**Peter’s narrative**

**Peter** is a retired university academic who has specialised in music education throughout his career. Peter regards thinking and writing about music education as being his ‘first love’ in his professional life. Peter grew up in South England and attended a secondary modern school. During his time in secondary school, the Head of Music at the time bought two trumpets, and Peter was ‘lucky enough to get chosen, [he didn’t] know why’. Peter had lessons in school, delivered by a teacher from the local music service. Peter’s school were supportive of his interest in music, and teachers introduced him to local ensembles in the area that he could participate in outside of school. His teachers even organised lifts to take him to rehearsals.

In the locality where Peter grew up, traditions from the North English, Welsh and Scottish coal mines were present, including brass bands. Peter joined his local colliery band, which he regarded as the ‘biggest, most formative moment of [his] life’. Peter attended three rehearsals per week. During his first practice session, Peter was required to play a piece by Beethoven, although he only managed to play the first and last notes due to the level of difficulty. Three years later, Peter was reading music fluently, and says ‘I don’t know how I got there’, it was ‘all osmosis, just being there’, bringing an ‘informal dimension’ to his music education. After five years, Peter became the principal cornet player, achieved through a ‘community model of learning’ which was very different to the formal taught tuition he received in school. Peter commented that ‘it fired me up to do stuff’, and wouldn’t have attained his musical achievements without the band. Peter was highly motivated by playing in the band and practiced every day for the first seven years. He was ‘self-motivated through community model of learning’, and not pushed by his parents to practice. Peter experienced total ‘immersion in sound’. In the local area where Peter grew up, the Royal Marines school of music was also based there – with some soldiers often coming to play in the band. Peter reflected upon his fellow musicians in the band, with some being fabulous musicians, and others being beginners. Band concerts were open to all to perform in – regardless of ability. The exception to this was for band competitions, which were few and far between. Peter remembers that he ‘sat at the knee of these people and looked up to them, thinking ‘I want to be like that’’.

During his music education, Peter experienced ‘tension between formal learning and the sort of informal, and that’s always been a tension’. Peter played in the County Youth Orchestra alongside the brass band, which was formal and more technical, often involving transposition on the spot. Peter reflects that ‘this tension is the thing I’ve most have to grapple with in my life’. ‘Whilst I don’t dismiss the role of the technical, analytical learning [drawing upon the ideas of Swanwick], beginnings of learning is [through] encounters, intuition. I have resolved those tensions over time, but it is quite a conundrum’. Peter considers technical skills to be important, but it matters how you get to them: ‘if you start with them or if you raise them up on a pedestal above other types of knowing and understanding, then I think there are problems’ – sometimes leading to alienation from school music. Peter advocates moving ‘from intuition to analysis’. Peter is experiencing an ongoing process to resolve tensions between formal and informal music learning, and regards himself as a ‘post-modernist at heart’. Peter’s pedagogical approach is ‘to start with meaning, knowledge of music, primordial understanding’. Current policy poses challenge ‘to [Peter’s] way of thinking’, for example the Model Music Curriculum (MMC), which raises up other types of knowledge as being the aims, but ‘it’s the process of getting to that’. The MMC ‘leaves out so much about the nature of musical understanding and knowledge as if it’s unimportant. But if you leave it out, then people won’t take it seriously’. In all of his 16 years as music teacher, the most typical lesson that Peter would facilitate included composition. He comments that music lessons are ‘about trying to capture [an] innate, intuitive relationship with music’. If Peter had not adhered to that approach, he believes he would have ‘lost’ some of his students along the way.

Peter studied for a music Certificate in Secondary Education (CSE), and moved to a local technical high school to study music O and A level. Following that, Peter studied a Bacholor in Education degree (BEd) for four years to train as a teacher. During this time, Peter met influential music educators and lecturer. At this stage, Peter commented that ‘[he] was a musician, [he] wanted to be a music teacher’. The degree opened his eyes to ‘what music education might be’. He reflects upon the 1970s at the time he was studying, when John Paynter and the schools council were operating. This was ‘a really exciting time of moving away from the traditional model of music education, which was singing, learning notation, learning history. We seem to have come back to that, rather ridiculously’.

Peter shares an anecdote of when he was undergoing his teacher training. Peter was being observed by his University Lecturer, having to teach a Year Nine class rhythm. The class were well behaved, although Peter was nervous about lesson. The feedback given at the end of his lesson was: ‘so you can control the class, but when are you going to allow these children to become *artists*?’ Peter expresses that ‘that was the sort of influence I had’ – allowing the curriculum to emerge from children, rather than imposing it on them.

Peter’s first teaching post was an ex-grammar secondary school. The Head of Music let Peter ‘get on with it’. Peter comments that in his lessons, he ‘started with music. We either composed or we performed or we listened, and then we talked’. The discourse would be in music, moving to a discourse about music. Peter would teach students the formal elements through music they were producing themselves or the music they were listening to – otherwise he believes he would have ‘lost them’. This is a responsive way of working, using a stimulus, then composing in response. Peter’s framework often consisted of a composition task, discussion, then improvisation (using something that will work, for example a pentatonic scale, not allowing students to fail). Peter encountered the mystical illusion of being ‘musical or not musical’ – which he regards as not being a useful concept, emphasising that ‘fluency first and last’ [Swanwick] is important. ‘Fluency is where the children are at’. In this ethos, stumbling is fine if there is ownership of learning and student motivation. Peter comments that it becomes a ‘dirge of dearth’ if a student is struggling over someone else’s learning. Students needed to be a ‘part of a musical experience that was fluent’ every lesson. Peter states that ‘a musical responsibility of teachers is to facilitate fluency’.

Peter then taught music in a different county for ten years – progressing from Assistant to Head of Music. During this time, Peter tried to apply his philosophies of teaching music. He then returned back to his home county, employed in a ‘tough’ secondary modern school for six years. In this school, there was a Head Teacher who was supportive of music education. After this role, Peter then began mentoring student teachers and ran the secondary music education PGCE at a local university, progressing to programme leader of a large PGCE. Peter then progressed through management roles at a different university, but reflected that one of the PGCEs that he had been involved with was an innovative course and gave different experiences of music education, for example, music in the community. He says that: ‘I don’t know what we would have done if Ofsted would have come in, as it was way off beat’. Despite moving to university management, Peter continued to write about music education.

As a mentor to student teachers, Peter would give suggestions and encourage criticality, rather than to give direct specific feedback, believing that there were always musical alternative ideas that could be implemented. Peter acknowledges that there are plenty of opportunities for students to understand the formal moment of musical learning throughout education, but ‘what gets buried is the informal moment, and part of [Peter’s] job was to raise that awareness’ – not to replace, but to balance approaches. Peter wanted to raise ‘the possibility of the informal intuitive moment, as opposed to the formal academic moment. Raising the critical possibility of the informative, the intuitive, the musical encounter, and the reason why we’re in music in the first place at all. And setting that against the formal.’ Peter discusses an epiphany moment of a student teacher he had mentored during his role as PGCE tutor. A student with a formal music education background placed in a school that advocated Musical Futures pedagogy, with his rationale being that it’s ‘always worth seeing the other side of the coin’. Peter advocates ‘raising respect’ for the other ways that people learn music and that rationalisation from a musical perspective is important. Nature and structure of the subject is of interest to Peter. Powerful epistemologies in Western society over hundreds of years have impacted upon knowledge in education. There is also a dominance of social realism and cognitive neuroscience, ‘so embedded in current Ofsted inspections, both Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and schools’. ‘It doesn’t do us any favours in the arts [or other subjects]’. Policy is like a pendulum – ‘it swings backwards and forwards’. Peter believes that we’re in a ‘trad[itional] swing at the moment, underpinned by quite a big trad[itional] swing in wider education as well, so perhaps a more significant one that we’ve had in the past’.

Peter’s practice and thinking has become ‘more nuanced and more subtle as time has gone on’. Throughout his career, he has been influenced by the work of Swanwick, Paynter and Green, ‘the heroes of music education’, where the centrality of musical meaning and critical dimension is highlighted and thinking has been fundamentally shifted. Other writers ‘have filled in the gaps of where [Peter] was intuitively’. Although Peter’s central beliefs about music education haven’t changed over time, he has become more nuanced in the ways that he is able to resolve tensions and fill in the gaps, for example the tension between informal and formal music learning. Peter says that ‘the reason we engage with music is because it means something to us’ – although he does relish challenges to his thinking when they arise. ‘There have been times when it has been easier to be the sort of teacher I would want to be. I’m not sure if I was required to teach in terms of cognitive load theory [representing the current policy discourse] … I know I couldn’t teach music in schools.’ Peter reflects and concludes that ‘there was a time when my way of thinking had more traction’, for example, the National Curriculum in 1992 (influenced by Swanwick) allowed for an iterative pedagogy. However, Peter admits that he has ‘had some monumental disasters’ – ‘if you put creativity on the line, it’s risky’. Thus, the pedagogy Peter values isn’t easy to implement: ‘the things I’m saying no, I don’t think I could do myself’ – but he feels he can still say them to articulate his philosophy of music education. Peter thinks that it’s important to draw pupils into the discipline of music *through* music, so that they are engaged, rather than to focus on behaviour management strategies – which is particularly important for student teachers who are still developing their foundational teaching skills.

When thinking about current policy and the MMC, Peter thinks it is ‘wrong-headed in its starting point, quite seriously and prejudicious so’. He exclaims that ‘the word ‘meaning’ comes up 27 times in the MMC’. The implication is that ‘you get to meaning after you’ve learnt all of this stuff’ – but in the document, there is no analysis of the term ‘meaning’. The MMC ‘encourages a model of learning that is the wrong way around’ – immersion should come first. ‘Immersion in music is the best you can probably do in an hour a week. Just do as much of that as you can’, whereas the amount of content in the MMC encourages a ‘top down’ pedagogy. The MMC inverts what is important about music and has ‘serious racial problems’. Peter feels that it is ‘easier to sweep music under the carpet’ as a subject that serves others.

When asked about Peter’s hopes for the future of music education, he says that ‘part of me thinks that we should just trust the music itself in many ways and trust people’s intuitive engagement with music’. He considers a model that involves ‘decurriculuming the school, making music departments an open house where people come and do their stuff. An open resource, rather than something that they turn up to. Increasingly, I worry about an hour a week or less than an hour a week, if I’m honest, what that’s all about.’ Peter states that if the discipline area can’t come up with anything different than what we have, ‘then we need a different model’ that is more inclusive, for example by making resources more available. Peter admits that such a model ‘needs a lot of working out. It’s almost like Heresy to take it off the curriculum.’ Peter considers an element of choice within the curriculum perhaps, which is open to all. One hour per week is regarded as music for all, ‘but does it reach genuine inclusivity? If not, we need to consider different ways of musical delivery. First Access got close, also community models from United States band system’. One aim might be ‘to more successfully transfer some more community-based models, especially in the primary school’. Peter’s hope is that ‘music education becomes as musical as possible’. He believes it could happen in patches, and already does exist in some patches – ‘you’ve got to hope that enough of that gets through’. Peter acknowledges that ‘music teachers are under a lot of pressure. The music education system and higher education needs to embrace this [action] too’, encouraging increased criticality. Peter believes that action and change ‘needs to start at the top and the bottom in many ways’. It is about joining up thinking with musicology too. Peter draws upon Green’s way of thinking, suggesting that ‘sometimes, [when] left to their own devices, children will learn. The more models of community and ownership, the better. It’s about ownership, meaning and community-based learning’. Peter ‘hope[s] for, but [is] not hopeful’ that such change and action will come to fruition, although this might be attributed to the stage that Peter has come to in his career, after many years of experience.