

**Conceptions of Teaching and Learning  
Instrumental and Vocal Music**

**A study of the ways musicians and their students  
experience the phenomenon of teaching and learning music  
at a tertiary level**

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**1999**

## Certificate

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me and that any help that I have received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

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## Abstract

This thesis describes variation in the way musicians and their students experience the teaching and learning of music at a tertiary level.

The teaching and learning of instrumental music has a long tradition where students seek out a master musician and 'learn' the master's style. The tradition assumed that master musicians could naturally 'teach' by virtue of their own experience of learning and watching their master, and by virtue of their own formidable abilities.

Instrumental music is unusual in that there has been no defined pedagogy, or curriculum, for the field. Research on teaching and learning music has concentrated on the obvious product of learning music, the performance. The quality of performance, and by default learning, has been studied using various behavioural and constructivist methodologies. This research found that the musicians' and student musicians' experience of the world of professional music may be related to their experience of teaching and learning music.

The research for this thesis takes a relational view and uses phenomenographic and case study methodologies to address the following questions: "*what are the teachers' and students' conceptions of teaching and learning instrumental and vocal music?*", and "*what are the relations between a teacher's conceptions and his/her students' conceptions?*". The phenomenographic portion describes variation in the musicians' experience of teaching and learning as three sets of related categories of description: teachers' experience of teaching/learning instrumental music, students' experience of learning instrumental music, and students' experience of teaching instrumental music. This thesis also describes variation in the way musicians experience the professional music world. This has been called the Music Entity and it is found to be related to the way the participants' understand teaching and learning. Four case studies describe the relations found between individual teacher's experience of teaching and learning and those of their students.

Finally, the implications for the academic development of instrumental/vocal teachers, curriculum development for instrumental/vocal music, and understanding teaching and learning in general are described.

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