

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

The refereed scholarly journal of the



Volume 2, No. 2
September 2003

Thomas A. Regelski, Editor
Wayne Bowman, Associate Editor
Darryl A. Coan, Publishing Editor

Electronic Article

The Cultural Work of Music Education Nietzsche and Heidegger

David Lines

© David Lines, 2003 All rights reserved.

The content of this article is the sole responsibility of the author. The ACT Journal, the MayDay Group and their agents are not liable for any legal actions that may arise involving the article's content, including but not limited to, copyright infringement.

ISSN 1545-4517

For contact information, please point your Web Browser to:

ACT Journal: <http://act.maydaygroup.org>

or

MayDay Site: <http://www.maydaygroup.org>

The Cultural Work of Music Education Nietzsche and Heidegger

David Lines
University of Auckland

To be an artist means to be able to bring something forth –Martin Heidegger, in Nietzsche, Vol I: 69

Without music, life would be an error –Frederich Nietzsche

Introduction

Music is unquestionably a profound, dynamic and important part of the life of humans and musical practice across the world takes a multitude of forms. Music, in its diversity, is a significant part of our lives. The question of the significance of music is one that particularly affects music education, for it is in the realm of education, whether in institutions, homes or society at large, that the profundity of music is received, accumulated, and expressed. Where then, does music penetrate to, and how should we conceive of its limitations? Is music confined within the precinct of what we in the Western world have understood as ‘performance’ or does it have a broader reach? Is music perhaps at the very basis of what we articulate as humans in the formation of language, identity, and the urging of communication? Does our predominant view of music limit our understanding and experience of it? If our view is somewhat limited, then how should we conceive of our work in music education?

To examine the scope of these questions, this essay explores a view of music influenced by Nietzsche and some of his key interpreters¹. It takes the position that music – and all art – is a central aspect of the *work* (labour) that humans engage in, an aspect, it is proposed, that has been forgotten and needs to be restored and affirmed. Using a context of Nietzschean derived thinking (including post-Nietzschean thought), the essay brings to the fore a conception of music that affirms all aspects of human life and nature,

Lines, D. (2003). The cultural work of music education: Nietzsche and Heidegger. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*. Vol. 2, #2 (November 2003).
http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Lines2_2.pdf



a view to which music educators can potentially become critically and artistically attuned. Further, on such premises music can be seen and practised as an art that stimulates learning and challenges culture, from the thinking and expression of individuals, through to larger frameworks and assemblages.

This essay begins with an examination of the Heideggerian concept of ‘work’ as *poiesis* or ‘production’ applying it more particularly to music, and generally to all art. Following this, Nietzsche’s notions of ‘will to power’ and the ‘revaluation of values’ are presented as a way of conceiving a multidimensional and critical aspect of cultural work. Finally, in the concluding section, the preceding analysis is applied and located in the concept of music education as cultural work culminating in the extraction of the main pedagogical themes.

Music as Work

Heidegger’s extended concept of “work” is outlined in the essay ‘*What are Poets For?*’ (Heidegger, 2001). Work (the German word *Arbeit* meaning labour) in this sense, is “intentional production” (Young, 2002: 47), which is more than mere paid employment. Heidegger says: “We must think of this placing-here, this producing, in its broad and multifarious manner” (Heidegger, 2001: 107). Young explains further,

Not only are human beings (of every epoch and culture) *essentially* and uniquely workers, they are almost *always* workers. Work, in Heidegger’s broad sense, is not just a, but rather *the*, central feature of human existence, its ‘everydayness.’ (Young, 2001: 47 italics in original)

Heidegger thus posits work as our universal human condition as producers and as a way in which we experience life through varied engagements with beings. This idea is perhaps best encapsulated by the Greek origin of the word *poiesis*, meaning bringing forth. In his essay *The Question Concerning Technology* Heidegger quotes Plato’s reading of *poiesis*: “Every occasion for whatever passes beyond the non-present and goes forward into presencing is *poiesis*, bringing forth” (Plato, *Symposium* 205b, cited in Heidegger, 1993: 317). *Poiesis* relates to all ways that humans produce things, but is

perhaps best encapsulated in the sphere of art. The process of art creation is an example *par excellence* of work as *poiesis*, engaging both the action of human work (*Arbeit*) and the positing/placing of new beings into open space. To posit art as *poiesis* displaces our view of art as an object of study or as a name of some *thing* into an active movement that captures its origin or nature. For Nietzsche, music was a source of inspiration that encapsulated this active and creative element. Music framed his philosophical ideas and formed an aural lens through which he could frame a critical perspective of the world.

In the *Origin of the Work of Art* (Heidegger, 1993) Heidegger questions the meaning of the ‘work’ of art (in this case the German word *Werk*). This conception of work (*Werk*) is distinct from work (*Arbeit*) as explained above. In this essay however, Heidegger is still interested in the poietic origins of the art-work (*Werk*), with how an art-work comes forth or is set-forth by an artist; i.e., with what the ‘workly’ character of the work is. Heidegger says this character consists in its having been created by the artist and can only be grasped in terms of the *process of creation* (Heidegger, 1993: 183; emphasis mine). Art occurs in movement and motion, and thus is connected with time and is utterly absorbed in it. Art is the culmination of all the events of work (*Arbeit*) where artists project or put forward art creations, opening spaces, and defining limits. The creative process is the key element worthy of attention.

What, then, are the dimensions of poietic creation in art? Heidegger’s artistic ‘circle’ explores such dimensions, a circle where the elements of art making are understood as art, artist, and artwork in mutual existence (Heidegger, 1993: 144). Such a conception of the art experience affirms what *is* in the moment, what exists in the temporal movement of art making, and it affirms the way of thinking where one is aware of existing elements in the art process. Human art-makers are less likely to deny or misrepresent certain elements that make up this circle by attending to the circular relationship that holds the elements together. The inclusive circle of art production diffuses possible notions of imbalance that can occur when parts of the circle are forgotten, obscured, or ignored.

Moving from Heidegger's generalised picture of art, we can say that music, too, like all art, is the 'work' (*Arbeit*) of humans – working beings of sound – as they critically engage with sound and produce formations which are technically mapped or spontaneously intended to unfold in time. Music as sound brought forth, sets up unfolding spaces in time, opening instances of cultural work to be received, measured, and evaluated by a varied and discerning audience. The act of bringing forth music, critical in the music process, encapsulates the elements of music, musician, and music-works (*Werk*), each of which mutually participate in the working of the whole. In this circle, *music* is the broad capacity of sound and meaning which allows the participation to happen; the musician is the human of musical action and the work (*Werk*) the ongoing influence of the musical action as it unfolds and 'works' (*Arbeit*) culture. Music educators, then, as the planners, generators, and constructors of musical experiences, work with the elements that make up the musical process but do not necessarily determine what the artistic outcome will be. The domain of the outcome in all its multiplicity, the 'worlding of the world' of a music work, has its own being and, to that extent, the musician must let that event happen if the origin is to be realised.

If work (*Arbeit*) can be thought of in a "broad and multifarious manner" (Heidegger, 2001: 107), the work (*Arbeit*) of music inevitably connects with the greater work (*Arbeit*) that occurs in the world and, of course, is existentially entwined with it. Such a sense of music was developed by the later Nietzsche and can be observed in the language of his critique of Richard Wagner's music. The following quote, taken from Nietzsche's rhetorical critique of Wagner, gives a view of his music from the perspective of life, character and cultural forms rather than the more formal musicological treatment of analysis we are accustomed to. Speaking of Wagner's music directly but negatively, he writes:

I'll enumerate it: the decline of the power to organise; the misuse of traditional means without the capacity to furnish any justification, any for-the-sake-of; the counterfeiting in the imitation of big forms for which today nobody is strong, proud, self assured, healthy enough; excessive liveliness in the smallest parts;



excitement at any price; cunning as the expression of impoverished life; more and more nerves in place of flesh... (Nietzsche, 2000 (COW): 643)²

For Nietzsche, the work (*Arbeit*) of Wagner's music making and producing was entwined with a broader perception of culture that incorporated the critical judgments and evaluations of cultural expressions in general. In Wagner's case this reflected for Nietzsche the decadent Romantic tendencies of German culture in the late 19th Century. Nietzsche's critique is pithy but revealing of an open sense of music rather than a closed field. Within the critique, the elements of the Heideggerian artistic circle (as noted above) can also be found: a broad notion of music that affirms its connectivity in culture; an adjunct awareness of the musician (Wagner) who, in the act of creation, opened up and affirmed these cultural forms; and an affirmation (all-be-it in a critical sense) of the existential power of the musical-work (*Werk*) as a residual and enduring cultural phenomenon.

The artistic process of *bringing forth*, when presented in terms of what is actual in experience, be it with music, language, or other forms of artistic endeavour, offers us a transformational perspective of artistic events. This is because the work perspective (*Arbeit*), as given here, in its affirmation of boundary-less assemblages and temporal creation, is orientated around the fluid regions of action and change. Being Nietzsche's choice of inspiration for thinking, music, as it is, provides an excellent exemplar of this work perspective and is the ideal medium of imagination, time, and change – elements which have not gone unnoticed by film and video directors in recent times. Music is also unseen, pliable, able to be manipulated and modified, subtly expressive, and ever homing in on sources of human response. Music, as work brought forth, opens intuitive spaces of insight and feeling, transforming our daily life responses through its idiomatic nuances and established planes of resonance, sparking and triggering imaginative forces in a multiplicity of possibilities. Music splits into a thousand metaphors (Kofman, 1993: 11), opening up spaces of truth removed from the initial creative offerings of the initiating musician. To understand the network of possibilities work-in-music can offer, a

theoretical conception is needed that is more attuned to the multiplicity, fluidity, and dynamism of music. Further, in order to realise the impact of our work as music educators, we need to view this dynamic picture of musical work within the spheres of cultural relationships, forces of influence, and a critical consideration of values in society.

Such a perspective can be found in Nietzsche. In continuing with the Nietzschean thread that works through this essay, the concepts of ‘will to power’ and the ‘revaluation of values’ are now examined as ways in which this notion of music as cultural work can be developed. These ideas are explored in order to develop a broader sense of what sort of work (*Arbeit*) a cultural worker and music educator can do.

Nietzsche’s Will to Power and the Revaluation of Values

Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ is a doctrine that seeks to comprehend all things in nature and how they are connected; material things, seen and unseen, humans, animals, thoughts, and institutions are part of this general expression. In all, it is a universal, radically monist world picture of things, a unity of natural forces. Thus, will and power operate in natural objects just as they do in humans. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche sums up this larger picture of things in this way:

Assuming, finally, that we could explain our entire instinctual life as the development and differentiation of *one* basic form of the will (namely the will to power, as *my* tenet would have it); assuming that one could derive all organic functions from this will to power and also find in it the solution to the problem of procreation and alimentation (it is all one problem), then we would have won the right to designate *all* effective energy unequivocally as: the *will to power*. The world as it is seen from the inside, the world defined and described by its ‘intelligible character’ – would be simply ‘will to power’ and that alone. (Nietzsche, 1998 (BGE): #36)

Here Nietzsche had a radical thought which directly challenged the Cartesian metaphysical thinking of his day that separated the world of appearance from reality. His collective notion of the world as energy was beyond any significant form of moralising about what was good or evil, or transcendental notions of another unseen world existing as an antithesis to the apparent world. ‘Will to power’ was a thought that was more than

mere cultural critique; it challenged the very foundation of Western thinking and the history of philosophy. It is interesting to note that in Nietzsche's actual formal publications the phrase 'will to power' is only mentioned in a few important places (as in the above quote); but in his notes and jottings the thought is mentioned and elaborated in considerable detail, indicating that he was somewhat hesitant about how he was to present it, perhaps fearing misinterpretation. Nietzsche was undoubtedly aware of the implications and difficulties such a thesis might raise in a cultural and philosophical environment that would not take kindly to its very philosophical foundations being challenged.

Nietzsche's affirmation of nature and natural existence posited the thought of an entirely new destiny for the whole of humankind (Allison, 2001). Here, in the natural order of things, was the entire possibility of humanity, natural and human-made structures, the thought world and the art world too, all radically neutralised by a quasi-scientific reading of force, which, as a discovery of physics, was now extended to the world beyond that of normal scientific investigation. Allison writes, "as a physical doctrine, one can say that 'everything' is will to power, at every scale of natural and human existence: the scale and, indeed, the form of things, here being defined by the relative differences between aggregations or 'congeries' of force – from the subatomic to the geological scale of existence"(Allison, 2001: 121). As a grand network of interacting forces, the 'will to power' thesis provides a unifying but plural vision of things that was directed away from individuation to a broader vision of Being. This grand conception was the result of a long period of consideration of the direction of his thoughts as he struggled to find a position against the dominance of Platonic idealism, transcendental foundations, and metaphysical truths in modern culture. As Heidegger notes, "it [will to power] is the fundamental experience of a *thinker*; that is, of one of those individuals who has no choice but to find words for what a being is in the history of its Being"(Heidegger, 1991b (Vol IV): 7). In other words, Nietzsche's thinking had reached the stage where he *had* to bring forth this thought; he was directed in this way, and the thought was a emergence of his own "becoming" (p. 7). Like Heidegger's own project of Being,



Nietzsche's 'will to power' thesis laid a conceptual foundation for the micro and macro politics of work and power in culture and also for the pedagogical considerations implicit and embedded in the interpretation of culture; in other words, for what he thought in the 'will to power' had to be 'worked' as a 'way' – or pedagogy – in which a revaluation of values³ could be brought about and from this, the spectre of art seemed to provide a solution.

The radical neutrality of the 'will to power' invested Nietzsche with a tool to help in the conception and genealogical analysis of the morally inept values he criticised so vehemently. Modern culture, he argued, rested upon metaphysical foundations implicit in the underlying pessimistic tenets of Christianity and, subversively, in the secular values that mirrored Christian beliefs and carried the same moral sentiments. Thus, the notions of 'good' and 'evil' and other moral sentiments pervaded and polarised all sectors of culture in the form of romantic 'decadence' or the morally inept "utility of the herd" (Nietzsche, 1998 (BGE): #201). What the "overall degeneration of man" (BGE: #203) was to Nietzsche consisted of a belief that humankind could be bred to endure the hardship of existence by gathering together all the subtle knowledge possible in one's consciousness in order to adopt a kind of sanctifying moral disposition. An impotent "culture of domestication" (Nietzsche, 1968 (WP): #684) was seen by him to have fixed itself onto common thinking, lessening the tendency to create new and original interpretations and values.

Further, the naïve tendencies of science to unwittingly adopt theories of causation from which the recurrence of changes in appearance of objects were deemed to be movements of *things in themselves* implied a singular and reductive perspective of things. Of this reductive perspective Nietzsche firmly and promptly notes, "appearances cannot be causes" (Nietzsche, 1968 (WP): #545)! Scientific method, he said, had assumed its victory over science (WP: #467), thus nullifying its potency to stimulate thinking about the world through its reductive control and singular consideration of procedures and philosophy itself (WP: #467). He also found a cultural condition which had created

metaphysical contradictions where the unseen ideal world was assumed to be prominent anywhere its match could be observed in external reality; thus, a world of contradiction and suffering on earth had to be paralleled with a world of no contradiction and bliss in the heavenly, metaphysical realm (Allison, 2001). These observations of modern culture and science, which brought out both the condition of *ressentiment* (inwardly focused hatred stemming from dissatisfaction with life) and an increasingly mechanistic view of humanity and change, were the main nihilistic targets of the ‘will to power’ doctrine. With its demoralised neutrality and intricacy of interpretive possibilities, the new doctrine sought to destabilise these mechanistic cultural assemblages, thus necessitating a more interpretive position.

Nietzsche’s philosophy, then, is very much shaped from a holistic view of nature and the place of humanity in a bigger picture of natural destiny. His view considered the multiplicity of natural events at any one time in relation to the actions and events of humankind, which were very much part of this bigger picture, constituting what he calls “*homo natura*” (Nietzsche, 1998: #230) – natural man. In direct opposition to the metaphysical culture he sought to unearth, the emphasis on nature created a necessary environment for his new thinking. In this way he could assert the place of humankind in the context of the work of nature over time which manifested itself as an affirmative attitude known as “*amor fati* (Nietzsche, 1974 (GS): #276) – or ‘love of destiny’ – that encapsulated the positive and life-affirming character and direction of Nietzsche’s thought, but at the same time displaced the human subject from the centre of things. The new human would see life as both cruel and uplifting, as in the wild, but the central guiding goal being an affirmation of life, of Being, which, in all its pluralism and multiplicity, was seen as the ultimate and infinite place for human action. As Allison (2001: 107) put it, it was as if “nature, world, history, and humanity become us, became transformed and included – interjected – into our history, as if they constituted precisely what we are!”

The rejection of the inadequacy of the metaphysical world of appearances meant that Nietzsche had to consider a different, more radical view of being. If being was not



appearance, how could it be conceived? For Nietzsche, a new conception of being was found in the dynamism of process and transformation. Inspired by the unseen, ephemeral art of music and by the related idea of the Dionysian⁴ (hu)man who “constantly transforms himself” (Nietzsche, 1982 (TI): 520), Nietzsche thought that what mattered in existence lay in the dynamic and energetic qualities of *becoming*: “To impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power...becoming as invention, willing, self-denial, overcoming of oneself; no subject but an action, a positing, creative, no causes and effects” (Nietzsche, 1968 (WP): #617). What were the qualities of a dynamic becoming, then? For Nietzsche will was indeed power and power was will. The collective synergy of these two elements could not be viewed separately, indicating a notion of existence as a moving dynamic flux of directional energy. Forces operate on other forces by their nature, some exuding dominance and becoming prominent, others less significant or fading in energy altogether. Such energies and forces in the process of becoming had to be conceived of as ‘overcoming,’ for in strength and mastery some forces are able to overcome others and remain persuasive. “To demand of strength that it should not express itself as strength, that it should not be a desire to overcome...is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength” (Nietzsche, 2000 (GM): Essay 1 #13). Force in the ‘will to power’ is then conceived as mastery – not in the sense of mastery by and of humans for humans, but rather as a force in nature; as instinctive force, it carries out its mastery regardless of any preconceived centrality of human existence. Thus, viewing the world as a communal and natural expression of will, we enter into this expression and at the same time accept the wider, multiple implications of our work as evident in the network of elements impacting on forces. As Nietzsche puts it, “the question is ultimately whether we really recognise that the will can *effect* things, whether we believe in the causality of the will” (Nietzsche, 1998 (BGE) #36). By calling into question the causality of the will we begin to instinctively affirm the presencing of a multiplicity of events and directions that shape, bend, transform, create, and derive new forces and directions from existing ones.

If Nietzsche is intent on dehumanising the concept of the will and the power/force relations entered into, then this would seem to be a strategic move on his part to recapture or reinterpret work (*Arbeit*) in a way that resonates with a broader perspective of all cultural phenomena that affect change. This does not mean, however, that Nietzsche is disinterested in the human condition; to the contrary, his whole philosophical disposition is orientated towards what is the cultural condition of the modern human, namely the value of human values as expressed by diverse means. Using an interpretative method he calls genealogy, the origin of values and the value of origins (Deleuze, 1983: 1) are unpacked and made transparent. In Nietzsche's resulting view, Western culture (i.e. Europe and European colonisation) has been afflicted by a cultural condition which he posits as 'nihilism,' a condition characterised by an inability to live without an order of values, or that the "highest values are devalued" (cited in Blanchot, 1985: 121). The impotence of the Western world's nihilism is a result of years of cultural decline, which was expressed in terms of a lack of meaning or direction in a world where existing values failed to ring true. Nietzsche himself proclaimed the provocative remark "God is dead" (Nietzsche, 1974 (GS): #108), indicating that a universal, singular, otherworldly God had no further resonance with an increasingly nihilistic people. This came about through the increasing detachment and abstraction of "reactive forces" (Deleuze, 1983) in religion, morality and reason, in addition to mechanistic, reductive notions of the human subject, especially in the context of increasing industrialisation and economic decline. In searching for the evaluative element in a culture constituted of differential forces (e.g. master and slave morality in the *Genealogy of Morals*), Nietzsche gathers together a pithy genealogical interpretation of values that exposes an underlying 'hatred' or 'bad conscience' as a general pattern of cultural expression. The expression of an underlying hatred of life and feeling of 'nothingness' is indeed not what it may seem, that is empty, but constituted – what Blanchot describes as "undeniably unmasked as being" (Blanchot, 1985: 126).

Within the diverse conditions of force relations, pluralism, and nihilistic values that Nietzsche posits in modern culture, interpretation becomes a key quality to be nurtured in

any kind of educational or pedagogical setting. Nietzsche says: “the will to power *interprets* ...it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power” (Nietzsche, 1968 (WP): #643). The ability to interpret cultural values and simultaneously work with them in a positive transformative sense is a foundation of a Nietzschean inspired critical pedagogy. The interpreter needs to ask, What is value? Nietzsche says, “our values are interpreted into things” (WP: #590), and “value words are banners raised where a *new bliss* has been found, a new feeling,” and “the standpoint of “value” is the standpoint of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming” (WP: #714). Values, in his view, are patterns of thought that attribute a quality or perspective to something and need to be understood in a context of cultural positions of dominance. Values may be hidden in a milieu of appearances comprehended and taken for granted in a way that has forgotten the initial conditions that constituted their construction. The Nietzschean art of interpretation, then, considers the evaluation of values from a multitude of perspectives and considerations. The critique and reinterpretation of values is what Nietzsche often described as the “revaluation of values” (Nietzsche, 2000 (EH): 769)

What criteria can we use then to evaluate our interpretive positions regarding values? The spontaneous evaluation of a multiplicity of values requires interpretive positions to be taken and, more particularly, taken with an instinctive understanding and resonance of what is affirmative or life enhancing. Of this, Nietzsche insists that evaluations be considered in relation to their life enhancing or life denying qualities, that “every art, every philosophy, may be considered a remedy and aid for the service of either growing or declining life” (Nietzsche, 1982 (NCW): 669). To evaluate, then, also means keeping one’s eye on the life affirming orientation of work and, according to Nietzsche, this is best exemplified in the process of art creation. The life affirmation of which art can be a stimulant is the positive “element from which the value of values derives” (Deleuze, 1983: 171). Like good art, this element has particular characteristics worthy of notice because it promotes temporality and change; and fosters “creation in place of preconceived knowledge” (p. 173); belief in the power of illusions – in the “truth

of dreams”(Nietzsche, 1968 (WP): #492); the identification of “horizons of knowledge” (WP: #482); synergy with life as *homo natura*; and an instinctive readiness to embody the Dionysian artistic drives that provide a source of life enhancement. All these elements of interpretation are consistent with the artistic pedagogy that Nietzsche readily affirmed as a model for action.

For the Nietzschean pedagogue, the revaluation of values is of utmost importance in order to challenge existing elements in culture that have hidden the underlying values of bad conscience and impotence. The growing emergence of nihilistic cultures in the form of mechanised and commodified systems of control and compliance is a reminder that this critical element may be even more necessary today than in Nietzsche’s time. Nietzsche, however, also observes an aspect of nihilism itself that stimulates the emergence of the ‘revaluation.’ This is the surfacing of a creative change from the element of despair or nothingness (reactive nihilism) to assertion and transformation (affirmative nihilism) (see Deleuze, 1983). As in the moment of tragic insight, when the horrid reality of death in a dramatic performance intensifies through music and through sympathetic understanding audience members gain insight into their own death and existence, the despair of nihilism generates a tragic stimulus for conversion. Only when the element is changed is nihilism defeated. This change from negative to positive, from reactive to affirmative, happens when “reactive forces break down their alliance with the will to nothingness” (Deleuze, 1983: 174); as when, for example, metaphysical patterns of control no longer have force due to their emptiness and irrelevance. For Nietzsche, the transmutation of the final exhausting consequence of nihilism is best exemplified as a process; the creative emergence of art (music) in any kind of meaningful event of art making or art sharing: “Art is a stimulant of the will to power....something that excites willing”(Nietzsche, cited in Deleuze, 1983: 113).

One thing that Heidegger and Nietzsche have in common is their affirmation of the artistic process as a means to conceive of and put into action the respective notions of ‘poiesis’ and ‘will to power.’ Both viewed art as a means of understanding the wider vision of the rejection of modernity and the creation of new values. With Heidegger, art

represented the way out of the nullifying effects of metaphysics with the simultaneous ‘turning’ and critique that occurs when an individual acknowledges and affirms modernity’s dehumanised conception of Being. To him, Being (the natural horizon and possibilities of existence) is set-forth by the work that humans and works of art initiate, unconcealing itself as *aletheia* (Heidegger, 1993: 444) or truth. Nietzsche is more political in his approach, engaging instead the contestation of force and power; and his rhetorical and metaphorical positions of critique and seductive notions of overcoming emphasise a more transformational passage out of nihilism. In both thinkers art represents the ‘stimulus’ of the turn or transformation from nihilism to creation and the artistic process of ‘work’ (*Arbeit*) becomes a model for action in all spheres of life. The specific features or elements found in artistic and musical action engage us in both critical and transformational power.

Conclusion: Music Education as Cultural Work

The thinking of Nietzsche and Heidegger with regard to music education is both important and timely. Music educators have been struggling for years with practices that reinforce the dualism of ‘musical sounds’ on the one hand and ‘cultural assemblages’ on the other. The Heideggerian perspectives of ‘poiesis’ and ‘work’ (*Arbeit*) and the Nietzschean notions of ‘will to power’ and the ‘revaluation of values’ challenge this dualism and lay the conceptual ground for a music education practice that is more critical. A focus on ‘work’ in this sense, as the existential character of both music making and human action, acknowledges the triggering and energising factor of change in the artistic process, perhaps best described as *poiesis* or bringing forth. In Nietzsche’s notion of the ‘will to power’ the action of *poiesis* is akin to *physis* – that is, the whole creative process of nature coming forth (Young, 2001), generating, and blooming in new cycles of transformation. As a natural consequence of taking these processes into account, it would follow that a powerful and transformational music education praxis would be synchronous with the work of music in the widest possible sense – that is, the work of music as cultural transformation and change. This approach sees musical sounds as

specific stylistic phenomena that are entwined with a wider matrix of cultural force and poietic production.

What can we now say about the actual dimensions of the musical experience? In answering this question today, many educationalists merely consider the specific Western musicological-analytical dimensions of rhythm, melody, or harmony; or for others, the intuitive expressions, feelings, and emotions suggested by European formalist aesthetics. Nietzsche's 'will to power' notion, however, challenges such reductive perspectives of the musical dimension and it effaces perceived boundaries between music and cultural meanings. Music becomes synonymous with cultural attitudes, cultural action, and cultural meaning. In this more fluid conception of musical connectivity, *musicianship* – the traditionally static artistic concept held by music educators as a form of standard – becomes instead a dynamic and changing element in accordance with the multitude of dimensions governing musical events. Within a more open dynamic of change in music, any reductive sense of the musical experience is dissolved. From the perspective of the cultural work paradigm, the music educator is attuned to the wider dimension of plurality and multiplicity, and is simultaneously a generator or energiser of new values and forms of cultural music-expression.

The 'will to power' dimension of music education is a region of power relations and competing forces where artistic truths (*aletheia*) and music learning emerge in focal practices and teaching events. Music teachers need to be discerning of the predominant values and forces influencing these events and, if necessary, subject these to reevaluation. The most potent force a music educator has of course is music itself, and musical focal practices and events can be designed in ways that challenge unquestioning or reductive thinking. The work, the poiesis of the music educator, lies in the strategic positioning of these learning practices with the aim of affecting learning in a positive way. This type of critical practice may even involve drawing our preconceived conceptions of what is musical (musicianship) into doubt by means of critical reevaluation.

What does it mean to posit *music as the guiding element of pedagogy and thought* in the cultural work of education? With music placed as the interplay of dynamic forces

in culture, its work will then penetrate all musical interfaces, including those of place, space, creation, community, production, consumption, dissemination, interpretation, and reception – *viz.*, all facets of education. The work of the music educator, then, involves an artistic selection of interacting threads and a dialogue of values emerging in the musical action. An open conception of the musical is perhaps useful here, where plurality and multiplicity give us the option of affirming identity within difference.

With music functioning as a critical lens in the educative process, the act of interpretation becomes all the more vital in all the dimensions that our musical experiences project to us. The momentary point of evaluation or teaching element can be gathered from the musical experience where a particular event meets with an interpretive force. Forces may be cultural planes of illusions or, more specifically, personal responses of bliss or instances of value, the energy of which transform thinking and the responses of the body – in the moment. To what extent can we see, feel, change, or transform culture through the musical amplifier of work? What are the values that are explicit or implicit in each musical experience we encounter in our work? As educators, we can attune ourselves to musical events and examine the genealogy of musical values that endure and come forth in these events.

This is not to denounce all current practice but, instead, to critically engage in the evaluation of cultural values in practice both musically and conceptually. Within the many musical traditions of Western culture, instances of musical authenticity, canonical hierarchies of composers, performance virtuosity and music credentialing are played out, not only to promote certain values but also to deny other types. Instances of the local, the amateur, the popular, or the current may have been subsumed by the dominance of the more powerful ‘other’ simply as a result of the attributing network of cultural forces and legitimating values that accompany them. A critically attuned music educator may even discern and interpret aspects of the accepted musical world that, due to a particular mix of circumstances and network of forces, exhibit characteristics that are in fact only remotely musical. The negative forces in music education are destructive and nihilistic in Nietzsche’s sense, expressing, as it were, reductive or disempowering values that have

endured in a desert of theoretical nullity, separation, and nihilistic inaction. What is Nietzsche's 'utility of the herd' of contemporary music education? Have singular and reductive perspectives of music resulted in a musical 'culture of domestication?' If so, where have these values been located and what should be done about them? Such Nietzschean critical questioning becomes the ground for action for the music educator as cultural worker.

Finally, what would such an active musical pedagogy, that is, the work of the cultural worker, consist of? An active pedagogy is implicit in the dynamic of the Nietzschean philosopher-artist, the thinker and musician, the designer of active curricula, the critique of cultural values, and the worker (*Arbeiter*) of new values in music. This pedagogue takes music to be the dynamic model of change and action, becoming an instinctive interpretive and artistic movement tempered by the space and place of the moment. He or she works to broaden our singular concepts of music by affirming the interconnected regions or spaces in the moment. This way of thinking becomes a guiding element in a music pedagogy.

Notes

¹ Heidegger's interpretations of Nietzsche are among the most influential and provocative in recent philosophical writing. Following Heidegger, the French interpretations of Nietzsche (Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault) sparked further interest in the English-speaking world.

² For clarity, Nietzsche's texts have been abbreviated and listed at the end of the essay.

³ The 'revaluation of values' is a phrase used by Nietzsche to describe the radical necessity for all values to be reconsidered in the light of their life affirming or life denying qualities.

⁴ Nietzsche often linked Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and intoxication, to the creative triggering of life in artistic events – best exemplified by the musical experience.

Explanation of Abbreviated Texts by Nietzsche

BGE – *Beyond Good and Evil*
BT – *The Birth Of Tragedy*
COW – *The Case of Wagner*
GM – *On the Genealogy of Morals*
GS – *The Gay Science*
HH – *Human all too Human*
NCW – *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*
TI – *Twilight of the Idols*
WP – *The Will to Power*
EH – *Ecce Homo*

denotes paragraph number or aphorism

References

- Allison, D. (2001), *Reading the New Nietzsche : The Birth of Tragedy, The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and On the Genealogy of Morals*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Blanchot, M. (1985), 'The Limits of Experience: Nihilism', in *The New Nietzsche*, (D. Allison ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1983), *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (H. Tomlinson trans.). London: The Athlone Press.
- Heidegger, M. (2001), *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (A. Hofstadter trans.). N.Y.: HarperCollins.
- Heidegger, M. (1993), *Basic Writings*, (D. Krell (ed.)). N.Y.: HarperCollins.
- Heidegger, M. (1991a), *Nietzsche Volume I-II*, (D. Krell, ed.). N.Y.: HarperCollins.
- Heidegger, M. (1991b), *Nietzsche Volume III-IV*, (D. Krell, ed.). N.Y.: HarperCollins.
- Higgins, K. (1986), 'Nietzsche on Music', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 47(4), pp. 663-672.
- Kofman, S. (1993), *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, (D. Large trans.). London: The Athlone Press.

Nietzsche, F. (2000), *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (W. Kaufmann, ed. and trans.). N.Y.: Random House.

Nietzsche, F. (1999), *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, (R. Geuss and R. Speirs eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, F. (1998), *Beyond Good and Evil*, (M. Faber trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nietzsche, F. (1996), *Human all too Human: A book for free spirits*, (R. Hollingdale trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, F. (1982), *The Portable Nietzsche*, (W. Kaufmann, ed. and trans.). London: Viking Penguin.

Nietzsche, F. (1974), *The Gay Science*, (W. Kaufmann, trans.). N.Y.: Vintage Books.

Nietzsche, F. (1968), *The Will to Power*. N.Y.: Random House Inc.

Young, J. (2002), *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young, J. (2001), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young, J. (1992), *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Correspondence with author: d.lines@auckland.ac.nz

Biographical Information

David Lines is Senior Lecturer in Music Education at the University of Auckland. He is currently completing his PhD on music education entitled "The Melody of the Event: Music Education as Cultural Work." David is a jazz pianist who regularly performs and records in Auckland, New Zealand. David's research interests lie in the areas of music, cultural studies and educational philosophy and he has presented papers at various international conferences. He coordinates the postgraduate programme in music education at the University of Auckland and has recently been a visiting scholar at the University of Glasgow.

Lines, D. (2003). The cultural work of music education: Nietzsche and Heidegger. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*. Vol. 2, #2 (November 2003).
http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Lines2_2.pdf