30. Assessment of Composing in the Lower Secondary School in England

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on teaching and learning composing in the English National Curriculum, and how this can be problematic for teacher assessment. This is explained as being because there are often confusions between assessment of process - of *composing* - and product - of *composition*. Differences between the two are described, and ways in which formative and summative assessment can be employed are discussed.

Keywords: Assessment; Composing; Teaching and learning; Classrooms; Formative Assessment; Summative Assessment

Context

Assessment is never innocent. Every assessment judgment made is, as Broadfoot reminds us, a political act. “Assessment procedures are the vehicle whereby the dominant rationality of the corporate capitalist societies typical of the contemporary Western world is translated into the systems and process of schooling” (Broadfoot, 1999, p. 64). Assessment is not a matter for schools alone to decide upon; assessment uses, at all levels of education and in many countries, are driven by policy from government, and, as Colwell observes, “[p]olicy can hurt as much as it can help” (Colwell, 2007, p. 5). In England there is a national curriculum for music in the lower secondary school which has always included composing as one of its three key strands, along with listening and performing. This privileging of composing makes England somewhat unusual in some respects when compared with many other countries. In this chapter the nature of this classroom composing is described, and ways in which it is assessed are discussed.

It is important to note at the outset what is meant by composing in the context of the lower secondary school in England. The National Curriculum regulations which govern this stage of education are actually quite brief, comprising only six bullet points:

> Pupils should be taught to:

- Play and perform confidently in a range of solo and ensemble contexts using their voice, playing instruments musically, fluently, and with accuracy and expression.
- Improvise and compose; and extend and develop musical ideas by drawing on a range of musical structures, styles, genres, and traditions.
- Use staff and other relevant notations appropriately and accurately in a range of musical styles, genres, and traditions.
- Identify and use the interrelated dimensions of music expressively and with increasing sophistication, including use of tonalities, different types of scales, and other musical devices.
- Listen with increasing discrimination to a wide range of music from great composers and musicians.
- Develop a deepening understanding of the music that they perform and to which they listen, and its history. (DfE, 2013, p. 219)

What makes this different from some other national contexts is that this is a *generalist* music education curriculum, which is to be taught to *all* pupils within the lower secondary school; in England this means for young people aged between 11 and 14. This places an immediate delimitation on the sorts of musical endeavor that can take place within a classroom. For example, although staff notation is mentioned within the National Curriculum (NC), its use is not mandatory throughout, and so composing does not necessarily entail learners sitting with music manuscript paper and a pencil (although it can). What is far more likely to be the case is that the young people are engaged in composing directly into sound.

Assessing composing

From this description it follows that a central question for teaching, learning, and assessing classroom composing in the lower secondary school is:

- What is being taught and learned under the heading of composing at this stage?

It also gives rise to some subsidiary questions:

- What is good composing?
- Should we separate the process of composing from the product that arises, the composition?
- What happens if there is good composing (whatever that is) but a poor composition results?

And, as a lot of generalist classroom work in England takes place in groups:

- How can we distinguish the contributions of individual children and young people to a jointly organized endeavor?

These questions are framed here at the outset of this chapter, as they foreground many of the issues which need to be explored.

One of the main issues that needs to be considered is that of the purpose of composing in general classroom music education in the first place. This has been a long-standing issue, certainly in England, but also in many other countries, too. For example, Heidi Westerlund asks:

> …[S]hould we educate devoted listeners through selected classics or transmit musical hands-on knowledge for amateurs to enjoy in their future lives, or should we simply feed the existing musical institutions, symphony orchestras and the ilk, with new practitioners? (Westerlund, 2012, p. 9)

The very act of asking this question immediately places responsibility onto the teacher to think about what they are doing, and why they are doing it. But in England, as we have seen, a national curriculum is in operation, and so teachers have to follow its strictures, of which composing is a part. A useful observation was made by Swanwick when he observed that the purpose of having composing in education was not to create composers, but to enable musical learning to take place in all children and young people in schools:

> Whatever form it may take, the prime value of composition in music education is not that we may produce more composers, but in the insight that may be gained by relating to music in this particular and very direct manner. (Swanwick, 1979, p. 43)

It is this which is the purpose of composing in the English curriculum.

The types and forms that composing takes in the English school classroom are varied. They range from songwriting to the avant-garde; however, what they have in common is that they are often realized directly into sound using classroom instruments such as guitars, keyboards, tuned and unturned percussion, and any instruments that the children and young people are learning to play outside the classroom. This composing approach is often:

> […]deliberately non-notational. By emphasizing performance and composition over reading and writing, students acquire musical skills in a

> natural way and often times at accelerated pace. This creates a context rich in musical experience for young learners. (Wish, 2015, p. 23)

Composing here needs to be thought of as “the act of making a music object by assembling sound materials in an expressive way” (Swanwick, 1979, p. 43), and although this point is being labored somewhat here, it is nonetheless important to understand as we move towards a more detailed consideration of the assessment of composing in the classroom, as otherwise those outside of the immediacy of the English context may not fully appreciate the nuances of what is taking place.

Composing and assessment

Teaching and learning composing in the English secondary classroom is a complex and multifaceted arena, and assessment of it even more so. Over the years that the NC has been in operation, there have been policy changes which have affected what teachers are required to do statutorily, as well as changing conceptions of what is involved in good assessment practice in the classroom.

In earlier incarnations of the NC, assessment of pupil attainment was undertaken by teachers grading completed work using what was known as a *National Curriculum level statement*. These level statements provided a generalized set of wordings, purportedly representing holistic achievement across all areas of music education within a single paragraph. The level statements were organized such that Level 5 was intended to represent the average attainment by a pupil aged 14 years, at the end of the then-statutory period of musical study. One of the many problems with this system can immediately be grasped in the wording of the level statement:

> Level 5
> Pupils identify and explore musical devices and how music reflects time, place and culture. They perform significant parts from memory and from notations, with awareness of their own contribution such as leading others, taking a solo part or providing rhythmic support. They improvise melodic and rhythmic material within given structures, use a variety of notations, and compose music for different occasions using appropriate musical devices. They analyse and compare musical features. They evaluate how venue, occasion and purpose affect the way music is created, performed and heard. They refine and improve their work. (QCA, 2007)

From this statement, it can be seen that the three pillars of music from the NC –composing, listening, performing – are assessed holistically, with the three being bundled together. Fortunately, the government recognized problems with this, and in 2014 issued the following statement:

> As part of our reforms to the national curriculum, the current system of 'levels' used to report children's attainment and progress will be removed from September 2014 and will not be replaced. By removing levels we will allow teachers greater flexibility in the way that they plan and assess pupils' learning. (DfE, 2014)

The removal of level statements was widely heralded as good news by the teaching profession, as they had been felt to be highly problematic (Sainsbury & Sizmur, 1998; Fowler, 2008; Fautley, 2012). Since 2014 there has been no national requirement for assessing musical attainment, including composing, in any standardized fashion. For many teachers, however, the removal of the NC levels left a vacuum that they then needed to fill. Advice came from the then Ofsted inspector for music, Ofsted being the arms-length governmental inspection service, who wrote in a blog:

> A powerful creative act cannot be contained by a neat spreadsheet of numbers and letters. As national curriculum levels disappear, I'd ask you respectfully not to replace them with another set of numbers.
> But pupils' musical work does need assessing. This should be simply constructed and ideally in sound - the music itself - not mainly about what pupils produce on paper. (Hammerton, 2014)

This is clearly an important piece of advice, but for many teachers this caused consternation. Having been used for many years to being able to record attainment in a spreadsheet, they were now being asked not to. Alongside these anxieties were long-standing concerns with the ways in which composing should be taught and learned in the first place. Back in 2001 Rebecca Berkley had asked, "[W]hy is teaching composing so challenging[?]" (Berkley, 2001). In a similar vein Burnard and Younker had observed that, "...understanding the role of creativity in composing in schools remains a fragmented and difficult issue" (Burnard & Younker, 2002, p. 245). Indeed, a not uncommon observation is that made by Winters:

> Visits to school music departments reveal a range of pupil music-making but often the area which is least confidently facilitated and supported (and perhaps misunderstood) is composing. (Winters, 2012, p. 19)

Given that there are many concerns about teaching composing, it follows that there are also likely to be areas of concern associated with assessing composing in the classroom.

In the English context, a further confounding factor needs to be taken into account, this is a shift in focus in schools driven in part by the inspectorate, Ofsted, to look at *progress* as a distinct issue, where *attainment* had previously formed the main locus of attention in schools. What this shift in focus has done is to move teacher thinking towards demonstrating shifts in attainment to prove that pupils have been making progression in their composing work. Again, this is a problematic area (Devaney, 2018).

This issue, and a number of others besides, have been recognized for many years. Writing back in 2000, John Paynter, one of the pioneers of classroom composing in England, wrote of the potential pitfalls with the assessment of composing:

> We accept without question that a school curriculum must show progression, not only in the programme overall but also in the content of each subject. In reality, however, things may not be that simple. In the first place, there are different kinds of progression and what would be a reasonable expectation in one area may not be so in another. Also, to be effective, the scheme must include regular appraisal of students' work, and again that is not necessarily a straightforward matter. Some subjects - music among them - may include group activities, so that defining the nature of the progression becomes part of the larger problem of how to recognise individual pupils' achievements. We are not helped by the continuing confusion about assessment and evaluation; the one an informed judgement which can be challenged and if necessary revised, the other awarding values on a scale representing agreed, and therefore - at least for the time being - fixed, criteria. Either way, there is pressure upon teachers to produce verifiable evidence of progress. If, to do that, it becomes necessary to compromise by making important whatever is easiest to assess/evaluate rather than assessing/evaluating those things which are truly important to a subject, then students' achievements may be trivialised. (Paynter, 2000, p. 5)

Paynter was being very prescient when he wrote that. There are many aspects in that quotation which warrant careful unpicking in the light of what has happened in the intervening years. Paynter alerts us to issues of progression, personalization, assessment and evaluation, and assessing an individual within group work. All of these have daily relevance to teaching and learning taking place every day in school classrooms.

What this all means in practice is that there is a concerted effort by teachers to do three things with their composing pupils:

1. To construct schemes or work that enable progression in composing to be achieved.
2. To design assessment systems that enable such progression to be delineated.
3. To be able to prove to external viewers that such progress has been made.

To this can sometimes be added a fourth component, that of “meta-proof,” where the teachers go beyond point 3 above, and need to prove to their principals or the inspectorate that the proof they have provided of attainment and progress is valid (Fautley, 2016, p. 142). So, not just proving progression, but proving they have proved it!

Formative and summative assessment of composing

All of this presents a complex and multiple simultaneity of issues which the classroom music teacher needs to give consideration to when assessing composing in the classroom. Before turning to a more detailed consideration of how this is - and might be - done, some essential aspects of assessment language as well as uses and understandings in the specific peculiarity of the English context need to be discussed.

The terminologies of formative and summative assessment are well known both in education generally (TGAT, 1988; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996; Wiliam & Black, 1996; Harlen & James, 1997; Harlen, 2005), and in music education specifically (Colwell, 2007; Fautley, 2010; Schneider, dePascale, & McDonel, 2019). In terms of assessment of composing, it follows that assessment of process is probably best undertaken formatively, while summative assessment can normally be expected to come into play when considering the finished product, the composition, and it is to this point we now turn.

Composing as a classroom activity

One of the many issues with the assessment of composing in the classroom in the lower secondary school is that of what exactly should be assessed. David Bray makes this point when he observes:

> […]it may be helpful not to assess the **composition**, but to focus on the skills and understanding the students demonstrate whilst **composing.** The finished composition was actually less important than the skills that

> students demonstrated whilst they were composing. These skills will be much easier to assess than the finished composition [emphasis in original] (Bray, 2002, p. 80)

This distinction between process and product raises some useful and informative points about teaching and learning composing in the classroom. The prevailing culture of Western music privileges the final piece of music (Goehr, 1992), whereas for educational purposes a carefully crafted learning program needs to be designed which enables children and young people to get to the stage of producing a finished piece. In the English public examination systems of GCSE and A-level music, it is the final piece only which is submitted for external grading. Unlike some fine art examinations, where works in progress – sketchbooks – are considered as counting towards the final grade, in music it is only the final piece which matters for assessment purposes. What this means for pedagogy is that it is up to each individual teacher to decide on the most appropriate pathway for them to adopt with their learners, as there is no official direction as to how this can be achieved.

Unlike performing, which has long-established pathways and progression routes involving graded music examinations, with publications, tutor books, studies, and anthologies to help *en route*, the pedagogy of composing has none of these. This means that, in many cases, the teacher has to devise their own materials. It can also be the case that the teacher has personally had little by way of direct involvement with composing since their own time at school, as some performance degrees and other forms of higher education require little or nothing by way of acquaintance with the act of composing. All of this means that the teacher's own preparedness can be patchy.

A further issue is that of the modality of composing. The archetypal Western romantic view is of the solitary composer struggling against seemingly overwhelming odds and possibly starving in a garret somewhere! Even in today's Western, classical-derived musical world it is the triumph of the individual composer which is celebrated. Things can be different in the pop, rock, and jazz spheres, where collective composing is recognized as being "a thing." In English secondary school classrooms, where classes normally number around 30 pupils, with lessons typically lasting for an hour a week, the individuated composer model comes into some difficulties. Group composing is normal in English classrooms, often involving subdividing the 30 pupils into smaller units, maybe five pupils to a group, who then work as described above, with classroom instruments composing directly into sound.

To recap, what we have, then, in the English lower-secondary music classroom are groups of young people using readily available musical instruments, working directly with sound, and undertaking conjoint composing

activities which are realized in the form of pieces of music, which may or may not be performed publicly, but will most likely remain in the classrooms in which they were created.

Assessment of classroom composing

Having moved away from the system of National Curriculum levels described above, and faced with the competing demands of demonstrating attainment and proving progression, teachers in England have had to devise their own strategies to deal with this. One of the ways in which many have chosen to do so is by privileging the spoken word, as Colwell notes:

> Formative assessment is friendly and widely accepted. Music teachers, however, believe that formative assessment refers to any assessment conducted by teachers who then tell students the results. Formative assessment does not occur unless some learning action follows … Assessments are formative only if something is contingent on their outcomes and the information is used to alter what would have happened in the absence of the information…(Colwell, 2007, p. 13)

This is what has become normal assessment procedure, and, historically, there is little that new and original in this. Music teachers were effectively doing formative assessment before it was invented! Armed with the knowledge that giving good verbal feedback about how to improve is a form of assessment, this is how teachers have been working. Helping students make a difference to their learning and doing by talking to them is a key component of good formative assessment. The process of composing in groups is one which teachers feel they can help with, however inexperienced they themselves are in composing, as much of it involves “normal” performance modalities – starting together, coming in at the right time, and controlling dynamics, all things within any music teacher’s comfort zone. But what is harder for teachers to do is to comment constructively on the *quality* of the music being produced. As an example of this, in one piece of research it was found that when both professional composers and teachers were working with children and young people, composer interactions were often focused on qualitative developmental work, whereas teacher interactions were frequently characterized by task completion matters (Fautley, 2014, p. 18). In other words, what was taking place was that professional composers were engaging the children and young people in discussion about their music, whereas the teachers were primarily concerned with how much time remained in the lesson, and whether the pupils would have any substantial work to show for it at the end.

This discrepancy between composers and teachers gets to the very heart of what is often taking place in English classrooms. This is the effect of what has come be known as the performativity agenda:

> […] performativity, a key element of current educational reform worldwide, has marked a disturbing phase in the resetting of education… Teachers are required to measure and test students, to report using mandated standards and systems and to teach in state-sanctioned ways. Pedagogy has been shaped and reshaped by reform policies focused on school organisation, the curriculum and student attainment, with assessed teacher performance now itself the direct focus of change which has substantially impacted on the work of teachers (Burnard & White, 2008, pp. 667-668)

Indeed, performativity has become so pervasive and invasive that Ball (2003) called it a battle for "the teacher's soul". What Burnard and White described above finds its outworking in the issues of meta-proof discussed earlier. This means that music teachers, fully aware that their principals and senior management teams in school will know little, if anything, about quality in composing, are forced to demonstrate ("prove") that learning and progress have taken place in the hour-long lesson. Composers, accustomed to organic time-scales, are more concerned with the music, and less so with the impending schoolroom bell. This key difference goes a long way towards explaining music teacher actions; performativity has forced them to be more concerned with the measurable than with quality of music. This leads inexorably to the situation described by Gert Biesta, who asks:

> […] whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can)[1] measure (Biesta, 2010, p. 13)

A similar sentiment was expressed by Dylan Wiliam:

> We start out with the aim of making the important measurable and end up making only the measurable important. (Wiliam, 2001, p. 58)

And, to pursue this theme back into the music class, Paynter elaborated on the same issue:

> [...] we may all too easily allow ourselves to be trapped by compromise, making important what can most easily be evaluated rather than valuing what is important. In which case, why do we bother with ... anything that

[1] Parentheses in the original

> relies upon the exercise of imagination, creative response, and the expression of independent views (Paynter, 2002, p. 216)

Clearly we do not want teachers to be simply measuring and assessing things for the sake of it, or to prove, or meta-prove, to their school administration that they have done something (anything!) simply to avoid trouble.

The way forward

Many of the descriptions in this chapter so far describe the ways in which the assessment of composing as a generalist classroom activity can be problematic. It is important to observe that this need not be the case, and so in this section we turn to matters of how composing in schools *can* be taught, learned, and assessed.

One of the key factors in assessing composing is that the teacher needs to have an open mind as to what the outcomes of a composing task will be. Defining assessment criteria, or what Americans call “rubrics,” too tightly in advance can mean that a creative and interesting composition scores lowly in a summative assessment exercise, as it does not fit what was expected. Although doing, say, Bach chorale harmonization can be viewed in a similar fashion to completing a crossword puzzle, composing can be more open-ended. The first task-decision the teacher needs to make is:

- Do I want a closed composing task (like a harmony exercise), or do I want a freer composing activity?

There is no right answer to this question, and how teachers address it will depend to a large extent on where both they and their learners are in their program of study. The second and third questions are much harder:

- What do I want them to *do*, and
- What do I want them to *learn*?

This is now getting to difficult pedagogical matters. For instance, a children’s composing activity creating a soundscape about the sea is a *doing* task, the question that educators will be asking is, “What is the learning that is taking place while they are composing a sea soundscape?” Again, answers will depend on where the learners are in their journey. A group of primary-school children are perfectly capable of doing this task, but both the *doing* and the *learning* will be somewhat different if done with older students.

Although formative and summative assessments are not necessarily conceived of as being different, it is appropriate to think about what will be done with the information generated:

> Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a formative assessment. The distinction between formative and summative applies not to the assessment itself, but to the use to which the information arising from the assessment is put. The same assessment can serve both formative and summative functions, although in general, the assessment will have been designed so as to emphasise one of the functions. (Wiliam, 2000, p. 118)

In the case of the sea soundscape, what the teacher will be looking to do is give verbal feedback to the children and young people – whatever stage of learning they are at – that is designed them to help improve their music. This is formative assessment proper:

> Formative assessment, therefore, is essentially feedback … both to the teacher and to the pupil about present understanding and skill development in order to determine the way forward. Assessment for this purpose is part of teaching; learning with understanding depends on it. To use information about present achievements in this way means that the progression in ideas and skills must be in the teacher's mind—and as far as possible in the pupils'—so that the next appropriate steps can be considered (Harlen & James, 1997, pp. 369-370)

This is fundamental to understanding assessment of composing in school classrooms. In order to help pupils improve at composing, teachers need to interact in meaningful ways with the young people *while* composing is taking place.

At the beginning of this chapter a number of key questions were posed. Let us take a moment to think about these in the light of the matters discussed. Let us begin by taking the first two together:

- What is good composing?
- Should we separate the process of composing from the product which arises, the composition?

These are to some extent interrelated. The process of composing needs to be done in a way that is suitable for the learners in the class. If advanced musicians, with a thorough grasp of theory and technique, they may be composing with MS paper, or with digital technology. If they are novices, they will be composing with instruments directly.

Important to note, though, is that any assessment of composing can all too easily degenerate into assessment of performance instead. Teachers who feel less confident in composing pedagogies can fall into this trap. The performance is important, especially when composing takes place directly into sounds, but teacher and pupils need to be aware of the differences between the two, and have different assessment criteria for each.

Key in the formative assessment of composing-as-process will be that the teacher has considered appropriateness and designed the learning program accordingly. So, the teacher needs to know:

a) What a good process is.
b) What a good process looks and sounds like.
c) What a good outcome is.
d) What a good outcome looks and sounds like.
e) That this is communicated to the learners so they know too.
f) What the learners will be doing.
g) What the learners will be learning.
h) How they will be doing this.

This requires reactive teaching. The teacher has to be prepared to "think on their feet" and to be able to respond to the needs of the learners. Which takes us to another question:

- What happens if there is good composing (whatever that is) but a poor composition results?

This is where there needs to be a clear separation of process from product. To use an analogy, when learning to drive a car, it is unlikely that the first driving lesson will involve undertaking a practical driving test. The student needs to first learn how to use the clutch, change gear, steer, and so on; they also need to become acquainted with the rules of the road. The same is true of composing. It is unreasonable to expect learners to produce a complete composition at their first attempt. The teacher needs to produce a structured scheme of work that gets the students to this point. Here Shulman's (1986) notion of *pedagogic content knowledge* (PCK) comes into play. The teacher will know their class and the stage of learning they are at, and should plan and act accordingly. This makes it hard, if not impossible, to be prescriptive about composing pedagogies from a distance:

> PCK is not a single entity that is the same for all teachers of a given subject area; it is a particular expertise with individual idiosyncrasies and important differences that are influenced by (at least) the teaching

> context, content, and experience. It may be the same (or similar) for some teachers and different for others, but it is, nevertheless, a corner stone of teachers' professional knowledge and expertise (Loughran, Berry, & Mulhall, 2012, p. 7)

In practice this means that the teacher will need to think through stages of development in composing, and of associated learner activities that are stage-appropriate. What should be done is privileging learning, and so the outcome is of lesser importance *at this stage*.

Having said this, at some point both learners and teachers will want to move onto producing finished compositions. It is at this juncture that we will be moving towards thinking about the last of our initial questions:

- How can we distinguish the contributions of individual children and young people to a jointly organized endeavor?

This is difficult and needs careful consideration. It is the equivalent of disentangling Lennon's contribution from McCartney's in Beatles songs. If the assessment being undertaken is primarily formative in purpose, then the teacher will be commenting on the work that the group has made as a whole, as well as in part. Assessment for summative purposes will be rather different, and so let us now turn to a consideration of that.

Thorpe makes an important observation when she states:

> The last thing an assessment model needs is a surprise, and yet creative artists seek to do just that. This can pose a dilemma for classroom music teachers who may not have a clear understanding of how to go about assessing creative work anyway…. Furthermore, the objective assessment of creative products is fraught with difficulty and controversy. Even the idea of declared assessment criteria for creative works is a fairly recent one… (Thorpe, 2012, p. 420)

On this basis, maybe the first question for summative assessment of group composing ought to be, "Why am I assessing this, and what happens to the results?" The use of criteria statements here can be problematic, and as Thorpe observes, assessment models do not need "a surprise." What they do need, however, are ways of assessing attainment. Knowing why the work is being assessed in the first place goes some way towards this. A teacher working with their own class of learners and assessing for reporting purposes is a very different thing from one assessing for external certification.

But what of assessment of group composing? Here the teacher faces a dilemma, do they assess the group, and give the same grade to all? Or do they, as many teachers in England do, assess the group, and then “shade” a mark for each individual within it? Here a crucial factor is the teacher’s own judgment. Teachers have been wary of this, and prefer to rely on external criteria, but musicking requires professional judgments being made all the time, and composing is no different from this. After all, a rating scale that can encompass music by musicians as disparate as Webern, Bach, Stormzy, Kraftwerk, and John Barry equally within its frames of reference is going to have to be either all-encompassing, which is unlikely, or selective, which is going to disadvantage some musics.

Conclusion

The assessment of classroom composing is, as this chapter has hopefully shown, fraught with difficulty. This does not mean that composing should not be taught in the lower secondary school, nor does it mean that it should not be assessed. Learning from the English experience for an international audience, what it does mean is that teachers should begin by asking themselves the question, “Why am I assessing composing?” and the corollary to this question, “What is going to happen to the results?” The answers to both of these will determine to a significant extent what the teacher then does as a result. What this chapter has hopefully shown is that composing assessment needs to arise from a thoughtful consideration of the differences between the *process* of composing, and the *product* that results from it, and to not confuse assessment of composing with assessment of performing.

For an international audience, this chapter has outlined learning that can be gathered from the English experience of assessing composing in the lower secondary school. The various pedagogic forays into composing in other jurisdictions can build on these foundations, and take from them matters which are appropriate in their own circumstances.

In the world of performativity and measurement of every aspect of education, music educators need to be able to confidently assert that composing is a valuable classroom activity, and that assessment of it can be undertaken. Wishy-washy views of creativity being too special to assess will hold no sway with neoliberal policy makers. We music educators need to be confident in our curricula and our assessments, and we need to take heart from the fact that, in music education, we have been teaching, learning, and assessing for many years, and that, although there may be difficult questions to be asked, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. To do otherwise is to open up the

very real possibility of music being sidelined, and that is surely something that no music educator can face with equanimity!

Reflective Questions

1) In your professional practice, are you able to distinguish between composing, the process of creating a new piece of music, and composition, the musical product that results from this?
2) What, for you, does good composing look like, and sound like?
3) In your professional practice, what does progression in composing entail? What does it sound like?

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