

# Musics of ‘The Other’: Creating musical identities and overcoming cultural boundaries in Australian music education

**Melissa Cain**

Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University, 140 Grey Street, South Bank, PO Box 3428, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101, Australia

[m.cain@griffith.edu.au](mailto:m.cain@griffith.edu.au), [m.cain@uq.edu.au](mailto:m.cain@uq.edu.au)

*The binary opposition between ‘own music’ and ‘other’s music’ is the ‘result of deep conditioning’ (Drummond, 2010, p. 118) and is almost impossible to overcome. By exploring the underlying constructs that influence students’ and teachers’ perceptions of minority cultures and their musics, this paper explores the notion of ‘the other’ in Australian music education. In particular, how the many factors which play a role in cultural identity serve to both promote and prevent musical understanding and appreciation. An examination of Australian multicultural policy and music curriculum documents in the state of Queensland provides a foundation for the discussion of data obtained from interviews with teachers from state and private primary schools in the capital Brisbane. The results reveal that while music educators are generally inquisitive about incorporating musics of ‘other’ cultures into their lessons, they are less comfortable with crossing cultural boundaries, and do not wish to threaten the position of Australia’s own musical culture – ultimately highlighting a disconnect between policy, rhetoric and practice in the area of culturally diverse music education in classrooms today.*

## Introduction

Much has been written about the in-depth processes of identity formation, the effects of cultural marginality and the benefits of intercultural understanding (Thompson, 1998; Volk, 2002; Skelton, 2004; Boston University, 2007; Alkoot, 2009; International Society for Music Education, 2010; Schippers, 2010). In assessing attitudes to the inclusion of diverse musics in Australian schools it is helpful to understand the underlying constructs that influence students’ and teachers’ reactions to cultures and musics not of the dominant paradigm. How are cultural and musical identities formed? Does the Australian educational system honour and promote cultural diversity? What factors encourage some teachers to be open to and inquisitive about ‘other’ sounds and transmission practices, and what factors prohibit the appreciation and acceptance of musics which differ from one’s own cultural reference point? To answer these questions, it is necessary to briefly examine Australia’s multicultural history, and its impact on education policy and music curriculum – and ultimately on teacher practice.

With this in mind, this paper investigates the occurrence, place and role of cultural diversity in a selection of primary music programmes in state and private schools in Brisbane, Queensland and highlights the ways in which common perceptions of Australian cultural identity serve to both promote and prevent a broader understanding

and appreciation of musics in contemporary classrooms. The results presented are part of a larger study with music teachers and music teacher educators in Singapore and Brisbane. The three main objectives of this paper are: (1) to examine how Australian colonial, multicultural and educational history impacts music teacher practice; (2) to report on current practices in culturally diverse music education in Brisbane; and (3) to highlight issues of hegemony and bias which contribute to a restricted view of what constitutes 'music' in Australian classrooms. Themes explored in this paper include: (1) support for musical diversity, (2) hegemony in policy, curriculum documents and practice; (3) hierarchies of music; and (4) reasons for hegemony and bias.

### **Cultural and musical identities**

It may be argued that one of the most important and long-lasting benefits of exploring the arts of a variety of cultural groups is the resulting increase in intercultural understanding and empathy, and the reduction of prejudice (Thompson, 1998; Volk, 2002; Skelton, 2004; Woodford, 2005; Alkoot, 2009). With this in mind, teachers may ask if it is most beneficial to respond musically to the ethnicities of the students they teach, or to introduce their students to unfamiliar musical cultures to achieve musical breadth (McCarthy, 1998). In addition, teachers may query if a diverse and inclusive approach is only applicable to culturally diverse educational situations or if students in homogeneous settings would benefit similarly (Cain, 2011).

Attempts to honour diversity and inclusivity in music classrooms often lead to problems of assumed cultural identity. The formation of cultural identity is both a complex and fluid process. One's culture involves a multifaceted mix of factors such as ethnicity, sex, age, nationality and social experience. Musical identity is also influenced by such factors and is in constant flux (O'Toole, 2005). Educators may assume that their students are familiar and identify with the culture of their parents and ethnic community and therefore expect that students should also present an observable cultural identity. Ethnic and familial culture may not, in fact, be relevant to students' sense of self at all, and students may not identify with any particular cultural identity we choose to attribute to them (Allsup, 2003; Gracyk, 2004; Kelly & Weelden, 2004; Saether, 2008). In fact, research suggests that current youth culture may be the predominant influence (Allsup, 2003; Saether, 2008) and musics from this culture may be what students identify with most strongly today.

While music teachers should make every effort to understand their students' complex cultural identities, Kushner (1991) advocates that they remain flexible in their instruction so as to be sensitive to the specific nuances of these identities. Teachers must be mindful of the position students are placed in when moving between two or more very different cultural worlds, and be able to plan activities which ensure students feel safe and included. Teachers should allow students 'to construct their own musical identities rather than handing them ready-made' (Woodford, 2001, p. 81), while at the same time also 'helping them to let go and see the universal' (Woodford, 2001, p. 83).

### **The transmission of cultural and musical values and bias**

Music, suggests Tilton (1992) 'is universal, but its meaning is not' (p. 1). All students enter the music classroom with a set of prior cultural and musical experiences. These experiences

may, however, bear little resemblance to those offered at school. Despite advances in culturally diverse music education over the past 45 years, it is still not uncommon for some educators to teach from a single point of reference, finding musical diversity either unacceptable or impossible to implement (Cain, 2010, 2011; Schippers & Cain, 2010; Cain *et al.*, 2013). Traditionally, music education has centred around the best and most representative examples of European music. Schippers (2004) explains that 'Western classical music practice has served as almost the single reference point for the practice and thought on organised music transmission and learning in many countries across the world' (p. 1). He offers that the hegemony – or cultural dominance – of Western art music 'still pervades global thinking on music and music education' (Schippers, 2006, p. 7) in which the dominant culture is 'the only frame of reference for most institutes, programs and methods throughout the Western world' (Schippers, 2006, p. 11).

Philosophies about music education are influenced by many societal, cultural, political and economic factors. Understandably, many Australian music teachers favour a Eurocentric approach with a focus on western Art music. They are familiar and experienced with such an approach, and often model their practice on the methods and repertoire acquired in their own informal and formal music education. This, suggests Green (2003), is due to the ideology that perpetuates western classical music being respected as 'the most valuable type of music' (p. 14) which has been accepted by the majority of teachers and curriculum planners around the world for many years. As a result, Green (2001) notes that for most students to succeed in music at school it is 'necessary for pupils to accept the superiority of classical music' (p. 53).

### **Musics of the 'other'**

While music teachers generally express positive attitudes towards musical pluralism, most have difficulty translating their support into meaningful and effective practice (Cain, 2005, 2010, 2011; Nethsinghe, 2012a, 2012b; Cain *et al.*, 2013). Negative responses may occur when teachers identify some musics as belonging to 'others'; particularly other social or cultural groups (Elliot, 1990; Brittin, 1996; Fock, 1997; Green, 2006; Drummond, 2010). Educators often approach the study and practice of 'other' musics as 'coming from different places, having a different musical function and requiring a different pedagogy' (Thompson, 2002, p. 19), and this may reinforce the status of these musics as deserving of a marginal place in the curriculum. Drummond (2010) makes a valid and important observation that 'the training of music educators tends to encourage them to operate within the dominant paradigm rather than to challenge it' (p. 119) and thus, music educators must deal with 'a natural tendency to privilege the music that is "theirs"' (p. 119) with an educational system which values and perpetuates only one main learning paradigm.

Contrastingly, Thompson (2002) notes that 'different' may also have positive connotations. She points out that musical experiences 'which offer something slightly "familiar" yet exotic, are enjoyable, affirming, and more likely to be accepted' (p. 19). In Australia, such musics are usually those which have been influenced by the ideals and aesthetics of western music. Musics with less familiarity and connection to western music are often deemed too dissimilar and thus not as easily accepted by teachers and students alike (Rajan & Mohanram, 1995). While some world musics may be valued

for their interesting difference, there may be a point at which difference gains negative connotations if it is too far removed from the dominant model. Although 'other' musics have been included in the music curriculum, they have traditionally been allocated a position of limited power. Thus, viewed through the western lens, 'other' musics are offered little potential for challenging the canon (Giroux, 1988; Edgar *et al.*, 1993; Thompson, 2002).

### **Multiculturalism in Australian music education**

In order to understand the cultural and historical influences on music education in Australia it is important to gain an appreciation of the role of multiculturalism in nation building and as part of an Australian identity. Multiculturalism has been a prevailing social policy in Australia for over 30 years, heavily influencing political, cultural, economic and educational arenas. Central to discussions of Australia's diverse cultural heritage are the Indigenous peoples, whose legacy pre-dates European settlement by some 40 000–65 000 years, making theirs the oldest continuous living culture in the world. At the time the first British convicts and European free settlers came to Australia in the late 1700s, there existed some 600 Indigenous nations with different cultures and beliefs. At present, the Indigenous cultures nationwide are classified into two distinct groups and make up approximately 2.5% of the Australian population: Torres Strait Islanders (33 000) whose cultural heritage is Melanesian, and Aborigines (464 000). There is also a small group identifying as both (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

At the time of the formal formation of the nation in 1901, the *White Australia* policy (legislation which restricted non-white immigration to Australia) was the first act to be passed by the new Australian Government. The *White Australia* policy remained active until the 1950s, while elements of the strategy were evident in legislation until 1973 when it was officially declared redundant. After the Second World War, assimilation became the official social policy of the Australian government. As a monocultural policy, assimilation emphasises the minimising of cultural differences and encourages social conformity and continuity (Lemmer & Squelch, 1993).

In an attempt to provide more inclusive legislation, Immigration Minister Al Grassby introduced a new vision for Australian immigration termed *multiculturalism*. Formal multicultural policy began in 1972, while in 1975 the Australian Government passed the *Racial Discrimination Act* which outlawed racially based selection criteria. The term *cultural diversity* was first used in the *NSW Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society* and is defined as including people from 'a range of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds' (Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1995, p. 1). The *Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity* policy states that 'one of the greatest strengths of our nation is our cultural diversity' (Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2003, p. 5) and that inclusiveness is said to be the key to the success of multicultural Australia. The Australian Multicultural Advisory Council's most recent statement on cultural diversity declares that 'Australia is multicultural: it always has been and we can say with certainty that it will be in the future' (2010, p. 9). With 43% of Australia's population born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas, and with over 200 languages spoken around the country, multiculturalism and cultural diversity are still highly relevant as guiding principles for the nation today.

### Music policy and music curriculum

Contemporary music education in every nation suggests McCarthy (2010) 'is shaped by its past – the gifts as well as the burdens inherited' (p. 72). In the 19th century, Southcott and Joseph (2007) note that Australia perceived itself as an outpost of the British Empire, and thus, 'colonial Australians attempted to replicate British culture and social practices' (p. 236). This was strongly reflected in the repertoire of songs sung in schools at this time. While such musical influences remain evident in repertoire practiced in schools today, the effects of immigration and cultural diversity have steadily influenced practice. Musicians from other parts of the world have come to Australia 'bringing with them their musical knowledge and skills as performers and teachers, their approaches to education, and their cultural heritage which embraces aspects of both of these' (Biernoff & Blom, 2002, p. 23).

On the surface, Australia presents as a smorgasbord of cultural plurality with many opportunities for citizens to gain intercultural competence, understanding and empathy. As the arts are a cultural product and representative of culture itself, Australian music education offers exciting prospects for the sharing and understanding of cultures that shape modern Australian society. Harrison (2005) suggests, however, that although Australia is a culturally diverse nation, Australian music education may be considered multicultural as opposed to culturally diverse, as 'it projects the idea of the existence of many cultures that do not necessarily interact' (p. 121). Despite the face of Australian society developing interculturally, educational structures which relate to European traditions are still firmly entrenched. These structures have essentially 'remained constant throughout the increase in cultural diversity' (Harrison, 2005, p. 119).

In the Australian state of Queensland (from where these data originate), the importance of exposure to culturally diverse musics is frequently referred to in music curriculum documents. Particular mention is given to the importance of understanding protocols and procedures relating to the practice of Indigenous musics. It would appear from the many statements in policy and curriculum highlighting the importance and value of cultural diversity that music students in Queensland today should be experiencing a wide variety of musical cultures both theoretically and practically, however, striking contradictions are evident. On one hand it is encouraging to note that numerous statements referring to the importance of musical diversity exist in the preamble to the *Queensland Arts Syllabus, Scope and Sequence* (Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework, 2007), *Essential Learnings* (Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework, 2008) and the *Australian Curriculum: The Arts* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013) documents. In fact there appears to be a strong focus on connections between communities, culture and the music to be chosen for inclusion in school programmes. However, (for example) the *Scope and Sequence* document, which breaks down the content and skills to be learned at each developmental level, only makes reference to western musical elements, western organisational principles and patterns, and restricts ways of notating to the use of western music symbols and concepts. This reveals an overwhelming predominance of western musical concepts stipulated as essential knowledge.

## Methodology

The data presented in this paper come from a larger study which examines pertinent factors concerning culturally diverse music education in Brisbane, Australia and Singapore. A discussion of results related to the Singapore component of this study has been presented in other publications (Cain, 2010, 2011; Schippers & Cain, 2010) and will not be addressed here. The following section presents responses to interview questions by primary music teachers and music teacher educators in Brisbane, Australia. This examination of practice has been designed to fill identified gaps in the literature, to investigate perceived discrepancies between policy, rhetoric and actual classroom instruction, and to gain an understanding of the extent to which teachers adhere to requirements to include a diversity of musics in their lessons.

To obtain the data presented in this article a semi-structured interviewing process was used. Interviews with music teachers and teacher educators were approximately two hours in length and were conducted at the workplaces of the participants, either following observations of class activities or at a more convenient time. The research aims were made clear to respondents before they were interviewed and informed consent was obtained from each. All interviews were transcribed in full and coded, and pseudonyms have been used to ensure the de-identification of respondents.

## Description of sample

Brisbane is the capital of the Australian state of Queensland. Brisbane's population is approximately 2.15 million people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013), making it Australia's third most populous city. All children with Australian citizenship or Permanent Residency are entitled to enrol in a government-funded state primary school. Independent schools or private schools are fee-paying schools, of which the vast majority have a religious affiliation. Often private schools have better facilities and resources than state schools due to larger budgets and the ability to attract high calibre staff. In general, students in both state and private schools receive one 30 minute classroom music lesson per week.

Seven music teachers from five state primary schools were interviewed for this phase of the research project. Teachers were aged between 22 and 50 years of age and have been teaching for between one to 26 years. They teach at co-educational schools located in the southern and eastern suburbs of Brisbane and in varied socio-economic areas. In addition, eight music teachers from five private schools were interviewed. These teachers were aged between 24 and 42 years and have been teaching for between two to 20 years. Their schools are located in the inner areas of Brisbane and in middle-class to upper middle-class socioeconomic areas. All schools have an affiliation with a Christian denomination. Four schools are co-educational and one is an all boys' school. Six music education lecturers from the four institutions in Brisbane which produce music education graduates were also interviewed. The first three universities are located within five kilometres of the centre of Brisbane. The fourth is located in a satellite city, 27 kilometres south-west of Brisbane.

## **Results**

Interview data provide a frank and honest portrait of the position of minority musics not of the dominant paradigm, yielding eight main themes. Several of these have been explored in other publications (Schippers & Cain, 2010; Cain, 2011). This paper reports on four of these themes, in particular for their relevance to the focus of this article – the role of policy, curriculum and teacher training in contributing to the hegemony of western music in Australian music classrooms.

### *Support for musical diversity*

All teachers supported in principle the need for diverse music education, however, most would only initiate activities if they found themselves in a position of teaching a diverse body of students.

Laurena illustrates this point when explaining about the repertoire she uses at two contrasting primary schools. The ethnic diversity of the students at these schools is markedly different:

[School A] has a large percentage of Asian students. A lot of Middle Eastern families as well. With them I know that I am using a lot more cultural repertoire. If it's from their culture, they're very excited. [School B] is very much Caucasian. I can't say I'm going out of my way to implement [diversity] . . . I don't think it would be as appreciated as much. At [School A] they have an awareness of places on the map, and they have an understanding of things they can attach to that culture group. With [School B], they don't have that background.

Renata makes a point to include non-western musics when she encounters students who are of minority ethnicities:

At [name of school] there are a lot of Maoris and Aboriginals, and they're really rhythmical, and they love music. So often I will do some Maori or Islander music to suit them.

Drake agrees, but questions the need to expose all students to diverse musics:

If you're teaching in [name of region with an ethnically diverse population], where you've got a lot of cultural diversity, then your programme is going to need to have that. You can have a lovely sharing of ideas, dances and songs, and the whole cultural experience. But if you are teaching out here in [name of school with very little ethnic diversity], I have to ask myself, apart from broadening their general knowledge, how strongly I should include it?

Only Renata felt that the teaching of diverse musics was applicable to children in all schools whether culturally diverse or not:

There's always diversity, even if we had a whole class of Australian children it would be nice for them to hear what's out there.

Campbell (2000) states that both students and teachers 'stand to be enlightened by the practices of musicians in other cultures and by their means of musical transmission' (p. 53). Comments made by interviewees suggest that teachers are not cognisant of the important role they might play in supporting a variety of musical cultures as an extension of the tenets of Australian multicultural policy. The majority of teachers indicated that non-western musics should be included to indulge the preferences of minority groups, and not as a means of developing cultural competency for all students. Interviews also reveal elements of stereotyping such as Renata's comment about Maori and Aboriginal students being 'really rhythmical', therefore providing a reason for these musics to be explored. As stated by Thompson (2002) Australian music teachers do not view their role as agents of providing a well-rounded, culturally relevant musical education, 'other' musics not of the dominant paradigm will continue to be allocated a position of limited power and viewed as only relevant to a minority of students.

*Hegemony in policy, curriculum documents and practice*

Teachers noted that despite many references relating to the importance of diversity and inclusivity in curriculum documents, in reality what they are expected to teach and assess western musical content and skills.

Laurena indicates that western music provides the framework for music curriculum documents:

I would say [our curriculum] is western-based, with all the fundamentals of our teaching practice and theories, and we're just using other cultures to emphasise those western ideas.

Samuel concurs:

[Our curriculum] is fairly broad but there's only a light smattering [of diversity]. There's still a very big focus on western music. That's our cultural heritage. In terms of world music as such, we're probably similar to a lot of schools in that there's a little aspect here and there but not necessarily a focus.

Mallory is aware of an emphasis on Indigenous musics in the curriculum:

There is a strong push at the moment politically to do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island music and there are strong statements to cover that. I think that's as multicultural as [the curriculum] gets. I don't do Aboriginal music, it's hard ... honestly I haven't explored that.

Susanna feels justified teaching a monocultural programme as she is skilled at teaching western music, and believes it is important her students receive a quality education in western music:

Because western music is what I know, what I'm good at; it's what my kids know. If I tried to be too multicultural I'd be missing something important.



Roylance (1995) describes curriculum policy documents as important agents in supporting hegemony, and in being 'sites for authorising knowledge through both the selection and representation of cultural forms, and the strategic maintenance of dominant musical discourses' (p. 40). She notes that historically, Queensland syllabus documents have explicitly acknowledged that 'music is raced, gendered and ethnicised only insofar as it is dealing with marginalised representations' (1995, p. 43) but do not apply the same acknowledgement to the canonical forms of music. In this way, Queensland syllabus documents appear to support a hidden curriculum, which through textual codings reinforce and endorse a hegemonic perspective. Comments from teachers in this section demonstrate that they are indeed aware of the striking contradictions between policy supporting and promoting cultural diversity in music education and overt expectations for Eurocentric practice.

#### *Hierarchies of music*

While the majority of teachers felt quite comfortable with a focus on western musics and transmission processes, some teachers expressed less positive views towards Middle Eastern and Asian musics and culture in particular, despite significant populations of such students in their schools. The scales and microtones used in Middle Eastern and Asian musics were unfamiliar and foreign sounding to some teachers.

Annette expresses her reservations about teaching Muslim students, whose cultural responses to music differ from her own:

We also have a large Muslim population which has brought a whole lot of issues, so I've really had to work at opening up their minds to different ideas. Most of them can't sing in tune anyway. For many of the Muslim children they don't listen to music at all, so it's a new experience.

Mallory shares Annette's sentiments:

I'm teaching in a state school, which has this Christian constitution, we celebrate Christmas. If you choose not to sing that is your choice but I am teaching it. I am happy with respect for other cultures, but I have a culture too, and the place I work in has a culture.

Drake expresses his preferences about particular Asian musics:

Indian music is still foreign to me. I'm glad Indians enjoy the music of their cultural festivities, but thank you very much I don't want to listen to it; don't like it. Chinese music, the same. I'm sorry if that sounds bigoted and narrow-minded. But if I'm honest with myself, well that's how I feel. I think as educated people you should respect other cultures, you should be able to understand and accept, but you don't have to like it.

Mallory prefers not to teach any musics dissimilar to western music:

I wouldn't tend towards Asia and Middle East, where the scales are not diatonic. They are slightly out of tune, so I don't explore them.

Winnie feels fortunate that in general she has not yet had to deal with the perceived complexities of musical diversity:

I've got one girl whose father is Aboriginal but it's not been anything that we have to grapple with. We are fortunate in that regard. We're a Christian-based school and that's part and parcel of who we are and what we teach, so we don't have to have the same sensitivities I guess.

Despite the fact that contemporary research (Sæther, 2004; Burnard *et al.*, 2008) has emphasised the importance of pluralism in music education as assisting with social inclusion and the development of effective multicultural learning environments, comments by interviewees suggest that this is not occurring at the schools in this research project. It is significant that Annette felt it was her job to open up the minds of her Muslim students, as her own comments reveal a strong level of bias. Her comments also reveal a lack of cognizance and valuing of 'own country musics' that her students would have been experiencing in their homes and communities. As reported by Szego (2005), Muslim students are often presented with the difficulty of negotiating conflicting messages regarding the merit of music making. It is important for teachers then, to be cognisant of such issues and to plan their lessons with such issues in mind.

As O'Toole (2005) and Woodford (2001) suggest, music teachers play an essential role in assisting students to negotiate and develop their personal and group identities. Even if policy and curriculum documents advocate an intercultural approach to music education, Schippers (1996) reminds us that the attitudes of teachers are 'a central issue in the success of cultural diversity in music education' (p. 21). This issue has been highlighted by interviewees' comments in this section.

#### *Reasons for hegemony and bias*

Music teacher educators conveyed strong opinions about possible factors prohibiting the appreciation and acceptance of 'other' musics in Brisbane schools. Comments relating to this theme provide a somewhat confronting picture of the realities of cultural and musical dominance in Queensland music education.

Jimmy expresses his concerns about tokenism and ways of dealing with the 'other':

I think it's unrealistic to go around and find out the cultural background of every student and make sure you include something. My reservation is that this idea of cultural diversity has been reduced to this notion of 'other languages, other experiences, other countries', and which in my opinion tends to emphasise 'the other'. People can achieve lots of personal and social outcomes but they seem to forget they have to teach music.

Stan has become aware that the graduates from his institution who fare best in the classroom are those who have an understanding of the value of diversity and familiarity with 'the other':

The more you learn about other cultures, the more expressive you become. We also found with [pre-service] music teachers, that if they had an experience with 'otherness' and being 'the other', that they had a much better idea about how to do that. To be honest [name of lecturer's university] is not in the business of training culturally diverse capable teachers and neither is anyone. I've had students that say – I'm not going to be dealing with that. I'm going to be working in a private school that's white, Christian.

Michael concurs:

It shouldn't be only in terms of students going into multicultural schools and dealing with multicultural contexts, it's also about pre-service teachers going into a white context, which some Brisbane schools really are, and presenting that multiculturalism and getting them engaged, even though it may not be part of their heritage.

Callen – who was not born or educated in Australia and who can therefore view Australian tertiary training through a different lens – echoed sentiments about a general complacency which hinders the inclusion of musical diversity:

I think it's cultural sensitivity that many Australians lack, because they are culturally homogeneous. We [advocate] policies and statements that say we are a multicultural melting pot – but as long as we all melt down into the lowest common denominator. We might have pockets of excellence that subscribe to cultural diversity and cultural sensitivity, but on the whole, I've found Australians not very supportive of people of another cultures. While we may not have the policy of assimilation, the legacy remains.

Drummond (2010) notes that it is the qualities essential in developing transformative music educators that are most often neglected. As such, Schippers (2010) stresses that the development of attitudes sympathetic to cultural diversity are as important as developing knowledge and skills in this area. Australian music education programmes by the very nature of their structure, philosophies and modes of delivery seem to be more conducive to producing individuals who reify, not those that challenge the status quo.

## **Discussion**

While it was evident that many of the music teachers interviewed in Brisbane displayed an interest in widening the types of musics presented in their lessons, and that some successful attempts at including culturally diverse musics had taken place, comments suggest some teachers had difficulty in gaining an appreciation for the necessity and benefits of intercultural music education. Several areas can be identified as influencing the attitudes and practice of the study's participants.

First and foremost, it is apparent that a lack of appreciation for diversity at a philosophical level (resulting in complex and ingrained musical conservatism) has impacted the practice of some respondents. Westerlund (2002) states that pluralism in music education should emphasise multiplicity over conformity, and yet the comments made by interviewees indicate that they value compliance to the ideals of western music and tend to make light of musics which deviate from this norm. As a result, participants in this study recognise culturally diverse student populations in their schools, but feel justified in continuing to focus on western music.

The majority of teachers interviewed indicated that non-western musics should be included to indulge the preferences of minority groups, and not as a means of developing cultural competency for all students. Comments reveal notions of stereotyping, and attitudes which suggest a divide between 'our' music and 'their' music. Some of the teachers interviewed struggled with teaching and assessing students whose musical experiences and expression did not match the ideals of western music, and thus assessed students' performances against this single reference point. It is apparent that unless teachers understand and appreciate unique differences in non-western musics and the context in which they are performed, they may judge such musics to be incompatible with the aims of their programmes and deemed unworthy of inclusion.

The data collected are significant in identifying hegemony in the syllabi as reflected in teacher practice. Teachers are cognisant of directives in policy and curriculum to include culturally diverse musics in their lessons, and yet their music programmes are firmly based on the acquisition of western skills and content. As music assessment tools focus on elements which directly relate to western musical concepts, teachers are reluctant to include more diverse musics in their lessons, as non-western musics are not easily assessable using this structure. As observed in the analysis of educational policy and curriculum documents in Brisbane, textual codings generally serve to privilege and maintain dominant musical discourses while marginalising 'other' forms of music. Both teachers and students understand that while 'other' musics have been included in the curriculum, they have been allocated a position of limited power and thus offer little potential for challenging the canon. And thus when teachers do give attention to culturally diverse musics they are often seen as additive to the hegemonic scheme and not an integral part of music education as a whole. This may in turn reinforce the status of these musics as deserving of a marginal place in the curriculum.

In addition, the frankness of interviewees' comments reveals a deficiency in tertiary training and professional development experience with regard to cultural diversity in music education. In the Queensland context, one of the main issues identified is the total absence of programmes specifically designed to supply undergraduate teachers with practical advice, skills and theories on teaching more than one musical culture in depth. No teacher interviewed had participated in a vocal or instrumental ensemble at university that was not part of the western music tradition, and no participant had taken a course which specifically addressed diversity in the context of music education. Pre-service teachers may occasionally gain theoretical and practical skills in a non-western genre, but unless this training is approached from a music education perspective, it becomes very difficult for teachers to turn what they have learnt into age-appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for young children.

## Conclusions

In interviews with music teachers and music teacher educators in Brisbane, the word 'other' featured prominently. In the Australian context, the results of this study have revealed that while music educators generally exhibit positive dispositions to incorporating musics of 'other' cultures, they are less comfortable with crossing cultural boundaries, and do not wish to be seen to threaten the position of Australia's own musical culture. Teachers display interest in providing their students with exposure to a broad array of musics and yet there appears to be an invisible boundary they will not cross. Despite musical identities constantly expanding and re-moulding, some educators still have a firm understanding of what constitutes 'the other'.

With this in mind, comments from interviewees highlight three main reasons for the low incidence of cultural diversity in Queensland music classrooms today:

1. Teachers tend to view musics not of the dominant paradigm as belonging to 'others' and thus deserving a marginal place in the curriculum.
2. Textual codings in music curriculum documents send a confusing and contradictory message to music teachers regarding the place of non-western musics. As a result, very little of the rhetoric in policy and music curriculum documents translates into culturally diverse practice.
3. Trainee music teachers in Queensland continue to graduate without a full appreciation for the values and benefits of culturally diverse music education for all students, and do not gain the skills, knowledge and connections to community culture bearers required to support programmes in cultural diversity.

No research project has rigorously explored issues of pedagogical conservatism with regard to culturally diverse music education within the Australian context. Therefore, this study makes a unique contribution which has obvious relevance in contemporary multicultural societies both for and beyond the discipline of music. The results of this study have broader implications for the training of music educators globally, especially in societies grappling with issues of ingrained hegemony in music education methodologies, teacher training and practice. Providing ways for music teachers to move beyond perceived cultural boundaries is essential in assisting educators to realise in musical terms the diversity which defines contemporary Australia.

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**Melissa Cain** is an educator with a passion for Asian and Pacific musics. She has qualifications in music, education, Indonesian and ethnomusicology, and studied Javanese and Sundanese gamelan while resident in Singapore for 20 years. Melissa’s doctoral work explored the ways that philosophy, policy, teacher training and curriculum documents effect practice in the music classroom. Her current research interests include inclusive and culturally diverse arts education; music, health and wellbeing; and the assessment of performance in conservatoire settings. Melissa is a Researcher and Lecturer in arts education at the University of Queensland and Griffith University.