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BETWEEN TWO WORLDS:
TENSIONS OF PRACTICE ENCOUNTERED BY
SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHERS IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education at
Massey University, Manawatu Campus, New Zealand

Judith Diane Donaldson

2012
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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the tensions of practice encountered in the daily working lives of secondary school music teachers who hold the responsibility for music in their school. The analysis used data from semi-structured interviews with nineteen participants, including current and former practitioners and music advisors in Aotearoa New Zealand. The participants represent a range of musical traditions, teaching experiences, and demographics. Data were analysed thematically in terms of four research questions: (i) the expectations attached to the role of secondary school music teacher; (ii) the tensions of practice encountered; (iii) the manner in which teachers experienced their working lives; and (iv) their efforts to resolve the tensions they encountered. Major tensions of practice were found to arise from the boundary positions which teachers occupied at the interface of two worlds – the inner world of music and the outer world of the school – and from the complex demands of working in the three different areas of classroom, extra-curricular and itinerant music. Further tensions stemmed from changes brought about by national policy changes from the mid-1990s to a broad, practically-based official curriculum and standards-based assessment in senior secondary school credentials. Within their roles, teachers experienced conflict, ambiguity and overload which had an impact on personal well-being and their identities as musicians. They derived satisfaction from drawing students into the inner life and meaning of music. The study addresses a major gap in the understanding of secondary teachers’ work. It contributes to local and international research literature into the lives of teachers, the position of music in schools, and the nature of music education. It has practical and theoretical implications for policy makers, school leaders, teachers and researchers.
Acknowledgements

There is an adage that it takes a community to raise a child. In the years spent bringing this thesis from the germ of an idea to fruition, I have received love, guidance and encouragement from colleagues, family and friends within many communities.

This study could not have been undertaken without the nineteen participants who so generously gave of their time and shared their experiences of music and music teaching with me. It was a privilege to listen to their stories and I hope that I have done justice to them. I hope too, that this thesis will help to make more visible the work that these dedicated teachers undertake in the service of our young people. My sincere thanks go to every participant in this study.

Professor John O’Neill, my chief supervisor, and Dr Sally Hansen have provided me with expert and timely guidance throughout. Thank you John for the belief you have shown in me since my first tentative suggestion in 2004 that I might undertake doctoral studies. I have learned much from your scholarly approach and the clarity of your thinking. I have appreciated your dry humour, and your challenge to avoid ten words when two will do. Adverbs, adjectives and ‘throat clearing’ have taken on a whole new meaning! Thank you Sally for the insights provided by your deep understanding of teachers and teaching, your wisdom, and for your encouragement and confidence in me. They have meant a great deal. I count myself very fortunate to have been guided by supervisors who have worked so cooperatively in my interests.

I am grateful to Massey University and particularly to Dr Kama Weir and Dr Alison Kearney and the Schools of Arts, Development and Health Education and Curriculum and Pedagogy for the support and encouragement provided to me. My sincere thanks are also due to my colleagues, who, particularly in the latter stages of the project, have helped to make space and time available. I am also grateful to Massey University for assistance provided by a research award in 2011, which enabled me to create blocks of time for writing. My thanks go, too, to Philippa Butler, for her proof-reading expertise.

I have very much appreciated the support of friends and close colleagues also engaged in doctoral studies. It has been encouraging to celebrate the successes and know that it is possible to reach the end of the journey. To the ‘7.30 am Moxies Ladies’ – Jenny, Kama, Karen, Rowena, and Zoe – thank you! Wednesday morning breakfast
at Moxies has been a weekly highlight, with an opportunity to take stock, compare notes, laugh and re-charge for the next leg of the journey. I treasure too, the love and friendship of the BMWs, the encouragement of my fellow arts ‘PhD Pilgrims’ – Jenny, Rosemary and Tracey-Lynne – and the guidance and life lessons learned with Nigel and the Process. All have contributed to this project.

Many of the sacrifices necessitated by part-time doctoral studies have been borne by my family. There aren’t enough words to thank them for the love and understanding they have so unstintingly offered. To my dad Ken, and step-mum Jill, husband Guy, sisters Sue and Penny, to my UK and Chicago-based sons – Lee and Gavin – their wives Sandy and Janet and their children, to Owen and Xiaodan, and to all the members of our rich extended and blended family – thank you, from the bottom of my heart.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to:

My Dad, Ken Gregory, whose inner life and love of music still shine through in his ninety-third year, and in loving memory of my mother, Joan. Their shared vision of a family bach at Kuratau on the shores of Lake Taupo, furnished a tranquil and often solitary retreat where much of the gritty work for this project was undertaken.

And to my husband Guy, expert musician and master teacher, who walked the journey at my side, giving support when the going got tough and celebrating with me the small successes along the way.
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<tr>
<td>ANZ</td>
<td>Aotearoa New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZC</td>
<td>The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZAAE</td>
<td>The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Art Educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATCL</td>
<td>Associate of Trinity College of London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERO</td>
<td>Education Review Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOF</td>
<td>Head of Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual educational plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRMT</td>
<td>Institute of Registered Music Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITM</td>
<td>Itinerant teacher of music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENZA</td>
<td>Music Education New Zealand Aotearoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MERC</td>
<td>National Centre for Research in Music Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>METANZ</td>
<td>Music Education Trust Aotearoa New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCEA</td>
<td>National Certificate in Educational Achievement</td>
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<td>NZ</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZC</td>
<td><em>New Zealand Curriculum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NZCF</td>
<td>New Zealand Choral Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZQA</td>
<td>New Zealand Qualifications Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>NZSME</td>
<td>New Zealand Society for Music Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPTA</td>
<td>Post Primary Teachers’ Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIC</td>
<td>Teacher in Charge of Music</td>
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