

Chapter 46: In This further perspective the author rehearses [a]the possibility of drawing parallels between trends in music education globally and known behaviors (or even conditions) such as romanticism and narcissism. We attempts to view technology's role under this novel 'lens.' Finally, the author argues that technology is often viewed as a tool, or as sets of tools, that are being used not particularly creatively in order to "enable," "facilitate," or "enhance" curricular aims and objectives that might have remained unchanged for over a century, which is something that might be counterproductive. The author suggests that it is through technology that a new "music education" can be envisaged, celebrated, and experienced.

Keywords: narcissism; romanticism; parochial practice; role of technology; epistemology

Narcissism, Romanticism, and Technology

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It is exciting to having been given the opportunity to participate in such a well-structured anthology of expertise, critical thinking, and creative intuition presented within the current volume. It is equally exciting to have been given the freedom to employ a somewhat non-mainstream vernacular to that of usual academic writing in order to foster a novel critical discourse about key issues that the writing team is passionate about. I find myself usually rehearsing technology's potential roles within particular educational and commercial contexts, but I am very excited that in this instance I have been invited to offer a short commentary on issues that I have found to be interesting, controversial, or challenging, as arising from other contributors' writings within this present volume. I aim to present a number of these hereafter, and conclude by offering my personal opinion about the implications for technology's role (alas, "the role" once again) in music and music education.

It is, to begin with, intriguing to see Waldron's presentation of her "bi-musical" self elsewhere in this volume, the one comprising a "formal" side, and a "self taught" one. Waldron, a seasoned figure in academia, with a substantial portfolio of written and spoken public output, as well as an oft exploited skill to perform sharp meta-cognitive assessments, provides a great example of the institutionalized divide between different musical identities, musical expertise, musical pasts, or "trajectories," if you will. Funnily, it was not my own "schizomusical" background as a classically trained choral conductor and music theorist, in tandem with a self taught bluesy jazz guitarist (or jazzy blues, depending on the "judge's" own gestalt and musical niche) and vocalist, that stimulated my thinking about this frequently reported duality, it was Waldron's account. Obviously, Waldron, myself, and numerous academics and practitioners the world over do have to market themselves at given junctures, and do have to specialize in a particular field in order to make a living, sustain their families, and pursue a career. On the other hand, we are past the time where we should have needed to be terribly protective, secretive, and/or apologetic about any facet of ours that overlooked [b]outside the expected existential horizon. Popular musics are, gladly, well-established disciplines, the study of which is continually supported and enriched by multimodal research enquiry. Similarly, informal, non-formal, or other-than-formal learning, whatever the terms might mean to the people that use them, are also established notions that appear to be under continual scrutiny, internationally. Why do I, therefore, still have the impression that our other than formal

side is sometimes presented (often by ourselves) either as a "guilty pleasure," a "cute quirk," a "niche lite," or perhaps an "interlude" from the "proper stuff"? Is it simply "presented" this way, or is it even "perceived" in this way by some of us that do it[c]? My somewhat dubious differentiation of perception and presentation is by no means implying ill intent or deception; it probably echoes countless examples that I can recall where I personally presented my other than formal side as a guilty pleasure or quirk. In my own case, this usually was either in order to feel more relaxed, fraternize, or simply to be able to communicate with people that I thought had limited to no understanding (interest, or respect!) for something that I have been extremely passionate about. But the taxonomy of things that are either in conflict or celebrate our *raison d'être* would not be complete if I didn't rehearse another interesting and very familiar to me example in Waldron's text: her "What's the big deal?" rhetorical question when introduced to a known academic book that was attempting to uncover how popular musicians learn. I recall experiencing my introduction to the particular text with very similar surprise and consternation. Within the few passages that I could actually identify with as somewhat approaching my own past learning experience as a popular musician, I remember being in a continual state of astonishment when reading about the fact that one could be so excited to discover such novelty in other people's learning journeys. To me, and the hundreds of people that were part of my extended network of popular musicians, this was simply how things either were, or at least should be. I don't know whether part of my discomfort might have been precipitated because of the particular musical genre that I was passionate about, or the people that gave birth to it. But I have a vivid recollection of experiencing a synaesthetic drawing of mental parallels to old documentaries and encyclopedias that present the exciting findings of the curious elite of the British Empire during their wondrous journeys and their studies of the noble savages. Although sometimes skilfully presented, it feels somewhat "not right." It is important for me to highlight that outside this mental parallelism exercise one can usually identify in these old reports more than one reasons to feel extremely uncomfortable about (such as racism, exploitation, and cruelty); I certainly don't refer to these in this paradigm. But besides these profound issues, there are also some more "refined" issues that potentially manifest[d], like condescension, superficiality and/or ignorance. These more refined issues appear by some means to form what perhaps the late vocal pedagogy pioneer Richard Miller (2000) presented as some of the "pedagogic pollutants" in the ambient instructional air that today's singers breathe. I will try to assess whether [e]these might ill inform some of the dialogues on the use of technologies in education and music education and whether similar pedagogic pollutants might exist within the overarching fields of music and technology. I intend to do so because I find myself experiencing comparable inner "field disturbance" when I come across similar accounts wearing the "technologist's" hat.[1]

In this setting, technology is often being presented or accounted for as a knowable "thing" as Waldron intuitively argues, or as a set of heuristic remedies, similarly presented by Himonides and Purves (2010), and Himonides (2012). Furthermore, Himonides (*ibid.*) argues that, in most cases, our conventional "understanding" or "agreement" about the threshold past which the non-technological (or "analogue") ends and the technological begins is arbitrary, and perhaps elusive. Furthermore, we can also witness a number of different "junctions" or time-bins even when referring to the technological side of things. For example, elsewhere in this present volume, Howell talks about "new" music technologies, Waldron

rehearses the pre-networked and networked technological contexts (and also informal music learning 1.0 and 2.0), and Medvinsky alludes to "contemporary" technology. How well defined are these, and does it matter anyway?

I believe that it does, and greatly so. The reason that I believe this is because the definition of these, within ourselves, our microcosm(s), our macrocosm(s), and the greater society(ies) and world, is consequently tightly interwoven with our gauging of ourselves, and others (e.g. our students) somewhere on the digital immigrants versus natives (Prensky, 2001) continuum. This, as a result, will inform our general "attitudes" (see Himonides, elsewhere in this volume) towards technology, and, even further, our ethos, modus operandi, and potential influence on other people's musical and other than musical development. I believe that this is flawed, philosophically, conceptually, as well as praxially. Several writers have rightfully challenged Prensky's concerns, [f]either as somewhat exaggerated, scaremongering, alarmist, and even naive. I would prefer to characterize such a classification as simply unnecessary. What shines under this light is, once again, that the biggest part of the "civilized" world is very much attracted, reliant, or plainly "stuck" onto the worship of the tyranny of labels. [g]We might come across people that identify themselves as popular musicians, classical musicians, digital natives, digital immigrants, qualitative researchers, quantitative researchers, constructivists, behaviorists, phenomenologists, pragmatists, objectivists, and so on. For those of us who are educators, we might also come across students from a plethora of musical backgrounds, and perhaps from families that celebrate some, or other, or absolutely none of the above philosophical stances. How could we possibly compartmentalize, classify (or pigeonhole, if you wish) the students in our class according to all their existential "facets," in order to provide appropriately tailored developmental pathways to them? And how could we use technology appropriately in order to tailor-fit their experiences?

In line with what I argue elsewhere in this volume, I believe that it is "attitudes" that need to be adjusted; in this case, not our attitudes towards technology, but our attitudes towards diversity, originality, and the celebration of creative expression and learning needs that do not necessarily align with our own. Here is where the notion of narcissism could be used as a paradigm. We tend to appreciate and value our own trajectories. We were raised in a particular way, we formed an understanding of the various bits around us in a particular way, we have developed ways of understanding new concepts in a particular way, we have become musicians in a particular way, we sustain our musicianship in a particular way, we use technology in a particular way, we teach and we create in particular ways. At the same time, we have particular ways in which our self-esteem is formed, our confidence is built, and our aspirations are cultivated. Particularly for those parts of our past trajectories in which we assess that we have been quite successful, it is not uncommon for us to possess a strong sense of causality. A causal ascription for success (Meyer, 1980) can potentially harbor doubts about the effectiveness of other possible ways (or trajectories) that other people might have followed. Interestingly, a lack of empathy towards others is a very common trait with narcissistic personality disorder (U.S. National Library of Medicine, n.d). Perhaps equally interesting is the fact that according to published evidence (e.g., Kohut, 2013), people with narcissistic personality disorder often display elitist, snobbish, contemptuous, or patronizing attitudes. One cannot but notice that such attitudes are not infrequent amongst musicians, [h][i] be it performers, educators, theorists, philosophers, or combinations of these.

Complementary to the paradigm of narcissism that I offer here, is that of our romantic attachment to whatever tools or instruments we utilized during our perceived-to-have-been-successful developmental paths. This [j]can involve anything from instruments, tools, spaces, methods, and affordances, to simple commodities such as food, drink, clothing, and accessorizing. A Musician can have romantic recollections about their favorite performance shoes, or pencil, or metronome, or music stand, or manuscript paper. Similarly, a technologist can have affectionate memories about a particular programming language, hardware interface, operating system, storage device, sequencing package, or anything else that they have formed a positive association with.

These conditions frequently seem to infuse our ethe and praxes as educators and/or researchers. The Examples of educational software interfaces that bear a freakish resemblance to artwork seen in the textbooks that the developers (or their educational consultants) were taught with when themselves were children are not just numerous, they are the majority. There is usually a great disparity between the graphical user interfaces that children are invited to use within their formal learning contexts and those that they choose to use at home for gaming and general "edutainment." What they are expected to use at school is dumbed down both visually and functionally solely because this is what the people that designed the educational software would have expected to experience when they were children learners. It would be helpful for such disparities to be rectified. I believe that this will gradually happen because of the additional strength of what Waldron metaphorically calls "informal music learning 2.0," i.e., networked digital technologies, and what I simply call social technologies.

Finally, I would like to highlight what I believe to be an often-overlooked issue. Technology is often viewed as a tool, or as sets of tools, that can be used in order to "enable," "facilitate," or "enhance" educational (in the present case, music education) curricular aims and objectives, some of which haven't really changed in the past century or so. I see this, too, as particularly counter productive. It is through technology that a new "music education" can be envisaged, celebrated, and experienced. Technology can facilitate, enable, and foster a new praxis in music education. We simply need to embrace our technological selves, free from stereotypes, labels, romantic attachments, and free from prejudice about the unfamiliar. We need to stop worrying about what technology we want to use where and focus on how we are going to use it and why. This will result a critically formed framework of effective practice that will help us celebrate our development with and through music in new and very exciting ways. So lets not reminisce about how great things used to be; the best is yet to come!

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EndNotes

[1] Presented more extensively elsewhere in this volume.

[2]

[a]AU: pls. clarify the intended sense of this here

[b]AU: is this the intended meaning?

[c]AU: pls. clarify referent

[d]AU: is this the intended meaning?

[e]AU: is this the intended meaning?

[f]AU: correct as edited?

[g][AU: the foregoing paragraphs seem quite an important, well-presented contribution to the book's discussion --MR]

[h]AU: logical fallacy here?--to imply that because these characteristics often appear among musicians, musicians often have narcissistic personality disorder? perhaps this might seem to take the association between musicians and the disorder further than necessary to make your point? --since it would seem adequate merely to point out that many musicians exhibit narcissistic behaviors (like so many people in what has been called a society that nurtures such behavior), which is quite possible without their having the full-blown disorder, correct? pls. consider clarifying your intended meaning/implication here

[i]not really... MR18 is funnily missing the point, completely... I am not talking about causality here!

[j]AU: correct as edited?

[k]AU: correct as edited?