

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Outline of the study

Minimal music embodies a number of musical characteristics known to, and preferred by, students aged 6-18 years at primary, secondary and first year tertiary level. These include tertian harmonies, tonality, pulse, repetition and ostinati. Minimalism is concerned with structural process and is a contemporary art music which has influenced some popular music styles and been influenced by aspects of popular music and music of other cultures. These attributes suggest that it has application in music education for:

- ◆ leading students from the known to the unknown;
- ◆ empowering students by introducing them to a new musical aesthetic incorporating the notational elements of music with which many have a working knowledge;
- ◆ introducing students to structures different from those of other tonal musics and to compositional processes more tightly constructed than those of such improvisatory-based student composing activities as graphic scores, and soundscapes;
- ◆ challenging students with a concept of time different from that of other Western art music;
- ◆ and providing a stylistic bridge between art, popular music and music of other cultures.

Zenatti (1993) has described studies showing that many people in Western cultures choose to listen to program material, broadcast on radio, based on tonality, in both popular and classical music styles. As parents, these listeners place their children in a well-defined musical environment out of which their musical acculturation develops. The term acculturation “designates the process of learning through which the child receives the culture of the society or milieu to which he or she belongs” (Bastide

(1968) cited in Zenatti 1993:178). The study of this thesis aims to extend this acculturation process for teachers and students to contemporary art music through minimalism, because of familiarity with tonality and other reasons given above and discussed in Chapter Three. It plans to do this by facilitating an engagement with contemporary arts and contemporary society through composing activities drawing on the contemporary compositional techniques of minimal music presented in *The Pulse Music Album*, a resource of projects described in detail in Chapter Five.

1.2 Research aims of the study

The thesis focuses on teachers who engage their students in minimalist composing activities. The study analyses student compositions employing compositional techniques of minimal music, and investigates the roles, approaches and strategies of the teachers when facilitating minimalist composing activities, but it does not examine the student composing process.

The study has two principal research aims.

Aim 1:

to analyse compositions of students aged 9, 12, 15 and 18 years and their teachers, seeking pastiche development of the concepts presented in a resource album of minimalist projects and expansion of these given concepts beyond pastiche writing;

Aim 2:

to investigate how teachers facilitate composing activities with students aged 9 to 18 years, using a resource album of minimalist projects. Through examination of the teachers' qualifications, preferences and experience, the teaching environment in which they find themselves, their teaching perspectives of music education and the teaching roles, composition teaching approaches and strategies adopted, the study seeks reasons why compositions

submitted by some teachers show pastiche development of the given minimalist material, and those submitted by others expand beyond the concepts presented in the resource projects. Using this understanding, the thesis aims to inform music teachers, in-service teachers and teacher training institutions on ways they can facilitate expansion of minimalist compositional concepts with students. These could also be relevant to the introduction of composing activities with other contemporary art music styles and to the introduction of composing activities with any compositional techniques new to students.

Reasons why development and expansion beyond material introduced in the resource projects is important are threefold: i) historical, ii) educational and iii) social.

i) Historically, minimalism has experienced a constant expansion of the tightly constructed processes characteristic of minimal music of the late 1960s and 1970s, an expansion heard in a comparison between, for example, two works of Steve Reich - *Piano Phase* (1967) and *Different Trains* (1988).

ii) Educationally, expansion of material indicates facilitation with, and development and exploration of, familiar concepts of music - time, pitch, structure, timbre - within a musical aesthetic new to most of the students. Paynter (1982) has reminded us that while “genuine originality is very rare, ...musical ideas which may be familiar to us as adults and musicians can still be, in a very real sense, ‘new’ for the pupils who discover them. That ‘discovery’ may take the form of exploring along clearly defined lines unashamedly derived from the work of a much admired composer or performing group” (112). By seeking expansion and development of the ‘clearly defined lines’ of the project material presented in *The Pulse Music Album*, I am seeking that which is ‘new’ for the students.

iii) Socially, expansion of the given material is tangible evidence of self-expression through manipulation of musical material, and thus an engagement, by the individual,

that is 'the student composer', with the classroom society and wider contemporary society through a contemporary music. This relationship between the composer, his or her music, and society is argued later in this chapter. Development and expansion of material within student compositions may occur as the result of adaptation of material by the teacher, deliberate exploration by the student or teacher, or may be the result of a misunderstanding or misreading of the project instructions.

1.3 Background to the study

The impetus for this study came while I was living and working in Hong Kong. As tutor for a third year university music subject on twentieth century compositional techniques, I was able to observe the reaction of students to a number of different art musics and noted how they attempted to absorb the characteristics of each composer's style and reproduce them in their own work.

Most of the students were totally unfamiliar with any compositional techniques of twentieth century Western art music but were familiar with those of previous centuries through their school system and the United Kingdom Royal Schools of Music and Trinity College London examination systems. These are both Western art-music theory and performance syllabuses similar to those of the Australian Music Examinations Board. When minimalism was introduced through an analysis of Reich's *Piano Phase*, I observed that its composition techniques and structures were understood quickly by the Hong Kong students, reproduced successfully in pastiche compositions by all students with a sense of achievement, and many of the compositions were successfully performed in class time. There was a sense of achievement and pride on the part of the students.

In music education literature a number of reasons have been given for involving students in creative composing activities. Composing activities are a way of:

- ◆ encouraging artistic expression (Paynter and Aston 1970:3; Burnard 1995a:1);

- ◆ developing students' musical vocabulary (Davies 1986:280);
- ◆ enabling students "...to understand music better; to obtain that pleasure which is inherent in the art" (Owens 1986:348 quoting Schoenberg 1950);
- ◆ empowering students (Wiggins 1989:35; Hogg 1994:23);
- ◆ engaging students in different ways of thinking and problem-solving (McMillan 1991:320; Plummeridge 1980:37);
- ◆ developing students' critical powers and perceptions (Paynter and Aston 1970:7; Wiggins 1989:35);
- ◆ influencing students in developing or maintaining a positive attitude towards the study of music (Scott 1971: 138);
- ◆ and facilitating the learning and reinforcement of basic concepts and theoretical skills of music (Wiggins 1989:35).

While these were all an important part of the experience of the tertiary Hong Kong students, I noticed that, from a social perspective, it was the accessibility of minimalism as a contemporary art music, discussed in Chapter Three, which allowed the students to 'successfully' engage in "...the art that is *most* relevant to us...that of our own time" (Paynter and Aston 1970:4). I also noticed that from an educational perspective, they were able to involve their knowledge of the familiar musical concepts of time, pitch and structure, in an aesthetic very different from that of musics of their previous knowledge. This led me to ask the following: could minimalism lead teachers and students at primary, secondary and early tertiary level to engage with a contemporary art music if a class of Hong Kong tertiary music students, to whom most twentieth century Western composition techniques were unknown, were able to achieve a reasonable level of understanding of minimalism through a range of music activities in one week?

The minimalist project material offered to the teachers in this study was drawn from my own teaching experience in the preliminary study undertaken in an English school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and discussed in Chapter Five. With a class of nine year old students, I explored different minimalist techniques and processes drawn from the compositions of a number of composers. From this teaching eight projects were

designed and packaged into *The Pulse Music Album*. The album, plus a number of questionnaires for the teachers and their students, was offered to 155 teachers living and working in Hong Kong (United Kingdom curriculum influence), Indonesia (United States curriculum influence), Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand. These were all countries where I was living or visiting frequently during the data collection years of the study, 1989 – 1993. One hundred and forty-five teachers accepted the invitation to work with minimalist project material in whatever way they thought best, and through whichever activities they felt suited the material. I initially sought teachers working with students at ages 6, 9, 12, 15 and 18 years, as this range of ages fitted evenly across primary, secondary and first year tertiary institutions. I planned to close the study when four teachers for each age group were engaged with the material within a two year time-frame. However, despite conducting my study over five years, I was unable to obtain this spread of teachers.

1.4 Contemporary music in society – the music classroom as a microcosm of society

The view that music mediates changes in society which in turn are reflected in the changes of contemporary musics has been argued before the twentieth century. McClary (1987) has drawn our attention to discussion on music and its relationship with the society in which it was written in Plato's *Republic*, and in Monteverdi's foreward to his *Fifth book of madrigals 1605*) as glossed by his brother in *Scherzi musicali (1607)*(15-16). In Beethoven's music Theodor Adorno heard the social upheaval and changes of the time and recognised that the music itself helped in some way, to bring about the social changes. The revolutionary bourgeoisie and "...the cry for that totality in which reason and freedom are to have their warrant..." are represented in the music of Beethoven (Adorno cited by Jameson in Attali 1985:ix). For Jacques Attali, "art bears the mark of its time" (Attali 1985:5). Using metaphors from music and art he argued for music as "...a way of perceiving the world...it reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society. *An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge [and] ... provides a rough sketch of the*

society under construction...” (4 –5 author’s italics). These theorists all argue for a strong connection between contemporary arts and their relation to the society in which they are produced.

John Dewey (1934) wrote of the danger when an art product attains classic status, finding that “it somehow becomes isolated from the human conditions under which it was brought into being and from the human consequences it engenders in actual life-experience” (3). Dewey warned that an art product loses its significance when it is taken out of its societal place and time.

Geertz (1973) and Langer (1957) have described ways in which this relationship between art and society can take place. Explaining culture as “webs of significance” spun by man and within which man is suspended, Geertz (1973:5) stated that it is through the flow of behavior – “...or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation” (17). Langer (1957) argued for art as presenting forms, “sometimes intangible forms - to *imagination*” (1957:70), and found that the cultural importance of art requires recognition of art as both a product and an instrument of human insight (69). “The only way we can really envisage vital movement, the stirring and growth and passage of emotion, and ultimately the whole direct sense of human life, is in artistic terms. A musical person thinks of emotions musically” (71). For Langer “cultures begin with the development of personal and social and religious feeling. The great instrument of this development is art” (73). “The arts objectify subjective reality, and subjectify outward experience of nature. Art education is the education of feeling, and a society that neglects it gives itself up to formless emotion”(74). Both Geertz and Langer suggest that human behaviour, in particular imagination, has a strong connection with cultural behaviour.

The body is the means by which people experience sound or music. Elizabeth Wood employed the metaphor of a sonogram with her as the ‘sonographer’. She made connections between the body as a sound map through which we ought to be able, in a sense “...to ‘hear’ the crisis of society in its sounds and noises and vibrations” (Wood

1995:106). Through their writings, both Wood and Attali argue for music as the most immediate sensor of shifts in society with the composer predicting and reflecting these shifts.

Elliott (1995) also noted the connection between music and society by directing discussion of the individual and society to the composer:

Whenever individuals begin to compose, they are never acting “alone”. Their composing is always “situated” and social in the following ways. First, the musicianship required to compose particular kinds of music develops in relation to the thinking of other composers and performers, past and present, who have immersed themselves in the achievements and the authority (or the standards and traditions) of particular compositional practices...One learns to compose by being inducted into culture-based and practice-centered ways of musical thinking that particular groups of musical practitioners maintain, refine and embody in landmark compositions. (162)

Elliott’s observation is of particular relevance to this thesis as it is through the “culture-based and practice-centered ways of musical thinking” within music education that students are inducted. And if the learning environment is based on the culture of contemporary art music with a teacher who chooses composing activities for the students, then the resulting connection between the student and society will be closer. Whether the contemporary art music is composed by the students or performed by them, “...situating a work in context helps us understand the origin, journeys, and socio-economic-cultural influences that envelop the work” (Veblen, McCoy and Barrett 1995:49).

John Shepherd raised the question that there is so much sound and so many musics at the end of the twentieth century, are we listening? Within the cultures of industrial capitalism, he finds a certain deafness has arisen “...in relation to what our music can tell us about ourselves because music is generally used to escape the everyday consequences of the ‘real world’” (1991:215). This may be because “...the musics of our own cultures (as well as those of others) have things to tell us which we frequently do not hear because of the way in which we categorise and locate music socially” (216). Here Shepherd is referring to the increasing polarisation between art

and popular music. This is seen in the different types of concert venues for each music, and the categorising of music by radio stations through formatting, into all-day listening in one's favourite style - classical, country, rock, easy listening. In education, too, there is a polarisation between students' musical preferences for contemporary popular musics, and teachers' preferences for art music, usually of earlier centuries. Studies confirm the interest of students in popular music (Shuter-Dyson and Gabriel 1981:157; Stowasser, 1983:95), and their ability to discern fine differences between styles within the genre (Neville, 1985:150). Yet for many teachers classical music, excluding 'avant-garde' classical music, contains "obvious" benefits while pop music is viewed as inferior and often in an oppositional role to classical music (Green 1988:64-65).

By choosing minimalism as the contemporary art music in this thesis, there is an opportunity for both the teachers and students taking part to find 'common ground' with their previous musical knowledge, and bridge differences between their different musical preferences. Writers have commented on how audiences of concerts in which the music of Glass and other minimalist composers is performed, represent a convergence of elite and mass appeal (Polin 1989:236). In the early 1980s Wim Mertens noted how the music of Riley, Reich and Glass reached a broader public "than one would have dared predict in 1972", and their work helped break down traditional borders between audiences of avant-garde and popular music (Mertens quoted by De Meyer 1985:388). In his introduction to Glass's book *Music by Philip Glass*, Jones (Jones in Glass 1987) discussed his own reaction, from a classical music background, to the sound of Glass's music. For him it was "...the most bizarre music", "...like something from another galaxy" and he contrasted this with the reaction of a twentieth-century music and rock enthusiast who found *Einstein on the Beach* attractive, delightful, and easy. Jones found that people of different backgrounds "find different things in [Glass's] work..." (Glass 1987:x).

The society which minimalism represents for many, is that of America in the 1960s and 1970s. Examining the ways in which social movements contribute to processes

of cultural transformation, particularly in relation to music, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) placed an emphasis on music of the 1960s – black music, folk music and “roots of rock music” (5). They reminded us that in music, art and literature, social movements provide the opportunity for renewal and rejuvenation by implanting new meanings and reconstituting established aesthetic forms and genres (10). Weill, Copland, Bernstein, Baez and Dylan were named as composers, along with writers, artists and others, who, while their work cannot be reduced to their political involvements, would have produced very different works if they had not taken active part in social movements (12).

Eyerman and Jamison add the concept of “exemplary action” to their argument. Through exemplary action, music and art is lived as well as thought. “It is cognitive, but it also draws on more emotive aspects of human consciousness” (23), and in the process may become “truth-bearing” (24). “Perhaps more effectively than any other form of expression, music also recalls a meaning that lies outside and beyond the self. In that sense it can be utopian and premodern” (24). The years from 1961 to 1965 in the United States were a period of transition from the civil rights movement to a broader political opposition to the war in Vietnam. From 1965 the anti-Vietnam war movement became the single most important social issue and it was more divisive than the civil rights movement had been, altering the interaction between politics and culture “...that had been so intimate during the early 1960s” (114). Popular songwriters and musicians, their songs, the contexts in which these were written, and the political demonstrations and collective festivals where they were performed from 1961 to 1965, are for Eyerman and Jamison, an example of music having a truth-bearing role (106 and 24). Popular music of the time, through the words of protest songs by the Beatles, Baez or Dylan, was politically oriented, dealing with “...alienation, racial bigotry, ecology, war, civil rights, and similar temporally urgent subjects” (Polin 1989:231).

According to Eyerman and Jamison, classical music did not, for many, carry any truth-bearing messages (24). However for others, minimalism, a ‘classical’ music of

America's early 1960s, was an exception. Minimalism's interest in eastern music, and the search "...for more contemplative modes" (228) was, for Polin, essentially the rise of a non-intellectual movement (230) with its political content not so easily decipherable (232). Despite its ability to offer escape, she finds minimalism "...represents a critical reaction to the condition of humanity in a complex and uncontrolled society" (238), and quotes Neumeyer's dictum of the 1950s, that "...'art tends to move away from contemporary cultural realities, even to the point where the artist creates for himself worlds that have not existed before..." (232). De Meyer (1985) proposed repetitive music as being nothing more than pure escapism, "offering the opportunity to flee from reality, sometimes in response to individual dissatisfaction with the dominant socio-cultural system, and sometimes as a result of the pressure imposed by the socio-economic system in times of crisis" (395). Because of the hypnotic-ecstatic experiences often associated with repetition, he concludes that the music is nothing more than a drug, and in music-political terms, is extremely conservative (395) as it seeks neither to protest, nor to take a political position (396).

Combining aspects of Eastern contemplation and the western artist's move to a potential world away from that of the present, Small (1980) chose one minimalist composition by American Terry Riley, to discuss the relation between music and "the potential society". In Riley's *A Rainbow in Curved Air*, Small finds that, among other directions, the human race recognizes its relationship to nature, where the time of clocks and the tyranny of the future can be transcended, the individual finds his/her proper relation to society (209). In Riley's work, Small comments on its 'non-harmonic' nature "...which contains no tension, no development, no drama, exists wholly in the present and does not demand concentrated, steady listening" (209-210). He quotes from Riley's vision of a potential society, described and painted on the record sleeve and finds, that despite their naivety, "...the presence of those ideas...in the music of our century speaks clearly and eloquently of their presence within the matrix of our society, in however latent a form" (210). Riley himself, (cited in Smith and Smith 1995) has spoken of minimalism emerging from the changing climate just before the 1960s. There was a feeling of "...really wanting to be free, to tear off the

bonds of society which said you had to lie a certain way or do certain things to be a valid individual...the climate was one of hope, of deepening spirituality, as was the whole of the 1960s” (231-232). Minimalism developed as part of the climate of the time and “...it made people feel aesthetically something they hadn’t felt in previous musics” (231).

Wishing for “...an increase in ...conviviality in our culture...”, Small then refocused his lens on society, and trained it on the role of education, calling for a consideration of “...the possible effects of rethinking our education along artistic rather than scientific lines” (Small 1980:210). Perhaps, he argued, the relative unimportance of arts in our society and in education, with its wider tolerance of innovation, can be turned to advantage, with students experiencing life itself and giving them confidence in their ability to learn what they wish to learn by introducing “...a joyful experience...*in the present*”(211). This applies to the music of the present, the contemporary arts. For Small, it is through the creative act, which needs to be placed at the centre of music education, “...from which all other, more traditional activities radiate, fed by the work of creation and in turn feeding back into it...”. With this will come enjoyment of each moment with skills developing as they are needed (213). He acknowledges there may be a sacrifice of virtuosity, but it is perhaps this virtuosity which “...cuts the majority off from true musical experience...” (216). For Small the arts, and music in particular can “...put us in mind of that potential society which does not yet exist. [It can] ...disturb habitual ways of feeling and perceiving” (217) and he cites the violent reaction of audiences to Schoenberg’s music, or that of the Rolling Stones. He argues for arts education as the path through which change through innovation can occur, and it is within the act of creation itself wherein the real power of art lies (218).

Schafer (1975), however, has found that school separates art from society. For the child of five, art is life and life is art, “...a kaleidoscopic and synaesthetic fluid”, yet when they enter school, music becomes music (a little bag on Thursday morning) and life becomes life (15).

Yet popular music and world music, both strong influences on, and, for popular music, influenced by, minimalism, have raised issues of the relationship between music and the society which it reflects. In Western countries popular musics often connect strongly with the society from which they have sprung. For members of a “second generation punk” band in England, their music was a language of change connected closely to their view of society. Music provided a way “to state your political views” (Horn 1984:129). Music educators, Reimer (1994) has stated, are responsible for illuminating the two essential dimensions of all music – first, that it is sonorous expressive form, not in isolation, but as culturally derived, and second, that cultural values and experiences become music when given sonorous expressive form (243). Drawing on the music of the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, he presented two opposing views on the issue of authentic experiences of music from foreign cultures – individuality versus universality, the distinctive versus the general, self versus other (241) – and within music education, felt that to *some* extent (occasionally to a full extent, or to no extent) people can experience genuinely, a different way of musical being, a different way that musical soul (music reaching to the core of one’s selfness (242)) can be achieved. This contextualisation of all musics through musicological discussion has raised issues in music education of music’s role in different societies, of authenticity in performance, of ownership, and of the need for new ways of teaching music from cultures other than our own. Music education curriculum documents referred to in this thesis require teachers to address music in society and music in other cultures with their students at primary and secondary level.

Composers closely involved with school music have refocused discussion on the relationship between music and the classroom society. Discussing the many ‘uses’ of music in society, composer and educationalist Paynter (1982) posited the school as a microcosm of this society, arguing for music education to embrace many different music activities, many different musical styles, and many different ‘purposes’ (22). For Schafer (1975), “the music class is always a society in microcosm, and each type of social organization should balance the others”, with a place for individual

expression (4). Owens (1986) mentioned the importance of providing opportunities to “develop an awareness of the *relationship of music* to the other arts, the life of the school and the wider community” (349). When students and teachers undertake composing activities with a knowledge of, and an engagement with, composition ideas and techniques of contemporary music (in this study, contemporary art music, although the argument holds true for engagement with popular musics), they are acting as mediators between their music and their society. This is achieved both as individuals, and collectively, as members of the classroom microcosm of society, within the larger community. Creative composing activities are found, among other things, to allow empowerment through self-expression, self-fulfillment, and dialogue with other members of the music education society and through oneself, with self-discovery.

Through their teaching and writing, composer-music educators John Paynter, Peter Aston, and Murray Schafer, plus others active from the late 1960s into the 1970s, have influenced classroom teachers in their own countries and around the Western world. This was a time when music of the avant-garde tended to take what Paynter (1982) described as a “usefully ‘open’ view of music sound”, thereby broadening the scope of music for students with no previous conventional musical training (136). Because of the pivotal role these composer-music educators played in laying the foundation of composing activities in music education, and thus engaging the student as creative participant, the literature reviews in the following chapters draw on and discuss their work and the work of others from this period.

Composers are those members of society whose ideas and works, by their very nature, shape contemporary musical arts practice. The role of composers (Orff, Paynter, Aston, Schafer and others) in activating the child as creative participant in music education through composing activities in the second half of the twentieth century, discussed in Chapter Two, has brought this interface between composers and society into the classroom by inviting students and teachers to be composers and to engage with contemporary arts practice within their classroom microcosm of society.

Examining the structuring of children's compositions, Barrett (1996a:231) felt it was clear that the participants in her study were "making musical and aesthetic decisions in their composing processes..." (231) thereby engaging "in aesthetic decision-making in non-verbal ways through their musical discourse as composers" (237). When the student compositions of my study are examined for evidence of pastiche development and expansion of the minimalist project material, these are regarded as evidence of self-expression, and dialogue within a contemporary art context. However, Negus (1996) reminds us that "music cannot simply *reflect* society, an individual's personality or life...[but] is created, circulated, recognized and responded to according to a range of conceptual assumptions and analytical activities that are grounded in quite particular social relationships, political processes and cultural activities" (4).

When the study focuses on teachers' facilitation of minimalist composing activities with students, it is investigating why the students of some teachers develop and expand the material presented in the album projects in their compositions, and why the students of other teachers do not move beyond pastiche writing. The students who were encouraged to expand material and express themselves are engaging with society as artists. Teachers have approached composition teaching in many ways, and many of these are described in Chapter Four. The ways teachers in this study were able to lead their students to achieve this expansion of compositional material, and possible influences, are sought by examining their backgrounds (qualifications, preferences, experience, teaching environment), personal beliefs in, and teaching perspectives of music education, and teaching roles and approaches to teaching composition.

1.5 Definitions of terms used in this thesis

1.5.1 Creativity and composing activities

Terms such as ‘improvisation’, ‘composition’, ‘inventing’, ‘exploring’, ‘experimenting’, and ‘creativity’ are all encountered in music education literature, and require some explanation as to how they have been used in this thesis. ‘Creativity’ does not always involve improvisation or composition. Jeanneret (1995) found that the sense of ‘creative music educator’ is the one encountered most frequently in literature on creativity, with an emphasis on “...the fostering of creative behaviour not the role of composition in learning” (53). Comparing the education of the African and western child (especially in the United States) Elizabeth Oehrle (1986) found three aspects central to the creativity discussion: the creative process; some traits of creative people; the nurturing of creative behaviour (167). Clarifying creativity in music education, Plummeridge (1980) focused the term ‘creativity’ on composing and composition, finding two distinct concepts of creativity in writings: ‘traditional’ and the ‘new’. The ‘traditional’ concept takes the person as composer, and his/her creativity for granted. Here it is the ‘value’ of the compositions which is critical with the “...notion of value ... seen in terms of the person’s contribution to the discipline of music” (36). The ‘new’ concept of creativity is concerned with the process of composition as a creative activity, and because of its interest in ways of thinking, problem-solving, finding novel solutions, making imaginative leaps (drawn from Vernon 1970 in Plummeridge), is rooted in psychology (37). This approach finds resonances in the first of Oehrle’s aspects in the creativity discussion, referred to above.

The concept of ‘value’ of compositions, the psychological interest in the composing process, and student audiation capacities all find a place in this thesis. Creativity in the broad sense of fostering creative behaviour in the classroom is not the focus of this study. Instead, creativity as composing, and more specifically composition (the products), the roles and approaches teachers adopt for introducing minimalism through

composing activities to students, and associated student compositions are at the heart of the study.

Composition

The term ‘composition’ is used in the thesis to describe the student outcomes resulting from their work with teachers on minimalist projects. These compositions are by individual students, small groups, or the whole class. Some are non-notated, recorded after an improvisatory process has been undertaken and I have either transcribed them from the recording, or in the case of compositions using a phase shifting process, the ‘intended’ composition has been written out. Other student compositions are notated often with a performance, and recorded. For my study, these student outcomes needed to be recorded on tape and/or notated, and because of the range of student ages often came through improvisation.

Marsh (1995) has reminded us that the term ‘composition’ is derived from the Latin *componere*, ‘to put together’ (10), and other music educators have adopted this wide definition. For Gamble (1984), composing is “thinking in sound (‘thinking’ in its broadest possible sense)” (15) and improvisation, from completely free to the controlled, is central to the act of composing (17). Gammon (1996) carefully differentiates between composing, “with its implication of continuity and process”, and composition which implies completion (120). In discussion of their sequence of musical development, Swanwick and Tillman (1986) refer to the childrens’ ‘musical utterances’ and ‘musical offerings’ (311) as compositions. Swanwick reinforced this broad definition by referring to composition as “...any activity which involved decision-making on the ordering of music, whether improvising, notating ideas, assembling work on tape, or arranging material” as composition (Swanwick 1989:160) and I have adopted this definition of composition in this thesis.

Improvisation and empirical composition

Between improvisation and composition, Addison (1988), Hinckley (1988) and Webster (1992) distinguish improvisation leading to composition, from improvisation

leading to performance. Hinckley (1988) finds that improvisation in a composition context needs to be “value-free” (21). Addison (1988) distinguishes between improvised performance and ‘straight’ performance by highlighting the intention of the performer and the expectations of the listener. “...The removal of the ‘performance memory’ element is crucial”, and telling a player (student or adult) to improvise and be able to reproduce the same performance creates an “extremely cautious” response (256). He finds that improvising with the intention to recall, repeat or write-down is different for the performer and listener.

Burnard’s (1998) observations of students improvising revealed the creation of a continuous and interconnected web of ideas, the outcome seeing the invention of new music in performance (3). She also noted that for some student participants in her study, improvising and composing were perceived as “related or indistinguishable events” (Burnard 2000:241), while for others they can be perceived as “distinct entities according to the context and manner in which musical activity is orientated” (241).

When Paynter talks of improvisation as it leads to composition, Addison (1988) finds he is not talking about an improvisatory event at all, but about compositional method, “...as employed by composing musicians of all periods” (257). Paynter and Aston (1970) describe this as ‘empirical composition’, “...going directly to our materials...and experimenting with them by improvisation until we have fashioned a piece of music” (12), a term Mellers applies to Mussorgsky’s approach to composition (Mellers 1971:14). Webster discusses different task parameters but makes the same conclusions – “If subjects are given the opportunity to revise their work in some way before it is considered finished, the product or process is considered more compositional in nature. If the product or process is not reconsidered for change, it is more improvisatory” (Webster 1992:270). I use Paynter’s term ‘empirical composition’ in my thesis, to describe improvisation, often repeated, leading, after evaluation, to composition.

Exploring, experimenting, investigating and organising sounds

The terms ‘exploring’, ‘experimenting’, ‘investigating’ and ‘organising’ are often used in music education literature when the activity of sound exploration through improvisation is new to students. They appear frequently in primary and secondary school documents when composing activities involving sounds and sound sources new to the students, are discussed. Examples of these terms are found in 1984 *Music (K-6) Syllabus and Support Statements* – Department of Education, New South Wales, Australia; 1994 *The Arts – a curriculum profile for Australian Schools*; and 1989 *New Zealand Syllabus for Schools Music Education --Early Childhood to Form Seven*. By placing ‘explore’ as the first activity students should undertake when performing and composing (before “...create, select and organise sounds...”), the 1996 *United Kingdom National Curriculum (Music)* implies a sequence of music activities leading to notated composition. This preliminary exploration of sounds is reflected in the first stage, ‘Sensory’, of Tillman and Swanwick’s sequence of musical development. In their summary of this developmental mode, the terms ‘experimentation’, ‘investigate’ and ‘sound exploration’ are used to describe the activities of the young subjects in their study (Swanwick and Tillman 1986:332). I adopt terms such as exploring and experimenting in this thesis to describe preliminary sound explorations in the composing process, leading to either improvisation for performance, or improvisation leading to composition, that is empirical composition.

Integration

In music education literature ‘integration’ takes on several meanings and these are discussed in this thesis. Some teachers in the study refer to the ‘integrated’ approach of the NSW music curriculum. This curriculum was strongly influenced by the Comprehensive Musicianship movement started in 1965 in the US, whereby students’ musicality and knowledge of “common elements” are developed through “integrated activities involving performance, movement, musical creativity, ear training and listening” (Marsh 1999:1-3). In the NSW context students “are encouraged to study a broad range of music in-depth”. Music, approached through the “concepts of music” is “performed, analysed and composed or improvised by the students” (1-3).

Stowasser (1993) noted a move towards this style of music program from Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory to other Australian states during the early 1990s. In Chapter Four this approach is discussed further.

Integration is also used to describe the inclusion of music activities with one or more other school subjects. Stubbs (1988), Schafer (1967/69) and Nieviadomy (2000) have written of the benefits of this approach in the school environment and this also is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Contemporary music – contemporary arts

In this thesis the term ‘contemporary’ art music is used to describe minimal music, and contemporary arts practice. When minimalism emerged in the United States in the 1960s, ‘contemporary’ referred to modern or avant-garde art music, music exemplified in the name and repertoire of the New York orchestra for modern music, the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. This ensemble recorded works by composers such as Varèse and Babbitt (Griffiths 1986:53), that is, works by United States composers who were contemporary to the 1960s.

There are a number of words other than ‘contemporary’ used to identify art music of the twentieth century, and, in particular, music of the second half of the century. In 1977, Cope used the term ‘new music’ to discuss compositional style of the newer musics of the past forty years (Cope 1977), while for Griffiths (1981) art music of the same time period is *Modern Music – the avant garde since 1945*. Griffiths described the origins of minimal music as “...a very different current in the experimental stream...” (176), with the early 1980s seeing repetitive music venturing into “...more demanding realms of thought...” (297) and thus seeming to retain its place in the avant-garde. For Cope, the term ‘avant-garde’ has become a designation for those composers or works displaying the newest technique or anti-technique, the ‘raison d’être’ of the avant-garde movement being centred around shock and “newness” (Cope, 1993:347). Philosophically, he finds the avant-garde remaining one of the most conservative areas of musical thought: “a concept in which, indeed, anything does *not* go. The very nature of the avant-garde

concept binds the composer to reject the past and work within a multitude of limitations often surpassing those of the strictest of traditional contrapuntalists” (348). For the ‘post-avant-garde’ composer, the new sound, the new device, the new trick are no longer important, but the new work is. “Redefined, the post-avant-garde composer is just the composer, using anything that is necessary to fulfill the need to create music; accepting all sound and silence without being limited by current styles” (348). Minimalism, for Cope, is part of the new conservatism, which he does not label wholeheartedly as avant-garde. It seems to embrace aspects of the avant-garde and post-avant-garde that will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Discussing the politics of name categories to define different musical styles, Schaefer’s book, *New Sounds* (1987), takes its title from a radio programme of the same name. The programme started in 1982 “...as a way of showing people that the term ‘modern music’ didn’t necessarily mean the dry ‘honk-squeak’ style of the music schools” (xiii). Radio station WNYC in the United States set out to demonstrate “...how some composers had reacted to this trend – namely, by creating music that didn’t share the avant-garde’s real or imagined lack of concern for the audience” (xiii). Here minimal music, along with world music, electro-acoustic, process, ethnic music, and unusual folk song arrangements, rock, oldest and new instruments, and music of ECM (Editions of Contemporary Music) and Windham Hill labels, takes centre stage. For Schaefer, minimalism is not part of the avant-garde, but is a particular style of new music.

A number of terms could have been adopted to describe minimalism, however ‘contemporary’ was chosen because of its fluidity, and its dictionary definition as: “of these times – of the day” (Fowler & Fowler 1942). Here it can refer to the musics of whatever time is being discussed, and also its ability, in the 1990s, to describe a range of different musics. ‘Contemporary music’ can refer to popular music, (for instance, the contemporary music course (popular music) at University of Southern Cross, New South Wales, Australia), and contemporary art music as discussed earlier in relation to the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble. In my own experience as a composer, performer, and tertiary teacher, ‘contemporary’ embraces both popular and art musics,

musics of other cultures, multi-media and technology-based arts, plus cross-art collaborations within the School of Contemporary Arts at the University of Western Sydney. Working within a music environment with a focus on music of the twentieth century, the traditional tertiary view of music as evolutionary is replaced by a view of musics of the past and of other cultures from the standpoint of this point in this century, and in relation to the position of the contemporary arts, that is, the musics of today. A term which can direct discussion at both popular and art music, include musics of other cultures and their influences, and the work of such multi-media artists as Laurie Anderson, is ideal for a study of minimalism in a music education context. The term 'contemporary' is also used to label recent visual arts, dance, theatre and style developments, thus linking music with all contemporary arts practice.

Minimalism

Since its beginnings in the late 1960s, the term minimalism has been applied to music compositions ranging from the long drones of La Monte Young's *The Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Steardown Transformer* (1962), to parts of John Adams's orchestral work, *Harmonielehre* (1985), to minimalist electronic pop of The Chemical Brothers' *The Sunshine Underground* (1999). Johnson (1994) views minimalism as an aesthetic, as a style or as a technique. Minimalism as an aesthetic "...represents a new way of listening to music, concentrating on the process itself. The activity of listening to music is downscaled substantially, and very slight changes in rhythm, texture, or harmony become the main events in a piece" (744). Johnson finds minimal pieces from the late 1950s and 1960s best exemplify this definition of minimalism as an aesthetic. This marries with Colpitt's (1993) definition of Minimal (sic) art as being "restricted to those artists who shared a philosophical commitment to the abstract, anticompositional, material *object* in the 1960s" (1) as opposed to what he calls "lowercase *m*" minimalism (1) which some artists continue to engage with today. Minimalism viewed as a style or a school, according to Johnson (1994), embraces pieces that "...do not focus exclusively on the process and that are representational or teleological in some ways" (747-748). It "...recognizes the mode of expression common to the music of a number of composers, principally the works

of Reich and Glass during the 1970s...” (747), developing from the minimalist aesthetic. The later works of Riley, Young, Reich, and Glass combine minimalist features with other techniques and minimalism may be defined most accurately as a technique (750). The notion of minimalism as an aesthetic, a style and a technique is useful, in this thesis, for describing how one composer’s use of minimalist compositional techniques differs from another’s.

1.6 Chapter outline of the thesis

In this chapter, reasons are stated for choosing and investigating minimal music as a contemporary art music with which to engage teachers and their students aged 9 to 18 years. The chapter states the research aims, gives a background to the study and defines the key terms.

The compositional focus of this thesis was taken because of the increasing belief by many music educators that these activities play an important role in music education at all levels (Addison 1988; Jeanneret 1995; Hinckley 1988; Gammon 1996). Chapter Two begins by outlining the relationship between the composer and student composition in twentieth century music education, seeking reasons why music embraced creative composing activities so late in the century, and describes the 1960s and early 1970s when the sounds of art music’s avant-garde were adapted for student exploration in the classroom. The second part reviews articles, educational materials and studies by researchers and music educators working with, and observing, student compositional process and product, seeking information relevant to particular age groups and classroom situations.

In Chapter Three a brief history of minimal music in the United States and Australia is described to give the reader a perspective on minimalist composers and their compositions, and to identify ways of working of, and influences common to, a number of composers. Educational and social reasons for choosing minimalism as the contemporary music with which to engage teachers and students through the study are discussed.

Chapter Four seeks information on the roles, approaches and strategies adopted by teachers undertaking composing activities with students and investigates factors affecting these roles, approaches and strategies. The importance of the teacher in facilitating composing activities (Bunting 1988:269; Hogg 1994; van Ernst 1993:38; McMillan 1991:354, 358) is the focus of this thesis. Because of the role played by composers as artistic mediators between the contemporary arts and society, and their facility with the composition process, the processes and opinions of composers in schools (Paynter and Aston 1970; Schafer 1967/1969; Nomura 1996; MacGill 1988; Owens 1986) are sought.

Chapter Five outlines the qualitative methodology used in the study and the rationale for the approach adopted. A description of the Preliminary Study is given when first-hand teaching experience brought home to me the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating composing activities in a minimalist style. This realisation brought about a reflexive effect resulting in a shift of focus for my thesis. The Preliminary Study aimed to investigate what students were able to achieve with minimalism through different music activities, and looked for changes in their musical preferences, experiences, opinions and attitudes before and after the 'minimalist' teaching period through a questionnaire administered twice. The focus of the main thesis study was an investigation of the relationship between the pastiche development and compositional expansion of minimalist project material in students' compositions and the experience, qualifications and teaching roles, approaches and strategies of teachers. The data-gathering procedures are outlined. Key concepts drawn from the literature reviews of Chapters Two, Three and Four are identified. I explain how the key concepts are employed to analyse and interpret data drawn from open-ended questionnaires completed by each teacher which are presented as teacher profiles in the appendix, and written up as investigative reports in Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. Chapter Five discusses the concept of 'development' and 'expansion' of student compositions in relation to the compositional concepts presented in the project material of *The Pulse Music Album*, drawing on approaches to analysis of student compositions in a number of studies.

Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine present investigative reports of participating teachers who engaged students in the 9, 12, 15 and 18 year age groups of the study with material from *The Pulse Music Album* through composing activities. These reports contain analyses of the compositions submitted to the study and seek relationships between the findings of the analyses and information from the teacher profiles.

Chapter Ten draws conclusions from the investigative reports of the previous four chapters, outlines implications for the resourceful teacher, for teaching training, in-service training, and for designing music teaching resources. It also describes issues for further research.