

# Unpacking the Key Competencies in Music – Sound Arts

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The New Zealand Curriculum identifies five key competencies:

- \* thinking
- \* using language, symbols, and texts
- \* managing self
- \* relating to others
- \* participating and contributing.

**Music engages students in learning that contributes to the development of the Key Competencies. Music helps students to live, learn, work and contribute as active members of their communities and develops capabilities for living and lifelong learning.**

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The following ideas help explore aspects of the thinking process and gives examples of how these might be applied in learning in, through and about Music–Sound Arts.

## Thinking

All aspects of music support the development of this key competency, however the statement, '*Intellectual curiosity is at the heart of this competency*', lends itself to a more in depth look at how Music approaches this competency.

Curriculum links for the ideas in this section are:

- *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*: Strands PK, CI, DI, UC;
- NCEA Music Achievement Standards: All
- Unit Standards Music: All
- Unit Standards Performing Arts Technology and Music Technology: All

### The thinking processes

#### Creative Process

The capacity to think creatively is a central component of being able to solve problems and be innovative. In this process students learn to seek innovative alternative solutions and use their imagination to generate a range of possibilities. They learn to take risks and make new connections with information learned.

Music encourages creativity most obviously through composition, arrangement and interpretation of music in performance. Listening activities also aid the creative thinking process

through challenging the student to formulate and express their own opinions and respond diverse ways, such as creative writing and comparisons with other listening examples.

### **Critical Process**

Reasoning, processing and inquiry encompass the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to enable students to inquire about the world around them, and to use critical thinking to analyse and evaluate the information they encounter. Students learn to assemble and question information and develop opinions based on informed judgments. They also develop the capacity to transform information into coherent knowledge structures.

Music encourages critical thinking in various ways, including:

- ❖ reflective assessment (particularly in performances and composition),
- ❖ listening
- ❖ score reading
- ❖ research
- ❖ analysis and context, when studying musical works.

### **Metacognitive Process**

Learning is enhanced when an individual develops the capacity to reflect on and refine their existing ideas and beliefs. In this process students learn to reflect on what they know, and develop awareness that there is more to know. They learn to question their own and others' perspectives. They evaluate the validity of their own and others' ideas. They also develop metacognitive skills in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own thinking processes and strategies.

Music encourages metacognitive thinking and this is evidenced in reflective practices, such as those used for performances and composition, evaluation of goals, and research evaluation. This often occurs in classroom discussion and learning conversations with students, and is integral to Making Music AS3.6, AS3.7, and Music Studies 3.4. Ongoing feedback is a way teachers can ensure that students are able to improve their metacognitive process before summative assessments.

## **The purposes of thinking**

### **Developing understanding**

Through application of the above students could be expected to show thinking skills in action by successful progression through the curriculum levels.

### **Decision Making**

Students could be expected to show their understanding through the choices they make such as:

- ❖ the selection of their performance pieces
- ❖ choice of musical elements and compositional devices to develop and structure compositions
- ❖ topic choice and refinement of question in research.

### **Shaping Actions**

Students should be able to take what they learn and use it to direct their methods, choices and actions. This can include encouraging positive and constructive feedback in peer assessment, developing regular constructive practise routines, asking questions to clarify understanding after using all the given information.

### **Constructing knowledge**

Students should be able to display how they are able to use knowledge, beyond how they gain knowledge. There are wonderful task opportunities when studying music works that allow students to apply knowledge to new situations, such as writing a review, or compositional tasks

based on the set work studied. The teacher can also evidence this through their careful crafting of aural, score reading, or materials of music questions.

### **What we could see from students of Music - Sound Arts**

Students who are competent thinkers and problem-solvers actively seek, use, and create knowledge. They reflect on their own learning, draw on personal knowledge and intuitions, ask questions, and challenge the basis of assumptions and perceptions.

### **Using a ‘thinking programme’ as a school wide initiative**

**Bloom’s Taxonomy** is an example of a programme many New Zealand schools have adopted as a school wide approach to developing thinking skills. The six areas covered by this learning approach are Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

An example of how this might be shown through different types of questions is highlighted here using the example of Mozart’s *Non Piu Andrai*.

**Knowledge:** Explain what Opera Buffa means?

**Comprehension:** Using the internet for source material, and write a 250 word biographical article on Mozart’s life, listing the important moments in his musical development.

**Application:** The first theme of *Non Piu Andrai* contains multiple compositional devices, such as repetition, imitation and sequence. The following is an extract to Mozart’s famous *Queen of the Night* aria from ‘The Magic Flute’. Identify as many compositional devices on the score as you possibly can.

**Analysis:** Write out the themes of *Non Piu Andrai* and compare and contrast the various musical elements of two of them.

**Synthesis:** Now that you know the story of ‘The Marriage of Figaro’ write your own short song to replace Mozart’s version of ‘Non Piu Andrai’. You may write your own lyrics, providing you do not change the story line.

**Evaluation:** Imagine you have attended a performance of ‘The Marriage of Figaro’, write a review that pays particular attention to the piece you have studied, *Non Piu Andrai*.

More information on Bloom’s Taxonomy can be found on the following website; [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/stage2/prog\\_blooms\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/handbook/stage2/prog_blooms_e.php)

**Tony Ryan’s Thinking Keys** are another example of possible initiatives to challenge thinking within the classroom or school. These would work very well with any music research by provoking new lines of thinking within students.

**Original question:** How can I avoid getting RSI on the guitar?

**The reverse listing key:** How can I get RSI on the guitar?

**The variations key:** How many ways can you get RSI on the guitar?

**The different uses key:** List some of the different uses prevention of RSI on guitar can have?

**The brainstorming key:** Brainstorm ways of preventing RSI

**The inventions key:** Invent something to help prevent RSI on the guitar?

**The alternative key:** List different ways, no matter how ridiculous, that could help prevent RSI in guitarists.

There are numerous Thinking Keys and these just give an example of a possible usage for them.

The following ideas help explore aspects of using language, symbols, and texts and gives examples of how these might be applied in learning in, through and about Music–Sound Arts.

## Using language, symbols, and texts

Classroom Music and assessment is strongly grounded in music notation. While music notation is a set of symbols that helps musicians to effectively create a form of language, there are other aspects of this key competency to explore and develop.

“Of all the competencies, this is perhaps the one that is potentially most different from the previous essential skills. It subsumes aspects of “communication skills” and “numeracy skills”. It includes, but is far more than, simple literacy and ICT skill development. This competency is about understanding and knowing how our perceptions of the world are constructed through language, and how we use language in different ways to do different things. It is important that it is not thought of as just the “literacy and numeracy” competency.”

– Rosemary Hipkins, The nature of key competencies: A background paper.

Curriculum links for the ideas in this section are:

- *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*: Strands PK, CI, DI, UC;
- NCEA Music Achievement Standards: All – with a focus on composition, aural, and theory
- Unit Standards: All – with a focus on composition, aural, and theory
- Unit Standards Performing Arts Technology and Music Technology: All

## Understanding using language, symbols, and texts

### Language

Language is a tool for meaning making. As it is used here, this term encompasses all the organised systems we have for communicating and exploring ideas. It is far broader than just systems of words and grammar. In music specific ways of arranging harmony become languages – we could, for example, speak of the language of jazz, or of the romantic or classical periods. Languages are not static, they keep evolving as we find new ways of communicating in different situations, such as a new style of music, or a new fusion of existing styles.

Music crosses all cultural and linguistic barriers, and although each nationality has its own musical styles and forms, people today appreciate music that originates from all over the globe. When considering the language of music, one must look further than words, grammar, the instructional language of the classroom, or the specialist language of music. For example, when looking at Western Music, or any type of music, explore what musical elements contribute to making the music unique and identifiable. Music underlines many forms of communication and nearly every type of entertainment.

Standards that assist the understanding of the language of Music include Aural Skills, Materials of Music, and Music Works. Application of these skills can also be evident in the composition and performance standards.

### Symbols

Symbols are the components from which languages are constructed. In music symbols include; note values, pitch, articulation, tempo, and dynamics. Articulation is one of the most obvious

ways of changing the feeling and meaning of a phrase. These individual aspects contribute to the creation of a musical language and are developed through the study of theory, score reading, and music works, as well as in practical standards such as performance and composition.

Some subtler forms of musical symbols can include, for example, the use of a perfect cadence to indicate the end of a phrase. This cadence is avoided mid-phrase as the listener will wrongly interpret this mid-point as some form of ending. Through listening activities and composition students can gain a greater understanding of the wide variety and subtle nuances of musical symbols.

### **Texts**

Texts are the product of all this meaning-making activity. Text is not restricted to written word but can include instrumental performance, written notation, oral and aural response, and visual presentation. ICT can play a large part in creating multi-media presentations that encompass a variety of texts.

In all aspects of Music assessment some form of text is required and a variety of possible responses can be seen through student submission: DVD's, power points, CD's, notated scores, verbal and/or visual presentations, instrumental performances, as well as written responses.

### **The purposes of using language, symbols and text**

“Languages and symbols are systems for representing and communicating information, experiences, and ideas. People use languages and symbols to produce texts of all kinds: written, oral/aural, and visual; informative and imaginative; informal and formal; mathematical, scientific, and technological.”

NZ Curriculum Document

### **What we could see from our students**

Students who are competent users of language, symbols, and texts can interpret and use words, number, images, movement, metaphor, and technologies in a range of contexts. They recognise how choices of language, symbol, or text affect people's understanding and the ways in which they respond to communications. They confidently use ICT (including, where appropriate, assistive technologies) to access and provide information and to communicate with others.

### **Using language, symbols and text, as a school wide initiative**

The most common initiatives in this area have already been specifically targeted at literacy and numeracy strategies. Classroom strategies for Music could include:

- ❖ having posters highlighting the use of common musical terms and symbols
- ❖ learning to improvise using the circle of 4ths/5ths
- ❖ producing work, using technology, such as a sequencing or notation programme
- ❖ playing games to help retention of knowledge

More information on literacy and numeracy strategies can be found on the TKI website.

[http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_leadership\\_sec\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_leadership_sec_e.php)

The following ideas help explore aspects of managing self and gives examples of how this might be applied in learning in, through and about Music–Sound Arts.

## Managing Self

‘This competency is associated with self-motivation, a "can-do" attitude, and with students seeing themselves as capable learners. It is integral to self-assessment.’

Bringing appropriate equipment to class, handing work in on time, and asking questions to clarify understanding are all aspects of managing self, however it is valuable to look at different ways to create independent and interested learners.

Curriculum links for the ideas in this section are:

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- Unit Standards Music: All
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### The indicators of managing self

#### Enterprising

Through developing skills of enterprise students could be expected to take the initiative with their learning. In Music examples of this could include:

- ❖ organising ensembles and music for group performance
- ❖ immediately starting to work on arrival to class
- ❖ bringing appropriate listening pieces in to compare with music works
- ❖ finding new sources of information without encouragement
- ❖ leading rehearsals
- ❖ reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses in a particular area,
- ❖ and finding their own performance situations (including getting paid gigs)

#### Resourceful

Students could be expected to produce work independent of teacher instruction, using whatever resources they have available. Resources could include using books, the internet, other students, tutors and people in the wider community. In Music this could, for example, include:

- ❖ sourcing their own performance music
- ❖ researching composers
- ❖ making flash cards to learn musical terms
- ❖ testing each other on aural skills.

#### Reliable

Students could be expected to show that they are consistently able to manage their behaviour and work. This can include having the correct gear, handing work in on time, contributing to group situations, and being able to peer tutor. In Music this could be shown through students regularly attending rehearsals, both punctually and prepared. Regular goal setting, creating a practice schedule, keeping a performance journal or log are just a few methods that can aid students into developing the skills associated with being reliable.

#### Resilient

Through developing resilience students could be expected to learn from constructive criticisms in ongoing feedback, and work towards self-improvement for further assessment. Students who

are resilient move quickly to solve problems and can adjust easily to new situations. In Music this could include situations such as:

- ❖ setting goals to overcome difficulties in their own performance
- ❖ backing up computer files to ensure security of work
- ❖ attending tutorials to increase understanding
- ❖ working successfully with a variety of other students in group situations

### **What we could see from students of Music - Sound Arts**

Students who manage themselves are enterprising, resourceful, reliable, and resilient. They establish personal goals, make plans, manage projects, and set high standards. They have strategies for meeting challenges. They know when to lead, when to follow, and when and how to act independently.

### **Using managing self as a school wide initiative**

Many schools already have various forms of initiative to help students manage themselves. Often these are targeted at specific behaviours, such as turning up to class on time, wearing the school uniform correctly, keeping a school homework diary, or having cellphones in the bag and switched off. Many schools offer a Study Skills programme to their students to help with work and study skills, and to encourage students to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses.

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The following ideas help explore aspects of being able to relate to others, and give some examples of how this might be applied in learning in, through and about Music–Sound Arts.

## **Relating to others**

Relating to others is about interacting effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts. This competency includes the ability to listen actively, recognise different points of view, negotiate, and share ideas.

Relating to others is an area of learning where knowledge cannot be transferred directly, but rather one that students come to know as they experience knowledge building. In Music opportunities for students to explore the use of relationship skills are particularly evident in Group Performance standards, and this competency can also be fostered in other standards and class activities.

Curriculum links for the ideas in this section are:

- *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*: Strands PK, CI, DI, UC;
- NCEA Music Achievement Standards: All – with a focus on group performance
- Unit Standards Music: All – with a focus on group performance
- Unit Standards Performing Arts Technology and Music Technology: All - with a focus on US12823, US23729, US12825

## **Processes involved in relating to others**

### **Listening Actively**

Listening actively involves participation from the listener. Without active listening, relationships with others are less likely to be successful.

A student who is actively listening may exhibit some of the following skills or abilities; to positively contribute to group discussion, makes insightful and relevant observations, gives non-verbal responses (such as nodding the head) while listening, and has an ability to summarise what they have heard.

Activities in Music that can encourage active listening skills can include:

- ❖ producing a text in response to focused listening
- ❖ practising and performing in a group context, or with an accompanist, in order to respond musically to intentions of the composer, conductor, leader, or other musicians
- ❖ setting up sound equipment to assist and compliment those using it

### **Recognising different points of view**

Being able to recognise that there can be more than one point of view on a topic or issue, allows students to understand one another better, and also helps in the construction of more robust essays, discussions and debates.

Activities in Music where this skill is fostered can include:

- ❖ discussions, giving personal opinions about a piece of music
- ❖ writing a review of a concert or recording
- ❖ exploring and researching the context of quotes
- ❖ observation of and feedback on performances
- ❖ exploring reactions to sounds through social, cultural and historical context
- ❖ using context to gain a greater understanding of different genres and periods of music

### **Negotiating**

Negotiation is a way of communicating ideas and possibly compromising to reach a resolution. As a developed skill students are able to recognise different points of view, and find a way forward. This skill is particularly valuable when working as a group.

In Music negotiation is commonly used in preparing for group performance. It encompasses aspects such as choice of music, gaining access to practise rooms and allocation of roles and parts to members of the group. Negotiation occurs not only between students, but also between teacher and student(s). Students can negotiate their performance times, performance choices, research topics and questions, and, occasionally, their due dates.

### **Sharing Ideas**

Sharing an idea is useful way for a student to increase their ability to interact with others, and they can also gain a wider perspective on their own work.

An area in music where students often appreciate the opportunity to share their work with their peers is composition. While at the senior level of music students need to be working individually on their compositions, feedback from other students, teachers and composers is a valuable step in developing ideas and communicating intentions. One way of managing this is through a composition workshop. At a junior level group composition can be encouraged. This is, after all, how many rock bands create their original music. Sharing expands a composer's

understanding of different instruments and how to incorporate diverse creative ideas to a single cohesive composition.

### **What we could see from students of Music - Sound Arts**

Students who relate well to others are open to new learning and able to take different roles in different situations. They are aware of how their words and actions affect others. They know when it is appropriate to compete and when it is appropriate to co-operate. By working effectively together, they can come up with new approaches, ideas, and ways of thinking.

### **Using ‘relating to others’ as a school wide initiative**

A focus schools can adopt, and many already have, is a strong emphasis on a student’s contribution to the greater life of a school. This can involve joining a musical, cultural, sporting, chess, debating or academic based activities. The development of an effective student leadership system are areas where students with good relationship skills become role models to other students, and through their interactions with the wider student body, they have a positive effect on students aspiring to greater skills in this area.

Schools may also look to include more group activities in their junior programmes, allowing students to interact with each other in a learning environment.

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The following ideas help explore aspects of participation and contribution, and gives examples of how this might be applied in learning in, through and about Music–Sound Arts.

## **Participating and contributing**

This competency is about being actively involved in various communities - school, family, regional, national and international. Music outside the classroom naturally lends itself to this key competency, as students can opt to give up their time to participate in co-curricular events, and contribute to the sharing of music both within the school and wider community. Classroom Music also has areas where students can have the opportunity to develop these skills.

Curriculum links for the ideas in this section are:

- *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*: Strands PK, CI, DI, UC;
- NCEA Music Achievement Standards: All – with a focus on performance
- Unit Standards Music: All – with a focus on performance
- Unit Standards Performing Arts Technology and Music Technology: All - with a focus on US12823, US23729, US12825

## **Participating and contributing in Music – Sound Arts**

### **Actively involved and Participants in a range of life contexts**

Music – Sound Arts is a learning area that student participation and contribution is vital for meaningful and successful learning to occur. Students who actively engage in practical work are better able to contextualise theoretical learning. Participating and contributing gives students opportunities to share work and ideas with others. Students, to some degree, are required to participate and contribute in order to complete their own work and assessments. Developing

these skills beyond the minimum for success allows them to access a greater variety of learning opportunities, and to gain feedback from others.

Some ideas for encouraging participation and contribution from a classroom environment in Music can include:

- ❖ encouraging students to express personal opinions through composition, (e.g. writing a protest song)
- ❖ encouraging classroom discussion over a listening activity
- ❖ peer assessing work
- ❖ work-shopping compositions and arrangements

In a performance setting students could be encouraged by activities such as:

- ❖ performing in assemblies
- ❖ making performance assessments open to families, the school community or to the general public
- ❖ having monthly lunch time concerts showcasing student work, both in performance and composition.

The venues for performances could lie within school or in the local community (e.g. local rest home, church.) These activities could be either ongoing or summative assessment for solo or group performance, and even for performance of compositions.

“Singing, for example is a significant experience as a group of learners. Playing in a musical group for example requires co-operation, leadership, discipline and artistic endeavour. Active participation in music learning activities supports a positive, reflective, appreciative environment where all contributions are accountable to a communal outcome. The music making experience is therefore one of true co-operative learning where the work produced is reliant on the interdependency and interrelationships of each and every participant.”

- O’Conner, P., & Dunmill, M. (2005). *Key competencies and the arts in the New Zealand curriculum.*

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/content/download/509/3834/file/nzcmp-0805.doc>

### **Contributors to the well-being of New Zealand**

‘By making, sharing, and responding to music, students contribute to the cultural life of their schools, whānau, peer groups, and communities. As they engage with and develop knowledge and deeper understandings of music, they draw on cultural practices and on histories, theories, structures, technologies, and personal experiences.’

- NZ Curriculum Document Music – Sound Arts Statement

Students of Music – Sound Arts have the opportunity to contribute culturally to various communities. They also have the opportunity to gain employment in a position related to music, and are able to contribute economically to society. Many musicians across the world have become advocates for environmental issues, from Dave Dobbyn’s ‘Whaling’ to Bono’s repeated calls to support Greenpeace activities and planting of trees. Students can become aware of environmental issues through the study of music works and composers, and can themselves contribute to environmental, either as composers or by participating in other environmental activities inspired by music and musicians.

## **What we could see from students of Music - Sound Arts**

Students who participate and contribute in communities have a sense of belonging and the confidence to participate within new contexts. They understand the importance of balancing rights, roles, and responsibilities and of contributing to the quality and sustainability of social, cultural, physical, and economic environments.

## **Using ‘participating and contributing’ as a school wide initiative**

As with relating others schools can adopt, and many already have, a strong emphasis on students participating in school activities and groups. Schools could look at new ways to interact with their local communities or wider communities. This could either involve students representing school in such communities, or inviting members of communities into school.

Support from a school could include:

- ❖ allowing students to attend various concerts, games, or functions during school hours
- ❖ assisting with funding or locating funding for students to be able to participate in events and groups occurring outside the classroom
- ❖ sourcing interested adult support to allow students to participate in a wide range of activities

Student leadership is another area a school could look at developing further to encourage all students to participate and contribute more widely in community activities. This can be achieved by supporting student driven events, such as Stage Challenge, 40 Hour Famine, Relay for Life, fundraising for charities, international food and cultural festivals, lunchtime concerts etc.

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