



The Future for String Pedagogy in Australian  
Tertiary Education  
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# Structure



- I. Purpose of this talk
- II. Fundamentals of the discipline
- III. Method
- IV. Outlook

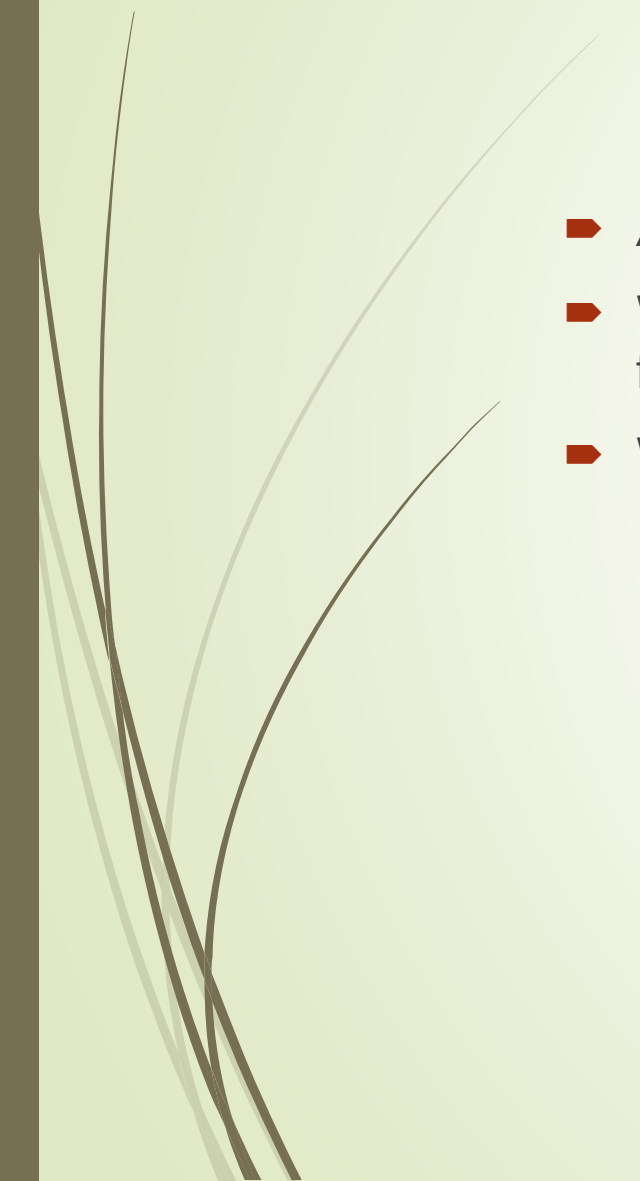


# I. Purpose of this talk

**My daughter is starting trombone. I am looking for someone who can teach her trombone in parallel with School. You don't need to be a proper teacher just someone who plays well is fine.**



# more simply...

- ▶ A sketch of string pedagogy in practice (subjective, anecdotal)
  - ▶ What should determine string pedagogy as a discipline? (view of fundamentals)
  - ▶ What can we do to advance the discipline ...
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# What's happening and why should we care?

- ▶ Universities doing their own stuff... teachers are just trying to make a living. Why should either care?
- ▶ The obvious: The cycle of teaching and learning. Students of performance and education become teachers. String teachers usually receive crucial formative impulses through University study. They should be able to rely on the knowledge formation in Universities to provide insight and resources for their work. (lifelong-learning)
- ▶ Teachers are more effective if they can refer to an independent authority of a discipline. Universities are traditionally the custodian of a discipline, it's knowledge, methodology and definitions.
- ▶ Universities have a capacity (and duty) to bring together knowledge, thought and practice from fields that are directly relevant to the discipline and to the work of individual teachers. (eg. educational psychology, neuro-science, physiotherapy)
- ▶ Universities are established to provide society and disciplines with renewal of ideas, practices. They are funded by tax payers.



# What is the condition of the discipline of string teaching in Australia?

- At best: very diverse. (Unclear? Ad-hoc?...exciting? )
- Multiple stake-holders who may seek to determine the discipline from their perspective and in always different (often contradictory) ways:
  - parents (looking for educational development and opportunity for their children),
  - schools (discharging their [perceived] educational brief, occasionally with authentic vision, but often merely fulfilling educational norms set for them)
  - Teachers (seeking economic and professional opportunity, talented students, securing territory)
  - Assessment bodies and cultural institutions (AMEB, Eisteddfods, etc)

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- ▶ Are there formal, discipline and focussed string pedagogy programs in Universities? In the absence of a clear disciplinary view, individual teachers' work (practice) may become a placeholder for the discipline (depending on authority and success). Individual practice replaces overarching discipline. (A discipline would require a structured, systematic and theoretical framework and dialogue -> challenges to development)
  - ▶ There are advantages to bio-diversity, of course. There are also costs if such bio-diversity develops according to cultural, social or economic influence that undo harmonic balance.
  - ▶ The disadvantages are significant and may include disempowerment, challenge to maintain authority, lack of renewal, decline of creativity, lack of access to opportunity and knowledge, formation of unproductive power structures (territories), etc.
  - ▶ The challenge for society: There is no accreditation or quality assurance beyond the jungle (-> it is possible for an entirely unqualified person to teach and set themselves up as a teacher)



# Bio-diversity


John Curro (Festschrift for Jan Sedivka, 1982): “In a sense Australia may still be considered artistically remote, and because of this, we have considerable advantages over the European and American cultures which have largely processed themselves away from the artistic values which concern some of us. Probably the majority will not agree with this, seeing only the brilliance and shine which is so important nowadays in the entertainment world. Per head of population it must be recognised that Australians possess at least as much talent as any country in the world. This has become quite evident in spite of the prevalent philosophy of the easy life, the over-emphasis on money as a priority and the downgrading of the idea of work for its own psychological value.... This brings us to perhaps a central idea, that of a ‘school’ for Australia. If it is in fact true that Australian students exhibit as much talent and probably more spontaneity of approach than their overseas counterparts, this logically would be due to conditions purely Australian...The problems related to this usually show up as a lack of early development, insufficient instrumental skill on entering a tertiary institution and little early commitment to the study of the instrument”  
*(Festschrift 4-5)*





# Three decades on...

- ▶ Changes to economics, society and education have changed some (not all) of these features.
- ▶ Immigration (increased flow of talent, educational ideals and pedagogy from China, Korea, etc) have brought change to educational attitudes and aspirations. Challenge to the world view of the enlightenment
- ▶ Socio-cultural: Increased emphasis on musical performance as a gatekeeper of educational or personal opportunity (eg. Private School Music Scholarships) reducing focus on music as a lifelong professional possibility. (The most able students do not become professional musicians- > the less able are discouraged, because they believe they are not good enough)
- ▶ Education: increased and aggressive emphasis on analytical modes of thought (sidelining artistic-intuitive thinking) (STEM Education, academic epistemological paradigms favouring analysis in Universities (research))



# The jungle remains.... (with increasing concern about climate change...)

- ▶ An increasing rift in educational opportunity emphasizing regional disadvantage (Australia has not overcome its geographical challenge and concentrates resources in large metropolitan areas) -> string teaching in outer metropolitan (fast growing areas) and rural and regional areas remains v inconsistent.
- ▶ Highly successful “elite” programs for secondary students in Conservatories give access to/for select students and teachers but create exclusion for others. (eg. “Rising Stars”). Education may be replaced by a simplistic paradigm of “success” which undermines development of the discipline while advancing individual interests and cherry-picking “talent”. Conclusion: Elite programs are **necessary but not sufficient** for the development of a discipline. They also need to be directed by transparent and accountable educational principles and leadership.
- ▶ Some initiatives to direct inter-subjective dialogue (*String Praxis, Australian Violin Pedagogy Conference*)
- ▶ Ad hoc development of the discipline through some courses, and/or HDR students’ research.



# Why should Universities care about string teachers?

- ▶ The obvious: recruiting future students with sufficient skills and appropriate attitudes (the need for professional programs of dialogue, outreach, engagement -> building disciplinary expertise)
- ▶ Music departments and music schools need to take care and develop music through excellence of musical performance (why? -> silent or casually/ poorly performed music undermines musical culture as a whole; performance excellence is integral to music as a whole) **and** through discourse about such excellence
- ▶ The interpretative performance of music is central to our culture and our intellectual life. (Universities rarely understand this as they are preoccupied with scientific and analytic modes of thought) It develops the capacities that sustain our analytic, scientific and reflective abilities (Georg Picht)



# Musicians in Universities...

- ▶ Performing musicians within Universities are custodians of artistic work: their own and that of their colleagues. They are in a privileged position of significant responsibility and they undermine musical creativity, artistry and intuition when they make music and musical performance itself the subject of an analytic or scientific enquiry instead of advancing reflection and research that benefits the excellence of performance
- ▶ Authentic research (reflective) methodologies that preserve or advance the phenomena include the study of musical form and history (musicology), music education and pedagogy and the philosophy of music (aesthetics and interpretation). String/ instrumental teaching must be a core field of research for musicians in Universities (-> Institutes of musical pedagogy)



## II What is the discipline?

“The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes.)” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

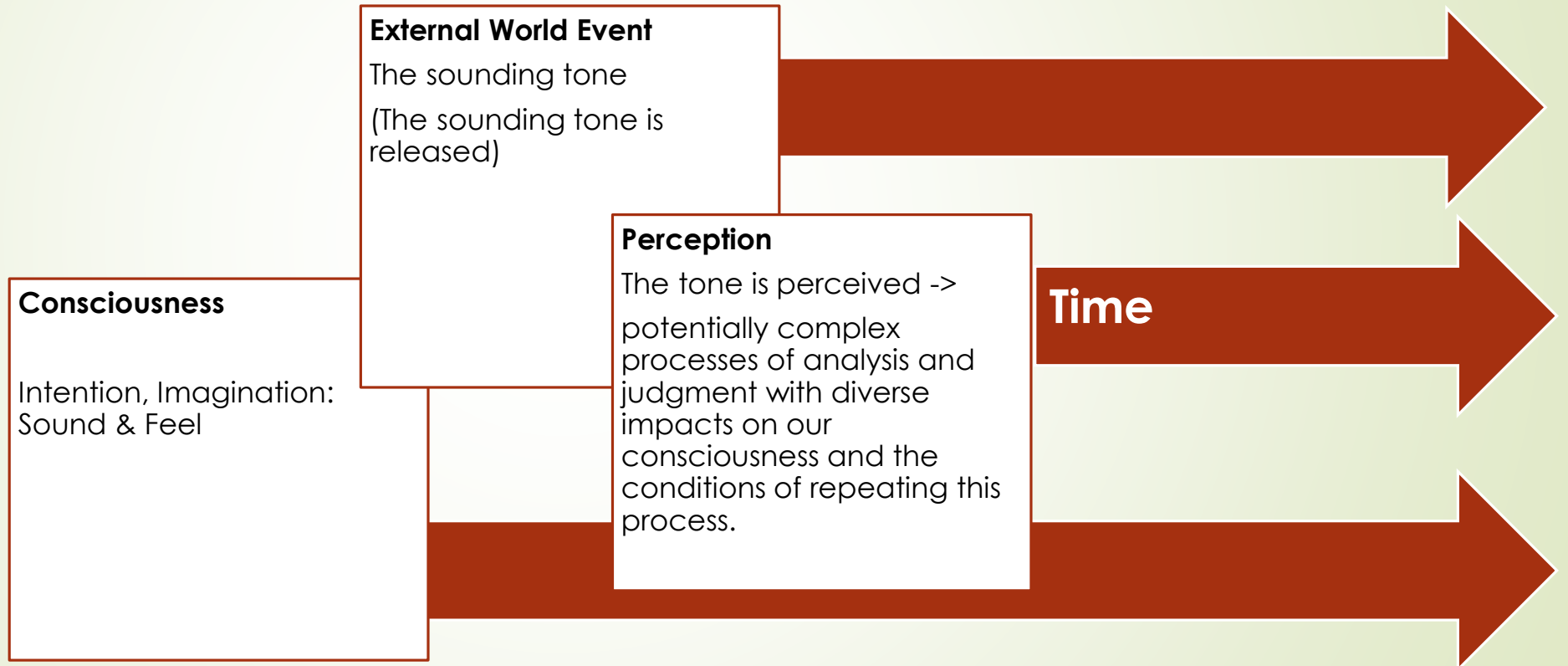


# Playing and Performing

Play and performance take place within a context determined by

- ▶ Ontology: playing and performing are a “doing” -> requirements, attitudes of attention and consciousness. (anticipation, one-chance-play)
- ▶ Intentionality (Directedness of Consciousness, thinking, intuition, Psychology of Learning, Listening, etc
- ▶ Physicality -> movement
- ▶ Identity: Individual and society -> the changing nature of our society and social interaction.
- ▶ Technology. Instrument, the virtual world -> authenticity

# Ontology: Schematic analysis of performance





# Intentionality

- ▶ Attention directs learning
- ▶ Attention directs memory and memory cues, etc
- ▶ Attention has temporal dimension: -> attention to what happens/ has happened = perception. Attention to what is about to happen = anticipation. Manifold integration of the modes of attention through imagination
- ▶ In musical performance we work with intuitive (anticipatory) attention. Limits of analysis
- ▶ Practice = Balance, integration organisation of attention and the modalities of attention
- ▶ Attention directs physical and mental organisation (temporal)
  - ▶ (i) body
  - ▶ (ii) left hand, prepared, allowing anticipation.
  - ▶ (iii) right: active, alert to life of music (articulation, intensity, enlivening of sound). Phrasing organisation. "structural rhythm". (Grossrhythmus)



# Physicality: Fundamentals of playing

- (Tension) Free upper body (posture, shoulders, abdomen, breathing, etc) in rest position and while moving
- Green light (-> the fundamental importance of the amygdala and signals of “stress” to the brain... yellow and red lights). Tone to be associated with green light
- **Left:** free, unimpeded movement, intuition, leisure, temporal priority (“**material**”), “just there” -> “Happy left hand”. (NB: no punishment, anxiety, etc about left hand).
- **Right:** intentional, conscious, (“**form**”). Impulsive, dynamic, sensitive, etc. (Feeling through fingers/hand, arm movements contribute to playing); definition of sound through articulation, intensity, movement energy (Dynamic)





# Identity



- ▶ Social factors determine attitude and motivation towards performance
- ▶ Society is complex, including increasingly 'virtual' elements. Musicians too live increasingly in the world of social media/ appearance (balance between inspiration and distraction)
- ▶ Authenticity: Media technology creates appearances. Musical performance uncovers truth through appearance, Music answers the human desire for authentic experience (opportunity!)
- ▶ Listening central to music (obviously!). However, complex understanding of listening as mere hearing, embodied listening (listening with all sense), intuitive listening (hearkening), and listening to each other -> Musical performance develops listening. (see above)



# Interpretation of Music



- ▶ Discipline of string playing has strong and deep roots in a history of the interpretation of written music. (-> the relevance of improvisation to this) -> the importance of tradition and the study of history
- ▶ What is interpretation and why does it matter? Reading and performing music is an important, comprehensive skill with real benefits for our mind and soul.
- ▶ The interpretation of music has developed within a tradition of music as an absolute, autonomous art – this is unique in human civilisation. The canon of musical works forms a definition of cultural and human identity akin to great literature, art, etc.
- ▶ 20<sup>th</sup> century brings a commodification of art, which results in a development we see today as the ‘business of music’
- ▶ At the same time the early development of music as an autonomous art occurred in a field of tension where music was seen as fundamentally ritual, human, social and imitative (Enlightenment -> Herder)



# Education (“Formation” – *Bildung*)

- ▶ String Playing shares in the importance of music to education that are well known (classical roots)
- ▶ In addition and because of a movement based technique, string playing requires work on unifying thought -> (the movement of ) the bow as the voice and soul. The string player does not “use” a technique. The musical intuition rather finds the movement. (practice). In this, the asymmetric nature of our playing is important: left hand has a material function and thus requires different a different attitude and attention than the right hand/ arm with its forming, expressive importance. (Capet)
- ▶ The centrality of temporality and temporal organisation of thought and attention defines important virtues for the performer. These are gained through rhythmic schooling (foundation of so-called technique is rhythm, eg. co-ordination, movement, musical form and structure)
- ▶ The central aesthetic dimension of music is character. This makes its practice central to education
- ▶ Where education declines into either a mere training towards proficiency, a commodified market-driven activity or any other form of functionalization of the human being (including intellectual functionalisation) it loses its essence as *Bildung*. Music revives our attention to this essence of education.



## III. Method

“Einstmals hieß *techne* auch das Hervorbringen des Wahren in das Schöne”

“*Once upon a time, techne also referred to the bringing-forth of truth towards the beautiful.*”

(Martin Heidegger, Die Frage nach der Technik/ The Question concerning technology, 38)



# Method and Vision

- ▶ Methodos -> a path to where? Vision of our discipline:
  - ▶ Unification of art and technique
  - ▶ Centrality of imagination: forms of instruction and practice that advance learning through the life of the mind and our imagination in a concrete way
  - ▶ Centrality of intuition: direct sensation, development of listening to reflect all dimensions (intelligence of the senses). Understanding the limits of fundamental limits of analysis
  - ▶ Artistic interpretation that sees music as an autonomous art with social roots.
  - ▶ Developing authenticity and musical performance as an artistic form of voice
  - ▶ Developing autonomous thought and freedom of mind (-> musical interpretation)

Methods are a reflection of vision



# Practical concerns

- ▶ Methodological values are not restricted to “advanced” forms of playing only. They apply throughout the discipline
- ▶ Teaching methodology needs to recognise the limits of functionalization; emphasize expression, original intuition (Autonomy from technology: Role of imitation vs autonomous creativity) -> seek foundational clarity. Functionality is required but must be kept in context
- ▶ Methods reflect directly elements of vision
- ▶ Discourse (reflection, scholarship, thinking) responds to view of the fundamentals of the discipline: ie. ontology, aesthetics, philosophical (body-mind), movement, character, education as formation, etc.




## IV. Outlook

*The human being only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays*

(Schiller, Letters on Aesthetic Education)





# String pedagogy as educational discipline with theoretical, practical, formal expertise and authority.

- ▶ Increase purposeful dialogue > practical work fora and access to knowledge.
- ▶ Develop scholarship (academic) and engagement with community -> string teachers/community need to challenge Universities and become more demanding. (eg. AUSTA chapters must “invade” Universities)
- ▶ Musicians in Universities need to work with string teachers directly and without territorial interests. There needs to be access to develop gifted students in special performance programs but this cannot divide a community of teachers. Advanced development is useful, but not sufficient for the discipline and community.
- ▶ Universities must do more to support the work of schools and their music performance programs through purposeful dialogue. Schools need to demand more from Universities. (Schools of all kinds)
- ▶ Academics and practitioners must develop specific methodology to improve access to performance learning for remote, regional and disadvantaged areas.
- ▶ An independent authority or identity of the discipline, its skills and values needs to be developed to balance (and lead) the insufficient and damaging definitions developed by the community in response to existing examination systems or performance competitions.
- ▶ A clearer sense and definition of the discipline will improve the lack of balance among stake-holders. Such a definition starts with an understanding of roots in ontology (intentionality), tradition (interpretation) and education (character)



# Developing musicians ...

- ▶ ... as interpreters, and individual artists
- ▶ ... as string players and performers with a natural sense of play (movement - technique)
- ▶ ... who see their art as socially important and culturally significant (purpose) and are effective in sharing this (social)
- ▶ ... as ambassadors for music, imagination and intuition
- ▶ ... with a passion for the art and its ongoing life
- ▶ ... deriving a strong sense of identity from being a musician

Questions, Comments, Discussion  
please....



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