accounts show that students' interests were at the heart of repertoire selection and that Viktor helped students understand the structure of their repertoire. When selecting repertoire, students explored a variety of genres and common structures, such as key and tonality, so that they could begin to transfer ideas and learning strategies between pieces.

Learning the repertoire through aural copying

Mobile devices were regularly accessed during the lessons to listen to various pieces or to play along with them. Students played a sample of the piece for Viktor, and then worked through the piece, with Viktor helping the students establish the key and harmonic progressions.

I am trying to teach them to get the music, to figure it out, to see the chords without the sheet music in front, like ear training. So, I am running the music, and then they hear the key and they try to figure out the key.

Over time, students would be able to learn large portions of a song or a piece independently by ear. 'A lot of people now come and say, "I learned this by myself, my memory is complete" . . . Some people just play by watch[ing] video or where the fingers go.'

In addition to learning the notes and rhythm aurally, students also used the recordings to see if their tempi were appropriate:

[I]f you go for original, you play along with the artist, but sometimes it goes too fast. But sometimes it is fun, and they see the progress when they reach that speed. But it always helps and they feel it is important to hear that and follow along, because they can play or sing at the same speed as the recording.

Recordings were also used as models of nuance and phrasing. Students played along with various recordings to see if they had mastered the phrasing and nuances of the piece.

Sometimes [they] play along with Itzhak Perlman. Some phrasing is tough, but they can compare the real speed. But they laugh and find it fun to aim for that speed. So [we do not only play along to recordings with] modern [music], but with the classical music as well.

Viktor also wanted his students to be able to read from chord and standard notation. We observed some students who referred to recording and notation.

[A student might say,] 'You know, there's a song on the radio that I now want to play.' And I say, 'OK, let's pick it up.' So they bring their iPod, all that stuff, and if we can really find the sheet music, I've been training [them] just to write down whatever we hear, so and then they can make the other song [the] same way that they listen, you know, and they can make it their own – they can make it different.

Table 1. *Outline of lesson*

Time	Description of Activity
5:45 – 6:00	Guitars only
5:45	T (acoustic guitar) and S (electric guitar) warm up by jamming together T leads the session, strumming shifting chord progressions, while S improvises a melodic line above, responding, to the best of his ability, to changes in harmonic direction
6:00	Guitars & iPod S takes out iPod and selects Song 1 T & S jam
6:05	T & S jam to Song 2
6:10	T & S jam to Song 3 Brief exchange about the artist of Song 3
6:20	Guitars only T & S jam to an arrangement of Jingle bells
6:22	T & S jam to a Latin song T offers improvising suggestions and S implements these
6:35	S's brother walks in, picks up a drum and joins in with the improvising (= start of the brother's lesson)

Viktor noted that he wanted his students to eventually be able to learn aurally and by reading notation:

I never teach by ear alone. You need to read the music, you need to have the whole package. So the ability to listen to something I start playing, right away you know someone who plays music is really comfortable and more secure with the music.

Integration of skills and knowledge as needed

Viktor was responsive to the needs and interests of the students during the lesson. At the beginning of some of the lessons, students came in with their media players and played a portion of the audio file for their teacher to indicate the song they wanted to learn, and this audio file became the focus of the lesson. The lessons started with a performance of a piece, and then Viktor addressed issues that would strengthen the performance. From time to time, he integrated some theoretical or technical drills that were pertinent to the repertoire.

Viktor has been providing studio music instruction for over a decade and provides instruction on violin, piano, guitar, drums and vocals. We observed five hours of lessons taught by Viktor. Table 1 presents an example of a typical lesson, which more closely resembled a jamming session than the traditional lesson documented in the literature (e.g., Duke & Simmons, 2006).

Since most of the lesson consisted of back-to-back jamming, any directions which were given, occurred during fleeting moments – either as the pair played or in between songs. Overall, these directions were related to how the students could improve their improvising

skills. During *Song 2*, for example, Viktor explained that since the singers were singing mostly short phrases, it was better to 'go behind' the voices, rather than go 'on top' and drown them out. In *Song 4*, the student seemed to have trouble locating the key and the teacher suggested: 'Let's find the key first' (See [Table 1](#)). Shifts in mood, rhythmic drive, and harmonic progressions were all initiated by the teacher and executed through the music-making itself. Occasionally, the teacher gave advance notice of upcoming changes through subtle physical gestures, such as raised eyebrows, or head nods.

Engaging in listening, performing, improvising, and composing throughout the learning process

When students were not playing along to recordings, they were often accompanied by Viktor. Viktor likened his lessons to performances: 'I say my class is like a recital all of the time because we are performing all the time because, it is half an hour or one hour, I want them to feel like they are the superstar and that they have control in all they do.'

In addition to enhancing the students' musical self-efficacy, Viktor felt that accompanying his students helped them to experience performing first hand while he shouldered the responsibility of the performance by accompanying them. '[Y]ou go take lessons to fly a plane but you don't have control to the plane. You are sitting there with someone else, and that happens at first, but in the end you have to fly.' Replicating a performance was not the final goal of learning the piece; rather, Viktor encouraged the students to create their own version of the song.

And there are benefits to them to make their improvisations, their own lines, even change the words. And this was singing, but I do it practical too, and I say this sound this way but how do we make it sound different, how can we change the harmony and it make people click, and they say, I didn't know it could sound that way.

Being able to replicate the piece was not the final goal, rather it was to have the students infuse their own ideas into the melody, harmony, lyrics, or structure of the piece. Viktor recognized that having the ability to develop and infuse such ideas was also a skill, and supported this learning process through co-playing during the lesson. Through this process, students were learning to be their own musicians, and their creative ideas were nurtured and celebrated in this process.

Discussion

The lessons taught by this teacher represented an informal orientation to teaching as outlined by Green (2008). Students largely chose their own repertoire, but their parents and/or their teacher also influenced repertoire choices. Students often brought a recording of the piece to the lesson to share their choice with the teacher. Recognizing that the students could figure out simpler songs, the teacher sometimes advised the students to find a more challenging piece for the lesson and leave the other repertoire to learn on their own.

Studio instruction is described in some literature as being dominated by verbal interactions (e.g., Duke & Simmons, 2006; Kosta, 1984). In contrast, Viktor led most of the interactions with his students through and with the music. During the lesson, very little verbal direction was given; rather, the students experienced new ideas through performance. Viktor often played along with his students, supporting their improvisations and helping them refine their performances. Viktor acted as a coach and would model and demonstrate ideas to the students as issues arose. These pedagogical practices supported the observations by Green (2008) and others, who documented how teachers convey ideas through non-verbal means (e.g., Simones, Rodger & Schroeder, 2015; Zhukov, 2007; 2012).

Unlike studio music teachers described elsewhere (e.g., Burwell, 2005; Lopinski, 2005), Viktor is not imitating the way that he was taught through formal lessons; rather, he relied on all of his musical and pedagogical experiences to create an engaging and comprehensive pedagogy. Viktor's music background contained both formal and informal learning opportunities. He attended a specialist music school where he received strict, formal instruction on the piano and the violin. Someone else chose the instrument he learned to play, and he completed a pre-determined curriculum that consisted exclusively of classical music. However, Viktor also engaged with music outside of school, listening to the Cuban dance music that was popular at the time. As an adolescent, Viktor relied on informal techniques, such as listening to music to create a score, which helped him learn music that he would perform in the community. Viktor had a well-rounded music education: he was exposed to a variety of genres and ways of exploring and learning repertoire. Subsequently, in his teaching, he relied on all of these experiences to help inspire and educate his students. Viktor infused the music-making in his studio with his broad knowledge of music. Viktor aimed to create independent and engaged musicians. He did so by allowing them to choose repertoire and by supporting their performances in the lessons by accompanying them. He provided suggestions as necessary to help students become better musicians. Viktor's teaching background is similar to the teachers described in Robinson (2012) who learned in both informal and formal contexts. While Viktor seemed to embrace both the formal and informal approach as a learner, his pedagogy seemed to be more centred on an informal approach.

Viktor also wanted his students to be able to tackle more complex repertoire over time and to learn music in a way that increased their musical understanding and musical literacy. Viktor tried to create ear-based processes for the students to learn the repertoire and helped them make connections between pieces. He acted as a guide, demonstrating learning processes and helping his students to solve problems. For example, Viktor spoke of helping the students to establish the key of the music after hearing it, and then to figure out the chords. Viktor noted that over time, students became better at figuring out these components on their own. He also spoke of aiming to help students combine learning by rote and learning by note. Viktor recognized that students would be stronger musicians if they could access music through either of these venues, and he aimed to help students see how aural recordings and notated scores provided access to new repertoire. The idea of helping students become proficient musicians could replicate music from both aural and notated sources and who were also able to infuse their own expressive ideas into the process was this teacher's goal. Green (2008) acknowledged that over time, students engaged in informal learning would also need to acquire theoretical understanding, and

acknowledged that ‘such knowledge is more easily assimilated, and more meaningful, because as it is acquired, it can be put to immediate use with music-making or music learning activities, rather than remaining an abstraction’ (p. 182). Viktor’s students, who made these connections among structures, harmonies, and melodies, provide an example of how students are able to identify theoretical structures in a meaningful way as they engage with new and different repertoire.

Conclusions and recommendations for further research

Findings from this research illuminate how one teacher utilized his formal and informal music background to support the needs of his students. Students were engaged in music-making throughout the lesson, with the teacher providing cues and supports while accompanying the students. The genre of music heard during the lesson was varied, but the practices of learning through playing pervaded all styles of music. Through the use of informal pedagogies, there was an overarching aim to infuse students with musical knowledge that would enhance their learning, to expand their understanding of musical genres and performance practices, and to help them construct their own learning pathway, rather than leading them down a pre-determined route.

Findings from this research illuminate the positive engagement that is facilitated through an informal approach and illustrate how students can gain theoretical understanding through the information that the teacher can still provide in this supporting role. As educators and researchers, we aim to support the development of musicians. This research adds to a growing body of literature examining informal approaches in music learning. It provides the perspective of a Canadian teacher reflecting on his own practice and responding to the needs of his students. However, more research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical practices of studio music teachers and the extent to which informal and/or ear-based approaches are incorporated in a variety of teaching contexts both within Canada and in other areas where studio instruction is prevalent.

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