

Submitted by Lorenzo Capitanio

Motivation in Music Education

Topic:

Are AMEB Grades a “Ticket” to teach instrumental music.

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In Issue 2 Spring/Summer newsletter I wrote about the misuse of the Australian Music Examination Board (AMEB) grades within the music teaching profession. Another concern is the misunderstanding within the industry that AMEB grades and other similar examining bodies are a substitute for tertiary music qualifications.

For decades the private music teaching sector in Australia has been, and still is, an unregulated industry. Anyone can proclaim themselves an instrumental music teacher outside of mainstream education. Many private instrumental teachers also misrepresent music examination grades such as the AMEB as a qualification, “a ticket” to teach music. A common statement within the industry is that, *“as long as you (the teacher) have a grade higher than your student you can teach them”*. This is simply not true and I strongly recommend parents to think twice before placing your child into the responsibility of individuals that express these views. The issue is not the ability to play their instrument (although important) but the teaching ability and no AMEB grade provides training in the pedagogy of music.

This lack in the ability to regulate the instrumental music teacher has provided a window of opportunity for many unskilled and untrained individuals to work as instrumental music teachers both within the private sector and mainstream education. Many schools in Australia outsource instrumental music tuition from private organisations which subcontract instrumental teachers with little or no formal qualification in music or music pedagogy. Many of these organisations base their employment criteria on the premise that individuals should have a grade 5 AMEB grade or equivalent.

It is important that parents, educators and government authorities take greater interest in the quality and standard of instrumental music teaching and learning that is taking place in our schools. The fact that no laws govern the quality of instrumental music teaching in Australia may be why many children “give up playing by the end of primary school” (ABRSM, 2000, cited in Pascoe et al 2005:21).

This is disappointing because according to Howard Gardner's philosophy "everyone is born with potential to develop some degree of musicality, provided they have the right experience at the right time" (Bridges 1994). Research advocates that the most important years of musical development is the primary years and it is imperative that the best possible music programs and qualified music educators are teaching our primary aged children.

Bridges (1969) states that, "all music teachers need to have a clear philosophy of music education, otherwise they cannot teach with conviction" (68). You would not take your child to an unqualified dentist, nor should you expect anything less from your instrumental music teacher.

Reference:

Bridges, D. (1969). Training the Music Teacher. *Music in Tertiary Education* (Spearritt, G. D.), Canberra: Australia Government Publishing Services, pp. 66-78.

Bridges, D. (1994). An Australian Perspective. *Music Education: International Viewpoints* (Comte, M.), Australia: Australian Society for Music Education in association with CIRCME, pp. 51-56.