

Embedding embodied cognition and neuroscience in music pedagogy

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Robyn Marie Staveley, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of International Studies and Education, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

Embodiment is at the heart of being musical. Music pedagogy that fosters active engagement and interaction between the brain, the body, and the world, creates a living system, primed for developing deep, musical cognition. This thesis investigated how embodied cognition and neuroscience was embedded in music pedagogy in music education settings. A design-based methodology was employed to create research-based practices. Experienced music teachers attended a professional development course on embodied cognition and neuroscience, looking at how embodied practices could be applied in music education settings. A group of the teachers conceptualised and embedded embodiment theory in their music pedagogy. These conceptualisations and practices formed new perspectives and usable theory on how musical embodiment can be practiced. The researcher gathered data, through observations of lessons and reflections with participant-researchers, to identify what embodied practices looked like in their classrooms. The findings revealed that embodied music practices are achieved through enriched environments. Teachers' pedagogy created worlds where the body, including the body of the teacher, students and others, was characterised by high levels of musical action and social interaction. The worlds the teachers created were full of opportunities for musical interaction between people, places and tools with musical affordances. The brain was primed for developing musical cognition through opportunities for personal engagement in complex, authentic environments. This thesis puts forward some key insights for application of pedagogical principles and practices to foster embodied music cognition.