

**Minimal music: roles and approaches of teachers engaging
students with a contemporary art music through composing
activities**

Volume One

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of the requirements of the degree of
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Statement by the Author

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Abstract

Since it arose in the 1960s, the minimalist aesthetic has increasingly influenced composers of art and popular music around the world and, in turn, minimalist composers have drawn on the compositional ideas of Western popular music and several non-Western musics. Educationally, minimal music offers much potential for music in the classroom as it embodies a number of musical characteristics known to, and preferred by, students aged 9-18 years at primary, secondary and first year tertiary level. Socially, it offers teachers an opportunity to engage students, through composing activities, with contemporary society.

The study aims, firstly, to analyse compositions by students aged 9, 12, 15 and 18 years and their teachers, seeking pastiche development of, and compositional expansion beyond, the musical concepts presented in a resource booklet of projects, *The Pulse Music Album*. Secondly, this study aims to investigate how nineteen participating teachers in three countries engage their students with minimalist composing activities stimulated through the resource booklet. The study attempts to determine why teachers adopt their particular roles and strategies by examining music qualifications, preferences and experience, teaching perspectives and teaching environments. It also seeks to identify reasons why one group of teachers submitted pieces which were pastiches of those presented in the projects and another group submitted compositions which moved well beyond pastiche into an expansion of these same musical concepts and argues for this as evidence of dialogue with contemporary society.

Conclusions drawn from the findings note that while there are many commonalities between the backgrounds and approaches of both groups of teachers, there are clearly observed differences. These differences suggest approaches to classroom composition for consideration by practising classroom teachers, in-service instructors and teacher training institutions.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the teachers and students who participated in the study. For engaging students with the project material and taking time to submit long and detailed questionnaire responses plus cassettes, scores and other material which form the heart of the thesis, I am very grateful. I hope *The Pulse Music Album* continues to be a useful resource for your teaching.

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Abbreviations used in the text

AMEB	Australian Music Examinations Board
CMP	Contemporary Music Project for Creativity in Music Education
ECM	Editions of Contemporary Music (US recording label)
GCSE	General Certificate Secondary Education
GO	Goals and Objectives Project
HK	Hong Kong
HSC	Higher School Certificate
MENC	Music Educators National Conference
NSW	New South Wales
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States