

**LISTEN
IMAGINE
COMPOSE**

Creativity and Composing

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Centre for the Study of
Practice and Culture in Education

 **BIRMINGHAM CITY
University**

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What is creativity?

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Revision – some terminologies

- Creative Teaching
- Creative Learning
- Teaching for Creativity

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The NACCCE report (1999) defines *creative teaching* as 'using imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting and effective' (1999: 89). It defines *teaching for creativity* as forms of teaching that are intended to develop young people's own creative thinking or behaviour.

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"In creative learning we are often as concerned with process as with product; in other words it is the journey which matters as much as the destination. ... Having a focus on process is something that creative learning entails and which is undertaken purposefully."

(Fautley & Savage 2007, p54)

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Creative learning

- Looking at things in a different way
- A different relationship to knowledge
- Generating new ideas
- Metacognition
- Risk-taking
- Concept development
- Creative action

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Issues

- Creative Teaching needs nurturing
- Creative Learning cannot always be legislated for
- Teaching for Creativity needs encouraging



All 'spot of theory' illustrations taken from: Kinoshita & Foulley, 2007

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"If we take seriously the dictionary definition of creation, to 'bring into being or form out of nothing', creativity seems to be not only unintelligible, but strictly impossible. No craftsman or engineer ever made an artefact from nothing. And sorcerers (or their apprentices) who conjure broom and buckets out of this air do so not by any intelligible means, but by occult wizardry. The 'explanation' of creativity thus reduces to either denial or magic."

(Boden 1990 p.2)

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Novel - for whom?

"If Mary Smith has an idea which she could not have had before, her idea is P-creative - no matter how many people have had the same idea already. The historical sense applies to ideas that are fundamentally novel with respect to *the whole of human history*. Mary Smith's surprising idea is H-creative if no one has ever had the idea before her."

(Boden, 1990 p.32)

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For the classroom....

- Boden's idea is important, as
- Although we as music teachers may have heard some ideas 100s of times, for the children and young people making them they are new and novel
- This means that
 - We can consider them as being creative utterances in their own right
 - We can work with them to help try to nurture their ideas
 - We ought not to dismiss them simply because we have heard them before!

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Anna Craft 'Little c creativity'

LCC AS DISTINCT FROM HIGH CREATIVITY

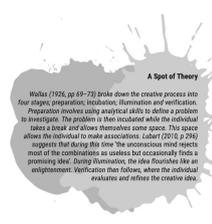
'Little c creativity' is distinct from 'high creativity', which I take to mean the extraordinary creativity of the genius, in any particular field such as science, art, dance, mathematics, etc. High creativity I take to have certain characteristics, such as innovation/novelty, excellence, recognition by the field within which it takes place and a break with past understandings or perspectives.

Craft, A 2001, p46

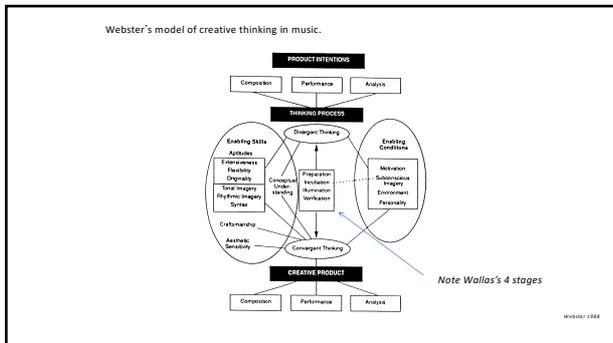
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Wallas (1926) 4-stage model of creativity

Preparation;
Incubation;
Illumination;
Verification



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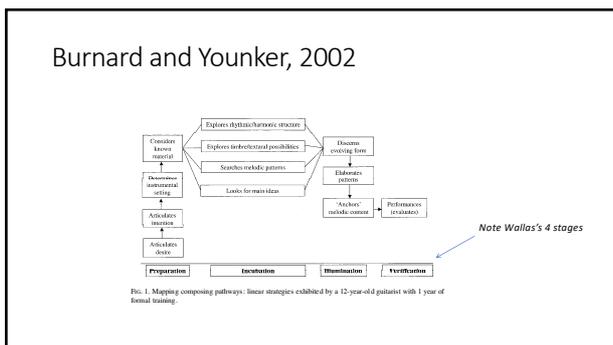


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Webster, 2003 p.56

"Initial music gestures, or what I have called *primitive gesturals* (PGs) are very easy for children to create ... Children can easily string together a series of PGs, creating a wide variety of timbral effects, spatial distance, and textural diversity."

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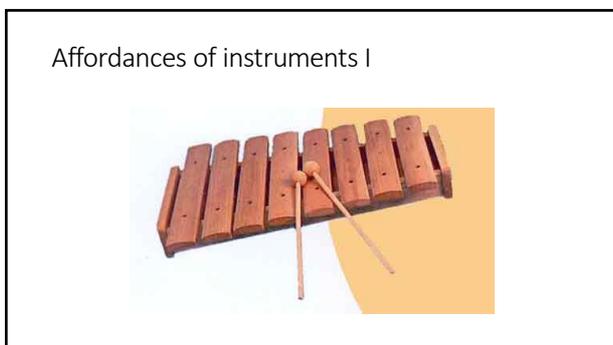


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Gibson (1979): Affordance

Gibson's notion of *affordances* is key here. Pupils play classroom instruments in ways whereby the instrument itself *affords* opportunities to the player.

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Affordances of Instruments III



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Affordances continued

A not untypical late KS2 or early KS3 lesson is often for the teacher to ask the pupils to find divergent ways of playing classroom instruments, but, nonetheless, these divergent approaches are still *afforded* by the instrument. Composing gestures are therefore affordances. Chained gestures are chains of affordances.

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Proto-Music

From these affordance-based gestures, emergent sonic utterances are afforded the status of music, or maybe more correctly *proto-music*. The analytical tools for refining this are provided by the teacher, who has a set of concepts and terminologies upon which to draw to convert this proto-music into music, by applying, possibly subconsciously, formulations with which they are familiar.

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"Persons find it easier to comprehend the music whose production they are not involved in by employing a familiar rather than an unfamiliar conceptual framework." (Goehr, 1992 p.252)

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"Compositional skill..."

"Compositional skill entails the existence of a repertoire of ways of extending and building from the given, by discovering and using its inherent properties in principled ways."
(Sloboda, 1985 p.116)

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Group composing as a stage towards solo:

Group composing is useful as a stage in the development of autonomous skills, as it allows distribution of the composing task among multiple individuals, and enables scaffolding of learning ...to take place as individuals become increasingly competent. In other words:

"... one should regard situations of distributed cognitions not only as ends in themselves but, more important, as means for improving mastery of solo competencies." (Salomon, 1993, p. 135)

Source: Fourley, 2005, p54

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The Social Dimension

- "...friendship influences the collaborative process ..." (Meill & MacDonald, 2000)
- "... because they affect motivation, social factors can have a powerful impact on creativity" (Aronoff, 1996 p.17)
- [Social aspects of creativity help] "...the novice composer in building skills while also enjoying the experience" (Byrne, MacDonald et al., 2002)
- Csikszentmihalyi (1996): Notion of 'Flow'

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How do you organise groupwork for composing ?

Mix	Advantages	Disadvantages
Friendship groups	Established group dynamic; Pupils Already know each other	Reinforcing existing social strata - leaders and followers; possibility for off-task discussion; issue of those with limited social skills might not fit in
Ability groups	Targeted support can be given; possibility of high levels of achievement from some; can help G&T pupils not be distracted	Ability is a problematic construct - is this just communication skills? What are your criteria for choosing? Social stigma 'the thick group' might result
Structured mix	Ensures no one is left out; reduces off-task chat; Allows for social engineering - weak with strong	Initial time can be wasted establishing a social dynamic; tends to establish leaders in that position; quiet pupils can get 'swamped'
Random mix	Allows pupils to establish new contacts; has face validity (seems 'fair')	As Structured mix; plus existing enmities can hinder progress
Single sex	Can allow power to be equalised (ie boys don't get all the PCs); can be within some pupils comfort zones; some minority cultures prefer it.	Can increase gender issues; can result in needless inter-gender rivalries.

Holliday & Smeager (2007)

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Friendship Groups

"81.6% of friendship groups were of homogeneous ability"

Kutnick et al (2005)



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Revisiting Session Learning Outcomes - Questions

- Creative Teaching – what does this mean in the context of composing?
- Creative Learning – what does this look *and sound* like when composing?
- Teaching for Creativity – how can this be undertaken with regard to composing?

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More questions

- What do theories of creativity tell us about planning for composing?
- What about Boden's 'p and h' creativity?
- How do we plan for, and enact, *learning* to compose?
- What is the place and role of 'rules' when composing?
- What about restricting the task?
- Does uncreative composing exist?

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Final thoughts

- Some aspects of *teaching for creativity* can be facilitated
- It is not axiomatic that *creative learning* will follow



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