

Guitar Tuition in Australian Tertiary Institutions: Impact of Contemporary Music Pedagogies

Daniel Lee, William Baker, Nick Haywood
University of Tasmania

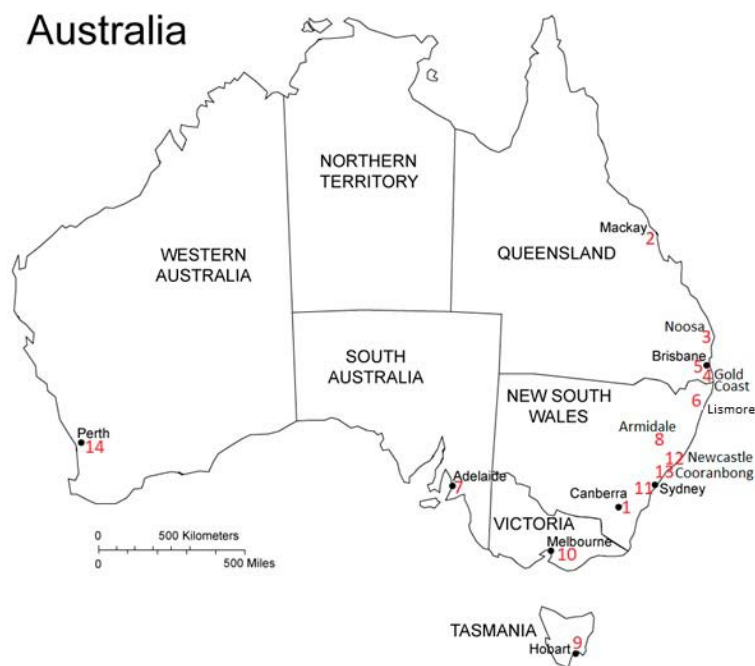
Introduction

Winston Churchill once said; “One of the signs of a great society is the diligence with which it passes culture from one generation to the next” (Churchill in Mansfield & Grant, 1995). This paper is presenting research examining how, and perhaps how well, this is happening in regard to Australian guitar community performance styles and the education of the next generation of guitarists through tertiary music programs. The scope of this study focuses on Bachelor level, Australian Qualifications Framework Level 7 (AQF7), Contemporary Popular Music (CPM) courses where a student has the option to major in performance with the guitar as their primary instrument. The first tertiary institution to offer a Bachelor level degree, in CPM in Australia was the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education, in 1986 (Hannan, 2000). This campus has over the years, through processes of amalgamation and consolidation, become part of the Southern Cross University at Lismore on the Northern New South Wales coast where this course is still offered. In the year 2000, Hannan published a report on CPM education in Australia. At that time there were three AQF7 CPM courses where a student could major in performance and a few other courses undertaking what he described as; “servicing aspects of the popular music industry” (Hannan, 2000, p. 2). At the time of data collection, semester one, 2018, there were 23 AQF7 CPM courses, 15 offered by universities, 5 by private institutions and 3 offered by TAFE, or polytechnic, colleges. The map in figure 1 demonstrates the location of these courses is concentrated in state capital cities. The courses offered by The University of New England, and Central Queensland University are also offered in a fully on-line mode.

Methodology

This study can most simply be described as an ethnography as it aims to answer ethnographic type questions regarding performance practices of localised guitar communities. However, it can more accurately be described as a phenomenographically-oriented, multi-sited distance, comparative ethnography. It is multi-sited as there are 26 different physical locations where AQF7 CPM courses are being delivered. Three institutions have campus in two cities. It is a distance ethnography as the research was conducted from an office in Adelaide via the use of twenty-first century communications technology.

Figure 1 Map of institutions offering AQF7 CPM courses



<u>Institution</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Map</u>
Australian National University	Canberra	1
Central Queensland University	Mackay & Noosa	2 & 3
Griffith University – Queensland Conservatorium	Gold Coast	4
Queensland University of Technology	Brisbane	5
TAFE Queensland	Brisbane	5
University of Southern Queensland	Brisbane	5
Southern Cross University	Lismore	6
University of Adelaide – Elder Conservatorium	Adelaide	7
University of New England	Armidale	8
University of Tasmania	Hobart	9
RMIT University	Melbourne	10
Box Hill Institute (previously Box Hill TAFE)	Melbourne	10
Victoria University	Melbourne	10
Melbourne Polytechnic	Melbourne	10
Australian College of the Arts	Melbourne	10
Australian Institute of Music	Melbourne & Sydney	10 & 11
JMC Academy	Melbourne & Sydney	10 & 11
Macquarie University	Sydney	11
University of Sydney – Sydney Conservatorium	Sydney	11
Academy of Music and Performing Arts	Sydney	11
Avondale College	Cooranbong	12
University of Newcastle	Newcastle	13
Edith Cowan University – Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts	Perth	14

Methodologies for distance ethnographies were developed during World-War-Two by ethnographers in America studying the cultures of Eastern-Europe and Asia (Mead & Métraux, 2000). The methodology design employed in this study is influenced by these and employs similar sampling strata, data collection techniques and analytical methods. It is a comparative ethnography because the study compares the pedagogical approaches and curriculum content of the 23 different courses against each other. Also data from the three different data sources are compared against each other. Phenomenography is a research method adapted for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualize, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in, cul-

tural or social constructs (Marton, 2015). The cultural constructs under examination in this study are Australian CPM and associated pedagogical practices. A second defining characteristic of phenomenography is the distinction between first and second order perspectives. A first order perspective describes how things actually are, while a second order perspective describes a perceiver's experience. This research seeks to compare first and second order perspectives of the participants regarding CPM education and its influence on the CPM communities.

The first data source for the study was two online surveys. One of students and alumni, and another surveying educators of relevant courses. The second data source was unit descriptors of every core unit, and performance and guitar related electives, from every AQF7 CPM course. The third data source was interviews of students, alumni and educators of AQF7 CPM courses. Within the sample there were affiliates of every institution in Australia offering a CPM course with a performance major. Participants requesting anonymity have been designated appropriate pseudonyms.

Initial statistical analysis of the first two datasets was conducted to inform the design of the interview questions. Analysis of the data corpus was conducted using Inductive Thematic Analysis techniques informed by Braun & Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2014), Sarantakos (2013) and Bryman (2016).

Questions

The questions being addressed in this paper are not the primary research questions for the PhD research project this paper stems from. Rather, they are other questions that arose during the inductive data analysis process which also seemed important to address. The questions being examined here are:

- Are the onward revolutions of online technologies and activities driving the world toward a global musical monoculture?
- Do geographical boundaries exist in 21st century music communities?
- What roles have, could, or should, educational institutions play in musical enculturation?
- Is there an Australian CPM guitar performance practice heritage worthy of preservation? If so, what is it?

Global Musical Monoculture

The concept of a global musical monoculture seems to be a hot and divisive topic, on a par with some political, religious or environmental topics in terms of those that agree or disagree and how animate they are about it. Bruce, an educator from the University of Southern Queensland thought the whole debate should be dropped;

The idea that there is a global guitar monoculture has been a pervasive trope of guitar mags for the last four years. It's about time we stopped really. – Bruce (Educator, USQ)

He reasoned;

In terms of a global guitar monoculture, ... I suppose that assumes that all people playing guitar have internet connections and Instagram accounts but that's certainly not the case. – Bruce (Educator, USQ)

Donna feels the onward revolutions of online technologies and activities allows individuals to focus more on their chosen sub-genre, or musical sub-culture, thus strengthening the health of trans-local multi-cultural musical phenomena;

But you know things like Spotify, people can really hone in on specific musical interests with all of those software [...] individuals can pursue their own interests and their own path a lot more via the internet than without. – Donna (Educator UNE)

Renaldo feels for Australian musicians to succeed in the global market they need to conform to standard practices of the global industry. He expressed this may be the key to the survival of the Australian industry;

It might be the only thing that can keep the thing going, especially in Australia. – Renaldo (Alumni, TAFE Queensland)

Geographical Boundaries

One observation that was common among the participants was that musical communities are no longer geographically bound.

The sub-cultures within the global guitar culture are no longer geographically bound. – Bruce (Educator, University of Southern Queensland)

It was felt this was especially so in the CPM guitar communities which have a strong online presence and interaction via file-sharing sites including *911tabs*, *UltimateGuitar* and social media.

Allan, an educator who took part in a discussion group conducted in England following the 2018 IASPM conference in Huddersfield, expressed his observation that contemporary musical sub-cultures have never really been geographically bound due to dissemination via radio and record sales;

Micro cultures within the music thing aren't actually, or never have been, geographically bound. – Allan (Educator, City of Birmingham University)

The internet has exaggerated this phenomenon and made it much more rapid. Dan, however, has also observed that the internet has, in fact, strengthened geographically located guitar communities, in a way, by making them accessible to the whole world.

I think the internet has, in terms of geographical boundaries, I think we've broken them down and strengthened them at the same time. – Dan (Educator, Queensland University of Technology)

He explained people from other parts of the world can listen to Brisbane bands and observe the local “Brisbane sound” much the same way as we all observed, and could identify, the “Liverpool sound” of the sixties from all over the world via radio, television and records.

Another interesting observation in the data was the sub-cultural sounds within Australia. Mention has already been made of the “Brisbane sound” which has been researched and documented (Regan, 2019). There was also noted a distinction between Melbourne and Sydney. Influenced by the World-War-Two era musicians appealing to the American servicemen located in Sydney, created there a genre grounded on swing era dance music, while the Melbourne sound was more Roots-Blues based. This distinction is observed to still exist;

I think there is still a separation between Melbourne and Sydney. – William (Student, Australian National University)

Industry Awareness

Should the breakdown of musical-culture geographical boundaries be embraced, embattled, or treated with impartiality, by Australian educational institutions delivering Contemporary Popular Music (CPM) programs? Before this can be answered we need to discern the current state of awareness within the institutions regarding geographical boundaries of communities in the local and global music industries. It was found that industry relevance was a very strong concern among the educators and course designers, and has been since the earliest days of CPM education in Australia. Chrissie feels very strongly that the institutions should be engaging with the industry in a symbiotic relationship, helping maintain industry health so the students have somewhere to go when they graduate;

If we don't have a healthy and strong Australian industry these students are not going to have anywhere to work. I think it is really important. – Chrissie (Educator, Australian College of the Arts)

The student participants, however, typically felt a bit daunted by the current global music industry and often found it difficult to balance finding a niche where they fit, while also fitting in with the entire global phenomena;

It really is a global thing now, like there's is no limit to what we can take in. – William (Student, Australian National University)

I felt like I was so bombarded with information I was just trying to get me head around, there was no room to find my own voice. – Erica (Student University of Adelaide)

Role of Education Institutions

If, as some educators feel, there possibly is no threat of a global musical-monoculture, what role does tertiary music education play, or should it play, in maintaining and developing an Australian voice in the global guitar communities? Barry feels it is important for educational institutions to actively partake in at least promoting the existing Australian identity;

I think we have a very important role to play and I think everything that we do as academic music educators and researchers should have some sort of focus on promoting an Australian musical identity. – Barry (Educator, Southern Cross University)

Barry also had this to say regarding our local indigenous musical culture;

I think Non-indigenous Australia is still struggling with its cultural identity and so I think in that sense universities have a very important role to play because there is not many other institutions that are actually interrogating these questions as part of their daily practice. – Barry (Educator, Southern Cross University)

Chrissie, in addition to feeling tertiary education maintains industry relevance also feels it must also maintain cultural relevance, for much the same reason. She wonders; what is the point of educating musicians to create art that is culturally diss-connected from their own local environs?

I think that it's important that we maintain Australian cultural significance [...] because if the Australian music industry is not a healthy industry then all of these students that are entering the industry over the next few years are not going to have a viable industry to go into. – Chrissie (Educator, Australian College of the Arts)

However, it was not unanimously felt among the participant cohort that tertiary music education institutions should be pro-active in cultural development or even cultural significance;

One of their responsibilities should be identifying, and refining, and developing Australian music. – Adam S (Educator, Melbourne Polytechnic)

I don't know that it's the university course, or the tertiary course's responsibility to be churning out a supply of culturally significant musicians. I definitely don't think it's the universities' responsibility to do that. – Ben (Educator, Australian College of the Arts)

Australian CPM Heritage

If tertiary music educators are to be culturally sensitive to our local music heritage, we need to know what that is. Furthermore, if guitar tutors are also to be culturally sensitive in regards to local performance practices, an understanding of this cultural capital is also paramount. In this investigation, one particular ensemble, and their lead guitarist, stood out from all others as the iconic representation of Australian CPM guitar music. AC/DC, and their status as iconic Australian artists, were referred to by participants from all sample strata, from students and educators from all three institution types in both the interviews and surveys;

I mean the only really obvious guitar sound to me would still be AC/DC. – Dan (Educator, Queensland University of Technology)

Wow, the first name that comes to mind would be Angus Young. – Erica (Alumnus, University of Adelaide)

Any AC/DC song. – Student survey respondent 7

If you look at an act like AC/DC I think a lot people assume that Australian guitar is raw and loud and less skill-full. – Renaldo (Student, Queensland TAFE)

However, no mention was found in the unit descriptors. This may indicate the course designers are either unaware of AC/DC's status in the community or they are unwilling to acknowledge this and include it in their curricula.

The general consensus among the participant cohort was that AC/DC's music is simple on the surface but gets more and more sophisticated as you try to replicate it and try to teach it to others. There are elements of the music that are important to its aesthetics that are difficult to define and describe using traditional music language (Kawamoto, 2019). This was perceived by the participants to be difficult to integrate into an objective education, and quantitative assessment paradigm. The performance practices of AC/DC, and other Australian rock guitarists, may seem simplistic when analyzed using traditional musicological techniques including the role of functional harmony. However, it was noted that as you try to replicate their performances, and as you try to teach others to replicate them, the music becomes more sophisticated the more you try to reach accurate reproduction of the rhythmic elements. Other significant Australian artists that were mentioned by participants as iconic include Tommy Emmanuel, Cold Chisel, The Easybeats, The Living End, The Angels and INXS. Chris Cheney, guitarist and front-man of The Living End is an alumnus of the Course at Box Hill TAFE. The aural aesthetics of the band INXS can be described as being influenced by the post-punk new-wave movement, however they never lost touch with their cultural roots in the Oz-Rock scene in Australian pubs and clubs.

Participants typically found it difficult to identify iconic features of Australian CPM guitar performance styles. However, when they did manage to describe something, it was most typically regarding Australian guitarists unique sense of, or approach to, rhythm;

That powerful rhythm thing [...] hypnotic powerful rhythm – Kevin (Guest lecturer)

Rhythmic feel, groove – Student survey respondent 23

It's not the style as such it's the delivery, [...] a different rhythmic emphasis – Paul (Educator, Academy of Music and Performing Arts)

This tremendous rhythmic forward motion [...] its pretty remarkable, an intensive groove – William (Student, Australian National University)

This was also described by James as a significant and identifying feature of rock guitar playing by indigenous artists;

Aboriginal musicians as a group, guitar players, have a quintessential, certainly a unique guitar rhythmic style which is kind of overlooked and not really acknowledged – James (Guest Lecturer)

Be Yourself

This paper will present three themes developed from the data corpus using the process of Inductive Thematic Analysis. The most prominent theme was 'Be Yourself'. This concept was observed to be grounded in student autonomy and the encouragement for students to find their own voice rather than copying the performance styles of others;

There's a lot of emphasis on them working out what kind of artists they want to be. – Ben (Educator, Australian College of the Arts)

As you progress through the course, you're allowed more and more autonomy. – Warren (Student, Victoria University)

The prominence of autonomy in AQF7 CPM courses may be a response to, or a result of, the prominence of individuality in Australian popular music culture. In the late 1960's and early 1970's there was a push in the arts industries to create more Australian material and to 'Be Australian'. With this governmental push toward cultural nationalism there was a swell of interest in Australian film, theatre, visual arts and music (French & Poole, 2011; Strohmaier, 1999). Various national agencies, including The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, the International Cultural Corporation of Australia Council, The Experimental Film and Television Fund (EFTF), the Australian Film Institute (AFI) and the Australian Film Commission (AFC), were engaged with the task of

promoting Australian arts internationally (Berryman, 2013; Formica, 2011). However, the push-back from the rock musicians, in typical Australian fashion, was to respond to the call by defying it. Rather than 'Be Australian' their mantra was to 'Be Yourself'. In this manner the creative tendencies of the artistic industries in Australia was a diverse expression of the self;

The 60s thing was driven more by trying to be like the U.K. or America. But then 70s really emerged as be yourself. I think be yourself was more important than be Australian. That was quite a driving force – James (Guest Lecturer)

Perhaps the greatest example of this in CPM is the band Skyhooks who pushed the boundaries of commercial music lyrically and aesthetically. Their on-stage performance style, including choice of costumes, was designed to shock the established Australian machoistic attitudes dominant in the Australian Pub-Rock industry.

Vast Array

It was observed among the 23 courses being examined, no two courses contain parallel curriculum content and courses design features. The various course designs are so vastly dis-similar that graduate attributes from some courses bear little overlap to those from other courses. A few courses contain elements typical of the conservatoire model, incorporating traditional pedagogical practices including one-on-one tuition, ensemble units, prescribed repertoire, music theory and music history units. However, there are courses that feature none of those things. A couple of courses focus on the student's own compositions and developing an online presence and marketing regime. Some of this diversity has come from the course designers incorporating contemporary music pedagogical practices similar to those outlined by Lucy Green (2002). Some diversity is built into the course to cater for broad genre and career perspectives;

The student will be immersed in playing music from a vast array of genres and related fields. – Griffith University (Unit Descriptor)

The 21st century musician is generally required to engage in a broad range of musical contexts in order to sustain a portfolio career. – University of Southern Queensland (Unit Descriptor)

Some of the diversity has come about as a result of the diverse cohort of applicants with varying degrees, and modes, of previous musical education and experience. Designing a course that can offer all equality of access to all members of this diverse cohort, and an equal education, has necessitated in creating and adopting diverse pedagogical practices;

The cohort is so diverse, you've got people that are totally focused on Death Metal, you've got people that like Blues, there's a kind of ritzy thing, Pop, there's a huge range involved – Denis (Educator, Macquarie University)

One feature observed in the data was a large range of elective options available at some institutions, many from a large range of other fields. Also, the options of double-majors including music and literature, or music and history, music and science, was found in some courses. This was noted by the student participants as an attractive component of the course, as it allowed for a wider range of options for post graduate study;

It gives us huge ability to do post-grad in more areas than just music. – Jamie-Lee (Student, Queensland University of Technology)

Two of the alumni interviewees were pursuing further study in music therapy having completed a double major in music and health sciences.

Jazz Virus

In Hannan's 2000 paper he mentioned the trained educators in the early CPM courses had mostly come from Jazz backgrounds as there were no prior CPM courses to train the first generation of CPM educators. Also, many of the educators in the early CPM courses in Australia were practitioners with little or no training in pedagogy. He stated: "I have observed that the highly skilled contemporary musicians we employ tend to try to indoctrinate their students with what I call the jazz virus" (p. 6). This study has found that nearly two decades later the Jazz virus is still alive and well in some Australian tertiary CPM courses;

I know for instance my current teacher is really into Jazz and more experimental kind of music – Asher (Student, University of Tasmania)

A big thing that you learn as part of music theory is Jazz – Jamie-Lee (Student, Queensland University of Technology)

The study of improvising over chord structures by examining Jazz repertoire will provide the students with new knowledge, and/or expand on existing knowledge. – University of Sydney (Unit Descriptor)

Most of the educators surveyed and interviewed had been trained in Jazz performance. The courses offered by Central Queensland University and the University of Tasmania are Popular Music and Jazz courses, the genres are offered together. In other courses students were found to be encouraged to listen to jazz guitarists for inspiration. In many cases these were Australian artists;

Encouraged to check out the works of James Sherlock, Stephen Magnusson and Frank Gambale – Student survey respondent 46

I certainly point them in that direction: James Muller, Steve Magnusson – Educator survey respondent 80

In a few courses Jazz content was incorporated into the curriculum for ensemble performance, solo repertoire and theory units. The instrumental studies unit descriptor from Box Hill TAFE states by participating in a Jazz ensemble, students will ‘augment’ their study on their primary instrument;

Techniques that are not overtly utilised in mainstream popular music, but have been utilised by experimental jazz artists and creators of music that exists at the fringes of popular culture, will be explored – Box Hill TAFE (Unit Descriptor)

Conclusion

This study found there seems to be little observance by the participants of any risk of online technologies and activities driving the world toward a global musical monoculture. Rather musical micro-communities still exist, however, their boundaries are not geographical due to increasing online activity. Some educators felt it is important for Australian tertiary institutions delivering CPM courses to embrace Australian culture. However, it was found there is some difficulty in defining what is Australian music, and also what are its distinguishing characteristics. This study suggests an important aspect of Australian CPM is finding one’s own voice, or ‘be yourself’. This is being encouraged in Australian institutions. Findings of this study suggest institutions should continue to teach Australian CPM with reference to iconic Australian cultural capital in the form of compositions and guitar performance styles. However, they should also embrace further development of the Australian voice by continuing to include original compositions in Australian CPM. These two must be delivered in conjunction to avoid a dis-connect with the past. In this way CPM education will embrace the blending of styles, including its own heritage, which is the way Australian CPM performers have previously found their own voice (Lee, Baker & Haywood, 2018).

Further research could be conducted into performance styles of other instruments including vocalists, and especially Australian CPM songwriters to further identify and describe Australian-isms in CPM. Investigation could also be conducted on the concept of devising a systematic approach to defining Australian music similar to the MAPL system employed in Canada. Is it necessary that graduates from all courses labelled as CPM performance degrees have comparable graduate attributes? If so, then perhaps some of these courses need to be renamed to more accurately present the content. This is seen as important so prospective students can know more accurately what it is they are signing up for when they enroll, and also for future employers to understand the skill sets of the graduates they are employing. Further investigation could be conducted to examine the role of Jazz pedagogies in CPM education, and in Australian CPM education and what should, or should not, be included and delivered in a course titled CPM.

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