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**SINGING A JOYFUL SONG:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF
PRIMARY SCHOOL MUSIC LEADERS IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

at Massey University, Palmerston North,
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the work of generalist primary school teachers who work in music leadership roles in their schools. There is an absence of research into the work of such teachers who play a key role in children's formal and informal music learning, and who represent the musical 'face' of their primary schools. This study addresses this music research gap by collecting and analysing the stories and observing the work of a sample of teachers for whom music is both a personal and professional passion, and contributes to our general understanding of the work of primary school teachers who love music and share it in their schools and classrooms.

Five men and five women representing a range of personal and teaching experience and demographics participated in the study. All participants were interviewed about their work as primary school music leaders and were also observed undertaking a regular music leadership activity of their choice. Interview transcripts and observation notes were analysed in relation to the three research questions that address who the teachers are and how they came to be music leaders; the work they do and the skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin that work; and the significance of their work.

Key findings related to the interplay of personal and professional factors in the development of these teachers' identities as primary school music leaders, the complex and multi-faceted nature of the role, and the broad significance of their work to the teachers themselves, the children they teach, and their wider school communities. In addition, themes of identity, emotionality and curriculum context emerged as important frameworks for understanding the data with Wenger's (1998) 'communities of practice' utilised as a unifying theory.

The study contributes to a body of locally-based and international research concerned with music's place in the primary school curriculum, the role of music teachers and leaders in sustaining music in the curriculum, and the value and benefits associated with music teaching and learning. In addition, it has practical and theoretical implications for teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum leaders at institutional and policy levels.

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