

BULLETIN: ASME VICTORIA

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Australian Society for Music Education,

Victoria Chapter Registration Number A0013254W



**Recognising and encouraging innovative
pedagogies in music education**

– a major goal of ASME

Chair's message

Sue Arney

Welcome to ASME Victoria for 2021! The shared sense of optimism and renewal at the start of this year provided a perfect opportunity for the Chapter Council to meet on the last Saturday in January for a day of planning for the year ahead – and beyond.



With a strong, diverse and active Council of 18 now in place, we are firmly focussed on building a robust and inclusive music education community that embraces classroom, instrumental and ensemble music in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary settings. Our commitment to supporting current and future ASME (Vic) members continues and we are excited to be broadening and deepening our level of activity across the profession over the coming years.

Our planning day was underpinned by the following four questions:

- Why do we/others join/belong to ASME?
- What are we doing to fulfil the goals of ASME?
- What are our points of difference from other organisations?
- What are our opportunities?

We began with a discussion/exploration of the ASME National Strategy four priorities and goals in relation to our activity in Victoria:

- Advocacy and Networking
- Professional Learning
- Research and Resources
- Communications and Vitality

It may not come as a surprise that our main discussion focussed on ASME as community. This theme will underpin all our activities throughout the year as we find ways to encourage discussion and sharing of ideas in our workshops, support new and early career teachers, build stronger connections with other professional learning organisations and create occasions for music educators to connect in a range of settings.

Our Chapter has proudly led the way in professional learning around composing in the classroom and we are keen to build on this to develop programs that support and connect Australian composers and compositions. We will continue our ongoing conversation around Indigenous music and musicians with a view to building stronger connections, resources, projects and opportunities between Victorian teachers, Indigenous musicians and cultural organisations.

We have begun to expand our plans for projects that advocate more strongly for music teachers, school music programs and campaigns that promote the profession. We are always keen to hear from teachers and schools who are in need of support, in case we can be of assistance. Please contact the Council via email: asmevic@asme.edu.au

As Victorian members, please keep an eye on our website as it continues to develop over the coming months (www.asme.edu.au/vic) and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ASMEVictoria). Our team will be providing regular updates of our events throughout the year.

Let me finish by acknowledging our fabulous ASME (Vic) Council – a vibrant, enthusiastic and expert group who volunteer their time willingly to support the organisation and the music education community in Victoria. They are an exhilarating bunch to work with!

Editorial

Ros McMillan

This issue of the *Bulletin* has a post-COVID theme. There has been a general sigh of relief that Victorians have weathered the pandemic storm and that schools are almost back to normal. For music students and teachers the sigh has been more of a mighty exhalation of breath that, once again, musical instruments and voices are being heard in classrooms and rehearsal spaces.

Music, as a school subject in 2020, encountered a range of situations that were different from other subjects in interesting ways. Pages in this *Bulletin* are devoted to



comments from both students and teachers in regard to both learning online and the feeling of euphoria in returning to music-making in schools. We are most grateful to the teachers and students who responded to our call for comments in regard to what we hope will be a once-in-a-century happening.

Also in this issue, well-known music educator Roland Yeung shares his views on the difficulty of keeping ensembles 'alive' throughout 2020 in his article 'Thoughts on Music Education'. This year's planned activities can also be found in this *Bulletin* as well as details of the 23rd National Conference, to be held in Hobart this year. This will be an event not to be missed!

Cover: Hard at work! Members of the Victorian Chapter Council at the ASME Planning Day. Left to right: Katie Hull-Brown, Erin Heycox, Pip Robinson, Jen Skate, Heather Morcom, Ros McMillan, Sue Arney. Absent: Lucy Lennox.
Photo: Katie Hull-Brown.

THOUGHTS ON MUSIC EDUCATION

What does a conductor do during COVID lockdown?

This article is written by Roland Yeung, a leading Victorian music educator, and Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Grainger Wind Symphony.

During the COVID restrictions in Victoria last year, large music groups were not permitted to gather from mid-March 2020 until February 2021. Even today, despite Victoria's success in keeping the virus at bay, there is always the risk of another lockdown. Large community group gatherings will remain fragile into the future and events may be jeopardised. However, gathering again for music-making has been a great joy, particularly as I have not conducted an ensemble since my last concert on 9 December 2019, 14 months ago!

The role of the conductor is to inspire a group of musicians to respond and express music together in one voice. Whilst we can practise refining conducting technique and studying scores in isolation, it is very difficult to respond to the expressive playing that is not made in front of you. My role is more than checking on players to play the right rhythm, notes and dynamics as marked in the score. Rather, the conductor imagines the artistic possibilities, shapes the cascading sound emerging, helps players 'on the run' if they mess up and encourages players to do their best. The conductor makes fine adjustments to the elements of music to bring the music to life – a little softer here, a little darker there, a little shorter here, a little slower in the ritardando, more vibrato, more weight on the accent and so on.

Players join this community group to play works that are challenging and at the highest artistic levels. They are satisfied if they can differentiate a variety of musical styles and music from different geographical locations through performing with nuances, when interpreting the composer in performance.

The current video conferencing technology is not capable of enabling large number of players, each on their own internet device, to be able to respond instantly to each other in real time. With this comes the loss of the finest of nuances in interpreting a musical phrase and sound together. There are too many differences from inferior to fast internet connections and the video devices may be mobile phones or laptops that may not be optimised for interactive live performance. Because of the lag or latency of the technology, a conductor is reduced to the role of a metronome and is, therefore, unable to collaborate and respond to players. Conducting colleagues of mine have up-skilled to develop video recording projects

where students individually submit videos of themselves playing to an audio backing track. After that, conductors compile these videos into an enormous video presentation with multiple windows.

Rather than undertaking this type of activity, our players during the lockdown period were encouraged to maintain their music performance skills by doing individual practice and performance as a soloist or in a chamber group. Ensemble skills would have to wait.

Our group's committee meets monthly via video conferencing. During lockdown we held our Annual General Meeting and finalised a new important policy on discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying. With this new policy we want all members to treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect. The policy was based on the template provided by Australian Live Performance Industry Code of Practice. I encourage all community groups to develop their own.

Another activity we developed towards the end of last year was our COVID-Safe Plan, drawing on guidelines and rules from the Department of Health and Human Services ([coronavirus.vic.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au)), the Department of Education and Training and Business Victoria's COVID guidelines for Incorporated Associations. We also considered requirements of the venues we hire for rehearsal and performance before we could resume. Protecting our members and their family is important.

It is wonderful to be back rehearsing, making vibrant music and adjusting to the COVID normal practices each time we meet.

Melbourne Recital Centre Bach Competition

Applications are now open for the Melbourne Recital Centre's Bach Competition, dedicated to young musicians passionate about Johann Sebastian Bach.

The competition repertoire must be any work of JS Bach not exceeding 10 minutes in total duration. Soloists and ensembles of up to five members who are 17 years of age and under on 1 January 2021 are welcome to apply. Applications close on Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at midnight and the finals will be held at the Melbourne Recital Centre on Sunday 30 May 2021.

Cash prizes of up to \$4,000 are available to be won. For further entry information and competing guidelines visit the website: www.melbournerecital.com.au/bach-competition-2021

Teachers' voices in the time of COVID-19

For teachers, 2020 was a particularly difficult year. The overwhelming sentiment was that everyone had to work [much more than] twice as hard in preparing and delivering lessons. Music teachers expressed a range of views in their feelings about the year, many of them positive. The comments below are those of instrumental music teachers.

Was there anything positive about teaching on-line?

I found that the students became more self-reliant over time and gradually more accountable for their own work. They were often more prepared to give my ideas for practising a 'try', possibly because there were fewer distractions in their personal lives. Unlike previously, they were not able to 'party' and the vast majority made great progress because they had the time – and possibly the patience! – to work on particular problems. Often I would tell them to try something for two weeks and invariably they would see real improvement. This was something that they were far less inclined to do in 2019, so hopefully the concept of practice will be regarded as an essential aspect of their learning.

I was fortunate that my institution took great pains to ensure that students were assisted to achieve the best possible outcome in extremely trying conditions.

– *Tertiary piano teacher*

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

It stretched my teaching capabilities and made me find new ways of engaging and being productive. Because we weren't playing together as we normally do in a face-to-face lesson, the kids were in the limelight in regard to performing. Parents were also involved. By sitting in on lessons they became more interested in their children's learning and more understanding as to how to play an instrument. As a result, they became more supportive when it came to practice because they saw what their kids could achieve and, conversely, what happened when they didn't practise. Teachers can only offer so much but when parents don't know what's expected of their children so many opportunities for improvement are missed.

Somehow the students 'slip under the radar' when they're learning at school but when they're online they're far more exposed. They're also not swamped by the sound of the teacher playing with them. And along with meeting their

parents, which was great, I met all my students' dogs, cats, chickens and rabbits and got a lot of housework done!

– *Secondary and primary cello teacher*

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Having to teach online got me thinking about different ways to teach a piece. As I wasn't able to point to a note on the piano or guide my students' hands as they played, it meant I had to come up with exercises or catchy rhymes to help them remember the notes.

– *Primary piano teacher*

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

What was the worst thing about teaching on-line?

Without a doubt it was the inadequacy of Zoom. It's a brilliant vehicle for communication but it's designed for speech, not musical performance. I found that I was unable to use the usual movements and gestures that I do when teaching face-to-face.

There was often a problem with the students' own set-up, too. Often I couldn't see their hands and it was usually impossible to see their feet and how they were using the pedals. The sound wasn't helpful for hearing pedalling either while some students were unable to set up their computer so that I could see them properly. Probably worst of all, some of the instruments they were playing on were very poor quality, certainly compared to the teaching piano my institution provides me.

– *Tertiary piano teacher*

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It was beyond exhausting looking at a screen all day and you lost the essence of performing together. The ability to express feelings and emotions when performing just doesn't come across via a screen. Music is so immediate and the sound coming through the screen was 'dry' – it's why we need music more than technology! It was also a lot of trouble when computers cut out or screens froze.

– *Secondary and primary cello teacher*

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

The internet 'lag' meant that interactive activities, such as playing together, were impossible. Stage 4 lockdown was the worst because computers were always cutting out, probably

because everyone was likely at home and using the internet!

– **Primary piano teacher**

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Are there other comments you'd like to make?

I asked my students to send me sound files of their own playing. This worked well particularly in Semester 2 when I asked them to reflect on their playing, which they did far more than ever before. I was fortunate that my institution provided the students with digital pianos, the sound of which was quite good. Interestingly, one of my students thought the digital keyboard was better than her own piano and chose to use that for all her recording.

– **Tertiary piano teacher**

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There was a great deal of support from one of my schools. The Head of Music thanked the music staff over and over again which was really appreciated. The second school where I teach showed no gratitude at all. For all the work we do, there should be appreciation shown.

– **Secondary and primary cello teacher**

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Online teaching was a totally different experience for me as sometimes I had to re-invent my approach completely. I did like the challenge of this, however, I am happy (as are most students) to return to lessons 'in person' again.

– **Primary piano teacher**

Student Voices

When you do music with everyone else it's really great because it's fun being with other people and doing music together!

– **Dusty, Year 5**

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

I love learning violin with the others because it makes me feel peaceful.

– **Vostina, Year 4**

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

This year I'm really looking forward to spreading *music* around our school community. It will be awesome to see other musicians in our community perform in front of people again. Being able to work together as a group and play music together has been amazing after missing it all year last year due to COVID-19.

– **Sarah, Year 8**

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Coming together again, after long periods of lockdown, to play and sing music has given me a nice feeling of community. Everyone, especially us school musicians, had a stressful 2020 with online learning as well as having music lessons online. Going back to school, I felt quite excited to go back to rehearsals and performing. Nothing speaks family like coming together and doing what we love!

– **Iyla, Year 8**

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It's been such a relief coming back to school and studying music and violin in school. Back when it was online learning, although I did have the extra time to practise, that practice was like walking in the fog, unsure whether or not I was playing in tune, in time or even if my basic posture was right. Now back in school I have all and more than the basics to improve my music. I have my teachers who shape my future playing, friends who encourage and motivate me, and those highly skilled peers who learn sonatas at a skill beyond their age and who answer my music questions like a sage.

– **Victor, Year 8**

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I love doing music because you can sing and play all the feelings that happen in the day with your friends

– **Jack, Year 6**

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

2020 collapsed and transmitted music – our sounds – through space in neat little packets. In 2021 we're able to unleash our music with all its velvety or prosaic textures, bright or sullen pitches. Everything swells into form. It bursts out the restrained boxes it was encapsulated in for so long.

– **Elisa, Year 8**

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I think it's really good to be back at school because you can fix my flute.

– **Tom, Year 6**

ASME's plans for workshops for 2021

Following the Chapter's Planning Meeting in January, a range of workshops are being organised. All will be delivered online with Victorian members receiving dates and details via email. All workshops will also be advertised on MusicMail and the ASME (Vic) Facebook page.

As noted in the Chair's report, there will be a particular emphasis on workshops for Early Career Teachers, both primary and secondary. Below is a brief outline of our workshop schedule.

MARCH

Primary Music – Tuesday 30 March, 4.30-6pm (already held)

Engaging students in Primary Music – a workshop for new and early career teachers, including those moving from secondary to primary

This workshop will present structures and strategies which aim to engage all students in sequenced motivational activities. Various strategies which assist in catering for differentiated learners will be investigated. Classroom procedures and methods for introducing new material such as dances, chants and songs will be presented as well as ideas for introducing creative activity into classroom programs.

Presenters: Michael Travers, Katie Hull-Brown, Ros McMillan

MAY

Planning a music class for Early Years – Wednesday 5 May, 4.30-6pm

*How I Wonder – a workshop for teachers of Early Years programs
(3-5 year olds)*

By harnessing children's curiosity and wonder, music can be a vehicle for exploring ideas beyond the classroom. The presenters will share examples of how they plan and develop extended inquiries stemming from a child's wondering as they create their own music. They will also discuss planning and pacing an early years' music class drawing on their combined experiences.



Presenters: Jen Skate, Katie Hull-Brown

JUNE

Secondary Music – Years 7 & 8

Establishing the culture of a classroom for new and early career teachers working in compulsory music

This workshop will cater for new and early career teachers as well as those looking for new ideas for teaching the core Year 7 and 8 years. For students entering secondary schooling, the range of their musical experiences in primary school is enormous. For some, their only musical experience has been one classroom lesson a week for perhaps one or two years. Others have been involved in instrumental lessons for anything up to six years, making the teaching of these mixed classes extremely challenging. How this can be overcome will be a major focus of this workshop.

Presenters: Thomas Williams, Erin Heycox, Ros McMillan

AUGUST

Secondary Music – Years 9 & 10

Elective music classes – attracting and retaining students in participatory music experiences

This workshop will cater for new and early career teachers as well as those looking for new ideas for teaching elective Year 9 and 10 classes.

Presenters: Pip Robinson, Thomas Williams, Heather Morcom

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER

Composing and improvising in the classroom

A workshop for generalist primary teachers and those new to teaching music in the primary school

An introduction to engaging primary students in the composition process. With activities based on an Australian picture story-book, the workshop will also incorporate activities from other Arts subjects.

Presenters: Michael Travers, Jen Skate, Ros McMillan

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

In Conversation with Lorraine Milne – ASME Patron

Late afternoon Forum at Graduate House, Parkville

Lorraine is an award-winning composer and music educator of long standing. She has written and produced music resources for teachers and students including songs and scores, resource kits and study guides. At this informal gathering, Lorraine will discuss some of her work and participants will be invited to ask questions and exchange ideas on topics raised.

ASME National Conference – Tasmania

Conference theme: Music, Nourish Life

The 23rd Biennial ASME National Conference will be held in Hobart
Wednesday 29 September – Friday 1 October.

Important dates:

14 May 2021: closing date for submission of papers, workshops and performing groups

30 June 2021: closing date for Early Bird registration

Venue:

Hotel Grand Chancellor, 1 Davey Street, Hobart. General enquiries: enquiries@hgchobart.com.au

The hotel faces Constitution Dock and is a short walk to the MONA ferry and Salamanca Place. Accommodation is also available at the hotel.

Keynote speakers:

Professor Gary McPherson, Ormond Professor, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

Dr James Cuskelly OAM, Immediate Past President of the International Kodály Society.

Professor Julie Scott, Co-Chair of Music Education, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Jacinth Oliver Memorial Address: Ms Di O'Toole, former teacher and contributor to pre-service and in-service teacher development in Tasmania.

Conference website: asmeconference.org.au



ASME (Vic) Chapter Council – 2020-2021

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SAVE THE DATE

ASME XXIII National Conference

29 September—1 October 2021

Hobart, Tasmania



Register your interest [HERE](#)