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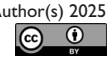

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‘What’s it like?’: An autoethnography of three words that challenged and inspire a pedagogue in the concert hall

Claire D Nicholls
University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Abstract

This autoethnography examines my practice of curating didactic orchestral concerts for children with regional community orchestras over 16 years. Bourdieusian concepts are used as a theoretical framework to critique the nuances of my story. The commentaries provided in reflective narratives examine the initial well-meaning yet misguided motivations of a graduate teacher replicating high arts doxa through socialisation; efforts to shape audience behaviours and build cultural capital with a largely non-concert-going public; and later practice informed and reformed through research. Significant reflexive turns are shared with the view to provoke conversation, encourage fellow practitioners and smooth pitfalls for others working in these spaces. With these lessons and learnings in tow, the article critiques my current praxis, values and work in curating concerts for children, and offers guidance when considering the potential curated orchestral concerts as meaningful arts experiences for children. The article ultimately seeks to encourage practitioners and researchers both within this field and beyond to bravely have a go at blue sky projects mindfully, critically and reflexively.

Keywords

Autoethnography, concerts for children, didactic concerts, music education, regional community orchestras

Professional orchestras worldwide commit significant funding to engage diverse audiences through regional touring, education concerts, novel concert formats and venues, and initiatives to target specific audiences (Pitts & Price, 2019). However, because most concerts happen in capital cities where the orchestras are based, millions of people living regionally miss out. Sadly, this includes children and young people who are audience demographics within themselves (Bernhofer, 2016; Johanson & Glow, 2011). According to the Rights of the Child convention (United Nations, 1989), children have the right ‘to participate freely in cultural life and the arts . . . appropriate to the age

Corresponding author:
Claire D Nicholls, University of Southern Queensland, West Street, Darling Heights, QLD 4350, Australia.
Email: claire.nicholls@unisq.edu.au

of the child' (Article 31, 1). It is the prerogative of state parties to 'encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity' (Article 31, 2).

There is tremendous potential for amateur community music groups, including those in regional areas, to provide age appropriate and meaningful concerts for children. These organisations powered by avid, amateur music lovers have a unique relationship with their community, connecting with their audiences in ways that professional orchestras simply cannot (Nicholls, 2019a). These valuable community and artistic resources are well-positioned to potentially provide children and families with greater access to quality, accessible and appropriate concerts, occupying a space limited by finite budgetary and programming capacities of professional orchestras.

This is my story of working as a graduate classroom music teacher who was sent to a small regional town in Queensland, Australia. While teaching attentive listening activities with a year 3 class, a student asked, 'what's it like to go to a concert with an orchestra?' In this moment I encountered the challenge of supporting my students to access appropriate arts experiences to facilitate quality music education opportunities.

Having grown up in the city regularly attending concerts, I had never really considered the importance of these arts experiences as part of my music education and cultural upbringing. They were taken-for-granted opportunities that these children did not have. Fortunately, there was an amateur community orchestra in town and together we developed a project and began to experiment with pedagogy, music mediation and concert design to help children enjoy and understand more about orchestral music and its performance. These interests formed the basis of my two postgraduate projects and the question 'what's it like' continues to spur my work as a researcher and practitioner.

This context, the story told in this autoethnography, and its message to readers identifies three issues. Firstly, the potential of community orchestras, particularly those in regional areas, to meet cultural needs of audiences beyond capital cities. Secondly, an altruistic motivation inherent in autoethnographic writing; to share what I know about designing concerts for children. The third issue concerns how have I come to know it and how to make sense of it. It is hoped that sharing my story might encourage and smooth other people's paths in developing concerts for children with learning in mind.

Borrowing from autoethnographic practices and arts-based research, this article is structured around six reflections serving as the primary means of enquiry. Bourdieu's (1984) sociological toolkit has been chosen as a way of theoretically critically engaging with each reflection analysing the interactivity between fields, habitus, doxa, capital and reflexivity (Grenfell, 2014; Reed-Danahay, 2017). The reflections were stimulated using arts-based research methods borrowed from traditions of autoethnography and mindfulness practices including listening to playlists and collage-making. The research is driven by the question 'how have I come to know what I know now?'

Methodology and theoretical framework

This work was undertaken with Bartleet and Ellis (2009), and Campbell's (2016) definitions of autoethnography in mind. Firstly, the work aims to synthesise theoretical connections between my story as a pedagogue and the social, political and cultural structures that surround it (Bartleet & Ellis, 2009). The impact and implications of the work is felt in both process and product because critical autoethnography situates the researcher's experience as the origin of understanding. Therefore, epistemologically the ethnographical phenomenon is one with the researcher (Campbell, 2016). Here, I explain not only what I know now (process), but more importantly, how I came to know it (product). These distillations of knowing, the product, are what will be useful for fellow

practitioners and researchers within the field fulfilling the social-justice imperative inherent in autoethnographical research (Bochner & Ellis, 1992).

The research is also contextualised by my position as 'the researcher and/or narrator within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 2017, p. 145), aligning with Bartleet and Ellis (2009) definition of autoethnography adopted for this study. There are inherent power arrangements present to navigate as I undertake this autoethnographic work: my insider-ness as a musician and lover of orchestral music, my otherness as a newcomer from the city to a rural country town, my position and values as a pedagogue and educator (and its baggage!), my unfolding experience as a novice researcher, and then later a hybrid teaching-artist-researcher. It is a beautiful thing that this internal social context is also influenced by temporality and how my experience, realisations and practice evolved (and continue to evolve) over time. Luxuriating uncomfortably in this temporality has been one of the great joys in undertaking this autoethnography.

Fundamental to the theoretical framework for the work ahead are Bourdieu's tools and terminology for explaining socio-cultural phenomenon and his model for ensuring researcher reflexivity. The former's application will become evident in the analysis, findings and discussion while the latter should be addressed here.

Bourdieu bluntly rejected the 'biographical illusion' in favour of 'anti-autobiographic' writing (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 213) in which the researcher directly addresses their own position and positionings, within and through the social-cultural contexts and internalised structures (Reed-Danahay, 2017). For a researcher to be reflexive in an Bourdieusian sense means to be ever vigilant of their own biases and prejudices in doing the work of self-analysis, and that through revealing these distortions the researcher is impelled to take corrective action (Campbell, 2016). Bourdieu's formulation of reflexivity demands that critical self-reflection be characterised by 'ultra' or 'hyper-reflexive' processes (Campbell, 2016). These will be outlined in the next section including how this vigilance of biases was mitigated using mindfulness (Nicholls, 2019b).

Methods: Data generation

Data generation began with collating artefacts created over 16 years as I led the development of concerts for children. These artefacts included photographs of events, concert programmes, concert scripts and run sheets, curriculum teaching materials I had developed and recordings of concerts. I revisited annotations and notes taken during my PhD candidature, scholarly reading, memos and my research-reflection diaries. These sources provide the physical documentation of the data (Barton, 2020). Artefacts were collated and grouped into what I see as the significant chronological periods in my practice (Martin & Hanington, 2012). I also prepared playlists of music featured in concerts within each timeframe to assist in evoking semantic, episodic and associative memories (Jäncke, 2008; Sloboda, 1985). The power of music to elicit memory recall and autobiographical information is well-documented and as an arts-based research method complements the collage, mindfulness and writing techniques also used (Butler-Kisber, 2008).

Methods: analysis

The initial process of writing the reflections drawing on the stimulus artefacts served as a back-and-forth analysis, spiralling forming a double hermeneutic for interpretation evident in the following narrative reflections (Barton, 2020). Before each reflection writing session, I took a mindful moment to celebrate these achievements, times and places (Nicholls, 2019b). This was followed by a 10-min audio guided mindfulness exercise focussing on breath, presence, curiosity, kindness and gratitude. Adopting the mindfulness attitudes and 'how skills' of being non-judgemental, one

mindful, and effective through observing, participating and describing (the 'what skills') are key to how reflective and reflexive turns were identified and processed (Nicholls, 2019b). From there, I wrote the reflections responding to each collection of artefacts while listening to each associated playlist adopting a one mindful attitude. As such the data generation and analysis were distinctly non-linear and drew on the position that this research process 'be understood as a broad and multiform process where various elements of a larger picture are pieced together, then elaborated in more and more detail' (Goetze, 2017, p. 40). Emerging themes from the process of piecing together the narratives were systematically noted again using a non-judgemental and one mindful reflective attitude, and coded according to the concepts of habitus, doxa, capital drawn from the Bourdieusian toolkit (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Finally, each reflection was edited and refined to 'develop a coherent narrative in which single aspects and pieces of knowledge come together in a systematic exploration' where 'perspectives are explored as they emerge in the process of research itself' (Goetze 2017, p. 35).

Findings and discussion

Finding opportunities and early years of practice (2008–2011)

REFLECTION 1: An idea and first attempt. My professional work started as a primary public school music teacher in a small country town. I had never lived outside Queensland's capital city Brisbane or away from home, and to say I was naïve was an understatement. But as many first-year teachers do, I had the attitude that music mattered and that with a 'can do approach' I was going to make a difference.

One day, the year 3s were doing active listening tasks using a piece of classical music. I explained that the music was being played by an orchestra and, being the days before YouTube, showed them a poster. My inquisitive students asked, 'what's it like to go to a concert with an orchestra?' One student was persistent asking: 'Are orchestras fancy? They look fancy all dressed up. Would I get to dress up? Is going to a concert like listening with headphones, or do you feel it here?' (placing hands on chest).

With a modicum of 'saviour complex,' a love of classical music, and possibly too much first-year teacher determination, I declared 'I must get these children to see an orchestra!' Investigations into taking the students to the professional orchestra in the closest city proved too expensive and our major state orchestra could not send an ensemble. I lamented these obstacles to a colleague who then told me that there was a community orchestra in town comprised of volunteer amateur musicians.

An idea formed and a partnership was struck. The orchestra and I worked together to create a free concert of music featuring *The Carnival of the Animals* and music we thought children would like. Generously the orchestra agreed to perform for free on a Saturday afternoon so that the children and their families could attend. I had written a rather rigid aural-vocal sequential program of teaching aligned to the Curriculum that was distributed to four local schools who would also invite their students to the concert.

The day of the concert came with all the students having done the pre-learning and listening preparation during music lessons at school. Nearly 300 children and family members came to the concert that was held at the sports hall at the local high school. But after interval and drawing what seemed an eternity of lucky door prizes, the audience vibe began to change. Some children walked around playing chasing games in the back of the hall, the adults chatted to each other as the orchestra played, and some were even talking on their phones. The kids seated on the floor in front of the

orchestra squirmed and wriggled and the audience's noise grew so great that the conductor eventually turned around and told the audience to 'sit down and listen!'

You can imagine how the debriefing conversation went with the orchestra's organising committee. 'Did you see the kids?' 'The adults were worse!' 'We are never doing that again!'

My life experiences, values, and opinions embedded into my subconscious through a happy childhood of attending professional concerts and the theatre, unknowingly influenced my decision-making processes about what and how concerts for children 'should' look like. I believed that children needed 'children's music', hence the classic *Carnival of the Animals* performed with the traditional narration. I believed that purposeful attentive listening meant being technically proficient in music and that well developed audiation and declarative knowledge would somehow help children make sense of what it would be like to go to an orchestral concert, making them 'good, educated listeners.' However, what I grossly did not account for was that attending an orchestral concert from the perspective of an audience who had likely never stepped into a concert hall before would unintentionally, and to be honest catastrophically, rub against the tacit expectations (the doxa) and tradition expected of classical music concerts held by myself, the orchestra and its organisers. Not to mention that my spectacularly planned hour and a half of music and the required concentrated listening may have been too big a ask of the littlest audience members.

REFLECTION 2: On a Mission: Well-meaning, but oh so monstrous. I joined the orchestra as a 'cellist and continued with the orchestra over the following years when I was transferred teaching music for a circuit of two smaller primary schools in the region. At my new base school, a season of flooding meant my music room, most of the classrooms and our outdoor play areas had been demolished and naturally rebuilding and refurbishment of classroom spaces took precedence. So, for the following three years I taught classes in their classrooms with my trolley of resources and instruments in tow'.

Teaching in other teacher's classrooms was enlightening and at my base school I was introduced to School-Wide-Positive-Behaviour-Support. The crux of this system lies in a basis that desired behaviours are not innate, and that positive behaviour must be proactively taught explicitly and reinforced (Queensland Government, 2024). It got me thinking about the audience at our first collaboration with the orchestra and the evident rub between the ways the orchestra expected the audience to behave, and the ways of listening demonstrated by the children and adults who came to the event.

I realised. . . 'It's not their fault. They don't know the rules'.

Bourdieu's thinking toolkit expanded upon the core concepts of doxa, field, habitus and capital to describe clashes of sociological phenomena. Bourdieu's (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice* theorises that there can be disruption between field and habitus where the habitus of social conditions and reproductions of habitus are out of touch. Bourdieu named this disruption *hysteresis;* and though I did not have this vocabulary at the time of my realisation, hysteresis is exactly the phenomenon at play represented in reflection two that both scholars and professionals need to be aware of. There was a fundamental mismatch between the habitus of the first-time concert goers and the behaviour expectations of the orchestra. This is not because, as the orchestra concluded at the time that the listeners were a 'bad audience', but rather because the doxa and etiquette within the tradition of classical music performance exists largely as a tacit and implicit practice within the cultural artefact (Wagener, 2012). There was a communal felt sense of hysteresis that in many ways was destructive to the relationships between the orchestra and their novice audience.

Hardy's (2014) commentary on Bourdieu's hysteresis reminds us that hysteresis can also be felt personally with its challenges providing constructive force and opportunities. As Bourdieu (1977) said, this hysteresis 'is doubtless one of the foundations of the structural lag between opportunities

and the dispositions to grasp them which is the cause of missed opportunities' (p. 83). As reflection one and two illustrate and reflection three will demonstrate, the apparent hysteresis provided an opportunity to think about and refine concert giving practices with this audience which was ultimately aimed at social reproduction. However, as I write this commentary now, this hysteresis is something that I keenly feel as monstrous. My assumption at the time that 'I, a young teacher from the city, knew better' and that 'I can save this audience from their ignorance' is thrown into sharp relief knowing what I know now. My values and attitudes towards audiences and education have radically changed and my practices have evolved. This demonstrates the constructive force of hysteresis and the importance of reflexivity afforded by time and critical reflection. As Hardy (2014) states:

> Hysteresis, as a thinking tool, provides explicit links between the objective natures of systematic change field transformation and the subjective character of an individual in response to that change. In this way, it allows us to appreciate the nature and consequences of field changes as experienced personally and a social environmental level. (p. 144)

Fumbling and piquing a research interest (2012–2015)

REFLECTION 3: 'Teaching audiences to behave' and developing STAR' – A not so stellar idea. Amazingly, the orchestra agreed to perform a children's concert the following year. Again I prepared a curriculum, this time based on Mozart's *Rondo Alla Turka*, and sent it out to schools. We capitalised on the opportunity to feature a teacher who was a highly accomplished pianist. We also included film music hoping it would appeal to and hold the attention of the audience. Fourteen schools were involved in the pre-teaching and again we amassed a suitably large audience on the day of the concert.

We trialled prefacing the performance with 'how to be an audience member' explaining that there was a checklist to follow in the programme notes. I shamedly acknowledge in retrospect the monstrosity of the language in the notes given to the master of ceremonies for the concert. We did get some things right though – having 'audience mentors' (teacher colleagues who sat with the children and were prepared with focussed questions about what was being played) seemed to help with crowd control, we also organised an opportunity to 'meet the musicians' and instruments during interval which was a remarkable success and highlight of the event.

The following year the orchestra and I experimented more boldly with concert design. We started choosing shorter pieces of music that would better hold the audience's attention and tracked down repertoire in which the audience could play parts during the concert. During these next concerts, 'STAR' was born – a framework to help audiences understand the behaviour and etiquette expectations – Still and silent; Tuned in; Appreciative; Respectful. In retrospect and in the light of my current work I absolutely cringe at these expectations placed on children and the 'professional orchestra audience' box we tried to wedge our listeners and concert formats into.

As a scholarly community we should further investigate what are the ethical considerations of insisting that the symbolic power of doxa, what is taken for granted as socially orthodox, within a given field must be upheld based on tradition. When it comes to the tradition of orchestras in concert halls it might come as a surprise that the current perception and behaviour of audiences as still, silent and passive is a relatively recent development. Even so, there are two Bourdieusian themes worth examining in these second and third years of concerts.

The first is an inherent belief readers should recognise are that audiences, orchestras and concerts regardless of the social field should aim to replicate the doxa and habitus of high art with the intention of instilling 'taste' (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990; Prior, 2013). The aesthetic experience of

listening to orchestral music and having a taste for classical music, for better or for worse, comes with a cultural code of elitism and class status (Bourdieu, 1984). This is instilled within the habitus of the field within concert halls and professional arts organisations in a distinct a specific set of behavioural expectations and that was supremely ableist. As Bourdieu (1984) asserts, 'the culture of which results from this magical division is sacred' (p. 6) and that 'consciously and deliberately or not. . . [these] fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences' (p. 7). To an extent, it could be argued that these social differences and habitus become so part of the arts experience that it becomes part of the art of interacting with the Art. Thus reaffirming Bourdieu's argument that social standing is determined where within the hierarchy of taste belongs. Upon reflection, monstrous as it may be, this is what these early years of concert curation sought to do through explicit instruction to the audience. In this sense, the STAR model did serve to wrangle audience behaviour and induct a largely first-time concert goer listenership into the tradition of orchestral concerts; but I cannot help but feel that this symbolic violence of cultural reproduction did more harm than good.

The second theme that emerges through this reflection is the imposed role that audiences and listeners should play as arts consumers – that there is a 'correct' way of listening and that audiences are passive collectives. Bourdieu (1984) in his text *Distinction* upholds this idea that inheriting this social and educational capital is essential to the aesthetic experience and that through experiences of live music performance one may be inducted into the field and eventually move confidently across more fields. The role of audiences as passive entities, that I took as truth, is reflected in the language used towards the audience, the homogenising ways the audiences were managed at these events, and the subordinated reverence with which they were encouraged to listen. This is evidenced in the language used towards the audience in the artefacts and scripts reviewed: 'you [the audience] are almost as important as the orchestra and soloists. . .'; 'you can help the orchestra play the best they can'. Insert shudders and cold chills here!

If these two imperatives were still to be seen as important, as I am sure there is a place for at times, perhaps a more effective approach would have been to embrace what Bourdieu called 'heterodoxy' (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015). That is, the possibility that:

> Competing beliefs and the emergence of such competing beliefs entails a move from practical action to discursive exchanges and the emergence of a field of option. . . [which] in its most effective form, often comes from groups which are well endowed in cultural capital but are poor in economic capital whose experience of life is neither that of the power, nor that of the higher reaches of society. (Deer, 2014, p. 118)

REFLECTION 4: Finding a theoretical home and asking questions. By our 4th and 5th year of working together the orchestra and I felt we were onto a good thing. Our concerts had gone from being rowdy, unwieldly events to carefully choreographed and intentionally designed arts experiences with a focus on audiences' needs and attentive listening. We got rid of the interval, included increased audience interactive music, continued to capitalise on the 'meet the musician' success, and were drawing audiences from across the rural region to free concerts with over 500 people in attendance and 24 local primary, secondary, public and private schools involved in the preparatory teaching. The final year's concert was even funded through a grant to go on tour to three towns further away in western Queensland. We also began to look more carefully at our audiences, even going as far as to recruit 'audience observers' who would complete anecdotal records of how listeners interacted with each element of the concert. I found a theoretical home amongst the literature on audience development and authors who explore the nuances between listening and audience such as Pitts (2005), Radbourne et al. (2009), and Roose (2008).

Commentators on Bourdieu's (1984) work provide interesting insights that can be applied to understanding the nuance between listening and audience. Readers of *Distinction* will recall

Bourdieu's belief that cultural capital and taste that he associated with class is not only embodied but also notoriously difficult to change. However, Bourdieu also argues that taste, including that of music resides separate from phenomena that develop over time such as place, communications and relationships (Ashwood & Bell, 2017, p. 5).

Perhaps this is why over the course of five years of concerts things were able to change and the audience and orchestra began to understand one another. I began to see the audience not as a homogenous group (Roose, 2008) that 'needed educating'. But rather as a diverse group of listeners including 'culturally aware non-attenders' (Dobson, 2010; Winzenried, 2004) and cultural omnivores (Savage & Gayo, 2011). I appreciated the highly differentiated ways (Burland & Pitts, 2014) in which audiences listen which led me to understand that experiences of concerts rather than habitus could assist audiences in navigating cultural spaces. I began to wonder of the potential of pedagogy and how these relationships could be facilitated through music mediation. These were important metanoic shifts in perspective laying the foundation for the next chapter of both my research and practice.

Reflexive turns and kindred spirits (2016–2019)

REFLECTION 5: Challenging pre-conceptions and 'education'. I moved to Toowoomba (a regional city 2 h west of Brisbane) to take up a new challenge as a high school teacher where there was another wonderful community orchestra and a lively arts and culture scene to be part of. This community welcomed me heartily and I began to work with the orchestra figuring out the practical outworking of reflexive realisations afforded through critical reflection and changes in practice. I began formally researching 'what's it like' to experience orchestral concerts finding resonance with voices in the field such as Small (1998), Karlsen (2007) and Winterson (2010). I questioned the place and face of 'education', possibilities of pedagogy and philosophical underpinnings of experience.

In the earliest years of my practice, I spoke about pedagogies of listening in directive terms — 'learning to listen', 'educators and pedagogues' and pedagogies as things that are done *to* and *for* audiences. However, a reflexive turn was unfolding through my practice, reading and research. I assert that in the context of the concert hall, the relationships between orchestra and listener, listener and audience, and audience and artform must be understood differently than what is traditionally implied in a student-teacher relationship. In this reflexive turn the original research questions did not change, but rather the meaning implied by my questions needed refocussing to consider a much broader view of the potential of 'learning' and 'music education.'

To speak of 'learning to listen' now seemed reductive of 'the experience' implying an imperative for audiences to learn a certain way because of the singularity of what it is to listen in a certain way. Instead, I found that learning about the music and making meaning happens through the act of listening and being part of the audience co-becoming (Small, 1998). Thus, I realise with a greater understanding the importance of the doing, being and having of experience (Dewey, 1934). 'Learning through listening' instead is mutually reliant upon both what the arts organisation does and what the audience member brings, gives, and takes from the experience. My experiences highlighted something of the changing flux and transitionary give and take in transformative (educative) experiences. The baggage carried with using descriptors such as 'teaching,' 'learners' and even the broadest notion of 'education' limited my capacity to fully comprehend and communicate these complexities.

I argue that the listener must be understood in the concert hall as a catalyst to their own learning as much as the organisation is a designer and curator of experiences. The traditional notion of the teacher-student relationship or the educational institution does not align with the types of relationships evident in the concert hall. Together, through these relationships, musicking and meaning are

curated by the arts organisation, and learning is realised through these complex processes and relationships. Through my research I attempt to speak of what transforms experience and knowing beyond aesthetic appreciation. Or as Dewey (1934) would say, what vital sense defines experiences as being educative in quality when we say, 'that *was* an experience' (p. 38).

REFLECTION 6: Kindred spirits – The potential of community orchestras. The conductor of the orchestra in Toowoomba, a local primary school music teacher and highly accomplished 'cellist, had previously led the development of annual concerts for children. As friends and kindred spirits, we share a vision for designing and curating concerts for children. We have enjoyed wrestling with questions and the practicalities of concert design, what makes for meaningful music learning at concerts, why community orchestras are so unique and different from professional orchestras, and how can concerts be most effectively curated to serve diverse audiences and orchestras.

Together we reignited the practice of providing free of charge concerts for children and families across the region in partnership with local libraries and council, local authors and professional arts organisations. Our annual concerts encourage singing and dancing with the orchestra through an interactive reading of a children's picture book that is chosen each year and are underpinned by the philosophies and practices developed through research and reading. Concerts have no interval and last between 30 and 40 min to help hold the audience's attention. They begin with a child friendly and interactive welcome to country and well known hello songs; introduce the orchestra and provide pre-listening and learning through music elements and concepts. The story itself is presented by an animateur who facilitates the learning with the orchestra and enhances the storytelling through short music excerpts of both familiar and unfamiliar repertoire with the audience invited to sing, sign and contribute. The concerts finish with familiar nursery rhymes, action songs and a concluding good-bye song. Finally, the audience is invited to meet the musicians, get an up-close look at the instruments, and enjoy post-concert activities facilitated by local kindergartens.

The answer is in a story, and the story is just unfolding (2020–2024)

REFLECTION 7: More questions to where we are. For nine consecutive years now, even through the Covid pandemic, the community orchestra in Toowoomba has been curating free concerts for children. My beliefs about the role and diversity of the audience, their involvement in concerts, the place and face of education, and tensions with the artistic values and priorities of orchestras have changed significantly. In part this is due to research, in-depth reading, exploring practices of orchestras from around the world, and scholarly discussions. But just as equally, the changes to my practice as a designer and curator of concerts has been influenced by the audiences, orchestras, colleagues and teachers I have worked with. In some ways the questions I am currently asking are the same, in other ways they are different. The notion and language of 'concert curation' rather than 'educating listeners' is something I am excited to explore further as are questions of how other pedagogues have come to know what they know about concert design. A recent development in my thinking has been stimulated by the emerging literature on musikvermittlung and music mediation (Chaker & Petri-Preis, 2022, Váradi, 2020, Wimmer, 2010). I am excited to engage with authors and communities working in this space.

I am immensely grateful to that year 3 student all those years ago. May she get to wear her fairy dress and glitter shoes to her next orchestra concert.

The curation of learning experiences through listening need not be seen as a challenge to the doxa and habitus of the concert hall. Instead, what if we were to imagine this work as a catalyst for the ongoing evolution of the concert hall and the art. Becker (1984) discusses this notion in his text *Art Worlds* in sociological terms describing the collective and collaborative activity that is creating

art (musicking) (Small, 1998). Furthermore, Becker (1984) explains that the cooperative web of activity created in creating and participating in the art world is the very thing that brings it into existence. The concert hall is therefore not seen as a class stratified archaic institution, but rather part of 'a bundle of systems' (p. 158). Audience and listener participation within this art world – all the choices, activities and ongoing living out – are the very things that give way for meaning and ultimately educative-learning experiences (Dewey, 1934). As Becker (1984) explains 'art worlds, rather than artists, make works of art' (p. 198). Pedagogies of listening, contribute to this elongated and inclusive process, and the listener and audience are integral to it.

Concluding thoughts

Thinking sociologically about listening in the concert hall has irreversibly changed my appreciation of how to teach ways of being with music. Through self-reflexive analysis methods achieved through mindfulness I have examined conditions within the concert hall, my liberation through oppressive power arrangements, and have sought to challenge wider sociological processes present in social, cultural, and artistic tensions present in music education. As researchers of music pedagogy and education, we must be ever aware of the destructive forces of social reproduction evident in fields, doxa and habitus present in our assumptions and work. Not to do so, or to neglect the practices of reflection and critical reflexivity inevitably stunts our potential to grow as practitioners and our student's musical futures.

Despite the significant reflexive turns illustrated through this autoethnography and a black opinion of my beginning work with audiences, I do not want to leave readers of this article in fear that their early attempts at a new project are wasteful or fraught with doing more harm than good. The opportunities afforded to both the children, the orchestras and the community have had far reaching impacts just as they have done for me professionally. My message is really, just have a go. If there are lessons to be learnt in this article that is fantastic, but more than that I want to encourage you to step out and try that idea that has been eating away at you. You never know where it will take you.

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Author contributions

Claire D Nicholls: Conceptualisation; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Writing - original draft; Writing - review & editing.

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ORCID iD

Claire D Nicholls https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5183-0149

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Original data are available upon request from the author. The data that support the findings of this study including artworks are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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