

**Seeking “Success” in Popular Music**

2013, p. 257) that are typically identified as being native to popular music (Green, 2001, 2008). As the Institute's full name implies, the primary focus for student activity is performance of popular music (I critique the conflation of terms "popular," "contemporary," and others in Smith, in press). Given that education programs in popular music are considered (even assumed) in this context to be worthwhile—they are the school's *raison d'être*—I turn my attention to assumptions that may underlie and inform educational practice, and the potential



studies” (McLaughlin, 2012, p. 12). In that edition of the newsletter, Rod Jones of Scottish rock band Idlewild gives a 245-word response to this invitation, in which he talks only about the pros and cons of popular music *performance* programs in the U.K.; he clearly appears to misunderstand the question, believing “popular music studies” to refer to the study of popular music performance, in the sense of working hard at being a performer. This is quite an understandable error, and underlines the centrality of performance in popular music to those who perform it—this does look like the most obvious way to study popular music. However, to bifurcate the two fields of “performance” and “studies” creates a false duality that is misleading because it is at odds with the experiences of popular musicians.

I have always found difficulty in conceptually separating “popular music” from “popular music performance,” since to me the former implies the latter. Without the performance there would be very little popular music (and historically, most popular music has been performed). While this is a gross over-simplification and could engender volumes of discussion, it is from this perspective that I write; being a professional drummer, I have always approached the teaching of music and writing about music and musicians as a drummer, first and foremost. I have not, as it were, left my musicianship at the door when entering the office to write or the performance classroom to teach.

Attending the inaugural meeting of the U.K. Punk Scholars Network in late 2012, it struck me that those of us who straddle McLaughlin’s “fence” are growing in number. We are reaching a point where it is no longer healthy or tenable—if it ever was—to maintain the epistemological barrier between performers and scholars. This is not to say that scholars need to be performers; but rather that academia could consider using a less divisive lens. Berger (2002) observes “a huge gap between the experience of living a normal life at this moment on the planet and the public narratives being offered to give a sense to that life” (p. 176). Musicians increasingly lead protean or portfolio careers (Bennett, 2008, 2013; Hallam & Gaunt 2012; Partti, 2012) that Burnard (2013) identifies as “boundary-less careers”; those of us working in HPMPE need to recognize this as soon as possible, or else risk holding the frame up quite a long way from the picture. Our institutions need to recognize diverse manifestations of success for musicians, and to reflect these back, through curriculum and pedagogy, to our students so that they are all the better prepared for navigating the future. Bennett (2013) asser-3 (r ) ] T 41 0 -3 (.3 ( -2 ()-K2730.24 0 0 0.24 172.3064 101.52cm BT 0s) -) -3 (.005



engaging young people with music so that they can develop into empowered and actualized members of the society. This does not need to have anything to do with winning high school band competitions or getting through to the final round of a made-for-television “reality” talent contest. These should not be taken off the table either, but a broader vision is required of *what being a musician is*—from the first years of music education, through college or university, and beyond (Mantie, in press).

### **Construing “Success” at the Institute**

Students beginning programs at the Institute usually want music to play a significant role in their futures. For the vast majority this means seeking careers in music. A browse through the promotional literature of the Institute reveals that, “At the Institute, we are constantly focused on the needs of our students ... our goal is their success!” (Institute

working in HPMPE. Students at the Institute are required to take a course in the history of popular

world or even just in London at present, and, by extension, the futility of trying to identify a definitive history of popular music.

I like to try the following exercise with my classes: I ask how many of the students in the class







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Jorgensen, E.

