

Personhood and Music Learning

Research to Practice

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Personhood and Music Learning

Connecting Perspectives and
Narratives

Edited by

Susan A. O'Neill

Canadian Music Educators' Association
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The overall aim of this book is to engage researchers in sharing their work in a way that will stimulate critical thinking, dialogue, and reflection among all members of the music education profession and others who also share a passion for music learning.

Susan A. O'Neill
September 2012

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Series Preface

The *Research to Practice* Biennial Series provides a forum for exchanging knowledge and ideas on important and wide-ranging issues in the field of music education. Each volume in the series places its topic within a contextual matrix of scholarship, inquiry, learning, teaching, application, evaluation, policy, practice-based research, and reflective practice. Each volume provides thought-provoking ideas and valuable insights on contemporary topics at the interface of music education research and practice. Readers of these books, therefore, gain a valuable insight into current thinking in the disciplinary study of music education—vital information for making informed choices and effective decisions in a sea of fluid change within an increasingly fragmented, multifarious, and unpredictable world.

Even though researchers and practitioners often work in different places and have different stories to tell, we share many common goals and concerns across the profession. We need to continue to seek innovative interfaces for exchanging views and establishing meaningful connections. We need to continue to create spaces for building and nurturing research-practice relationships between those who produce research and those who might use research knowledge to inform and infuse their practice. There are many possibilities to explore and lessons to learn from those who succeed through persistent and concerted efforts on both sides. We need to listen to accounts from those who work in harmonious and productive partnerships as well as those who simultaneously straddle both worlds as practitioner-researchers in all manifestations. We also need to listen to those who find themselves on one side of the research-practice divide or who are isolated and marginalized through inequitable and unjust policies and practices. The *Research to Practice* Biennial Series aims to provoke purposeful dialogues and critical reflections on these issues. The stronger the research-practice interface the greater the potential for research and pedagogical innovations, professional growth, and long-lasting, effective educational reforms.

It is a privilege to serve as the CMEA/ACME Senior Editor for the Biennial Series *Research to Practice*. The dedicated members of the Publications Advisory Committee (PAC) offer leadership and guidance, and the support and involvement by members of the CMEA/ACME Executive and Board contribute to the overall success of this initiative. We would all like to express our sincere appreciation to my predecessor, Lee Bartel, who served as the Senior Editor of the Biennial Series from 2000-2009. For nearly a decade, Lee brought his distinctive voice, vision, and leadership to this role. His efforts helped bring to fruition four previous books in the series that provide a valuable resource for all levels and areas of the profession.

Susan A. O'Neill, Series Editor

Perspectives and Narratives on Personhood and Music Learning

Susan A. O'Neill

Abstract

Personhood is an intriguing and challenging concept. Numerous scholars across many disciplines have struggled to make sense of it and illuminate its potential for advancing our understanding of human action and experience. This chapter provides an introduction to some of the most prominent perspectives on personhood and demonstrates some of the rich possibilities that arise for research and practice. The author also describes the value of narratives and how personhood is both displayed and established through story telling and narrative accounts of our lives. Personhood and related aspects of selfhood and self-identity offer many insights into the affordances and constraints that impact the lives of music learners—critical knowledge for making informed choices and decisions in the field of music education. O'Neill introduces the notion of persons as connected to music learning through an evolving and transformative “engaged agency” or active engagement with music in ways that matter to them and that make a difference in their own lives and communities.

Reflective questions

1. To what extent can we describe or understand another person? How might we try to do this and what challenges are involved?
2. If personhood is a profoundly social phenomenon, why do we perceive ourselves as self-contained, separate, and distinct from other people?
3. How do we use language and stories to express ourselves and make meaning in the world? How might we use stories and autobiographical narratives to better understand music learners?
4. Why might it be useful to share knowledge and critical understandings of the cultural practices that construct and shape music learners' worlds in diverse and particular ways?
5. How might an understanding of personhood help us overcome constraints and create possibilities for more expansive music learning opportunities?

What is personhood?

The concept of personhood goes directly to the heart of what it means to be human. Simply put, personhood is a dynamic and cultural construct that refers to the human condition—what it is like to be a unique person in a particular place and time, experiencing, responding, and acting on the world in a particular way. Personhood is always situated in an integrated web of particulars. Although many people share common characteristics, no two people are exactly alike. Each person occupies only one spatial-temporal location or space-time trajectory. Persons are biological, embodied beings, and yet we are more than our biophysical body. Persons are embedded in sociocultural structures and practices, and yet we are not fully determined by them. Even among cultures or groups of people that emphasize collective membership, personal singularity remains ever-present. Persons have a sense of location or being-in-place, and yet we also sense being placed and displaced by the world around us. Persons develop their own perspectives through social interactions, and yet we also have the ability to recognize and understand other perspectives. And, persons have the ability to make choices and to act on these choices in ways that impact their own lives and the lives of others. According to Martin, Sugarman and Hickinbottom (2010), “it is this never-ending interplay of persons and their societies that constrains and enables all of our human aspirations and possibilities” (p. 178).

Perspectives on personhood

Many scholars across many disciplines have offered varied perspectives on personhood. Although too numerous to provide a detailed review here, this section introduces some of the key features of prominent perspectives. Personhood theories emphasize different facets of personal ideology, and examine various processes associated with the formation, construction, and consequences of holding particular self-theories, identities, and subjective experiences. Personhood researchers scrutinize and illuminate features of personhood such as consciousness, agency, embodiment, reflexivity, emotions, and memory. They seek to clarify what constitutes the essential subject matter of personhood using methods that range from observations and measurements of phenomena to interpretations of patterns of meaning that make up our personal, social, and musical experiences. In education, we are also mindful of the practical implications of research on personhood. How can we generate objective knowledge or stimulate awareness and reflection about the actions and experiences of music learners so that we understand them better? How can we empower music learners and enable the voices of marginalized and oppressed persons to be heard and understood through transformative pedagogical practices? How can we best assist diverse learners and create effective learning

opportunities that will resonate with them and be accepted by them? These are some of the goals of personhood research, and you will find an exploration of these, and others, as they relate to music learning, in the following chapters of this volume.

Theories of personhood seek to identify and explain *what we are* and *who we are* as encultured, embodied, moral, and aesthetic beings, and how this relates to notions of selfhood or self-identities (McAdams, 1993; O'Neill, 2002). Unlike personal identity or a sense of self, which develops over time and through social interactions, we are “granted the status of personhood by other people” (Benson, 2001, p. 94). We consider a newborn to be a *person*, even if he or she has not yet developed a sense of self (Cooley, 1902). Harré (1998) describes personhood as expressions of our sense of personal *distinctiveness*, *continuity*, and *autonomy*. Taylor (1989) argues that personhood can only be defined in *relation to others*. This perspective considers personhood or “self” as embedded in an intricate web of sociocultural contexts, formal and informal structures and practices, and a nexus of relationships. Both Mead (1934) and Vygotsky (1978) share similar perspectives on our sense of self as an *activity*—a process that relies on social interactions that emerge through our engagements, relationships, and connections with other people (Crossley, 2000). Each perspective emphasizes different aspects or features of the ubiquitous concept of personhood.

Benson (2001) reminds us that both place and time are a condition of existence: “‘who’ and ‘what’ you are is a function of ‘where’ you are” (p. ix). According to Casey (1993), “to be in the world, to be situated at all, is to be in place” (p. xv). Thus, place-time is inextricably linked to personhood through the embodied connections we make during moments of experiential time. Casey describes experiential time as “paces of ebb and flow that don’t map onto the rigid regularity with which clock time is arranged to pass” (p. xv). Further, the person you are is derived from the particular cultural and historical contexts you inhabit. However, Rasmussen (1999) warns that scholars in a number of disciplines have become critical of traditional concepts of culture and personhood as “normatively constructed by collective representations, as consensual and static, or as a finished patterned structure” (p. 401). She states that there are increasing efforts “to understand culture as a fluid, unfinished and emergent process rather than a structure, and to accommodate approaches to personhood to this formulation of culture” (p. 401).

One of the most complicated features of personhood is that we have a sense of ourselves as self-contained, separate, and distinct from other people. We walk around in physical bodies that separate us in space and mislead us into a false notion of psychological “separateness.” We feel that we have a core or private centre of consciousness or a “world inside our heads,” and that we are independent and autonomous agents acting on the world around us (Stevens, 1996). Our lives, experiences, thoughts, and memories somehow seem to hold together as a singular person. However, social constructionists such as Gergen

(1991) argue that our sense of having a core or relatively stable self is actually a constructed notion. According to Gergen, the increasing complexity and fast-changing technological advances in today's world, particularly in relation to communication and travel, have resulted in a "saturated self" with profound implications for our experience of personhood. Gergen argues that the information and digital age has increased fragmentation in our lives and altered our consciousness to such an extent that there is "a general loss in our assumptions of true and knowable selves" (p. 16). He suggests that we have become increasingly aware "that each truth about ourselves is a construction of the moment" (p. 16) and that this promotes "free play of being" that opens up a "multiplicity of possibilities" (p. 248). Gergen offers a positive and adaptive view of personhood in today's globalized and digital age—a perspective that encourages exploration and freedom from the constraints of the past. For Gergen, instead of a constant and coherent "inner self," a more "open slate emerges on which a person may inscribe, erase and rewrite their identities as the ever-shifting, ever expanding and incoherent network of relationship invites or permits" (p. 228).

Despite being aware that our personal attributes are complicated and ever-changing over the course of our lives, we have the sense nonetheless that they remain relatively stable (Stevens, 1996). In other words, we feel a unity to our personhood that appears to remain constant in the context of the fluid and changing nature of our relationships with others and the world around us. In reality, our sense of unity is a complex and fluid structure. Harré (1998) argues that the so-called "core" of personhood is a useful fiction—a narrative convention. This convention is emphasized through our use of the first person pronoun "I," which functions as a kind of indexing system that takes what someone says or does and ascribes to it a particular point of view. We then perceive and act on this singular point of view, which is often reinforced over time, giving us the impression that we are relatively stable entities. He refers to this as a "site" from which we "perceive the world" (p. 4). Once formed, our perceptions of the world are resistant to change and disconfirmation. Often, it requires a concerted and prolonged effort to transform our cherished views, no matter how strong the evidence to the contrary might be (O'Neill, 2009a).

We are also aware of ourselves as experiencing the world around us. This ability to reflect on the act of experiencing is often referred to as *reflexive awareness*. In particular, we are aware of distinctive features, such as time and the finiteness of our existence. These existential concerns include expansive aspects of personhood such as subjectivity, embodiment, relatedness, meaningfulness, emotional expression, autonomy, and authenticity (Stevens, 1996). Existential philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and existential phenomenologists, such as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, have sought to articulate the unique and dynamic qualities of human existence as *being*, which refers to ontological existence in the sense of "being

in the world”, and *becoming*, which “conveys the sense of ontological existence as a path of a continuous, ceaseless, and dynamic moment-to-moment transformation in one’s standing and relations vis-à-vis the social world” (Stetsenko, 2012, p. 1). Our reflexive awareness makes it possible for us to question our values and the meaningfulness of our experiences, and to imagine other possible courses or actions, as well as ways of being in the world.

A large part of our personhood derives from our attempts to figure out who we are and our place in the world. In other words, persons are active agents in making sense of their own lives. Martin (2012) describes persons as “embodied, reasoning and moral agents with self-consciousness and self-understanding, and social and psychological identity, who have unique capabilities of language-use, and are uniquely culture-capable” (p. 132). At the same time, “persons are agentive beings who develop through embeddedness in sociocultural contexts and within relations to others” (Stetsenko, 2012, p. 146). Understanding persons as *engaged agents* of their personal and social lives is particularly prominent in Vygotsky’s theorizing. According to Stetsenko, Vygotsky believed that “all organisms, from the first moment of life, find themselves in unbreakable, intricate relations with the world” (p. 148). For Vygotsky, personhood is formed through “constantly ongoing, open-ended and ever changing (dynamic) interactions and back-and-forth exchanges with the world” (p. 148). These continual exchanges and interactions with the world give us a sense that our life is “relatively enduring yet always retaining a fluidity” (p. 148). Vygotsky (1997) used the term “adaptive adaptation” to describe the way humans engage in goal-directed and purposeful collaborative transformations of their environments. According to this view, persons come to be and come to understand each other, themselves, and the world around them “while transforming their world, and, in the process, while collectively creating their own life and their own nature, along with their society and history” (p. 148).

Bourdieu (1990) also described persons as actively engaged in culturally appropriate practices and representations. Rasmussen (1999) argues that Bourdieu’s explanation of the production and transformation of cultural forms is useful for examining concepts of personhood because it helps to account for “both the consistency and creativity inherent in cultural practice” in a way that “avoids reducing practice to either the mechanical reproduction of an existing cultural form, or the wholly free activity of an autonomous actor devoid of social or cultural constraints” (p. 403). For Bourdieu, most cultural knowledge is learned informally through living in class systems (which he refers to as *habitus*). Our cultural knowledge is embodied through our lived experience of characteristic posture, movements, and actions “whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 55). It is in and through these cultural practices that personhood becomes necessary and possible.

Benson (2001) states “personhood is a moral attribution rather than a psychological category” (p. 94). The moral values that are favoured by our culture and the particular communities in which we live influence the person we feel ourselves to be. We are often called upon or feel compelled to justify or excuse ourselves or explain the kind of person we think we are (Stevens, 1996). Taylor (1989) argues that notions of personhood are inextricably linked with concepts of morality or the moral “good.” For Taylor (1989), one of our basic needs as persons is to feel connected with issues that matter to us and to our community, and that we see as “good.” Our personhood is essentially defined by the significance that these things have for us. This requires an understanding of persons as connected through an evolving and transformative engaged agency or active engagement with the world. Stetsenko (2012) argues that by taking an activist stance “the ethical can be most fully integrated into the very foundations of human Becoming” (p. 151). Stetsenko’s notion of personhood as an “activist transformative stance” offers a perspective whereby persons are viewed as “agents not only for whom ‘things matter’ but who themselves matter in history, culture, and society and, moreover, who come in to Being as unique individuals through and to the extent that they matter in these processes and make a contribution to them” (pp. 1-2). Similarly, O’Neill (2012) argues that learning transformations occur when music learners reflect critically on their values and make conscious efforts to plan and implement actions that bring about new ways of viewing themselves, others, and their world in relation to music activities.

Today, our conceptions of personhood are radically different than even a generation ago. Traditional approaches to personhood often failed to provide an adequate or meaningful account of the vicissitudes of human action and experience. New frameworks have emerged across all disciplines and areas, providing nuanced understandings, expansive constructs, and transformative practices, such as those found in feminist theories, autobiographical and narrative approaches, and indigenous epistemologies. Taylor (1989) refers to concepts of personhood as “loose packages” related to evolving “connections between notions of the ‘the good’, understandings of the self, the kinds of stories and narratives through which we make sense of our lives, and conceptions of society” (p. 105). Perhaps personhood is best viewed as an ambiguous, complex, and multidimensional concept. Any attempt to determine at the outset its boundaries, precise nature, and exact meaning—to provide a definition—is likely to result in fragmentation, distortions, and deletions that might limit rather than advance our understanding. There are many concepts relating to personhood from many disciplinary perspectives. As such, there is a need to consider integrated facets of personhood, and yet as Benson (2001) points out, we also need to “raise our eyes to a wider horizon” (p. ix). What matters is not having a precise definition, rather it is how we use the notion of personhood to make sense of ourselves and others, and how we use the concept to help us recognize and understand new and emerging perspectives and possibilities.

Narratives and personhood

Personhood is both displayed and established through story telling and narrative accounts of our lives. We have a sense of unity of experience that is held together by autobiographical narrative—the stories we tell that tend to describe persons as both singular and unique. According to Harré (1998), “there are many stories that could be told by each person about his or her life” and “the incidents that are offered to oneself and others as constitutive of that life are usually multiple” (p. 9). Even though we have a sense of living a singular life, each person has many possible autobiographies, “each expressing the current perspective from which that life was being viewed by the one and only person living it” (p. 9). Narratives help us grasp complexity and give order to the meaning of our lives.

Being a person is to be immersed in a particular culture and to use language and stories as a way of expressing ourselves and making meaning in the world. Bruner (1990) describes the “narrative mode” or the mode of stories as the way we make sense of the “vicissitudes of human intention” (p. 16). Josselson and Lieblich (1995) tell us that the “ultimate aim” of narrative is “the interpretation of experience” (p. ix). Through narrative we come in contact with people engaged in the process of interpreting themselves and others. In this way, meaning does not simply reside in one point of view or another; rather, it is negotiated and interdependent. According to Bakhtin (1981), our efforts to understand people, relationships and situations, are also negotiated through our inner dialogues. For Bakhtin, “utterances and texts in the outer world are a site of struggle, and are populated with the voices of others” (Stevens, 1996, p. 262). Meaning about ourselves emerges from relations with others and continues to be maintained by them even in their absence. This is because their voices become internalized players in our ongoing inner dialogue. Bakhtin also describes narrative as “juxtaposition” to acknowledge that voices engaged in dialogue are “neither identical nor unified, but rather heterogeneous and even opposed” (Hermans, 2001, p. 249). These oppositional spaces provide a meeting point where “meanings and practices of the contacting partners change as a result of communication, understandings and misunderstandings” (p. 273). From this perspective, personhood is seen as an evolving and fluid sense of self that is shaped by personal interpretations of meanings derived from the narratives we encounter in our relationships and in the world around us.

McAdams (1993) presents the concept of personhood as an unconscious process of creating a personal myth—a patterned integration of memories from the past, perceptions of the present, and an anticipated future. He describes how we do not merely discover ourselves *in* stories; rather, we create a sense of self *through* stories. Storytelling is a fundamental feature of human experience; it can be traced back to ancient times. An interesting feature of stories is that the

narrative unfolds according to crucial events, rather than through a strict adherence to time sequences. Ricoeur (1984) refers to this as “humanly relevant time” because crucial events are used to preserve the significance and meaning of the experience being told. We use stories to order and structure our lives; they help us make sense of our fragmented and sometimes confusing experiences by arranging them into coherent messages that offer a sense of meaning, unity, and purpose. According to McAdams (2001), “stories are less about facts and more about meanings” (p. 28). This does not mean that the stories we tell ourselves are lies, nor are they neutral forms of knowledge. Rather, they are made up of our own truths about what we value and find meaningful. Even if we try to present ourselves in the best possible light, we do not suddenly invent ourselves through our stories or personal narratives. This is because the stories we live by are made and remade through an on-going, self-defining process (O’Neill, 2009b).

We do not *discover* who we are through our personal narratives, but they help us define and share significant aspects of who we are, who we were in the past, and who we might be in the future. According to Bruner (1996), “what people do in narratives is never by chance, nor is it strictly determined by cause and effect; it is motivated by beliefs, desires, theories, values, or other ‘intentional states’” (p. 136). Our personal narratives evolve slowly over the course of our lives and are shaped by our knowledge, values, beliefs, and feelings, as well as the cultural, historical, and institutional settings in which they occur. Taylor (1989) tells us that our personal narratives are essentially defined by the ways in which people, things, and events have a particular significance to each of us. This makes our personal narratives unique and yet deeply connected to what we see as good and vital to our community and ourselves.

For both researchers and practitioners, narrative forms of inquiry help us work toward constructing a caring community and building relationships (Burnard & White, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). According to Moen (2006), narratives are “thinking tools” for teachers practicing in the field, for researchers engaged in various forms of inquiry, for politicians and policy-makers making decisions that affect our schools, and for student teachers learning to become reflective practitioners. We might also consider them the “thinking tools” for music learners as they strive to make sense of who they are. According to Deakin Crick and Wilson (2005), “only if and when we become aware of the attitudes we have acquired and evaluated the reasons for them, can we be said to own them, and to have confirmed them and to take responsibility for them” (p. 361).

Increasingly, music education researchers are attempting to understand the personal practical knowledge associated with music learning through the study of narrative accounts of lived experience (e.g., Barrett, 2010; Barrett & Stauffer, 2009; Wingstedt, 2005; Younker & Hickey, 2007). Clandinin (1985) describes

personal practical knowledge as “knowledge which is imbued with all the experiences that make up a person’s being” (p. 362). Connelly and Clandinin (1988) describe narrative as “the making of meaning from personal experience via a process of reflection in which storytelling is the key element and in which metaphors and folk knowledge take their place” (p. 16). Narrative accounts provide insights into how music learners come to understand their musical lives. From an early age, children begin to tell stories about their experiences of music learning, and often continue to recount and create order out of these experiences throughout their lives. Each time we tell the stories of our experiences, at different times, for different audiences, and in different social settings, we gain new perspectives on these experiences. This offers us alternative ways of constructing and performing what becoming a music learner means to us. And this, in turn, affects *how* we as music learners come to see others and the world.

Personhood and music learning

Becoming a music learner is a complex, multilayered, and continual process of growth and transformation. Understanding music learners requires an approach that conceptualizes the learner within contexts of development that culminate in the attainment of an *idealized personhood* (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1998). An idealized personhood refers to having an adult status that is associated with making culturally valued contributions to self, others, and institutions (Lerner & Lerner, 2006). We deepen our understanding of music learners through a consideration of the entire situated person in relation to his or her music learning. We empower music learners by nurturing their reflexive capacity to reflect inwardly about connections between self, music, and their sociocultural surroundings.

There are obvious and not so obvious affordances and constraints that enable some learners and limit the potential of others (Gladwell, 2008). Increasing our understanding of music learners is not only about knowing who they are but also about knowing what enables or prevents them from being considered as, or from considering themselves to be, music learners. For this, we need to adopt a relational-developmental perspective (Overton, 1998) so that becoming a music learner is understood as “an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50). It also involves interrelationships between those who have an impact on the lives and development of music learners throughout the lifespan. This includes teachers, parents, peers, conductors, musicians, researchers, policy-makers, colleagues, and so on. Understanding these complex ecological-cultural systems requires a critical approach to perspectives on personhood that considers how choices and decisions might impact on the lives of music learners.

Music learners are part of an intricate sociocultural web involving particular structures and practices that empower some and prevent others from taking a

deliberate role (O'Neill & Senyshyn, 2011). This means that as well as developing the knowledge and skills necessary for valued and valuable forms of music-making, learners also need to develop a positive understanding of, and commitment to, music learning that keeps them meaningfully engaged—what O'Neill (2012) refers to as transformative music engagement. A key outcome of transformative music engagement is that learners feel an *engaged agency* in relation to music activities. They feel empowered and autonomous in their ability to construct their own form of “music learning authenticity” (Green, 2005).

Transformative music engagement also involves a sense of connectedness and emotional expression, a capacity for reflexive self-awareness, and an impassioned spirit that continually seeks untapped possibilities (O'Neill, 2012). This form of engagement assists learners in sustaining and enhancing their contributions to culture, community, and their own sense of self-worth as a lifelong music learner. According to Smith and Spurling (1999), lifelong learning is a virtue or quality of character that is founded on four moral principles: personal commitment to learning, social commitment to learning, respect for others' learning, and respect for truth. These characteristics or qualities conceptualize music learners “as seeking authentic knowledge of subjective and passionate truth about themselves through an authentic (nonexploitative) and aesthetic appropriation of music” (O'Neill & Senyshyn, 2011, p. 28).

Personhood from this perspective is about become a music learner who is also an authentic musical being involved in developing an aesthetic understanding of the relational, culturally embedded, alienated, and meaning-making aspects of music-making in his or her world. Music learners use language and stories as a way of expressing who they are and representing their musical worlds to others. As Deakin Crick and Wilson (2005) point out, being a music learner in the 21st century requires that learners have a sense of the *worthwhileness* of becoming a person with a learning identity, and that “an awareness of self and of one's own worth as a person is a necessary condition for ‘becoming a learner’ and for identifying and engaging with ‘what is of worth’” (p. 359).

This perspective on personhood has great potential for identifying crucial components of transformative music engagement through an interrelated, relational, and critically reflective awareness, as well as a collaborative activist stance that empowers learners to seek positive change (O'Neill, 2012). According to Deakin Crick and Wilson (2005), “a sense of self as a learner is formed in relationship, and understood as one learns to tell one's own story, as a participant in the conversation of the learning community” (p. 359). And yet, music learners do not always know how to tell their own story in a way that will take them beyond simply meeting the criteria of being involved in music and into the realm of becoming a meaningfully engaged music learner. Current

music education practices may not prepare music learners for reflective self-awareness or foster the resiliency necessary for continued transformative music engagement (O'Neill, 2011). As DeNora (2000) reminds us, "music's 'effects' come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and extra-musical associations" (p. 61). I hope that this chapter will provide both an introduction and a catalyst for future dialogue and research on personhood and music learning that will encourage positive, meaningful, and transformative music engagement for future generations.

About this book

Readers are invited to join the authors of this book in forming their own synthesis or coherence of understanding of personhood and music learning. By connecting different perspectives and narratives of the "pieced-together patterings" that Geertz (1995) describes as capable of producing change or bringing about transformations in our understanding of the world, we create an opportunity for reflecting on and revisioning our practice.

Each chapter that follows offers a different lens or perspective on personhood within a particular music-learning context. Contributions by 24 authors from around the world offer perspectives and narratives about persons engaged in music in ways that matter to them. Chapters are divided into three sections, with topics focusing on: musicians, composers and conductors; music teaching and learning with children and adolescents; music education research and professional practice. A key feature of this book is the inclusion of an abstract at the beginning of each chapter followed by a set of reflective questions to both orientate readers and engage them in thinking about particular issues related to the chapter. At the end of each chapter, the authors have provided a list of suggested readings for those who may wish to inquire further into a particular topic area.

This book aims to recast theories of personhood in relation to music learning, reassert the person into multiple narratives, and restore the centrality of personhood to music education theory, research and practice. Students and researchers internationally, as well as music educators in all areas of professional practice, will find in these pages thought-provoking ideas with profound implications for envisioning the future of music education.

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