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Gendering the Musical idea: defining musical value in classroom composition

Dr Victoria Armstrong

Keynote address, December 2012, Grieg Academy of Music, Bergen, Norway.

Setting the scene

The importance of practical musical-making in music education has long been recognised as central to a child's musical development, in terms of musical understanding, development of knowledge and with regard to providing opportunities to facilitate a particular form of musical creativity through improvisation and, more recently, composition. And composers and music educators such as Carl Orff and his 'Orff Instruments' in the late 1920s and John Paynter in the 1960s and 70s (and beyond) were some of the earliest proponents who believed passionately about the value of giving children hands-on experience as music creators. As the composer and jazz pianist Julian Joseph notes studying composition is valuable not only in its own right but because of the insight it gives into music itself (2009: 237) stating that, 'to know what a thing is, to understand how it works, involves a sense of how it is made'.

In fact, reflecting on my own early experiences of music in the 1970s I can see how the work of Orff and Paynter shaped the approaches my teacher took to incorporating music into the classroom (and this was long before it became part of the National Curriculum, that wasn't until 1988). I went to a small rural Primary School in the South West of England which consisted of two rooms. One was allocated to the infants (4-7) and the other was for the juniors (where all children from 8 to 11 were taught together in the same room by one teacher). I recall the smaller of the two rooms being stuffed full of Orff's tone bar instruments - chime bars, glockenspiels, xylophones, the odd bit of percussion (most of which we made ourselves - shakers, drums and the like). When I think back to those experiences, the enduring memory was the fun and excitement of making music with other people, and being given free rein to devise our own music, often based on a story or picture provided by our teacher, Miss Lawrence. Little did we know that what we were actually doing was composing. The word wasn't used; it just seemed a normal part of our school week - to make music and make up music of our own.

However, little did I know then that this was to be my only experience of composition throughout my entire musical life. The music syllabus I followed at secondary school between the ages of 11-18 did not include improvisation or composition at that time. And certainly, during my four years at a Music Conservatoire training as a Classical Singer, my brief experience of 'improvisation' was in a one semester jazz module which involved working out jazz chords on keyboards in the 'piano lab' - the experience, as I recall, was neither particularly creative nor musically satisfying. My experience of studying and playing music as a singer and pianist, and flautist consisted of a rather limited diet of Western Classical Music. Music which constituted a canon of 'masterworks', and which has come to be considered as representing the highest pinnacle of musical value being highly innovative, original and therefore considered worthy of detailed study and attention. Furthermore, this exemplification of the best of the Western Classical Tradition is further distinguished by the fact that all of the music I played had been composed by a White Western male. But I never questioned this at the time.

However, a growing interest in and facility for performing contemporary music provided me with my first encounter with a female composer, which involved learning Judith Weir's unaccompanied mini-opera 'King Harald's Saga' from memory for my audition to undertake postgraduate study at the Banff Centre in Canada. Having completed my formal music education at the age of 24 and graduating from Music College this was the first female composer I had ever performed or studied, as I came to find out for myself there were quite a few them, both past and present. Therefore, my musical education had to all intents

and purposes air-brushed women composers from my musical life, and, with hindsight, what is perhaps most troubling is that this was never challenged or critically addressed by any of my instrumental teachers, my school teachers or my conservatoire professors. As far as they were concerned, they just didn't exist, or they may have felt their work wasn't of sufficient merit to warrant serious study – and the period I'm talking about takes us up to the early 1990s.

So, let's skip forward some twenty years and see how this situation now stands with regard to composition and the representation of women composers in formal music education. Firstly, on a positive note, composing is now a core part of the music curriculum in England and Wales, and has been since the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. I think it's probably safe to say that its place in the music curriculum is now assured (and in other countries too such as the USA, Canada and Australia) but there are still on-going debates (some of which I will return to later) about how best to 'teach' composing. On a less positive note, there appears to be very little that has changed regarding the presence and acknowledgement of women composers in formal music education. Looking at the current syllabus requirements of the GCSE (the General Certificate of Secondary Education which pupils take at 16) and the Advanced or A level which is studied between the ages of 16-18 in preparation for University Entrance, women composers and women performers rarely, if ever, feature in the anthology of 'set works' that students are expected to study. For example, one of the four 'areas of study' for the GCSE exam is Western Classical Music 1600-1899. It includes the usual suspects: Mozart, Chopin, Handel, Beethoven et al, but equally it could have incorporated music by Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann or the early works of Amy Beach or Cecile Chaminade. In Area 2, called 'Music in the 20th century', the music fare here includes Schoenberg, Reich, Bernstein, Webern but there are an abundance of riches when it comes music written by women in the C20th which have not found their way into this anthology. Why not Elizabeth Maconchy, Nicola Lefanu, Ruth Gipps, Sofia Gubaidulina, Pauline Oliveros, Ruth Crawford Seegar, or Nadia Boulanger (also a renowned composition teacher whose pupils included Philip Glass, the late Elliott Carter, Thea Musgrave and Aaron Copland). I could go on, but I think you get the point.

Gender and Composition

So, moving now towards a critical discussion of gender and composition, why does the canon continue to hold such sway in contemporary music education and why do male composers continue to dominate music syllabi in formal music contexts? A prolific period of feminist writing about music in the late 1980s and 1990s drew attention to some critical issues regarding the subordination and marginalization of women's music (LePage, 1980; Neuls-Bates, 1982; Bowers and Tick, 1987; Shepherd, 1987; Pendle, 1991; McClary, 1991; Citron, 1993; Solie, 1993; Cook and Tsou, 1994; Dunn and Jones, 1994; Jezic, 1994; Halstead, 1997 'The woman composer: creativity and the gendered politics of musical composition'). For the first time musicology cast its critical gaze on how gendered ideologies are constructed and maintained through various musical practices. These texts acted as a long awaited corrective to the hitherto unchallenged supremacy of hegemonic masculinity that underpin discourses about music. However, while we now have a far better understanding of the historical, social and psychological reasons given for women's marginalisation from the Western Musical Canon, as Burnard (2012) notes in her recent book 'Musical Creativities in Practice 'the idea of Great Performances of Great Works by Great Composers persists as a historically specific ideology' and has resulted in a concept of the 'masterwork' which celebrates both the 'sacred and fetishized formal act of composition', and the cult of the male Romantic stereotypical composer.

In summary, composition has and continues to be associated with masculinity. This is due to the historical and social construction of composing as male because the act of composition is typified by a focus on technical knowledge, expertise, rationality and mental logic, attributes which supposedly characterize men and masculinity. Within Western thought, the

dualisms that construct the oppositional male/female, mind/body, reason/emotion, culture/nature split reproduces this gendered discourse, a way of thinking about the world that results in common-sense notions of 'how things are'. Take this example from Paul Ableman's 'The Doomed Rebellion (1983), where he accounts for women's perceived lesser capacity for creativity as determined by biological difference. Because a man cannot be 'biologically creative' and therefore have babies, he is:

driven to fulfil his creativity 'out there'.... A woman may go 'out there' but part of her is always tempted back towards the womb and the future, and the divided impulse, which blunts her culturally creative drive, and is undoubtedly the reason why so few women ever produce major cultural contributions.

Such perspectives polarize masculinity and femininity and we construct musical experiences and meanings through this gendered lens. In her seminal work on gender and music education, Green (1997) argued that there are two distinct aspects of musical meaning, the first of which lies within the organization and conventional interrelationships of the musical materials. These *inherent* musical meanings are part of the listener's learnt understandings of how musical materials relate to each other. In addition, the listener also brings other experiences to bear on the music such as their own cultural and social position or perception of the performer (such as appropriate mode of dress, for example). These *delineated* meanings operate dialectically with music's inherent meanings and, whether consciously or not, our listening experiences are never devoid of these meanings. If we then apply this to how we construct gendered musical meanings, Green argues that when we see a woman performing or listen to the work of a female composer her femininity becomes part of the music's delineations. However, whereas the female singer affirms her femininity through the perceived alliance of her sound with her body, devoid of the need to control or employ external forms of technology, the female composer challenges patriarchal notions of femininity. In order to create the technical object (music), the composer must have technical knowledge of instruments and harmony in order to create the musical work, as well as an understanding of both technology and compositional technique leading Green to suggest that composition becomes a 'metaphorical display of the mind' (ibid: 84). Therefore, 'part of the musical delineation includes the notion of the mind behind the music, and part of the notion of mind is that it is masculine' (ibid: 88). A similar point is made by Citron (1993) who also argues that the male appropriation of creativity relies on this ideology that links creativity to the mental, although this may appear contrary to how we perceive the arts as they are understood as dealing with emotions; emotions one would expect to be grounded in the natural body and thus 'feminized'. As such, 'feminine emotion' must be supplanted by the 'rational' masculine mind; rational knowledge that transcends and subordinates 'feminine' emotions. However, even though the male creative genius is allowed to take on these 'feminised' attributes, Battersby (1989) argues that, when applied to females, these attributes are not accorded the same status. As Green observes this can result in femininity being defined by attributes such as passivity and emotionality, while masculinity is defined as active, rational, inventive, experimental and scientific.

Battersby (1989: 32) observes that:

The progress of women in the arts has been like the slow, sideways progress of a crab towards the sea: a crab that keeps being picked up by malicious pranksters and placed back somewhere high on the beach... Our present criteria for artistic excellence have their origin in theories that specifically and explicitly denied women genius. We still associate the great artists with certain (male) personality-types, certain (male) social roles, and certain (male) energies... Women who want to create must still manipulate aesthetic concepts taken from a mythology and biology that were profoundly anti-female. Similarly, the achievements of women who have

managed to create are obscured by an ideology that associates cultural achievement with the activities of males.

Turning our attention to the classroom

So, as I have outlined in some detail, gendered ideologies within Western art music continue to inform notions of what constitutes a composer and this composer is invariably male. Drawing on data gathered from a study of four schools in London and the South East of England over a six month period, in the next part of my talk, I will show how these constructions continue to conflate masculinity with the appropriation of creativity and artistic ability which, in the music education classroom, can prevent girls' work and working processes being accorded value. I will do this through an examination of the gendered discourses underpinning teachers' perspectives of deviance and conformity when students are working with teacher-generated musical models and stimuli. Through an analysis of the experiences of two pupils in one particular school, I will then go on to look at how this is reinforced by teachers' different levels of 'interference' in male and female students' compositions in ways which conflate deviance with musical value thereby reinforcing normative assumptions about femininity and masculinity.

It is worth pointing out at this point that the actual focus of my original research from which this data is taken was on gender as it related to digitally mediated compositional process. I hadn't anticipated that there would be a gendered dimension to the way students were expected to compose using existing musical models but it turned out to be a key theme in the students' narratives of their compositional processes.

Firstly, I will briefly outline the educational debates about the appropriation of musical styles, ideas and models as a starting point for students' composition and then demonstrate how this practise has a highly gendered dimension which contributes to perceptions of gendered musical value. Bunting (2002) has noted that the thorny notion of 'originality', considered so important in Western composition as epitomised by it, is deeply problematic if this is the only criteria by which we assess the value and quality of young people's compositions. In line with the report issued by the National Advisory Committee on Creativity and Cultural Education in 1999, it has been suggested that there are different categories of originality: individual, in that it may be original in relation to that person's previous work, relative, in that it could be considered original in relation to the work of their peers, or historic, or what Anna Craft would call 'Big C' creativity where the work is deemed original in relation to anyone's previous output. This is particularly important to keep in mind when teachers are making value judgements about their pupils' work. Long before composing became compulsory in the music curriculum, Plummeridge, in the early 1980s had questioned the educational value of using appropriated musical ideas from other composers' work although, as we know, this approach has a long tradition in how composition is taught because, as Paterson and Odam (2000:38) have noted, 'learning by copying has a noble precedent'; and certainly pastiche is valuable for developing students' understanding of a style or a musical language. Glover (2000) also expresses her concerns arguing that, despite teachers' beliefs that children come into school trying to compose without musical models, children do have a wide range of experiences of musical models acquired through enculturation and it is the teacher's task to uncover what pupils bring with them into the classroom rather than imposing a set of musical models and values. Enculturation is not about musical training and skill but about children's musical development in relation to their sense of the music around them and how they wish their own compositions to relate to this (Sloboda, 1985, cited in Glover, 2000). This leads Glover to assert that '... it is when they [*the children*] come up with their own ideas for what the music will be that it becomes most meaningful to them' (2000: 27). Starting a new piece from scratch is a challenge all composers must face, but invention and generation of musical materials is obviously a fundamental starting point for any composer and yet teachers, guided by music syllabus requirements, invariably appropriate musical materials as a basis for a compositional activity.

And yet, this practice, while educationally and musically dubious, underpins the current composition coursework requirements for music. Students are required to produce three pieces. Two of the compositions must be in contrasting styles, one of which should be from the Western Classical Tradition and one must use techniques and conventions from music of the C20th and C21st (usually minimalism or serialism). For one of their compositions, they have four musical briefs, i.e. the beginning of a piece, which they are expected to complete in a musically appropriate style (it could be a chord sequence, it could be a melody, but they have to use this as their starting point). They are encouraged to draw on the music they have studied in their 'anthologies of set works' which, as I observed earlier, is dominated by the work of Western male composers. Only one of their submissions is a 'free' composition.

My findings showed that working with musical ideas provided by teachers elicited similarly negative responses from both boys and girls. Although some students stated they liked the boundaries provided by a given musical idea the majority saw such stimuli as removing a sense of ownership or pride in their work, as Carolyn passionately stated:

Carolyn: I find if you're given an idea and told to stick with that idea, then I'm like 'But I didn't want to go in that way', so, you're always proud of yourself when you come away with a composition that sounds sort of good but then you do sort of, there's not much emotional attachment to the piece. I suppose that's a bit of shame because that's what music's about for me.

This sense of 'emotional attachment', pride and self-expression were very strong themes in the girls' comments about their work from all four schools and, similar to Carolyn's remark, having written a piece of music based on your own ideas was crucial in producing a meaningful and satisfying musical experience:

VA: The stuff that you compose. What do you think its purpose is, apart from fulfilling coursework obligations?

Joanne: Well, I suppose it has got some kind of meaning in it. The things you do from scratch or something is more meaningful because it's something you've started from the beginning but if you've got, you're like told to do something along these lines, it's not as meaningful because you've been told like half of what you're supposed to do. (GCSE girl, Old Tech Grammar)

Deviance and conformity

The girls' comments suggest that these compositional constraints disrupt their sense of ownership and pride in their work, and yet, they have particular resonance here as they relate to teachers' gendered constructions of deviance and conformity. As Walkerdine (1990) observed in her study of gender in the mathematics classroom not only is boys bad behaviour downplayed by teachers but 'being naughty' is actually turned into a positive attribute linked to an assumption of masculine creativity whereby boys are seen as 'independent, brilliant, proper thinkers' unlike girls who are 'described as lacking the qualities boys possess'. They are no trouble, but then their lack of naughtiness is also a lack of spark, fire and brilliance' (ibid: 127). Green (1997: 200) makes a similar observation in relation to music composition '... where feminine conformity is taken to be a symptom of a lack of compositional ability and a dull musical mind, whilst, conversely, masculine non-conformity is understood to be a source of inventiveness and creativity'. It is precisely *because* boys play wrong notes, do not stick to set forms and 'experiment' more that teachers perceive them as having more imagination and compositional ability compared to girls. Girls are perceived as better at 'getting down to work' and tend to work harder but this is given as a causal explanation for their lack of autonomy and creativity (ibid: 198). Girls' qualities (of working

hard and being quiet) are unfavourably compared to the creative and inventive qualities teachers attribute to boys that make them successful at composing. As one teacher commented, girls are more interested in 'writing things down and getting it right' but boys 'would rather be creative and not bother learning how to write/record work' (ibid: 197).

This is certainly borne out in my findings which suggest that providing pupils with a musical idea has highly gendered connotations, due to the fact that teachers' value judgements regarding how conformity and deviance are perceived had a strong gendered dimension. Whereas male pupils' 'deviance' is accommodated and encouraged by the teachers, female pupils are not always accorded the same degree of autonomy. Interestingly, as the above discussion shows, the issue of providing musical ideas elicited uniformly negative comments from virtually all the pupils interviewed but boys and girls responded differently to set tasks and boys were far more likely to deviate from the given material.

Accommodating deviance

From the observations and interviews carried out in my four schools, there was evidence to suggest that when boys deviated from the music stimulus they were more likely to go unchallenged thereby affirming assumptions about boys' supposedly greater creativity and imagination as composers. The teacher's acceptance of their deviance appears to feed back into the boys' perceptions of themselves as creative, musically autonomous individuals and becomes, in Green's (1997) terms, affirmatory of their masculinity. This was certainly borne out in the ways that boys' and girls' deviance was perceived and accommodated by the teachers within my study. For example Robert, a GCSE student at Old Tech Grammar, asserted that he could not compose if he was given an idea because 'it sort of like pressurizes me. It's like saying you *have* to do this'. His strategy was to completely subvert the nature of the task that was set and, despite some initial misgivings by the teacher he was allowed to continue to write what he wanted:

VA: Do you stick to that [*the musical idea*] or do you try to change it?

Robert: I have an example of that. He [*Mr Clarke*] gave me, gave everyone this piece called 'Summertime' and we had to do an arrangement of it and um, mine was not 'Summertime' at all by the end of it. It's now like a sort of a club-dance remix style thing which he didn't like very much. He wanted to hear the actual tune but I'd changed every bit of it: the tune, the rhythm. He tried to make me re-do it but no-one else re-done it so I didn't re-do it. (*GCSE boy, Old Tech Grammar*)

Robert uses the idea of stimulus and the concept of an 'arrangement' very loosely and, even when challenged by the teacher, he refuses to change it. I asked his music teacher about this during his interview. He stated that, 'No, it wasn't what was set and I didn't really like it but Robert is very creative and he tends to produce really good pieces'. The teacher's perception of Robert's deviance (both musically and in terms of attitude, by refusing to acquiesce to the teacher's instruction to re-write his composition) becomes a sign of his creativity in the eyes of teacher and, furthermore, his deviance is tolerated because his music is accorded *value*. As such, 'deviance' and 'value' enter into the discursive construction of masculinity but are not part of the discursive construction of femininity characterized by conformity, diligence and is non-innovatory. (Green, 1997).

Deviance and musical value

I will now to illustrate this conflation of deviance with musical value through a case study of two pupils at Crossways Independent School: Luke, a 15 year old male GCSE student, and Carolyn, a 17 year old A Level student. Initially, from the classroom observations it appeared that there was a high degree of flexibility in working with the given stimulus. Having spent a

GCSE lesson reviewing Indonesian scales, the class teacher, Mr Trevor, told the pupils to use the notes of the scales they have just been looking at as a starting point for their own Gamelan compositions and the following exchange then took place:

The teacher says ‘I’ll let you into a secret, I wasn’t sure how much I wanted you to know beforehand about writing a Gamelan piece’. Luke asks does he mean ‘not being tied down?’ The teacher says he wants them to be ‘open to their own inspiration’ [...] Luke asks about the time signature; he wants to use 19/2 but then says he wants to write it in 19/4. He says he’ll try it and the teacher supports this idea and says it will naturally subdivide into smaller blocks. (Field notes, first GCSE observation, 28 February 2003).

After the lesson Mr Trevor and I met in the staff room and I was keen to explore his views about pupils’ compositional process. He stated that he believed in allowing the pupils as much freedom as possible and did not insist on them writing ‘strict pastiche’ of any particular type of music because it was better for pupils to ‘play around and see what happens’, as evidenced by his support for Luke’s inclination to experiment with the rhythmic elements of the piece. On the surface, this seemed an extremely positive scenario. However, after carrying out further observations and interviewing the pupils, I began to realize that what I had witnessed was indeed the teacher’s tolerance and accommodation of deviance but that it was more likely to be accorded to male pupils.

Upon my introductory first visit to the school where I was introduced to the pupils, Mr Trevor pointed Luke out as ‘an extremely good composer’ informing me that both his parents were professional musicians and that Luke was very talented. No claims were made for Carolyn’s abilities when I subsequently visited my first AS level class (also taught by Mr Trevor) but I found out that she had achieved an A Grade for GCSE music in her previous school and had been awarded consistently high grades for her compositions. When asked if he had noticed any differences in the way pupils composed using music technology, Mr Trevor stated that he tried not to impose too many restrictions on pupils during the early stages of their compositions because ‘The fewer rules I give them the quicker they work and also the better they work. I mean, this isn’t true of everybody of course. I mean, it’s absolutely true of the most gifted’. It was noticeable that, when applied to Luke, the ‘rules’ were exceedingly flexible both in terms of musical parameters and how he occupied his time. He was given a high degree of autonomy in composition classes, often not composing at all. His minimal compositional activity in class, although commented upon, was tolerated because he was seen as a gifted composer:

Mr Trevor: Luke [...] quite likes to be cool and waste his time on Friday afternoons and mess around and then basically produces fantastic pieces, you know [...] I wish he would focus more during lesson time but, if he’s composing and bringing the work in to show me so it’s not so important that he should be actually visibly engaged in work on Friday afternoons.

This teacher’s attitude towards Luke played a very strong part in Luke’s construction of himself as a gifted composer. He was also acutely aware that the teacher’s tolerance of his slack attitude on Friday afternoons was connected with this:

VA: When you do have a brief from the teacher, to what extent do you stick to it?

Luke: If I’m doing my own work then I’ll stick to it exactly but I don’t really, that’s the only time I might [...] Well unless I do it and change it and

then it sounds awful then I'll put it to how it originally was and I'll save it but normally I'll change it.

VA: You don't ever feel constrained by the fact that you've been given a melody or a harmony framework or whatever?

Luke: I'm not given a melody or harmony because, I don't know, well, I think some people are but I'm not sure I'm *expected* to stick to it. I dunno.

VA: What do you mean?

Luke: Well, I don't think, I mean, apparently anyway I'm much further ahead than anyone in the class or the year for music so I dunno, I'm just kind of left to potter about and see what happens really. Yeah, I dunno really. If I find something that sounds really nice the teacher won't make me change it because it's not exactly what he wanted [...] I've also convinced him that playing the guitar during lessons is also a definition of work!

This last sentence refers to what Luke usually did in the Friday afternoon lessons I observed.

This scenario contrasts sharply with the teacher's attitude towards Carolyn. Composition was viewed quite favourably by all pupils at this school and, like Luke, Carolyn was a particularly keen composer often working with her brother's sequencing software at home and appeared to be trying hard to forge a strong compositional identity. In her interview she expressed consistent and very clear ideas about the music she wanted to write. However, unlike Luke, Carolyn was not viewed as a particularly gifted composer by Mr Trevor and he would often become frustrated with what he saw as her 'inability to move ideas forward':

Carolyn: Yeah, um, I'd say I'm really satisfied with the Minimalist style but I feel a bit, with the song I wrote that it's sort of, not to be rude about the teacher but I sort of felt it went off in the direction that he wanted it to go in and not so much in the direction that I wanted it to go in. And I felt it's sort of come away slightly sounding like popular music mixed with a Renaissance dance which sounds slightly bizarre. I still like it but it's just I don't feel that it was really what I wanted to write.

VA: How did that happen?

Carolyn: I think it was just because, I've got to do a middle eight section of the composition and I think he [*Mr Trevor*] was trying to show me how to do this by doing this composition with me and I think it sort of, he had to kind of show me how to do certain things, [*so*] it meant that it went in a different direction. Um, I started with a very good idea for the song but then I hit a hard wall sort of thing. I hit a barrier and it's quite hard for me to get over that and that was the point at which the teacher's influence on the piece came in because he was getting quite frustrated that I wasn't getting on with this piece and I was finding it quite difficult getting on with the piece so he just went 'Well, do this, do that, think about the instruments coming in there' and giving me these ideas and I just went with them because I couldn't think of anything else to do. Um and I think that meant that it came out sort of with quite a lot of his ideas.

Despite her best efforts, Carolyn was not afforded an autonomous compositional identity, unlike Luke. While teachers need to be on hand to provide advice and assistance, in this case, it appears that this tipped over into something more akin to teacher *interference*. This was rooted in the teacher's perception of Carolyn's assumed lack of ability and his significant compositional input into her piece prevented Carolyn from developing and showing her skills

as a composer. Rather than offering her a range of possibilities about how to progress, he removed all possibility of compositional autonomy from her, asserting his own compositional ideas and identity on her work. The time and flexibility accorded to the compositionally gifted Luke was not equally accorded to the apparently compositionally ungifted Carolyn. This could be said to reflect the persistent Romantic legacy which we find personified in the individual accomplishments of the Great male 'genius' Composer, which Burnard (2012) argues results in a 'concept of musical creativity' which embodies the ideal 'of music autonomy, ownership, authorship, and authority' (p. 9) and originality. Rather problematically, as Burnard (2012: 10) rightly observes this 'Western conception of musical creativity increasingly underpins the values and norms for measuring and standardising the assessment of composition'; such ideologies, when reproduced by teachers' utilisation of these value judgements, can prove devastating for those whose work falls outside of this narrow, and highly gendered remit for what constitutes a composer.

Another example of how these gendered ideologies were played out in the classroom can be seen in how the teacher accommodated Luke's assertion that he was not able to compose at school because he had a 'creative block'. He said he was currently playing around with a chord sequence at home for a 'much bigger piece than anything I've really tried to do before' that would be scored for guitar, double bass, string quartet and percussion. The teacher also commented on Luke's intention to write this 'ambitious' piece and was happy to let him work this out in his own time even if this resulted in significant indolence on Luke's part during composition lessons. Citron (1993: 60) asserts that the musical education required to become a composer reflects ideologies about the kinds of training needed to produce certain kinds of music; the type of music that embodies the value of the musical canon and has tended to privilege 'largeness: more notes, more sound sources, more performers, more volume'. Luke's ambitions to write a large-scale piece appears to reflect this privileging of male knowledge, supported by the implicit value judgement from the teacher that informs his relaxed approach towards Luke's classroom activities. In addition, the teacher's attitude towards Luke evokes earlier descriptions of the male creative genius of the nineteenth century who embodies the values of originality, authenticity and spontaneity. But, as Battersby points out (ibid: 15), this is an evaluative term whereby the 'genius' is judged valuable in terms of his contribution to art and culture and these will be *male* standards on which judgements are made. These judgements also accord with the notion of 'professionalism' which comes with a number of assumptions about the identity of the composer - that the professional composer will be male as the presumed repository of knowledge and skill, requiring cerebral control (Citron, 1993) and is certainly evident in the teacher's construction of Luke:

Mr Trevor: As long as he's here and kind of thinking about it and vaguely thinking about what everyone else is talking about then actually, well for an adult we would allow that to be a vital part of the process so why on earth should that not be for a fifteen year old?

Echoing Luke's appraisal of his approach to composition, Carolyn stated that 'I generally have to sit down and think about what I'm gonna do' to work on new ideas but this was perceived by Mr Trevor as her 'always leaving things to the last minute'. Although both Carolyn and Luke appear to work best when starting from their own ideas, requiring significant amounts of time to let ideas ferment, Luke is granted the privileges of an adult male professional composer because he produces 'fantastic pieces'. However, Carolyn, whose compositions were not considered particularly noteworthy, was not accorded the same status and this had serious consequences for her identity as a composer as this poignant comment illustrates:

Carolyn: I'm one of those people who tends to go off in their own direction and I get quite passionate about going off in my own direction. I'm not, I don't really like being told that it has to do this or sound this so I'm finding it quite frustrating when you realize you don't really have much choice in it and that it has to be this and that and so, dunno. I mean, the whole point of composition for me is letting out the creative side [...] and then I'm like 'But I didn't want to go in that way', so I found with my song, because that was setting a poem to music, putting it into a song and I went away and spent a lot of time thinking about the poem that I was going to put in and the main melody and how that was going to reflect the poem and the feelings I felt came from that poem and that sort of, I wouldn't say it got lost but it's not clear now, so I think that's quite disappointing. There's not really a lot I can do about it.

This detailed discussion of Luke and Carolyn mirrors the observations made by other researchers highlighted earlier suggesting that boys' deviance is viewed positively as a sign of independence and creativity. As Citron (1993: 45) observes, 'patriarchal society has captured the concept of creativity and deployed it as a powerful means of silencing women'. Carolyn has certainly been silenced: her 'very good idea' transmuted into something that was not hers, and neither she nor her ideas appeared to be valued.

Concluding remarks

So, some concluding thoughts. Despite the relatively small numbers of young people opting to study formal music in school after the age of 14 in the UK, a growing number sadly seeing school music as having little relevance to their lives (around 67,000 took GCSE music last year, and around 18,500 took A level music and for Music Tech 2556 boys and 476 girls), music education still plays an important formative role for many. It should be an important stepping stone into lifelong participation in music, it should foster a curiosity and enthusiasm for all types of music but it should also provide opportunities for young people to experiment and find their own particular musical 'voice' and develop a strong musical identity which affirms their sense of self. Perhaps, for a few, it may even be the starting point for a musical life they had never envisaged for themselves.

Throughout my discussion, I have highlighted how schools act as a key site in the construction and formation of gender, with teachers playing a key role in policing the boundaries of what constitutes appropriate behaviours and expectations for males and females. While the music curriculum has certainly widened, when it comes to composition, the traditional male-dominated models of Western Classical Musical creativity still hold sway as I've highlighted in today's talk. The reproduction of these gendered values based on one particular cultural model maintains a formidable and worrying hold on how teachers, and inevitably, the young people themselves, judge which musics are of merit, whose compositions are worthy of serious consideration and who is allowed to be called and call themselves 'a composer', with all the privileges this label brings with it, regarding how we accord different levels of value to young people's compositional approaches. Teachers' normative constructions of masculinity and femininity play a large part in this. While boys' deviance is admired and encouraged for its perceived 'flair' and 'creativity', girls' deviance is configured rather differently in accordance with cultural assumptions about femininity and conformity. It may well be that some girls are more willing to rely on the guidance of the teacher due to a lack of confidence in their abilities, such as Carolyn. However, it is important to recognize that lack of confidence is not an innate aspect of feminine identity but *becomes* part of a musical feminine identity, constructed by teachers' gendered discourses of what constitutes a 'gifted' composer (who is invariably male, as in the case of Luke) and

which then reflects back, negatively, on to these young female composers. As Burnard (2012) succinctly puts it 'not all music and all musical creativities are created equal', and, as I've outlined in my talk today, there is a highly gendered dimension to this musical inequality. Music educators should seek to challenge these stereotypes and not reify and reinforce them as appears to be the case in the contemporary music classroom. I agree with Burnard when she argues we need to 'develop a pedagogy of critique'. At the outset of my talk, I noted that, throughout my formal musical education, none of my teachers ever stopped to consider why they were providing me with an unbalanced diet of music by white Western males. No-one ever challenged this imbalance, their approach to pedagogy and their repertoire ossified, stagnant and stuck in the past - the very opposite of a pedagogy of critique. I am palpably aware that I have presented a very negative and somewhat depressing vision of the gendering of compositional processes in musical education but perhaps we should not be surprised, even if we are deeply concerned and disappointed with the state of things as they appear to be. As we know, in academia, topics go in and out of fashion. In music education, as music composition increasingly relies on digital mediation, we've seen a proliferation of texts about how to use ICT in the classroom, pedagogies based on popular music are having their day in the sun, the importance of singing as central to a music education has also been on the agenda recently. While I recognise the importance of these contributions to our conversations about the state of music education today, we must maintain a focus on the sociocultural contexts in which these activities take place. They do not occur in a social vacuum, and, although there are other larger policy and curriculum issues to consider, in the first instance I would like to make a serious plea for a change in thinking regarding teacher education. It must start to pay greater attention to sociological issues in the classroom. I feel strongly that this has been squeezed out due to the increased instrumentalism of teacher education over the past fifteen years or so, based on a neoliberal model which views education as a market that thrives on competition and providing customers with ever greater choice. The constraints placed on schools and teachers in terms of league tables, classroom management issues and the pressure to 'get through' the syllabus means that gender (and also ethnicity and social class) is given too little attention in teacher training courses. Therefore, how can we expect teachers to be critical of what they are asked to teach and how can we expect them to recognise that the way they use language, the types of talk in which they engage, decisions about classroom organisation and attitudes about musical creativity are all highly gendered when they don't have the right tools to make these judgements. Without addressing this, and I see this as fundamental to what happens in music education in the future, the next generation of music teachers, taught by this current generation of music teachers will not be able to break this cycle of cultural reproduction and will therefore, inevitably, will fail in creating more equitable spaces for young people to create; rather than classrooms being spaces that devalue and ignore the creativity of all its students, there should be the possibility and the hope that they can become spaces which foster and encourage both young male and female composers equally. It is a lot of hope for, but we should continue to work towards that even if it seems an impossible task.