

## ‘Making-With’ in Music Education

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### Abstract

Music is inherently a making subject. We make music together, we make composition, and we make sounds. ‘Music-making’ is such a ubiquitous term in music education that there is little critique and consideration of what the term making relates to. Yet, we constantly live with the ‘trouble’ caused by this, whereby not all making is considered equal, where the term making, is used as a ‘tool’ to achieve stateable cognitive learning, or as a ‘sound demonstration of something already mastered’ or as a site for discrete ‘skill building’. This article draws on my PhD project with music student teachers (Cooke, 2020), playing with ideas of teaching as improvisatory. The project ‘troubled’ (Haraway, 2016), what it means to be a ‘teacher/maker’ and made us pay attention with our bodyminds to the role of making within music education and music teacher education.

**Keywords:** Music education, making, improvising, posthumanism

### Introduction

*A group of 12-year-olds enter the music classroom. The students have been working in small groups to compose a pop song and are nearing the end of the project. At the start of the lesson the teacher plays a range of pop songs asking pupils to identify the lyrics, the chord sequence, the bass riff and the melody, thinking about how in each example they work together to create different musical effects. The teacher then asks each group to set themselves a composing target for the lesson (e.g., complete melody for the verse) and the groups set to work. At the end of the lesson each group performs, with the remaining students asked to identify which features of the pop song each group has managed to demonstrate (Observation, March, 2017).*

Music in schools is a making subject. We make music, we make compositions, we make sounds, we make meanings. We make in similar ways to other arts subjects in which “knowing, doing and being are [in]separable” (Thomson et al., 2012, p. 11) and it is widely accepted that “Music-making of all kinds...should be at the centre of the music curriculum” (Elliott, 2005, p. 7). However, despite being so ubiquitous in music education, there is little critique and consideration as to what the term ‘making’ actually involves, and we constantly live with the “trouble” (Haraway, 2016) this lack of consideration causes. This trouble can be seen to involve disconnects between musical making in schools and society (Dolloff, 2008; Hess, 2018); differing views on what counts as musical making (Allsup, 2016; Hill, 2008); the continuing impact of broader educational policies of standardisation (see Bath et al., 2020); and, as has begun to come to light through the debates around decolonisation in music education, the significant roles of power within making practices (Hess, 2018; Allsup, 2016).

This article draws on my PhD project with music student teachers in which we (a group of music student teachers, their course leader and myself) played with ideas of teaching as improvisatory (Cooke, 2020). Teaching as improvisation acted as a radical apparatus, creating generative frictions which set in motion bodies, materials, concepts and knowing, “staying with the trouble” of making in music education (Haraway, 2016). By diffractively playing (Cooke, 2021; Murriss & Bozalek, 2019) with the term “making”, Haraway’s writing on sympoiesis (making-with) (Haraway, 2016, p. 5), and the experiences of the project, this article provides a (re)reading of issues of power, performative socio-material relationships, and ways-of-being teacher-makers to argue for a democratic and sustainable view of making within music education.

### **“Troubling” Making in Education**

Making has a troubled and troubling position in education, where accountability and standardisation agendas have significantly impacted on the perceived value of making subjects (the Arts and Design Technologies) in the school curriculum (see Ball, 2006; Bath et al., 2020). At the same time there has been an increased interest in pedagogies, mainly in the US, which focus attention on making as a key feature of learning. These include tinker and maker education (Schad & Monty-Jones, 2020), some forms of STEAM education (Colucci-Gray et al., 2017) and specific initiatives such as Lego Education (Dann, 2018), which collectively centre material engagement, exploration and decision-making in process, and learner autonomy. These approaches and initiatives challenge enlightenment notions of ‘fixed knowledge’, and neoliberal educational ideals of standardisation, instead providing spaces and ways of playfully exploring what may become (Schad & Monty-Jones, 2020).

Within music education in the UK the role of making has also seen some interesting developments. These have included greater recognition of informal learning practices through the Musical Futures initiative (Hallam et al., 2017/2018), and first access initiatives to introduce music making to whole classes (including whole-class vocal and instrumental learning in England, and El Sistema-inspired initiatives across the UK). These initiatives focus on equity of access, social justice and the importance of positive experiences of ensemble singing or playing. However, making and how it is enacted in music education settings, even sometimes within the practices described above, can arguably still maintain enlightenment views of knowledge, as fixed and separated from self, even when making music is the central mode of engagement (Allsup, 2016).

This can be seen most readily in practices where music-making is enacted as a ‘tool’ through which cognitive understanding is gained. Viewing music-making in this way is to see the medium (music) and the materials involved (instruments, sheet music, environment etc.) as being *used* to achieve an outcome, creating a linear connection. By playing x you will understand y, where the making process ‘contains’ the learning. This is an outcome-driven view of making, narrowing in on a pre-planned aim. The nature of this ‘making towards’ a predefined outcome, aligns with Hill’s critique that in some forms of western art music, “standard modes of ensemble music-making...focus[ed] on a prescribed, even “right” sound, rather than offering opportunities for rich, divergent sound exploration” (Hill, 2018, p. 54). This is controlled making for a controlled outcome, where the power lies with the person(s) who design the learning and the making tasks to achieve their objective. Allsup (2016) explicitly argues against this kind of music-making by suggesting there is a distinction between students as “making, not merely doing... [where they are] not merely executing the master’s bidding” (Allsup, 2016, p. 103).

Another type of music-making that can be commonly found in classrooms is where the music acts primarily as a site for developing skills (see Fautley 2018; Fautley & Murphy, 2016). Often phrased as the knowledge versus skills debate, revolving around the distinction of the two as being separate (knowledge involving the head, and skills involving the body and making), this separation is predicated on the notion that the body does as the mind tells it, where skilful practice is still cognitively accounted for. The knowledge versus skills debate is constantly reignited by policy and curriculum developments in the UK which in England has recently seen an explicit shift towards what is promoted as a knowledge-based curriculum (see Bath et al., 2020). According to Fautley, knowledge-based curricula invariably “define knowledge almost entirely as being declarative knowledge, with facts being at the centre of these” and leading to skills being “either downplayed or discredited” (Fautley, 2018, p. 1) where abstracted skills development (making) is used to “service” understanding. Allsup (2016) describes this form of making as “a problem of backward design” (Allsup, 2016, p. 16), where achievement and accomplishment is “located in the mastery of observable and measurable skills” which are pre-known. As Allsup points out, this view of making reserves innovation for those who have already learnt the rules “before they are allowed to break them” (Allsup, 2016, p. 16). Many music educationalists have challenged this separation of skills and knowledge, most notably Elliott (2005), in his Praxial philosophy of music education in which he argues that “we can and should develop our students’ musicianship (skills) and creativity simultaneously” (p. 7), “bring[ing] together doing, making, feeling, and thinking, [as] it complements action and reflection” (Silverman, Elliott & Davis, 2014, p. 64).

Making can also be used as a sound demonstration of prior theoretical learning, a presentation of knowing, commonly discussed as the product versus process debate. Here, again, making is *used* to provide a means by which learning can be made explicit, as a sounded signal of understanding. This type of music-making can emphasise fluency and accuracy (if associated with performing repertoire), or if within a composition context, the inclusion of expected conventions, ideas or stylistic clichés. In neither case is the focus on the musical decision-making along the way, the ideas that were tried and rejected, how the final ideas developed over time or the problematic aspects that were overcome, but instead it focuses on what is produced. Again, western art music has a particular influence here where the reification of music as aesthetic object emphasises the value of musical products, such as, CD recordings, sheet music, “final” performances (Spruce, 2012; Regelski, 2016). However, as noted by Thibeault (2015), there is an inherent tension between music education practices that promote the achievement of a polished product, something which is final, and the notion of an inclusive, and therefore democratically enacted, music education. This product view of music education intersects strongly with equally strong ‘product’ views of general education, as promoted by neoliberal education agendas and seen through policies and assessment strategies that promote standardisation.

Thinking across and between these critiques it becomes clear how far they are underpinned by enlightenment views of knowledge and a stance of human exceptionalism. Ingold (2009) argues that this creates an “assumption that making entails the imposition of form upon the material world, by an agent with a design in mind” (p. 91). Bringing together matter (hyle) and form (morphe) in the term hylomorphic making, Ingold (2009) argues that this model of making has become increasingly embedded but also unbalanced in western thought, rendering matter as passive and inert while form being thought of as pre-designed, fixed and implemented. Rethinking such socio-material making relationships with a posthumanist lens, particularly thinking with the term sympoiesis (making-with) from Barad (2007) and Haraway’s (2016) work, provides spaces for considering more democratic, (post)humanising ideals of all bodies (human and non-human, teacher and student) as makers.

## **Making to Making-With**

Posthumanism, via new materialism, provides significant challenge to this hylomorphic view of matter as inert and of human dominance of materials in making, where instead all matter is movement and vibrations, with nothing static or inert (Barad, 2003) and where matter is a “doing” (Murriss, 2016). Matter in this posthumanist view of making-with is “an active participant in the worlds’ becoming” (Barad, 2007, p. 136), with the “force and power to transform our thinking and being” (Taguchi, 2012, p. 4). This dynamic view of matter interferes with epistemological understandings of subject and object as being fundamentally separated, instead seeing both as becoming together, giving each other meaning but also creating a “radical openness, an infinity of possibilities” (Barad, 2012, p. 214). This requires a reframing of both form and matter, and therefore making.

This is, therefore, a life of what Haraway calls sympoiesis, which she defines by stating, “Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means “making-with... Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organising” (Haraway, 2016, p. 58). Making-with is a constant making, where nothing is settled or pre-determined. It is a making-with relationships across and between bodies (human and non-human), as a dynamic response to whatever happens. Therefore making-with is rooted not in a telling of past events, representing and interpreting, but staying in the present, being attentive to how the materials and relationships make-with us and allowing the unexpected, complex or divergent in rather than suppressing it. Such attentionality in making-with is embodied, a making-with the hands, eyes and ears, as pluralist ways of knowing and being (Ingold, 2016).

This shift from making to making-with significantly challenges many notions of making in educational contexts, where pre-decided outcomes, the valuing of completed ‘products’, and the form of the educational experience are often planned in detail (sometimes down to the minute) before the lesson commences. It also challenges views of teachers as separate and separated from making processes, asking us to consider teachers as ‘teacher-makers’; that is, active bodies with all the other bodies (material and human) in performative socio-material relationships. This directly challenges notions of “teachers as experts”, with predetermined knowledge to transmit, and predetermined pedagogical approaches (Britzman, 1991). Instead, it shifts views of power to focus attention on what is happening between everyone and everything, not as within someone. These critiques raise questions such as: how do teachers/student teachers conceive of making in music education? What does making-with as ‘teacher-makers’ means for ‘how we are’ with each other? And how can teacher education act as a catalyst for doing/thinking/feeling/making? These were the questions which drove my PhD project, focusing on the idea of teaching as an improvisatory act, and the implications of this for teacher education and notions of who and what “teacher” is.

## **Improvising as a Radical Apparatus**

Working with undergraduate and postgraduate music student teachers in a Scottish university, we playfully explored improvising, as a musical, physical, theatrical, verbal, material practice of making-with (**Figure 1**). Through a series of improvisation workshops, we deliberately, as a whole group, including the course leader, ‘troubled’ linear, transactional, standardised forms of making, teaching and learning.



**Figure 1**  
*Transdisciplinary improvisings*

Like for Barad (2007) and Murriss (2016), improvising became a “radical apparatus”, not as an instrument to magnify and bring into focus aspects of the world, but instead an apparatus as a “laborer” which, through how it entangled with us, “contribute[d] to the production and reconfiguration of difference” (Barad, 2007, p. 232). The term *apparatus* has etymological roots in Latin meaning “make ready for” or “prepare”, where in the project the acts of improvising we explored together made us ready, with our bodyminds for doing, feeling, thinking-with in different than expected ways (Harper, n.d). The term *radical apparatus* reflects the radical ways in which improvising opened up and made us attentive to otherwise infrequently considered aspects of making (Murriss, 2016). This wasn’t pre-planned, pre-discussed, we didn’t know what would happen as we engaged with each other and the ideas and practices of improvising, but as we moved together, improvisation radically altered our languages, our musical acts, our processes of making, and the concepts, metaphors and ideas we played with.

With this radical apparatus of improvising, what we made and how we made was at stake, where interruptions of discourses and expectations required us to be open and vulnerable to what might emerge. For a group of highly trained musicians, mainly within Western Art Music traditions as aligning with Welch et al.’s (2010) research into music student teacher’s backgrounds, such challenges to expected and normalised forms of making created frictions which in turn created movement, opening up new possibilities for making-with (Springgay, 2018).

The remainder of this article diffractively plays the language and images of these sequences of making-with, with and through the inseparable issues of power, performative relationships and ethical and sustainable ways-of-being ‘with’. Diffraction, as described by Barad (2007) is a physical phenomenon in which “the disturbances in the water caused by each stone [thrown in] propagate outward and overlap with each other, producing a pattern...between the overlapping wave components...The waves are said to interfere with each other, and the pattern created is called an interference or diffraction pattern” (Barad, 2007, pp. 76-77). This notion of interference,

of 'troubling' in order to 'make different' necessitates exceeding the normative, disciplinary or habitual "gaze" and invites alternative ways of doing, seeing, feeling, thinking. Therefore, to diffractively play is to deliberately commit "to understanding which differences matter, how they matter and for whom" (Barad, 2007, p. 90). In doing so, diffractive methodologies trouble human arrogance of locating knowledge and meaning-making only as in the human subject and mind, instead recognizing that knowledges are only ever partial, are not static, but dynamically performative in constant becoming, and are not separable from the living and non-living world (Haraway, 2016).

### **Making-With Differently: A Diffractive Playing**

What follows is a series of makings-with, where the materials and ideas of the project are diffractively played with to (re)see/feel/do making-with in music education. These diffractions, where materials, experiences, literatures engage in "touching encounters" each other, creates spaces with the text for you, the reader, to be attentive to what they are making with you (Springgay, 2018). Playing with the materials in different combinations allows us (both me the writer and you the reader) to engage in a performative process of (re)considering our enactments of maker/making-with in educational contexts. Therefore, this is not a "conclusive reading" but rather a series of provocations to think otherwise with the term.

### **Reachings**

*The groups are busy making-with playdough, exploring the improvisatory natures of play, as a return to childlike connectedness and attentiveness, as explorers setting out on an adventure together into the unknown. One group immediately divides up the task with an agreed 'product' they are aiming for, each taking a separated part of the model to build in their own space at the table. The others refuse to commit, yet. Their exploring is characterised by 'feeling their way' in the spaces together. Reaching towards each other, entangled and inseparable (C. Cooke, Reflections, March 2019).*



**Figure 2**

*Reaching: Into, across, between, over*

## Reaching

Like Haraway's descriptions of tentacular thinking as "probing creepers, swelling roots, reaching and climbing tendrilled ones...about life lived along lines—and such a wealth of lines—not at points, not in spheres" like "a series of interlaced trails" (Haraway, 2016, pp. 31-32). This is a reaching "towards that which is in-formation or transformation...altering us" (Manning, 2007, p. 85) as "the ongoing unfolding of difference" (Manning, 2007, p. 9). Difference of ideas, difference of intentions, difference of following the materials.

These moments of interlacing, of reaching towards, into, between, over and with, make me think about the stories the music student teachers told me about their experiences of making music. Responding to an image of children improvising with percussion instruments they juxtaposed their response to the picture with their own experiences. *[that's]* "kids making music, themselves *[pause]* working in little groups, trying things out maybe...we never did that" (Personal communication, December 2018).

*"they are working together...but mostly in my experience they'd probably be on their own [pause] to be honest"* (Personal communication, December 2018).

These experiences of making-with musical instruments were further experienced during the musical improvisation activities. Coming together in musical making, moments of reaching into, reaching with bodies and materials, to "do" cymbal playing differently than expected, was a moment of significant hesitation.

*Hands coming together—hesitancy in getting to this point* (C. Cooke, Reflections, January 2019).



**Figures 3 & 4**  
*Hesitating bodies*

The sequence of movement and sound from which these two still pictures are taken capture the slowing of time and the hesitant, awkward pauses which these two students took to explore the bringing together of their bodies, cymbals and therefore sounds. Relative to the messy and sometimes frantic creation of sounds that was going on around them, this sequence, which lasted for 8 seconds, was a highly charged but very slow sensorial moment. A moment of co-mingling in

which “human and non-human matter compose[d], challenging the human arrogance of power and control ‘over’ materials, where the cymbals ‘asked’ to be brought together, where the hesitancy of the humans involved couldn’t stop the inevitable ‘meeting’ of flesh with metal with the room’s acoustic” (Springgay, 2018, p. 59).

These two sequences of reaching into, and with bodies (both human and non-human), made a difference. It set in motion considerations of what counts as ‘correct instrumental technique’, ‘whether we have the power to do differently than commonly expected’, ‘what does it mean to make together as a physical act’, and ‘what power do materials have in what we make’. These differences made in acts of improvising, focused our attention on what we were making-with, where notions of individual production were unravelled to create spaces for entangling ourselves differently. We noticed ourselves as ‘with’, where we had to be response-able (Haraway, 2016) to what was occurring, where we had to have an openness in our relationships with each other and the materials to what was in-the-making-with. These reaching’s weren’t limited to bodily/material reaching, but also sounds.

### Soundings

*We are in the middle of improvising musically, mostly with percussion instruments and guitars. We are in two groups of four, making sounds together in material-sonic-bodily combinations. There is no speech in the room. We all focus our attention on sound, as a creative expression, a material response and as an invitation.*

*J. plays a rhythm, asking a question both with the sound but also with his facial expression. Direct eye contact, a quizzical look, asking for our attention.*

*The question asks for a response, to which E and R join in to provide. The response is not to ‘finish’ but to continue with the question.*

*The sound qualities of the question reach across the room and realising this J. turns to invite others to join in too (C. Cooke, Reflections, January 2019).*



**Figure 5**  
*Sound diffracting*

This was the sound of something different occurring. The sounds diffractively interfered with spaces, bodies, materials, and making as we encountered each other. They reached beyond, across, between, challenging notions of human control and individual power, to develop a different

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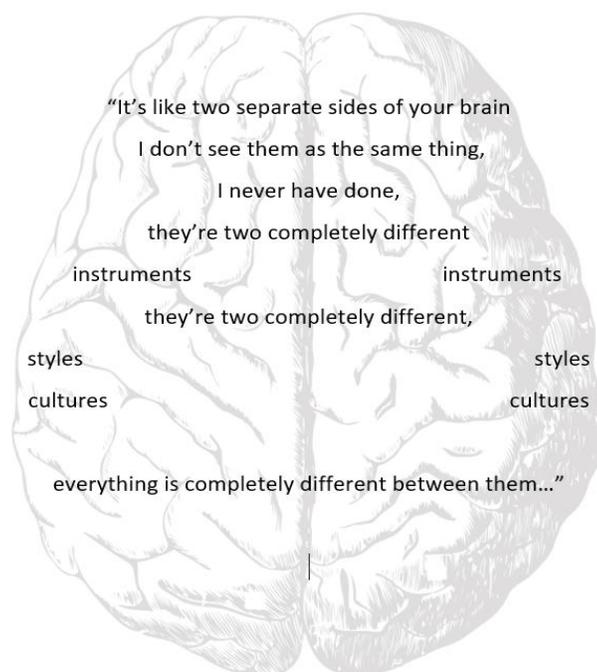
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performative account of sound in the room. As argued by Gershon (2013), sound is “theoretically and materially consequential” where “if everything vibrates, then everything – literally every object, ecology, feeling, idea, ideal, process, experience, event – has the potential to affect and be affected by another aspect of everything” (Gershon, 2013, p. 258). This was/is a space of response-ability (Haraway, 2016), where attention was/is paid to the “speculative fabulations...relays, string figures, passing patterns back and forth, giving and receiving, patterning, holding the unasked-for pattern in one’s hand” (Haraway, 2016, p. 12), which cultivate response-ability in “collective knowing and doing, an ecology of practices” (Haraway, 2016, p. 34). Soundings as consequential, as speculative, as “interrupt[ing] commonly held metaphors... queer[ing] the pitch of contemporary notions of thought and practice” (Gershon, 2013, p. 258), was evident in the differences between this sequence of action and the ways in which the student teachers discussed the ways they experienced their own sound-making in music education.

*In the initial conversations with the group about their own music education experiences, Maddie discussed her dual identity as a traditional Scottish folk fiddler and also as a Western Art Music violinist. “...I was on their waiting list (referring to a HE institution) because I couldn’t decide which route I wanted to go down [Trad fiddle or Western Art Violin], which I think is ridiculous” (C. Cooke, Reflections, December 2018).*

*She continued...*



**Figure 6**

***Maggie’s Dilemma: Fiddle/Violin lived dichotomies***

These tensions of hierarchical positioning between different types of making, where Maddie had in the same conversation both ridiculed the separation of types of making, and at the same time justified their bounded differences, was further developed in a conversation with Simon.

*We did have a little band in school – but we couldn't use the music department or their amps, so we had to bring in our own... It was like, that's not the sort of music we do in the music department...I practised piano in the department (Simon, December 2018).*

What is particularly interesting in Simon's and Maddie's comments is that they embodied the container metaphor, which is so dominant in education in relation to thinking about the brain, learning, and the body (Gallagher and Lindgren, 2015; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The containment of sounds, their bodies, their material relationships, both described here as institutional containment, went beyond declarative statements or rules which Maddie and Simon could work within. Instead the containment of sounds and making was embodied. They embodied the physical movement of equipment and bodies into what was considered an appropriate space where the sounds were "allowed" to be. Their experiences were an enactivist metaphor: they "lived" the music's as separated cognitively, physically and environmentally. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that this embodiment in the formation of metaphors is critical, where the metaphors then act as "structures that recur in our everyday bodily experiences" (Lakoff, 1987, p. 267). This could be seen in the hesitation some of the group had in making-with sounds. In particular, Jay's "testing" of the expectations of the space when asked to get an instrument when he asked, "can it be a guitar?" (Workshop 2), and Maddie's distressed response when a member of the improvisation introduced a key to play the cymbal with, rather than the expected beater or drumstick.



**Figure 7**  
*Interrupting conventional expectations: Discomfort with keys*

The consequences of playing with sounds through improvising was to (re)focus our attention on the ways in which sounds resonate in and with bodies (human and non-human), in ways that are felt, physically and emotionally, challenging conceptions of making sound as somehow separable, containable, with significance within but not in response to. As Allsup (2016) so eloquently argues,

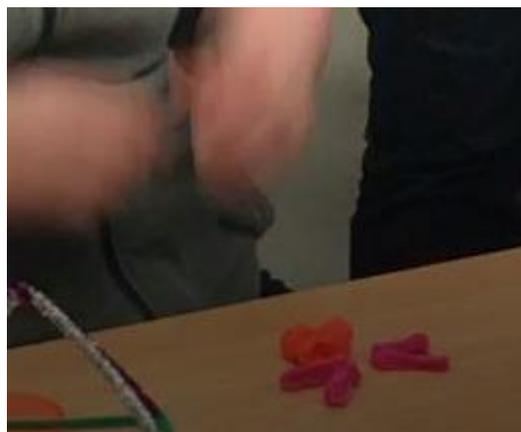
What if we attended to new frequencies? What if...we pushed back at the boundaries of what we once thought of as beautiful? What would we find? A new noise, a new ordering, a new way of teaching? Just degrees from our controlled music curricula are the wilfully hybrid, the open-sourced and appropriated, the interdisciplinary and the weird, our wondrous and unholy muddle...[as] a democratising force, a plurality of discourses in

which the great collapse of dualistic music education can be made out, if we choose to listen (Allsup, 2016, p. 33).

This involves different types of relationships with materials, challenging human exceptionalism views of control and power-over (Bell, 2014).

### **Material “Doings”**

*You are making a donkey and yet it won’t stand. You are trying to control his legs and weight, adjusting the distribution and the way it can work with the table surface. You question the playdough, asking it to allow you to attach a head to the body, and yet it rejects it, the weight of the head changing as it begins to fall and squashes against the table. You question it again, making slight alterations to your grip, and the force with which you push the head downwards onto the body, this time the playdough answers by sending its legs flying to the side. You quickly move your hands back, laughing loudly. Later, he becomes a “little donkey, who’s very tall”, to counter the weight problems of the head. As noted by another in the group “He canna help how he grew...he canna help his growth spurt” (C. Cooke, Reflections, December 2018).*



**Figures 8 & 9**  
*“He canna help how he grew”*

*A variety of other incidental materials exerted themselves into the project. Water bottles, pens, keys, phones – all become with the project, as beaters, shakers, or in the case of the phones as ‘fixers’ and ‘recorders’ (through photographs) and ‘sharers’ (through social media and our group email). They exerted their presence, and their ‘doings’, awakening us to their company (C. Cooke, Reflections, October 2020).*

We awoke to the materials. We noticed their ‘doings’. We acknowledged our attitudes towards them, our vulnerabilities in their company, and their abilities to make-with us. In doing so, we both became “capable” (Haraway, 2016, p. 1) in each other’s company. This was an encountering, a ‘waking up’ of the body, the senses and the materials, making them active together and response-able (Haraway, 2016) to each other. But it also required us to take a different onto-epistemological stance, where we had to escape from “‘majoritarian’ norms, subject positions, and

habits of mind and practice”, as controllers of materials and powerful individuals as makers, to what Taguchi (2012) discusses as “becoming minoritarian” (p. 267).

Becoming minoritarian is not an easy process. It is predicated on challenging deeply-rooted assumptions, beliefs, and expectations, which are enacted as habitual practices and behaviours in order to “opens up things which are excluded, un-expressed or unheard by breaking into, deterritorializing and altering the usual modes of doing and saying things” (Beyes & Steyaert, 2011, p. 111). These tensions were real and felt amongst the group, steeped in Western Art Music practices, a music education still dominated by Enlightenment epistemology and working in neoliberal education contexts.

The vulnerability of the group, in becoming minoritarian, was evident throughout our improvisations and involved nearly all of the group members. These were expressed as frustration and repetitive actions to “make something work” as they expected (e.g., making a boomwhacker resonate “properly” on a chair leg, or attaching playdough between two upturned pots to create a bridge), surprise and sometimes discomfort at materials inhabiting spaces they didn’t think they should be in (e.g., playdough in a music education classroom, or being asked to complete a theatre game with an imaginary ball), and a sense of correctness in skill and use (e.g., expressing shock at using a key as a beater, or displeasure at someone “carefully” dropping a cymbal on the floor, or concern that someone wasn’t able to play a guitar chord fully).

However, when in the midst of musical improvising, there was evidence of more acceptance and dynamic response-ability with the materials during making (Haraway, 2016). This was particularly seen in an improvisation pictured in **Figure 10**.



**Figure 10**  
*Lost in process: Surrendering to the material*

In this short five second sequence the materials are leading what is being created. Both Maddie and Simon change how they are playing their materials (a guitar is on Simon’s lap and Maddie is holding the water bottle), and what they are playing (Simon changes to playing the table  
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and a drum to his side) as a critical and creative response. They are lost in the moment of the piece being created, absorbed and intensely involved. They are lost in the process, not knowing where they are heading and making changes and decisions in-the-moment of playing without explicitly negotiating this with the group. Instead, the group follows the changes to sounds that are made, they are completely present in the moment, reaching forward for something and thoroughly entangled in the sounds, relationships and becoming-with the experience. This is a sensing of music as a material process which Springgay, citing Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, argues “necessitates giving up the comfort of positioning, the reliance on preconditioned knowledge and a pre-chosen political viewpoint. In a word, it designates giving up a mastering, molar attitude” (Springgay, 2016, p. 76). It is this changing in positioning which Gershon and Ben-Horin (2009) conclude takes us beyond playing an instrument, in a technical and skilful way, “to a much deeper understanding of the meanings [of what] is collaborating to produce this sound” (p. 8). It is this (re)reading of collaborative relationships in music-making, to include material doings, which reframes how we see power. Power is no longer control, domination, individualised, and contained within, but as Bell (2014) argues in his account of improvisational leadership, this is a shift from “power-over” to “power-with”, as a collective freedom which is generative and productive for all (p. 1017).

### **A (Re)reading of Ourselves as Makers-with**

Those of us involved in ‘making’ subjects in education hold a privileged position in shaping how the next generations develop socio-material relationships. Paying attention to how making in music education, and elsewhere, can be characterised by control, standardisation, reification, and abstraction, we can collectively make ourselves aware of how human exceptionalism, views of matter as inert and powerless, and individualism in making, continue to be (re)cycled in our practices (Spruce, 2012; Regelski, 2016). In doing so, we can begin to see/feel/make differently, embracing the potential of making to address critical issues in our cultures, societies, and environments, whereby we emphasise the importance of paying attention, being responsive and adaptive, of making-with materials and people rather than trying to impose power and control on others. Seeing, perceiving, and talking about making differently is part of the shift necessary to enact making-with. However, as is evident through the project cited in this article, making-with also requires a different stance, a different “way of being teacher”.

Re-seeing ourselves as makers-with, and as “teacher-makers”, is to recognize subtle yet important changes in how *we* (as teachers) are in socio-material relationships in music education. Our own positionality is critical to how making-with is permitted, enacted, felt within a (music) education system which often pulls us in a different, more standardised, cognitive focused direction. Part of such a shift in stance is to allow ourselves to “become minoritarian”, to allow others (materials, young people, environments, serendipitous happenings) to have power-with us in our making (Taguchi, 2012). This disrupts strictly applied, pre-planned courses of action to become more response-able to how particular entanglements of making can themselves teach. Therefore, our role as teacher is re-seen. Not as gatekeeper of knowledge, or leaders of learning, but instead, as material-space-bodies-environment entanglers, where we deliberately invite others to join in with us, reaching, and entangling ourselves to discover collectively what we will be learned. Therefore, just as in the project in this article, instead of starting from a position of knowing what is to be gained from making, we start from a position of making-with and find out what is to be gained along the way.

These making-with spaces are (post)humanising spaces, where democratic and ethical forms of “becoming-with” each other as “capable partners” are made possible (Haraway, 2016).

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