



Music & Psychology Research Conference:
Virtually Together (#AMPS2020)

9th October, 2020

“The notes look all blurry.” Emergent learning diversity in the instrumental music studio

Stephanie MacArthur¹, Prof Jane Davidson¹, Dr Amanda Krause^{1,2}

¹Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne

²Department of Psychology, James Cook University

When children commence instrumental music tuition, unacknowledged diversity in their learning can arise. Learning diversity refers to differential needs that children may require in order to facilitate successful musical skill development. The primary focus of this research project is an investigation of children’s lived experiences of the first 18-months of learning to play the cello and how this impacts ongoing musical development. However, an unexpected finding of the research was that across the data collection period, half of the child participants presented with issues that created extra challenges for their learning. These challenges included dyslexia, dyspraxia, suspected attention deficit disorder, learning processing disorders, anxiety and intrusive synesthesia. This paper investigates the ways that children’s learning diversity can emerge and how these challenges can compound the personal and social factors that influence children’s motivation to persist with their musical development. Specifically, this paper examines how children’s additional learning needs can be identified and accommodated by the child, teacher and parent for productive learning outcomes.