Fostering the Development of Expressive Performance Skills: A Gestural Approach within the Reflective, One-to-One Piano Studio

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2017
Abstract

This study reflects on my professional practice in the one-to-one piano teaching studio through the analysis of four case studies at a pre-tertiary music school attached to a major Australian university. Each research participant’s weekly lessons were recorded over a calendar year (30–40 lessons per student). Recordings of the 130–140 lessons were viewed retrospectively, with synopses, observations and reflections diarised. A reflective journal of lessons with the initial six case studies was kept throughout the 12-month period of data collection, and two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted with the research participants and their parents. Two additional cases provided pilot material.

The research hopes to identify strategies that fostered the development of the research participants’ expressive performance skills. It also describes the kind of learning environment(s) that may encourage expressive sensibility in pianists of late elementary and early intermediate levels. Specifically, this research seeks confirmation that the working knowledge of tone production, articulation and phrasing through the adoption of expressive gesture can help young students learn to intrinsically link how they move at the piano with how they sound. The aim was that research participants would learn, with support and guidance, to expressively characterise their pieces, but still have the ability to build their own transferable knowledge base that could be applied to multi-genred repertoire in the future.

The thematic analysis of my Reflective Journal, the lesson synopses and 12 semi-structured research interviews all provide rich and complex representations of the central research question: *In what ways could expressive gesture be used to foster the expressive performance skills of late elementary and early intermediate level pre-tertiary pianists?* The data indicates that this may not be appropriate as a single teaching approach with every individual; rather, it will need modification, especially where motor skill, kinaesthetic awareness, technique, practice habits and learning how to learn may be of greater priority. More widely, the study also demonstrates the need to think beyond a one-size-fits-all approach in one-to-one studio teaching, a context that has historically been quick to defend pedagogical lineage, thereby leading to a sometimes exclusive adoption of the teach-as-taught approach within a master–
apprentice framework. Although generalisations are problematic, this project serves as a reminder that while the long-standing pedagogies of expressive gesture and physical movement are useful in improving a student’s sense of expressive playing, there is a need for increased awareness of the unique profile that each student presents. To seek pedagogy that is individualised in its very broadest sense is one of the greatest potential assets of the one-to-one context. The research provides a window into what is happening in the lives of the students, demonstrates how they grow with the research aims in their own way and time, and articulates their’s and their parent’s perception of the effectiveness of expressive gesture and ‘whole body’ playing.

The project bridges theory and practice, providing adjunct methods for expressive performance instruction that may be of use to other piano pedagogues. The process provided an opportunity for me to reflect on my teaching in a real and sustained way. It has helped to continue the process of my teaching transformation, and provides a detailed look into the one-to-one environment, a context that is not well represented in the research literature. From my own perspective, the research journey has afforded an opportunity to be reminded of what it is like to be in the role of the less experienced learner, and has influenced the type of pedagogy that I employ in my everyday practice.

**Keywords:** musical expression, gesture, expressive gesture, expressive gestural vocabulary, body movement, one-to-one pedagogy, one-to-one studio teaching, teaching and learning, piano pedagogy, reflective practice, critical pedagogy, teacher-as-researcher.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:

Mark Griffiths

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## List of Abbreviations

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALMW</td>
<td>Alan Lane Memorial Weekend</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMEB</td>
<td>Australian Music Examinations Board</td>
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<td>APPC</td>
<td>Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPCLA</td>
<td>Children’s Participation in Culture and Leisure Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPS</td>
<td>joint position sense</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>musical performance anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTAQ</td>
<td>Music Teachers’ Association of Queensland</td>
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Acknowledgements

Thank you to the students and their parents involved in this research. You were only too willing to assist when I asked. Thank you for helping me to grow into the best version of my teaching self.

I offer my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Gemma Carey and Dr Stephen Emmerson. I have enjoyed learning from the best and thank you both for helping steer this project. Thank you also for your kind encouragement and support along the way.

I also appreciate being granted the Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship by Griffith University for most of my candidature.

Professional editor Dr Lisa Lines provided copyediting and proofreading services, according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national ‘Guidelines for Editing Research Theses’. Thank you Lisa for sharing your expert knowledge.

I am so grateful to my piano teachers, Yvonne Anthony, Alison Green, Alison Kirkpatrick and Leah Horwitz. Thank you all for your care and guidance, and the important part that each of you played in my formative years.

Thank you to my parents Jan and Harry for all that you have given me.

To my wonderful partner Shaeed, thank you for all of the love and support that you gave, and for the space that I needed to complete this project.

Lastly, thank you to my loyal friends Holly and Bailey who were always there to lend a helping ‘hand’, and faithfully kept me company throughout this journey.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of six chapters and a reference list, as well as nine appendices that are presented in a separate volume.

Chapter 1 outlines the structure of the thesis, provides a rationale and background to the study, and presents the overarching research aims and objectives. It also outlines the significance of the study and its contribution to the existing research literature. It then poses a central research question and four secondary research questions. Chapter 2 reviews major literature on the topic, taken from multiple perspectives, and provides justification for the study. Chapter 3 articulates the research theory and methodological framework for the investigation, while referring to literature that supports such an approach. Chapter 4 gives important background information pertaining to each case, explains how and why the research participants were chosen, and describes the research participants’ journey in relation to the research aims. Vignettes, which are taken directly from the synopses of the one-to-one lessons and the Reflective Journal, are used to illustrate the research participants’ personalities and typical interactions with the research investigator within the one-to-one lesson environment. Chapter 5 discusses the research questions from the multiple perspectives of the final four case studies. While each case study’s presentation is varied, commonalities are sought and highlighted through supporting vignettes, video extracts from the lessons and research reflections. Chapter 6 summarises commonalities and disparities between the four case studies. With support from the literature, the concluding remarks then provide a summary of the thesis and outcomes of the research, offering directions for future work.

Much of the primary data is presented in extensive appendices (in a separately bound volume) in order to provide transparency between the analysis and conclusions drawn within the thesis. Appendix 1 contains the unedited Reflective Journal, documenting the lessons of the original six case studies. Appendix 2 contains examples of data initially sought within the Reflective Journal and the recordings of one-to-one lessons. Appendix 3 contains unedited synopses taken from the recordings of the final four
case studies’ one-to-one lessons. Appendix 4 provides examples of initial interview questions with the research participants. Appendix 5 provides examples of second-stage interview questions with the research participants. Appendix 6 provides examples of interview questions with the parents of the research participants. Appendix 7 contains links to video recordings of the research participants’ playing; first when they were identified as potential case studies and then during the final stages of data collection. Appendix 8 demonstrates approval of the research from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. Appendix 9 provides the original ethical protocol signed by the research participants and their parents.

1.2 Rationale

Several recent studies support children’s involvement in musical activity due to its importance in the development of their overall learning mechanisms (Chandrasekaran & Kraus, 2009; Hunter, 2005; Pascoe et al., 2005). More specifically, playing a musical instrument may enhance a child’s language-related skills, emotional development and cognitive processing (Chandrasekaran & Kraus, 2009). It could be argued that a growing awareness of findings such as these has contributed to figures that see around one fifth of Australian children learning to play musical instruments, a benchmark that has remained relatively stable since the year 2000. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2012), in the 12 months to April 2012, 18% of Australian children aged five to 14 years played a musical instrument.¹ Presumably, a significant proportion of these involve studying the piano in the one-to-one studio.

With such active participation and growing client-based accountability, it seems increasingly important for one-to-one studio music teachers to reflect upon their practice and share insights gained through practice-based research. This study reflects a twofold overarching rationale, where those engaging in practice-based research develop individually as a result of their research, but are also able to share their knowledge with the next generation of music teaching professionals.

¹ For the purposes of Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities (CPCLA), the ABS (2012) considers playing a musical instrument to include lessons to learn chords without being able to play a set piece of music, practising and giving performances
1.3 Background

I arrived at the topic of this thesis gradually, after two decades teaching within a variety of learning environments at the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. These have included early childhood, pre-tertiary and tertiary contexts, each of which requires unique skills and modes of pedagogical delivery. During my undergraduate studies, my focus began to shift from a mental approach to playing to one that was more orientated in overall physical sensation. In particular, I became interested in how expressive gesture\(^2\) could be used to ‘unlock’ musical gesture within the atonal works of the second Viennese school, both in terms of the performer’s expressive sound production, and visual communication with their audience. Experience and reflection in the years since have taught me that those concepts are pertinent to most other repertoire, and they have influenced my approach to playing and teaching, with examining and adjudication providing wider perspective. In the early stages of my teaching career, I tended to employ a dogmatic approach to impart ideas of technique, expression and tonal nuance, most especially when choosing repertoire within which to package these. However, I came to realise that this was too often at the expense of the students’ needs, and sometimes resulted in their waning interest.

1.4 The Problem

Thus began a journey in discovering how students of varying ages and ability learn, what keeps them interested in their learning, and what I could do to foster their connection with the piano, physically, musically and personally. However, I soon found that despite all my clever analogies, countless heartfelt demonstrations and detailed verbal explanations, some of my students were not instinctively expressive, despite in many ways being ‘musical’. For those children, I used a ‘backwards’ model, where expressive gesture was a way of recreating expressive nuance, rather than being a by-product of expressive nuance. Further, I began to realise that all styles of music require comparable levels of energy and expressive purpose, and I found that expressive gesture could be used to foster an embodied connection between

\(^2\) In general terms, expressive gesture may be understood as gestural activity of the arms, hands, and trunk being used functionally to facilitate the expressive shaping of sound.
instrument and player, and as a means to shape sound with expressive intent, regardless of style or genre.

1.5 Overall Research Aims

In recent years, one-to-one instrumental and vocal instruction has become an area of increasing research interest, but much of this literature has centred around highly experienced tertiary teachers who are mostly self-taught in pedagogy (McPhee, 2011). Research has found that a common shortcoming of the teachers in these studies was a lack of encouragement towards autonomy in interpretation and musical expression (Gaunt, 2004, 2008; Persson, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b, 2000). Perrson (1994a, p. 88) has argued that a majority ‘dominate their students completely’. Such studies have suggested that students need to learn strategies to enable them to create expressive interpretations that are personally meaningful (McPhee, 2011). One is left to consider whether such strategies might best be fostered at earlier stages of a student’s learning.

When commenting more generally on the role of musical expression in music education, Elliott (2005) seemed to value its importance, stating that ‘we need to reflect upon and teach this dimension of musical meaning more carefully, deliberately, and creatively than we have in the past’ (p. 103). It is curious then that apart from McPhee’s (2011) study of adolescent musicians, within the small body of research that explores issues of one-to-one teaching to school-aged students (e.g. Colprit, 2000; Duke, Flowers & Wolfe, 1997; Fredrickson, 2007; Gillespie, 1991; Siebenaler, 1997; Ward, 2004), almost no consideration has been given to the teaching of musical expression. Nevertheless, a recent study by Lisboa (2008) indicated that during (cello) instruction, teachers should be helping children to develop the tools needed for independent expressive playing, but these tools were not made explicit. Piano teaching might benefit from an early focus on expressive music making, where young pianists are encouraged to convey their expressive imaginations and have the skills in order to do so.

1.6 Research Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify strategies that foster the development of expressive playing skills within my one-to-one piano students, and to
describe the learning environment(s) that encouraged expressive sensibility in young students of late elementary and early intermediate level. By reflecting critically on my professional practice through the examination and analysis of four case studies at a pre-tertiary music school attached to a major Australian conservatoire, this research explores strategies and processes that I have used to foster expressive playing in my piano students of late elementary and early intermediate level. Specifically, this research explores how expressive gesture may assist young students to forge a link between how they move at the piano and the types of sound that they are able to produce. While elements of gesture and physical movement have been a long-standing element of piano pedagogy for generations, the study sought the students’ opinions as to the relevance of such an approach, with students’ and parents’ perceptions garnered through semi-structured research interviews. I sensed that supporting young pianists in their expressive maturation may be linked to their own sense of personhood, musical identity and competence, and could contribute to their willingness to engage with piano study in the long term. Indeed, this aim seems to echo that of Hallam (2010), who called for greater emphasis on affect in music education, citing individual and societal benefits.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Scholarship regarding the essentially physiological aspects of pianism is historically far reaching, with various approaches or schools being represented. Some notable ones include C. P. E. Bach (1949), Deppe (1885), Breithaupt (1909), Leschetizky (Brée, 1902; Prentner, 1903), Neuhaus (1973), Matthay (1903, 1932), Ortmann (1925, 1929), Whiteside (1929, 1955), Taylor (1981), Bernstein (1981, 1991), Fink (1992), Kochevitsky (1967), Lhevinne (1972), Sandor (1981), Taubman (Milanovic, 2011), Cooke (1985), Mark, Gary and Miles (2003) and Lister-Sink (1996). Indeed, one need not look far to find proponents and critics of these schools in equal measure, and the relative merits of such approaches need not be debated here. While the concepts expounded in this project are a synthesis of my own pedagogical lineage, ideas distilled from the work of my aforementioned forbearers, those found within recent literature, and my own professional expertise, it is not my intention to put forth another ‘method’ or to reinvent the pianistic wheel. Rather, the value of this study may be found in the way that it seeks to illuminate real-life pedagogical processes that
foster the development of expressive performance through the marriage of *expressive* concepts with *physiological* concepts under a gestural umbrella, to characterise the studio environment that might facilitate the uptake of such expressive ideology, and to ascertain how the research participants engage with the research aims, and what, if any, personal value they may find therein. Further, within the established framework of reflective practice, the project illustrates the value of such a proactive approach towards professional development within the one-to-one studio context.

The results of this study may offer adjunct methods for expressive performance instruction in the one-to-one studio. It is possible that teachers might use the insights uncovered to ‘reevaluate their own practices and become more purposeful in how they choose to teach expressiveness’ (Broomhead, 2006, p. 18). Wider circulation of ‘expressive pedagogy’ could potentially empower teaching professionals with greater knowledge and confidence to approach this ‘mysterious’ area that is often left to the student to learn by osmosis (Raffmann, 1993). The potential of expressive gesture as a method of inducing expressive playing may be useful to teachers who work with a diverse student population with varying pedagogical needs. More broadly, this study could be seen as part of a larger movement that calls for teacher practitioners to examine and reflect on the effectiveness of their pedagogical processes within the one-to-one learning context. Despite speaking in terms of the conservatoire environment, Carey et al. (2013, p. 155) sought to deepen their understanding of pedagogical processes in the one-to-one environment, so that it might improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning generally, and such a philosophy is echoed here.

### 1.8 Contribution to a Growing Research Base

According to Daniel (2006), it is generally agreed that systematic research into the teaching of musical instruments is a relatively neglected area when compared with classroom music education (Gaunt, 2004; Golby, 2004; Harris & Crozier, 2000; Kennell, 2002; Schmidt, 1992; Siebenaler, 1997), despite the fact that the applied music studio may be the most fundamental music teaching and learning experience that binds the profession together (Brand, 1992). Daniel (2006) has suggested that this

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3 ‘Expressive pedagogy’ may be defined as a toolkit of pedagogical strategies used to enhance the expressive skills of young musicians.
scenario may be due to the use of non-standardised practice (Zhukov, 1999; Swanwick, 1996; Kennell, 2002), a teaching culture that is individualistic (Hallam, 1998; Harris & Crozier, 2000; Young, Burwell & Pickup, 2003), the relative isolation of the one-to-one environment (Jorgensen, 1986; Brand, 1992; Swanwick, 1996; Gaunt, 2004), and the perception that success is often attributed to student aptitude rather than the efficaciousness of the teacher (Harris & Crozier, 2000; Rostvall & West, 2003). Pedagogical practices that may have once been historically appropriate are now being scrutinised (Fautley, 2010), perhaps in part due to the demand for more ‘client-orientated accountability’ (Carey et al., 2013, p. 151).

1.9 Contextual Transparency of One-to-One Studio Teaching

Following advocacy by Tait (1992) and Persson (1996a, 1996b), this research contributes to an increasing understanding of the nature of effective instrumental music teaching in the one-to-one studio, a process described by Rostvall and West (2003) as a ‘black box’ (p. 214) about which we have very little knowledge. Further, Triantafyllaki (2005) has claimed that within the comparatively small number of studies that attempt to characterise the interaction, many have ‘predominately focused on what happens in lessons and how it happens, without considering why things happen as they do’ (p. 383). By exploring the interaction between teacher, student and parent through the lens of critical pedagogy and critical reflection, this research aims to move the learning process beyond that of the ‘master–apprentice’ model (Jorgensen, 2000) where teaching is often based on intuition, commonsense and tradition (Persson, 2000), to one that is grounded in the systematic examination of assumptions (Schmidt, 1992), while drawing on, but not relying completely on, the teach-as-taught approach (Hallam, 1998). Following Odam’s (2001) support for situating more research in everyday practice, ‘the building of a research culture that places reflective practice and creativity at its heart … [that might] reach the people who have the ability to develop and change practice’ (p. 80), remain central aims of this research. Such a framework might influence wider community and institutional change, where ‘institutions are not independent of their teachers, but rather the result of teachers’ beliefs and actions and the social and cultural context of which they are a part’ (Triantafyllaki, 2005, p. 385).
1.10 Research Questions

The central question that underpins this research can be articulated as follows: *In what ways could expressive gesture be used to foster the expressive performance skills of late elementary and early intermediate level pre-tertiary pianists?*

Four secondary research questions were posed, which can be grouped into three main areas of investigation:

- Factors that facilitate the adoption of expressive gesture (Q. 1 and 2)
- Differing degrees of perceived success with expressive gesture among the research participants (Q. 3)
- Student, parent and teacher perceptions of expressive gesture and ‘whole body’ playing (Q. 4)

Specifically, the four secondary research questions were:

1. What pedagogical tools might assist the research participants to adopt expressive gesture?
2. What factors within the learning environment might facilitate the adoption of expressive gesture?
3. What factors might explain differing degrees of perceived success in the uptake of expressive gesture among the research participants?
4. How do the students, parents and teacher perceive the effectiveness of such pedagogy, particularly expressive gesture and concepts relating to ‘whole body’ playing?

With the research rationale, background, aims and objectives established, and the research questions made transparent, *Chapter 2* provides justification for the study by outlining major research literature pertaining to the topic.
Chapter 2: Overview of Related Literature

This chapter overviews core research literature related to various aspects of the topic. First, some background is provided regarding the link between music and emotional expression, and the importance of expression in music performance is considered. There follows a review of expression and music teaching, existing studies in teaching expression, and some of the ways in which expression has been scrutinised and is being taught within contemporary contexts. Challenges with the teaching of musical expression through playing the piano are identified, and a case for a gestural approach to making music is argued. Literature regarding embodied cognition in music performance and teaching, and the role of motor development in the acquisition of embodied music performance is then briefly reviewed. Thereafter, I move to caution that expression may be a natural behaviour that could be unwittingly suppressed if not nurtured, and with the help of recent literature, I argue for greater consideration of the environmental factors that might influence expressive pedagogy, both physical and metaphorical.

2.1 Music and Emotional Expression

Many scholars have theorised a link between music and human emotions. According to Woody (2002), Langer (1953, 1957) was one of the first modern philosophers to expound a relationship between musical sound and human emotional experience. Pointing to properties that occur in both realms, such as tension, resolution, expectation and fulfilment, Langer (1957) defined music as ‘a tonal analogue of emotive life’ (p. 22). Fritz et al. (2009) found that the expression of emotion is a fundamental attribute of Western music and its capacity to convey such meaning is often necessary for its appreciation by Western cultures. As cited by Hailstone et al. (2009, p. 2142), many authors concur that for most listeners, the emotional content of music is its paramount attribute (Blood & Zatorre, 2001; Dalla Bella, Peretz, Rousseau & Gosselin, 2001; Sloboda & O’Neill, 2001). Woody (2002) seemed to agree when he stated that ‘listeners generally find “meaning” in music by responding emotionally to the expressive qualities they hear’ (p. 214).
In a cross-cultural study involving a native African population (Mafa) and Western participants, Fritz et al. (2009) reported that the ability to recognise three basic emotions (happy, sad, scared/fearful) in excerpts of Western music occurs above chance level, suggesting universal recognition of these basic emotions. Fritz et al. (2009) indicated that such universality of emotional expression in Western music may come from emotional prosody,\(^4\) which is universally recognised (Scherer, 1997), has previously been shown to be mimicked by Western music as a means of emotional expression (Juslin, 2001) and may be somewhat innate (Juslin, 2001; Sloboda, 2000). Further they noted that their interpretation is consistent with findings where similar emotion-specific acoustical cues are used to communicate emotion in both speech and music (Juslin & Laukka, 2003; Kivy, 1980; Scherer, 1995; Tartter & Braun, 1994). Juslin (2001) noted that performers and listeners vary in their ability to efficiently perceive and apply such acoustic cues to specific musical structures and these processes may improve with what Sloboda (2000) calls ‘specific targeted learning experiences’ (p. 402). Of importance to the present study is the suggestion that ‘at least part of the differences in levels of expressive skill between performers may reflect the different learning environments in which they acquired their skill’ (Sloboda, 2000, p. 402).

### 2.2 The Importance of Expression in Music Performance

It has been suggested that, beyond the expressive nature of music itself, the expression of emotions is one of the most important aspects of the musical performer’s role (S. Davies, 1994; Gabrielsson, 1999; Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Karlsson, 2008; Woody, 2000, 2003). The ability to play expressively is often seen as fundamental to communicating musical meaning (Juslin & Laukka, 2004; Laukka, 2004; Lindström, Juslin, Breslin & Williamon, 2003). Lindström et al. (2003) have suggested that many listeners consider expression to be the essence of music and many performing musicians value expression as an important aspect of their craft (Boyd & George-Warren, 1992; B. B. King, 1996; Menuhin, 1996; Schumacher, 1995). In studies of music performance, ‘expression’ has been used to refer to variations in timing, dynamics, timbre and pitch, and the ability to perform expressively by varying these elements distinguishes advanced musicians from those

\(^4\) The rhythm and inflection found in spoken language.
less skilled (Gabrielsson, 1988; Woody, 2003). Karlsson and Juslin (2008) have suggested that our preference for one musician over another is often due to our perception of their expressive skills. Davidson (2002a) maintained that it has long been thought that expressive skills separate average from excellent performers, a chasm that can only be filled by an untrained and ‘enigmatic gift’ (p. 98). However, Sloboda and Davidson (1996) found that the ‘expressive devices’ often used automatically by performers who are not necessarily conscious of what they are doing can potentially be taught, given that they are used systematically, improve the communicability of musical structure, remain stable over time and can be flexibly applied. Indeed, ‘many of the skills a musician uses instinctively in all types of musical performance are also found in rhetoric,5 which is an advanced system of communicating emotions and ideas’ (Tarling, 2005, p. iv). It seems that during the Baroque and Classical periods, the expressive and persuasive nature of oratory and music performance was studied with a view to building a mastery of their expressive potential, which is in stark contrast with the contemporary misconception that musicians endowed with exceptional expressive skill are born and not made.

2.3 Expression in Music Performance and Music Teaching

As involvement in musical activity and learning to play an instrument are often seen as vehicles that catalyse creativity and self-expression, it is not surprising that this view is reflected by scholars such as Davidson, Pitts and Correia (2001), who have suggested that, ‘expressive musical performance is the long-term goal of all instrumental work’ (p. 51). Others, such as Zhukov (2004), have maintained that ‘expressive playing is the ultimate goal of music teaching’ (p. 27). Despite increased investigation in recent years (e.g. Benson & Fung, 2005; Davidson et al., 2001; Lisboa, 2008; McPhee, 2011), the teaching of musical expression has been relatively overlooked in the pedagogical literature and warrants further consideration, particularly with regard to young learners. This situation is peculiar, as a fundamental theme in the study and performance of music is whether or not it is heard as being expressive (Budd, 1985; S. Davies, 2001; Juslin, 2001).

5 According to Tarling (2005), ‘the term “rhetoric” applies to a particular way of speaking by an orator whose main aim is to persuade the listener’ (p. i).
Given that expression is of such significance, it is surprising that existing literature (e.g. Juslin & Perrson, 2002; Lindström et al., 2003; Rostvall & West, 2001; Woody, 2000; Young et al., 2003) and my professional experience would suggest that the development of expressive skills in young pianists is too often not being given sufficient attention until somewhat late in a student’s development. As musical expression is commonly viewed as a de facto measure of talent or something that will develop naturally if the student is ‘gifted’, ‘musical’ or has ‘a good ear’, it is heartening that this view is beginning to be challenged. Raffman (1993) and others have suggested that musical expression takes time to develop, depends on physical and emotional maturity, is not easy to convey in everyday language to younger students, and is challenging to notate. There does seem to be a widely held assumption that ‘getting the notes right’ is the central goal in the early years, a scenario that Schleuter (1997) referred to as ‘button-pushing’ (p. 48), where the notated score is indicative of only which fingers to press, rather than what sound might be musically desirable. Indeed, many scholars have suggested that to view the ability to ‘communicate beyond the notes on the page’ (Fink, 2002b, p. 97) as reflecting an innate, genetic skill that cannot be learnt can actually hinder a student’s development (Fink, 2002b; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Sloboda, 1996). Similarly, Davidson (2002) has suggested that the importance of such innate skill is often exaggerated, while Fink (2002b) implied that such a view might actually reinforce teacher frustration when a student’s performance is ‘unmusical’.

Research has revealed that the desire to analyse musical expression in order to inform teaching practice is gathering momentum, at least with instrumentalists and vocalists of advanced level (Laukka, 2004). Yet even these mature musicians appear to desire further instruction in expressive pedagogy than is currently the case (Lindström et al., 2003). From cognitive feedback (Juslin, Friberg, Schoonderwaldt & Karlsson, 2004; Juslin & Laukka, 2000), aural modeling (Dickey, 1992; Ebie, 2004; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Woody, 2003), focusing on felt emotions (Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Juslin, 2003; Sloboda, 1996; Woody, 2000), the use of imagery and metaphor (Arrais & Rodrigues, 2007, 2009; Barten, 1998; Froehlich & Cattley, 1991; Martin, 1995; Persson, 1996a; Schippers, 2006; Watson, 2008; Woody, 2002), verbal direction (Woody, 1999), microstructural acoustical devices (Parncutt, 2003), gestalt-based rules (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983; Thompson, Sundberg, Friberg & Fryden, 1989),
computer-assisted evaluation (Juslin, Karlsson, Lindström, Friberg & Schoonderwaldt, 2006; Karlsson, Liljeström & Juslin, 2009) and enhancing the effects of timbre (Goydke, Altenmüller, Möller & Münte, 2004; Hailstone et al., 2009; Holmes, 2012), many avenues have been and continue to be explored. The above studies addressed ways of increasing the ability to play expressively but mainly focused on aspects other than intrinsic links between touch, tone and expressive gesture. Rink (2004) has argued that within empirical studies that attempt to quantify musical expression, there has been a bias towards investigating tempo and dynamics, as they are easier to scrutinise than timbre and bodily gesture. This is a curious state of affairs, especially if we are to consider Muñoz’s (2007) view that ‘gestures are part of a range of human reactions to feeling, sensation and comprehension, and to underestimate them in live performance would mean to ignore human signals in a human invention, which is what music is’ (p. 59).

2.4 Challenges with the Dissemination of Expressive Pedagogy

Perhaps there is a need for wider dissemination of concrete methodologies that may assist the teaching of musical expression to musicians while they are still children. The method books that many teachers use to teach beginners could be a good starting point, as many do not seem to expound expressive strategies at all (Rostvall & West, 2001). Other than casual reference to basic fingering and postural elements, the absence in many elementary texts of the role played by gesture and the human body in sound production seems at odds with general theories of embodied performance. Fink (2002b) suggested:

a great paradox of teaching is that while we recognise the ultimate importance of musicality, and leap at the chance to teach others the musical values that they lack, it is often during the normal course of study when students are unwittingly taught to be unmusical. By concentrating our curriculum primarily on the teaching of notation, lines and spaces, and rhythmic subdivision – score reading – and the mechanism and ways of manipulating it – technique – we ignore, or worse, even obstruct, the true development of a student. Although indisputably important, if literacy training and instrumental technique form the major focus of a student’s studies, he or she will often become frustrated and lose any personal and
musical sense of accomplishment and joy. When students are not trained to listen, play by ear, or improvise, they feel alienated from the spontaneity of music making, playing dutifully as though raking leaves, not as though they were expressing inner feelings. By not teaching the essentials of musical meaning and its communication, we doom them to experience music as a foreign language spoken only as perpetual outsiders. (p. 98)

Another factor that could impede the wide circulation of such pedagogy lies in the isolation of the studio-teaching institution (Baker, 2005; Gaunt, 2008; Mills, 2007; Mills, Burt & Phillips, 2007; Young et al., 2003) that works against teachers’ broader awareness of what others are doing, not to mention pedagogical research findings (Olsson, 1993). Beyond such isolation, Chronister (2005) has argued that ‘one-on-one teaching does not inspire us to question how we teach’ (p. 8). Haddon (2009) suggested that a lack of training opportunity leads to pedagogical short-sightedness, and Davidson and Jordan (2007) maintained that ‘there is an inherently enclosed mindset’ (p. 734) entrenched in private studio teaching, with teachers tending to approach instruction with strategies that they feel most comfortable with, regardless of their efficacy. Considering that many in the profession do not have relatively recent teaching qualifications, the prevalence of the ‘teach as taught’ approach and a relative naivete concerning pedagogical discourse might be more easily understood (Baker, 2005; Booth, 1999; Davidson & Jordan, 2007).

It has been said that many musicians who do eventually spend a significant part of their professional life teaching children are taught in conservatoires by performers who are not necessarily experienced pedagogues, may not always be aware of their pedagogical practices, may not have the tools to clearly articulate their pedagogical desires (Persson, 1994a, 1996a, as cited in Carey et al., 2013, p. 153), and may therefore have difficulty in clearly describing the expressive devices that they themselves employ (Thompson et al., 1989). To be fair, Juslin and Persson (2002) have suggested that knowledge about musical expression is mostly implicit rather than explicit and is therefore difficult to convey on a surface level, but it is not uncommon that precise descriptions of expressive ideas may even be deliberately withheld in an effort to encourage an individual’s creativity and imagination.
In a recent social media post, respected English pianist and pedagogue Graham Fitch seemed to suggest that technical and interpretive ideas are rigorously protected by professionals at the highest level of piano teaching: ‘Imagine the consequences if professors of surgery were as protective of what they consider “their secret pieces of information” as professors of piano can often seem to be’. Lehmann, Sloboda and Woody (2007) highlighted the fact that some performing musicians can express unease when research attempts to analyse and understand musical expression, where it can feel as if scholarship will discover the ‘formula’ for effective expression as it tries to ‘encroach on the mysterious and personal core of their artistic being, even rob them of it’ (p. 86). Of relevance is Parncutt and Holming’s (2000) view that modern piano students and teachers are often unaware of basic findings of research regarding piano teaching and performance. At any rate, the implication is that future teachers may leave their tertiary education without clear strategies to address all aspects of pedagogy in their students, especially the more aesthetic elements. This seems at odds with Elliott’s (1995) assertion that one of music teaching and learning’s most fundamental ideals is ‘to develop student musicianship in regard to musical expressiveness’ (p. 156). Broomhead (2006) agreed that ‘if students are to develop a well-rounded set of musical skills and understandings, expressiveness, as one of our most valued performance aspects, must be an instructional priority’ (p. 7).

2.5 Gesture and Teaching Expression

Numerous studies have argued for an embodied approach to expressive performance, with body movement and gesture taking a pivotal role (e.g. Davidson & Correia, 2002; Davidson & Dawson, 1995; Doğantan-Dack, 2011; Muñoz, 2007; Pierce, 1994, 2010). More specifically, Davidson (2000) maintained that performers appear to develop a specific vocabulary of expressive gestures that facilitate functional playing, and Berman (2000) referred to professional pianists attaining ‘a vocabulary of physical motions’ (p. 23) during their career. However, investigations of the use of body movement and expressive gesture with young pianists are yet to appear, despite their role in fostering expressive performance being widely acknowledged in piano pedagogy. Waiting until a student is emotionally mature enough to be expressive

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before introducing concepts that link gesture, tone production and musical expression may be putting the proverbial cart before the horse. Therefore, a pedagogical approach that utilises body movement and expressive gesture at earlier stages of development may warrant further investigation and consideration more generally.

It appears that gestural communication is critical even in the musical experiences of early childhood, with aspects of rhythm, tempo and dynamics embedded in playful movements and actions such as clapping (Davidson, 2002a; Papousek, 1996). The link between emotion, physical gesture and musical meaning might be forged early, with gestural play and quasi-musical vocalisations known as ‘motherese’ being viewed as ways to communicate basic emotional needs (Davidson, 2002a, p. 92). Viewed in this context, piano pedagogy that employs a gestural focus of the arms in order to convey musical meaning seems viable. Indeed, Fink (2002a) seemed to support such a concept, when he called the implementation of consistent arm choreography ‘our most powerful expressive tool’ (p. 61). In addition:

Your fingers are, quite obviously, of paramount importance in playing the piano. Only seemingly independent, they are actually influenced by all the other movements of your body. Were I to single out the most important of these movements, I would unhesitatingly draw your attention to the forward–backward movements of your upper arms. When properly coordinated, these movements must be considered the primary source of your musical and technical control. They influence the shaping of your phrases as much as they do the ease of your execution. In short, your understanding of upper arm movements will unquestionably lend a sense of naturalness and predictability to your playing. (Bernstein, 1981, p. 173)

2.6 Gesture and the ‘Sonic Self’

Bowman (2004, p. 38) stated that the ‘perception of musical gesture is invariably a fundamental part of what the music, fully perceived, is’ (as cited in Muñoz, 2007, p. 56). Muñoz (2007) has argued that even when appearing spontaneous, expressive movements are employed by performers in the creation of relationships between gestures and the character, articulation, quality and intensity of the sounds they create. Doğantan-Dack (2011) maintained that the gestural aspect in producing a sound is
crucial to its timbral identity, and the uniqueness of a performer can in part be found in their tonal palette, causally attributed to the movements and gestures of their performing body. MacRitchie and Zicari (2012) recently provided empirical evidence to suggest that the cognitive decisions made by pianists are translated into physical gestures that aim to satisfy their specific sound intentions. Their results indicate that when a pianist’s expressive intention is connected with their physical gestures, the control of tension within the limbs is crucial to the creation of tonal variety.

This relationship between beauty of tone and optimal body use has been described as the ‘sonic self’, a term coined by Cumming (2000, p. 23). Likewise, Smalley (1992) regarded the timbre of a sound and the human body that created it as indissolubly linked. Further, Doğantan-Dack (2011) argued that the pianist develops a memory for tone colour that is grounded in their kinaesthetic sensations, and ‘the timbre represents the unique interaction between their body and the instrument, the experiential result of the constant attunement between the force they supply to initiate and sustain the sounds and the counter-force exerted by the sounding instrument’ (p. 250). Further, in discussing the relationship between gesture, touch and sound, Berman (2000) saw their interaction as a process of building one’s vocabulary of physical motions, a personal pianistic ‘toolbox’. The larger the vocabulary, the more eloquent our musical speech becomes; the better equipped the toolbox, the more effective and efficient the pianist’s work will be. And the better the pianist controls sound, the more effectively he is able to communicate musical expression to an audience. (p. 23)

From a complementary perspective, Muñoz (2007) viewed the performer’s physical gesture as a meaningful and complementary visual element that influences the way music performance is aurally perceived:

Given that movement is the motor of sound and intention is the impulse of gesture, the inevitable connection between intentional body movements and music emerges, allowing us to establish synaesthesia channels, which influence expressiveness, understanding, and communication in performance events. (p. 55)
When discussing gestural timing in relation to sound, Muñoz (2007) defined three states of execution:

In the time before, the gesture represents the anticipation of musical need or expression, in the parallel time this gesture accompanies and is seen contemporarily to the sonorous discourse. When sound is free of any real practical execution, expressive gesture may explain or resolve the expression of sound in the time after. (p. 58)

Given this agreement concerning the role of gesture from the range of pedagogues cited above, the question is how to foster such a philosophy in young pianists, and at what stage should these principles be introduced? If we take heed of Muñoz’s (2007) notion that ‘to perceive, feel or understand music, it is crucial to perceive, feel, and understand our body’ (p. 58), it seems to be a case of the sooner the better.

Within the confines of this study, musical expression may be understood as a process where body movement, particularly gestural activity of the arms, hands and trunk, is crucial in developing a young pianist’s ability to convey tonal nuance, phrase shape, articulatory sparkle, rhythmic vitality, musical characterisation and ‘a connection to the music that is honest, real and radiating self-confidence’ (Westney, 2003, p. 34). This approach is informed by my own pedagogical background as well as consultation with the above literature that supports the indissoluble link between gesture, instrument, tone production and timbre. It is consistent with Lehmann et al.’s (2007) suggestion that the crux of expressive performance is found in tonal nuance, a subset of expression. Tonal nuance appears to be similar to prosody, the rhythm and inflection of spoken language, and has been described as the intricate manipulation of auditory parameters that gives music its ability to invoke humanistic arousal in the listener (Lehmann et al., 2007). According to these authors, the artistic worth of a performance is largely determined by a musician’s ability to manipulate tonal nuance in an aesthetically significant way (p. 86). Indeed, they are not alone in this view, as Holmes (2012) cited numerous scholars (e.g. Gabrielsson & Juslin, 1996; Juslin, 2003; Juslin et al., 2004) who view the ability to vary timbre as ‘one of the principal ways through which performers communicate musical structure, ideas, emotions and musical personality’ (p. 301). Seashore (1936) saw timbre as ‘the most basic attribute of all music’ (p. 24), and it seems recent research by Levitin (2008) backed such a
claim when he described timbre as ‘the most important and ecologically relevant feature of auditory experiences’ (p. 45).

2.7 Acoustic Variance, Timbre and Expressiveness Attained through Gesture

Piano timbre, the sound’s perceived tone quality or colour, is determined by ‘at least two physical variables: its *spectral envelope* (relative amplitude of spectral particles at a given moment) and its *temporal envelope* (which rises suddenly as the hammer hits the string and then decays gradually)’ (Parncutt & Troup, 2002, p. 289). Pianistic touch and its inherent timbral properties have long been seen by many pianists and pedagogues to be intertwined, despite studies that argue that timbre cannot be controlled independently of loudness or by variation in touch by the pianist (Baron & Hollo, 1935; Gat, 1965; Gerig, 1974; Hart, Fuller & Lusby, 1934; Ortmann, 1937; Seashore, 1937). In short, the pianist cannot influence *how* the hammer strikes the string, only the *speed* with which it does (Parncutt & Troup, 2002), and that is determined by the velocity of the key’s descent (cf. Palmer & Brown, 1991). However, there is evidence that mechanisms such as finger-key noise, hammer-string noise and key to key-bed noise, which can only be activated through the player, all contribute to an individual’s overall sound (Parncutt & Troup, 2002). Anecdotally, Bernstein (1981) suggested that ‘a beautiful piano sound is produced by eliminating as far as possible extraneous noises – finger taps, key-bed thuds, hammer blows – and using both pedals judiciously’ (p. 180). While such specifics may be beyond the scope of the present study, it cannot be disputed that many eminent musicians such as Berman (2000) have agreed that the individualised touch and tone colour that are part and parcel of a pianist’s physical movements are important in conveying expressive interpretation. This may be due to the perception that the ‘smooth and round’ movements of a pianist’s body and arms produce a different timbre to those that are ‘jagged and tense’ (Parncutt & Troup, 2002, p. 289).

Parncutt and Troup (2002) gave further credence to the multi-faceted relationship between gesture, expressive intention and touch when they postulated that the visual perception of a note may influence the way it is aurally understood. Davidson (1993) has demonstrated empirically that the body movements of performers convey visual...
information that audiences use to form perceptual judgments. Further, Vines, Krumhansl, Wanderley and Levitin (2006) have illustrated that in clarinet performance, aural and visual information gleaned by observers guided their perception of affective elements and structural content. Specifically, with regard to the affective and structural nature of phrasing, auditory and visual modes conveyed similar information, but the combination of auditory and visual aspects did serve to increase the observer’s sense of phrase direction through visual information that indicated both the onset of phrases and a sense of extending the phrase endings into silence (Vines et al., 2006). When discussing the results of Vines et al.’s (2006) study, Broughton and Stevens (2009) noted that multi-modal presentation of performance could enhance the expressive experience for both performer and observer.

2.8 Use of Video Recording in One-to-One Pedagogy

While helping students to ‘develop their own inspiration in their future movements’, Muñoz’s (2007) practical suggestions to initiate students into the expressive world of gesture include:

- discussing with students their video tape recordings or mirror visualisations,
- guiding with physical contact the students’ body segments in their movements, adding verbal metaphoric information to the gesture shown,
- offering students the opportunity to teach what they know and ‘interpret’ about gesture by giving classes to other students, and urging students to use their bodily expression, freely and consciously, connecting it with a new vital dimension in any physical action: not aural, not visual, but spatial. (p. 59)

Certainly, the use of video review in music education has been shown to transform performing and facilitate self-directed learning, though it is usually reserved for major performances rather than during the weekly lesson framework (Schlosser, 2011). It has been suggested that doing so may increase a student’s understanding of the interrelationship of their body, mind, and emotions – ‘a useful tool in monitoring a holistic approach to sound production’ (Schlosser, 2011, p. 352). It may also help to foster a deeper connection to the instrument, where the pianist sees the piano as a natural extension of their body (Nijs, Lesaffre & Leman, 2009). When discussing the
results of his study, Schlosser (2011) noted that the process of viewing videos on a regular basis and comparing their progress in pieces over both short and long time frames seemed to help students to recognise their progress, as well as fuelling their sense of competence and confidence. Such a process might encourage students to be more self-aware and to track their own self development, reflecting the importance of intrinsic goals to the artistic development of musicians, with their focus directed on the appreciation of the musical experience, rather than on competition with others (Lacaille, Koestener & Gaudreau, 2007). The subsequent question of whether camera angle and the movements actually recorded are of significance has been flagged by Schlosser (2011) and Savage (2002) as an area for further investigation. At any rate, it might be said that students self-reflecting their own playing via video recordings becomes part of an active rather than a passive process and ‘provides pianists with images of themselves that mirror reality and, at the same time, suggests opportunities for change’ (Schlosser, 2011, p. 356). With the unprecedented ease with which students can now record themselves with smart phones, tablets and the like, this process is increasingly more accessible today.

The use of imitation and mimicry within the one-to-one studio is an effective and efficient learning strategy that has long been advocated by music educators (Schlosser, 2011). Further support is found within recent investigations by neuroscientists, which have shown that when observing actions, especially those that they know they are required to imitate, the brain regions responsible for movement and movement planning in research participants are strongly activated through the human mirror neuron system (Buccino et al., 2004). Of potential interest to this study is the discovery of even higher neural activity when dancers watch, simulate in their minds and physically trace the movement observed (Cross, Hamilton & Grafton, 2006). Such simulation has been advocated for musicians (Bellon, 2006; Lehrer, 2002), after its successful use by athletes and dancers for many years. Savage (2002) suggested that the benefits of such ‘mental tracing’ of physical movement are not unlike those gleaned from observing oneself on video.

2.9 Gesture, Touch and Musical Expression

Barker (1989) stated that the intimate relationship between musical sound and the bodily movements involved in its production has been recognised since Classical
Greek writings (as cited in Clarke & Davidson, 1998). According to Clarke and Davidson (1998), many pedagogical texts during the nineteenth century expounded the essential interplay between the body, expressive intention and stylistic attributes of the score, at least anecdotally. Indeed, many piano pedagogues in recent history have supported the role of the whole body in performance, and such thinking in part reflects the way the instrument itself has changed (Gerig, 1974; Kochevitschy, 1967).

As cited in Parncutt and Troup (2002, p. 287), after undergoing considerable improvements in tonal projection due to an increase in size, string tension and key weight, the teachings of Ludwig Deppe (1885) and Breithaupt (1905) emphasised the importance of arm weight through the muscles of the upper arm and shoulders. These concepts, along with Matthay’s (1903) notion of relaxation, were hardly mentioned in earlier finger-based methods (Gerig, 1974). According to Parncutt and Troup (2002), the basic commonality between Deppe (1885), Breithaupt (1905) and Mattay (1903) was ‘to relax the arm in free fall, then introduce minimal muscle tension to control the movements’ (p. 287). Indeed, the indissoluble link between touch, tone, the gestural movement of a pianist’s arms and gravity has recently been supported empirically (Furuya, Altenmüller, Katayose & Kinoshita, 2010; Furuya, Osu & Kinoshita, 2009).

In recent times, Jane Davidson and others have done much to bring the importance of body movement into focus, especially with pianists and singers. It seems that the body’s dual role is to physically communicate expressive intention to listeners while executing the physiological aspects involved with instrumental performance (Davidson & Correia, 2002). Empirically, it has been demonstrated that information regarding musical structure and the expressive intentions of performers can be communicated to observers through body movement (Davidson, 1993, 1995). In fact, when presented with both aural and visual stimulus, non-musicians were almost exclusively visually reliant on the body movement of performers when garnering expressive information. In two studies that explored the kind of body movement that might guide the perception of observers, Davidson (1994) demonstrated an unsurprising relationship between the body movement and expressive intention of a single pianist – the greater the expressive intent, the larger the movement. The second study revealed the head and upper body were the two areas that observers most relied on when perceiving performance expression. Systematic observations (Davidson, 1991) have indicated that despite a continuously present and expressive cyclical sway
emanating from the hip region, some moments during the duration of a pianist’s performance demonstrate more obvious indicators of expressive intention than others and usually coincided with areas of structural significance. Fink (2002b) suggested that these ‘physical cycles tend to bind the many discrete intricacies into a musically coherent whole’ (p. 103). It has been argued that the hips represent the fulcrum for the pianist’s centre of gravity, provide a pivotal point for the movements of the upper body and represent the central location for the generation of physical expression (Clarke & Davdison, 1998). According to Dogantan-Dack (2011), for the performer, tone colour, gesture, musical structure and expression are inextricably linked, but have been conceptualised as distinct phenomena in much of the music theory and psychology literature. Further, it has been hypothesised that ‘performers do not learn, represent and store rhythmic-melodic units without their accompanying gestural and expressive dimensions … and … any gesture made to deliver a unit of music will inevitably unify the structure and expression, as well the biomechanical and affective components’ (Dogantan-Dack, 2011, pp. 251–2). Given such strong evidence that musical structure, expression and body movement are so closely related, pedagogy that embraces a combination of these factors is welcome, as it reflects ideas that are both empirically sound and emanate from the real world of performance practice.

2.10 Principles of Embodied Cognition in Music

music has adopted an almost entirely disembodied approach to its subject matter, a dominant trend in modern cognitive psychology:

The preponderance of a radical mentalism has resulted in listeners and performers being regarded as information-processing devices, with inputs and outputs coming to and going from a central ‘unit’ which is located firmly in the head and has little connection with anything as physical as an arm, a leg, a hand – or even an ear. (p. 74)

Further, to regard the body as being under total control of a ‘virtuous’ mind with any resultant movement being no more than the contingent outcome of thought is to ignore the interface between body, instrument, expressive movement and interpretation (Clarke & Davidson, 1998).

However, since the late twentieth century, music academia and performance have been rapidly falling into line with other disciplines, a welcome shift in perspective, considering music psychology and theory have been primarily concerned with the mind behind musical experiences in spite of ubiquitous physical and metaphorical bodily involvement (Doğantan-Dack, 2006). Clarke and Davidson (1998) embraced this growing awareness of the more corporeal elements in musical discourse, suggesting that many recent performance studies have incorporated a concern with physical movement rather than ‘a position of almost pure cerebral abstraction’ (p. 74). Frith (1996) advanced this thinking in popular music, stating that ‘musicians’ bodies embody their art and that the physical creation of music is a representation of the score on another level’ (as cited in Holmes, 2012). From another perspective and following recent advances in the study of cognition and neuroscience, several music theorists (Brower, 2000; Cox, 2001, 2006; Larson, 1997; Saslaw, 1996; Zbikowski, 1997, 2002) have argued that listeners ‘experience and make sense of musical phenomena by metaphorically mapping the concepts derived from their body experience of the physical world onto music’ by reference to so-called bodily image-schemas (Doğantan-Dack, 2011, p. 244). Thus, there is much evidence to suggest that embodied cognition is important to both musicians and their audiences.
2.11 Cartesian Collapse

It has been widely suggested that traditional thinking of music performance has suffered from a mind/body dualism that has its origins in Cartesianism. According to Juntunen and Hyvönen (2004), Decartes is cited within the extensive literature on embodiment as the philosopher who separated mind and body and thus the material from the spiritual. Until recently, this dualistic notion, which emphasised logic, reason and detachment of the body from the processes of the mind, has influenced Western philosophy for more than three centuries (Juntunen & Hyvönen, 2004). Cartesianism is said to have affected academia, education and popular culture and led to a neglect of the emotional and aesthetic aspects within Western culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), and ‘until recently, body and affect stood as antagonists to reason and cognition’ (Doğantan-Dack, 2011, pp. 243–244). However, through the emergence of studies by contemporary neuroscientists such as Antonio Damasio (1994, 1999, 2003), Joseph LeDoux (1996, 2002) and Alain Berthoz (1999, 2000), the embodied nature of cognitive processes has been demonstrated and it is apparent that our existence is perceived and experienced through our bodies (Doğantan-Dack, 2011). Further, it has been said that affect is a necessary element in the cognitive processing of reasoning, reflecting, deliberating and decision-making (Damasio, 1994, p. xiii) and that cognitive processes have individualised affective counterparts that are neurologically enmeshed with bodily representations (Doğantan-Dack, 2011). These findings reflect recent research in cognitive sciences where an embodied, enactive and ecological perspective of human existence is favoured over the separation of mind and body (Bermudez, Marcel & Eilan, 1995; Clark, 1997).

From a more generalised perspective, Ivinson (2012) has argued that the role of the body in pedagogy has been neglected until relatively recently and ‘focusing on the body has usually been recognised as part of the regulative rather than instructional discourse in schools’ (p. 489). According to Ivinson (2012), the ‘absence of moving bodies in schools and universities reflects a monastic legacy … [that works to] suppress the subjective, involved, affective and corporeal aspects of the person’ (p. 489). When viewed from such multiple perspectives, music pedagogy that links affective processes, neurological operations and kinaesthetic awareness certainly seems a harmonious union and reflects current research and theory.
Doğantan-Dack (2011) has argued that the most significant effect of Cartesian collapse has been the growing scholarly interest in music performance, which can be seen to represent the literal embodiment of musical phenomena. Throughout much of the twentieth century, the essence of music has been regarded as the relationship between sound and basic structural variables such as pitch and duration (Doğantan-Dack, 2011). Behind such an assumption is the idea that a piece of music can exist independently from its realisation in sound and that musicology has conceptualised music as a fixed text that is to be faithfully reproduced in order for true understanding to occur (N. Cook, 2003). Surprisingly, the performer’s role in this process has been questioned to the extent that the score itself has been deemed sufficient to generate a musical experience (Doğantan-Dack, 2011). Jenenius (2007) has suggested that music has been analysed more as written text than as sound or bodily sensation, noting that body movement has received scant attention in traditional music research, even though it seems to be an essential part of musical activity in many cultures. The intimate connection between music and organised body movement is so close in some indigenous cultures that the conceptual distinction between them is at times blurred (Blacking, 1973, p. 27, as cited in Doğantan-Dack, 2006, p. 449). As Shove and Repp (1995) have proposed:

In many cultures this close connection of music and body movement is so obvious as hardly to deserve comment. In Europe, however, the remarkable development of musical notation and of complex compositional techniques over the last few centuries has encouraged a focus on the structural rather than the kinematic properties of music, at least of so called serious music … [T]he close connection between music and motion has receded from people’s consciousness. (p. 64)

Juntunen and Hyvönen (2004) asserted that musical knowing is a bodily experience and that the body is our primary mode of knowing. They maintained that ‘bodily experience provides a means of developing skills, competencies and understanding necessary to work in the expressional mode of musical knowing’ (p. 200). Therefore, the recent turn in musicology towards performance (N. Cook, 2001, 2003, 2013) has shifted the status quo of musical scholarship away from an ‘overriding preoccupation with the score’ (N. Cook & Clarke, 2004, p. 10) towards ‘a renewed emphasis on
music as sound and event, an ontological status lost in the mid-nineteenth century, when music’s notation gained the upper hand’ (Rink, 2004, p. 37). This is likely to focus inquiry on music performance, the performer and the bodily and affective dimensions involved with both (Doğantan-Dack, 2006, 2011). Perhaps it is time for pedagogical theories and practices to follow suit? Rather than a so-called ‘museum’ culture that values a perfect reproduction of the composer’s wishes, pedagogical approaches that place emphasis on expression, gesture and the role of the body in achieving such aims above respecting individual subjectivity, creativity, a healthy relationship between teacher and student and a positive, flexible and motivating learning environment should be encouraged.

2.12 A Case for the Pedagogical Implementation of Embodied Performance

Embodied thinking in music scholarship is not new, as MacRitchie (2013) noted that:

studies of body movement in musical performance and theories of embodiment suggest that the body is used as a mediator for the performer in order to transmit their thoughts about the music to the musical instrument in order to produce the desired sound. (p. 1)

Prominent violin teacher Ivan Galamian (1962) stated that ‘the mind always has to anticipate the physical action that is to be taken and then to send the command for its execution’ (p. 95). Klickstein (2009) advised that instrumentalists would do well to imagine ‘while executing one musical gesture, experience the sound, meaning, and tactile sensations of the gesture to come’ (p. 49). Bernstein (1981) referred to ‘body legato’, a musical sensation that begins ‘deep within you, rising from your solar plexus upward through your torso and then radiating through your arms and into your fingers … the result is a synthesis of thought, feeling, and action’ (p. 176). Doğantan-Dack (2011) posited that the unique relationship between the body and the instrument is pivotal in the realisation of the pianist’s expressive intentions via their touch. In other words, the way the performer uses their body at the instrument has a great deal to do with audible differences in sound quality (Doğantan-Dack, 2011) and the manner in which they approach the keys is critical when considering how a sound is produced and how that relates directly to the pianist’s expressive intention
Fink (2002b) has suggested, ‘like a singer or dancer, the pianist’s instrument should be his or her body, breath and vocal cords, muscles and joints, emotions, and gray matter’ (p. 97). Nijs et al. (2009) stated that the musical instrument is a natural extension of the musician and that ‘the human body … is considered to be the most natural mediator between subjective experience and physical reality’ (p. 1). In fact, they further argue that an awareness of such an embodied connection between instrument and musician is necessary for the communication of expressive musical meaning and the optimal subjective experience of the musician themselves:

A symbiosis between musician and musical instrument results from a growing integration of instrumental and interpretative movements into a coherent whole that is compatible with the body of the musician and with the movement repertoire of daily life. Such integration leads to the transparency of the musical instrument that just like ‘natural’ body parts disappears from consciousness. The musical instrument has then become part of the body as stable background of every human experience and is no longer an obstacle to an embodied interaction with the music. It has become a natural extension of the musician, thus allowing a spontaneous corporeal articulation of the music. (Nijs et al., 2009, p. 1)

The implication here is that the musical instrument is integrated into the bodily coordination system (Nijs et al., 2009) and playing-related movements become part of the musician’s somatic sense (Baber, 2003; Behnke, 1989). Thus, the material, functional and formal features of the musical instrument no longer require explicit representation and become transparent in terms of the functional relationship with the musician (Rabardel, 1995, as cited in Nijs et al., 2009, p. 3). Without the need for cognitive reflection, the musician is able to solely rely on previously acquired skills and respond directly to the musical environment, thereby creating a balance between clear feedback of the performing situation and the skills required to cope with the challenges present, factors required for optimal subjective experience or so-called flow experience (Nijs et al., 2009).

However, the actual pedagogical implementation of such embodied ideology seems yet unexplored in the research literature, especially with young musicians. In fact,
Clarke and Davidson (1998) seemed to welcome such study, suggesting that the relationship between body movement, gesture ‘rhetoric’ and the practical interpretation of musical character, style and structure represents ‘a fascinating field of enquiry’ (p. 89). Further, Nijs et al. (2009) suggested that their insights into the relationship between musician and musical instrument provide a top-down strategy for the implementation of an embodied approach in instrumental music teaching. In this study, I will investigate strategies that might enable young pianists to see the piano as a natural extension of their physical body and connect the way that they move at the piano with the resultant acoustical properties that best reflect the musical character, style and structure of the compositions they play. I will also attempt to answer the question: can expressivity be taught, and if so, how? Through the exploration and analysis of several instrumental case studies, pedagogical principles that might best facilitate such expressive sensibility will be identified and unpacked, and the apparent gap in the research literature will, in part, be addressed.

2.13 The Role of Motor Development in the Acquisition of Embodied Performance

While the physical skills of experienced musicians have become fully automated units in motor memory (Lehmann, 1997a), McPhee (2011) has suggested that the success of teaching musical expression to younger students is dependent on their level of motor production. Whereas McPhee’s (2011) statement that the physical skills learnt by beginner music students require deliberate thought to execute may have anecdotal merit, her assertion that it could prove problematic to teach musical expression while these basics are still being learnt could be disputed. It may well be possible, through a process of careful scaffolding involving gestural embodiment, for basic principles of expressive touch, spatial awareness and corresponding motor programs to be learnt at the same time, or at least systematically. Ideally, such a process would be informed by principles of motor learning research, reflect each child’s learning variability and provide children with opportunities to develop their expressive skills in a systematic way, as they and their playing undergo physical, developmental, intellectual and emotional maturation. It is unviable to compare one child’s progress with or against another child’s, as rates of intellectual, motor, social and emotional development and progress are rarely uniform, even within one child (Altenmüller & McPherson, 2008).
An understanding of such variability has to the potential to inform the planning of appropriate, stimulating and enriching experiences, and provide the basis for encouraging and supporting young children’s learning of a musical instrument (Altenmüller & McPherson, 2008).

Placing disproportionate emphasis on finger dexterity at a young age before instruction in expressive gesture that may facilitate tone production and interpretive nuance at a later stage might fly in the face of basic motor learning research. Perhaps a reversal of such might better serve the way motor development actually occurs, from gross motor skills of the arms to refined motor skills of the fingers (Altenmüller & McPherson, 2008). In fact, as a general principle, the development of fine motor skills is always based on the inhibition of gross motor skills (Altenmüller & McPherson, 2008) and being unaware of such information may prove problematic if, for example, children are unduly criticised for stiffening their arms in order to prematurely control the independence and strength of their fingers. From a pedagogical perspective, Fink (2002b) seemed to agree when he stated that the larger elements of the playing mechanism should be developed first and that ‘harping on rounded hand position and broken nail joints does nothing for the ear, and has a proven history of locking shoulders and wrists, hobbling future development’ (p. 99). Parncutt and Troup (2002) also argued for the introduction of large-scale body movements from the start, citing the pieces by Kase (2001) as material that might delay focused finger movement and facilitate this process, perhaps to a time when the gestures that embody both technical and expressive elements posited here are being comfortably assimilated into the student’s playing. All these converging points of view seem to suggest that gesture should be taught to young pianists from the beginning of their study, rather than ‘added on’ later.

Another interesting argument for the development of expressive touch primarily through gestural implementation rather than other verbally based mechanisms comes from neurological research. While the motor aspects of sport and music seem to rely on balanced brain activation, Beckmann, Gröpel and Ehrlenspiel (2012) noted that verbal representation and declarative knowledge are related to activation of the left brain hemisphere, and the motor skills involved in music performance depend on the spatial orientation and touch centres found in the right brain hemisphere (Blaxton,
1996, as cited in Beckmann et al., 2012). Citing theoretical and empirical reasons, Beckmann et al. (2012) critically challenged the common approaches to teaching motor tasks that favour verbal instruction, producing an over-reliance on the left hemisphere, with negative consequences for later performance, especially in pressure situations. The kinaesthetic awareness implicit to the pedagogy argued within this thesis might come close to how the brain best learns and retains the specific skills needed for a fluent musical performance, expressive or otherwise. However, if motor skills are inlaid with expressive touch, muscular freedom and spatial awareness throughout the learning process, perhaps young pianists can learn to let go of undue conscious attention on ‘being expressive’ during performance. Masters (1992) referred to this conscious over-focusing on one’s own performance under pressure as ‘self-monitoring’, a process that may actually promote self-doubt and inhibit true musical expression (cf. Beckmann et al., 2012; Mornell, 2002).

2.14 Is Expression a Natural Behaviour That Might Be Unwittingly Suppressed?

There is evidence to suggest that musical expressivity could be a natural behaviour, in that even very young children may be able to control aspects of timing and dynamics in their sound production (Trehub, 2001). Children can perceive expressive character in music performance at age four (Adachi & Trehub, 1998; Gembris, 2002). For some individuals, the transition to actual instrumental or vocal instruction during childhood might inhibit or delay this natural expressivity (Brenner & Strand, 2013). Westney (2003) suggested that the childhood vitality that begets expressivity in music education is surprisingly perishable and requires nurturing rather than being neglected, taken for granted or dismissed as over-exuberant by insensitive teachers, parents or peers. Despite years of practising, students approaching adolescence may become disillusioned with their ability to enjoy and feel proud of their playing, sensing that something is lacking and not knowing how to fix it (Westney, 2003). The teaching of musical expression to child and adolescent pianists does not seem to be widely understood or addressed (McPhee, 2011), with some suggesting that it is in fact being neglected altogether, even at tertiary level (Persson, 1996a; Rostvall & West, 2003). When investigating the practice habits of children, Gruson (1988) observed that children tended to play through pieces repeatedly from beginning to end.
with an emphasis on notational accuracy. Other research has found that there is generally little focus on elements of aesthetic appeal, with teachers tending to lean towards an unbalanced concentration on the technical and notational aspects of learning an instrument, particularly with novice players (Davidson et al., 2001). Lindström et al. (2003) suggested that this neglect could result in students gaining the skills for musical expression rather late in their development. Could this be a contributing factor in the drop-off rates in piano students of early intermediate level, a stage when many begin to question their musical ability and the personal validity of the musical experiences in which they engage? A recent study by Davidson (1999) found that a sense of self was tied to playing instruments in adolescent musicians. Encouraging creativity and self-expression on global and local levels might help students to develop an intrinsic link with their instrument, while forging a sense of musical identity that can extrapolate the desire to continue with instrumental study.

In a culture that values technical perfection above all else, with an unbalanced focus on avoiding mistakes, students of various ages and levels of development could experience anxiety and be unable to connect emotionally with the music that they are playing (Riley, 2010). Tarling (2005) posited that

> the modern pursuit of technical perfection and the use of a general, all-purpose style restricts many performers’ imaginations. The uniformity of tone cultivated by many players and teachers today obliterates the subtle nuances favoured by performers of the eighteenth and … nineteenth centuries. (p. iii)

Anecdotally, many have suggested that the advent of recording technology has helped to foster today’s overemphasis of technical perfection at the peril of expressive performance. Could it be that this philosophy has contributed to teachers and, through transference, their students valuing basic skills of accurate notation and technique over creativity, expression and imagination so much that by the time the fundamentals of playing are in place, the time to make a personal connection to the music has long passed and the initial exuberance for learning has all but withered away? In a study by Woody (2000), it was found that many college level musicians consider expression to be one of the most fundamental aspects of performance, but the time between the realisation of such importance and the actual implementation into their own playing
had spanned many years. Of particular concern is Rostvall and West’s (2003) suggestion that a student’s deprivation of expressive experience could be a factor for ceasing music instruction. It has been said that a determining factor for future success may lie in the deeply influential early stages of musical development and experience (Lisboa, 2008). It seems that one of the key challenges for teachers of young pianists is to help students to develop skills in expressive tone production, while at the same time linking these skills with other elements of technique and structural conception. Encouraging an overall maturation of emotional sensibility, expressive autonomy, creative ownership of the learning and personal meaning in musical experiences should be prioritised and developed over the long term. Fink (2002b) insisted that

it is our responsibility as teachers to resist the desire to throw up our hands, and, instead, to forge ahead armed with the knowledge and understanding to encourage and improve the essence of music making; essentials found not in score reading and technique, but in the body’s linkage to song and dance, in ear training, inner hearing, and audiation, and in a deeper emotional grasp of the musical values relating to performance. (pp. 97–98)

2.15 Environmental Factors That Might Influence Expressive Pedagogy

Fundamentally, this study posits that the dissemination of such expressive pedagogy might ideally occur in a student-centred learning environment where the teacher and the student respect each other’s personhood and collaborate harmoniously in a constructivist way. As a teaching method where teacher and student see each other as co-creators of a dynamic and fluid experience, constructivism7 goes back to at least the work of education reformer John Dewey and Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Brown, 2008). Constructivism is not a passive process (Pritchard, 2009). It acknowledges that learning is a social activity, enhanced by shared inquiry where knowledge and beliefs are formed within the learners themselves (S. Scott, 2006). Students who learn in a constructivist way are given opportunities to link new learning to previous understanding, knowledge and skills, and to interpret new knowledge through practical experience (Webster, 2002). Children need to actively

7 Constructivism is not without its critics (cf. Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006; Mayer, 2004; Sweller, Kirschner & Clark, 2007).
engage with new information in order to understand it (Pritchard, 2009). Indeed, Pritchard (2009) has suggested that the teacher’s role in encouraging engagement is crucial, as a student’s lack of involvement and activity around the learning content can greatly reduce the opportunity for effective learning to transpire. Pritchard (2009) further posited that lessons need to be based on the pupil’s existing knowledge, be set in a cultural context that the pupil will relate to, include social interaction and be prepared to move the student’s learning forward, across the zone of proximal development.

An idea emerging from Vygotsky’s (1978) work, the zone of proximal development is a ‘theoretical space of understanding just above the level of understanding of a given individual … where a learner may work more effectively, but only with support’ (Pritchard, 2009, p. 25). Sewell (1990) described it as ‘a point at which a child has partly mastered a skill but can act more effectively with the assistance of a more skilled adult or peer’ (p. 17). Through a process of scaffolding, described as ‘the process of giving support to learners at the appropriate time and at the appropriate level of sophistication to meet the needs of the individual’ (Pritchard, 2009, p. 25), learners should ideally move through the zone of proximal development as comfortably and efficiently as possible. This obviously has implications in the area of piano pedagogy, as the multi-tasking of more and more complex skills and patterns of thought are common in piano playing, especially as the repertoire increases in difficulty. Assisting students to overcome these challenges one step at a time in a positive and engaging way should remain a priority at all stages of development.

This kind of student-centred instruction has been described as a process where the students’ needs and abilities are identified and met with insightful planning, teaching and assessment (Brown, 2008). Such student-centred approaches are valued by education researchers Barbara L. McCombs and Jo Sue Whisler (1997) because learning is most meaningful when it caters to the student’s individual interests and educational needs, while also recognising how these might best fit into their lives. Put simply, students are not given answers to problems directly, but are steered towards possible solutions and encouraged to explore, experiment and discover their role as part of the decision making process, all intending to stimulate their curiosity for the subject (Brooks & Brooks, 2000). Ultimately, in a student-centred learning
environment, individuals are respected as individuals who have relevant ideas about how their learning unfolds, are no longer ‘detached from the music they learn and the ways they learn it … [and] become involved in learning music, not just learning how to play the pieces in front of them’ (Brown, 2008, pp. 31, 33). Teachers might inspire their students to seek out knowledge while striving for understanding at a deeper level (Stuart, 1997). In short, ‘through student-centred instruction, our students can achieve independent minds and the capacity to make educated decisions and value judgments about music their entire lives’ (Brown, 2008, p. 35).

A student-centred constructivist approach is said to work best when curriculum is negotiated between teacher and student (J. Cook, 1992; K. Smith, 1993). J. Cook (1992) posited:

Negotiating the curriculum means deliberately planning to invite students to contribute, and to modify, the educational program, so that they will have a real investment both in the learning journey and the outcomes. Negotiation also means making explicit, and then confronting, the constraints of the learning context and the non-negotiable requirements that apply. (p. 14)

An obvious impediment to the success of such an approach would be the study of repertoire that the student shows no desire or intrinsic interest in playing. It has been argued that a key factor in building intrinsic motivation in musical experience is an emotional response to musical content itself (Sloboda, 1991). Hallam (1998) has maintained that in order to develop the intrinsic interest that facilitates long-term commitment to learning, students should be involved in making decisions about the style and level of difficulty of the music to be learnt. In other words, the learning needs to be meaningful to the learner on an emotional level and at a level of complexity where the challenge presented and skill required to be successful are optimally balanced (Davidson, 2002a). Renwick and McPherson (2002) provided evidence that suggests furnishing students with a balance between playing pieces they like and those that teachers assign could lead to heightened interest and overall success. Could it be that expressive playing might be best facilitated when students value the task, anticipate being successful, and are given a level of autonomy where they are regularly afforded the opportunity to choose repertoire that is personally relevant, emotionally meaningful and of a level of difficulty that takes account of their
level of skill? Certainly, the best pedagogy available is of no use if the student has become disengaged with their music studies and has ceased instruction.

2.16 Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to review the major research literature pertaining to the topic of this thesis. In doing so, it has established the importance of expression to music performance and justified an embodied, gestural approach for teaching musical expression in the one-to-one environment. The chapter has provided a case for the nurturing of expressive playing early in a young pianist’s development through gesture. Moreover, it has argued for greater consideration of the environmental factors that may influence the pedagogy of musical expression. Further, this chapter has demonstrated ways in which music expression has been taught in recent contexts, and has established the position of this thesis within that literature. Chapter 3 will detail the research methodology employed in this study, justify its use, and outline how data were collected and analysed.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

The previous chapter established the viability of teaching musical expression through a gestural approach within a framework of embodied cognition. This chapter outlines the theory underpinning the research and justifies the use of case study, auto-ethnography and reflective practice as research tenets. The data instruments of reflective journaling, video-recording and semi-structured research interviews are then reviewed. This chapter considers ethical concerns when working with children and details steps taken to impart research credibility. It outlines how research data were collected and analysed, and explains why these processes were employed.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

In a 2006 critique of research methods within the field of music education research, Burnard suggested that there has too often been a lack of cognisance regarding the difference between research methods and methodology, and emphasised the need to predicate research ideology. As Carey, Lebler and Gall (2010) have cautioned, ‘this lack of differentiation of methods from methodology renders invisible the assumptions about knowledge formation that drive decisions to act, think, or indeed research in certain ways’ (p. 179). Addressing these concerns, this study’s epistemological stance is situated within an interpretivist paradigm that seeks to gradually characterise activity rather than pursue causal explanations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1988). It assumes that the researchers’ values are inherent in all phases of the research process, acknowledges that the researcher’s task is to ‘map reality within time and space’ (Carey et al., 2010, p. 179), and ‘welcomes surprise, tolerates coexistence, and cares for the new, providing a welcoming environment for the objects of our thought’ (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 619).

The study engages with a relativist ontology that maintains that our understandings and experiences of the world are relative to our specific cultural and social frames of reference, and are open to interpretation (N. King & Horrocks, 2010). According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), relativist ontology ‘assumes that reality as we know it is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed
socially and experientially’ (p. 1). In terms of the study’s data collection, analysis and interpretation, transactional or subjectivist epistemology assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from what we know. The investigator and the object of investigation are linked such that who we are and how we understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others and the world. (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1)

3.2 Research Methodology

This investigation sought to address the research questions from a pragmatic viewpoint and involved a combination of qualitative research methodologies, including case study, phenomenology and autoethnography. Indeed, Burnard (2006) championed ‘methodological pluralism or eclecticism’ (p. 150), as it may ultimately result in research of higher quality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Further, this study aligns itself with recent studies (e.g. Carey et al., 2013) that have sought to employ methodology that draws on not only secondary data, such as interviews with students and parents, but also primary data, that is, the ‘direct examination of one-to-one interactions through video-graphic analysis, in order to map how interactions between teacher and student occur’ (Carey et al., 2013, p. 152). Qualitative research methodology seems ideal for examining the pedagogical processes in the one-to-one studio environment because the research will occur within its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). While the research participants’ conceptualisations regarding the relevance of expressive gesture within their own playing reflect aspects of phenomenology, a case study framework was chosen to explore pedagogical processes in detail, to develop an in-depth contextual understanding of how the learning environment and a collaborative relationship between teacher and student might foster expressive playing, and to help maintain a high degree of ecological validity where the observed behaviour is as natural as possible (Lisboa, 2008). Further, a case study framework was used to document the fluid nature of one-to-one pedagogy that a more overtly experimental design may not afford (Lisboa, 2008).
3.3 Case Study

Yin (2009) supported the use of case study where it is desirable to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth and acknowledged that such an understanding is dependent on important contextual conditions. Case study research seeks to explore an issue where a detailed understanding emerges from examining one or more cases that reflect clear boundaries of location and time (Creswell, 2013), such as the one-to-one lesson structure examined in this study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the case study approach is well suited to taking the insider perspectives of the research participants into account, while permitting research ‘when the boundary between the “case” (the phenomenon being studied – or the unit of analysis) and its context is not clearly evident’ (p. 27). Pitts and Davidson (2000) suggested that ‘detailed (case) studies allow close comparison of the methods and behavior in evidence, from which broader discussion can be generated’ (p. 46).

As each case is generally unique, a common criticism of case studies is that they are difficult to generalise from, but what they can do well is to show detailed processes at work. As such, case studies can reveal the complexity and consequences of certain actions (J. J. Campbell, 2011). Indeed, when comparing the literature (de Vaus, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000; Yin, 2009), opinions on the significance of case study generalisation differ widely, with some going as far as to categorise varieties of generalisation to include naturalistic generalisation (Stake, 1995), holographic generalisation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and fuzzy generalisation (Bassey, 2001). However, a major strength of the case study design is observed in the way that it allows multiple methods of data collection and data triangulation to be brought to bear.

In this study, data instruments included the observation and analysis of lessons through audiovisual recordings, field notes with preliminary analysis taken through a process of reflective journalling directly after each lesson, semi-structured interviews with the research participants and their parents, and the analysis of archival materials in the form of music scores, all of which furnish the study with richness of data and construct validity. Such construct validity may help to alleviate conventional concerns that case studies are subjective, and give too much scope for the researcher’s own interpretations (Flyvbjerg, 2006), a scenario that has been referred to as ‘the
interpretative crisis’ (Denzin, 1994, p. 501). The position of the researcher, along with the potential influence of the researcher on the researched, is perhaps one of the chief threats to validity in qualitative studies (Maxwell, 2005, p. 108). However, reflective practitioners are increasingly encouraged to make their experiences, opinions, thoughts and feelings a visible and acknowledged part of the research process (Ortlipp, 2008). Research should be presented in ways that make it clear how the researcher’s own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced their research interests, the way they choose to do their research, and the ways they choose to represent their research findings. (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001, p. 325)

3.3.1 Case Study Selection

In an effort to answer the research questions with a degree of conceptual generalisability that examination of a single case may not reveal, six instrumental, exploratory (Yin, 2009) case studies were examined and compared, thereby forming a multiple case study framework. Instrumental case studies differ from intrinsic case studies in that they are chosen not for the case itself, but for the information that the case might reveal (Yin, 2009). The six case studies were chosen through purposive sampling, and reflected variation between individual cases. The six research participants selected for this multiple case study represented a spectrum of skill attainment, degrees of commitment, age, gender and cultural background, and subjectively perceived levels of motor skill, coordination, kinaesthetic awareness, timbral perception, self-confidence, and unique attributes of personality and temperament. My subjective judgements regarding such matters were based on consultation of the research literature, more than two decades of practical experience in teaching pre-tertiary pianists, and my prior knowledge of and experience working with the research participants themselves. Thomas (2011) referred such selection based on the researcher’s familiarity a ‘local knowledge case’ and suggested its particular relevance to the practitioner due to intimate knowledge and ample opportunity for informed, in-depth analysis … The local knowledge case is eminently amenable to the ‘soak and poke’
of Fenno (1986, 1990) since the inquirer is already soaked, and in a good position, one hopes, to poke. (p. 514)

Further, Bates, Greif, Levi, Rosenthal and Weingast (1998) have argued that such cases provide ample opportunity for identification and discussion of ‘the actors, the decision points they faced, the choices they made, the paths taken and shunned, and the manner in which their choices generated events and outcomes’ (pp. 13–14).

In order to provide perspective and a detailed account of background information, Chapter 4 provides a biographical history of each research participant, including details regarding age, gender, ethnic background, position within the family framework, the total time spent engaging with music, the length of time learning the piano and the time spent studying at Young Conservatorium Griffith University. In addition, a subjective account concerning the student’s kinaesthetic awareness, tonal awareness, coordination, rhythmic reliability, level of engagement, mindset, level of commitment (home practice) and overall temperament is detailed. Such subjective judgements are drawn from my professional experience teaching school-aged pianists, spanning approximately 25 years, my personal and professional experience teaching the research participants, and through data provided by the research participants and their parent(s) during semi-structured interviews.

Kinaesthetic awareness, coordination and rhythmic reliability have been chosen as areas of relevance due to their ability to influence the ease with which expressive gesture may be assimilated. As reflected in the research literature detailed in Chapter 2, tonal awareness can be seen as an important discussion point in the context of this study, as the type of expressive gesture a student uses is directly linked with the quality of touch, and therefore the tone produced. It follows that a student’s awareness of tonal nuance may help to facilitate their ability to forge a causal relationship between expressive gesture, touch and tone. While a link between the dissemination of expressive pedagogy and factors such as engagement, commitment, mindset and overall temperament may not be immediately apparent, they are areas that the literature suggests are important in fostering effective learning and therefore will be considered within the context of this study. In summary, rather than choosing research participants based on their ‘learning style’, an area in the research literature fraught with conflicting points of view (Beheshti, 2009; Franklin, 2006; Green, 2010;
Kirschner & van Merriëboer, 2013; C. Scott, 2010; J. Smith, 2002), these factors were chosen to reflect a range of physical, musical and personal attributes. These considerations aim to see the research participants as whole people, demonstrating an understanding that learning goals are necessarily flexible among the research participants.

Students of late elementary to early intermediate level were chosen for this study as recent research indicates that this population may represent a critical phase of instruction, when many able pupils cease their lessons (cf. Bowden, 2010; Daniel & Bowden, 2013; Worthy, 2009). It is hoped that the research presented here may illuminate reasons for this trend, while providing teachers with strategies that may encourage students to continue with their piano studies over a longer term. Further, it is possible that students who are slightly older than a typical beginner may be able to articulate their responses to the questions asked in the interview process with greater detail and understanding of the wording and concepts contained therein. However, of relevance to this project is Brinner’s (1995) observation that one of the challenges when investigating a child’s self-concept of their musical development is a potential mismatch between what they can verbalise and what they can demonstrate through their playing. Further, Lisboa (2008) has indicated that research methods need to be flexible enough to take into account situations where children may know and understand a good deal more than what they can actually express in words. Therefore, it is important to note that the interviews were semi-structured and prudently worded, with answers carefully analysed against the child’s actual playing and behaviour within the lessons themselves. Archival material in the form of music scores were collected for the purposes of analysing and collating symbol systems that may prove useful in providing students with choreographic reminders of spatial patterns consistent with the elements of expressive gesture being examined. Such information forms a visually notated configuration of expressive gesture pertaining directly to the central research question.

3.3.2 Case Study Database

According to Yin (2009), after the use of multiple sources of data, the second principle of collecting case study evidence is the need to create a case study database. Case studies borrow from the practices followed in other research methods in that
their documentation commonly consists of two separate collections, the case study database and the written report of the investigator (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009) suggested that the narrative presented in the case study report is often synonymous with the data collected, and this distinction between a separate database and case study report is yet to become commonplace within case study research, representing a major shortcoming in need of correction. In principle, every case study project should strive to develop a formal database so that other investigators may review the evidence directly if desired (Yin, 2009). Such a database should reveal not just the actual evidence, but also establish the circumstances under which it was collected (Yin, 2009). These circumstances should be consistent with those originally specified within the case study protocol, an essential document for multiple case studies that outlines the instrumentation, the data collection procedures to be followed, case study questions and general rules (Yin, 2009).

Yin (2009) argued that a case study database and a case study protocol markedly increase the reliability of the entire case study project, and for this reason, a case study protocol (Reflective Journal) and a case study database (Lesson Synopses) are presented here along with the case study report (Chapter 4). The report takes the form of a multiple case study report, where multiple narratives covering each of the four cases are presented and appear alongside cross-case analysis and comparison (Yin, 2009). The report itself cites the relevant portions of the case study database (Yin, 2009). The third principle of collecting case study evidence is the need to maintain a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). This principle increases the reliability of the information, addresses the methodological challenge of establishing construct validity, allows the reader of the case study to identify the link between the content of the case study protocol and the initial case study questions, and affords the opportunity to ‘follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions’ (Yin, 2009, p. 122).

3.4 Auto-Ethnography and Reflective Practice

Elements of auto-ethnography were present through my direct involvement, reflexivity and prior experience with the research participants. Auto-ethnography has been defined as a ‘blend of ethnography and autobiographical writing that incorporates elements of one’s own experience when writing about others’ (Scott-
Hoy, 2002, p. 276). However, underpinning case study and auto-ethnography as methods of inquiry for this investigation lay a desire to engage in practice-based research, defined by Furlong and Oancea (2005) as ‘an area situated between academia-led theoretical pursuits and research-informed practice’ (p. 1). Bolton (2005) saw reflective practice as ‘learning and developing through examining what we think happened on any occasion, and how we think others perceived the event and us, opening our practice to scrutiny by others, and studying texts from the wider sphere’ (p. 7). The implication is that practitioners will incorporate learning from the research into their practice (A. Campbell, 2007). Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2006) have argued that ‘those involved in practitioner inquiry are bound to engage with both “theoretical” and “practical” knowledge moving seamlessly between the two’ (p. 107). When condensing the cycle of reflection on action, reflection in action and reflection for action, Jay (2003) summarised reflection as ‘looking back on experience in a way that informs practice, learning in the midst of practice, and/or making informed and intelligent decisions about what to do, when to do it, and why it should be done’ (p. 12; see also Richert, 1990; Schon, 1991; Shulman, 1987).

According to Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999), the most important influence on student learning is high-quality teaching, a philosophy echoed by Dewey (1933). Frid, Redden and Redding (1998) suggested that teaching experience in itself is not adequate to ensure further growth, citing a large body of literature that calls for explicit action to stimulate professional development among teachers (e.g. LaBoskey, 1994; Posner, 1993; van Manen, 1977; Zeichner, 1981). Posner (1993) maintained that, ‘we do not actually learn from experience as much as we learn from reflecting on experience’ (p. 20), while Frid et al. (1998) stated:

as professionals, teachers are constantly immersed in situations in which they must flexibly make decisions, act, respond, think and make further decisions, and act, respond and think further. For highly successful teachers this ongoing cycle is more than routine, habitual action. (p. 326)

Jay (2003) highlighted the general consensus regarding the importance of reflection in quality teaching, where teachers might engage in ongoing learning from their practice to best serve the constantly changing needs of their students. Reflection can assist
teachers to develop their ability to make informed decisions regarding what they will do, and when and why they will do it (Richert, 1990). Jay (2003) suggested that reflective teachers face the challenge of truly seeing themselves and their teaching. They approach their practice with openness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility, looking for the better path to take, the edges that need to be smoothed, and the changes they need to make in their practice to improve learning for students. This is the heart of quality teaching. (p. 2)

3.4.1 Reflective Journalling

This research project aims to extend my professional development as a piano pedagogue by documenting this process through reflective journalling, a common practice within qualitative research, particularly reflexive research (Etherington, 2004). Frid et al. (1998) described journal writing as ‘a written record or personal dialogue in which the focus is on global, ongoing processes, and which aims at reflection on deeper meanings and beliefs’ (p. 335). Such a journal may include specific ‘event appraisals’, described by Frid et al. (1998) as a process whereby you reflect on practice in a personal way about a discrete event, critical incident, object, student or interaction. Comments or answers to simple questions are included and usually involve aspects of teaching that relate specifically to the practitioner. (p. 336)

Russell and Kelly (2002) have suggested that self-reflective journalling can facilitate reflexivity, a strategy where researchers can clarify their subjective beliefs and make transparent their personal assumptions and goals. Ortlipp (2008) maintained that reflective journalling allows for research pellucidity, bears witness to subtle shifts in methodologies and analysis, and allows for documentation and critical reflection of research processes and practices.

According to Aggett (2008), the terms ‘reflective’ and ‘reflexive’ are often used interchangeably in the literature. The concept of reflective practice was pioneered by Schon (1987, 1991) and seeks to encourage practitioners to review their actions and the knowledge that informs them (Aggett, 2008). Reflexivity is focusing on one’s own actions and their effect on others, situations, and professional and social structures.
(Bolton, 2005, p. 10) while ‘finding strategies for looking at our own thought processes, values … and … prejudices … as if we were onlookers’ (Bolton, 2005, p. 7). While issues of bias and how much researcher influence is acceptable have not reached a consensus, within qualitative research, a reflexive approach is now widely accepted (Ortlipp, 2008). Indeed, effective reflective practice can increase a practitioner’s confidence, and enable care or education that is sympathetic to the client’s or student’s underlying needs (Bolton, 2005).

Bolton (2005) maintained that reflective practice encourages a deeper understanding of professional relationships, and allows practitioners to merge their whole person with that of whom they work. Further, ‘effective reflection and reflexivity make the ordinary of one’s experience seem extraordinary, “as different as possible”, and it makes the extraordinary, the foreign, of another’s experience more comprehensible, and close’ (Bolton, 2005, p. 32).

Reflective journaling has been used by practitioners in the fields of pre-service teaching (Hourigan, 2009; Towell, Snyder & Poor, 1995), nursing (Richardson & Maltby, 1995), library students (Tilly, 1996), and music therapy (Barry & O’Callaghan, 2008), as ‘an educative tool to investigate the way in which they practice their craft’ (Aggett, 2010, p. 186). According to Mruck and Breuer (2003), researchers are urged to reflect on ‘their presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process’ (p. 3). However, Bolton (2005) maintained that readers learn from characters, places and actions, and cautioned against using reflective writing as a process of mere abstraction, stating that ‘writers are exhorted to show don’t tell … don’t tell me she’s pregnant, show me her ungainly movements, swelling belly, and to her back as she stops to get breath’ (p. 52). Additionally, Bolton (2005) has suggested that writing from varying perspectives can widen the reader’s experience and open new avenues of understanding. Bolton (2005) cited examples where readers may gain insight through other protagonists’ perspectives and even the stories of a doctor’s sofa or other inanimate objects within the research setting. Of interest to this study may be writing from such a multi-voiced perspective, including that of the student participants, their parents and even possibly, the (inanimate) pianos that they play at home and within the one-to-one environment.
3.4.2 Critical Pedagogy

At the heart of such reflective journalling lies critical pedagogy, ‘a prism that reflects the complexities between teaching and learning … and … sheds light on the hidden subtleties that might have escaped our view previously’ (Wink, 2005, p. 26). Critical pedagogy aims to change coercive to collaborative, transmissive to transformative, inert to catalytic, and passive to active (Wink, 2005, p. 165). It does so by calling on teaching professionals to seek new perspectives and ask new questions, thereby empowering those who are most vulnerable in classrooms and in society (Wink, 2005). Wink (2005) maintained that critical pedagogy implores us to ‘reflect, to reflect deeply, and to take action on our new emerging ideas’ (p. 40). Teachers are called to be self-reflective, to understand and challenge their presuppositions (Freire, 1973) and to open their ideological mindsets to new realities (Abrahams, 2005).

Developed by Paulo Freire in the 1960s, critical pedagogy was used in Brazil to teach illiterate adults to read Portuguese (Abrahams, 2005). According to Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2003), the term, critical pedagogy was first used by Henry Giroux in his 1983 publication, *Theory and Resistance*. Critical pedagogy ‘is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society and nation state’ (McLaren, 1998, p. 45). A key tenet of critical pedagogy is the construction of new learning over the foundation of a student’s existing knowledge that needs to be acknowledged and valued (Abrahams, 2005). Critical pedagogy calls on the teacher to present information within a context that is familiar to the student (Abrahams, 2005). Focus is placed on developing the potential of both student and teacher, acknowledging who they both are and building on existing strengths while assessing and developing the individual needs of both parties (Abrahams, 2005). Such education empowers students and teachers to view themselves in a partnership, to pose and solve problems together, to broaden their perception of the world and to see the acquisition of knowledge as a transformative process that goes beyond the simple recall of information (Abrahams, 2005). Critical pedagogy concerns itself with the transformation of teachers and students alike (Abrahams, 2005).
Critical pedagogy encourages critical thinking, critical action and critical feeling, ‘has the power to liberate students and their teachers from present stereotypes about music and musicians’ and engages musical imagination, musical intelligence, musical creativity and musical celebration through performance (Abrahams, 2005, p. 8). According to Wink (2005), critical pedagogy means ‘looking within and without and seeing more deeply the complexities of teaching and learning’ (p. 25). Moreover, critical pedagogy challenges established social and institutional structures and the way knowledge is produced (McLaren, 1998).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1 Video Recording of One-to-One Lessons

The one-to-one lessons were the weekly interactions between myself (the researcher), and my students (the research participants) at Young Conservatorium Griffith University over a 12-month period, amounting to approximately 30 lessons per student. Each lesson was digitally recorded with a Sony camcorder in order to mitigate the Hawthorne effect, cited by Daniel (2006) as ‘the potential for better performance as a result of knowingly being placed under research scrutiny’ (p. 206). Further, it was anticipated that the opportunity for repeated and retrospective viewing of these recordings would allow for the emergence of pedagogical strategies not immediately apparent. Indeed, Carey et al. (2013, p. 153) have noted that the use and analysis of video footage has substantial precedent in music education research, citing various studies that adopt this method (e.g. Bowman, 1994; Daniel, 2006; DuFon, 2002; Gustafson, 1986; Kennell, 2002; Rostvall & West, 2003; Young et al., 2003).

While Daniel (2006, p. 193) did point to some challenges with video recording, including the time-consuming and demanding nature of analysis, he suggested obvious benefits, including the ease and unobtrusive nature of data collection within the teaching studio, and the potential increased reliability through repeated and retrospective analysis. Through my professional experience as the research investigator and consultation with the research literature, checklists of specific pedagogical concepts and environmental factors that were anticipated to support the development of musical expression were tabulated (see Appendix 2) and used as a starting point in describing the overall nature of each lesson. Together with a
reflective synopsis of each recorded lesson, and extensive field notes made within my Reflective Journal, lessons and/or parts of lessons that illuminated the research questions were identified through thematic analysis. Through this process, understanding of the strategies that worked to foster the expressive skills of each research participant began to emerge. In short, the study sought to identify and understand the overall effectiveness of utilising expressive gesture in teaching musical expression within a real-world context. While the data generated through video recording cannot give a complete picture of the lesson interaction, it was hoped that important areas for discussion would be revealed.

3.5.2 Semi-Structured Research Interviews

Within qualitative research, it is generally accepted that the unique values and opinions of the research participants are central to the research process, and ‘interviews are particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived worlds, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world’ (Kvale, 2007, p. 46). Therefore, in order to afford the research participants the opportunity to be directly involved in the research, to ascertain general attitudes towards their learning, and to garner their perception of the role of expression in their playing, semi-structured qualitative research interviews (Kvale, 1996) with each research participant and their parent(s) were conducted at the beginning and end of the data collection period. These interviews were recorded and the audio professionally transcribed. While some researchers (Corsaro, 1997; Prout & James, 1997; Weisner, 1996) have advocated ethnography and participant observation rather than interviewing in the study of children, Eder and Fingerson (2001) supported the use of interviews in such research, citing B. Davies (1989) and Eckert (1989) as successful examples of interview research with children from preschool age through to high school age. Further, Eder and Fingerson (2001) have suggested that interviewing children allows them to express their reality in their own words, rather than relying solely on adult subjectivity.
3.5.3 Student Participants and Sample Questions

In order to afford the student participants the opportunity to be directly involved in the research, to give a general impression of their learning, their learning goals and what they enjoy about playing the piano, the questions employed in the initial interviews were generic, open-ended and worded in an age-appropriate way. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) advocated such age-appropriateness when interviewing children, and cautioned against long, complex questioning or posing more than one question at a time. Examples of the initial interview questions can be found in Appendix 4. The answers to questions of a more specific nature were collected during semi-structured interviews in December 2014. These questions were in part formulated after reflecting on the answers from the questions asked during the initial interviews. I anticipated that the questions asked of each of the research participants would likely diverge as the study progressed, and each student would not necessarily answer the same questions, at least not in a pre-ordered fashion. Examples of these more specific interview questions can be found in Appendix 5.

3.5.4 Parents of Student Participants and Sample Questions

It has been recognised by many scholars that parental influence and the home environment are integral in supporting the process of learning a musical instrument, both within and outside lessons (e.g. Burland & Davidson, 2004; Creech, 2009; Creech & Hallam, 2003; Davidson, Howe, Moore & Sloboda 1996; Davidson, Howe & Sloboda 1997; McPherson, 2009; McPherson & Davidson, 2002, 2006; O’Neill, 1997; Sloboda, Davidson, Howe & Moore 1996). In light of this, the parents of the research participants undertook semi-structured interviews in a similar vein to their children. The study sought to understand parental perceptions of the research participants’ skill development, the pedagogical processes undertaken during the project, their thoughts on the effectiveness of employing expressive gesture as a teaching tool, and their role in contributing to what has been described by Creech (2009) as a ‘harmonious trio’ (p. 401) – the successful triangular learning relationship between child, parent and teacher. The types of interview questions that the parents of the research participants were asked can be found in Appendix 6.

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8 The initial interviews were completed during March and April 2014.
3.6 Ethical Considerations When Working with Children as Research Participants

Before embarking on the interview process with the research participants, essential literature was used to inform and sensitise my position as the research interviewer. For example, Eder and Fingerson (2001) cautioned interviewers to be sensitive to the potential power imbalance that may exist between adults and youth in Western societies. Mayall (1999) advocated seeing children as their own minority group that lack the essential abilities and characteristics of adulthood. Frones (1994) argued that children are primarily seen as an ‘age group’ rather than a population with its own culture and unique abilities. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) suggested that when participating in an event together with adults, children cannot have equal status because ‘the social roles of the participants have been influenced by age, cognitive development, physical maturity, and acquisition of social responsibility’ (p. 14). Further, Hood, Mayall and Oliver (1999) posited that children are a socially disadvantaged and disempowered group because of their age and their position as the ‘researched’ and never the ‘researchers’. However, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have suggested that some of the barriers between adults and children that work against effective interviewing can be softened by conducting the research interview in the child’s natural setting or within the context of a task that the child enjoys.

In the context of this study, having the interviews conducted at the research participant’s family home⁹ before or after a meal seemed to allay some of these concerns. Further, the collaborative, student-centred research environment advocated in this study may provide a valuable forum to mitigate any potential power imbalance. It was hoped that the research participants would come to understand that their position within the study was that of a collaborator, with their involvement in the research process based on reciprocity. According to Eder and Fingerson (2001), researchers can emphasise reciprocity as a fundamental way to address the potential for power inequality between the adult researcher and the youthful respondent. They argued that ‘the concept of reciprocity can be applied at several levels, from directly empowering respondents to using research findings to enrich and improve the lives of children through an action-orientated research focus’ (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p.

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⁹ Kelly’s interviews were conducted at a restaurant chosen by the family.
182). This statement seems to reflect the central aims of this study, that of arming the research participants with strategies that will enhance their expressive performance skills, while giving them greater ownership of the learning environment. These strategies may be useful to them, their peers and other children in the future.

Approval for the project was granted from Griffith University’s committee for human research ethics on 31 October 2013, GU Ref No: QCM/12/13/HREC. This document is included in Appendix 8. After discussion, the original protocol was signed by the research participants and their parents; this document is included in Appendix 9. It should be noted that a sibling of one of the research participants is regularly mentioned in the thesis and appears in the video extracts. For this reason, his consent and that of his parents was obtained prior to collection of data.

3.7 Research Credibility

To impart research credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), answers to questions posed in the interview transcripts were member checked through a process of clarification during the interview process itself, and then again in a non-overt way during subsequent lessons. This often involved rewording of the original interview questions in order to crosscheck answers for accuracy. I anticipated that additional and/or conflicting data would be collected during this process when the research participants and their parents had had time to reflect on their previous answers. In short, rather than seeing the interviews as separate activities for data mining, the lessons themselves seemed to merge with the interview process, where the participant’s views were revealed organically through situation-specific quotes and/or appropriate questioning by the research investigator. For total transparency, when the interview transcripts were completed, I sent a copy to each research participant’s family via email, asking that they check the transcripts for discrepancies before seeking their approval for the transcripts to be included as a true indication of the interviews conducted. As there were no concerns raised regarding the content of the transcripts, interview data were upheld for inclusion in the study.

In order to explore the research questions, data that emerged during the interview phases of the study were analysed using theoretical reading, a reflective approach where ‘a researcher may read through his or her interviews again and again, write out
interpretations and not follow any systematic method or combination of techniques’ (Kvale, 2007, p. 117). Kvale (2007) suggested that ‘recourse to specific analytic tools becomes less paramount with an extensive and theoretical knowledge of the subject matter of an investigation, and with a theoretically informed interview questioning’ (p. 117). Hargreaves (1994) described a similar analytic approach where he attempted ‘to sustain a creative dialogue between different theories and the data, in a quest not to validate any presumed perspective, but simply to understand the problems in their social context’ (p. 122). Such interpretative conclusions were then triangulated with data collected through video observation, my Reflective Journal and archival material. The advantage of such data triangulation through multiple sources of evidence is the development of what Yin (2009) called ‘converging lines of inquiry’ (p. 115), where case study conclusions are more likely to be corroboratory if garnered from several different sources of information. Indeed, case study methods that use multiple sources of evidence are considered of higher quality than those that rely on single sources of information (Yin, 2009).

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection period began in February 2014. Each one-to-one lesson was video-recorded using a Sony camcorder and then transferred to DVD for ease of viewing and subsequent analysis. In addition, each lesson was uploaded to two USB devices, with each individual research participant colour coded. The final lessons for the data collection period were recorded during November 2014. Personal and professional reflections pertaining to the content of each one-to-one lesson were diarised in my Reflective Journal as soon as possible following each lesson, usually within one or two days. Semi-structured research interviews were conducted with each research participant and their parent(s), usually simultaneously. The interviews were transferred to audio CD and then professionally transcribed. The first round of interviews were conducted during February and March 2014, and the second and final rounds of interviews were conducted during November and December 2014. The music scores of each research participant were collected, photographed and then returned to the participants during December 2014.

10 For example, music scores used by the research participants during the study.
3.9 Data Analysis Procedure

Following Borkan’s (1999) description of the procedure as a course of action whereby the researcher immerses themselves in the data they have collected, I revisited my Reflective Journal many times over an extended period. With the research questions in mind, certain themes emerged through a process of distillation. In terms of my Reflective Journal and the recordings of lessons, steps towards data analysis may be established as follows:

- **Phase 1:** Over a 12-month period, each one-to-one lesson was video recorded, and a reflective account of each lesson was entered into my Reflective Journal.
- **Phase 2:** The reflections were revisited many times, and areas of potential interest were manually highlighted with highlighter pens.
- **Phase 3:** These areas of potential interest were further reflected upon, with observations made directly in the manuscript margins with highlighter pens.
- **Phase 4:** Emerging themes were distilled from these observations.
- **Phase 5:** The emerging themes of each of the research participants’ lessons were tabulated in a Word document and colour coded for ease of cross comparison.
- **Phase 6:** Commonalities of themes between the four research participants were sought and identified.
- **Phase 6:** The recordings of every lesson were viewed retrospectively, with a detailed synopsis and additional reflective observations notated.
- **Phase 7:** From these reflective synopses, vignettes that best illustrate manifestations of each theme were identified and collated.
- **Phase 8:** Lesson footage corresponding to each vignette was sourced and edited.
- **Phase 9:** In order to illuminate the research questions, further reflections on each vignette were made in preparation for the final document.

Working in parallel, two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted at the beginning and the end of the data collection period. The initial interviews were completed during March and April 2014 and then professionally transcribed. Areas of interest were highlighted using a highlighter pen, and initial summaries were taken
from the highlighted manuscripts. Over time and extensive review, information regarding the uniqueness of each research participant, statements that illustrate the themes emerging from my Reflective Journal, and direct quotations that pertain to the research questions were extracted.

The first step in data analysis was to begin summarising the interview transcripts in the following order:

- Wendy (Case 6) and Yana (parent) – 7 May 2014
- Noah (pilot case) and Sharon (parent) – 7 May 2014 and 13 May 2014
- Kelly (Case 4), Jean (parent) and Sam (parent) – 8 May 2014
- Steven (pilot case) – 12 May 2014
- Adrian (Case 3), Jane (parent) and Oliver (parent) – 28 May 2014
- Jade (Case 1) and Julia (parent) – 30 May 2014
- Andrew (Case 5), Lyn (parent) and Matthew (parent) – 13 June 2014
- Finn (Case 2) – 1 July 2014
- Sarah (parent), George (parent) and Finn (Case 2) – 1 July 2014

The names of the cases listed above are pseudonyms, as are the names of the parents. These cases will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The second round of interviews was completed on 21 December 2014, with the audio being transferred to disc and sent for professional transcription. The interview transcripts were returned in early January 2015, and underwent content analysis during that same month. These interviews provided rich examples of the emerging themes that were concurrently being distilled from my Reflective Journal. For example, notational confidence facilitating the uptake of expressive gesture and the research participants’ personal connection with their repertoire facilitating an ideal learning ‘environment’ for expressive pedagogy to be disseminated were well represented within the interview transcripts. The perceptions of the learning environment, the pedagogical relationship(s), and the usefulness of expressive gesture as a teaching modality were garnered from the research participants and their parents. Where pertinent, quotations were taken, and audio from the interviews was extracted and edited for exemplification purposes.
I began taking notes and making inferences in my Reflective Journal in July 2014, shortly after the first six months of the data collection period had passed. To get an initial idea, I started reading my reflective notes, before using a pink highlighter to identify key words and sentences that I felt would eventuate into points of significance. As a starting point, I dealt with the lessons of Andrew (complete Lessons 1–26), Jade (Lessons 1–3 only), Kelly (most of Lessons 8–18) and Wendy (complete Lessons 1–17). During the second phase of analysis, I read, highlighted and wrote keywords in blue within the reflective writings of Andrew (complete Lessons 1–26), Jade (Lessons 1–2 only), Adrian (complete Lessons 1–17), Kelly (complete Lessons 1–19) and (again) Wendy (complete Lessons 1–17). The third phase of analysis consisted of reading, highlighting and writing keywords in orange within the writings of Jade (Lessons 3–16), and Finn (complete Lessons 1–15). While it may seem like these initial phases of analysis were somewhat piecemeal, my deliberate aim was to get an initial feel for what points of significance may start to emerge from various lessons across all case studies, rather than spending an inordinate amount of time on one particular case study at the exclusion of all others. The pink, blue and orange colour coding detailed above allowed me to keep track of this process.

Thereafter, a process of distillation began, where I summarised all keywords and sentences pertaining to each lesson for each case study, typing them back into my Reflective Journal in blue. This helped me to clarify my thoughts, moving to a process of further extraction where themes began to emerge, which I listed in a separate word document titled ‘Emerging Themes’. I then codified these themes using coloured type so that I could begin to compare the presence of these themes across the six research participants. During January and February 2015, I began the process of analysing the second six months of data contained within my Reflective Journal. This process was informed by my previous analysis, and in some ways, made the process of analysing the second six months of lessons a little easier.

While not discrediting any new themes or points of interest that may have emerged, I found that completing the analysis of the first six months gave me confidence, and made the process of thematic illumination within the second six months faster and more transparent. I did notice that as I was writing in my Reflective Journal towards the end of 2014, the reflective writings seemed to become more refined, possibly
because I was reaching data saturation. In effect, my reflections began to take on a more global view, where excerpts of the lessons could serve as specific examples of what I was writing about earlier in 2014. In other words, a great deal of philosophical detail was notated early in 2014 and more practical examples that illustrated that detail for each research participant became more evident in the latter half of 2014. This change of focus in my reflective writing in many ways reflects elements of real-life teaching, where focus can change, especially after rethinking objectives, making new plans and then carrying on with the research process. As effective teaching often has elements of reflective practice combined with elements of action research, avenues of investigative opportunity may reveal themselves over time.

With regard to analysing the second six months of my Reflective Journal, by January 2015, I had completed the initial reading and process of highlighting all lessons of all research participants in orange. The second phase of highlighting, summarising and keyword/sentence extraction was completed in green for Finn (complete Lessons 16–30) and Kelly (complete Lessons 20–41). In order to delve deeper, I continued with these two case studies and followed the summarisation and thematic extraction processes as outlined above to completion. Shortly thereafter, I started to view the recordings of Finn’s lessons, beginning the process of editing lesson segments that would serve to exemplify the emerging themes, ultimately leading to further exploration of the research questions. During this process, I became familiar with the technicalities of video editing, as I would be required to do much of this leading up to the Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference (APPC) in July 2015, and of course towards the final stages of the project, when video excerpts of the lessons would be used to illustrate elements of the thesis itself.

I then embarked on the same process of reading, highlighting, summarising and thematic extraction for the lessons of Jade, Adrian, Andrew and Wendy, again using the colour green. This stage of the data analysis was completed by the end of January 2015, at which time it was increasingly apparent that the volume of data was very large; therefore, in the interests of data management, the initial six case studies was reduced to five, with one of the female students, Wendy, being excluded from the project. Her progress exploded during the data collection period, and in early December 2014, she achieved a high distinction in her Grade 8 Australian Music
Examinations Board (AMEB) examination. This had ramifications for the study sample, as she was no longer of late elementary to early intermediate level. However, expressive gesture might allow particular students to improve rapidly, perhaps due to enhanced physical ease, heightened expressive insight and increased self-confidence. As Wendy’s case demonstrates, a pedagogical approach where expressive gesture is utilised could well be advantageous in fostering musical expression at advanced levels of performance.

As before, a process of distillation began, where I summarised all keywords and sentences pertaining to each lesson for each research participant, typing them back into my Reflective Journal in blue, moving them into the ‘Emerging Themes’ document, and then codifying these themes using coloured type. After further consultation with my supervisors, the number of case studies was again reduced, this time from five to four, with research participant Andrew being omitted from the final stages of the project. Although his case could well be included, he did receive a total number of 48 lessons during the data collection period, with most other research participants receiving around 30, and it could be said that due to this discrepancy, his data set may be incomparable to those of the other research participants. Additionally, I felt that Andrew’s case was in many ways comparable to Adrian’s and Kelly’s, and for these reasons, he was excluded from the project at that point.

Thus began the lengthy task of watching the recordings of all lessons, often when 12 months or more had passed since the initial recordings were made. However, such retrospective distance did prove very useful, as I carried out the task with heightened impartiality. I was able to view the recordings with greater objectivity, especially as lessons with the remaining four case studies had continued throughout 2015, and in many ways, their content had been informed through my reactions to the initial written reflections collected during 2014. Around half of Kelly and Finn’s lessons had been viewed by June 2015, with a detailed synopsis written for each lesson and many clips being edited and presented at the APPC in July 2015. This process continued throughout 2015 until January 2016, whereby all lessons for Jade and Adrian had been viewed, with synopses detailed, and ‘reflections on reflections’ undertaken. Similarly, the remaining lessons for Finn and Kelly were viewed, summarised and analysed by June 2016. During February 2016 and June 2016, video excerpts that
illustrate the research question were sourced and edited in preparation for my presentation at the Alan Lane Memorial Weekend (ALMW) in July 2016, hosted by the Music Teachers’ Association of Queensland (MTAQ). Parallel to this process, a draft chapter of the analysis was compiled, along with drafts of the other chapters. Further editing of lesson excerpts to be added to the analysis chapter continued from July to December 2016, concurrent to drafts being submitted in July, August, September, November and December 2016. The video excerpts were uploaded to a private channel on Vimeo in December 2016 and January 2017. The final draft of the thesis was reviewed from January to March 2017.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework and research methodology, articulated the instruments of data collection and detailed the methods of data analysis. **Chapter 4** will provide background information for each research participant, including detail pertaining to their familial circumstances, personality, learning trajectory and ability to adopt expressive gesture during the research period. The repertoire of each research participant is included, along with notable events, a concluding overview and pertinent issues arising from each case.
Chapter 4: Case Studies

The previous chapter outlined the study’s methodology and provided justification for using semi-structured case studies, interviews, video recordings and reflective journalling to collect research data. Drawing on the data collected, this chapter gives essential background to each case study in order to contextualise the results of the research questions within each individual’s learning journey. The process through which the final four case studies were selected from the initial six case studies and the two pilot case studies is overviewed. By referring to their familial context, learning history, personality, and development across the research period, a narrative of each of these final four case studies is presented. Each case study’s ability to adopt expressive gesture is detailed, as is repertoire studied during the research period. Notable events and breakthroughs are identified, and a summary of each case study is presented. Pertinent issues that arose are then addressed.

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Six Case Studies and Two Pilot Case Studies

Initially, this research project was intended to include six case studies and two pilot case studies. The students who acted as research participants in this project were drawn from my piano students who study at Young Conservatorium, a pre-tertiary music school that operates under the auspices of Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. The two pilot interviews with Steven and Noah and their parents were conducted at their homes and served to fine-tune the interview questions. I chose Steven and Noah for the pilot interviews, as both were of similar age (12) and level (AMEB Grade 4). I had taught them from age five at Young Conservatorium. Steven left the study mid-way to be with his family in China, where his mother and father were on sabbatical. Both Steven and Noah were interviewed once in March 2014. I also videoed and wrote about their lessons prior to data collection in order to get a feel for the process and ascertain whether the presence of the video camera would alter the course of a usual lesson in any significant way. As expected, it did not.

After a successful series of pilot interviews, lessons and recordings of lessons, official data collection began in February 2014. The six student participants (Kelly, Jade,
Wendy, Finn, Andrew and Adrian) and their parents were interviewed in March and December 2014, with the interviews being recorded and professionally transcribed. In terms of the three female students, I met Kelly and her parents at two local restaurants, I interviewed Jade and her family both at my home and theirs, and I interviewed Wendy and her mother at their home. In terms of the three male students, I met Finn and his family at their home, I met Andrew and his parents at their home, and I interviewed Adrian and his family at their home. All these interviews were conducted in an informal manner, usually before or after a meal. All research participants and their parents were provided with copies of the interview transcripts and invited to give feedback on their authenticity, with no issues arising. I encouraged them to reflect on and contribute to the research in a real and sustained way, especially as regular contact with them continued long after the data collection period ended. Thus, each lesson provided opportunities to regularly member check with the research participants and their parents.

4.1.2 The Final Four Case Studies

The original six case studies (Kelly, Jade, Wendy, Finn, Andrew and Adrian) provided a base from which to select a smaller number to present in greater detail. Four particular case studies (Jade, Finn, Adrian and Kelly) were chosen, as they represented wide variation in their presentation and were able to most clearly elucidate the research questions.

Jade was chosen because of her unique ability to play with an expressive touch, but her cautious nature did appear to impede her ability to firmly grasp the notes in a timely manner, leaving less time to implement gestural and expressive detail or to develop a sense of inner connection to the piece. This ultimately led to some performance anxiety. For that reason, thorough preparation of the score through ongoing goal setting and partial practice became a large focus of Jade’s lessons. On reflection, her overall ability to respond to the aims of the research results were still positive, but the time frame differed and the overall level of confidence in performance varied in a way that reflected her individual personality and learning trajectory. Towards the end of the research, it became clear that building Jade’s confidence and self-efficacy could see an improvement in her ability to leave the
notes behind and take some physical risks with expressive gesture. Moving forward, this has become a main area of focus.

In a similar way, Finn required coaching in ‘learning how to learn’ to a greater extent than I expected, and this took general priority over the implementation of expressive gesture. Setting smaller, more manageable learning goals as part of a larger plan became a major focus, as notational familiarity did increase his ability to engage with expressive gesture. Encouraging Finn to engage in regular and deliberate partial practice\textsuperscript{11} provided a backdrop for the way in which he responded to the research aims. Despite being at an age where he could be reasonably expected to do so, Finn was not always reliable with his commitment to preparation of the notes, which did appear to impede his ability to study the three-dimensional, spatial information that lay ‘between’ those notes. Like Jade, his preparation of the notes was slower, leaving a relatively small window of time to implement expressive gestural detail before performance. Nonetheless, the reflective process did remind me of each student’s unique learning trajectory, and how unsuitable repertoire choice, inflexible pedagogy, and unreasonable expectation can all inhibit a student’s overall progress, causing unnecessary frustration for everyone.

Thus, Finn encountered initial challenges with the physicality of the research, which Jade did not struggle with in quite the same way. In time, Finn did respond, but he struggled with the\textit{ physicality} of copying gestural detail more than I had anticipated, and I began to consider whether all effort should be abandoned. Instead, I strove to find an optimal balance between the research aims and what was in Finn’s best interest, and I gave him the space to improve at his own pace. As progress was slow, I looked for other ways to keep him engaged and feeling competent. For this reason, his lessons also included a focus on skills in keyboard harmony and vocal accompaniment, providing much needed variety and sense of purpose. In order for Finn to comfortably merge both the notes and the expressive gestural components with a good degree of reliability in performance, the quantity of pieces that he studied throughout the research period was somewhat limited.

Adrian was chosen as the third case study because of the relative ease in which he learnt the notes, and his superior ability to merge these notes with expressive gestural

\textsuperscript{11} See Lehmann (1997b) and Lehmann and Ericsson (1997).
information simultaneously. In Lesson 2 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote, ‘Adrian copes quite well these days with integrating rhythm, fingering, sound and expressive gesture simultaneously, if approached in a scaffolded manner’. Adrian is a quick learner and provides a glimpse into what is possible when notes and expressive gesture merge relatively quickly, giving greater opportunity for exploration of metaphor, analogy and other expressive concepts that appear in the literature. Jade, Finn and Adrian all remain my students at Young Conservatorium.

Kelly’s unique learning journey saw her greatly accelerate in terms of the difficulty of the repertoire she studied. Despite some challenges with coordination and subluxation of the fourth finger joint on her right hand, Kelly found the process of merging expressive gesture with notes relatively easy, though she did need some encouragement to be more extroverted with playing and practising. When questioned if learning the expressive gestural vocabulary had been useful, Kelly reported that it helped her ‘progress without having any (muscle) pain’ (Interview 2). Kelly is similar to Adrian: they are both highly driven individuals, despite their youth; they are ambitious; they have very supportive parents; and they provide examples where the uptake of the manual aspects of expressive gesture is relatively straightforward.

Unlike Jade and Finn, Adrian’s and Kelly’s parents recorded each lesson and encouraged them to view it retrospectively in order to focus their weekly practice goals, and one has to wonder to what extent this facilitated their progress with expressive gesture. Soon after the research ended, Kelly discontinued her piano study, owing to commitments with learning the harp and the cello. She is of an age where time constraints dictated her and her parents’ decision, as she is a skilled harpist and cellist.

Andrew’s lessons provided wonderful data, especially in terms of including multiple aspects of teaching with the research aims in mind. However, for most of the data collection period, Andrew received two lessons a week due to his explosive progress. For this reason and for his remarkable ability to ‘be’ expressive both physically and personally, he must be considered a special case, and was therefore excluded.

The final student, Wendy, was another special case, exhibiting so much raw potential that she soon advanced from AMEB Grade 4 to Grade 8 within the time between case study selection and the beginning of data collection. While she may have had some
initial difficulty with goal setting and attention to musical detail, she has natural facility and the expressive gestural aspects of playing came relatively easily. Being of advanced level, Wendy was excluded from the research early on.

In general, the research was positive for all participants, but there still appears to be a need for flexibility and maintaining a strong teaching relationship, despite obstacles with practice commitment, self-confidence and performance anxiety. Not all students would have been suitable to participate in this research, and perhaps expressive understanding and manual (gestural) skill is not everyone’s ultimate goal, at least not at every stage of their development. It is just one skill among many others that need to be developed. While performance ability is a relatively easy way to measure a student’s ‘success’ with the research aims, it has made me question what expressive playing really looks like, and one can expect it to look different for different students. The act of simply playing is surely an act of ‘expression’ of the self, so it can be beneficial, even if it does not measure favourably when compared to performances of (perceived) higher calibre. The research also reminded me to be flexible, and not to engage in a ‘one size fits all’ approach to one-to-one teaching, even at more elite levels.

4.2 Case Study One: Jade

4.2.1 Background and Familial Context

Jade was 11 years old at the time of her inclusion in the study. At the time when data collection commenced, she was approximately Grade 2–3 AMEB level, but had not sat any practical exams. Towards the end of the data collection period, she received a B+ in her Grade 4 AMEB piano exam, an expected result. Jade began lessons with me at age six in the Young Beginner Keyboard group class, in which she was clearly the most skilled and demonstrated good overall potential, grasping concepts quickly and confidently. She then entered the Young Beginner Piano program (now Developing Musician Piano) one year later. She has been studying piano with me one-to-one since that time. In addition, she studies the violin, plays in the school orchestra, and is heavily involved in local choirs. Jade comes from a musical family and is the eldest of two children. Her brother, who is two years younger than her, also studied the piano with me but now plays the trombone in the school band. Her mother, Julia, was born
and educated in Australia, and formerly a jazz and musical theatre singer. She is now a primary school music specialist. Jade’s maternal grandmother, Joanne, was also a singer. Jade attended her lessons at Young Conservatorium with either Julia or Joanne. Usually this would be a 50/50 split, as her lessons were on Saturdays, when Julia would often be called in to work part-time in a department store.

4.2.2 Personality, Personal Skills and Ability to Adopt Expressive Gesture

Jade plays with a sensitive touch, reliable rhythm, good overall coordination and a growing understanding of how expressive gesture can foster a physical connection between her body and the piano. However, her progress has fluctuated in recent years, mainly due to insufficient practice and some issues with self-confidence. She has a nervous temperament, as illustrated by my retrospective observations of Lesson 13:

Jade wipes her nose almost continuously and I ask her why she wipes it so much. She smiles and seems a little embarrassed but not fazed. I say that a lot of germs can be contracted through doing this. Joanne mentions that she is doing this because she ‘doesn’t have allergies’. I mention that I have noticed this before, and Joanne asks Jade to hold the top of her nose, presumably to help her.

Challenges with goal setting and a fear of ‘getting things wrong’ appeared to cause Jade to have increased difficulty in preparing notes with a degree of independence that might be reasonably expected for someone of her age and experience. For example, in Lesson 1, Julia mentions that Jade sometimes stops herself from practising or going further because she is scared that she will do it wrong, but I suggest that it is better to just keep trying, even with a few errors. Julia appears to want me to hear that Jade questions herself and worries, when she is probably doing quite well (Lesson 1 Synopsis). I noticed early on during this research that within the lesson, Jade did seem to find it challenging to stick with a task to its completion, as if her resilience for frustration during problem solving was lower than I had perceived (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3). During Lesson 8, Jade told me that she felt annoyed when partial practising. It was also apparent to me that she would sometimes have trouble remembering instructions from the previous lesson, or even within the same lesson (Reflective Journal, Lesson 4). I might have misjudged her need for
consolidation of notes and rhythm before exploring expressive gesture, but I did come to understand that, which informed our future interactions together.

Unfortunately, these scenarios often left Jade insufficient time to prepare her repertoire to a stage where she felt comfortable and confident enough to showcase her tonal sensitivity and expressive skills during performance. In the lessons leading up to the start of data collection, Jade and I had been exploring the importance of positivity and fostering a growth mindset when approaching new material, the need for greater autonomy with learning notes, and the futility of practising without confidence, strategy and precision. Consequently, Jade did demonstrate an increased commitment to regular, productive and confidence building practice routines heading into the research, and she began to make steady progress. Towards the end of the data collection period, I had the opportunity to triangulate my early observations with Jade’s violin teacher. In Lesson 31 of my Reflective Journal I wrote:

Interesting triangulation with Jade’s violin teacher: similar challenges this year with invigorating Jade’s physicality and challenging her to take some more risks in her playing.

4.2.3 Development and Progress Observed across the Research Period

Through working with Jade during this research, I have learnt that it can be counter-productive to make assumptions about what a student’s level of achievement should be. Attributes such as her intellect, physical skill and sound musicianship did not necessarily equate to the level of self-confidence that seems to be required to play with spirited expressive intent, despite my best efforts to encourage Jade to do so. Similarly, the organisational skills needed to implement regular practice in order to improve may need to be enriched in some cases more than others. Further, for some students, piano may not be the focus of their music education, especially if it is a second or third area of study. Therefore, expectations about the rate of progress may need to be adjusted. For example, in Lesson 1, Jade showed me her feedback from a two-week vocal musicianship program at the University of Queensland in January 2014, which included the statement ‘a strong musician’ – Jade was clearly delighted, and I was pleased for her. Being aware of her other musical pursuits allowed me to adjust my expectation of what Jade could achieve with the piano, given her limited
time due to her vocal and string activities, as well as her schoolwork. Indeed, a relevant learning pathway need not be focused solely on performance of repertoire, and a strong examination culture with a contemporary focus on achieving a diploma level by the end of high school may not be a realistic or relevant pathway for everyone.

From another perspective, there appears to be a current popular focus in Australia on quantity of repertoire learnt, through initiatives such as ‘The 40-piece Challenge’\(^{12}\), and it can be difficult to avoid feeling some professional inadequacy if a student can only cope with learning three or four pieces per year. Does this mean their learning experiences are invalid? Separate to this, there can be an unrealistic expectation from parents regarding the amount of effort required to progress, and the assumption that the amount of repertoire learnt automatically equates to level of success. Fortunately in this situation, Jade’s mother and grandmother are very supportive of the ‘what does my student need from me right now’ approach that I have since taken with Jade. She has found a way to fit piano with her other activities in a complementary way. As she is a singer and violinist, a strong focus on keyboard skills including keyboard harmony and self-accompaniment became as important as repertoire study, and the development of expressive performance skills. As with Finn, Jade is very capable, but at the time of the study, she needed further help to develop the confidence to follow through with goal setting and the completion of note learning before expressive gesture could be fully explored. For example in Lesson 2, I said, ‘Don’t try to do everything … just do one thing at a time. Get to know your notes and your fingering so that your confidence grows’. It seemed essential in Jade’s case that confidence with the notes be the focus, as without that foundation, the uptake of expressive gesture appeared to be impeded. In Lesson 20 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

> Interestingly, Jade seems to follow a pattern of three ‘good’ weeks and then a couple of slack ones, where home practice is either lacklustre or absent, causing her progress to stall and her confidence to dwindle. It seems that expressivity and expressive gestural concepts are not easily assimilated when note learning is still the main focus.

\(^{12}\) An initiative that ‘challenges’ students to learn at least 40 pieces per calendar year (https://40piecechallenge.com.au).
On reflection, Jade’s was very much a case where systematic learning of the notes needed to be kept as stress free as possible, and I might have underestimated her need for consolidation, assuming she was ‘musical’ and could therefore ‘figure it out’ on her own. However, I did find that if I asked Jade to write her own learning goals for the following week into her practice diary, she became much more inclined to employ the practice methods that would help her to achieve these goals, especially as she gradually began to realise that doing so built her confidence and skill level within and between lessons. This contrasts with earlier lessons when I wrote in her book to ‘save time’ (Lesson 2 Synopsis). In Lesson 22, my Reflective Journal suggests that along with encouraging Jade to build a mindset that focused on weekly improvement: ‘Jade requires greater coaching with organisation and goal setting, and asking her to write her own systematic procedural notes and keeping a practice log will hopefully help her to maintain focus, lest she becomes paralysed into inaction’. In Lesson 23 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote: ‘Setting and achieving weekly goals is important with Jade as it means that notes [in this case scales] are imbued with confidence, and makes cognitive resources available for other aspects of playing’. It seems important that I continue to remember that I need to see Jade as a person and not just a project (Reflective Journal, Lesson 23). Jade seemed to work best when I encouraged her to keep trying her best, even when it was clear she had not had time to practice during the week. In the synopsis of Lesson 4, I wrote:

She has been on camp and has been sick. I am working hard to be positive and enthusiastic, but Jade is tired and disengaged today. Using the analogy of a builder, I gently suggest that the more she can practice between lessons, the more you will get out of the lessons, and foundations can be built on at the next lesson: Do you come to lessons to practice, or practice to come to lessons?

Conversely, the more demanding I became, the more cautious Jade became, as this extract from the synopsis of Lesson 8 demonstrates:

I suggest that she is improving with the piece, but she needs to know her ‘spelling’ a bit better. It seems the more I push her, the more cautious she becomes, and I probably needed to back off a little here. The phone rings
and Joanne exits the room. I walk away to fetch my note-pad and she appears to improve, but when I walk back to stand beside her she falters.

I also began to ponder the impact of being too exacting on Jade’s ability to play expressively with minimal caution. It was interesting to observe that my presence in the room did seem to alter the way that she played the same piece.

I exit the room and Jade plays *La Vision* with beautiful sound and phrase shape but she does tend to ‘hang’ off the keys a little still. She only falters once and there is a beautiful expressive connection, though she loses this slightly in the cadenza. Julia says, ‘Good girl’, and then Jade plays the study. While it’s fast, she can’t maintain the tempo consistently all through and breaks down half way. The second half is untidy and she stops again. It takes her some time to recover and she plays the second half again. After she finishes, she looks at the score and then tries the second half again, but is having difficulty coordinating the two hands. After she finishes, she turns around and starts talking to Julia about choir ‘stuff’. As I enter the room, I give her the music and ask to hear her ‘presentation’. I suggest that if she smiles when she feels stressed, it may make her feel better. I ask her not to plod, mentioning that she reminds me of Tristan sometimes. Julia says, ‘have confidence in your body, not this shoulder thing that you get into’. Jade plays *La Vision*, but it definitely doesn’t have the same sense of expressive purpose or involvement that it did when she played it earlier when I was not in the room. She seems to look at the score much more and doesn’t move from the fourth beat to the first beat with quite the same conviction. She also falters during the final bars. (Lesson 8 Synopsis)

It seems that after watching lessons retrospectively, Jade can be rather passive in her learning, yet I did not always take the time to involve her more directly. In an effort to invigorate her mood, I might have dominated the lesson too much, hoping that my enthusiasm would be contagious and she would engage at a deeper level:

When she doesn’t seem to know the *Festival Rondo*, I again overcompensate by writing in more fingering and notes for her. I’m using expressive conducting and vocalisation to try and inspire her, and moving to expressive
gesture when it’s clearly not time to do so. She tells me she did five days practice, almost an hour each time, so there is clearly something not matching up. She appears listless and disengaged, but is she really just lacking self-confidence? (Lesson 5 Synopsis)

Similarly, there are clues that Jade does occasionally feel overwhelmed, but I do not always take the time to notice or acknowledge this. Instead of using such cues to ask questions and generate discussion that could inform the teaching, I take a ‘get on with it’ approach and diminish her concerns, which could ultimately fuel her insecurity, impeding her learning and her ability to play expressively. For example, when discussing *Elfin Dance* in the synopsis of Lesson 5:

She says that the recording is very fast and seems a bit intimidated. I ignore her concern and refer to the fact that the speed is indicative of an elf running about the crisp forests of Norway. We then go through the right hand again, but the fingering and notes don’t seem to have ‘stuck’ since the last round of repetitions. I draw her attention to the underlying harmonic structure, writing in the chord symbols, but perhaps I should be asking her to do so. I ask her to play the block chords with the right hand but she seems timid, and her body language is one of outstretched arms, not moving into the black keys even when encouraged to do so. She doesn’t leave her hand on the piano for long before she becomes defeated and drops it into her lap again. As I write her homework in the practice diary, she plays the chords multiple times, but is still slow to recall them with any degree of confidence.

During the research, I also came to understand that playing expressively does seem to depend a great deal on confidence and commitment to ‘energising’ the pieces during practice, within lessons and in performance; Jade’s generally shy and cautious temperament made this more challenging for her. For example, in rehearsing an upcoming performance during Lesson 14, I wrote in my Reflective Journal:

I say, ‘please welcome Jade, playing *Elfin Dance* by Edvard Grieg … take it away Jade!’ and she literally shrinks. The playing sounds flat, uncoordinated, and her arms appear to have no energy whatsoever; it’s almost as if she would rather be doing anything but this. She only gets
through the first half page before things go wrong and she withdraws her hands and wants to stop.

Similarly, my Lesson 7 reflections note that I mention to Jade that visualisation can be an effective way to feel more prepared for an upcoming performance. Rather unexpectedly, she says, ‘I can see what goes wrong’, which seems to point to a pessimistic mindset and/or a fear of failure. As I note in my Lesson 29 reflections:

Jade has a lovely basic sound, but drawing her ‘out of her shell’ will be the main focus in times to come, as will building her resilience against fear of failure.

Nonetheless, towards the end of the data collection period, there were signs that Jade’s confidence was beginning to blossom, perhaps due to my increased empathy in acknowledging her sensitivity, combined with increased practice and the adoption of partial practice strategies that led to earlier preparation of repertoire:

‘Do you feel like you’re feeling a bit more confident than you did a few weeks ago?’ Jade nods yes, smiles and whispers something. Julia laughs and says, ‘I feel she is’. I say, ‘I feel, you’re playing sounds a lot better, so what’s … what have you been doing differently? You’re still the same person with the same fears like everyone else’. Jade smiles and I continue, ‘You know, everyone’s got fears … oh what if I make a mistake … What have you done differently?’ Jade swings her arms, says ‘ummmm’, pauses, smiles, and then says as she sits up confidently, ‘Probably a lot more practice than I did before … yeah’. I say, ‘What kind of practice have you been doing?’ Jade – ‘Well … just running through those bits …’. Mark – ‘So have you been doing randomised practice where you take a bit, work on it for 10 minutes?’ Jade – ‘sort of’. Mark – ‘Yeah?’ Jade – ‘Yeah’. Pause and then Jade nods. I say, ‘So what I do in the lesson, I give you … umm … I give you sort of … examples of how you might practise’. Jade nods. I explain to Jade that usually I will tell her what’s right with the piece. Jade nods. I say, ‘it’s always nice to hear some good feedback, what’s wrong with the piece (why it doesn’t sound as good as it could) … and then I will usually give you exercises that will help you to improve your knowledge
and confidence. Once you start to realise that that is what the lesson is for, you will find that you will start to improve rapidly (Jade nods). A lot of times people think that they will come to the lesson and I just wave a magic wand and then it’s all fixed up (Jade nods and smiles), but really I’m just starting you off on the process to what your assignment is for the week. The kids who do really well with instruments, particularly the piano, are the ones who can sort of, you know, randomise their practice a bit, try the last bit this way and that way … but you build it up over time (Jade nods). If you leave it until the last minute, what happens?’ Jade says, ‘It won’t work’. I say, ‘Well you will run out of time to do stuff, and that’s when people get really freaked out and nervous’. Jade nods. (Lesson 30 Synopsis)

There is also evidence that as a direct result of the reflective process, I began to gain a more holistic understanding of Jade as a person, and how fostering her self-confidence would be a crucial way to enhance Jade’s ability to play with expressive intent, and ‘a connection to the music that is honest, real and radiating self-confidence’ (Westney, 2003, p. 34). In Lesson 30 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

Where the music needs to be its loudest, most exciting and most confident, Jade seems to struggle to find the correct notes and the expressive intensity quickly evaporates – Why?

How do we garner the confidence in order to able to ‘let go’? To continue to partial practice those tricky spots with an expressive and confident attitude until the notation, geographical negotiations and gestural choreography are programmed as part of the emotional, intellectual and motor memory, and can be delivered automatically while under performance stress, in a physically free and mentally unrestrained manner.

This stands in stark contrast to the frustration I sometimes felt during Jade’s lessons, thinking that I could somehow shame her into playing with enhanced energy and expressive intent:

Everything is accurate and flowing until the last line where the triple lilt isn’t accurate – I say in a somewhat disinterested undertone, ‘not too bad … it’s sort of improved … you have all the notes there now and that’s really
good to see’. I watch Jade carefully and she seems non-reactive. When I mention that we worked on the timing for the last line in the previous lesson, her eyes widen with caution. I suggest that she ‘must have forgotten’ and that we had ‘better write it in’. (Lesson 8 Synopsis)

I say that last lesson she was fine with the notes but the rhythm was wrong and this week ‘you’ve come back’ with the notes and the rhythm wrong (this is a bit harsh and not entirely true). I proceed to ‘point’ the pencil and while not being aggressive, I seem a bit condescending when I ‘tell’ her what she did wrong last week and how that hasn’t improved this week either, mentioning that if I can remember and I have more than 40 students why couldn’t she. This may be true but I can’t help but feel that the way I spoke to her hardly inspires confidence to try, nor a feeling of competence to continue trying. (Lesson 8 Synopsis)

I say to Jade that that piece is ‘quite good’, though I think that I could have been a bit more forthcoming with the praise here. I suggest that she could make it even more languid (?) and I then ask Jade if she listens to herself playing, which is, when looking back retrospectively, quite a loaded question with an almost negative undertone. Jade continues to touch her face and I ask her if she is experimenting with the time stretching (Jade says ‘sort of’, moving her hand in a so-so way and as I pause the recording she almost has a look of panic in her eyes). I say, ‘it’s your piece not mine’, and to me that seems like quite an unfair thing to say, considering it’s her best piece. I sense a deliberate attempt to undermine her efforts here. Joanne says, ‘you were wonderful’ and I contradict her by saying ‘you need a bit more rubato in a piece like that … try to think more imaginatively’. Jade starts again, but I pull her up for being too slow. She looks worried and starts touching her nose again. I start to ‘explain’ rubato in words, but really I should have used the fluorescent elastic hair band like I did with Adelaide a couple of days ago. Jade plays as I coach her with the counting – ‘that’s it … you’re connecting to the piece much more already … you must use your body to explain the piece to the audience. You can’t just sit there and push buttons … the audience won’t get it’. She was doing fine before and I feel like I am
punishing her with this piece because she didn’t do as well on the other two – who exactly is the one with the ‘all or nothing’ mindset now? I say that the audience will say ‘oh that’s a nice pretty piece’ but they won’t understand what the piece is about, but that is what I should have been saying about the other pieces earlier, not here. (Lesson 16 Synopsis)

‘Please don’t sabotage yourself … I don’t want to have to get cranky with you to turn you into a good musician.’ The question is – who is sabotaging whom, and according to who’s definition of what a good musician is? ‘I’ve given you everything I’ve got … I can’t give you any more than that … the rest of it has to come from you.’ A valid point which is probably lost amid such suffocating negativity. (Lesson 16 Synopsis)

Maintaining a reflective journal did help me to confront such negativity, and ultimately address these pedagogical inadequacies. Doing so has broadened my thinking about what does constitute expressive playing, and whether or not that is the goal for every student, at every stage of their musical development. In Lesson 30 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

Maybe it’s best (for me) to see her piano playing as a vehicle that continues to grow her self-confidence and self-expression in its own time, rather than see it as proof of her ‘deficits’ in these areas?

While Jade may not give immediate and obvious feedback when responding to direct encouragement and praise, the result may be just as potent and cumulative:

Nonetheless, she has the whole piece learnt and has added pedal too. After she has finished she looks to me and gives a cautious smile when I say, ‘I’m thrilled that you have got that far … yay!’ She looks at Julia momentarily and then looks back at me. ‘Now you’re moving in the right direction.’ Despite Jade being slumped, she is smiling broadly and seems pleased with herself – she likes the piece, and I say that it suits her. Interesting, she starts touching her nose as soon as I ask her if she would like to make any notes on the accidentals/clefs, etc. that I had just pointed out earlier. (Lesson 17 Synopsis)
I say what else do we need to do, and Jade seems to know! So she plays g melodic minor hands together while I’m outside talking to her brother. She plays it twice well and then waits. She plays it a third time very well – ‘they sound heaps better’. I then ask to hear c melodic minor softly with the RH. ‘Wow … congratulations, they’ve made a massive improvement over the last 2 weeks or so … keep going, all right?’ (Jade smiles proudly and says yeah). I show Jade where she was is on the sliding scale (silver pointer) and where she was, and where she spent most of the year – ‘You’ve pushed yourself up, it’s really good to see’. Jade is smiling and nodding. ‘Well done’. (Lesson 27 Synopsis)

Jade seems to respond better when expectations are conveyed in a less superior manner, and with a healthy dose of humour and goodwill:

‘Shape, put your back into, come on Jade … are you a musician or a mouse?’ The playing has energy, even though she falters a little as before, it always increases when I encourage her to be energetic. Good, OK. I ask Julia, ‘The sound is so different isn’t it when she puts effort in … If you don’t put effort in, it sounds a little bit pathetic … sorry but it does, but when you put energy in, it sounds completely different (Julia – and the audience goes whoo!)… The sound starts to sparkle, that’s all you have to do … It’s an attitude thing, it’s got nothing to do with skill or talent (Jade nods and says OK)… OK? See you tomorrow (Yep) … Come on Jade, are you a musician or a mouse?’ Julia laughs and Jade says ‘musician’. I say, ‘You’ve done all the hard work … please don’t sabotage it … there’s no point, you already can do it’. Julia says, ‘There’s no reason to’. (Lesson 32 Synopsis)

4.2.4 Repertoire Studied, Patterns, Notable Events and Breakthroughs across the Lessons

Jade studied a variety of solo repertoire during the research period. Her solo repertoire included the following:

- Spanish Donkey Driver – Takács
- Festival Rondo – Purcell, arr. Elissa Milne
- Elfin Dance, Op. 12 No. 4 – Grieg
La Vision, Op. 63 No. 1 – Alkan
Study in C Major, Op. 299 No. 1 – Czerny
Divenire – Einaudi.

In itself, the amount of repertoire that Jade studied during the research period was a significant achievement when compared to previous years. She had three pieces prepared for the performance workshop in May 2014, which was testimony that both the quality of her practice and her ability to prepare notation independently had improved. In retrospect, this shift could be in part due to a renewed focus in the lessons where I encouraged Jade to see herself as being ultimately responsible for her own progress. For example, in Lesson 6 I guided Jade to take a reflective, metacognitive\(^{13}\) approach to problem solving during practice, rather than employing mindless repetition (Lesson 6 Synopsis). During this lesson, I coached Jade in scaffolding her progress within the final bars of Grieg’s Elfin Dance, Op. 12 No. 4. By starting with a small amount of material, before adding more and more notes as mental and physical comfort ensued, Jade did seem to garner results sooner than if she repeated a large chunk of music ‘until it improved’. More importantly, Jade seemed to understand that she could ‘recreate’ this process herself, and not solely within this isolated excerpt.

Similarly, I started to encourage Jade to direct the lesson by asking her, ‘What would you like help with?’ (Lesson 7 Synopsis). Being cautious and reluctant to speak out of turn, Jade found this notion challenging, but it ultimately helped her to verbalise her weekly goals and develop the organisational skills needed to learn notes more quickly. This meant that more time in the lessons could be afforded to teaching expressive gestural choreography and improving general playing skills, leading to increased confidence and enhanced ability to convey expressive concepts in performance. The Lesson 8 synopsis illustrates this process, whereby building Jade’s notational confidence was a crucial precursor for cognitive resources to be directed towards understanding the spatial concepts embedded within expressive gesture:

I sit down and demonstrate, saying that what she has done is excellent, and that it makes me excited … ‘The way that you approach the notes and the

\(^{13}\) According to Pritchard (2004), ‘to work metacognitively is to consider, and take active control of the processes involved in learning and thinking as they are happening’ (p. 35).
way that you move on them is what makes you a pianist, otherwise you’re just a button pusher.’ Joanne says, ‘Is that so? (Yeah …) I’d never thought of that before’. I suggest that even getting as far as the correct notes, fingering and rhythm is quite an achievement and most kids don’t even get that far. I sit down and demonstrate that ‘most kids’ will (plays) … and even if they put some dynamics in, it will sound sort of fake (plays) … but then you’ll get someone come up and they’ll go (play) … you’ve got to ask yourself, well what’s the difference … it’s an intention and a use of the body, that’s the only difference … and usually, if you’re not confident with the notes, you won’t have reserves left over to do that … if you learn the notes and the movement (choreography) at the same, you’ll find that the piece will open up quite quickly … when you’re confident with the notes the piece will open, but when you’re not confident with the notes, the piece will never truly open up.

This focus on autonomy early in the year began to yield long-term rewards, as I was very excited to discover that Jade returned from mid-semester holiday break having learnt Alkan’s *La Vision* in its entirety, by herself (Lesson 17 Synopsis). Likewise, in Lesson 18, I exited the room momentarily, and on returning, I was surprised and delighted to see Jade writing her own fingering into the score without any adult intervention (Lesson 18 Synopsis). That said, there were times when I may have jumped in too early, where further confidence with the notes would have been desirable before expressive gesture was introduced. Processing multiple concepts simultaneously was at times challenging for Jade, and more time spent with the ‘nuts and bolts’ may have afforded a more favourable outcome. This is where the value of technical work really came to fruition. While Jade expressed her general dislike for keyboard harmony, scales and arpeggios, calling them ‘boring’ in Lesson 13, they did serve to ‘prime’ her overall body awareness and balance at the instrument, particularly when the compass was four octaves (Lesson 11 Synopsis). In Lesson 19, I can be seen to use arpeggios to ‘activate her playing apparatus’, in effect, coaching her with both forward and sideways tilt of the pelvis, engagement of the upper arms, pronation of the forearm, deactivation of the wrist, firmness of the distal joints of the fingers, and overall momentum of the upper body. I soon realised that these essentials elements were identical to those found in many of the expressive gestural concepts
that I was seeking to impart. With Jade and the other case studies, my view of technical work transformed, and I began to see it more holistically, where the roots of expressive gesture found in repertoire are extensions of this foundation.

4.2.5 Summary of This Case and Pertinent Issues Arising from It

Jade engaged with the aims of the research well and made good progress with adopting expressive gesture, though on many occasions, her general cautiousness and tendency to be risk averse appeared to impede her ability to ‘get past the notes’. In Lesson 24 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

> It seems that a big thing to come out of this study is that feeling confident with the material due to specific practice techniques is a huge part of feeling comfortable to be expressive, and not being cognitively ‘weighed down’ by the notes seems to be very important in being able to deliver the piece in a more holistic, gestural capacity.

Nonetheless, with time and support, her practice skills and overall confidence continued to blossom during the research period, and indeed in the time since its end. This has allowed Jade to showcase more of her own ‘self-expression’. I am reminded that Jade performed a self-accompanied arrangement of *Skinny Love* by Birdie in July 2016 at the ALMW in Brisbane, as part of my presentation detailing this research. I felt immense pride that she was able to sing and play with confidence and expressive maturity in front of my professional colleagues, perhaps not the easiest audience to perform for. As with Finn, I had some preconceived ideas about the ‘results’ of this research would entail. With hindsight, my view of what might constitute expressive playing is now much broader. Towards the end of the study, Lesson 27 of my Reflective Journal reads:

> The piano lessons are probably still of benefit, and encouraging Jade to play expressively may help her to open up a bit more and be a bit more ‘self-expressive’ … While her playing might not always match what I perceive to be ‘expressive’, who is to say that she isn’t already feeling a sense of self-expression, with the piano serving as an important creative outlet during her adolescent years.
Similarly, in Lesson 30, I wrote:

Maybe it’s best to see her piano playing as a vehicle that continues to grow her self-confidence and self-expression in its own time, rather than see it as proof of her ‘deficits’ in these areas?

With Jade’s case, I have realised that success with employing expressive gesture is, to a large extent, up to the individual and their personality:

You can have all the best pedagogical ideas and continue to encourage the student to ‘play’ expressively and with emotional involvement, but ultimately there has to be a drive to put oneself in the spotlight and to be energised and excited about ‘story-telling’, and some people find this easier than others. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 27)

As I reflect on my research experience with Jade, I realise that, moving forward, it will be important to provide her with the opportunity to choose her own repertoire to a much greater extent. Even though she can appear unconcerned by this option, even disinterested, it could perhaps be a front for the anxiety that she may feel if she perceives she will make the ‘wrong’ choice:

Jade smiles and then starts playing the Spanish Donkey Driver. This is clearly her best piece – the tone is beautiful and the languid nature of the writing suits her style. The connection that she has with the piece as compared with the others is unmistakable – she moves her trunk in and out with the phrases, her arms ‘dance’ and her head is involved in expressing piece as much as her body. Did I choose the right pieces for her initially? One can only wonder whether I should have involved her much more. I remember that I chose the pieces for her, without any consultation, and this is the outcome. There is a real sense of expressive width, shape and confidence here. (Lesson 16 Synopsis)

Jade is a musician with promise, and did seem to disengage at times so as not to endure further criticism (Lesson 8 Synopsis). Her face lit up when playing music she loved (e.g. Spanish Donkey Driver, Lesson 8 Synopsis), and positively glowed when praise was earned and given (Lesson 27 Synopsis). I realise that the key was to foster
her confidence and educate her that thorough preparation through effective practice was integral to her feeling comfortable being expressive when performing. I realised that performance anxiety causes her to become withdrawn and worrisome, with her playing lacking energy and expressive intent (Lesson 14 Synopsis). At the end of the data collection period, I posed the question to myself, ‘How do we garner the confidence in order to be able to ‘let go’?’ In my Reflective Journal, Lesson 30, I wrote my response:

To continue to partial practice those tricky spots with an expressive and confident attitude until the notation, geographical negotiations and gestural choreography are programmed as part of the emotional, intellectual and motor memory, and can be delivered automatically while under performance stress, in a physically free and mentally unrestrained manner.

While this advice may be pertinent to Jade, it could well have broader implication for others.

4.3 Case Study Two: Finn

4.3.1 Background and Familial Context

Finn is male, and at the time when data collection commenced in February 2014, he was 12 years old and approximately Grade 2 AMEB level, though he had previously played repertoire of a higher level. As my student, he sat an external AMEB Preliminary level exam several years ago and was awarded B+, an expected result. Finn’s paternal grandparents are of Italian background, but his parents, Sarah and George, were born and educated in Australia. Finn has a younger sister (11) and a younger brother (8), but he is the only one who studies the piano. He is currently enrolled in the Intermediate Piano Program at Young Conservatorium Griffith University, but during the research period, he was a member of the Young Beginner Piano program (now named Developing Musician Piano). Finn is extremely sensitive, friendly, loyal and kind-hearted. Naturally inquisitive, he has good aural skills, a promising voice and a developing inclination to pursue a musical career. Finn worked hard throughout the study to meet the inherent challenges that came with the

14 For example, J. S. Bach’s Prelude in C Major, BWV 846.
research’s expressive gestural focus. While his spatial awareness, fine motor control and capacity to employ expressive gesture improved, a commitment to regular and efficient practice outside of lessons, increased organisational skills and enhanced learning autonomy were also favourable outcomes of the study.

4.3.2 Personality, Personal Skills and Ability to Adopt Expressive Gesture

Finn loves music and really seems to gain a sense of belonging and identity being involved with it. Conversely, he does lack self-confidence, tends to procrastinate if he feels that tasks are beyond his ability and worries about most things in life (Finn, Interview 1). When he was younger, Finn was particularly reluctant to adopt the concept of partial practice, where sustained concentration, repetition and problem solving were required. In late 2013 when the potential research participants were identified, Finn had studied with me at Young Conservatorium for four years, having learnt with two previous teachers in the year prior. For Finn, the physical aspects of playing had not come easily, and he had historically been reluctant to use the score as a point of reference, tending to memorise the notes after learning them by rote, by ear or with the help of recordings. However, during the study period and since, I sought to involve him more when writing information into the score, particularly fingerings, articulation and chord symbols. While it may have been faster to prepare the score for him, the resulting questioning, discussion, problem solving and sense of fellowship gained by proactively engaging Finn in this process made it a worthwhile objective (Lesson 9 Synopsis).

During the first two years of his tuition with me, I made several attempts to coach Finn with expressive gesture, using elementary repertoire that focused on two-note slurs (e.g. Carley’s Play Party and Mozart’s Minuet in C Major, K6). However, I began to feel that my teaching objectives for Finn required review, as expressive gesture was not easy for him to grasp physically, and he would quickly ‘forget’ what I

15 Finn himself said that he finds looking at the music while being aware of what his arms and fingers are doing quite challenging (Lesson 2 Synopsis).
16 There is a question regarding preparation of the score: How much is too much? Should we prepare the score, complete with fingering, harmonic and structural detail, and historical information? Or is it best for it to ‘come up in the lesson’? Since the end of the research period, many of my teaching scores are made up with most, if not all of the fingering written in, preworked. Harmonic and formal information are usually notated, as they tend to form a direct link to the uptake of gesture and expressive ‘tools’ that unlock the expressive potential of harmony and form. Questions can still be asked of the student, but it saves valuable time compared to write everything down ad hoc, and contributes favourably to the overall forward flow of the lesson.
had taught him. As it was, note reading, systematic fingering, articulation and other basic rudiments were more pressing, and retaining his overall interest and momentum in learning soon meant choosing repertoire that (a) was not too challenging, (b) he was interested in, and (c) he had been involved in selecting. Such repertoire was usually chord and pattern based, which yielded quick results, rather than focusing on intricate notational detail, which would require careful scaffolding. In effect, I felt it best to delay the process of expressive gestural uptake until he acquired greater body awareness, increased concentration and an improved ability to move beyond the notation itself.

Since then, Finn has added many additional skills to his knowledge base, making a gestural approach to expressive playing, as seen in this research, less challenging to implement. I perceived that Finn was gradually beginning to understand how the use of expressive gesture could translate into expressive tonal nuance, and in late 2013, before data collection began, he had some good success with Haydn’s Serenade in F Major, though his ability to play with attention to expressive gestural interplay and tonal nuance was still somewhat unpredictable. My long-term aim was that I would continue to help Finn to grow musically and expressively, but perhaps using a flexible timeline and methodology to get there. While the concept of expressive gesture was still relatively new to him, I felt that he was of an age and level of experience where the way that he engaged with the research aims would be pedagogically fruitful, as well as telling from a research point of view. I did foresee that Finn’s research journey would not be as straightforward as the other three case studies, as his basic technique and touch still required significant development when data collection began. For example, in Lesson 1 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

His basic technical approach is still one of ‘grabbing’ with the thumb and twisting, causing inordinate tension and a clumsy sound, making expressive gestural implementation difficult.

17 See https://vimeo.com/197658649/f3a8565602
The synopsis of Lesson 1 reads:

I go on to demonstrate and paraphrase the importance of not leading with the thumb, lest the wrist twists, the fifth finger flattens and the middle fingers over-activate.

In essence, Finn defaults into ulnar deviation when playing the piano. Consequently, in many instances, time was spent reviewing his technique and body awareness (e.g. Lesson 1: finger stability, hand shape, forearm alignment, engagement of upper arms; Lesson 2: clarity of finger legato, forearm pronation, upper arm activation, loose shoulders) alongside the implementation of expressive gesture. In fact, there were times when expressive gesture was abandoned in order to focus on hand shape, finger stability and tactile sensitivity. For example, in Lesson 2, I observed:

I start to show him a double rotary movement that he could use for ‘loud-soft-soft’, but abandon this idea, reminding him to lead with the fifth finger rather than the thumb. As he plays again, I adjust his hand and elbow in order for the hand to align, asking him which muscle is keeping his arm high, [to] which he answers deltoid. I go on to describe (and demonstrate in the air), the idea of feeling where the bottom of the key is, and then making a chain from the bottom of the key, through the finger all the way up to the top of the arm. I say, ‘You don’t go past that (the bottom of the key) or not enough to it’. As he plays, I adjust him, saying, ‘So put enough weight in that you feel the bottom, but not so much that you end up squeezing the note’. He plays again, and I say, ‘Oh that sounds so different Finn … yay!’ He smiles and says ‘thank you’. He says, ‘It did sound smooth and connected’ and I say, ‘It sounded real’. I go on to say that if you don’t play it connected, it will sound ‘disconnected’, and Finn says, ‘robotic’. I agree, saying that it will sound like you are disconnected from what you are doing, in effect, pressing buttons.

Nonetheless, I was aware of his interest in contemporary popular music, keyboard harmony, singing and self-accompaniment, and felt those areas would provide an interesting backdrop to the research, in a way that the other three case studies may not. Indeed, I soon realised that working with expressive gesture and associated tonal
nuance need not be restricted to a particular genre or style (Reflective Journal, Lesson 27). In Lesson 14 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

The gestural vocabulary is easily transferable to a contemporary context, strengthening its viability, e.g. elliptical movement to shape the tone of broken chords in the right-hand accompaniment of All of Me.

Within the context of Finn’s involvement in this research project, I have come to understand that if body awareness and piano technique are slow to develop, so too are expressive gestural concepts and associated tone production (Reflective Journal, Lesson 21). Finn was quite engaged during his lessons throughout the study, though I was able to perceive when he had reached information saturation, when a short break to refresh his concentration was required. Despite Finn being intelligent with a good ability to see the bigger picture, he has historically experienced difficulty with rhythm, fingering and articulatory detail, mainly because of a reluctance to read music, but also because of challenges in remembering and systematising strategies that would lead to measurable long-term improvement. Early on, I noticed that Finn had difficulty regulating his own practice and progress, even though he was at an age where he might be reasonably expected to do so (Reflective Journal, Lesson 6). While Finn did seem to enjoy his lessons, this enthusiasm would not always translate into improved playing quality the following week. At times, he would become overwhelmed with what he perceived as the enormity of the learning task, and therefore seemed paralysed into inaction. This became more so during the study, as his school homework and other extra-curricular activities18 competed for his attention. For example, after Lesson 27, I wrote in my Reflective Journal:

With too much challenge, he seems to become withdrawn and worrisome – the need to feel self-efficacious is paramount here.

By Lesson 7, I began to understand that Finn’s challenges with learning notes lay with difficulty in planning, organising, prioritising and processing multiple concepts simultaneously, rather than laziness or procrastination (Reflective Journal, Lessons 7 and 8). As he had genuine difficulty in breaking tasks into manageable steps and

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18 Finn also studies singing and percussion, and is involved in his school choir and percussion ensemble.
prioritising what needed attention, it became apparent to me that expressive gesture was of little use unless Finn’s notes and fingering were firmly in place. For example, as I watched Lesson 8 retrospectively, I saw the futility of coaching Finn with expressive gesture in Chopin’s (arr. Jerry Hall) *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, when familiarity with notes, rhythm and fingering were far more pressing. Nonetheless, in an effort to increase his accountability, I began to make more time within lessons for Finn to initiate, verbalise and write down sequential instructions alongside his weekly practice goals. This saw a significant shift in both the amount and quality of his practice between lessons. While I began to encourage greater learning autonomy here in Lesson 8 and again in Lesson 13 (‘Make expectations clear – perhaps get Finn to write them down himself’), it was not until Lesson 20 that a more regular focus on learning autonomy found its way into the lessons. I wrote in my Reflective Journal:

Finn has trouble remembering specific directions, so I have now started asking him to write down his own weekly goals. He needs to be reminded of the importance of taking greater responsibility for his own progress. (Lesson 20)

Entries in my Reflective Journal for four consecutive weeks illustrate his burgeoning autonomy:

Giving Finn greater responsibility for writing down agreed to, itemised, and systematised weekly goals does seem to have worked – he achieved them! (Lesson 21)

I think that he feels more empowered if he has written steps to follow and I have started to encourage him to write down what he practises, in effect becoming his own ‘mini reflective practitioner’, as suggested by Diana Blom at my research confirmation. This may allow him to better reflect on the part that he himself plays in his own progress. (Lesson 22)

Finn continues to write in his journal, as I encourage him to set weekly goals and to write down what he practises, for how long, and for what purpose, using other students’ work as an example. (Lesson 23)
Finn is still at an elementary stage in many respects, but I will continue to give him opportunities to think critically on ways he can move forward. He is taking more pride in his independence and demonstrates increased self-efficaciousness, and those factors in themselves are worthwhile long-term goals. (Lesson 23)

He is polishing the rudiments of notes, fingering and rhythmic detail much faster now, and he continues to use his journal as a learning tool. (Lesson 24)

These vignettes stand in stark contrast to my retrospective observations of Lesson 2:

I ask him if I can hear Jinker Ride, mentioning that his ability to concentrate has really improved lately. I remind him that he was going to look at the right hand for homework, but he says that he forgot to. I ask him how he might remind himself. He is looking very embarrassed, so I ask him what grown-ups do when they want to remind themselves of something. He suggests that they put a dot on themselves. I laugh and say they carry a diary with them and write in what their assignment is. He seems surprised. I say that I have several, plus a calendar. He asks if he should bring a notebook for me to write in. I say that I’m not a secretary, but if he would like to write notes at the end of the lesson, he is welcome to. Sarah says, ‘It’s just like school darling, no different’. I suggest that he not beat himself up, but if he is prone to forgetfulness, he has to take steps to ensure that that doesn’t happen often, so perhaps taking notes is a good idea. I paraphrase, ‘Everyone forgets, but if you are prone to forgetting, you have to put in a strategy that will stop that from happening’. He nods in agreement and I ask him to try some of the right hand.

In addition, Sarah occasionally records the lessons for him to watch during the week. An obvious benefit is that the lessons can be watched retrospectively, and paused for clarification, but it has also encouraged him to be more accountable for his progress. Further, I suggested that if he were to watch himself play often, he may develop, over time, a more definitive picture of how he looks and sounds when playing. In the synopsis of Lesson 1, I talk to Finn about this process:
I call that a kinaesthetic sense – you build up a sense of how you sit. Like you sort of imagine yourself in a movie.

In Lesson 2 of my Reflective Journal, I note:

Finn needs to be encouraged to develop a kinaesthetic image of himself – body mapping.

This is summarised by this vignette from the synopsis of Lesson 2:

He says he was watching the video of last week’s lesson and realised that the pianos sounded different from each other. I ask him what it was like to view the video – he turns to Sarah and puts his thumb up. I ask him if he enjoyed it, or was there anything he noticed. We laugh about possible options, and then he mentions that he noticed he was a bit slouched a couple of times. He says that he looked a bit tired, but this week he’s happy (Yay!). I ask him if he noticed anything when watching the segments where he was playing chords. He says that he noticed that he sometimes over-exaggerated the extent to which he held his elbow out. I say that Finn is developing a kinaesthetic image of how his body looks and functions, without having to ‘look’ at it. I make the analogy of walking down the street and not having to ‘look’ at oneself walking. Finn is playing chords on the piano, but seems to be listening. Finn makes the link that he can’t look at the music and still be aware of his body yet. I say, ‘That’s OK’, and then continue, ‘I have a sense of where my body sits in space’.

4.3.3 Repertoire Studied, Patterns, Notable Events and Breakthroughs across the Lessons

Finn studied a limited amount of solo and vocal (sing and play) repertoire during the research period. His solo repertoire included the following:

- *Jinker Ride* – Dorian Le Gallienne
- *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, Op. 9 No. 2 – Chopin, arr. Jerry Hall
Finn’s vocal repertoire included:

- *All of Me* – John Legend, arr. Finn
- *Say Something* – Ian Axel, Chad Ding and Mike Campbell, arr. Finn.

Through teaching Finn, I have come to a better understanding that operating multiple physical and intellectual concepts simultaneously may be skills that are not immediately available for everyone, and need time to develop. When Finn first began lessons with me, he was obviously musical, but lacked physical refinement and tactile sensitivity. In retrospect, it seems as though the decision to delay more detailed work on technique, sound production and expressive gesture was a good decision in Finn’s case, as increased physical maturity and a focus on efficiency and greater commitment to practice have proven to be good foundations on which to implement expressive gesture. This occurred at a stage when he may have lost interest and a sense of competence had I employed more inflexible pedagogy and repertoire selection. In the early years, I felt that it was better to keep Finn learning over the long term so that I could help him to slowly develop his playing skills, rather than aiming for too much too soon, perhaps risking him ceasing lessons altogether.

Overall, Finn responded well to the research aims. His case demonstrates what might be done when difficulty with the physicality of playing the piano could impede an otherwise capable student’s ability to play expressively, at least within the gestural context of this study. His journey with the research aims saw a review of basic technique run in parallel to the implementation of expressivity via basic expressive gesture, despite having several years of lessons with me prior to data collection. One may wonder why this was not done years ago. His case, where motor skills are late in developing is not unique. It illustrates the need for more than one type of pedagogy throughout a student’s journey where there may be still plenty to learn before the concept of expressive gesture might be considered useful.

The points of significance with Finn may be divided into two main areas: body awareness and executive function. In Lesson 4, I first used the ‘hand over hand technique’, a spontaneous activity where Finn held his hand stationary, approximately 15–20 cm above my own, as I executed the up movement of a two-note slur. It proved useful in helping Finn to physically comprehend how over-activation was causing a
‘clipped’ sound within the up movement of a two-note slur. This was a real breakthrough, with Finn demonstrating his understanding within the lesson. Saying to Finn, ‘Imagine what it feels like, not what it thinks like’, seemed to be a compelling way to enhance his intellectual understanding of this most basic expressive gestural concept (Lesson 4 Synopsis).

It was also at this time that I realised Finn needed ongoing support with tasks that involve body awareness, as he would often find it challenging to isolate parts of the body, especially individual muscles. For example, when asking him to activate the deltotoid muscles in his upper arms, he would lift his shoulder and activate the trapezius instead (Lessons 3, 16 and 29 Synopses). Another area of challenge for Finn was learning not to over-extend the fingers of his hands when playing. An exercise to discourage such overuse, which I found useful, can be seen in the Lesson 4 synopsis:

I ask him to feel my forearm as I compare and contrast a loose forearm/tight forearm due to over-extension of the fingers. As I ask him to ‘roll’ on the notes, he tells me that he could feel my forearm was thin at first, but then when my fingers went into over-extension, my forearm muscles ‘got bigger’. I agree, saying that he should avoid that, as over-extension of the fingers causes all the muscles to tighten around the tendons that work the fingers, causing playing to become more difficult.

As Finn often defaulted into non-legato when using the sustain pedal, making the implementation of expressive gesture impracticable, during Lessons 6 and 7 I began encouraging Finn to imagine what his body looked and felt like ‘in space’. It seemed that an intellectual approach to solving technical problems of finger over-extension, lack of upper arm support, fifth finger insensitivity and forearm supination could have its limitations, so I approached these challenges from a kinaesthetic perspective, encouraging Finn to build a ‘kinaesthetic program’ of his piano playing. In Lesson 9, I suggested to Finn that he concentrate one part of his brain on the notes and the other on the movement of his body, saying, ‘So you’ve got to be looking, listening and moving … it’s multi-tasking’ (Lesson 9 Synopsis). In Lesson 10, I say:

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19 Could this be due to his percussion studies?
It’s not an intellectual activity (piano playing); it’s a whole person activity. You are a soul with a body, and you have to use your body to play. So that means you have to get used to whole your body feels. How does your body move from this note to that note? (Lesson 10 Synopsis)

In Lesson 11 of my Reflective Journal, I began to question whether having access to biofeedback would speed up this process. Described by Dr Kathleen Riley (2016) on her website as ‘the window inside of you’, biofeedback may prove to be an effective modality for educating students in basic muscle awareness and activation in real time, perhaps enhancing the implementation of expressive gesture. To explain further:

Neuromuscular biofeedback is very simple. Sessions begin with placement of sensors on your neck, arms, trunk or limbs to measure physiological activity commonly known as muscle tension … With biofeedback you quickly learn to consciously control muscle tension, improve posture and optimise movement patterns. (Riley, 2016)

While beyond the scope of this study, biofeedback may be something to consider. Nonetheless, by Lesson 25, I reflected on the need to encourage Finn to engage his kinaesthetic sense when playing:

Finn needs to be encouraged to become more and more aware that playing is a multi-sensory activity – How does your playing look, feel and sound? (Reflective Journal, Lesson 25)

In terms of Finn’s executive function, organisational skills, goal setting and procedural learning were key areas to address. In Lesson 2, I introduced Finn to the concept of critical thinking, as reflecting on one’s efforts during practice and looking for areas in which to improve are ultimately superior strategies to mindless repetition (Lesson 2 Synopsis). From Lesson 9, Finn started to become increasingly responsible for the weekly completion of assigned tasks, meaning that he seemed to absorb expressive gestural information much faster. During this lesson, I noted that while his Chopin’s Nocturne was still not ideal in terms of fluency, accuracy and legato, it did show good progress. When I asked Finn how he was able to achieve such
improvement, he said that he had been following ‘the steps’\textsuperscript{20} and partial practising much more in general. I praised Finn for his effort, reminding him that, ‘You have to know your notes so well that you can concentrate on the movement that \textit{connects} the notes’ (Lesson 9 Synopsis). Finn was clearly proud of his growing independence and the way that he internalised responsibility for his own progress was heartening:

Finn smiles and starts bobbing with excitement. I say that I want him to study it and that while I can show him what to do, it really is up to him. He says, ‘I have to do the work’. I say, ‘You’ll have to … I don’t live with you so I can’t supervise. It’s up to you … you’re old enough’. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

Essentially, I came to understand that the development of Finn’s notational security was a very important part of him having the self-confidence to play with expression, confidence that could be achieved through cognitive education regarding efficient practice. In Lesson 27, I noted in my Reflective Journal that confidence with notes and increased control of the upper arms seemed to afford Finn greater focus on the expressive possibilities of sound and overall tone production. Finn himself said that having the notes ‘in place’ gives him the space to enjoy being expressive (Lesson 27 Synopsis). This reflects my own observation that in Finn’s case, the ‘nuts and bolts’ of fingering, rhythm and keyboard geography need to be sorted, reviewed and practised as a priority, before any expressive gestural detail can be implemented (Reflective Journal, Lesson 22). Specifically, I came to realise that notational confidence did improve Finn’s ability to imitate expressive gestural choreography and absorb spatial information; consequently, he began to demonstrate increased skill in terms of being able to self-monitor and correct issues of finger alertness and upper arm activation (Reflective Journal, Lesson 26). I started to wonder, ‘Have technical challenges, misdirected cognitive resources and inefficient practice techniques been inhibiting his expressive potential?’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 27)

\textsuperscript{20} Five minutes each of:
1. Left-hand block chords
2. Right-hand melodic phrase
3. Right-hand phrase and left hand block chords
4. Right-hand and left-hand broken chords
5. Expressive tonal shape and tonal balance between hands.
Reaching this point was not easy, and there were times when Finn seemed to take ‘one step forward and two steps back’. In Lesson 20, Finn played Czerny’s *Study in C Major*, Op. 299 No. 1, but it was soon obvious that errors with fingering and rhythm had not been corrected during the week. After reviewing these areas, I assisted Finn to formulate his overall goals, and he wrote down an itemised, systematised list of the specific tasks he would need to undertake in order to overcome these challenges (Lesson 20 Synopsis). The following week he showed very good progress with these goals, which facilitated further questioning and discussion, giving him the tools that he needs to formulate further short-term goals\(^2\) (Lesson 21 Synopsis). Tellingly, George adds that this structure and literal instruction are great for Finn (Lesson 21 Synopsis). From the outside looking in, these lessons could be seen as slow, but were necessary in order for Finn to move along in his learning, and, without them, the potential of utilising expressive gesture in future may have been forfeited. Lesson 23 of my Reflective Journal reads:

Finn is still at an elementary stage in many respects, but I will continue to give him opportunities to think critically on ways he can move forward. He is taking more pride in his independence and demonstrates increased self-efficaciousness, and those factors in themselves are worthwhile long-term goals … I think that it has helped that I have adjusted my expectations just a little, in order for the learning to be relevant for Finn.

After he excitedly tells me how ‘handy’ writing in his journal has been (Lesson 24 Synopsis), a genuine moment of independence is evident in Lesson 24 when Finn says, ‘I have an idea’. Along with his weekly practice goals, Finn thinks it best to write down my spontaneous quote regarding the purpose of practice into his journal:

Practice is the process where notation (notes, rhythm, fingering) is moved from the short-term procedural memory to the long-term motor memory.

Piano playing is as much a musical activity as it is a motor activity. Like in

\(^2\) I take out a piece of paper and ask him to write down:

1. Practice 1 or 2 bars slowly with attention to fingering, accuracy and body awareness
2. Repeat step 1 with attention to expressive sound
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 (Finn smiles) except with other hand
4. Repeat steps 1, 2 and 3 (we laugh) except with hands together.

I ask him what bar we are up to, and ask him to write that in (bar 13); I ask him to play bar 13 using step 1 above. I ask him to add, ‘avoid pressing wrists, avoid over-extending fingers, avoid over-balancing fifth finger’. (Lesson 21 Synopsis)
sport, the whole body is used, but this is combined with the precision of fine motor skills and the poetry of musical expression (Lesson 24 Synopsis).

Lesson 17 seemed to mark a turning point for Finn, as it was at this time that Finn’s father George began to attend more regularly. I began to sense a shift in Finn’s overall engagement, body awareness, and ultimate progress with the research aims of expressive gestural implementation. During Lesson 17, George seemed very interested in asking questions regarding muscle activation, posture, and technique, adding that he had been getting Finn to hold a bag of bananas in each hand in order to develop his upper arm strength. George also mentioned that he has played a great deal of sport in his life, and can see the motoric parallels\footnote{This supports Sarah’s realisation that ‘it’s all body mechanics’. (Lesson 10 Synopsis)} (Lesson 17 Synopsis). In Lesson 17 of my Reflective Journal, I detailed this critical change:

> Parental involvement, understanding and support has been critical here – they know that I just want the best for their son and I think that they can now see where I am coming from. George said that he has been encouraging Finn to develop his upper arm strength and awareness through specific exercises and by using the rowing machine.

George seemed to provide a fresh perspective and I really felt a sense of fellowship that we were all doing the best we could to support Finn and his playing. During this lesson, George said:

> As a non-musician, I can really hear the difference in the sound when those gestures are used … the overall result is more ‘organic’.

I found George’s input in the lessons thereafter invaluable. With our combined encouragement, Finn’s confidence and self-efficacy appeared to increase:

> Finn seems pleased with himself and I think that he knows that he is getting the hang of what I am asking him to do. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 17)

There was a real sense of developing camaraderie between Finn, George and myself, with George offering support and useful information regarding Finn’s personality, and how he learns best (Reflective Journal, Lesson 21). George also ratified my
observations regarding Finn’s physical challenges, saying, ‘He’s behind all the other kids in physical development … but there’s signs it’s starting to come’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 21). In Lesson 28, George mentioned that he noticed Finn’s upper arm strength diminish as his practice of the Czerny study progressed, causing him to lean on the keys, with the playing becoming clumsy, lacking clarity and rhythmic precision. In fact, George showed me a ‘hole’ in Finn’s left upper arm where the muscle should be. I had felt that Finn’s inability to maintain the engagement of the muscles in his upper arms was a factor in his physical challenges, but it was still surprising to think that it may be a physical problem, and not just a lack of effort on Finn’s part. This point does seem to illustrate that the ‘golden triangle’, the relationship between parent, student and teacher, can indeed be powerful, and in Finn’s case, it did help to inform the direction that his future lessons may take.

With Finn, Lesson 17 also saw a renewed focus on using the iPad as a teaching tool. In my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

   Using the iPad does seem to help Finn become more reflective, perhaps helping him to become more aware of his body when he plays, and helping him to generate a visual and kinaesthetic ‘map’ of how he interacts with the piano as a whole.

Following George’s feedback regarding Finn needing very specific instruction, I began to use the iPad as a way for Finn to see what I was saying, which proved to be a very useful way to implement expressive gesture, more so than relying solely on verbal instruction or imitation. In Lesson 2 of my Reflective Journal, I wrote:

   iPad feedback regarding body awareness, technique and sound is useful for Finn to see where he might make/is making improvements.

The iPad did prove to be very helpful in encouraging increased critical reflection and overall body awareness (Reflective Journal, Lessons 17, 18 and 21), with Finn taking greater pride and ownership of his progress, even if the increments were small. In Lesson 23, my Reflective Journal reads:
The iPad continues to serve as a useful reflective tool, especially if used in a positive way: we are building on what he can do, rather than focusing on what he cannot (*is the glass is half empty or half full?*)

With Finn, I found that my Reflective Journal became a pivotal source of information that could serve to inform future work. In effect, his progress and my reflections informed each other, and allowed me to keep the bigger picture in mind, without sacrificing his learning satisfaction for the sake of the research aims. In Lesson 20, I wrote:

Progress is slow but steady with Finn, but when viewed in a holistic way in terms of his singing and percussion activities, he will no doubt mature into a well-rounded musician in the years ahead.

It allowed me to celebrate the small achievements along the way:

Progress is slow, but Finn seems to be retaining concepts relating to body awareness from lesson to lesson, in contrast to as recent as last semester. (Lesson 22)

It also gave me an opportunity to reflect on what was best for Finn as a whole person who is following his own unique learning journey:

I think that it has helped that I have *adjusted* my expectations just a little, in order for the learning to be relevant for Finn. (Lesson 23)

When he is interested and feels self-efficacious, he seems to learn quickly and demonstrates greater autonomy. (Lesson 13)

**4.3.4 Summary of This Case and Pertinent Issues Arising from It**

During the study, there is no doubt that Finn matured, his motor system ‘awakened’, and his time management skills began to catalyse. Most importantly, his interest in playing remained strong and his autonomy mobilised. Nevertheless, Finn’s physical limitations did make expressive gesture more challenging to adopt when compared with the other research participants, and my expectations, and those of Finn’s parents, required adjustment (Reflective Journal, Lessons 7 and 15). There was a need to
accept that different aspects of playing take time (Reflective Journal, Lesson 12) and it was best to meet Finn where he was, while moving him forward in a realistic and sequential manner (Reflective Journal, Lesson 27). Other learning experiences were afforded, and I began to see his playing as a tool to enhance his vocal studies and general musicianship, rather than solely focus his lessons on perfecting repertoire. While expressive gesture and technique were pedagogically present, a focus on keyboard harmony fired his interest, acted as a vehicle to encourage body awareness and sound production, and supported an increasing desire to utilise the piano as a vehicle to enrich his singing (Reflective Journal, Lesson 27). Further, taking opportunities to foster his skills in improvisation and arranging (e.g. Lessons 6, 18–20, 27 and 30) boosted his confidence, and provided a useful adjunct that has more recently seen Finn able to independently improvise his own vocal accompaniments.\textsuperscript{23}

One also needs to consider the family instrument in this case. I refer to an entry in my interview notes, where I wrote about the electronic piano at Finn’s home:

I was there last night having dinner (17 December 2015) and I was struck by the tactile feedback I was receiving from the keys. It seemed to me that each note ‘clunked’ under my fingers and it was difficult for me to get into the feel of ‘rolling’ between the notes, where the action of each key merges seamlessly into the next.

From my professional perspective, this seemed to be a factor in the delayed development of his tactile sensitivity, expressive touch and tonal nuance. Although I have encouraged an upgrade to an acoustic piano, it has thus far not eventuated. Nonetheless, I recall my own formative years with the piano, when I had a less than optimal instrument and my parents were doing the best they could. At any rate, an acoustic piano may not have made a great difference, as unlocking Finn’s awareness of the expressive potential of his arms was a priority during the research period. Having Finn understand that the way he used his arms and hands to ‘touch’ the keys was directly correlated with his sonic output was critical to his overall improvement; without that understanding, an acoustic piano and a working knowledge of expressive gesture may have been of little use. In Lesson 16, I said to Finn:

\textsuperscript{23} Finn recently sang his own self-accompanied arrangement of Leonard Cohen’s \textit{Hallelujah} in the Intermediate Piano Recital, on 6 November 2016.
That’s what makes one piano player sound different from another one, the way they touch the keys ... You need to become more aware of how your body sits in space, and how you touch the keys ... Technique isn’t about how curved your fingers are, it’s about how your body sits in space and allows you to make those minute timbral adjustments, just like a voice.

Lesson 16 of my Reflective Journal points to Finn’s growing capability in this regard:

Employing greater activation of the upper arms so as to ‘hover’ above them combined with gesture seems to facilitate his ability to vary arm ‘weight’/velocity of key descent, inducing tonal shape with repeated notes, and creating a ‘vocal’ line that has direction, expressive inflection and purpose.

In Lesson 17, George was quick to comprehend my methodology, and was able to provide terrific support, saying that the rock ballad *Say Something* that Finn was studying would certainly make use of subtle nuances. I enthusiastically agreed, explaining, ‘What you’re trying to do is imitate a singer’s inflections’, demonstrating the vocal line while giving a detailed analysis of the micro nuances. After proceeding to transfer these micro nuances to the piano itself, George said, ‘That’s a very good explanation’ (Lesson 17 Synopsis). The synopsis of Lesson 18 provides further evidence of Finn’s ability to avoid ‘leaning’ on the keys and increasing body awareness, leading to coaching of the ‘pelvic tilt’ concept to ‘invigorate the sound and for notes to flow out of the body’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 18).

While the expressive aspects of his playing have certainly improved, an unfortunate consequence of me pushing him to a greater level of achievement has been an increased susceptibility to the negative effects of musical performance anxiety (MPA). Finn shared at a recent lesson that it was as though he is ‘always being judged’ and that ‘people will think I’m not very good’. While his playing is reasonably competent in performance situations, he has verbally confessed to feeling an overwhelming sense of dread both immediately before his weekly lessons and during performance. Although he understands that he will be critiqued in lessons and I remain careful to balance the need for both positive and negative feedback, owing to the onset of adolescence, his own disposition, or perhaps the content of the lessons.

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themselves, he now needs coaching in learning to manage his anxiety. Having coached many young people in ways to manage their MPA in the past, I can certainly draw on my own experience of managing (and often mismanaging) it in order to help him. However, it would certainly be of great benefit to have an internal staff member who specialises in this pedagogical subset to assist, especially in such extreme cases. As up to 75% of child and adolescent musicians experience some form of performance anxiety (Britsch, 2005, as cited in Osborne, 2015), Finn is not alone with his fears.

Finn’s case points towards a potential downside to the premature use of expressive gesture as a teaching tool, in that some students may have a slight motor skill weakness, making the facilitation of expressive gesture difficult, time consuming, laborious or not entirely appropriate for their overall development, at least not in the early years of instruction (Reflective Journal, Lesson 11). Early in the study, I began to question my motives:

Should I be trying to ‘mould’ him into something that he is not, or should I aim for a healthier balance between what he enjoys and is good at, and those goals that would facilitate my idea of musical expressivity? Perhaps he already feels as though he is expressing himself by learning more about popular music, singing, accompanying, keyboard harmony, and music theory? (Reflective Journal, Lesson 11)

I now see that Finn did benefit from the research’s expressive gestural approach, but there was a need to see his piano studies flexibly and holistically, as support with body awareness, tactile sensitivity, goal setting, organisation and practice techniques ultimately improved his ability to utilise expressive gesture to create an expressive sound. Nonetheless, the research period only represents a small time frame within his overall learning trajectory; his journey is ongoing. As I noted in my Reflective Journal, Lesson 14:

He does get there in the end, but it’s just a slower journey for Finn … I feel glad that I pushed him to achieve a higher standard, but also relieved that I had the foresight to back off a little in order to give him the space to learn and achieve what I was asking … There exists a need to strike a careful
balance between expectation and the ‘space’ to learn – no one can learn effectively with someone always breathing down their neck.

4.4 Case Study Three: Adrian

4.4.1 Background, Familial Context and Temperament

Adrian is male. When data collection began in February 2014, he was eight years old and approximately Grade 5 AMEB standard, though he had never sat any practical exams. Towards the end of the research period, he was awarded A+ for his Grade 5 AMEB exam. Adrian was born in Australia. His father, Oliver, was born and educated in China, and his mother, Jane, was born and educated in Hong Kong. Oliver’s maternal grandfather was a piano teacher in China, and Oliver himself learnt the violin to a high level as a child. The family listens to a great deal of classical music, both in the car and at home. Adrian clearly takes great pride in his piano playing, saying that it feels ‘cool’ to learn the piano and he feels ‘proud’ when performing at school assembly (Adrian, Interview 1). This pride is evident during his lessons:

I praise Adrian for his choice of fingering, asking him ‘Is that exciting?’ to which he replies ‘Yeah!!’ We continue to review fingering, phrasing and gestural lift that was covered a little earlier, sitting down next to him, pointing to the score, conducting, vocalising and helping him choreograph the in and out movements by adjusting his right hand. I continue to explain ornaments are treated as semiquavers here and coach notes, fingering, phrasing and gesture simultaneously. Curiously, Adrian turns around and smiles widely at Jane. I ask him if he’s feeling proud. He smiles and says, ‘Yeah’. I give him a pat on the back and say, ‘You’re a good kid aren’t you’.

(Lesson 8 Synopsis)

He also said that playing piano gives him ‘a more fun life’ (Adrian, Interview 1). It is very clear that Adrian loves learning the piano and doing so gives him immense personal satisfaction. During the first interview, Adrian said that he feels ‘joyful’ when playing the piano. Jane and Oliver started their sons with music to develop more emotional wellbeing, intelligence, self-initiative and commitment, and to enrich their
lives (Adrian, Interview 1). Adrian is their younger son. His brother, Neil, whom I also teach at Young Conservatorium, is two years older.

I have been Adrian’s teacher since he started as a beginner at age five. He had had some previous informal guidance (approximately eight months) with Jane at home, using elementary material that Neil had studied with me some years earlier. When data collection began in February 2014, Adrian had recently been promoted from the Young Beginner Piano program (now Developing Musician Piano) to the Intermediate Piano program at Young Conservatorium. At some stage during Adrian’s first year of tuition, I began to notice that he demonstrated a very good ability to imitate expressive gestural choreography and refined tonal nuance. I was also aware of his tendency to become easily distracted, but in recent times I have helped Adrian to become more aware of the immense potential of his ‘race car brain’, if harnessed appropriately. While he has perfect pitch, excellent coordination and a strong kinaesthetic awareness that affords him a seemingly innate ability to use his body to procure an expressive touch, his overall sense of pulse and rhythmic reliability have historically been unpredictable. It was mainly because of the peculiar mix of abilities that I first began to record and produce electronic versions of his repertoire to both listen to and practise with each day. This included short excerpts in order to encourage rhythmic accuracy, and complete recordings with the metronome that he could play along with. Adrian himself said that he really finds the audio recordings helpful – ‘I get a basic sound, what to play … makes it easier’ (Adrian, Interview 1).

Adrian has always shown an excellent level of commitment, often to the point of an unhealthy obsession with perfection, resulting in frequent meltdowns at home, especially in the year before data collection, when potential research participants were identified. With the support of his parents and many phone conversations, I have, over time, been able to redirect him to be more flexible in his approach to learning, focusing on improvement rather than perfection, with a healthier balance between process and product-oriented goals. During the research period, Adrian demonstrated increased autonomy in setting and fulfilling smaller learning goals, with an emphasis on scaffolded improvement rather than instantaneous perfection. For example, in Lesson 9:
Adrian proudly tells me that he learnt ‘these two bars’ this morning before the lesson. He asks me if there is a lesson next week too, and when I say yes, he says that he has to ‘go up to there’, pointing to the score and setting his own learning goal for the week without my input. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

Helping Adrian to focus on improving through the achievement of goals has proven to be a good strategy, as he is able to cope more readily with making mistakes as part of the learning process. With my help, he began to demonstrate increased awareness of negative, overly self-critical and counterproductive mindsets, and continued to improve rapidly during data collection and in the time since.24 While this shift in thinking had been developing for some time, it did seem to flourish during the study:

Jane says that during the week, Adrian has been less inclined to repeat the piece from the beginning, and more inclined to push forward to learn new material. I praise Adrian for his maturity and comment that he has been having some very good lessons lately, mainly due to his more open mindset. (Lesson 5 Synopsis)

I have found that empathising with Adrian and his occasional frustration has proved a useful strategy. During Lesson 16, Oliver said that he often spends half an hour repeating without any real improvement. I respond:

That’s why you’re becoming obsessive with it, because you can hear it’s wrong (Oh), but the more you play it faster, the more detail you will lack, and then the cycle keeps continuing, and then you start getting anxious and then you go faster and then subtlety is lost … ah ha ha … I know exactly what it feels like. (Lesson 16 Synopsis)

Adrian is extremely inquisitive, boisterous, happy and intelligent, and desires success in all areas of his life. For example, in Lesson 16, Adrian said that his aim was to get in the top 0.3% for his school mathematics competition, adding, ‘I want to rule the results’ (Lesson 16 Synopsis). During Interview 1, his parents described Adrian as ‘sweet, fun and curious, but very serious, really hard working, with a strong sense of ownership … he wants to do it in his way’. When I asked Adrian to identify his

24 In September 2016, Adrian was awarded an A in his Grade 8 AMEB exam.
strengths, he said that he has a talent for piano playing and making a good sound, and is very good at ‘hearing’ (Interview 1). Like Kelly, Adrian has a clear vision for his future, demonstrates a very high level of ambition and self-confidence and is not afraid to express it. For example, Adrian told me during Interview 1 that as there is no one on YouTube who plays In the Wind or Jinker Ride, he would like to be the first person in the world to upload these pieces. When I asked Adrian what I should know about him, he replied, ‘I’m more special than the other kids … I was born to be special’ (Interview 1). In Lesson 8 of my Reflective Journal, I noted that Adrian sees himself as ‘special’, where he wants to ‘surprise people’ with his ‘special playing’.

An inner drive seems to fuel his progress, which in turn gives him the self-confidence to achieve, resulting in an even bigger ‘payoff’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 8). Adrian said that he would like to be an inventor when he grows up and really enjoys ‘getting things right’ (Interview 1). He also told me that he intends to invent (compose) the 15th Bach Invention when he is older. When I asked Adrian how far he would like to go with his piano playing, Adrian told me that he would like to be ‘the best’ and (pointing to his neighbour’s house from the kitchen table) wants to go (metaphorically), ‘very far … from me to the other house’ (Interview 1).

Adrian is the type of person who needs performance opportunities to shine, and these provide tangible goals and personal reward (Reflective Journal, Lesson 1). Competition and performance really motivate him, and provide incentive to meet learning goals (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5). He has an excellent memory, a genuine interest in learning and improving his skills, and most of the time, he comes to the lessons keen to hear my feedback regarding his progress, often verbalising his learning goals for the coming week. During Interview 1, Adrian said that he likes to ‘fix things up so that I will give him a compliment’. He added that he feels excited before his lessons because he is going to see me and because of the grand piano, ‘plus I feel free … like a snow leopard’. Adrian has a vivid imagination and a pictorial way of thinking. For example, when I asked Adrian what those listening might be thinking or feeling when he plays the piano, he said, ‘they might be hearing birds chirping or butterflies hatching’ (Interview 1). Moreover, when I asked Adrian what ‘playing with expression’ might mean, he said, ‘play with (like) something living … like a snow leopard hiding in its den, or a mother polar bear going in its den in the mountain to her cubs’ (Interview 1).
During the lessons, Jane encouraged Adrian to seek clarification, supported him in listening to his pieces on YouTube, helped him to access the study material that I sent electronically, and asked me for advice and direction regarding all aspects of Adrian’s learning, without refuting my role as his teacher. With such active support and interest from his parents, it may not be surprising that Adrian continues to mature in terms of goal-oriented learning, taking an active interest in his own progress. Indeed, Jane is perhaps one of the most supportive parents I have encountered in my professional career. She respects my leadership, and I have come to value her frequent questions and attempts to keep Adrian on task. I see the relationship that we have as a ‘fellowship’, where she, Adrian and I share a common interest and contribute equally to his continued success. It is a very rewarding dynamic to be part of (Reflective Journal, Lesson 15). This support extends to Adrian’s father, Oliver, who attends most of the lessons, and to Adrian’s grandfather, who is also very supportive. Jane and Oliver help to supervise and direct his practice, help him to set realistic goals and, while encouraging him to fix the mistakes that I asked him to, often will ‘just let him go’ (Adrian, Interview 1). When asked to comment on how they feel about the teaching relationship, Jane said that she and Oliver see us as ‘a team’ and view me as, ‘a friend … a part of his (Adrian’s) life’. It very much feels like that in the lessons, as they both often give me positive feedback regarding the pedagogy, confirming the validity of an expressive gestural approach where an embodied, multi-sensory approach to playing is encouraged:

After playing the opening section of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major*, both of Adrian’s parents agreed that the end result was starkly different; in fact I remember hearing Oliver nodding and saying ‘totally different’ after a bit of coaching, and not necessarily on tiny detail, more just on the overall philosophy of ‘performing’ the piece with ‘a little bit of yourself behind each and every note’. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 19)

4.4.2 Development and Progress Observed across the Research Period

Adrian’s overall progress and the way that he engaged with expressive gesture during the research have been very encouraging. He is a remarkable boy, intensely curious

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25 According to Adrian, his grandfather recently spent half an hour searching his collection for a recording of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major* for Adrian to listen to (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5).
and partial to asking many questions during the lesson, often to the point where a reminder to ask only those questions that he feels are pertinent to the task at hand is required. One might wonder to what extent his strong curiosity and ability to feel free to ask questions during the lesson play in his learning outcomes. Nonetheless, his questioning can become distracting, and he can also be quite argumentative if not given a firm directive. During Lessons 1 and 2, Adrian’s questions are slightly disproportionate and sometimes irrelevant, but thereafter his questions are, on the whole quite reflective and intelligent. Interestingly, as I watched Adrian’s lessons retrospectively, I became acutely aware that it takes considerably longer to take notes and watch the lesson in its entirety, mainly because it is frenetically paced and full of detailed action. Adrian is extremely determined, and verbally sets himself weekly learning goals during the lesson. For example, in Lesson 3, Adrian sets himself a learning goal for the first section both hands. Adrian also likes me to set small achievable goals that he can get excited about showing me at the following lesson (Reflective Journal, Lesson 8). He constantly asks for feedback, and when positive, the boost to his self-confidence is palpable. He often flaps his arms, bobs up and down excitedly, and becomes vocally enthused, exclaiming ‘Yay!’ if I point out exactly where he shows improvement since our previous meeting. His lessons are usually very positive, and he enjoys pushing himself to do his best. At the end of Lesson 3, Adrian said, ‘Yeah, good lesson, I tried really hard!’ (Lesson 3 Synopsis). Doing well with the piano seems to build his self-confidence and self-awareness, and his awareness of the needs of those around him (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3).

Adrian can be an extremely dominating person and as such, he did require more of a transfer approach to support his overall learning ‘transformation’ early on in the research (cf. Carey & Grant, 2014). Historically, I was cognisant of the need to be direct and authoritative, lest he would take too much control of the lesson, becoming quite opinionated, seemingly without realising. In Lesson 2 of my Reflective Journal, I commented, ‘I think I might be talking too much and perhaps I should just demonstrate and direct him instead’. While Adrian’s general attitude towards the value of his lesson and interest in directing his own productivity did seem to crystallise early on during data collection, he did seem to thrive within a definitive master–apprentice framework, craving positive praise and asking me to validate his improvement (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3). At times during the study, I used
Adrian’s desire for validation to my advantage, asking him to ‘earn’ my praise in response to his effort to apply more efficient, sequential learning strategies.

‘Use your lesson to gain as much knowledge as you can instead of using it as an opportunity to get endlessly distracted. Earn my praise and respect by showing me how you can improve your skills quickly both in the lesson and at home’. I ask him to draw an asterisk in the closing bars where he will fix up wrong notes this week, saying, ‘We get a little bit higher up the ladder each week … layering progress on progress takes cooperation and effort from everyone … don’t hold yourself back’. (Lesson 2 Synopsis)

By Lesson 5, I could sense Adrian’s growing desire to collaborate with me rather than dominate the lesson, perhaps realising that it may be in his best interests to do so:

His attitude and approach to the lessons has matured considerably in the last few weeks – he seems to genuinely want to extract the most out of the lesson and appears to want to collaborate with me rather than dominate and assume that he has all the answers already. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5)

I ask him to review the left-hand three-note slurs with gesture and the right-hand in/out fingering before adding the two gestural patterns back together. He asks me if he should put a reminder sticker on that spot, which we do. I comment that I really like how responsible he is being and not wasting time – ‘it makes my afternoon so much fun, and it helps you too’. (Lesson 5 Synopsis)

As the research progressed, Adrian’s growing autonomy became more pronounced, as Lesson 21 of my Reflective Journal illustrates:

A really interesting (and really funny) part of the lesson was when ‘Professor Chan’ stuck his right-hand pointer finger up and muttered something like ‘okay’ or ‘got it’; cutting me off because he ‘knew’ what I was explaining, proceeding to apply what he understood to be what I was asking. He did something similar later in the lesson as he was ‘practising’ something and said ‘no’ or ‘wrong’ if something wasn’t to his satisfaction. He is taking ownership of what is happening and I really feel like I am
acting as a guide on the side, rather than someone who ‘fixes’ everything for him.

By the end of the data collection period, it seemed evident that a balance between transfer and transformative learning had been achieved, and this was reflected in Adrian’s general attitude, commitment, self-efficacy, and learning autonomy (Reflective Journal, Lesson 31).

At times, Adrian did come across as disrespectful, perhaps without really intending to be. For example, during Lesson 9 he said that I should be fired from the Conservatorium so that he himself could work there for one hour per day, earning $200 (Lesson 9 Synopsis). Knowing Adrian, I could tell that he was not being malicious, but rather saying what came directly to his mind at that time. This seemed to reflect Adrian’s own opinion of himself, when he called himself ‘direct’, though it could also be due to his thinking that musicians are rich (Interview 1). Nonetheless, he can become defensive, inflexible, resistant to direction and defiant if he feels that his intelligence or ability are threatened. For example, during a rehearsal with Andrew, his duet partner, I reminded Adrian that he should come to a duet rehearsal with ‘an extra sense’, meaning that there is a need to listen to one’s own part, but also be open to making alterations when the two parts are played together. This was after I had coached them with particular bars, rehearsing individual parts before combining them back together. Adrian said, ‘Does that mean I have to have six senses instead of five?’ and I agree, ‘That’s right, you’ve got to use the sixth sense’. Adrian replies, ‘But that’s not written in the health book’. It is clear that Adrian is, at this point, more interested in being right than fixing errors and making improvements. Equally, his behaviour towards other students could easily be misconstrued as ‘bossy’, as this vignette from the rehearsal with his duet partner illustrates:

Andrew says, ‘Can I play my song?’ and stands beside Adrian. Adrian ‘reminds’ Andrew by shouting, ‘You said that you wanted the other piano, so go!’ Andrew rushes over to the second piano and when he realises there is no chair, he quietly retreats, sitting down beside Jane without saying anything.
While this strong sense of self-confidence plays a big part in his success with the piano, Adrian’s strong sense of his own importance does at times work against him. After having some success in the Queensland Piano Competition in 2013, 26 2014, 27 2015, 28 and 2016, 29 he did occasionally present with a rather pompous attitude, especially if he felt that he would be successful whether he played well or not. Depending on his mindset, Adrian plays extremely expressively with wonderful musical characterisation, or very haphazardly, focusing solely on speed and ignoring expressive detail. Having taught him for a number of years, I could sense this shift, especially if Oliver retrospectively informed me that he had been saying ‘shut-up’ to his mother frequently that week when she attempted to remind him to focus on his learning goals from the previous lesson (Reflective Journal, Lesson 22). In Lesson 26 of my Reflective Journal, I could sense that Adrian’s progress had stalled, perhaps due to his over-confidence, thinking that he did not need to work hard anymore, as he was ‘the best’ anyway. Indeed, Oliver said, ‘He thinks he knows everything since he won the competition last year’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 26). Nonetheless, I have found that I am able to communicate openly with Adrian and his parents, and they have appreciated me reminding Adrian to be humble, focusing on achieving learning goals, rather than winning prizes:

**Jinker Ride:** he plays it fluently with hands together but it’s quite messy, uncoordinated and rushed. He gets half way through before I stop him and tell him it’s too fast. He tells me, somewhat tersely, ‘but it (the score) says allegretto 122–134’. He grabs the metronome to set it, but after I struggle to get his attention, I tell him that it’s too fast and it’s missing all of the lovely (musical) detail that he used to play with. I tell him that rather than me going through it all again, I suggest that he consider how he himself might make it better. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

During the study and the time since, I am increasingly aware that I have very high expectations of Adrian, partly because I see his musical potential, but also because I am acutely aware of his parents’ expectations and Jane’s constant reminders to Adrian.

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26 First prize, 9 years and under, 2013.
27 Second prize, 9 years and under, 2014.
28 Highly commended, 11 years and under, 2015.
29 First prize, 11 years and under, 2016.
not to waste time during the lesson. This has created some inner conflict, as I sometimes feel that I have been too severe in my manner with Adrian, as he has on occasion been on the receiving end of some rather harsh criticism (Lesson 13 Synopsis). Paradoxically, this is seemingly welcomed by his parents, despite my feeling that I had stepped into pedagogical territory that would be considered unduly severe if used with another student. Although I have high expectations of all my students, I have come to recognize the importance of maintaining an overall positive learning environment and a flexible outlook, as each child brings with them elements of their own family dynamic. I have come to understand and place greater value on the chameleonic ability to teach not only the child, but also frame the learning within the context of the family’s value system. For example, I wrote:

It certainly helps to be a pedagogical chameleon! I am finding that to a large extent, I adapt my teaching style and philosophy to suit different families, their shifting expectations and educational goals, their prior experience of ‘piano lessons’, and the potential emotional association that couples those experiences. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 6)

4.4.3 Repertoire Studied, Patterns, Notable Events and Breakthroughs across the Lessons

Adrian studied a variety of solo and ensemble repertoire during the research period. His solo repertoire included the following:

- *Jinker Ride* – Dorian Le Gallienne
- *Elfin Dance*, Op. 12 No. 4 – Grieg
- *Invention in A Minor*, BWV 784 – J. S. Bach
- *In the Wind* – Sarah de Jung
- *Viennese Sonatina in A Major* (1st movement) – Mozart
- *Alla Turca*, third movement from *Sonata in A Major* K331 – Mozart
- *Rage Over A Lost Penny* – Beethoven, arr. Mark Griffiths

Adrian’s ensemble repertoire included:

- *Pirates of the Caribbean* (secondo) – Klaus Bedelt
As he was working towards his internal technical exam in May for Intermediate Piano and his external AMEB Grade 5 exam in September, he also studied scales, arpeggios and other technical work throughout the year. Similar to the other case studies, while coaching Adrian with his technical work, I became increasingly aware of its potential to ‘prime’ the whole body for the implementation of expressive gesture, seeing such exercises as useful adjuncts in addressing concepts relating to alignment and freedom of the whole playing mechanism. Consequently, I sought to instil this philosophy, encouraging Adrian to view his technical work as a vehicle to refine his body awareness and touch (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3). Like Jade and Finn, through reflecting on my lessons with Adrian during the research period, I have realised that in the past, I may have treated technique and musical expression as separate entities, but have come to understand that they are really two sides of the same coin. In Lesson 14 of my Reflective Journal I wrote:

Technique isn’t necessarily a separate entity, as often concepts of body position, joint alignment, sound production, tone and freedom of execution directly facilitate expressive ideas. For example, pronation of the forearm to facilitate thumb passing in scales may be seen in another context as part of a larger gesture that facilitates the expressive realisation of crescendo in an ascending melodic line.

Specifically, I was able to use technical work to coach Adrian in elements of expressive gesture that are found in repertoire. One such example can be seen within contrary motion scales, where a forward tilt of the pelvis at the extremes of register and pronation of the forearms in order to blend the volume of the thumbs are reviewed and added to his movement vocabulary (Lesson 22 Synopsis).

Through working with Adrian, I came to understand that he has very good ability to imitate expressive gesture, and I realised the tangibility of describing how the three-dimensional properties, direction and speed of physical gesture work to create the volume, articulation and tone colour of musical gesture, without necessarily using more verbal means of instruction. In effect, expressive gesture seemed to facilitate
expressive playing, rather than simply being a by-product of expressive playing (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5). Nonetheless, visual imagery and the use of analogy and metaphor are very effective with Adrian, and he is quick to understand their ‘logic’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 1). For example, in Lesson 5, I suggested that the use of crescendo, descrescendo and ritardando in In the Wind could be indicative of a tornado, and I encouraged Adrian to link sound with ‘movies in his mind’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5). This seemed to increase his fascination with the piece and in turn, had a positive impact on his ability to learn quickly and successfully convey the pictorial character, increasing its expressive potential (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5).

Nevertheless, Adrian’s ability to move through the note-learning stage quickly to a point where he is able to confidently present the notation with minimal insecurity does allow for these strategies to be brought to bear sooner. For example, the time frame between note learning and coaching with expressive gesture and analogy is usually one to two weeks, and he responds quickly within the lesson itself:

Adrian is excited to show me that he has finished learning the piece. He is excited when I say that I knew that he would be good at the piece and seems pleased with his progress. He tries some fingering and I praise him for good thinking and ask him to write it in. We analyse the dynamic indications while I play, then Adrian plays and I coach him using imagery, vocalisation and gesture, saying, ‘The wind grabs you and throws you around like a tornado … The wild wind comes to town!’ I ask him to play the piece from the beginning to the middle and he is quick to refine the expressive detail. I say, ‘I really enjoy listening to that’. He asks me what the ‘rhythmic’ indication means. I give his some feedback regarding the pedalling during the opening bars and then instruction regarding decrescendo for the transitory bars. He tries several times, after which I say, ‘That’s brilliant … that sounds fantastic!’ He moves on quickly to another question – ‘Is this an accent or a decrescendo marking?’ (Lesson 5 Synopsis)

In working with Adrian, I have been reminded of the importance of using pedagogy that does not just diagnose the problem, but rather shows the student how to achieve improvement through careful sequencing of practice techniques. Adrian seems to find real benefit in me taking him through the work to be done. In effect, I ‘show him the
practice ropes’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 15) that he can then apply independently, both in the piece at hand and in novel learning contexts. Still, on some occasions I would default into a more definitive master/apprentice teaching model, particularly if a performance deadline was looming and his understanding was slow. My Reflective Journal and lesson video were useful, as I see that some of my pedagogical choices were less than optimal. I now feel more inclined to think of how my message might come across rather than saying something that could make matters worse:

It’s obvious to me that I just want him to stop wasting time and ‘get it’, when really I should be coaching him to use the metronome – his part is just very unreliable. I stop him, saying, ‘Good … Much better … (while clapping dotted crotchet beats) Don’t get slower’. Adrian starts touching his neck underneath his chin again (as before), and while he attempts to agree by saying, ‘Oh’, I can tell he is still unsure. ‘I know the other night I told you to get slower … I think you’re being a bit overcautious now.’ I ‘demonstrate’ my becoming slower as I count – ‘you’re trying to be accurate, but, just keep it moving’. I say, ‘Let’s play your part again … 46’, which we do but the same mistakes are there and without any firm reference point or specific instructions, Adrian isn’t likely to improve in my view, though it’s about 80–85% at this point. I stop playing in unison with him and start clapping the dotted crotchets, but he seems to make errors when I do this. Despite this, I say, ‘Good boy’, interrupt and ask him to repeat again from bar 43. Adrian scratches his head. He plays the secondo while I clap either in dotted crotchets or crotchets, depending on where he is. It seems quite successful until I make a mistake! I say, ‘Stop, nice … Let’s do the same thing again’. If I was doing this lesson over again, I would definitely make a recording of this section with the metronome for Adrian to listen to repeatedly, perhaps at a few different tempi. It seems that valuable time is being lost here, and this type of instruction isn’t what he needs. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

During Lesson 2, I noted that Adrian demonstrated increasing ease in integrating rhythm, fingering, sound and expressive gesture simultaneously, if approached in a scaffolded manner, perhaps more so than the other research participants (Lesson 2
Nonetheless, I now realise that Adrian, while quick to absorb expressive gestural detail, did have his limitations. He occasionally needed to be reminded of the importance of practising with hands separately, particularly when each hand utilised its own unique gestural choreography, as he then needed a higher degree of confidence, automation and consistency before resuming hands together (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5). Similarly, mixing rhythmic information with expressive gestural information was sometimes counterproductive:

We play together in unison – ‘good’. I say and demonstrate using a rolling gesture to the right, ‘Do this with right hand’. Adrian copies well, but I ask him to use a different finger. I get up, come over and demonstrate ending on the 4th finger. I take a pen, and write in the fingering while saying and gesturing, ‘real singy sound’. He seems to be scratching his head a lot here. I say, ‘That’s it, use your gesture there’. He is having difficulty coming in on the quaver half beat with the C natural here, I try to demonstrate using gesture, conducting, vocalisation and body movement, but it doesn’t seem to help him, at least not immediately. He tries again, incorrectly and scratches his head. I say that I’ll do the left hand (?) but after two attempts it doesn’t make any difference (scratches head). I demonstrate the RH alone whilst counting the beats; he tries, I demonstrate, he tries (he cuts off 2 beats from the trill, yet I say, ‘That’s it’). Eventually we get there, but it seems more of a process of trial and error than true understanding (scratches head). In true master/apprentice style, I demonstrate while saying, ‘So you practise it so that it sounds like this’. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

In terms of the uptake of expressive gesture across the lessons, Adrian found the entire process relatively straightforward. Indeed, many of the concepts had already been a feature in his lessons prior to the start of the research period. Nonetheless, several aspects were novel and appeared to enhance his expressive development. For example, in Lesson 4, I utilised the ‘hand over hand technique’, which came about spontaneously during Finn’s lessons at around the same time. I wanted to see if Adrian would respond in a similar way, albeit from a different perspective. Within the opening bars of Mozart’s Viennese Sonatina in A Major (1st movement), my intention was to coach Adrian to discern the subtle difference in velocity between the up
movement of mezzo staccato (2nd note of a two-note slur) and that of staccato with a subsequent single note or notes. As expected, Adrian was able to correlate the speed of the hand’s ascent with the articulation and tone quality of the resultant sound. Of interest is the way that Adrian asked me to clarify if the up movement of the mezzo staccato is a slower; I agreed, saying, ‘a slow movement gives you a softer sound, and a fast movement gives you a brighter sound’ (Lesson 4 Synopsis). In Lesson 9, the breath metaphor was utilised to coordinate overall body movement with the gestural activity of the arms, and the pelvic tilt was first addressed in Lesson 3, where it seemed to help Adrian to align his head and neck, and switch on the muscles in his back. Adrian commented he could feel his muscles, and he became excited when I told him that he is getting to know his body and how to pivot on his hips (Lessons 3 and 9 Synopses). In Lesson 9, Adrian was able to combine the breath metaphor with a forward pelvic tilt to highlight the ‘leaning’ quality of Classical appoggiaturas, leading to further discussion regarding how expressive gesture and body language were important factors in communication with the audience (Lesson 9 Synopsis).

In Lesson 8 of my Reflective Journal, I noted that preparatory movement combined with the overall forward and up movement of the arms seemed to provide the necessary momentum to facilitate the speed and coordination of the smaller tremolo and trills of the hands and fingers, where the bigger proximal muscles of the arm seemed to assist the smaller distal muscles of the hand and fingers, both being interdependent parts of the whole playing apparatus. This idea of using momentum and economy of movement was extended further in Lesson 17, when Adrian was complaining of feeling ‘tired’ during the right-hand broken chords of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major*, Hob.XVIII:11 (first movement). By focusing on optimal alignment of elbow, wrist, fingers and the avoidance of stretching between the notes rather than speed or ‘more practice’, I was able to help Adrian overcome the technical limitations that were leading to muscle overuse. In effect, by analysing and implementing the three-dimensional micro-movements that lie *between* the notes, Adrian was able to generate elliptical freedom and use the expressive gestural by-product of directional movement to cover the wide intervals efficiently, which, in turn, allowed cognitive resources to be directed towards tonal colour, overall expressive shape and ‘a natural, humanistic sound’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 17).
As usual, both Adrian and Jane were quick to comprehend and support the methodology, and how its implementation may avoid a ‘stiff’ sound.

4.4.4 Summary of This Case and Pertinent Issues Arising from It

Due to Adrian’s capacity to regulate his own progress, his superior ability to implement expressive gesture, and his general drive towards achieving his best, the focus of his lessons were somewhat different than in the case of Jade and Finn. I found that I used analogy, metaphor and visualisation to a greater extent, and, in general, my behaviour during lessons was far more expressive and gestural. I also see that the role of expressive gesture in solving technical problems was more evident, and general discussion of a multi-sensory approach to playing and the role of gesture and expression in performance was more prominent. For example, in Lesson 7 I used expressive gesture and vocalisation to demonstrate that principles of melodic shape give those listening a feeling of anticipation and resolution. In Lesson 16, I suggested that sound, gesture, expression and technique are four pieces of the same ‘piano pie’, and discussed the role of the performer as one who ‘narrates’ the story of the music through movement and sound. In Lesson 19, I suggested to Adrian that the students who become the best musicians are those who work hard and listen to the advice of their teacher, but are also able to listen to the sound that they create while adding ‘a little bit of themselves behind every note … It’s not just expression … it’s self-expression’ (Lesson 19 Synopsis).

Adrian’s thirst for knowledge and his constant questioning did yield some unexpected, yet welcome, discussion that enhanced my own understanding of concepts that I had not previously been ‘forced’ to explain. For example, in Lesson 19, when Adrian complained of being ‘tired and sore’ in his right forearm when executing right-hand broken chords, I suggested that it was probably caused by undue stretching between adjacent intervals, resulting in finger over-extension and overuse of the forearm muscles. Looking more holistically, I could see that the momentum created by employing expressive gestural movement of the upper arm would facilitate greater efficiency of movement, eliminating intervallic stretching by allowing the fingers to glide over the notes without over-extension, thereby reducing the muscular load within the forearm:
I ask him to ‘check out’ the activity of my elbow as I’m playing the broken chords – He says, ‘But wouldn’t you get tired going up and down?’ I say, ‘No, the big muscles (I touch my upper arm) are designed to take the load … if you stretch the muscles in the forearm and the finger, you’ll get tired … Think of weight lifters – they use their whole body, not their fingers (dramatises) … they’re too small’. I explain that they use the bigger muscles in their upper arms and back, not their fingers. I play the passage HT again, and ask Adrian to throw my arm up (easily the 1st time and not so easily the second time – ‘Do you feel that resistance? (Yep) That’s because I’m stretching (to cover the notes) and look what happens … (I ask him to feel my forearm when the fingers are stretched and when they are not). When you use rotary movement, you don’t have to stretch or push’. He makes a few more investigations and seems to understand the concept – ‘That’s the reason you’re having a few problems there (Yeah)’. I summarise that segment of the lesson – balancing self-expression with gestural alignment and technical efficiency. (Lesson 19 Synopsis)

Discussions of this nature led me to further consider the interdependent relationship between musical expression, expressive gesture and technical freedom, which ultimately enhanced my professional practice.

Adrian’s case shows what can be done to successfully enhance a student’s expressive performance skills through the implementation of expressive gesture, especially if the student demonstrates self-confidence, drive, determination, learning autonomy, poetic insight, motor skill and an understanding of scaffolded achievement,\(^\text{30}\) and there is a collabollatory relationship between student, parent and teacher. Adrian will need continued support with his rhythmic development, but his expressive gestural vocabulary is flourishing, as is his confidence and ability to be self-motivated. Further, there is evidence of Adrian’s growing understanding of his own capabilities and ownership for his own progress, and the strategies that might be most effective in meeting his learning goals within the required time frame. For example, in Lesson 21,\(^\text{30}\) It seems important to start planning an ‘expressive’ reading of the piece early on, and Adrian has really caught on to this concept in recent times. I think he understands that not everything has to be done all at once, but if fingering, notation, basic sound, phrase shape, voicing and metrical ‘rules’ can be implemented in small sections from the outset, foundations are set for a stylish, expressive outcome as time goes on (Reflective Journal, Lesson 8).
I reminded him of an approaching performance deadline and he replied, ‘Yes, fair enough, but I have still got another four weeks, so I’ll be fine’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 21). Even at his superior level, there still exists a need to meet him where he is, not where I think he should be in years to come. Indeed, someone who demonstrates such confidence, ambition and desire for excellence is rare, and if these qualities can be channelled, they are great assets. In Lesson 32 of my Reflective Journal, I summarised Adrian’s year:

I have helped him develop his ‘gestural vocabulary’ and his ‘expressive templates’, I have taught him how to deal with his perfectionism and to channel his oftentimes explosive frustration into solving problems rather than creating more, I have taught him how to partial practice with a definite goal in mind, and best of all, after four years, he still enjoys coming, his curiosity is stronger than ever, and his learning autonomy is to be admired.

4.5 Case Study Four: Kelly

4.5.1 Background and Familial Context

When data collection commenced in February 2014, Kelly was 9 years old and approximately Grade 5 AMEB level, but by year’s end she was playing more advanced repertoire of Grade 7/8 AMEB level. Kelly celebrated her tenth birthday in September 2014. She had previously sat piano exams, completing Grade 3 AMEB with her previous teacher shortly before commencing lessons with me at Young Conservatorium in February 2013, 12 months before data collection began. Kelly began learning the piano at age 4, the harp at age 7 and the cello at age 8. Kelly’s mother, Jean, was born and educated in Korea, and her father, Sam, was born in Taiwan and educated in Australia. Kelly was born in Australia and is their only child. She began her one-to-one tuition at Young Conservatorium in the Young Beginner Piano (now Developing Musician Piano) program, transferring to the Intermediate Piano program in February 2014. Kelly is an extremely disciplined young musician, and her level of commitment and engagement allowed her to improve her skills in a systematic way. A quick learner who reads music easily, she has an excellent memory and responded to direction within the lesson in an exacting and prompt manner.
Kelly began lessons with me with evidence of tension in her playing, which had mostly receded by the end of the data collection period. Throughout the study, I noted that she had some difficulty maintaining stability of the metacarpophalangeal joints, which tended to subluxate, particularly within the fourth and fifth fingers of each hand.\footnote{Jean mentioned that Kelly has problems with fifth finger joint stability in cello, too (Lesson 22 Synopsis).} This, combined with some restriction in the arm and shoulder, resulted in an occasional lack of tonal depth and overall control of touch.\footnote{Nevertheless, using expressive gesture did seem to heighten Kelly’s ability to inject both melodic shape and depth of touch into her playing (Reflective Journal, Lesson 12).} Despite these challenges, Kelly demonstrated superior kinaesthetic awareness, good overall coordination, and an aptitude to imitate expressive gesture and associated tonal detail. Kelly played a variety of solo and duet repertoire during the research period, and coped well with the challenge of learning a comparatively large volume of music. While reserved, she is ambitious and aspires to a career as a professional musician. Kelly loves learning,\footnote{In Lesson 24, Jean spoke to me about her upcoming birthday, saying that the family would probably take a trip to the museum, as Kelly loves museums, and ‘can be there for five hours’. I said that I love museums too and find learning about new things really enjoyable. When I asked Kelly if she too enjoys learning, Kelly smiled and nodded. Jean said that Kelly loves to learn.} enjoys research (Lesson 25 Synopsis), revels in challenge (Lesson 1 and 22 Synopses), finds lessons ‘fun’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3), feels happy playing the piano, and likes improving (Interview 1). She likes trophies and medals, is drawn to the idea of being famous, and describes herself as ‘stubborn and picky’ (Interview 1).

During Interview 2, Jean said that she felt Kelly’s fingers, sound and overall expression had improved a lot during the study, but Sam said that he felt that her happiness has shown the greatest transformation, evidenced in his statement, ‘I can see Kelly smiling, and enjoying it’. Jean elaborated, saying, ‘Yeah, happiness, and the best thing is she really enjoying your lesson. She always smile[s], and … even [when] she’s reviewing that iPad, she’s giggling’. Kelly herself said that she feels excited before and after lessons and when playing the piano in general (Interview 1). In Lesson 4, Sam said, ‘It’s good she’s enjoying it’, and when I asked Kelly what she enjoyed about her Mozart concerto, she said, ‘It’s fun … it’s exciting’. It was clear that the lesson environment played a factor in her enjoyment and perhaps her overall progress, as Kelly commented that the time in lessons seemed to go very fast, adding, ‘Never with my old teacher … it felt like it was, like 12 hours’. Jean commented that Kelly’s previous teacher was very strict and the house (studio) was very dark and
quiet, saying, ‘So it may be the atmosphere is quite different with like … in, like, con [the Conservatorium] you can hear all different music and singing’ (Interview 1).

The data indicates that, with a strong desire for success, Kelly is driven by her own passion in equal measure to pleasing her parents. Jean said that she feels Kelly respects me ‘a lot’ (Interview 1). It was interesting how much more extroverted and talkative Kelly was during the interviews as opposed to her lessons, where she is mostly silent, though highly attentive. This may reflect her wanting to make the most of the opportunity that her parents have provided. Kelly clearly feels a sense of responsibility to fulfil her parents’ expectations, revealed when she said that in the future she will need to ‘pay her parents back’ in response to Jean referring to Kelly as her ‘piggy bank’ (Kelly, Interview 1). Her parents have a strong desire to instil a sense of responsibility and hard work in Kelly, as well as the need ‘to take things seriously’. During Interview 1, Jean spoke of Kelly’s firm commitment: ‘She promised she only gonna have a day off unless she sick or birthday, Christmas. But even Christmas Eve she practiced’. Sam agreed, saying that he and Jean were, ‘half tiger parents in some way’. Kelly described her parents as ‘half tiger, half angel’, which I interpreted to mean that while they were demanding, Kelly felt that they were also supportive, and had her best interests at heart.

What is clear is that Jean and Sam are devoted to Kelly’s future musical success, they do not see the lessons as a mere ‘hobby’ (Lesson 18 Synopsis), and they understand how important parental support is to a child’s success. For example, in Lesson 13, we discuss how important it is for parents to ‘drive’ their children towards success, with Jean saying, ‘It’s hard for parents to understand that kids can’t do it all themselves’. I affirm their involvement saying that I like parents who are ‘a little bit pushy, but not too shouty’. Jean laughs and says that she can sometimes be ‘shouty’ and a little bit mean when she’s angry (Lesson 13 Synopsis). In Lesson 35, Jean appears to give me permission to be sterner with Kelly, saying, ‘Sometimes you can be crueler on her’ (Lesson 35 Synopsis). Nonetheless, Jean and Sam seem to desire somewhat of a middle ground, as during the first interview, they both expressed a desire to instil within Kelly a strong, independent work ethic, which Kelly was well aware of, as evidenced by the following comments:
Sam – We’ve been trying to convert her so that she does things by herself more.

Jean – I want to let her do her job by herself.

Kelly – I need to be more independent sometimes.

Rather unexpectedly, Kelly’s parents decided to suspend her piano lessons in July 2015, in order for her to concentrate more fully on harp, cello and her schoolwork. In some ways I found this surprising, as shortly before they shared their intentions of cancelling the lessons, Kelly had given me a handmade card in which she wrote that she would never stop playing the piano, as it was her ‘favourite instrument’. However, I fully understood the circumstances, as Kelly’s daily schedule included practising at least 90 minutes on both piano and harp, studying music theory, playing cello in the school orchestra, and taking private coaching in order to improve her academic work, despite achieving good results at school.34 Jean and Sam were very concerned that they were pushing her too hard, as Kelly had apparently been feeling very tired and was having frequent headaches, perhaps due to being somewhat over-committed. In Lesson 27, Jean and Sam told me that Kelly’s optometrist said her eyesight had deteriorated significantly in the previous eight months and she would need to wear special lenses at night to prevent further regression. As Kelly had been having two 45-minute lessons a week with me for several months, Jean and Sam said that they felt Kelly was doing too much and would need to revert to one 45-minute lesson per week. She would also temporarily discontinue tuition in music theory. Jean said that she herself had been unwell and very tired of late, and Kelly had another cold (Lesson 27 Synopsis). Indeed, I had noticed that Kelly was often unwell at the lessons, having a cold in Lessons 11, 12 and 15. She can be seen coughing into her elbow in Lesson 18.

During a shared meal when I was informed of their (reluctant) decision, Jean and Sam did tell me that they felt Kelly was more likely to build a successful musical career as a harpist than a pianist. Kelly is certainly a gifted harpist, and during a recent presentation for the MTAQ, I played a recital excerpt of her harp playing, and it was

34 In Lesson 22, Jean told me that Kelly had some ‘good news’, having received nine A’s and a B for sport on her school report card.
clear that she was continuing to do exceptionally well with this instrument. Of course it is disappointing that I no longer have the pleasure of teaching Kelly, but her case is included here, as it contains abundant examples of her depth of engagement with the research aims of expressive gestural implementation. Indeed, one has to consider to what extent her involvement in the study may influence her future development as an expressive musician, even if she is not playing the piano. Tellingly, Kelly’s lessons were usually focused on the development of expressive gesture to a greater extent than the correction of rudiments, as she was always so well prepared. Nevertheless, in Lesson 11, my Reflective Journal reads:

‘All that is gold, does not glitter’, i.e. not every lesson is full of ‘teaching expression’, as oftentimes, notation and fingering must be reviewed, confidence with tricky bars must be built systematically, often note by note, and small segments must be chained together slowly but surely.

Similarly, an excerpt from Lesson 18 of my Reflective Journal reads:

Laying foundations of fingering, joint alignment and gesture are very important in being able to take the piece to its most comfortable, inspired and expressive level, one step at a time.

It was perhaps that Kelly was so responsible, and practised so efficiently, that she did not require a great deal of notational review during her lessons. She always seemed to return to her lesson each week having implemented what had been covered the previous week. I did find on reflection that even with Kelly and her keen reliability, I was at times (e.g. Lesson 1, Mozart Concerto), somewhat premature in moving to concepts of expressive gesture before helping her sort out ‘the nuts and bolts’ that may expedite this process. Her parents made recordings of all the lessons, with Jean and Kelly watching them intermittently throughout the week in order to better direct her practice (Lesson 32). Sam, Jean and Kelly all felt that viewing these recordings during the week was useful in facilitating her improvement (Kelly, Interview 1).

Nevertheless, Kelly was not a perfect student. According to Jean, Kelly did need the occasional reminder to practice according to the strategies laid out at her previous

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35 The recordings of Kelly’s lessons were made by Jean or Sam, and sometimes both (e.g. Lesson 6).
lesson. As most of Kelly’s repertoire was of Grades 6, 7 and 8 AMEB, Kelly’s case illustrates the increasing degree to which expressive gesture appears to interact with technical efficiency and tone production in the upper grades. After Lesson 11, I noted in my Reflective Journal that in Debussy’s *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* from *Children’s Corner:*

> There are good examples of choreographing the hands to achieve expressive shape and technical facility, illustrating the dual function of gesture within advanced repertoire.

Further, in Lesson 32, my Reflective Journal reads:

> It seems that the indissoluble link between gesture, sound production and technical facility is very strong in the higher grades, e.g. in the middle section of the Debussy and fast right-hand passagework around bar 5. At higher levels, it is becoming increasingly difficult to tease apart the expressive versus the technical role of gesture.

Kelly was relatively quick to form a working understanding of the intrinsic link between expressive gesture and sound. I noted:

> Kelly is starting to demonstrate an understanding of the interdependent relationship between gestural choice and tone production, i.e. her ‘gestural vocabulary’ is flourishing. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 15)

By Lesson 32, Kelly was able to experiment with altering the expressive shape of phrases by using gestural variation, and by Lesson 34, her ability to independently implement her own expressive ideas was gathering momentum (Reflective Journal, Lessons 32 and 34). In the year prior to data collection, I had discovered Kelly’s love of ensemble playing; for that reason, she began 2014 studying two concertos. I found playing concertos and duets with Kelly was a very useful way to impart concepts of expressive gesture, and equally beneficial in coaching the art of time stretching and tonal subtlety. Kelly herself said that her favourite repertoire to play were concertos and duets, because ‘it’s teamwork’ (Interview 1). Particularly telling was Kelly’s statement that the use of expressive gesture helped to ease the physical discomfort that she had felt in the past. During the first interview with Kelly and her parents,
Kelly said, ‘When learning with my previous teacher, I told Mum that, my fingers hurt and I was bored of my songs’. In the second of her two interviews, Kelly said, ‘My hands used to be sore when I didn’t use like the gestures. So, like I can just progress smoothly without having any pain’. Yet one of the most successful outcomes of the study for Kelly was her increased confidence:

In terms of putting her back into the playing, her sense of storytelling and confidence under pressure, Kelly has really improved this year. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 11)

Kelly herself might have been instrumental in this transformation, as she seemed to have a very clear idea of what she wanted from her learning. When I asked her during Interview 1 what a good piano player might look and sound like, she responded, ‘Relaxed … not tense when they’re playing; they’re confident’. Whether this perspective was hers alone or was influenced by Sam, Jean or me is unclear.

Teaching Kelly has helped me to further understand that (particularly at advanced levels of development) technical facility, sound and expressive gesture are intrinsically connected. In Lesson 20, I wrote in my Reflective Journal:

Good examples here of using ‘add-a-group technique’ where half bar gestural fragments are chained together. This seemed to improve Kelly’s awareness of the how elliptical movements change in size, shape and speed as the notation changes in spatial direction. Ultimately, this appears to help build an internal and external kinaesthetic map of the musical gesture, allowing for fluid, effortless transitions and a seamless sound … There is a good segment where we discussed the purpose of add-a-note/chaining: To discover the ‘secret’ gestural choreography that the notes sit atop.

Writing in my Reflective Journal after each lesson helped to crystallise my thinking, and on occasion, gave voice to what I knew intuitively. For example, I was reminded that fingering, joint alignment and gestural choreography need to be considered and planned from the outset of preparing repertoire for expressive performance, rather than an embodied, confident and expressive outcome being thought of as an inevitable by-product of a student’s dedication to hours of practice and/or musical gifts (Reflective Journal, Lesson 20). In contrast, while I could see that expressive gesture
and resultant tonal shape were important, I was reminded to not disregard the role of the fingers, as disproportionate use of expressive gesture sometimes led to overlapping of notes and, subsequently, imperfection of rhythm (Reflective Journal, Lesson 13).

4.5.2 Repertoire Studied, Patterns, Notable Events and Breakthroughs across the Lessons

Kelly studied a variety of solo and ensemble repertoire during the research period. Her solo repertoire included the following:

- *Invention in B-flat Major*, BWV 785 – J. S. Bach
- *Waltz in E Minor*, Op. 38 No. 7 – Grieg
- *Rondo in D Major*, K485 – Mozart\(^{36}\)
- *Prelude & Fugue in C Minor (Book 1)*, BWV 847 – J. S. Bach\(^{37}\)
- *Dr Gradus ad Parnassum* from *Children’s Corner* – Debussy
- *Nocturne in C# Minor*, op. posth. – Chopin.

Kelly’s ensemble repertoire included:

- *Concerto in C Major*, K467 (2\(^{nd}\) movement) – Mozart
- *Little Concerto in C Major* (all movements) – Haydn.

After mutual discussion, it was agreed that Kelly would aim for AMEB Grade 7, perhaps in 12 months’ time, and Kelly started the year with a review of technical work (Lesson 1 Synopsis). As a member of the Intermediate Piano studio at Young Conservatorium, the technical work required for Grade 7 would dovetail that required for her internal technique exam in May 2014. As with the other three research participants, I was quick to realise that scales, arpeggios and other technical work were opportunities to foster Kelly’s understanding of a whole body connection to the instrument, inevitably leading to enhanced control of touch and resultant sound, rather than paltry exercises to effect curved fingers (Reflective Journal, Lesson 1). Technical work was revisited throughout the year and continued to be a useful vehicle by which

\(^{36}\) Performed at Lady Cilento Children’s Hospital Concert, May 2015.  
[https://vimeo.com/197659070/b82d36eb3d](https://vimeo.com/197659070/b82d36eb3d)

\(^{37}\) Chosen in Lesson 18.
to prime Kelly’s overall body awareness, particularly support of the stomach muscles, and alignment of forearm, elbow, trunk, pelvis and head at the extremes of register (e.g. Lesson 13, 18 and 23 Synopses). Parallel to this, Kelly was playing two concertos, the second movement of Mozart’s K467 and all movements of Haydn’s Little Concerto in C Major, which she learnt during Christmas holidays between December 2013 and January 2014. I found that the Haydn concerto provided very good review of her basic vocabulary of expressive gesture that was established during her lessons in 2013, and both concertos afforded the opportunity to refine Kelly’s ensemble skills, which she thoroughly enjoyed (Reflective Journal, Lesson 12). Additionally, the concertos furnished her with opportunities to further explore principles of expressive performance, particularly with regards to lyrical shaping of phrases, time stretching and purposeful dynamic contrast.

During the early part of the data collection period, I assigned Kelly two solo pieces, Invention in B-flat Major, BWV 785 by J. S. Bach, and Grieg’s Waltz in E Minor, Op. 38 No.7. I first noticed that Kelly did not appear to be playing the Bach Invention ‘musically’ in Lesson 2:

At least here, Kelly doesn’t seem to be able to apply what she ‘knows’ to novel situations. Does she like the piece? Is her heart in it? Why is she not playing the piece ‘musically’?

Neither of these two pieces seemed to captivate her, and progress was slower than I had anticipated. Between Lessons 5 and 6 (23 March – 1 May 2014), Jean and Kelly returned to Korea for a holiday as a reward for Kelly’s hard work. This seemed to affect Kelly’s overall progress, as the momentum of the lessons was interrupted, and she did not have regular access to a piano for practice during her absence. By Lesson 8, I sensed that Kelly was losing interest in the Bach Invention, and by Lesson 9, Jean reluctantly told me that she did not enjoy playing it or the Grieg Waltz. Jean said that she could tell that Kelly was not enjoying those pieces and had cried many times during the week after being chastised for not playing them ‘properly’ (Lesson 9

38 Kelly and I performed both of these concertos at the Intermediate Piano Recital in June 2014. 39 Before Kelly left for Korea, I gave her the music for Debussy’s Dr Gradus ad Parnassum from Children’s Corner.
Synopsis). I was disappointed, but I have learnt from previous experience that sometimes it is better to acknowledge such a reality and move forward:

Kelly doesn’t appear to be ‘fascinated’ with those pieces, and needs something more challenging and ‘mature’ to cut her teeth on. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 9)

I played many options for Kelly during Lesson 9, and after taking into consideration her relatively small hand size, she decided to learn Chopin’s *Nocturne in C# Minor*, Op. Posth.

Following this, Kelly’s lessons seemed to settle into a routine, and her progress began to accelerate. Nevertheless, the first part of the year was by no means inconsequential, and there were many points of significance that occurred in reasonably quick succession. In Lessons 2 and 3, the expressive gestural components of two-, three-, four- and five-note slurs were reviewed, double rotary movement emerged in Lesson 3, and the concept of preparatory movement and the breath metaphor were covered in Lessons 4 and 6 respectively:

Initiating the sound with preparatory movement from the hips and arms appears to be both functional, in terms of stretching the time, ‘easing in’ to the phrase and facilitating a ‘ring’ in the sound, and illustrative, in terms of using the body to highlight points of melodic significance to the audience. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 4)

Using the breath and a preparatory up movement appears to facilitate a rhythmically secure and ‘humanistic’ sound, through the creation of momentum and the ability to roll through the notes without ‘getting stuck’. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 6)

In Lesson 2, the concept of the ‘pelvic tilt’ emerged:

A slight forward thrust with the upper body can be used to not only connect oneself with the piece, but also serves to ‘explain’ to the listener what is happening musically – that is, the gestures of the body and arms match what
is happening with the sound, making it easier for the listener to ‘hear’ the piece. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 2)

By Lesson 8, preparatory movement, the breath metaphor and the pelvic tilt converged with expressive gesture of the arms:

It seems that in Kelly’s case, the physical momentum needed to achieve a forward driving, energetic and self-confident sound, is achieved through employing a combination of the breath and preparatory movements of the arms, trunk, pelvis and head. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 8)

By Lesson 15, I felt that Kelly’s understanding of the interdependent link between expressive gesture choice and tone production was established, and her ‘expressive gestural vocabulary’ was flourishing (Reflective Journal, Lesson 15). To this end, Jean said in both Lessons 13 and 14 that Kelly’s sound is ‘very different’ when expressive gesture was employed (Lesson 13 and 14 Synopses). Throughout the study, I valued Jean’s devotion to Kelly’s progress, the care she showed towards preparing her lesson materials, and the supervisory role that she played in supporting Kelly’s practice between lessons, but at times the intensity of her involvement could have been stifling Kelly’s expressive development. I did not sense it at the time, but retrospective viewing of the lessons made me aware of just how often Jean ‘answered’ for Kelly, without giving her the space to think or formulate her own response. For example, in Lesson 10, I asked Kelly if harp is similar to piano, but before she was able to answer, Jean says, ‘Oh yeah, sometimes low strings’ (Lesson 10 Synopsis). While watching this lesson, I became acutely aware that I seemed a little nervous, perhaps in response to Jean’s expectations. I found that I too began answering the questions that I posed for Kelly, as this vignette from Lesson 10 illustrates:

I caution Kelly against using two different tempi for each section for too long in the learning process, and ask her to match the tempi. I ask her to either slow down the crossing hands part or quicken up the beginning. When she plays the crossing hands part slower, I ask her if it feels good doing it

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*I ask Jean to get some more “markers” for Kelly’s technical workbook and we laugh. Jean says that she is Kelly’s administrator and scheduler too’. (Lesson 19 Synopsis)"
‘that speed’, but before she can answer I shake my head and say, ‘not really … the answer is? … You have to practise the first part so that it’s faster’. Jean laughs. I can tell that I’m a bit nervous and just ‘fitting in’ with what Jean expects me to say rather than thinking about what is really best pedagogically … I say, ‘OK, the next time I see you, I want this faster (page 1) with no wrong notes’. Kelly nods and I smile.

Nonetheless, I saw a gradual shift in this dynamic, and by Lesson 18, Kelly is starting to ask for help directly, and does seem more proactive in the lessons, asking questions and seeking clarification (Lesson 18 Synopsis). Still, I did sense that Kelly was being a little cautious, and in Lesson 21, I began to encourage her to take greater ownership if a particular style had been studied previously. An excerpt from Lesson 21 of my Reflective Journal reads:

When approaching what might seem like a novel situation, Kelly needs to be encouraged to be confident enough to apply what she already knows, i.e. While I am happy to help her as necessary, Kelly can be encouraged to take greater expressive ownership here, as she ‘knows’ the (Classical) style through previous experience.

Further, I asked Kelly during Lesson 21 if, in general, she could aim to be a bit more gregarious, similar to how she seemed during the first interview when I met the family for dinner. I asked Kelly to ‘reach further than what’s on the page’, where the notes are her ‘friends’, and the concept of ‘self-expression’ came to the fore (Lesson 21 Synopsis). I suggested that while she should certainly follow my advice and actively seek feedback, it was ultimately Kelly’s piece, and there was a need for her to put a little bit of her own self into each and every note, at each and every stage of the learning process (Reflective Journal, Lesson 21). In an effort to encourage greater extroversion, I used drama and analogy before asking her to play the opening of her Mozart Rondo in a more childish, less serious way:

I ask her to pretend she is a bird, opening up her wings. Then I ask her to copy me as I tilt my head upwards too, saying, ‘Stretch your beak up; stretch up to the sky’. Kelly does well, but I can tell she is holding back, so I ask her

41 It was at this time that Kelly began to study Mozart’s Rondo in D Major, K485.
to pretend she is a clown at a children’s party and you want everyone to laugh – ‘Go!’ Kelly does really well! I laugh and say, ‘That’s it! That’s what your playing needs a little bit more of at times’ (Lesson 21 Synopsis).

Interestingly, Jean had said that she was trying to encourage Kelly to ‘feel the music more’, but did not know how to explain it (Lesson 21 Synopsis). Jean said that she feels Kelly is ‘getting her own style’ with harp, but with the piano she feels as though Kelly is ‘holding back’, perhaps feeling a bit scared due to the strict teaching that she had in her early years of learning:

Jean says, ‘Yeah, Kelly let go a little bit of the way you teach. It’s amazing that you point it out, I try to explain to her, but I don’t know how to explain’. I say, ‘What do you mean? Tell me, what you mean?’ Jean says, ‘I mean whenever I hear Kelly’s sound (yeah), even harp at the beginning she’s quite plain, like a kid playing (yeah). There’s a certain level, more than half way, she’s starting to put in herself, her way (yeah), but I think with piano, because when she was so young, the teacher was so strict, so sort of she’s not really, expressive, you know’. I say, ‘She’s a bit scared to … (yeah) yeah, I understand that’. Jean continues, ‘The harp is a bit better than piano for showing her style, but piano is getting really hard (yes) … so I was keep telling her you should feel it, but I can’t I don’t know how to explain (yeah). In a way when you were teach that kind of thing I was, yeah that’s what I want to say!’ Jean laughs. I ask Kelly if she understands what I’m saying (yeah). I say, ‘So you’ve got to inject a little bit of Kelly behind every note, and if you do that, you’ll go further in your playing generally. You’ll start to play even better than what you are’. (Lesson 21 Synopsis)

I commend Kelly on being a hard worker, but encourage her to ask her own questions, and to develop her own sense of self-expression at every stage of the learning, not just for concert time. By Lesson 22, I could see that Kelly was trying to be more animated and involved in the lesson. In order to encourage this, I began to use analogy and metaphor in the lessons more and more:
The sound that you make will be unique to your own self, your own thoughts and feelings, and the movements of your own body – tone is unique, like a fingerprint. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 22)

In Lesson 25, I encouraged Kelly to be like an actor when playing (Lesson 25 Synopsis), and in Lesson 26, I said that playing is ‘like a dance – your whole body and being’s got to be involved, not just your fingers’ (Lesson 26 Synopsis).

Lessons 27 and 28 seemed to take a slightly negative turn, as it was at that time that Sam and Jean informed me that two lessons per week were too much, and they would return to one lesson per week. Kelly’s playing seemed very uninspired and haphazard at this time, and probably reflected the fact that she herself was tired and over-committed. However, by Lesson 29 she arrived with soft drinks for herself and me, seemed more cheerful in general, and tried very hard in the lesson to be more energetic, and that zeal was certainly reflected in her playing. I wrote in my Reflective Journal, Lesson 29 of this ‘fantastic’ lesson:

According to both Kelly and Jean, Kelly is a good practiser, she just needed to be asked/reminded to inject musical and expressive energy into each step of the learning process (evidence of student self-reflection).

Following this, I tried to keep the lessons as affirming as possible, and I took every opportunity that I could to foster Kelly’s energy, confidence and positive mindset, even if immediate results were not always forthcoming:

I ask Kelly to scoop up the energy through the middle of her body. I join in too and encourage Kelly to apply this energy to her playing of the Mozart scale, which she does well. I say to Sam, ‘She’s come on a lot’. Sam says that it’s good because she needs to be encouraged to play with that kind of energy. I say that a few weeks ago, Kelly seemed a bit tired, and Sam said that she found it hard to keep practising these more difficult pieces, because when she gets to a point where she feels she cannot overcome the challenge, she gets a bit ‘down’, despite practising diligently. I agree that it’s hard, but I ask Kelly to try to remain positive. I say, ‘As soon as you do that, it sucks all of the energy out of the playing (Kelly nods). So even if it’s not working, try to remain up-beat’. Kelly says, ‘Yes Mark’. I remind her of the week that
she came in and the playing sounded very different, and it was because her Mum said to practice with lots of energy. I ask her to imagine if I didn’t come in with a positive attitude, and how that would rub off on the students. I say, ‘So if you practice like that, that’s how you’ll end up sounding’. I continue, ‘If I teach like that, that’s how my students will sound. If I teach like this (energetic gesture), that’s hopefully how the students will sound (Kelly nods) … So, even if you’re feeling a bit down, just try to be cheerful’.

(Lesson 31 Synopsis)

4.5.3 Summary of This Case and Pertinent Issues Arising from It

Kelly was a model student in many respects, and was able to develop her skill with expressive gesture relatively easily during the study. She was a wonderful practiser, a quick learner and demonstrably determined. Kelly really understood that in order to be cognitively free to study the spatial information contained within expressive gesture, one needs to be totally familiar with the notes and fingering, and she, like Adrian, was able to employ practice strategies in order to achieve that. Despite this, she has a reserved personality and needed to be encouraged towards greater extroversion and flair in order to take her playing to a new level. This strategy certainly began to yield reward late in the research period, as by Lesson 34, Kelly’s playing took on a new dimension, and I observed her implementing her own rubato in Chopin’s Nocturne in C# Minor, Op. Posth. By Lesson 40, I was able to assert that her overall confidence, energy and sense of storytelling had all improved.

As the repertoire that she studied was of advanced level, her case provided multiple opportunities to observe the interdependent relationship between expressive gesture and technical facility. For example, in the case of Debussy’s Dr Gradus ad Parnassum, it was evident that attempting to negotiate the broken chord nature of the writing was impossible without employing elliptical movement of the hand, forearm, elbow and upper arm. It appeared that inordinate stretching with the fingers between intervallic neighbouring notes led to physical restriction of the forearm, causing momentum and tonal control to be lost, and fatigue to quickly set in. In effect, my focus was to foster a more sensorial foundation to her playing, where notes were grouped into gestural fragments that were then chained together, creating a kinaesthetic map of the expressive gestural choreography that was proprioceptively
memorised (Reflective Journal, Lesson 35). Indeed, it seemed helpful to describe these elliptical movements being of different sizes and trajectories, as the intervallic relationships and the velocity required to cover the circumference of each is unique to the notation (Reflective Journal, Lesson 35). In Lesson 35:

‘When you play these bigger pieces, they aren’t actually notes … they’re gestures and shapes, and you’ve actually got to memorise the gestures and the shapes and the speed of the shapes. That’s how you’ll get an even sound. If it’s not rhythmical, it’s not because you’ve got bad rhythm.’ I ask, ‘So what’s the problem? That your rhythm’s bad?’ Kelly says no. I suggest that learning how to reproduce the size of the gestures is what practice is for. I say, ‘That’s why add-a-note technique is so good, because it allows you to memorise the speed of each individual part of the bigger gesture’. (Lesson 35 Synopsis)

In effect, ‘What does it feel like, and can I reproduce that feeling again and again?’ (Lesson 35 Synopsis). I suggested to Kelly that perhaps one day in the not too distant future, it might be possible for students to ‘learn’ the expressive gestural choreography of their pieces by using motion capture technology:

If we attached some electrodes to your elbow and fed it through a computer, what shape would the circles be, and how fast would they be? (Lesson 35 Synopsis)

While Kelly is no longer learning the piano and has decided to concentrate on the harp, it is perhaps pertinent to reflect on the extent to which our time together furnished her with foundational skills in expressivity, gesture, audience communication, tenacity, scaffolded practice techniques and overall confidence, all of which may be applicable to other fields of instrumental study. Kelly entered the research period as a gifted, yet rather reserved and subservient child who often let her mother talk for her, but by the end, she had found her ‘voice’, and her expressive and confident playing reflected this maturation.
4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided contextual understanding of each research participant, and included information pertaining to their unique personality, skill set, learning trajectory and repertoire. Notable events and patterns were detailed, each research participant’s level of engagement with expressive gesture was described, and a summary of each case, including emerging issues, was presented. This has furnished the reader with greater understanding of each research participant’s unique learning profile, and their diacritical research journey. This information provides justification for their inclusion in the final case study report. Chapter 5 seeks to highlight commonalities between each research participant, while illuminating the research questions through reflections, video excerpts and diarised excerpts from the lesson synopses.
Chapter 5: Analysis

In the previous chapter, a case history of each research participant was detailed in order to establish greater contextual understanding of their unique learning profiles, their overall learning trajectory during the period of data collection, and the way that they engaged with concepts relating to expressive gesture throughout the study. This chapter will consider each research question within a framework of such individualism, highlighting thematic commonalities between the research participants. As detailed in the research methodology, the research questions are illuminated through retrospective reflections, supporting examples drawn from my Reflective Journal, synoptic extracts from the lessons, video excerpts drawn from recordings of the lessons, and in some instances, excerpts from the research participant’s music scores. While each research question is considered using specific examples, many of these examples could illuminate a number of research questions, demonstrating how often themes are present together within the same lesson.

The central research question was: In what ways could expressive gesture be used to foster the expressive performance skills of late elementary and early intermediate level pre-tertiary pianists? The analysis is presented in the sections below:

5.1 Using Expressive Gesture to Understand How Motion Affects Sound and the Intrinsic Links between Notation, Body Movement and Expressive Tonal Nuance

The data suggests that expressive gesture can be an effective and tangible way to forge an understanding of how motion affects sound. It may be used as a vehicle to foster greater awareness of the intrinsic links between notation, body movement and expressive tonal nuance. The data supports the teacher working collaboratively with the student to encourage a mindset by which their expressive gestural skill base is constantly being refined and updated, and ultimately drawn from independently. The data suggests that when small sections of notation are imbued with the tonal nuance and phrase shape that are the by-products of expressive gesture, foundations can be built for a confident and musically expressive outcome. Thus, expressive gesture forms an integral part of the notation itself, and therefore the learning process. This
stands in contrast to an approach where notes are learnt, fingering and technique are ‘corrected’, and expressive nuance is seen as something separate, done last, or happens naturally if students are blessed with an expressive ‘talent’.

In the following excerpt, Adrian (primo) and Neil (secondo) can be seen rehearsing Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake*, Op. 20, arranged for piano duet by Mary Elizabeth Clarke.

After initially establishing how the melodic line might be shaped expressively when sung, Adrian is quick to recognise that variation in tonal shape enhances forward flow and musical purpose. Using critical comparison and demonstration, this excerpt demonstrates an exploratory process where small amounts of notation are imbued with expressive gesture, with the resultant tone quality analysed. It is particularly interesting that when prompted, Adrian is able to identify the types of expressive gesture used to create subtle variations in tonal nuance, highlighting his developing ability to correlate motion with sound (Adrian, Lesson 22).

https://vimeo.com/195610398/7bb522df9c

**Adrian Lesson 22**

They start again but I interrupt, saying that I would like to work on Adrian’s tonal shaping. I demonstrate the right-hand melodic line, pointing out that the C’s are softer. I play it again, saying, ‘If you go … (I overplay the C’s) it sort of … it makes it jagged instead of … when you’re singing you wouldn’t go …’. I start singing and compare two examples. Adrian says, ‘Oh flowing’. I say, ‘Yeah, so not every note needs to be loud’. I ask him to play the C’s ‘underneath’. I think I see high/low gestures here too, but the view is obstructed by Adrian standing, though I can see a reflection in the piano. I ask him to try (OK) and he does. I ask him to ‘roll’ while I demonstrate the last part of the phrase. He tries and I ask him not to … (I play it stilted and then more gestural). I show him again, talking him through each step – ‘Starting soft … then loud on C … then softer’. He plays again, but starts too loud on the A. We continue to experiment and refine the tonal shape – ‘Your A is loud … make your C louder than your A’. I ask, ‘What gesture did you use to do that?’ He shows me with his hand (‘like this’) and I say, ‘a rotary movement’. Neil says that Adrian is using his thumb on the A. I say while demonstrating, ‘Yeah, that’s OK, but if you go down on your thumb, you’ll have a heavy sound, but if you go up on the thumb and then down on the C … You see what I mean? You can have a light sound on the C … depends on which way you move it’. Adrian says he finds it easier to play the thumb on the A, and I say, ‘That’s fine, just use an upward movement for the thumb, and then roll across for the C’. He says, ‘Instead of going …’. He rolls quickly to the thumb and then ‘corrects’ himself, using a slower, upward movement towards the thumb (softer) and then a quicker downward movement towards the thumb (louder). I agree, saying, ‘Exactly, and that’s how you get a louder sound there’. He plays again, but starts too loud on the A. We review the up movement on the A and the downward movement on the C – ‘Come up here and then drop your way through’. He tries, and then I demonstrate again – ‘Come down on this note (E), and then come up here (A), and roll fast there (C)’. He does it well, so I ask the boys to add the parts together again – ‘Good guys’.
5.2 Using Expressive Gesture to Help Solve Technical Problems

Common to each of the case studies is the concept of using expressive gesture to solve technical problems that may otherwise hinder physical ease, confidence and the ability to generate an expressive sound. The following excerpt from Grieg’s *Elfin Dance*, Op. 14 No. 2 demonstrates how expressive gesture of the arms facilitates the ability to cover intervallic distance without the need to stretch with the fingers, often a cause of finger over-extension and undue forearm tension that can inhibit speed and technical freedom. Expressive gesture appears to provide a physical framework in which Jade can build a sequential awareness of the three-dimensional, spatial information inherent within the gestural aspects of notation, and how she can ‘recycle’ movement, achieving enhanced fluidity, physical ease and an expressively shaped phrase in the process. While these concepts will require multiple revisits over time, it is satisfying to see Jade’s pride in her progress, with her success ultimately contributing to her budding self-confidence (Jade, Lesson 14).

https://vimeo.com/195941159/a8c7b0132d

<table>
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<th>Jade Lesson 14</th>
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<td>I ask Jade to stand, and I demonstrate the quavers from the opening bars, referring to and illustrating, ‘Out, in, out, in, etc. … rather than … If you try to do it all on one level without moving and adjusting, you’ll never get it … You need to revise the in and out movements’. I take her through the add-a-note technique, but this time emphasising the in and out movements, the tip of the thumb, placement on the key surface, and opening and rolling to the right. I continue to coach her with changing direction, pairs of notes, standing on the fingertips, a quick shift to the right, alignment of notes with forearm, and avoiding a stretched ‘open’ hand (‘come around’). I ask Jade to avoid coming ‘down’ on the fifth finger, but rather come up onto the fingertip – ‘Otherwise you lose all power and the fingers can’t speak’. I then ask her to combine the ascending and descending sections of the right-hand phrase together here. ‘Don’t wait until after you’ve played the B to change direction … Play the B on the way back up’. Jade plays it again while I coach her using gesture and the spatial directions involved. She has good success and I praise her quite excitedly. ‘Play the F# to the left and the B to the right … If you don’t do that you’ll find that the fingers will get stuck’. She plays the passage again a couple of times and it has much improved in terms of tonal shape and physical fluidity. Using critical comparison, I ask her to breathe in and drop into the first four notes of the phrase so that they aren’t static. I say, ‘OK, you know that it’s getting better … you can feel it … yes? Can you tell or am I just imagining things?’ Jade nods. I ask her to add the left hand back in. As she prepares, I say, ‘Remember those directions, because they will help facilitate not only a good sound (the light is turned back on), but they’ll make the rhythm and the coordination much easier’. Jade plays from the beginning of the piece, very slowly. I say, ‘Good … now play it faster and with life’. She does well and I say, ‘That’s it! Do you notice … it’s better?’ She smiles and nods.</td>
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In the following excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major*, Hob.XVIII:11, I remind Adrian that expressive gesture can be used to maximise alignment of the fingers with the hand and forearm unit. Adrian uses a combination of ‘add-a-note’ and ‘add-a-group’ (or ‘chaining’) techniques in order to unlock freedom of gestural movement and expressive tonal shape of left-hand semiquavers simultaneously. As the difficulty of the repertoire increases, the point at which expressive nuance, expressive gesture, muscular comfort and technical freedom converge seems to become more difficult to pinpoint. The data supports the notion that expressive gesture and technical prowess become harder to tease apart within advanced repertoire (Adrian, Lesson 21).

[https://vimeo.com/195615871/75af1a0668](https://vimeo.com/195615871/75af1a0668)

**Adrian Lesson 21**

I dramatise, saying, ‘The tighter the muscles becomes, the slower it becomes’. Adrian starts playing again and I ask him if it feels better. He says, ‘Yes’. He starts playing the next section, having a little trouble controlling the pace. I sit down and demonstrate, asking him to let his upper arm ‘wobble’ a little too. I ask him to gently rest his hand just above my left elbow in order to feel how the upper arm rotates a little in sympathy as the hand is playing. He smiles and says, ‘Oh’. I show him what it feels like when ‘someone doesn’t rotate properly’, i.e. they use fingers in isolation, without the support of the rest of the arm. I say, ‘See how it’s very still?’ Adrian points out that it sounds different too, and I agree. He sits down at the second piano and plays that same fragment of the left hand, to which I say, ‘It’s better’. As I stand beside him, I ask him to copy a nine-note gestural fragment, but he is rotating too quickly, thereby compacting the time between notes seven, eight and nine. He continues to experiment and then I ask him to reduce the number of notes again – ‘Practise fast, but in smaller sections’. He tries again. I explain that he is eliminating a whole rotation, causing the eighth note of the nine-note fragment not to sound. He smiles and mentions something to Neil (inaudible) before I ask him to copy me after I play a five-note gestural fragment, throwing my arm to the right, in the direction of travel. He continues to imitate me as we repeat the sequence again and again. I ask him to pause on the eighth note before rotating back to the left for the ninth note, which he does. He avoids pausing between notes eight and nine, but I explain that the rotation between notes seven and eight is too quick. He tries again, this time with success. The following time he stumbles between notes seven and eight again. I say, ‘Did you hear that?’ He holds up his right-hand index finger, saying, ‘Yep’. We all laugh. Adrian smiles as I draw attention to ‘Professor Chan’ becoming more aware of how to achieve a successful outcome independently. Jane says, ‘So cute hey?’ I say, ‘I got that! Don’t tell me!’ It really is very endearing. I suggest that Adrian could be a professor of music when he grows up. As he keeps trying, he playfully says ‘good/yes’ or ‘no/wrong’, depending on his success rate. After a short while, I start to join in. Thereafter I say, ‘You need to do some partial practice and chaining there. You would chain each group to the next; do you know what I mean by that?’ Adrian says, ‘Yeah, got that’. I say, ‘You sure?’ Both boys say, ‘Got that!’ in unison while sticking their index finger up. It’s a funny moment.
In the next excerpt, Adrian and I explore the way that expressive gesture can facilitate clarity of fingers within the rolled left-hand chords of Mozart’s *Alla Turca*, third movement from *Sonata in A Major*, K331. He appears to be getting ‘stuck’ within the notes due to a lack of momentum, causing rhythmic inaccuracy and a clumsy sound. By utilising expressive gesture, Adrian is able to align his elbow behind each note, facilitating clarity and speed of the fingers. I encourage him to correlate how expressive movement can facilitate technical ease and improve tonal vibrancy. This excerpt is comparatively longer than others, as it demonstrates how solutions to technical problems are often the result of a carefully scaffolded sequence of tasks that cannot be rushed. It serves as a reminder that the lesson is a place where practice strategies are disseminated in real time (Adrian, Lesson 29).

https://vimeo.com/196916323/a8434138f8
Adrian Lesson 29

Adrian starts playing Alla Turca. He has done a great job in learning the piece independently, and already it sounds stylish. In the final section, he plays the broken octaves divided between the hands, so I play the bass. After he finishes, I say, ‘That’s amazing! That’s incredible!’ He tells me about how he has divided the hands in the final section, and I say, ‘That’s the problem with the higher grades ... oftentimes you need a bigger hand’. I demonstrate the broken octaves – ‘Ideally ... can you do that?’ I ask him to play one broken octave fragment, using gestural movement. I say that he can clearly move to cover the distance between the two notes, and while he can stretch it, I’d prefer him to avoid stretching in general; he agrees. I say, ‘You want to move to it’. He says that he finds it hard to get a clear result, so I ask him to try playing full octaves, which he does. I say that his hand is a bit small for the piece and he looks at Jane and smiles. I go on to say that in six months’ time, he may not be too small, so there’s no harm in playing the rest of the piece and leaving out the octaves. He goes on to tell me that he tried the notes, but he’s finding it a bit ‘big’. I say, ‘That’s OK, you just put it away for six months and then bring it out again when you’re a bit bigger ... but it’s so musical what you’re doing (Yay) ... It’s really like, interesting to listen to’. He tells me he got four pages finished in two weeks. When I say, ‘amazing’, he looks at Jane and smiles proudly. Jane says that he picked it up quickly, because he likes it; he enjoys playing it and put the time in to practise it. Adrian tells me that his grandpa has a recording of the piece on CD. Jane mentions that he took away some of the bottom notes (for the octaves) and I say, ‘Yeah, that’s fine’. Using the score, I review and play the section with octaves, saying that he can continue doing the top notes, but that he should now try to add the left-hand rolled chords. I help him find the section within the score, and then show him how the rolled chords come from the arpeggios that he has been studying. I demonstrate the A Major arpeggio and then the rolled chords slowly. He copies the rolled chords and I nod and demonstrate, saying, ‘And as I was saying to Wendy, you don’t hold the shape there, you just sort of go ... (I play, and he copies) Yeah’. I demonstrate what it would look like ‘if it was a slow melody’, i.e. make gradual adjustments, and then what it would look like if I maintained a stretched position. I demonstrate gradual adjustments, but use a faster overall tempo, within a single gesture. He tries and does well on the first one, but gets ‘stuck’ on the second one. He tries again, with more success. I ask him to watch (‘Good boy, now do this’) as I coach (by demonstration without verbal direction) him to start each rolled chord with a preparatory gesture. I watch as he experiments a few times, but he doesn’t quite get the concept, even though I demonstrate again. I ask him what position he is in when he plays the first rolled chord. He adjusts his elbow and trunk to the left. I say while demonstrating, ‘Good ... So what you’ve got to try and do is get from there (and then) back to there’. He has a go and does better. I give a half nod, saying, ‘When you get the right sound, it will mean that you’re in the right position’ (he nods). I demonstrate again, saying, ‘See how mine goes ... If I don’t get the angle that I did when I did this (I play the first chord), when I come back it won’t sound the same (Oh). So you’ve got to try and get the same angle and the same movement’. He tries again, and I say, ‘Close’. He tries again, ‘That’s better’, even though both attempts weren’t quite right. I demonstrate and ask him to ‘do that a few times and sort of stop in between (to check) and sort of, feel where ...’. He does well (good), and I go on to explain that you would shorten the time frame between each rolled chord while still maintaining the preparatory step. He tries again, but it’s still not quite clear, though I say, ‘Good’. I demonstrate and say, ‘So as you play this last A, you use it to move across’. While it would have been better to just indicate that he needs to simultaneously widen his elbow as he plays the last A, we keep experimenting together until I say, ‘That’s it!’ and he turns and smiles at Jane (Yay). I continue, ‘Do you understand? (Yeah) ... That note gets you prepared for the next one (Oh yeah), and you’re sort of recycling the movements (I roll my hands) ... one note gets you to the next (yeah), and that’s why I can do (I play the four bars of rolled chords as Adrian watches)... It’s not because I’m gifted or something, it’s because I know what movement to do’. He points to the score and asks me how he should get from the top A down to the bottom D.
5.3 Combining Expressive Gestures to Form an Expressive Gestural Vocabulary

Expressive gestures can be combined to form an ‘expressive gestural vocabulary’ that students can apply successfully across multiple genres. In simple terms, an expressive gestural vocabulary can be viewed as a ‘library of movements’ that facilitate expressive tone production in piano performance. More specifically, it could be seen as the holistic awareness of one’s body moving as a synergistic kinetic chain, where an intrinsic connection is forged between gestural movement, touch, timbre and tone production, with many individual components consolidated and embodied over time. Much the same as a person’s spoken or written vocabulary, one might start with basic words (movements), then simple phrases (gestural fragments), before developing the ability to speak in more complicated sentences over time (gestural choreography). At its highest level, a person’s written vocabulary could be quite complex and their speech patterns increasingly expressive and persuasive, yet the process of its assimilation is often scaffolded, with increasingly difficult tasks being layered as skills are mastered, fluency increases and confidence grows.

This process could be likened to the implementation of the expressive gestural vocabulary argued here, where one or two basic movements are learnt, before being combined into gestural fragments, precursors to the assembly and assimilation of increasingly complex choreographic patterns where the two hands ‘dance’ independently. Evolving one step at a time, over time, these basic gestural fragments dovetail together, and may ultimately harness an increasingly independent ability to
implement gestural combinations that facilitate the expressive tonal shape embodied within musical notation. Rather than expressive gesture being added ad hoc to serve as mere visual display, part of the teacher’s role may be seen as honing a student’s ability to analyse the notation and implement a range of physical gestures that help to unlock the expressive potential of the score’s musical gestures. While not immediately apparent, expressive physical gesture may be seen as an intrinsic part of the musical notation, fundamental to expressive tonal shape and colour.

What follows is an increasing ability to interpret and implement the three-dimensional, spatial trajectory between consecutive notes and how they might combine to produce larger gestural fragments, seamlessly merging together to create the overall gestural choreography implied by the notation. This may be likened to a dancer learning individual steps, before combining them together into larger movement sequences, and finally adding them together to produce a sequenced, fluid outcome. If dance notation is the two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional activity, then the same concept could apply to music notation. As repertoire increases in motor complexity, the implicit gestural choreography of the notation may be forged with the above expressive gestural vocabulary in mind. The data suggests that ‘chaining’ individual notes and gestural fragments together assists the student to marry the external gestural choreography with an internal kinaesthetic map of the musical score, where the movements of their performing body are cyclical, and causally linked to the expressive tonal shape and timbral nuance that is imbedded therein. In effect, the physical gestures become an embodied representation of the musical gestures used within the score, and the two merge to become intrinsically expressive tonal gestures, resulting in an energised spirit and promoting an embodied, indissoluble connection between instrument, sound and musician:

As a ‘golden rule’ one could say that each note/motif/phrase/movement needs a custom tailored musical – and successively – motor design, which is then learned, consolidated, to be executed in a perfect, reproducible [sic] and optimal way … Playing must be prepared by imagining how body and movement will feel while moving. (Wolff, 2012, p. 5)

The data suggests that while the four case studies are unique and at different stages of their development, there were times when they each demonstrated increased
awareness of the engagement of the deltoid muscles in the upper arm, and the direct correlation between tone production and the subtle movement of a pliable and well-aligned ‘kinetic chain’, where the upper arm, elbow, forearm, wrist and hand are synergistic. Further, the data indicates that expressive gestures can be learnt and combined to form an expressive gestural vocabulary, where the spatial patterns that link the notes dictate the types of expressive gestures used. Thematic analysis of the video recordings and my Reflective Journal saw six main types of expressive gesture common to each case study emerge, which are elaborated in the subsections below.

5.3.1 The Fundamental Stroke

‘The fundamental stroke’ is where the depression of a single key starts a kinetic chain reaction of the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow and upper arm. In other words, the movement trajectory required to press a single note continues well after that note has sounded. In the following excerpt from Mary Elizabeth Clarke’s arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake Op. 20, Adrian demonstrates his understanding of the fundamental stroke and how an expressive follow through movement of his right forearm and elbow enhances the expressive ‘ring’ in the sound. Adrian’s confidence in his ability to identify and implement concepts that have been visited before is particularly pleasing, and demonstrates an increasing ability to apply existing knowledge to novel contexts (Adrian, Lesson 21).

https://vimeo.com/226675483/a426bf2b9e

Adrian Lesson 21
Adrian plays the primo part with beautiful expressive phrasing. I take out the music, sit at the second piano and ask him to start again in order to give him ‘some tips’. I ask him to aim for an ‘oboe’ sound with the first note of the right hand, demonstrating a follow through movement of the whole arm. He sits down, says, ‘Oh, like this?’, and plays the first note E with the right hand. I gesture while saying, ‘Yeah, hear that ring in the sound?’ He says, ‘You do this’ and shows me the gestural movement on the top of the lid. I gesture and say, ‘Yeah, you bring the elbow up … you’re such a clever kid’. He pumps his fist, saying, ‘I’m clever’. I show him what happens to the sound when the key is played without the follow through movement. Adrian likens that movement to a ‘straight rectangle’, probably meaning that it doesn’t curve around like the first one. I suggest that it could be my imagination, but it is very clear on camera that the tone qualities of each example are indeed quite different.

The next example demonstrates Finn’s growing understanding of how gravity assists in the execution of the fundamental stroke, where the upper arm muscles activate
immediately after key depression in order to continue the movement trajectory of the elbow and forearm, this time within the context of a two-note chord rather than a single note. Of interest here is how the end of one expressive gesture acts as the beginning of the next. Finn’s ability to employ expressive gesture within this context seemed to crystallise during this lesson, with his sense of achievement and budding self-confidence palpable.

https://vimeo.com/226672429/5cbdb135bc

5.3.2 Preparatory Movement and Cyclical Down and Up Movement

Another example of expressive gesture is preparatory movement and cyclical down and up movement, where the beginning of one gesture merges with the end of another. The following example from Mozart’s *Alla Turca*, third movement of *Sonata in A Major* K331, illustrates Adrian’s growing understanding of how preparatory movement can assist him to generate momentum in the arms, leading to enhanced clarity, freedom and stylistic vigour. Particularly pleasing is the way that I am able to help Adrian arrive at this conclusion using collaborative questioning, rather than...
solely relying on direct instruction. Of note is Jane’s involvement in building Adrian’s sense of responsibility for his own learning, actively encouraging him to seek feedback in a way that supports learning autonomy. As usual, Adrian is quick to draw parallels between his own experience and my analogy of throwing a ball, with a forward throw preceded by a backward preparatory movement (Adrian, Lesson 30).

https://vimeo.com/195622094/1e8ec6d08f

**Adrian Lesson 30**
Jane double checks if Adrian has asked all his questions. He says he has, though he starts playing the left-hand rolled chords again, just to check. While standing beside him, I demonstrate the macro and micro adjustments required, saying, ‘You could actually ... come around a little bit more ... it’s better than it was’. Adrian tries again, and I say, ‘That’s better ... yeah ... Not only ... good ... good! What do you notice that movement does?’ He responds, ‘Um, it’s more clear sound and um, definitely more grand’. Jane agrees and I say, ‘It’s more grand ... it’s louder. That’s because you’re using momentum, not pressure’. He agrees, and demonstrates what a ‘pressure’ approach might look and sound like. I go on to provide the analogy between what we are doing here and throwing a ball, where a preparatory movement enables the ball to be thrown forward. We discuss how shotput could be a ‘pressure’ approach.

In the next example, Kelly plays an excerpt from J. S. Bach’s *Invention in B-flat Major*, BWV 785. Using analogical language, metaphor and demonstration, I encourage Kelly to start the downward movement with a preparatory gesture in order to avoid ‘a cold start’. Though not mentioned explicitly, the upward movement at the end of the first phrase acts as the preparatory movement for the second phrase, and thereafter it becomes difficult to determine where one gesture ends and the next begins. Kelly is very quick to imitate gestural information and the result is one where the fingers roll through the notes with enhanced momentum, forward flow and expressive tonal shape (Kelly, Lesson 5).

https://vimeo.com/196070760/0fbca773d1

**Kelly Lesson 5**
I stand beside Kelly and demonstrate ‘a cold start’, before showing her how to execute the same phrase using a preparatory up movement. Kelly experiments and I ask her to ‘fall into the notes, like you fall into the couch’. I dramatise, sitting in the chair using a single movement without ‘stopping’ just before reaching the chair. I enact a critical comparison, and liken the concept to the way she might fall into the keys without stopping ‘mid-flight’. Kelly experiments, and I reiterate the concept, marking the score with a gestural illustration while saying, ‘preparatory up movement’.  

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5.3.3 The Breath Metaphor Combined with Preparatory Movement

As an extension of the concept of preparatory movement, using the breath metaphor combined with preparatory movement appeared to further facilitate the research participants’ understanding of expressive tone production, especially when coupled with discussion regarding how singers and other instrumentalists might generate expressive tone. When combined with preparatory movement and cyclical down and up movement, the breath metaphor appears to facilitate momentum and the ability to ‘roll’ through the notes.

In the following example, I work with Adrian on an excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major* Hob.XVIII:11. Although it is a new concept for him, metaphorical breathing appears to help Adrian maintain a flexible wrist when executing two and three-note slurs, and further enhances his ability to ‘roll’ through the notes, resulting in a less brittle touch. From a wider perspective, the breath metaphor may encourage greater understanding that the body, breath and instrument work together to help the music ‘come alive’ (Adrian, Lesson 9).

https://vimeo.com/196900016/e8175546c2

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**Adrian Lesson 9**

I ask Adrian to ‘lean in’. He does quite well so I go further – ‘Can you take a big breath in and then breathe out on that one?’ I play and demonstrate the concept before continuing – ‘The way that you coordinate your breath and your body with the instrument makes it come alive’. Adrian tries and does well. I compare it (and demonstrate while whistling) to the way a wind player would breathe in before sounding the note. I suggest that as pianists we can mimic this idea, where lifting the hand between slurs is similar. I coach him with the upbeat breath at the beginning of the piece. Adrian tries and has a bit of a ‘splutter’, causing us to laugh. I mention that we don’t literally have to take so many breaths, but it’s the concept that’s important. I ask him to sit with his head back, use soft and supple arms, count and breath in. Adrian plays while I conduct him with expressive vocalisation. He is quick to notice previous errors, and corrects them as we move forward.

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In the next excerpt, emphasis is placed on forging an intrinsic link between sound and movement in a sequential manner, one note at a time. It demonstrates how metaphorical breathing and preparatory movement can combine to build confidence, fluency and expressive tonal shape in ascending and descending scales. Taken from the first movement of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major* Hob.XVIII:11, building expressive gesture in this way appears to make sense to Adrian, as he bobs up and down excitedly. Jane is also able to notice a difference, saying that, ‘it sounds sweet’.
By combining this process with analogical language, scales are transformed from mere finger exercises to expressive gestures that sound as if they are ‘ascending to heaven’ (Adrian, Lesson 17).

https://vimeo.com/195623958/c576aca454

**Adrian Lesson 17**

As Adrian continues to experiment, I kneel down and ask him to imitate some ‘breathe in and drop’ drills – ‘Breathe in, move to the left and add-a-note’. I suggest, ‘Any sort of scale, have a breath in… drop, and roll’. He does well – ‘Good boy Adrian’, I ask him ‘not to start cold’ before sitting down at the second piano to demonstrate ‘what other kids do’. I continue to coach him both ascending and descending – ‘Move your head … up with the thumb … feel up in the body. Lovely … you get this lovely, ascending to heaven sound, rather than, playing my scale … it’s just a (musical) gesture’. Adrian is pleased with his efforts, and starts bobbing up and down excitedly when I say, ‘Lovely, good boy’.

Though physically challenging in terms of seamlessly merging preparatory movement with the fundamental stroke, Finn was able to grasp the concept of metaphorically ‘breathing’ with his arm, especially being a singer. In a way that is typical of his progress during the study, he seems to understand what to do, but it takes a little more time and experimentation before physical success ensues. In the following example, Finn is playing the right-hand melodic line of Chopin’s *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, Op. 9 No. 2, arranged by Jerry Hall. Combining preparatory movement with the breath metaphor appeared to help Finn maintain the required momentum to ‘roll’ from one note to the next on a micro level, and indeed from one gestural fragment to the next on a macro level, without ‘stopping’ in between. It is encouraging that Finn himself can sense his progress, as he takes pride in the development of his own ‘sonic self’ (Finn, Lesson 9).
During his initial attempts combining preparatory movement with the breath metaphor, Finn tended to separate individual elements of the overall expressive gesture, causing him to ‘stop’ just before key depression. However, with encouragement and experimentation, the two began to merge together more seamlessly, seeming to create expressive tonal shape within the accompaniment of one of his vocal solos, *All of Me*, composed by John Stephens and Toby Gad, and first performed by John Legend (Finn, Lesson 14).

As was typical during the study, Kelly was quick to understand and implement the concept of the breath metaphor, and when combined with preparatory movement, it did seem to help her generate the required momentum to ‘roll’ through the notes, assisting expressive tone production and technical ease. The following excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major* demonstrates how the arms work together with a forward tilt of the upper body. Using critical comparison, I demonstrate how greater vitality and expressive nuance can be brought to bear by ‘breathing’ with the arms (Kelly, Lesson 8).
5.3.4 Gestural Over-Shape and Under-Shape

Gestural over-shape and under-shape (and the implicit clockwise and anticlockwise elliptical movement) embedded within ascending and descending two-, three-, four- and five-note slurs may be considered expressive gestural fragments that can be combined together. Such fragments may consist of single and/or double notes that are consecutive or multi-directional, and there is a growing awareness of how differing rates of forearm vertical velocity within a slur’s down and up movement affect volume and expressive tone colour.

Overall, Jade developed well with this concept, yet there were times during the study where challenges with notational accuracy and general confidence disrupted the sequential nature of ‘tracing’ the overall gestural fragments that fit together. Success with the adoption of expressive gesture might be dependent on an ability to prepare the notation in a timely manner. When Jade was well prepared and more confident with the notation, her ability to adopt expressive gesture greatly improved, but if she was in any way unsteady with the notation, accuracy became her sole focus, and her ability to explore the spatial relationships that link the notes became less of a concern. In the following excerpt, Jade successfully applies a left-hand over-shape to what is essentially an ascending two-note slur in Takács’ *Spanish Donkey Driver*. When combined with analogical imagery, this process does seem to invoke a sense of forward-flowing purpose within the triple metre (Jade, Lesson 1).
Within the piano accompaniment of John Legend’s *All of Me*, composed by John Stephens and Toby Gad, the next example demonstrates Finn’s initial attempts with the anti-clockwise elliptical movement. These are inherent within the gestural fragments of ascending two- and three-note slurs that are subsequently joined together into a larger expressive gesture. Initiated at the elbow, this movement does seem to induce sympathetic movement at the forearm and wrist, allowing the notes to ‘roll’ out of the hand, producing a dreamy touch. In a way that is typical of Finn’s learning trajectory, he is not immediately able to imitate the movement despite demonstration and verbal direction, but he is responsive to critical comparison and manual manipulation of his arm in order to feel the movement for himself. It is particularly pleasing that we are both able derive a sense of satisfaction from his incremental success, however small it may seem (Finn, Lesson 25).
The following example illustrates both four-note slurs and two-note slurs within the right hand of Dorian Le Gallienne’s *Jinker Ride*. It clearly demonstrates how a knowledge and understanding of differing rates of vertical velocity of the forearm can impact the overall expressive tonal shape contained within slurs of varying lengths, also referred to here as ‘expressive gestural fragments’. In the earlier part of this excerpt, Adrian works towards refining the inherent decrescendo within descending sequential quavers, and is quick to recognise that he is lifting too quickly on the last note of each four-note slur, causing inordinate tonal bumps, ultimately inhibiting expressive forward flow. Through a process of experimentation within a collaborative framework, I coach Adrian to ‘lift up slower and fall down quicker’, but it is clear that he is drawing on previous experience with this concept, as he responds expeditiously. Later in the excerpt, expressive gesture is utilised not only to give tonal shape to a series of repeated (ascending) two-note slurs, but also to affect an overall expressive crescendo across the bar. The uptake of this gestural data is expedited due to Adrian’s strong desire for self-improvement and positive feedback, coupled with superior preparation of the notation between lessons (Adrian, Lesson 24).
5.3.5 Double Rotary Movement

The double rotary movement, a counter-intuitive precursory ‘roll’ to the opposite direction of travel acts to propel the forearm, hand and finger unit, is usually used to negotiate a leap or to increase volume with a ‘ring’ in the sound, thereby avoiding brittleness, and the need to ‘press’ or ‘key-bed’. It seems to further facilitate momentum, enhance fluidity, and promotes a lubricated, organic approach to playing.

In this excerpt, Jade explores how multiple, consecutive visitations of double rotary movement can help to build a crescendo in Alkan’s La Vision, Op. 63 No. 1, without the need to ‘squeeze’ or ‘key-bed’, which tends to result in a wooden sound. Jade is reasonably quick to imitate the expressive gesture, though she does find merging double rotation with rhythmic detail and fingering challenging initially. While I try to inspire her towards greater extroversion through my own expressive gesture and
vocalisation, I have come to understand that her cautiousness is part of who she is and that I need to give her time to digest expressive concepts with repose, without expecting immediate enthusiasm or ‘results’ (Jade, Lesson 17).

This excerpt demonstrates how a single double rotary movement from B flat to G can work to produce a ‘ring’ in the sound, as seen in Jerry Hall’s arrangement of Nocturne in E-flat Major, Op. 9 No. 2 by Chopin. I ask Finn to ‘feel the bottom of that key (B flat) and then rotate to the right’, which he is able to imitate, despite losing structural definition of the fifth fingertip. In a way that was typical at that time, when I ask Finn to round out his fifth finger, he tends to ‘brace’ all of his fingers, producing a claw like hand that does seem to induce tension in the forearm, which ultimately makes the adoption of expressive gesture more challenging. Nonetheless, after multiple revisits, he is able to employ double movement without undue tension that could compromise the integrity of the movement itself (Finn, Lesson 4).
In this excerpt from the primo part of Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* Op. 20, arranged by Mary Elizabeth Clarke, Adrian is initially confused why I might ask him to roll to the left when the geographical direction of an ascending major second is to the right. Through questioning, he is quick to identify that a precursory roll to the left might facilitate greater momentum, volume and ‘ring’ in the sound. Without prompting, Adrian recognises that he is able to achieve a better sound, and I agree. Providing further support, Jane is also able to discern the difference in expressive tone colour when using such double rotary movement (Adrian, Lesson 21).
Here Kelly plays the first movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major*, and she appears to be ‘freezing’ on the C, which I liken to ‘Botox playing’. Using critical comparison, I demonstrate how she can use expressive gesture to keep flowing through the phrase, inducing a subtle decrescendo on the concluding G. She is quick to imitate this concept, but when returning to the phrase a little later, it becomes evident that there is a slight lapse of finger clarity, which may be improved by using double rotary movement. Sensing that there does appear to be a need for a shift of momentum in different directions in order to facilitate improved clarity of the fingers, I demonstrate moving to the left for the first four notes of the phrase, to the right for four notes of the ornament, and then back to the left for the final note (G) of the phrase, which was explored at the beginning of the excerpt. As usual, Kelly is able to implement these micro gestures relatively easily, resulting in enhanced finger clarity, technical ease, and expressive nuance.
The following concept complements expressive gestural activity of the arms, as the research participants begin to incorporate and coordinate movement from both the upper and lower body. In essence, a ‘whole-body’ approach facilitates the gestural activity of the arms.

5.3.6 The Pelvic Tilt

Expressive energy can be generated through the ‘pelvic tilt’, a forward and backward tilt of the hips, trunk and pelvis. I was aware of the work done by Jane Davidson, including studies that measured professional pianists’ use of forward pelvic tilt (2002b, 2007), and I began to look for instances where I could apply that concept within the research participants’ playing. I also explored the work of John Paul Ito (2013) who refers to the concept as a ‘focal impulse’. Exploring these concepts proved beneficial for Jade, Finn and Adrian and Kelly, and indeed for the other two case studies, Andrew and Wendy. There was good evidence in all of the case studies that a forward tilt of the pelvis does appear to induce a sense of natural momentum, working to enhance expressive colour and energy.

In Jade’s fifteenth lesson, she seemed to struggle a little with the concept, but by the end of the study (Lesson 32), she had refined her ability to generate tone by unifying the movement of her hips and arms. Still, her main challenge appeared to be feeling confident enough within herself to use such movement, as she would not want to appear ‘silly’ in front of other people. She might have felt tired, or held back due to feeling nervous about the performance the following day. Alternatively, it could even

Kelly Lesson 8

As she plays the ornament soon after, I ask Kelly not to ‘stop’ on the longer note, but rather keep moving through it with expressive gesture. I suggest that otherwise it sounds like the playing has ‘had Botox’, meaning it ‘freezes’. Jean laughs when I ask for, ‘no Botox playing’. Kelly plays again and does very well. I say that even though these are little things, they will transform the way the piece sounds. I ask Kelly to play louder on the second phrase. As we approach the ornament again, I ask Kelly to look at what my body is doing. I suggest that physical movement will ‘make it happen’. When she is unable to play it clearly, I slow down the phrase, illustrating how the gestural trajectory can be broken into smaller gestural fragments, all of which help to execute the phrase cleanly with expressive tonal shape. As I play, I narrate the changes in spatial direction using my hand and then while playing. I explain that double rotary movement propels the hand with the required momentum to execute the ornament cleanly. She does well.

https://vimeo.com/196714036/59e8d9c757
be that my presence caused Jade to become self-conscious, as she did appear to be noticeably more comfortable when playing Alkan’s *La Vision* earlier in the lesson when I was not in the room, though her mother Julia was. It is difficult to lay attribution as to why the second example seems more tentative than the first, and perhaps unnecessary anyway, as Jade’s general commitment to generating an expressive outcome had certainly matured over the year. For reference, I have included both excerpts below. (Jade, Lesson 32).

https://vimeo.com/196649628/48a43c16c5

https://vimeo.com/196656165/e6acd49e5c

<table>
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| Jade plays *La Vision*, but it definitely doesn’t have the same sense of expressive purpose nor involvement that it did when she played it earlier in my absence. She seems to look at the score much more and doesn’t move from the fourth beat to the first beat with quite the same forward flow and conviction. She also falters during the final bars, but I coach her with the pedal here instead. ‘That’s pretty good… it’s got a nice sense of climax over here… I really liked it’. Jade scratches her neck nervously. I sit down and play the end of the cadenza, asking her to take you pedal off there. I ask (and demonstrate at the second piano) her to lean forward – ‘Put your back into it Miss West … Good girl … at the masterclass you were looking a bit like you were sleepwalking … put your back into it (I gesture a forward movement with my hand and whole body). You’ve got a beautiful basic sound, but the whole thing’s quite flat’. I enact a critical comparison – ‘I can’t generate any sound (doing that)’. I play again, this time leaning forward from the hips towards the top note while singing ‘and put you back …’. I continue to play while doing another critical comparison, this time without speaking or singing … ‘Put your nose over the notes’ (Jade smiles). She starts again and I come over to help her lean forward on the top notes of the phrase. I continue to use expressive gesture and body movement to conduct her. Interesting, she doesn’t seem to need to look at the score this time. I say, ‘Different colour for minor… ring, ring, ring… and up again… E Major. That’s a lot better already, you’ve got to put your back into it’.

The pelvic tilt became a useful method for Adrian to unify his entire body with the expressive gestural activity of his arms. So as not to overload him, we rehearse the pelvic tilt without the distraction of the notation, before he merges the notes with a forward tilt of his upper body. Taken from Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major* Hob. XVIII:11 (first movement), utilising the pelvic tilt does seem particularly effective in this excerpt, as the concept of ‘leaning’ into the two-note slurs corresponds directly with the expressive potential of what is essentially a notated appoggiatura, a term which comes from the Italian verb *appoggiare*, ‘to lean upon’. Using critical comparison, demonstration, teacher expressive behaviour, and the analogies of ‘smiling inside’ and ‘moving like an ostrich’, I encourage Adrian to find his most
natural embodiment of the musical material. Jane adds that ‘it seems more alive’, which really captures the purpose of employing expressive gestural movement of the entire body in this context (Adrian, Lesson 9).

https://vimeo.com/195641511/b3846241ad

**Adrian Lesson 9**

I pause to coach him with the ‘leaning notes’, and say, ‘Aim to lean in with your body as you play them’. Adrian tells me that they’re not leaning notes. I ask him to move forwards from the hips. He tries, without much success, so I sit down in my chair to demonstrate, asking him to put his feet down and to move the chair back a bit. I sing and move from the hips and ask him to do the same, before moving back to playing again. He does better this time. Owing to her request for clarification, I briefly discuss the subtlety of this concept with Jane. Adrian plays the ascending ‘smiling’ scale, but I suggest that it doesn’t sound that cheerful, so I ask him to use his body, his arms, and his breath. He tries again, but it’s obvious that the left-hand notes are proving a distraction. Without being asked, he ‘checks’ the left hand and then replays hands together with expressive success. Coaching him with expressive vocalisation and gesture, I say, ‘Very good … it changes the sound, doesn’t it?’ I sit down and demonstrate the passage with and without expressive body movement, but Adrian tells me I missed the length of the A in the left hand. I demonstrate the suspended D with body movement, ‘like an ostrich’ which he imitates. I mention the need to avoid over-exaggeration, saying, ‘Don’t lift your nose … be more natural’ and ‘smile inside’. Adrian seems pleased and smiles, and Jane says, ‘It seems more alive’. I say, ‘If you are alive, so is your music … Remember you told me (in the interview) about the snow leopard?’

In this excerpt from Lesson 26, I encourage Kelly to ‘keep moving’ as a means of generating expressive energy in Mozart’s *Rondo in D Major* K485. Using critical comparison and demonstration, I show Kelly how subtle nuance can be created in the execution of repeated notes by combining gestural activity of the arms with an almost imperceptible forward tilt of the trunk. Of interest here is the way that I coach Kelly with the pelvic tilt without any playing, before adding notes back into the body movement. In a way that is typical of Kelly, the effect is instantaneous and seems to add greater expressive colour and forward flow. It is particularly noticeable when the video is edited, where excerpts are juxtaposed and direct comparisons can be made (Kelly, Lesson 26).
Four secondary research questions were posed. The analysis is presented in the sections below:

5.4 Secondary Research Question 1: What Pedagogical Tools Might Assist the Uptake of Such Expressive Gesture?

5.4.1 Deliberate Partial Practice

Deliberate practice is not a new concept, having been mentioned in the literature along with the often referred to, and now seemingly culturally imbedded 10,000 hours principle (e.g. Krampe & Ericsson, 1995; Ward, Hodges, Williams & Starkes, 2004). The data suggests engaging in partial practice that deliberately aims to foster the link between notation, expressive gesture, and tone production proved a useful way for the research participants to improve their capacity to play expressively. Making such connections may seem an obvious way forward, but the data sometimes suggests otherwise, and many variables saw the individual case studies diverge in terms of how and when such principles were brought to bear. For example, the ability to cope with the frustration in what may be perceived to be arduous repetition was highly variable. From my own experience, the need to see deliberate partial practice (i.e. enhancing the security of notation both mentally, physically and expressively) as something helpful, rather than a sign of weakness or a lack of talent can be a significant first step. When I was an undergraduate, I remember feeling that if I was not ‘playing’, I was not making real music. In fact, when my major study teacher pleaded with me to ‘stop performing and start practising’, I recall feeling quite perplexed. Being in my late teens by that stage and struggling with the concept myself, it is hardly surprising that in the context of this study, the ability to employ a reflective, metacognitive

Kelly Lesson 26
I suggest, 'That's where you get your energy from... moving'. I critically compare a couple of bars of Rondo in D in order to illustrate how a slight forward tilt of the pelvis can enhance the quality of the touch. I continue, 'Use gesture and movement from the trunk as well'. After demonstrating again, I ask Kelly to try. She does, but soon after I ask her to mimic my body movement alone, before adding the notes back into this movement. She tries again, and there is a discernable difference in expressive tonal nuance this time.
approach to problem solving might need to be taught, considering the youthful age of the research participants.

Initially, Jade seemed to make headway with such concepts, especially when I encouraged her to remember and ‘retrace’ specific partial practice strategies in order to build skills when working independently, ‘just like Hansel and Gretel’, an analogy I used in an attempt to help Jade understand that her ability to strategically problem solve was a means of ‘finding her way home in the dark’ (Reflective Journal, Jade, Lesson 6). While Jade did appear to grasp the concept intellectually, she seemed to wince with a combination of frustration and embarrassment when mistakes were made during the process (e.g. Jade, Lesson 15 Synopsis). ‘Pulling the piece apart’ in this way seemed to challenge her, perhaps not in a good way, and she had some initial difficulty imitating the segmented nature of the partial practice ‘drills’. During the study, I sometimes wondered whether employing such practice methods was having the opposite effect to that intended, as it seemed to make matters worse, at least in the short-term, mainly due to her plummeting self-confidence and therefore her physical extraction of effort and verve. This scenario did seem to inhibit Jade’s ability to engage with and enjoy deliberate partial practice, and when combined with her tendency to be fearful of ‘getting things wrong’ led to periodic inadequacy of notational preparation. Ultimately, these factors did limit her progress with the research aims, at least to a certain extent.

Despite an occasional lapse in concentration, Finn was very engaged in the lessons, and I would often feel as though he really understood the purpose of deliberate partial practice, especially when he himself seemed to recognise that such strategies gave him the required amount of review for ‘things to stick’, at least within the lesson. However, in the early part of the research period, his practice habits were inconsistent, and when he did have time for independent practice, it seemed as though he was unable to remember what to do, often returning the following week with little progress. I have since come to understand that what I initially perceived to be indolence or a lack of time was actually in part due to severe procrastination brought about by paralysing worry about not being successful with his weekly tasks (Interview 2). Nonetheless, it was around Lesson 16 that proved a turning point, with Sarah beginning to periodically video record the lesson for Finn to watch during the week.
This became a tool to better direct his practice sessions, and when combined with Finn formulating his own written goals during the lesson and George’s support and increasing attendance, Finn’s progress with notational security began to accelerate. This paved the way for increased coaching with what to practise and how, and ultimately consolidated the implementation of expressive gesture.

Being very ambitious and goal driven, Adrian was, on the whole, far easier to direct in terms of the implementation of deliberate partial practice, and this, combined with Jane almost always recording the lessons in order to keep him on task at home, led to rapid progress. His main challenges were his extreme sensitivity to criticism, his occasional obstinacy, and a tendency to ‘rattle things off’, where speed became the main priority rather than him ‘caring’ about expressive nuance or gesture. Nonetheless, he did mature during the study, and became more critical of his thought process. In turn, I learnt to package my feedback in a way that honoured his dominant personality, yet still gave him a sense that he might do even better if he avoided being too fixed in his outlook and would do well to heed the advice of a more experienced mentor.

In many ways, Kelly was the model student – hardworking, attentive and ambitious. She would usually attend the lesson with both her parents, one of whom would record the lesson for her to watch several times during the week. She always came to the lessons prepared, and was quick to imitate deliberate partial practice techniques, implementing them reliably at home. Her only perceived difficulty was that of being more effortful and ‘deliberate’ during her practice, where maximum concentration might lead to even further improvement. Jean mentioned that Kelly occasionally appeared to be ‘going through the motions’ at home, but after a discussion in Lesson 28, this seemed to be less of an issue. Increasingly, I encouraged Kelly to employ greater focus and gusto during her practice and playing, leading to a discernible improvement in energy and a shift in her manner within the lessons themselves. In essence, she strove to become even better. Kelly’s ability to see the bigger picture was very mature for her age, and in Lesson 33, a telling conversation transpired. When I asked her why musicians practice, she said, ‘to get more confident with the notes so that we might then have the freedom to express them in our own way’. When I asked her how she might do that, she said, ‘using the add-a-note technique’. The ‘add-a-note
technique’ certainly proved to be a useful strategy for all research participants, as it allowed the opportunity to ‘study’ the directional relationship between notes, the overarching gestural shape of the phrases and, in turn, the expressive tonal shape of those phrases. The data suggests that this technique can be employed on a localised scale, before continuing on to chain small fragments together, thereby increasing confidence with the notation and expressive content within larger amounts of material in the process.

In the following example from Mozart’s *Alla Turca*, there are multiple presentations of the concept of deliberate partial practice, where mind, body and sound associations are scaffolded as ‘progress is layered upon progress’, thus enhancing the connections between an individual’s body movement, proprioception, instrument and aural memory. Throughout this excerpt, expressive gestural analysis and subsequent deliberate partial practice are revisited many times, one step at a time, over time, yet not necessarily within a single lesson or a single practice session (Adrian, Lesson 32).

https://vimeo.com/197015530/20780abfd3

This extended excerpt demonstrates how confidence can be built into the notes in a scaffolded manner, as tasks are sequenced with increasingly larger amounts of notes being chained together. Within the climax of Chopin’s *Nocturne in C# Minor*, the ‘add-a-note technique’ is combined with pairing of notes, rhythmic alteration, variations in touch, alternating directions and finally, as written. These strategies seem to marry Kelly’s physical and cognitive understanding of the notes, the fingering and

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**Adrian Lesson 32**

I compliment Adrian on his improved coordination, and then direct him to move a little quicker towards the bottom A in the left hand. Before demonstrating the add-a-note exercises covered earlier in the lesson, I suggest that ‘tomorrow morning’, he can do some more of these drills, but this time beginning to add the right-hand C#, essentially enhancing the reliability of his coordination and the shift simultaneously. After he starts to have success, I then direct him (via demonstration) to add the subsequent right-hand rolled chord. After a couple of repetitions, I play the whole fragment with hands together for him to copy. When he has success, I say, ‘I knew you were going to get it that time’. He shakes his hands excitedly, smiles, looks at his parents, and says, ‘Yay!’ Using gesture to illustrate my words, I go on to explain how partial practising doesn’t always involve doing a whole ‘part’, but rather, starts with repeating one fragment until comfortable, and then ‘sliding in’ another bit, and then another bit, and then another; essentially ‘patching’ it altogether. I say, ‘When you’ve got difficult shifts and coordination, you just do one thing at a time until it feels free … If there’s any stiffness, you won’t get it right’. Adrian smiles, nods and says, ‘Yeah’.

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This extended excerpt demonstrates how confidence can be built into the notes in a scaffolded manner, as tasks are sequenced with increasingly larger amounts of notes being chained together. Within the climax of Chopin’s *Nocturne in C# Minor*, the ‘add-a-note technique’ is combined with pairing of notes, rhythmic alteration, variations in touch, alternating directions and finally, as written. These strategies seem to marry Kelly’s physical and cognitive understanding of the notes, the fingering and
the relationship between adjacent notes, giving her the confidence to deliver the overall phrase with maximum expressive intensity. Importantly, the lesson is being recorded and can therefore be referred to and revisited by Kelly during her home practice. The underlying benefit is that in real time during the lesson, instruction on how and what to practise leads to a library of strategies that Kelly can apply for herself, both here and in new contexts as they arise (Kelly, Lesson 38).

https://vimeo.com/196936647/747b19f85f

Kelly Lesson 38
I ask Kelly to do a bit more practice of the right hand leading into the climax. I question the monkey drawn on the page, and Kelly reminds about last week’s analogy of ‘swinging through keys (trees)’. I suggest that Kelly’s confidence could be further improved, so I sit down and we do some ‘confidence’ drills, in effect employing ‘add-a-note technique’. As the number of notes increases, Kelly has to refer to the score in order to remember. We continue on, this time with two-note slurs for each pair of adjacent notes. I say, ‘You really want to nail this part… It sounds like it’s a bit prone to breakdown, depending on how you feel on the day, and you don’t want the whole piece to come towards something only for it to fall apart (Kelly nods) … It’s not very satisfying for the listener or for you’. We resume the two-note pair drills, and I suggest that Kelly spend a good ten minutes doing this. We move into Long-Short-Long-Short and Short-Long-Short-Long, then back to pairs of notes, then into rhythmic alteration, then staccato triplets, then staccato pairs, then as written, then ascending and descending while adding notes either side, then as written. We then start from ‘the next note back’. Following that, we drill pairs, staccato pairs, as written, Long-Short-Long-Short, Short-Long-Short-Long, ascending and descending, ascending and descending but adding another note/s to the top. We then start from the next note back again. Kelly copies me as we do pairs, as written, Long-Short-Long-Short, Short-Long-Short-Long, as written, ascending and descending, ascending and descending but adding another note/s to the top, as written. We then add ‘the next note back’. Momentarily, we stop and I ask Kelly if she gets the idea; she agrees. I say, ‘If you do that you will triple your confidence’. I ask her to start from the beginning of the ascending chromatic run, and she does very well in terms of accuracy and fluency. I ask, ‘Feel easier?’ and Kelly agrees. I say, ‘It works … if you spend the time doing it… most kids won’t do it’. I whisper, ‘lazy’, but then suggest that maybe they just forget what to do… and they’re lazy. We laugh. I say, ‘You’re good at that piece, you’re ready to get up and have a go now’. Kelly nods, smiles and looks at Jean.

The data suggests that the relationship between sound, expressive gesture, mental agility and physical ease are interdependent, and this connection may be forged through several key strategies, though coming under the deliberate partial practice umbrella. Three of these strategies proved particularly successful in the implementation of expressive gesture, though variable in their individual presentation. These three strategies are unpacked below,
5.4.2 Hand Over Hand Technique

The following example demonstrates how the imitation of forearm vertical fall and lift can prove difficult to understand intellectually, but given the chance to physically feel the resultant movement trajectory, the student may be able to comprehend abstract spatial concepts and reproduce them more reliably. At first Finn seems unable to fall into the first of a two-note slur faster than the speed in which he lifts upward on the second; in effect he is reversing the speed of each movement. By using the ‘hand over hand technique’, I am able to facilitate Finn’s ability to imitate a quick fall into the keys followed by a slower lift, essential to unlocking the expressive tonal nuance of each two-note slur. In this way, Finn is then in a better position to understand the inherent ‘off-on’ muscular activation of the upper arm and independently reproduce the two-note slur with enhanced expressive predictability. The way that he is able to analogise the concept to the ‘flicking of a light switch’, demonstrates his internalisation of this idea, and his ability to rephrase it in his own words is an encouraging outcome (Finn, Lesson 3).

https://vimeo.com/196979261/c66771ec43

Finn Lesson 3
Finn takes the score, points out the section, and asks me if E# is F. I agree, demonstrate, and point out the two-note slurs, highlighting them in his score. I demonstrate again, and he plays, asking which fingering to use. I move his hand up the octave, suggest 2-3 and move his arm up and down while he plays the two-note slurs. I encourage him to be loose, saying, ‘That’s it, just let it go’, before singing the song, Let it Go. Finn smiles and I ask him if he knows the song. He says, ‘It was on the movie’ and Sarah says, ‘Frozen’. He plays the two-note slurs again, this time on his own. I say that he is over-activating the up movement, and then demonstrate, suggesting that he be ‘strong then lazy … that’s better … even still, can you …’. I demonstrate again and he tries, before we move on the ‘hand over hand technique’. I ask him hold his hand above the keyboard, before going on to demonstrate via critical comparison the variation in speed of the upward lift. He smiles as I say, ‘Try not to come up that fast’. He starts using fingers one and two, so I correct him and move his forearm up and down. While doing so, I ask him to let everything go loose on the way down (‘on the two’) and then ‘turn the muscles on slowly and softly on the way up’. We repeat this process before I add, ‘off on, off on, off on, off on’. He smiles and then tries for himself while I repeat ‘off on …’. I get excited and say, ‘Hear that? (He smiles and says ‘yeah’)… That’s good!’ Finn makes the analogy of someone flicking a light switch (on and off). While gesticulating, I say, ‘You would think it would be on off, on off, wouldn’t it be … but it’s off on, off on’. Finn gestures and says, ‘Off to just let it drop and then on to pick back up’. I agree enthusiastically and Finn seems very happy. I continue, ‘But you don’t go off ON… it’s just a soft on … off on, off on’ and Finn concurs. As I demonstrate the two-note slurs, I suggest that the off is more powerful. Finn copies and does very well.
In the next excerpt, the concept of ‘hand over hand technique’ is taken a step further, as I work with Adrian in the first movement of Mozart’s *Viennese Sonatina in A Major*. After having recently identified its usefulness with Finn, I was intrigued to see if the ‘hand over hand technique’ could be successfully applied to the other research participants. Despite a slightly different context, it is clear in this example that Adrian is able to correlate the speed of the hand’s accent with the quality of touch produced. By using the ‘hand over hand technique’, verbal instruction is tangibly supported, as Adrian is able to physically differentiate between the mezzo staccato of a two-note slur’s second note and the more routine staccato that follows thereafter. Adrian’s understanding is almost instantaneous, and it is especially fortunate that without any further prompt, he realises the articulatory detail within the dovetailing left hand (Adrian, Lesson 4).

[https://vimeo.com/197050647/60a6ba924e](https://vimeo.com/197050647/60a6ba924e)

### Adrian Lesson 4
Adrian plays the first section of *Viennese Sonatina* with hands together. It’s fluent, with good rhythm this week, and he smiles when he finishes. He asks if he got the section that we worked on during the last week’s lesson right, and is excited when I say that he has really improved there. I check if he understands the slur concept as I demonstrate the ‘hand over hand technique’ in order to help him differentiate rates of vertical velocity for staccato versus second note of two-note slur. I say, ‘It sort of feels like this … the slur staccato is a slow one, but the real staccato is a fast one’, and he seems to understand, saying ‘Ahh’. Adrian asks me to clarify if the up movement is a slow movement – ‘A slow movement gives you a softer sound and a fast movement gives you a brighter sound’.

### 5.4.3 Add-a-Note Technique and Add-a-Group Technique

The spatial and ‘sound’ information inherent within the gestural fragments that combine to produce the overall gestural choreography can be learnt through directional ‘add-a-note technique’ at performance tempo. In other words, the micro-adjustments that facilitate fluid, directional movement between consecutive notes are developed first, before larger gestural fragments are added together on a macro level. The ‘add-a-note technique’ can help to build a student’s awareness of the three-dimensional aspects of multi-directional movement, and enhance their ability to embody the lateral, oblique and elliptical gestural combinations necessary for the realisation of expressive tonal shape. In this way, individual notes or groups of notes are chained together and ‘digested’ by the brain, ‘automated’ by the motor system and
‘embodied’ by the player, one step at a time. Throughout this process, a student’s confidence with the notes may be enhanced systematically, further improving their ability to explore what lies ‘behind the notes’. In this way, the approach builds confidence, and that confidence enhances the effectiveness of the approach.

In the following three excerpts from Lesson 9, I work with Jade on Grieg’s *Elfin Dance*, Op. 12 No. 4. In the first excerpt, I initially coach her with preparatory movement of the left hand in order to create the momentum that would enable melodic projection via a free fall into the keys. Thereafter, ‘add-a-note technique’ is utilised in order to unlock the spatial information contained within the left-hand melody. Adding one note at a time while throwing the arm in the direction of travel seems to enable Jade to sequentially digest the inherent three-dimensional choreography and resultant tonal shape of the melodic line. It is interesting at this point that I instruct her to free-fall randomly into the keys, without the distraction of the penultimate F#, a technique covered in section 5.4.4 below. At this point, the final two notes of the phrase are added back in, before the inherent double rotary movement at the beginning of the phrase is identified. It is interesting to note here that a combination of techniques and strategies described herein are used, and it becomes challenging to tease them apart, though not impossible (Jade, Lesson 9).

https://vimeo.com/196991246/4a94f5cae1

**Jade Lesson 9**

I ask Jade to drop faster in the left hand for increased volume, before adding a preparatory movement in order to ‘give it the momentum to be loud … Don’t squeeze, fall way’. I help Jade to add the next two notes while gesticulating in the direction of travel. I ask her to come right out on to the edge of the F# before aiming to ‘rock to the D’, then adding a note whilst rocking back towards Joanne. Jade continues to imitate me and I ask her to ‘try not to press (into the keys)’. I suggest that she is too far in (on the F#) and that is why she appears to be having overlapping between fingers four and three. We continue to refine the gestural choreography here: ‘Play the F#, then rock to the left for D, then rock to the right E and F#’. Jade has success – ‘Good … that will give the music shape … If you shape your arm (Jade plays again) you’ll give it good (sound) shape’. Following that, I coach Jade with rolling onto the E whilst lifting up the D (finger).

After the gestural aspects and the resultant expressive tonal shape of the left-hand melodic line have been established, the work is extended to now include both hands, the subject of the second excerpt. In this segment, ‘add-a-note technique’ is utilised again, but this time in a way that highlights the direction of gestural travel, which
ultimately strengthens the coordination between the two hands. While she finds this challenging initially, through systematic review, Jade achieves success with synchronisation of the hands, expressive tonal shape, and textural definition between melodic and harmonic material. It is especially encouraging that Jade herself *feels* the improvement (Jade, Lesson 9).

https://vimeo.com/196993611/9696a4a343

_Jade Lesson 9_
I demonstrate the passage with hands together and Jade imitates me – ‘That’s better, now go …’. We continue with the directional drills, but now with hands together. I ask her to have her right hand sitting slightly higher than her left hand. We continue cycling through the drills with the hands together, adding another beat while gesticulating in the direction of travel; either right, left or crossing over in the middle. I ask Jade if she feels it getting better, and she nods. I say that this process will help her find how the hands coordinate, rather than simply practising the passage until the hands are coordinated. I say, ‘This method really does work, but you just have to spend the time doing it’. Further, I say (and demonstrate), ‘it may not be perfect by tomorrow, but … that’s all right … It’s come a long way (thumbs up/Jade looks at Joanne) … You do one thing at a time … she’s (you’ve) fixed the last bit up, now the next challenge … it’s like a shopping list (gestures) … you just gradually work through it’. Jade nods in agreement.

In the third and final excerpt from this lesson, we ‘recycle’ the concepts covered in the first two excerpts, not only to help Jade improve within the lesson itself, but also to highlight the purpose of such work and to give her direction for her home practice. Of interest here is the way that Jade frequently looks at Joanne, perhaps for reassurance (Jade, Lesson 9).

https://vimeo.com/196996174/cbe3632a5f

_Jade Lesson 9_
We continue ‘recycling’ the drills, always feeling the direction that each hand travels. I mention that one wouldn’t necessarily think that each hand could be going in opposite directions – ‘It’s because people are unaware of those small movements, that’s why it’s uncoordinated … It’s not because you’re uncoordinated, it’s because you don’t have a really good knowledge of those movements … but doing this sort of practice is how it will happen’. We continue to explore the gravity drop of the arms with a solid foundation of the feet before cycling through the drills again. These exercises culminate in dividing the two bars in half, stopping in between before continuing with a gravity drop, and then lastly ‘as written’.

Kelly can be seen in the following example using a combination of ‘add-a-note’ and ‘chaining’ techniques in order to discover the spatial trajectory that facilitates physical ease and expressive tonal shape within Mozart’s _Rondo in D Major_ K485. Initially, two-, three-, four- and five-note gestural fragments are studied before being chained
together into a nine-note gestural fragment. I suggest that results are not always quick
to reveal themselves, and we continue to employ a methodology that seems to train
the arm and hand unit to change direction as fluidly as possible. At the conclusion of
the excerpt, Kelly demonstrates improved facility, tonal shape and rhythmic control
within the right-hand passagework (Kelly, Lesson 29).

https://vimeo.com/197080854/877d3e298f

**Kelly Lesson 29**

Regarding the tricky semiquaver passagework, I say that I can see how much effort she
has put in already, despite her fingers still being slightly uneven. I ask her to play those
bars again. I sit beside her, and begin to demonstrate the gestural choreography,
beginning with pronation of the forearm as the thumb passes under the hand. From
there, Kelly copies me as I deconstruct the passage into five-note gestural fragments,
before chaining them together. As we continue, I ask her to ‘start rolling’ as she plays the
notes preceding the thumb. There follows experimentation to find the spatial trajectory
that links the notes. I say, ‘Very good … see the little circle there?’ Kelly smiles, and
nods in agreement. I continue, ‘Do you see it? Get to know the spatial pattern and lay
the notes across that’. As she plays I trace the passage in the air before writing in a
gestural cue in the score. I suggest that it (the spatial trajectory) can be hard to find, and
we continue recycling the exercises that seem to train the hand to change direction. As
Kelly plays the five-note gestural fragment, she shows good improvement and I
encourage her – ‘Yeah, it’s in there … I can hear it’. I remind her not to get ‘stuck’
between fingers three and four. I say that there is a little hiccup somewhere, but it
sounds quite good in retrospect. I suggest that the fingerwork is a little uneven between
fingers two and one, where the hand changes direction from descending to ascending.
She plays again, and I say, ‘Oh, very good’.

In the next slightly extended excerpt, I encourage Kelly to discover the left-hand
gestural shape within each half bar of Chopin’s *Nocturne in C♯ Minor*, op. posth.
Kelly had come to the lesson asking for help with the hands together, but instead, we
work with the left hand alone, using the ‘add-a-note technique’ to study the intervallic
distance between each adjacent pair of notes. Practising each gestural fragment in this
way seems to encourage kinaesthetic memorisation, mental confidence and physical
comfort, where awareness of the speed of lateral adjustment between each pair of
notes is fostered, and when chained together, the unique shape of each elliptical
gesture is constructed in a systematic way (Kelly, Lesson 25).
5.4.4 Adding Notes into Pre-Rehearsed Gestures, as Opposed to Adding Gestures into Notes

The data suggests that when an inordinate focus on playing accurately inhibits the ability to ‘digest’ the gestural aspects that would enhance the tonal expressivity of the notation, it is useful to momentarily ‘take away the notes’ in order for the research participants’ sole focus to be directed towards the spatial information of expressive gesture. Essentially, a gestural scaffold is erected, and becomes the physical means through which variations in expressive nuance will be ultimately realised. This strategy was utilised with success among all research participants, especially when lapses in notational familiarity and/or self-confidence seemed to block greater body
awareness. Gestural information is digested without the distraction of the notation, whence notation is laid back into those gestures.

In the following excerpt, Jade encounters some challenges with the essential triple lilt in Grieg’s *Elfin Dance*, Op. 12 No. 4. She doesn’t seem to be able to immediately imitate the subtle shift in nuance across the bar that might enable expressive forward flow and enhanced characterisation. However, when the notes are removed and the physical aspects of notation are studied independently, her awareness of the gestural variations that might unlock such expressive nuance are heightened, allowing her to then add the notes ‘back in’ with greater success (Jade, Lesson 15).

https://vimeo.com/196514681/33cd182af3

**Jade Lesson 15**

I move Jade back to the crotchetts B B F# B B, encouraging her to implement a triple lilt, as she is playing all the notes at the same volume. We do the ‘random splat’ technique to analyse the speed of the arms that might facilitate this, before adding the notes back in. I say, ‘Throw your arms into the keys faster on the first beat’. We add the upbeat to the bars following the B minor crotchetts, before moving forward a little more, essentially chaining the two parts together systematically. I say that this is the type of practice I would like Jade to do during the week.

Adrian can be seen in the next example playing *Little Bird*, Op. 43 No. 4, by Grieg. He has a good command of the notes, yet the sforzandi sound ‘tight’, too soft and are lacking in expressive character. By analysing the vertical aspects of expressive gesture whilst temporarily removing the notes, Adrian is able to digest the gestural information much more efficiently. A little cautious at first, I quickly realise that he would not be allowed to ‘bang’ the piano in such a way at home. However, I suggest to Jane and Oliver that it is actually an effective practice technique, as studying the gestural information without the distraction of notes can be liberating. When Adrian ultimately includes all notes as written, the expressive gesture remains intact and the difference in expressive character and sound are noticeable (Adrian, Lesson 12).
Kelly also found this strategy useful, as seen in the following excerpt from J. S. Bach’s *Invention in B-flat Major*, BWV 785. In a way that is typical, the notes are stripped away so that the ‘bare bones’ of expressive gesture can be analysed without notational clutter. I liken the physical movement of ascending crescendo and descending decrescendo to ‘the way a toddler might do it’, which seems to help simplify the overall concept for Kelly. Once this scaffold has been laid, I use expressive vocalisation and gesture to coach her with the macro crescendo and decrescendo, yet she is still able to maintain the micro expressive tonal shape of each individual phrase (Kelly, Lesson 3).

Kelly Lesson 3

I remind Kelly to use expressive gesture to convey the inherent decrescendo within two-note slurs. After she plays, I suggest that while the two-note slurs are effective on a micro level, she probably could consider the overall phrase a little more. I demonstrate the overall crescendo on a macro level, before taking her hand and showing her physically, combining gesture with my expressive vocalisation – ‘then to loud … then to soft … then to loud … etc.’. I suggest that if I were teaching a toddler, that’s what I might do, as that is the overall effect required, after which individual notes would then be added back in. Kelly adds the notes back into the overall gestural choreography, but I remind her (using expressive gesture and my voice) to stay within the basic pulse. Thereafter, I remind her that we need to keep the tempo uniform, despite the changes in volume. She plays the right hand again, this time with very good control of tempo and expressive nuance. I remain quiet this time, but when she finishes, I say, ‘Very good’.

Adrian Lesson 12

I draw Adrian’s attention to the right-hand staccato, asking him what sort of movement he might use to achieve the required touch. He says ‘up’ and I say ‘yes … but is it a slow up or a quick up?’ He answers, ‘quick’. We move on to a ‘random note free fall’ for the subsequent chord, before I mention again about ‘catching’ the staccato. He combines these movements – ‘catch’ for staccato, with a gravity drop on random notes. I mention that perhaps he is not allowed to do that at home, and it seems true, as Jane says that Neil might ‘abuse’ it. Nonetheless, I suggest that it’s actually a good practice technique. I explain, using gesture, that sometimes people ‘play the notes, instead of playing the notes’. Understandably, Adrian seems a bit confused. I say, ‘Don’t be too careful … just throw your arm down, because then you’ll get a better sound … now it sounds more sinister’. I demonstrate, gesticulate and vocalise, and Adrian plays while I coach him.

https://vimeo.com/196367319/db2c83c5b0

https://vimeo.com/196206037/f49c58a2a0
5.4.5 When Critical Comparison, Critical Evaluation and Critical Reflection are Used by the Student

The data suggests that an effective way for the research participants to adopt expressive gesture was by encouraging critical self-evaluation via recordings within the lesson. By fostering a growth mindset, where pianistic skill can be improved through self-awareness, effort and strategy, the iPad (or iPhone) became a convenient way to generate analysis and subsequent discussion. As perception and reality are not always congruous, the iPad became a useful tool to enhance the research participants’ physical and aural awareness. Whether in repertoire, technical work or ensemble, I found the way that the iPad allowed for immediacy of visual and aural feedback very useful, as I could encourage the research participants to correlate gestural activity of the body with tone production. As a result of this process, it is possible that the students began to see themselves as a source of their own sonic success, while building a kinaesthetic map of their own body acting as a sonic extension of the instrument. Utilising the iPad as a learning tool certainly seemed to help Adrian and Finn particularly, though I used it less frequently with Jade. As her parents recorded every lesson, Kelly became well versed in watching and analysing her own playing.

During this next excerpt, I use the iPad as a tool to coach Jade with contrary motion scales. As is often the case, Jade tended to disengage the muscles in her upper arms while turning her thumbs under the hand, causing a resultant tonal bump due to a ‘heavy thumb’. Using the iPad to encourage Jade to engage her upper arms, lighten her elbows and employ a gestural tilt with the upper body did seem to enhance her body awareness and a uniform touch across all registers (Jade, Lesson 19).
While not repertoire based, the following excerpt, taken from his seventeenth lesson, did seem to mark the beginning of a new learning phase for Finn. The combination of using the iPad and reflective writing did appear to catapult his ability to critically evaluate his own technique, opening the door for greater body awareness and increased utilisation of expressive gesture. By building on what he could do rather than focusing on what he could not, George and I were able to foster Finn’s ability to take responsibility for his own body and his own improvement (Finn, Lesson 17).
With Adrian, the iPad was useful in analysing the amount of time stretching in Mary Elizabeth Clarke’s duet arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake Op. 20. In this example, expressive rubato and associated gestural choreography are analysed and improved within a collaborative atmosphere. Interestingly, Adrian’s mother Jane can be seen her videoing the lesson with her iPad. She would often help to facilitate Adrian’s home practice using these recordings, and as a result, Adrian was familiar with the process of critical reflection (Adrian, Lesson 24).
5.4.6 Imagery, Analogy, Metaphor, Narrative and Dramatic Role Play

The use of analogy and metaphor is certainly not a new concept in one-to-one teaching, with many studies attesting to its relevance in building the expressive skills of musicians with varying levels of expertise. However, when working with child and adolescent musicians, the data uncovered here suggests that supplementing the tangibility of expressive gesture with the often intangible aspects of imagery, analogy, metaphor, narrative and dramatic play can be a potent learning combination. Within each case study, there are many examples of this dynamic power of linking the concrete with the abstract, where the physical elements of expressive gesture are more readily understood when coupled with rich language, imagined pictures, feelings, smells, flavours, sounds, physical sensations and the spatial malleability of time.

Adrian Lesson 24

As they finish playing, Adrian smiles and waves his arms. I say, 'Thanks guys', and Neil asks, 'Was that better?' I say that in some ways it was, and in other ways it wasn't. I ask them to watch the recording with me while I explain. I say that the tempo at the end was much better, and Adrian states that the width of his gestural movement was the reason for such success. I rewind and reiterate 'how awesome' the 'stretchy' interchange between phrases was in the first section, and say, 'Hear you are stretching together there?' I suggest that using rubato in this way might be applied to other parts of the piece too. As we continue to listen, I point out that Adrian is rushing the last few notes of Section A instead of stretching them – 'Your rhythm's wrong there, hear that?' (Adrian – 'Oh'). Neil says, 'He did a bit of a rush', and Adrian says, 'So I have to drag it back'. We listen again, and I say, 'Hear you rushed it?' and Adrian says, 'C ... (I rushed) the C'. We listen again and I say, 'So fill out the whole beat'. As we continue to listen to the B section, I say, 'Hear that?' referring to the lack of space between phrases. I rewind it for them to listen, saying, 'Give us some space'. I pause the recording, singing with rubato, 'And finish off'. Adrian says, 'Oh'. I do a critical comparison, singing the end of the phrase without stretching, and Neil says, 'Oh'. We listen again, as I sing with rubato over the top to demonstrate. Adrian says, 'Oh, too fast', and I agree, suggesting that both boys need to pull back. As the recording continues to play, I demonstrate with expressive vocalisation (and gesture though unseen), how they might create a more dramatic realisation of the music with additional time stretching. I say, 'It's just a little bit too ... the same tempo the whole way through', and Adrian replies, 'It needs to be stretched more'. I point out Adrian's wrong note (A Major chord instead of a minor) and I rewind to show him – 'Oh'. As we go further, I point out to Neil that during the final page, he could stretch out his melodic line, especially as it ascends. I sing with the recording – 'That's too much in time Neil' and he says, 'I hear it'. I say, 'Try to breathe, and just drag it out a bit' and Neil says, 'So that's wrong?' I say, 'You're still doing good, it's still nine out of ten', and Adrian says, 'That's good'. As we listen to the final bars, I point out that the boys are not precisely together. I say to Adrian that he is hitting the bottom of the keys after Neil, due to coming up too far, or not coming down fast enough ('Oh'). I rewind the recording, we listen and both boys can hear the parts are not synchronised ('ga-dang'). I reiterate that it's still good, but those little points will separate a good duet from an excellent one.
Analogy and other similar devices appear to be useful in forming connections that are meaningful to the students.

The data indicates that for some students, analogy, imagery and metaphor are potent ways to facilitate the adoption of expressive gesture and develop their expressive skills, but for others, rhetorical abstraction may well complicate this process. For reasons relating to their level of maturity, their cognitive style and/or the pure uniqueness of each individual, it appears that some students require a more explicit and literal approach to instruction that doesn’t rely on rhetorical abstraction, at least initially. When developing skills relating to emotive or expressive concepts, an approach that utilises expressive gesture might offer a more tangible point of entry that a purely verbal, demonstrative, emotional or philosophical approach may not afford. The data suggests that using imagery, analogy, metaphor, narrative and dramatic role play as teaching tools is greatly enhanced by how familiar a student is with their notation, though such strategies may be useful in the earlier stages of the learning process too. Nonetheless, it did appear that the more confident Jade and Finn felt with notational rudiments, the more heightened their ability to find value in such abstraction became. Conversely, within the lessons of Adrian and Kelly, it was apparent that many more examples of imagery, analogy, metaphor, narrative and dramatic role-play were present, perhaps due to a greater degree of freedom to explore such possibilities, owing to their increased commitment to notational preparedness between lessons.

5.4.7 When Imagery, Analogy, Metaphor, Narrative and Dramatic Role-Play are Used by the Teacher

This excerpt typifies the interaction between Jade and myself, and I have really grown to understand and respect her personality during the study. She is reserved and often needs to be encouraged to have more fun with her playing. In an excerpt from Takács’ *Spanish Donkey Driver*, we both enjoy the analogy of ‘riding the piano like a donkey’. In a way that helps to invigorate the expressive forward flow of the piece, I encourage Jade to employ imagery and narrative to unify herself with the piano and the music itself. Though initially reticent, she does seem to enjoy the process of ‘taking the reins’ and ‘breathing life into the donkey’ (Jade, Lesson 8).
This example opens with a cautionary analogy of how a flat and disconnected tone can sound lifeless, before moving to a visual narrative of a nightingale’s journey as the melodic line ascends and descends within Jerry Hall’s arrangement of Chopin’s *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, Op. 9 No. 2. The way that expressive gesture and expressive vocalisation are used in combination with analogy, imagery and narrative seems to evoke an expressive response from Finn, as he embodies the phrase’s expressive shape with his voice and upper body. This is a pleasing result, as it helps to catalyse Finn’s expressive understanding at the early stages of learning his new piece (Finn, Lesson 2).

Using demonstration and critical comparison within John Legend’s *All of Me*, I combine the analogy of ‘breathing air into the note’ with expressive gesture and dramatic play. It is encouraging that Finn is able to discern and state a preference for the example with greater tonal swell. Extending this idea of expressive tonal swell, I make the analogy of ‘moulding clay’ rather than ‘throwing clay’. Although he does not seem to know what a pottery wheel is, Finn does appear to understand (and enjoy) the concept of ‘moulding the sound into shapes’, as I embark on an extended demonstration, where I mix excerpts of his Chopin *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, Op. 9

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**Jade Lesson 8**
I ask Jade to stand up and then ‘sit down on the donkey’ (the piano). I say, ‘You ride the piano like a donkey … take the reins (i.e. use a preparatory movement with an in breath)’. I move Jade’s left arm and ask her to breathe in and out. She then plays the piece (beautifully) while I stand at the second piano, occasionally conducting expressively. I take the music from her stand and sit down at the second piano while she continues to the end – ‘That's nice ... good girl ... you play it beautifully’. Jade smiles proudly.

**Finn Lesson 2**
To demonstrate, I sing *Ave Maria* with a disconnected and flat vocal tone. He says it sounds a bit boring and I agree, saying, ‘There’s no life in it’. As I play the right-hand melody, I refer to the sound ‘going out into the world’ and ‘the nightingale coming down to the nest’ at the end of the second phrase. As I dramatise the bird’s wings, I suggest (using inflection), ‘You can almost see it coming higher and higher, and lower and lower’.

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No. 2, with *All of Me*, as well as randomly improvised expressive fragments that are almost ‘Schoenbergian’ in their conception and sound. Sarah mentions that Finn may not know about pottery, but likens the concept to using play dough. After cautioning Finn not to play ‘buttons’, it is pleasing when he comments that the example that utilised expressive gesture did sound ‘more smooth’. There follows another extended demonstration of varying musical genres where the concept of expressive gesture and subsequent expressive tonal shape may be applied. The excerpt finishes with discussion regarding the piano being a percussion instrument, though expressive acoustical shape may garnered by ‘rolling’ through the notes with varying weight, much like making physical shapes with play dough (Finn, Lesson 14).

https://vimeo.com/197117257/aa75ea319d

### Finn Lesson 14
While dramatising, I say, ‘It’s almost like you’re breathing air into the notes’. Finn says, ‘Yeah, I personally like that one’. I do another critical comparison before suggesting, ‘It’s almost like you’re moulding the sound, rather than just throwing clay (I demonstrate and then dramatise) … You’ve actually got clay and you’re moulding it, you know like the wheel? You know how the pottery wheel goes around and around (Finn – ‘Oh yeah’) … and you press on it and it changes shape? So that’s really what you’re doing with the sound’. I demonstrate again, starting with *All of Me*, moving to random notes, then morphing into *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, moving to random notes, then morphing back into *All of Me*, before moving to random notes again. Finn turns to Sarah and smiles. I ask if they can ‘see’ the pottery wheel, but Sarah is unsure whether Finn has seen a pottery wheel. She says, ‘Like play dough when you were a kid’. I say, ‘But if all you do is press buttons …’ and follow with a critical comparison. Finn says, ‘That sounds more like, smooth’ and I say, ‘Of course it does’. I play a little of J. S. Bach’s *Invention in C Major* before saying, ‘It doesn’t matter what piece it is, it could be blues’. I play a little of *Willie Wagglestick’s Walkabout*, and both Finn and Sarah laugh. I gesture and say, ‘Shapes … It doesn’t matter what style of music you play, that’s the kind of instrument that the piano is. It’s a percussion instrument, but (I demonstrate) … that’s how you get variety in sound, by rolling through the notes with different weights. When you’re making play dough, you don’t just sit there and go (I use fingers in isolation) … You push it sometimes and pull it, knead it, roll (I demonstrate) … that’s basically what you’re doing with piano. You’ve got to get all the notes right, but use that sort of feeling’. Finn seems very engaged throughout this conversation.

Though short, this excerpt from Lesson 4 is particularly telling. Adrian is playing the beginning of *In the Wind*, by Sarah De Jong. In order to give a sense of purpose to the overarching crescendo and increasing gestural vigour, I use narrative and imagery of ‘the cold wind’, which Adrian describes in his own words as the unfolding story of ‘the little wind’. To further encourage him to fully embody the music, I ask him how he is feeling as he plays the piece, and it pleases me when he smiles enthusiastically and agrees that he feels good. When describing the marking of ‘sensuous’ on the
score, I describe it as ‘liquidy, like the wind is washing through your hair’. Adrian is easily excited, so building his interest in the piece is not difficult, especially when the expressive effects of the score are merged with gesture, imagery, analogy, and dramatic narrative as they are here (Adrian, Lesson 4).

https://vimeo.com/197120844/b5200b5d3a

Adrian Lesson 4
I ask Adrian to play much quieter, as I gesticulate and make wind noises. I demonstrate the overarching dynamic structure with block chords and verbalisation. Adrian plays again and I say, ‘Go for it! I just got a shiver up my spine like a cold wind’. Adrian verbalises his interpretation of a ‘little wind and then bigger and more wild’. I suggest, ‘It’s like a wind going over a graveyard’. I scare Neil and Adrian smiles as he plays. I ask Adrian how he feels – ‘Do you feel good?’ Adrian asks me about the decrescendo marking in the score and then he tries it with repeated F’s. I show Adrian my favourite part and I mention the ‘sensuous’ marking in the score – ‘It’s like it’s liquidy … like the wind is washing through your hair’. I ask him if he likes the piece and mention to Jane that I think the piece really suits him. Adrian is peering at the score, trying to find things that he doesn’t know in order to ask me. I help him learn a little more and we find common ideas repeated in different octaves. I say, ‘Spooky’, and try to scare him, but he just smiles. I show him the interchange to the low B’s and he tries. I attempt to move on to aural work, but Adrian continues to try to improve what we were just doing.

https://vimeo.com/197127239/06264bd928

Adrian Lesson 18
Adrian tries again, and I say, ‘Pretty good … In order to keep the elbow from not dropping, you have to keep these muscles in the upper arms from not switching off’. I stand and say, ‘We go again? You’re getting … almost there’. As he plays I wave my hands around his upper arm and elbow saying, ‘My teacher used to say keep air under your arm (‘How?’) … like there’s a fan … it’s blowing your arm up’. Adrian asks, ‘Did she actually put a fan?’ and I say, ‘No, it’s just a metaphor’. Adrian says, ‘Oh’ and I ask him if he knows what a metaphor is. He replies, ‘Yeah, like you sleep in a lion’s den but you don’t actually do it’. 

In this excerpt, I coach Adrian to refine the tonal uniformity of an ascending scale. I notice that he is deactivating the muscles in his upper arm as he executes the passing thumb, causing his elbow to droop and a tonal ‘bump’ ensues. In a way that is typical, Adrian is quick to identify and correct this error when I physically demonstrate at the second piano, but the use of analogy seems to strengthen his understanding. I hark back to my own experience where my teacher used to say, ‘Keep air under your arm, like there’s a fan; it’s blowing your arm up’. Being very literal, Adrian asks if she used an actual fan. He seems to know what I mean, even though I incorrectly label the concept a metaphor rather than an analogy. Regardless of terminology, his ensuing understanding is nonetheless evident (Adrian, Lesson 18).
The following excerpt is rich in analogical language. In a way that became typical of our interactions, Adrian is not only very quick to understand their contextual usage, but he also offers his own analogies in response to mine. For example, to encourage him towards greater subtlety of expressive tonal nuance, I ask him to gently touch his face, ‘like a feather’, before transferring that touch to the keyboard. While he does not appear to know the meaning of ‘subtlety’, he certainly comprehends the overall concept when the feather analogy is used. Jane agrees that she can discern such difference, as I comment that, ‘It’s got more colour … it sounds more human’. Adrian recognises the sound as ‘watercolour’. The use of ‘add-a-note technique’ as a means to unlock the multi-directional nature of the expressive gesture embedded within the melodic line follows. Using expressive gesture, I make the analogy between manipulating the tonal shape of the main theme with ‘mixing the perfect cake’, before extending this idea further with a critical comparison of how we might avoid sudden surges in dynamic level, especially if the melody was sung. Adrian is quick to describe the former example as sounding ‘ouchy’ (Adrian, Lesson 21).

https://vimeo.com/197129319/fa77106a93

Adrian Lesson 21
Adrian plays the right hand again with beautiful gestural flow, despite some overlapping of the fingers. After he improves his finger clarity, I ask if he can play with a bit more subtlety in the tips of the fingers too. He asks me what ‘subtlety’ means. Rather than using words to explain, I ask him to copy me, as he gently touches his face with his fingertips – ‘Gently, like a feather … now put that (touch) into the keys’. He plays beautifully, and I say, ‘That’s it, it’s a different quality’. I turn to Jane and ask, ‘Can you hear that?’ and she says, ‘yes’. I say, ‘It’s just got more colour in the sound… Rather than getting louder, it sounds more human’. Adrian says, ‘Watercolour!’ I ask him if he can apply the same idea to the end of the phrase. He tries a few times, before I ask him to copy me in playing a three-note gestural fragment. I add the next note saying, ‘Roll back to there’ and Adrian copies. I then play the full five-note gestural fragment saying, ‘Roll up slowly (on the last note) … That’s it’. I take him through this process again because the tone ‘dipped out’ on the F. He gives himself a small fist pump when I tell him it’s better. Adrian copies me again, but when I say it’s too loud on the C, he smiles. I play it again and he copies very well this time. I say and gesticulate, ‘It’s like trying to mix the perfect cake … you have to get the icing just right’. He says, ‘Oh yeah, if you don’t have any caramel or chocolate sprinkles’. I do an interesting comparison of how two different sounding phrases would translate if their dynamic swells were ‘sung’. I say, ‘It’s got the inflection’ and Adrian says, ‘It sounds ouchy’. I point out that if one were to sing the phrase with a sudden surge in the dynamic level, it would sound unusual, and so ‘we need to avoid that when playing the piano too’.

This excerpt details a conversation between Adrian, his brother Neil and me, as they rehearse Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake Op. 20, arranged by Mary Elizabeth Clarke. While
initially confused, Adrian later understands the oboe metaphor, especially when I liken differing registers of the piano to the various instrumental sections of the orchestra. Using expressive vocalisation, expressive gesture and critical comparison as teaching tools, both boys seem to enjoy the analogical language, and I leave them with the thought of the reedy melodic line sitting atop ‘a blanket of sound’ (Adrian, Lesson 22).

https://vimeo.com/197134733/c63653a174

Of all the research participants, Kelly’s lessons perhaps provided the most examples where imagery, analogy, metaphor, narrative and dramatic role-play were successfully used to convey concepts of expressive gesture, touch, tone colour, tonal shape and musical character. Passing examples included, ‘swinging through the phrases like a monkey’ and ‘a crescendo is like a flower opening’ in Lesson 33, ‘swimming through the notes’ in Lesson 36, and a ‘thick oil painting sound rather than a watercolour sound’ in Lesson 38, but further, more detailed examples are unpacked below.

It has been said that ‘the management of expectancy and surprise is a key component of aesthetically powerful performances. Musical expression heightens and interacts with the way that musical structures play on our experiences of tension and relaxation, expectation and fulfillment’ (Lehmann et al., 2007, p. 87). While beyond the scope of this study to certain extent, this excerpt from J. S. Bach’s Invention in B-flat Major, BWV 785 demonstrates how expressive gesture can be used to embody points of harmonic, structural and expressive significance. Using the dimmer function on the light above the piano, I use analogy to illustrate how modulation to closely related keys can reflect expressive colour change, from ‘light to dark’.

Adrian Lesson 22
I ask the boys to start playing from bar nineteen, saying to Adrian, ‘Have you got your oboe ready?’ He seems confused, so Neil and I remind him that in the orchestra, that would be the instrument playing the main theme. Though he says, ‘Oh’, I still don’t think he understands, because when I say, ‘So you’ve got to get that sort of sound’, he says, ‘So it blends in with the oboe’. Neil asks if the piano is like 21 instruments and I agree, saying, ‘It’s like a whole orchestra … you try and get a different colour in each register’. Adrian says, ‘twenty-one?’ while I go on to say (and sing) that Neil has the cello melody against ‘his’ oboe, but when you’ve got the … (I sing the triplets) you don’t go … (I sing and over articulate the triplets). Both boys laugh and Adrian says, ‘That’s squeaking’. I say, ‘It’s like a blanket of sound that the melody sits on top of.’

https://vimeo.com/197134733/c63653a174

179
Within the second movement of Mozart’s *Concerto in C Major* K467, I take the opportunity to play for Kelly while improvising a dramatic narrative. Drawing heavily on metaphorical imagery, I correlate what is ‘happening’ to Cinderella with the contrasts of dynamic level, musical mood, and modulations within the score. My intention was to evoke Kelly’s imagination in order for her playing to reflect such symbolism, suggesting that, ‘there could be a hidden meaning beyond what is on the page’. It also facilitated a chance discussion regarding the elegance and polish that one would expect to find in repertoire of the Classical Period. Though Kelly appears speechless, Jean says that she can tell that Kelly is very excited by the ‘story’, a worthy outcome in this context (Kelly, Lesson 15).

Kelly Lesson 3

I suggest that as musicians, we need to link changes of key to the expressive gestures employed – ‘If you can hear the keys, you can build the sound up and down, depending on whether the keys are dark or light’. I go on to say that g minor (dark) sounds different to c minor (gloomy). Kelly nods her head when I ask her if she understands. I use the different settings on the dimmer light to ‘illustrate’ the closely related keys – ‘Not only different volumes, but different colours as well’. I encourage Kelly to think about that concept and listen for it as she plays.

Kelly Lesson 15

Kelly smiles as I dramatise Cinderella and the prince getting into the carriage, and then waving goodbye. I ask, ‘Can you see it in your head?’ Kelly nods and I say, ‘I can too’. As I sit to play, I suggest that the whole piece could be the ‘soundtrack’ of Cinderella’s story. As I play, I suggest that there could be a hidden meaning beyond what is on the page, and I describe Cinderella’s ‘daily grind’. I suggest that the A flat Major section could be where her fairy godmother casts a spell to transform Cinderella, ready for the ball. I narrate, ‘Cinderella gets excited as she modulates to C Major … The ugly sisters return, and Cinderella feels sad … but then she spots the prince across the room and they dance together’. I fill out the harmony with the orchestral part, heightening the drama. We all laugh and I can see that Kelly is really enjoying this part of the lesson. I say that historically, the music fits the Cinderella timeline, when women wore ‘big puffy ball gowns’. I reiterate that the music goes through different moods, depending on the different keys. I sit and play a little more, narrating the d minor section when the stepmother demands, ‘Cinderella stoke the fire! Do my hair in lovely curls! Make me look beautiful!’ Jean says that she could tell that Kelly was very excited during the story, but Kelly appears lost for words. I remind her that the playing needs to be very polished, ‘like you are going to a grand ball’, and that there is no room for wrong notes, blurry pedal or ugliness. Kelly nods when I ask her if she likes the Classical style of Mozart’s music.
Within Mozart’s *Rondo in D Major* K485, this excerpt begins with the development of double rotary movement and decrescendo within both hands. In order to contextualise the concept, I suggest that the hands ‘come together to give each other a kiss before rolling away from each other’. I also draw on metaphor and imagery, saying that the resultant tone ‘sounds delicious’. Further, I ask Kelly to play the phrases ‘with flavour’, and compliment her on how the piece ‘smells’. In closing, I draw on the concept of three-dimensional movement, where the notes ‘flow around each other like the wind’.

https://vimeo.com/197656713/a01572f88f

**Kelly Lesson 23**

I ask Kelly to play the four quavers and then ‘rock out’ to play the first few notes of the following bar, which she does. I say, ‘very good’ and then ask her to finish the phrase. When I suggest, ‘It feels easier doesn’t it?’ Kelly nods. I say, ‘So use your motion to rock to the notes’. I ask Kelly to apply the same idea to the next (similar) phrase, and I say, ‘It’s improved already without doing anything’. Nonetheless, I ask Kelly to have the hands come together to ‘give each other a kiss’ before they roll away from each other. I ask her to play each phrase, saying, ‘Oh that sounds delicious … it’s like, really tasty’. I ask Kelly, ‘Did you think a piece could sound tasty? (Kelly says, ‘no’) … I can smell the piece, it smells really nice’. I suggest that Kelly play the phrases ‘with flavour’, and ask her to think beyond just what the notes are, demonstrating a flat sound. I explain that I was ‘thinking in a box’, rather than how each note moves ‘from one to the next’. I demonstrate and narrate how the notes ‘flow around each other like … (I make wind noises) … That way you get a really human type of sound’.

I ask Kelly to play the four quavers and then ‘rock out’ to play the first few notes of the following bar, which she does. I say, ‘very good’ and then ask her to finish the phrase. When I suggest, ‘It feels easier doesn’t it?’ Kelly nods. I say, ‘So use your motion to rock to the notes’. I ask Kelly to apply the same idea to the next (similar) phrase, and I say, ‘It’s improved already without doing anything’. Nonetheless, I ask Kelly to have the hands come together to ‘give each other a kiss’ before they roll away from each other. I ask her to play each phrase, saying, ‘Oh that sounds delicious … it’s like, really tasty’. I ask Kelly, ‘Did you think a piece could sound tasty? (Kelly says, ‘no’) … I can smell the piece, it smells really nice’. I suggest that Kelly play the phrases ‘with flavour’, and ask her to think beyond just what the notes are, demonstrating a flat sound. I explain that I was ‘thinking in a box’, rather than how each note moves ‘from one to the next’. I demonstrate and narrate how the notes ‘flow around each other like … (I make wind noises) … That way you get a really human type of sound’.

Working from Mozart’s *Rondo in D Major* K485, this excerpt demonstrates the use of the ‘happy birthday’ analogy, as I was searching for a way to encourage Kelly to go beyond simply applying crescendo to ascending gestural fragments and decrescendo to descending gestural fragments. While she seems to understand the analogical comparison, Kelly is initially distracted, leading to notational errors. The analogy might be distracting her from the notes, or perhaps my expressive vocalisation and somewhat exaggerated gesticulation is too much here. Nonetheless, after encouraging her using critical comparison, dramatic play and demonstration, she has success. This excerpt does remind me that early in the study, Kelly needed to be encouraged towards enhanced energy and extroversion in her playing (Kelly, Lesson 29).
Kelly Lesson 29
I check the right-hand notes, before moving to the ascending and descending three-note fragments, encouraging gestural movement by moving Kelly’s forearm and elbow as she plays. In effect, the ascending slurs are gestural under-shapes and the descending slurs are gestural over-shapes. I demonstrate and suggest playing them like … ‘Happy Birthday!’ Thereafter, I use expressive gesture while inflecting the phrase shape with my voice. Kelly tries and I encourage her to ‘come on, build it up … Happy birthday!’ The apex falls a little flat, so I use drama to critically compare how one might wish someone a happy birthday with energetic sincerity, rather than the opposite. Kelly laughs and then tries again. It is a little better as I use expressive gesture and my voice to coach her. I demonstrate again, using my voice to emphasise the shape and energy of the shapes. Kelly tries again and her playing shows enhanced energy now.

Adrian Lesson 22
I sit down at the second piano and suggest that Adrian aim for a more crystalline sound at bar nineteen – ‘More ping in the sound’. He tries, and I say, ‘Not as much in the left, more in the right’. Interestingly, he seems to have greater flexibility of the wrist and more follow through movement than earlier. I mention that that is called voicing, and I demonstrate what it sounds like when both hands are of equal level and when the right hand is louder. He says, ‘That is what I call red stone’. I ask him what he means. At first, he seems reluctant to say, but then he says, ‘It’s a jewel’. I say, ‘Oh, a red-stone sound … so it’s very bright and rich’ before playing again. Adrian then mentions ‘emerald’ before Jane becomes annoyed and Neil says, ‘Stop talking about Minecraft’. I say that I like that idea, and he further mentions, ‘Emerald is a rounded sound … and sapphire’. I say, ‘Well let’s move on’ and ask the boys to start playing from bar nineteen.

From a different perspective, this excerpt illustrates Kelly using my analogy of ‘conducting’ herself, in effect, ‘inspiring’ herself and her ‘instruments’ to play expressively. Using expressive gesture, dramatisation, critical comparison,
demonstration and humour, I encourage Kelly to ‘put herself into it, like a conductor would’. Following on from the initial analogy, I encourage Kelly to animate herself and her left hand, by asking her to say, ‘Come on cellos!’ with increasing energetic intensity (Kelly, Lesson 23).

https://vimeo.com/197170005/7a9f257fffd

Kelly Lesson 23
I suggest that in some ways, Kelly is like a conductor, directing the notes ‘how to sound’. I liken the bass notes of the piano to the cello section that she might seek to inspire using expressive movement. Kelly plays the left hand again, quite flat, so I say, ‘Is that how you’re going to conduct them?’ Kelly plays again, but this time with greater arm involvement and consequent tonal shape. I stand and do a critical comparison of how Kelly might conduct ‘them’ (the cellos). I say ‘Ready?’ and then conduct Kelly, who is in turn ‘conducting’ her left hand. I say, ‘That’s it, put yourself into it, like a conductor would’. I ask Kelly if she has ever seen a really good conductor and she replies ‘no’. I dramatise how they might use their whole body, before sitting down to ‘conduct’ my own hand playing the ‘cello’ part. I say, ‘They’re really like … right into it, rather than …’. I play the piece with a flat sound, saying, ‘There’s nothing there … it sort of feels false’. I encourage her to be more dramatic, saying, ‘Come on, cellos!’ At first Kelly is very shy, but not unhappy, and with persuasion, she is increasingly exuberant with her words and physical gesture. Jean laughs. I get up and pretend to play, saying, ‘Make their bows nice and fluid’. Kelly tries a couple of times before I take her right hand and ‘bow’ while she plays with her left hand. I ask her to tilt forwards from the hips and say, ‘Good girl Kelly … You have to use your upper body a little bit more in your piano playing’. When I say that she has improved a lot, Kelly smiles. I say, ‘Remember last year, you didn’t play with much expression I didn’t think … you sounded nice, but there was this sort of disconnect, that I think you’re getting better at now, definitely in the last week. It sounds like you’re much more aware of the sound already, and you’ve only just started the piece. It’s good, so you need to keep going with it all right?’ Kelly smiles, and nods her head.

5.4.9 Writing Choreographic Information in the Score

Even the most detailed musical score, full of dynamic indications and fluctuations of tempo, can only ever be suggestive of the expressive information therein. By its very nature, a flat sheet of paper is two-dimensional, and cannot necessarily capture the three-dimensional aspects of physical motion and gesture used to procure expressive performance as argued within this thesis. For this reason, embedding ‘choreographic’ or ‘spatial’ information within the musical notation may foster greater understanding of the movement trajectory that notes or groups of notes follow, thus facilitating the execution of gestural information, leading to enhanced expressive nuance. At present, this can be done crudely by hand but, in the near future, technology might be able to animate this ‘hidden’ information in real time.

The first score excerpt is taken from Jade’s second lesson, where we were working on Spanish Donkey Driver by Takács (see Figure 1). Instinctively, Jade seemed to ‘roll’
through the notes within bars 50 and 51, leading to an expressively shaped outcome. As a way to consolidate her understanding of the gestural choreography employed, I draw the spatial information of bars 50 and 51 in red pen, including the down/up direction for the repeated B’s, and the changing direction of the subsequent adjacent semiquavers (Jade, Lesson 2).
Figure 1: Score from Jade, Lesson 2

The following excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major*, Hob.XVIII:11 illustrates how gestural information was notated on Adrian score (bars 149 – 151) during Lesson 17 (see Figure 2). Using the analogy of numbers on the face of a clock, the visual representation of the anti-clockwise elliptical movement within the right-hand broken chords does seem to consolidate Adrian’s spatial understanding and, ultimately, his ease of execution. Of interest here is the manner in which Adrian is able to imitate horizontal and vertical subtleties in gestural configuration with relative ease (Adrian, Lesson 17).

**Figure 2: Score from Adrian, Lesson 17**

Adrian Lesson 17

As I demonstrate, I explain that when moving through each chord, there is the vertical ‘up’ aspect of the playing to consider, not just movement that is exclusively lateral. Adrian says, ‘Oh’. He wanders away, but Jane intervenes, pulling him back and insisting that he pay attention. I ask him to watch as I demonstrate again, before critically comparing – ‘There’s a whole aspect that you are not really doing at the moment, so how about you start to think about that and try that’. This approach, where instructions are explicit, is very effective with Adrian. After he tries a couple of times, I say, ‘Ok that’s good’ and then play again, saying ‘up and over’. As he tries, I guide the movement of his elbow and wrist, saying ‘up and over’. As I take his wrist, I say, ‘Good, so we’re going to make sure that we’re nice and fluid in the wrist here (Adrian – Oh)’. I demonstrate again, saying, ‘See how the thumb comes away from the B … and then the arm brings it back again?’ Adrian plays again as I guide his elbow and wrist within an elliptical plane, counterclockwise. I demonstrate again, and ask him to change the fingering to 1-2-4-2. Thereafter, I work with him to achieve a looseness of the wrist and an inward shift without twisting, saying, ‘Slide in on this note … good boy Adrian, that’s it’. He asks me how to effectively shift to the next group, so I sit down and experiment at the second piano, before demonstrating and suggesting, ‘Well actually, you would jump’. He tries, quite effectively and I say ‘good boy’ and then ask him to watch again, mainly to draw his attention to the alignment of elbow, forearm, wrist and hand when executing the top note – ‘No don’t lift it (the wrist) too far up… then you lift on the B … so go around to three o’clock … no that’s two o’clock … then lift up to 12, then back around to nine … Do you know what I mean? Can you see the clock?’ Adrian says, ‘Yeah’ and we repeat the process, as I explain, ‘Three o’clock is straight to the right, whereas two o’clock is a bit up to the right’. It would have been good to illustrate this process with the laser pointer, which I have since used in this context. While at the two pianos, I coach Adrian with the elliptical movement, ‘Around to three, lift up to 11 and back to nine’. I say, ‘Well Done! (Adrian – Yay!) … Now most people don’t understand that and that’s why their playing doesn’t sound fast … you end up getting a tight wrist if you … (I demonstrate tight) … If you don’t (I demonstrate elliptical movement) … That’s how you get speed, by doing movement (I use expressive gesture and Adrian says, ‘Oh’) … And rather than waiting until it’s fast to do that, start to do that now’. Jane comes over and takes the music out of the sleeve. I say, ‘I’m just a bit concerned that you’re going home and just playing it too fast, that’s not happening is it?’ Jane says ‘No, not really’ and I say, ‘No? He’s ok? Good … good boy’. Jane suggests to Adrian that it might be useful if he writes down the clock shape as a reminder, and he agrees, drawing on the score. As Adrian continues to experiment with the right hand, I write down some gestural choreography in the score. I continue to coach him as he experiments – ‘Make sure your fifth finger is aligned with your elbow … Good boy Adrian … That’s it!’ Adrian turns to Jane, smiles and says ‘yay’. I continue, ‘If you don’t have that alignment, you are going to build up tension, which will eventually slow you down, and it could cause pain or an injury (Adrian – Ok)’. He continues to experiment, but the alignment isn’t ideal. I coach him with the gesture required to move from the F# minor chord to the C#7 – ‘Lift your elbow up as you play the A, and that will parachute you across … When you speed it up, you won’t hear any gap, you’ll just hear … (I demonstrate)’. I go on to critically compare the resultant sound, with and without gestural freedom. He tells me that the score says ‘p’, so I sit down and play the same passage softly. I explain, ‘Speed comes from knowledge of movement, not fast fingers’. Adrian says, ‘Oh’, points to the score and tells me that he has learnt all the way ‘up to there’. I say, ‘You are such a good boy’, and he smiles proudly.
Kelly’s ability to assimilate gestural information was very good, as this excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major* illustrates (see Figure 3). During Lesson 1, I remind Kelly of the expressive gestural choreography that facilitates the expressive nuance within the cadential resolution at bar 16. As I draw the spatial information into the score, I say, ‘So you just stroke the E on the way
through’. In a way that was typical with Kelly, we work with individual gestural fragments before chaining them together when total physical and mental comfort has been achieved. Of note is the way that I compliment Kelly on her thorough preparation of the notes, as it accelerates her assimilation of the gestural choreography, saying, ‘It’s so easy to do this with you because you just know everything – it’s so simple’ (Kelly, Lesson 1).

[Video Link]

Taken from Lesson 21, this score extract and video excerpt demonstrate how I foster Kelly’s knowledge of directional movement within Debussy’s *Dr Gradus ad Parnassum* (see Figure 4) In an effort to help her visualise the movement trajectory of each gestural fragment within the right hand, I draw the ‘snakey’ gestural choreography in Kelly’s score. While crude, it does seem to foster an understanding of the concept, and may serve as a reminder for Kelly when she is working independently (Kelly, Lesson 21).
Figure 4: Score from Kelly, Lesson 21

Excerpt of Dr Gradus ad Parnassum from Children’s Corner, L. 113 by Claude Debussy. Image reproduced from Debussy (1908, p. 4).
5.4.10 Using Scales and Arpeggios as Tools That Serve to Prime Body Awareness, while Implementing Technical Foundations That Facilitate Joint Alignment, Gestural Freedom and Expressive Touch

During my doctoral candidature, the value that I place on technical work has been reignited, but not for the reasons that one might think. When I was a young pianist and teacher, I often saw technical work as ‘something to make your fingers stronger and faster’ where the more you did it, the better you were for it, regardless of any latent sense of frustration, boredom, or physical discomfort. In a recent lesson with a student who was not part of this study, I described my perception of scales and arpeggios and other technical work. I explained that during ‘the olden days’, when I was a younger version of myself, I was adamant that scales were to be taken seriously by any young student. This perspective could perhaps emanate from what I read and was told at the time, not necessarily from my own principal study teacher. The misguided view that if my students ‘did lots of scales’, the very act of ‘doing’ technical work would somehow induce improvement, regardless of their how, or from a student’s perspective, why? Having seen how much students loathed this approach, I perhaps naively thought that students simply disliked technical work, and therefore avoiding it where possible, not thinking that my somewhat autocratic approach could be partly to blame for their lack of engagement. In the years since, my ideological pendulum has somewhat approached a middle ground, where technical work is made relevant to the student, as a means of building harmonic understanding and as I
recently described on the inside cover of a young student’s technical workbook, ‘exercises to develop body awareness, to build postural foundations and to enhance the intrinsic link between tone production and body movement’.

I found that scales and arpeggios proved to be an effective gateway to a more embodied style of playing, particularly when studied within a four-octave compass. Concepts relating to seating position, location of the feet, support of the core, position of the trunk and head, upper arm support, forearm pronation, elbow position, overall flexibility of the wrist and curvature of fingers are all important to an effective balance at the instrument, and therefore a good basic sound (Reflective Journal, Lesson 19). In this excerpt, my aim was to foster Jade’s uptake of an active rather than a passive posture at the piano, whilst extending her keyboard harmony and theoretical skills (Jade, Lesson 19).

https://vimeo.com/197360069/9c238d6d33

Jade Lesson 19

I ask Jade to move the chair further back so that she sits on the half closest to the piano. I remind her to employ a seating position where she could stand up at any given time. She moves her feet back, smiles, and does the ‘stand up/sit down’ sequence. I suggest that sitting in this way makes the posture activated rather than passive. I ask Jade if she knows what passive means, but she gives a passive answer that’s inaudible. I say that it’s like lying on the couch. I demonstrate an activated posture where the body aligns with the notes, and the spine and neck extend vertically. I encourage Jade to do the same, though she is obscured in the recording. I explain that scales and arpeggios are useful for chord and harmonic knowledge, and also for learning how to operate the ‘apparatus’, saying, ‘How do we hold the apparatus?’ We move to the left hand, and I remind her that the fingering for the minor version of the arpeggio will be 5-4. Jade starts too high, so I walk over and adjust her, asking her to push her feet into the floor while bracing the stomach muscles – ‘Stand up/sit down … lean/tilt forwards and play … soften the shoulder, but keep the upper arm switched on’. I manipulate her physically, and say, ‘Good girl’. I ask Jade to play E Major, with the right hand and the left hand. I ask her to pronate her right forearm ‘in’ so that the thumb passes under without too much effort. She is lifting her shoulder up too much, so I ‘soften’ her shoulder. I ask Jade to start lower, before manipulating her – ‘Swivel the arm around from the elbow when you pass the thumb’. As she gets to the high register, I remind her to ‘start’ adjusting. I comment that it’s like being an athlete before sitting down and then asking her to play E Major with her left hand. I ask her to ‘start lower, lean over, head over, shoulder soft, upper arm on’. I make a comment about pivoting inwards with the forearm as she is descending. I ask Jade to play e minor with right hand and left hand. She plays right-hand e minor, and I ask her to move across, tilt her elbow up, and come across with her upper body – ‘Oh, that’s lovely … beautiful pivoting’. When I give her a compliment she seems embarrassed, and playfully scowls at Joanne.
In this excerpt, arpeggios over a four-octave compass seemed an excellent way in which to prepare Jade to play with the entire body simultaneously. During the study, it really struck me how useful arpeggios are in arming the student and their entire body with general principles of ‘technique’ that are really not often traditionally associated with technique. For example, strong solid feet, a forward pelvic tilt, preparatory ‘momentum building’ gestural movement of the arms and ‘energising’ the arpeggios on the student’s part were all useful for Jade, who did tend to sit quite statically if not prompted. The reflective process deepened my understanding of ‘technique’ as a means of preparing the body for the utilisation of expressive gesture, where I’m reminding of its Greek origin, *technikós*, meaning art and skill. Building on foundations established in previous lessons, this excerpt is lengthy, with Jade and I working through the arpeggios required for AMEB Grade 4. The arpeggios for A minor, E Major, E minor, B flat Major, B flat minor and E flat Major are reviewed and developed in real time, rather than merely ‘corrected’. At the end of the excerpt, contrary motion scales are briefly reviewed (Jade, Lesson 26).

https://vimeo.com/197371090/74ed1c3f20
Jade Lesson 26

I suggest that we start on arpeggios today and work 'backwards'. I ask Jade to play A Major with hands separately, right hand and then left hand. I put the metronome on as Julia talks to Holly. I ask Jade to play A minor right hand – ‘That’s good … play it a bit louder now … nice technique … very good’. She plays the left hand and I suggest that she aim for a bit more pronation with her arm, rather than tilting her head – ‘There’s a bit of a lock in the wrist there … That’s better … now start from here (an octave higher, descending left hand) … Good try, but I can feel you squeezing to get (the thumb) under there instead of rolling … That’s better, good girl’. Julia encourages Jade, and says that it sounds better. I mention that it’s a very subtle difference. I ask Jade to start from the top octave (descending left hand). I suggest that she ‘face me’ as she ‘goes under’, and walk over to Jade’s right. Jade tries – ‘Pretty good’. I demonstrate and say, ‘You roll your elbow out to the right, and the top of your (left) hand faces me’. Jade tries as I adjust her left shoulder and suggest that she come up onto her hips. I say, ‘Good, Well Done … now a little bit louder’. Jade plays descending – ‘Not too bad … good girl … and now faster’. I ask her to use her upper body more. We move on to E Major and I adjust her alignment within the top register – ‘Think of the pelvis as the middle point or the bottom of your spine’. I adjust her from side to side and say, ‘very good’. She plays E Major very well, but I ask her to play a little bit firmer – ‘Good, get into it Jade… a nice ring in the sound’. In order to avoid a loss of momentum that leads to stretching between adjacent notes, I ask her not to slow down after she plays E Major with her left hand. I ask her to pronate inwards when descending with the left hand, saying, ‘Roll this way but move that way’. I ask her if she can roll faster now, so that the forearm pronation doesn’t make the overall tempo slower. She tries again, but I say, ‘Not as good because you’re starting to bang the thumbs’. She tries again, and I ask her play on the very tip of the thumb – ‘Nice … it’s still of a high standard, and I do have very high standards’. Jade smiles and Julia chuckles. We move to e minor, and I suggest that she start lower with the left hand. I ask, ‘Can you hear the little gaps? (Jade nods) … That’s because you are stretching (between the notes) instead of rolling’. Jade tries again – ‘Good girl’. I ask her to play two octaves descending whilst initiating movement from her elbow and upper arm. Jade tries (Good!), but then loses momentum in the last octave, causing the notes to be unclear. ‘Come over here (I pull her to the left from the elbow in order to align to the lower octave) … and push your feet into the floor so that you come up over the notes (gestures) … Come over here, push your right foot into the floor so that your stomach muscles brace.’ I ask her to start descending again, and ‘fall into that position’. Jade plays four octaves descending – ‘Good try … Lead with the elbow and come over with the body … a combination of those two things … No you’re still stretching’. I ask her to shake her wrist loose, and Jade plays again – ‘Good, you unlocked your wrist that time’. We start an octave higher again – ‘Notes no good, technique excellent … combine the two … Good try … from the top to the bottom note … play louder … use this part of your body to move (pulling to the left gesture) and everything else will fall into place. Lead with the elbow … good … as you come up, don’t sink down with your shoulders… don’t pull your feet up, push your feet into the floor, that’s where your balance comes from. Good … lovely sound’. Jade plays e minor with her right hand – ‘Notice your right hand coming down is very lovely? The right hand going up and the left hand coming down is where you have to ‘create the movement’ … It’s the equivalent of backhand (stroke) in tennis. If you don’t create movement, you’ll always be behind’. I sit down and demonstrate – ‘This is how you create the movement … you’ve got to start … you have to be energised. If you start … (I demonstrate no energy). Coming down, it’s a lot easier to roll over the notes’. I show Jade that when coming up, most people do that (bump the thumb). I continue, ‘Play the scales and arpeggios like pieces’ (Jade plays and I get very excited) … Good, go go! Lovely… good!’ Jade swipes her nose, a rare thing in this lesson. ‘They’re like little mini pieces… if you can learn how to hold your body in scales and arpeggios and energise them, and then transfer that to the pieces, you will get the maximum benefit from doing the exercises’. Jade sheepishly says, ‘OK’. I say, ‘Let’s start with the left hand for E flat Major’. Jade plays quite well, but her fingering is incorrect. I ask her to swing her arm from side to side (without any notes) – ‘Now put the notes into that movement … energise’. She does well – ‘It’s only a very small amount (of energy) needed (to make a difference)’, but she looks a bit confused. I ask Jade to play the right hand.
In his earlier lessons, I encouraged Adrian to interpret scales and arpeggios as activities to prime his whole body for playing the piano, and as useful tools for addressing concepts relating to alignment of the hand and forearm unit, freedom of the whole playing mechanism, and ‘vehicles’ to develop body awareness (Reflective Journal, Lesson 3). Using the analogy of an athlete, my aim was to foster an understanding that scales and arpeggios were ‘a sport of the small muscles of the arm and hand, combined with the bigger muscles of the body’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 1). During the later stages of data collection, my intention was to build on these foundations, where Adrian could then use his scales and arpeggios to cultivate a more ‘loving’, expressive touch, where the piano could ‘come alive’ (Adrian, Lesson 18).
5.4.11 Revisiting Fingering Different from That Printed in the Score

As children mature physically, fingering that enhances the expression of musical intention in an ergonomic way becomes an important area of enquiry. Specifically, fingering that supports the expressive shape of musical phrases by controlling the way in which the arms move is to be favoured over blind adherence to conventional rules regarding black-white keyboard configuration (Fink, 2002a). Of interest is Fink’s (2002a) reference to fingering as ‘the key to arming’ (p. 60) and his implication that much of the discomfort with edited fingering lies in the ‘slavish devotion to the principles of scale fingering, which by definition prohibit the use of thumb and five on the black keys’ (p. 61). Fink (2002a) also stated:

Pianists must be aware that the fingers are not isolated units, but rather, integrally connected parts of a larger playing mechanism that begins at least as far back as the shoulder girdle. The movement of the entire apparatus is so crucial a dynamic in projecting musically intelligent and technically competent performances its freedom becomes a top priority. (p. 60)

It appears that using fingering that promotes stretching to cover the notes rather than making fluid micro adjustments between the notes inhibits momentum and ease of execution, and tends to make the muscles of the forearm freeze in the ‘on’ position for inordinate lengths of time (Reflective Journal, Kelly Lesson 22). This state of over-activation seems to restrict fluid movement, and the ability of the hand, fingers and forearm to operate synergistically, resulting in inordinate tension, ineffective joint alignment, and a clumsy sound (Reflective Journal, Adrian Lesson 6). The data

Adrian Lesson 18
I demonstrate and say, ‘Make your scales sound more expressive … more loving’. I ask Adrian to tell me something that he loves. When he says ‘iPad’, I say, ‘I was thinking more along the lines of a pet’. He says that he would like a pretend dog, not a real dog and smiles at Jane. I play, saying, ‘Pretend (when you’re playing) you’re patting a real dog’. As he plays, I gesticulate and say, ‘Make the piano sound like it’s living… thank you for playing me, I feel alive … I just love it when I feel alive … I sit in this room all time, in the dark and no one ever plays me nicely … You’ve got to pretend that the piano’s alive’. When he finishes, Adrian says, ‘I did that well’ and we both laugh.
suggests that using the arm to make help the fingers make these micro-adjustments typically leads to a greater capacity to assimilate principles of expressive gesture.

The following excerpt sees Jade and I discussing fingering options within the melodic line of Alkan’s *La Vision*, Op. 63 No. 1. Of particular interest is Jade’s ability to recognise that her right-hand third finger rather than her thumb would be the best option as the final note of the phrase, allowing her to float off the note whilst maintaining centred alignment of the hand, wrist and forearm. I am excited by her involvement, and Jade seems genuinely pleased with her contribution. Using critical comparison and demonstration, I clarify that in this context, using the thumb following the second finger may inhibit the graceful vertical lift necessary for the attainment of expressive gesture. I suggest that such scrutiny is necessary early in the learning process, as fingering facilitates the realisation of expressive gesture and subsequent expressive phrase shape. We continue this process with subsequent phrases, each time allowing Jade time to reflect on fingering possibilities before giving suggestions, and questioning her choices in a collaborative way. At the end of the clip, Jade writes in the fingering for herself. While it would be faster if I dictated the fingering and wrote it in myself, fostering Jade’s involvement in making such decisions may promote increased autonomy and learning responsibility over the long-term (Jade, Lesson 17).
5.4.12 Fostering an Awareness of the Overall Body, by Increasing Knowledge and Understanding of Specific Body Segments and Their Anatomical Function

The data suggests that an important aspect of working with expressive gesture is fostering increased awareness of the entire body, as well as the specific limbs, joints and muscles contained therein. In this excerpt from Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* Op. 20, arranged for piano duet by Mary Elizabeth Clarke, Adrian demonstrates increasing knowledge of the different segments of his arms, an important aspect in facilitating expressive gesture. Though initially confused between his upper arm and forearm, he does display pleasing ability to be able to ‘let go’ of the muscles below his elbow in order to be able to roll through the phrase with enhanced flexibility of the wrist. In this way, Adrian is able to employ expressive tonal shape in order to enact greater realism in the sound. Using analogy, I liken the expressively shaped phrase to that of a swan singing, begging for its life. It is interesting to note here that Adrian’s mother Jane can be seen enacting the expressive gesture in the background (Adrian, Lesson 22).
By reviewing her understanding of forearm pronation, this example sees Kelly and I working to develop greater stability of her right-hand fifth finger. I compare the inward pronation of her forearms to that seen when riding a bike, and suggest that undue forearm supination can cause the joint to collapse. The data suggests that a working knowledge of basic anatomical functions of the arm, hand and fingers is advantageous, and may afford the research participants greater control of their bodies and consequently, expressive gesture and tonal nuance.

https://vimeo.com/197408145/0a66e8f75e

Kelly Lesson 22
I say that when the fifth finger joint collapses, the hand will supinate instead of pronate – ‘You actually pull yourself away from the notes that you need’. I demonstrate in the air how you would hold your hands and arms to ride a bike, pronating instead of supinating the forearms.
5.4.13 Encouraging the Student to See Their Playing as a Gateway towards Self-Expression

While expressive gesture has been established as a useful way to foster the expressive performance skills of the research participants, such a strategy might form only part of the answer. Encouraging the student to see their playing as a gateway towards self-expression could be a powerful way to contextualise such pedagogy, giving greater meaning and sense of purpose for the individual. In their own unique way, all four of the research participants seemed to gain some benefit from coming to understand that their playing was ultimately, their playing; a veritable expression of themselves. The research process did ultimately challenge my perception of what can constitute expressive playing, and I began to question whether expressive performance skill is the fundamental goal for every student, at every stage of development.

In the following example, Jade is working towards expressively realising the melodic shape of the Alkan’s *La Vision*, Op. 63 No. 1. Her uncertainty and self-consciousness are evident, even though she does know the notation and seems to understand the gestural choreography. I encourage her to connect to the notes on a deeper level, suggesting that she inject a little bit of her ‘soul’ behind the note and ‘smile inside’ in order for it to ‘come to life’. I analogue between the wooden piano coming to life and the wooden boy, Pinocchio, who is magically transformed into a ‘real’ boy through his bravery and truthfulness (Jade, Lesson 17).

https://vimeo.com/196062393/3cf3f2ce5d

In a similar way, the next excerpt sees me questioning Adrian as to whether he can ‘put a little bit of his soul behind every note’. Adrian seems to have more global success with the overall expressive energy of Haydn’s *Concerto in D Major*, Hob.XVIII:11 (first movement) when I suggest that such a cheerful boy as he could
'put some of that cheer behind each and every note’. His pride is palpable, and I counsel him in making everything that he plays uniquely ‘Adrian’, suggesting that he work hard and follow my lead, while always being prepared to put something of himself into his playing. Through demonstration and a humorous critical comparison, I draw attention to my teaching manner being an embodiment of my self-expression, encouraging Adrian to conceptualise his playing in a similar way. After another short demonstration, he plays the opening of the concerto with enhanced vigour, excitement and expressive energy, and it is noteworthy that Oliver can also discern a real difference. The excerpt ends with familial discussion where I remind Adrian that during his first interview, he told me that he was ‘special’. I encourage Adrian to ‘show me through your playing how special you really are’ (Adrian, Lesson 19).

https://vimeo.com/196903413/c4d90d845e
5.4.14 References to Delivering the Piece to Enhance the Audience’s ‘Understanding’ of What They Hear and See

During the process of the study, and after consultation with the literature, I came to understand the importance of expressive gesture not only as a means of acoustical variation, nuance and expressive tonal shape, but also as a means of wider audience communication. My intention was to inform the research participants of these principles, and to ascertain the extent of their applicability. The data suggests that
when combined with imagery and analogy, each research participant derived benefit from their inclusion.

In this example, Jade is playing Alkan’s *La Vision*, Op. 63 No. 1. By encouraging Jade to fill the time between notes with expressive gesture, the excerpt demonstrates how ‘a vision in sound’ can be created, as the music is illustrated both physically and aurally. I liken the movement to walking, where steps are taken in due course, rather than each step being prepared in advance. In this way, the effect appears more organic, and Jade seems to genuinely enjoy the choreographic process (Jade, Lesson 18).

[https://vimeo.com/196053459/8f6e474107](https://vimeo.com/196053459/8f6e474107)

**Jade Lesson 18**

I ask Jade to play the left hand alone – ‘Velvet chords … lovely’. I ask her to cut the rest short on the fourth beat of the bar, and then coach her physically the idea of using the rest as a way to elegantly float the hand down to the lower register, rather than getting the note ready prematurely. I liken it to walking naturally, rather than getting the foot ready before taking the step – ‘Don’t line it up first’. Jade plays again but misses the minim, so I say that she needs to slow down the movement so that she covers the distance within two beats instead of one. I coach her with gesture and saying ‘minim thank you’, as well as ‘nice big rainbow’ and some other nonsense words. I say that that is how I would like her to practise the left hand – ‘Like that please’. Jade seems to enjoy the movement and I suggest that as a pianist, she can create a visual as well as an aural effect. I suggest that as the piece is called *La Vision*, she could create a ‘vision in sound’. I encourage Jade to think, ‘Listen to my sound picture’, rather than ‘Listen to my Grade 4 exam piece … As you learn the notes, start to find ways to illustrate the sound’. Jade nods.

Within Jerry Hall’s arrangement of Chopin’s *Nocturne in E-flat Major*, Op. 9 No. 2, this excerpt sees Finn and I discussing the way that expressive gesture can serve not only to produce acoustical variation, but also add a visual dimension that can convey the player’s emotional involvement to the listener. Through a series of critical comparisons and humorous dramatisations, Finn enthusiastically affirms that a blend of expressive gesture, expressive nuance and felt emotion that is neither underdone nor overstatement, represents a functional middle ground that may enhance audience understanding of ‘what’s happening’ in the music (Finn, Lesson 2).
In this example, taken from a rehearsal of Tchaikovsky’s *Swan Lake* Op. 20 for piano duet, I draw a comparison between using expressive gesture and the ‘McGurk Effect’. Perhaps more of an analogy than a direct comparison due to the absence of enunciation, I suggest to Adrian that the way that the arms ‘float’ expressively through the phrase may influence the way that the music is aurally perceived, because of that expressive visual cue. Through verbal explanation and demonstration, I propose that ‘the way you see something can influence how it sounds’ (Adrian, Lesson 21).
After exploring the analogy of a cellist building a crescendo through a series of repeated notes, I encourage Kelly to tilt her head forward slightly in order to illustrate a point of cadential resolution within the second movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major*. I suggest that this gesture will enhance audience understanding of the music’s inherent tonal shape and expressive harmonic resolve. While she struggles a little at first, the idea has at least been introduced, and will be explored further in subsequent lessons throughout the research period and beyond (Kelly, Lesson 1).

Taken from the first movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major*, here I remind Kelly that those listening in the audience may not have heard the piece before, and for that reason, I ask her to take her time in order to project ‘what’s happening’ in the music via expressive tonal shape. I liken the process of ‘showing each note’ to that of

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**Adrian Lesson 21**

I say, ‘That’s it … now when you get to that one (the first note of the second phrase) … don’t go (I play stiffly) … and freeze (I play with rounded elbow gesture) … let go’. Adrian does well and I ask him if I have talked to him about the McGurk effect. He says ‘no’, so I suggest that he look it up on YouTube. I briefly demonstrate and explain the concept, suggesting that even though we aren’t using our voices and faces in this context, a parallel might be drawn in the way that the seeing the gestural activity of the arms could influence how the phrases might sound to those listening. I say, ‘The way you see something can influence how it sounds’, and I demonstrate how using jerky movements makes the phrases sound jerky. I go on to show Adrian how fluid movements make the phrases sound fluid, and I play the passage in slow motion, describing the expressive gestural activity in real time.

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**Kelly Lesson 1**

Kelly and I deconstruct the repeated G’s and the ornament using ‘add-a-note technique’ and ‘tonal splat’ before combining them together again. As I demonstrate, I ask Kelly to move her head slightly forwards just before she plays the ornament. She tries and we laugh. I go on to explain that part of playing music well is the way that it looks as well as the way that it sounds, and I mention that this year we will be working on these more ‘performative’ aspects in her playing. I do a critical comparison before saying, ‘that gesture tells the audience … ‘Oh I think that she just go louder and softer there’, otherwise they don’t really know’. Kelly seems to understand, but it doesn’t translate as well thereafter, as she tends to rush.
inviting a diner to enjoy individual morsels from a delicious sushi platter (Kelly, Lesson 8).

https://vimeo.com/196814210/2853d82740

5.5 Secondary Research Question 2: What Factors within the Learning Environment Might Facilitate the Uptake of Such a Gestural Vocabulary?

5.5.1 The Emotional Climate and Relationships within the One-to-One Context

The role of the one-to-one teacher is certainly extremely important and has the potential to be underestimated generally. A complex skill subset is necessary, including instrument specialisation, pedagogical aptitude and psychological insight (Chmurzynska, 2012). Evidence has suggested that the influence of the instrumental teacher is stronger and more powerful than that found in general teaching (Konaszkiewicz, 2001). Konaszkiewicz (1998) suggested that the actual musical subject matter has the capacity to engender the teacher/pupil relationship highly emotional, while Chmurzynska (2012) saw the intimate, face-to-face nature of the individual instrumental lesson as giving rise to a considerable degree of teacher dependence on the part of the student. Various studies (Manturzewska, 1990; Sosniak, 1985, 1989) have suggested the instrumental teacher is an important person in the lives of professional musicians, while Sloboda and Howe (1995) saw the early years of instruction to be particularly significant to the young learner. Gliniecka-Rekawik (2007) stated that instrumental teachers are responsible for contributing to the development of self-confidence, personality and intrinsic motivation in their students and ‘the instrumental teacher can influence the general and musical development of their pupils, their performance skills and their attitudes towards music and the music profession’ (Chmurzynska, 2012, p. 308). When viewed in this context, outstanding performance artists and performance graduates who are neither endowed with an
affinity for instrumental teaching nor the ability, desire or time to undergo the necessary pedagogical training, self-reflection and research, could potentially mismanage their mentorship role.

According to Chmurzynska (2012), the characteristics, traits and functionality of an individual to be a ‘good’ or ‘model’ teacher in part reflect the cultural and social values of a given historical period and are consequently subject to change. However, this does not beget uniform change across all cultures at the same time and significant challenge may be encountered when the teacher and student are from two different cultures and have contrasting internal views regarding their individual roles in a dyadic partnership. Nonetheless, in recent years, a view that sees education as simply the transmission of knowledge has been questioned and the concept of a teacher who develops pupils has been replaced by the concept of a teacher who supports the development of pupils (Chmurzynska, 2012). The teacher creates an environment where students can develop their potential, assists in their information processing, respects their autonomy and teaches them to learn on their own (Gas, 2001). The lesson becomes a place of encounter (Kwiatkowska, 2008) and the teacher’s relationship with the pupil becomes the point of reference for reflection on the effectiveness of the learning environment (Chmurzynska, 2012). Rather than focusing solely on the teacher’s professional competencies, pedagogists have recently questioned to what extent the teacher’s personal competencies determine the quality and affective dimension seen within this relationship (Chmurzynska, 2012).

Various empirical studies (Czykwin, 1995, 2000; Konaszkiewicz, 2001; Necka, 2001; Rosenthal, 1968; Wojciszke, 2001) have demonstrated how teachers’ expectations can substantially govern pupils’ achievement measure (as cited in Chmurzynska, 2012). It seems clear that a student’s results reflect the positive or negative expectations of the teacher and that a pessimistic or overly realistic image of the student’s limitations can seriously disrupt the education and development of the pupil (Chmurzynska, 2012). Kolodziejska (2002) has said that a fundamental requirement of the twenty-first century teacher is their ability to respect their student’s subjectivity. In practical terms, this means respecting the pupil’s dignity and individuality while providing an environment that emanates security and induces a dialogue rather than a monologue (Chmurzynska, 2012). Increasing the pupil’s freedom in decision-making can reflect
this subjectivity (Chmurzynska, 2012) and may provide a powerful sense of independence, where choice of action begets responsibility for action (Seul-Michalowska, 1998). According to Chmurzynska (2012), the ability to foster a pupil’s ability to become a conscious self-educator and inspire cognitive independence and self-reflection is an important part of the contemporary teacher’s competence. To fascinate a pupil with the subject and trigger their cognitive interest comes, in part, from the teacher’s emotional commitment and passion in their dealings with the student (Chmurzynska, 2012).

Consideration of the emotional climate within the learning environment and its impact on the success of the learning of expressive concepts cannot be ignored. A number of authors have ‘expressed concerns that certain styles of one-to-one teaching have been evidenced to have unintended psychological impacts on students’ (Carey, 2008; Froehlich, 2002; Juuti and Littleton, 2010; Persson, 1996b; Triantafyllaki, 2010). It appears that fostering a positive pupil-teacher relationship within a supportive and encouraging environment, especially in the early stages of learning, predicates lesson satisfaction and perhaps continuation (Costa-Giomi, Flowers & Sasaki, 2005).

Characteristically, a close, personal relationship develops between instrumental teachers and their students (Kingsbury, 1988). Hanken (2004) stated that in dyadic teacher-student contexts, the development and preservation of an effective working relationship is indispensable. In terms of effective learning, the usefulness of the relationship between pupil and teacher could be determined to a large extent by the teacher’s level of self-awareness and an awareness of their actions (Chmurzynska, 2012). A low level of emotional and social intelligence on the part of the teacher could have serious repercussions that may impact the learner in a negative way. Chmurzynska (2012) has suggested that incorrect relations between a teacher and even the most gifted pupil can inhibit the realisation of full potential. Tiberius and Flak (1999) have claimed that there will be some degree of negative emotion involved in every teacher-student relationship and ‘the overt civility of dyadic relationships can mask unexpressed tensions and … these tensions, if not addressed, can increase to the explosive point, at which the relationship itself is destroyed’ (p. 3). Therefore, it seems imperative to ‘structure a relationship that can handle conflicts and tensions routinely and thereby prevent escalation’ (Tiberius & Flak, 1999, p. 5). For example,
when giving criticism or negative evaluation, the teacher must be aware of the ethical responsibility that they hold as the stronger party in an asymmetrical relationship and control their frustrations, favouring the students’ learning and overall well-being (Hanken, 2004).

As the teaching of expressive concepts characteristically requires the teacher and student to discuss feelings and to interact on an emotional level over many years, it is not surprising that the ability to manage the teaching relationship in a positive way is critical for the success of such pedagogy. Indeed, Hanken (2004) has argued that such a personal relationship between teacher and student is a fundamental trait of individual instrumental teaching. It seems plausible then that the implementation of expressive concepts in the one-to-one studio must be grounded in the affable interaction of all involved. Bergmen (1998) maintains that ‘acknowledgement, respect and consideration can only develop between persons who dare to expose themselves to each other in the conviction that they will not be rejected by the other part’ (p. 80).

When discussing an environment that is conducive to learning, Tileston (2011) suggested that unless issues of meaningful engagement and support are addressed first, no other pedagogical techniques can be truly effective. ‘We now know that how we feel about education has great impact on how the brain reacts to it. Emotion and cognitive learning are not separate entities; they work in tandem with one another’ (Tileston, 2005, p. 1).

A study investigating the role of teachers in the development of musical ability (Davidson, Howe, Moore & Sloboda, 1996) has highlighted the importance of the emotional climate in which musical experiences are garnered. It was found that children who learnt in a positive atmosphere that was enjoyable and free of anxiety were more likely to continue onto outstanding instrumental achievement than those children whose learning context was characterised by negativity and anxiety (Davidson et al, 1996, as cited in Davidson, 2004). This is understandable, considering the presence of stress has been found to impair brain cells (Jensen, 1998) and an overly critical mindset may undermine good health and life-long musical engagement (Bruser, 1997). In light of such powerful evidence, perhaps the culture of fear, intimidation, rigidity, unrealistic perfection, anxiety and an imbalance of power that might be found in traditional master–apprentice models may be questionable.
During this project, I reflected on the overall emotional climate of the one-to-one teaching studio, and I have come to understand that if repertoire is learnt within an atmosphere of anxiety and disapproval, it could be very hard for many students, particularly those who are prone to anxiety that manifests as physical restriction, to ever feel totally comfortable with the piece, both in terms of physical and musical expression. As I watched the recordings retrospectively, at times my frustration with some of the research participants was evident, despite my best efforts to keep it hidden. This was especially so with Finn, whose lackadaisical attitude to practice and note learning did challenge my patience, as I could foresee that it would ultimately inhibit his ability to absorb information relating to expressive gesture while working to hinder his general confidence, as his performance goals became unreachable. Striking a balance between being encouraging on one hand and being realistically honest on the other was certainly not easy.

Ultimately, I did find the best way forward was to encourage Finn to formulate his own goals, with greater emphasis on systematic notational preparation as the main focus area, rather than trying to fit in with my research project’s emphasis on developing musical expression through expressive gesture. By Lesson 12 it had become evident that there was a conflict between my expectations, the expectations of Finn’s parents, and the realities of Finn’s learning trajectory, and compromise was necessary in order to preserve the overall positivity of the learning environment. Once I let go of the pressure of his parents’ expectations regarding the speed of his progress when compared to other students, the expectation of fulfilling my research goals, and my own latent expectations of what Finn should be able to achieve within a particular time frame, the course of Finn’s learning journey became more enjoyable for everyone. As I reflect on how far he has come in the two years since data collection ended in late 2014, Finn’s use of expressive gesture and resultant tonal nuance have improved immeasurably, as has his general sense of pride in his musical ability. No doubt this is in some way indicative of my efforts to preserve a less stressful and more positive learning environment, where his uniqueness has been celebrated and his challenges supported.

I did at times find Jade’s apparent lack of ambition and drive disheartening, and I sometimes felt frustrated that her lack of confidence thwarted my own enthusiasm in
the one-to-one context. I eventually came to accept that that was part of Jade’s own journey, and not a reflection on my worth as a teacher. The best thing that I could do for her was to provide a soft place to fall, and to continue to support her, where the very act of playing the piano could be seen as a source of self-expression. I began to feel that in the future, the pianistic ability could be something that feeds her identity, pride and self-confidence as she takes her place in the world. I am reminded of my own learning history, and sometimes find it difficult to believe that I have come as far as I have, considering the issues with self-confidence and performance anxiety that have peppered my past. As I reflect on my own piano teachers, I cannot always remember exactly what they said to me, but I do remember how they made me feel. While I might not have been the most gifted or receptive student in their studio, something clearly ‘stuck’; energy, attitude and enthusiasm might be transferable, perhaps after many years have passed.

As I watched the recordings of Adrian’s lessons, I became cognisant of my role in facilitating a positive learning environment, where an atmosphere of ‘fellowship’ between Adrian, Jane, Oliver and me is celebrated. While Jane’s constant presence and questioning in the one-to-one environment could be misconstrued as being intrusive or overbearing, I sincerely valued her proactivity and respected her desire to learn alongside her son. I could see in the recordings how much Adrian respected his mother, felt her pride and sought her encouragement, and I endeavoured to capitalise on that to maximise his learning potential. At present, our ‘harmonious trio’ continues to be a great source of personal and professional satisfaction, as Adrian’s potential with the piano is nurtured. Nonetheless, there were times during the research period when Adrian’s perfectionist tendencies occasionally emerged, usually as a result of my inability to recognise that I was aiming for too much musical detail too soon, or not scaffolding my requests in an optimal way. Indeed, in a couple of instances the lessons were briefly suspended when Adrian’s extreme sensitivity to criticism and my inflexibility towards perfectionism collided. Through the project, I came to understand that despite all his amazing strengths, Adrian does occasionally present with rhythmic weakness that needs careful nurturing, rather than magnification due to inflexible pedagogy and unrealistic expectation on my part.
During the second interview with Kelly and her parents, I felt a real sense of personal pride when they told me that Kelly really respected my teaching and my efforts to cultivate a learning environment that is enjoyable yet serious in its intentions to harness Kelly’s potential in realising musical excellence. In Lesson 8, I explained that part of the reason that I conduct the lessons with such positivity was to lessen anxiety that could manifest as physical tension, which ultimately is counterproductive to fluid movement and self-expression. As I wrote in my Reflective Journal, ‘aiming to create an atmosphere of joy and a love of learning is surely as important as teaching a student to play with joy’ (Kelly Lesson 32). While there were many positive lessons, particularly Lessons 31 and 32, when it seemed that Kelly was making more of an effort to be engaged and energetic both in the lessons and during her home practice, there were some lessons that I did not feel good about. In Lessons 27 and 28, it was apparent that Kelly was very tired and her playing was lacking energy and enthusiasm, which of course made the realisation of expressive playing very challenging. While I had been very gentle and encouraging with Kelly up to this point due to her quiet and compliant personality, I criticised her for a lack of enthusiasm in lessons and for not being energetic in her playing. I sensed that both she and Jean were uncomfortable with what must have seemed unduly harsh, considering how much she was practising and how hard she was working generally. Nonetheless, Kelly’s attitude did shift, and I sensed a noticeable difference in her manner both within lessons and within her playing generally from Lesson 29 onwards. We did discuss it openly within subsequent lessons, and it seemed that a combination of cutting down on her commitments, having more sleep and trying harder to be more engaged and expressively energetic during her home practice and at lessons did make a noticeable difference to Kelly’s ability to play with enhanced expressive intent. In addition, Kelly became more talkative during lessons, asking more questions, and trying harder to be more involved collaboratively, and it gave me great delight to give her this feedback.

5.5.2 Teacher’s Use of Expressive Gesture, Body Movement and Vocalisation

When I began to retrospectively watch footage of the research participants’ lessons, I was surprised by the extent to which I employed expressive gesture, body movement and expressive vocalisation in my general demeanour and during practical
demonstration. While it now seems a key strategy to encourage overall expressivity in the research participants by emulating such behaviour, the extent to which it was present was still unexpected. I became aware that it occasionally seemed disproportionate, especially with Jade and Finn, who were perhaps in need of more consolidation of the ‘nuts and bolts’ of the music before such strategies would be truly constructive. On reflection, it seemed as though there was a subtle undercurrent that pervaded the lessons, where familiarity with the notation would happen ‘naturally’ if Jade and Finn received copious amounts of ‘inspiration’ via my expressive behaviour.

It was around the midway point of the study that I began to acknowledge that some students really need much more guidance with the practicalities of score preparation, perhaps more than I felt was reasonable, especially considering their intelligence, age and years of learning. Rather than laziness, poor memory, lack of motivation and practice, or aloofness, I began to consider that such limitations may be due to procrastination that has its origins in anxiety, fear and a lack of confidence to ‘get the job done’. Building the resilience to move through these obstacles has been described as moving through ‘the learning pit’, where success comes from learning to know what to do, when one is uncertain with what to do (Nottingham, 2015). I now understand that this process is in many ways similar to the doctoral research process, which is often laden with uncertainty and a lack of clear pathways, despite having good advice. Having to become self-reliant while building new skills to face new challenges is at times overwhelming, especially if one is not exactly sure what those new skills might be, or indeed even how to start developing them. ‘Having a go’, despite all this uncertainty, leads to new insights and heightened motivation, even if doing so is at the very least, uncomfortable and somewhat frustrating. Using this perspective helped me to see Jade and Finn in a new light, and I was able to understand their worry and lack of confidence much more than I had in the past.

After the essential groundwork has been laid and familiarity with the notation has been firmly established over an extended period of time, in the following example I encourage Jade towards greater expressive, physical and personal involvement within her interpretation of Alkan’s *La Vision*, Op. 63 No. 1. By using practical demonstration, expressive gesture and expressive vocalisation, I coach her ‘from the
sidelines’, where expressive gesture, conducting and overall phraseology are employed, all without causing undue distraction (Jade, Lesson 32).

https://vimeo.com/196839474/bfe52fdcd3

**Jade Lesson 32**
As I gesture a forward movement with my hand and upper body, I say, ‘Put your back into it … You’ve got a beautiful basic sound, but the whole thing’s quite flat … I can’t generate any sound (doing that)’. I play again, this time leaning forward from the hips towards the top note while singing ‘and put you back …’. I continue to play while saying, ‘Put your nose over the notes’. Jade smiles and starts again. I come over to help her lean forward towards the top note of the phrase, and then continue to use expressive gesture and body movement to conduct her. Interesting, she doesn’t seem to need to look up at the score this time. I say, ‘Different colour for minor … ring, ring, ring … and up again … E Major … That’s a lot better already … you’ve got to put your back into it’. I ask her not to let go of any long notes, so as to avoid a loss of physical and expressive connection. I demonstrate, saying, ‘The previous note creeps out of the G, but if you let go of the G, you’ve got no reference point’. I play again, saying, ‘That’s the first phrase, don’t take your finger off’.

**Adrian Lesson 20**
He puts his index finger up saying, ‘Let it Go!’ so I start playing the music from Frozen. Adrian smiles at Jane. ‘Oh, you mean let your arm be loose (yeah) … so loose arm and aligned body behind the notes?’ I dramatise and liken it to conducting where you would conduct the phrase with a single gesture, rather than individual notes. Jane laughs and Adrian says, ‘You would stiffen your muscles like this’. He turns and smiles at Jane again. I say, ‘Playing the piano is like conducting (expressive gesture) … and that’s what you do with your arm … It becomes a single gesture, not like a series … not like a bunch of notes’. Jane says, ‘Not like a robot’. Adrian demonstrates, saying, ‘Yeah when you let your arm go, you can go like very fast, but when you stiffen up, you have to go… like that’. I say, ‘Of course you can (Yeah, yeah) … That’s the whole idea of piano playing, not to make it like, relaxing, like (I sit and ‘demonstrate’) … but making sure that everything is working optimally… So you need some tension (Adrian – ‘But not too much’) … but not too much’. Adrian says, ‘Because if you have zero tension, everything fall apart’ and I agree.

https://vimeo.com/196836942/7c63654bcd
In the next excerpt from the first movement of Haydn’s *Little Concerto in C Major*, I use a combination of expressive gesture, body movement, dance, expressive vocalisation and facial expression to impart the idea of ‘telling a story’ through sound. Improvised sentences that reflect the balanced ‘question and answer’ structure, typical of the Classical style, give the phrases meaning beyond what is written on the page. By utilising these techniques within practical demonstration and ensemble playing, Kelly’s playing transforms into a vibrant, exuberant soundscape and a vehicle to showcase her obvious enthusiasm. As a further means for Kelly to ‘catch’ my expressive behaviour, I summarise the expressive content by writing dynamic indications in the score, matching those same indications with my voice and behaviour in real time (Kelly, Lesson 1).

https://vimeo.com/196843800/40a8dd47cb

The following excerpt shows how the use of teacher expressive behaviour can enhance the studio environment and uplift a student who was, in recent lessons, struggling to energise her playing. Kelly can be seen playing the opening of Mozart’s *Rondo in D Major*, K485. Using expressive gesture, body movement and vocal inflection, I coach Kelly to ‘roll forwards’ in order to give the playing energy, momentum and a greater sense of purpose. It is noteworthy how I lean my body forwards at the apex of each phrase, perhaps in order to encourage Kelly to employ
the pelvic tilt, a forward thrust of the upper body that we had been recently exploring. Kelly seems very pleased with herself and the playing sounds genuinely confident and expressively active. In order to enhance these concepts, I analogue my behaviour and Kelly’s playing with an energetic ‘Monday morning’ in their household (Kelly, Lesson 29).

https://vimeo.com/196855873/fddc4593d9

Kelly Lesson 29
I suggest ‘getting softer … getting louder’ and Kelly copies. I do a critical comparison with my voice, and ask her to show those listening the difference between the two phrases. Kelly nods and I ask her to start from the beginning. I remind her to give more sound as she approaches the top D’s, referring to them as ‘sunshine’. I am quite energetic and vocally enthused here, and Kelly smiles while she plays. I use expressive gesture and conducting to coach her, saying, ‘don’t slow down’ and ‘roll forwards’, while intermittently singing the melodic line. I tell Kelly that her playing has really improved and she looks pleased when I say, ‘Well done … that is awesome playing’. I ask her what she did differently, as the playing seems more energetic. When she doesn’t answer, I ask if she is feeling more confident. She thinks a little, and tentatively replies, ‘yes’. Both Kelly and Jean laugh when I suggest that she have more ‘Sprite’ (soft drink) before her next lesson, as she did today. I say, ‘It’s got to be really bubbly, and fresh, and sweet, and energetic … like you’ve just had a Sprite!’ Kelly is smiling as she nods. I use the analogy of energetically ‘looking for something to do’, rather than playing like a ‘Sunday night before school and everyone’s really tired and ready for bed’. Jean and Kelly chuckle and I say, ‘It’s sort of a Monday morning song… off we go!’

5.5.3 Student-Centred Learning and ‘Collaboration rather than Domination’

The data indicates that a judicious balance between ‘transfer’ and ‘transformative’ pedagogy (Carey & Grant, 2014) was brought to bear throughout the study and, as expected, the student/teacher relationship was negotiated, reflecting the uniqueness of each individual. ‘Collaboration rather than domination’ (Carey & Grant, 2014) means meeting students where they are, acknowledging what they already know. While a subtle fluidity was usually evident over a series of lessons, this equilibrium did, on occasion, shift within a single lesson. At times, the students seemed to thrive within the master–apprentice framework, where direction was explicit and expectations non-negotiable, but on occasion, excessive dogmatism appeared to reduce confidence, autonomy and ownership of expressive ideas. At times, I felt the need to be a ‘pedagogical chameleon’, where I adapted my teaching style to ‘fit’ different families, their shifting expectations and the educational goals that they had for their children (Reflective Journal, Adrian Lesson 6) and even their way of parenting (Reflective
Journal, Kelly Lesson 35). Fostering open communication through a learning partnership between student, parent and teacher, which can be best described as ‘the golden triangle’, was crucial to overall success, not only from the standpoint of this research, but in terms of the overall engagement and progress of each student.

During the research period, I felt that Jade was perhaps the trickiest student in which to strike this balance. She did seem to need firm expectations, lest she would slide into apathy and do as little as possible, yet if I pushed her too hard, it really did affect her confidence where she became reactive instead of proactive. To this end, it was my intention to foster her autonomy by involving her as much as possible in the content of the lessons, asking her to write in fingering, rhythmic information and expressive gestural indications into the score, and towards the middle of the data collection period, asking her to write weekly goals in her homework diary herself:

I playfully encourage her to be a musician and write fingering, timing or other in the score so as to trigger her memory later. I suggest that she heighten her awareness of this part of the lesson and ‘take charge of her own learning’. I say ‘very good’ when I see that Jade has written in exclamation marks, but she continues to wipe her nose nervously, though smiling widely. I say to write in ‘quavers’. I give Jade encouragement, saying that she is good at it, because ‘it’s fluent, there’s minimal notational errors and she portrays the character really nicely’. I help her to correct a couple of left-hand errors with chords, writing in chord names where necessary. Interestingly, Jade is not touching her nose nervously here – her demeanour is more positive and she is making eye contact with me. I suggest that she can give herself space to make corrections, and pleasingly, she goes straight in for the chords we were just practising – ‘make sure that at home you give yourself the space (time) to sit for 10 minutes and repeat until it’s right’. She does well, but she plays quavers as semiquavers again – she takes out the sheet, takes a pencil and writes. While she writes, I ask her what her favourite part of the piece is – she answers (very timidly) … I agree and say that I like that part too, and that she has a lovely sound for the piece. I ask her to write down what she might improve with the piece this week, saying, ‘What are you going to give yourself space for fix up?’ (Lesson 8 Synopsis)
Up to this point, I had written in her homework diary for her, thinking that it would be quicker and she would pay more attention, but it turned out that the reverse was true. It seemed that the more demanding I came, the more introverted Jade would become:

I ask her if she has been practising and she says, ‘yes I have’. ‘OK, all right – have you been putting the metronome on and getting them a bit faster?’ (No) …Well, when are you going to do it?’ Jade nervously itches her forearm. (I don’t think I have asked her to do so, so it’s perhaps a little unfair, but it would be good if she could develop greater autonomy). ‘Come on then, B-flat Major right hand’ – I ask her to ‘join in’ again, but it’s making matters worse! She turns the page to look at the scale, but I ask her to close the book and do it from memory (?) She makes a worried sigh, and doesn’t actually close the book. It seems that I am trying to prove a point in order to shock her a little, but I am actually hindering any real learning here. She touches her nose nervously and glances at Joanne as I say, ‘join in’. She has a good try here, and apart from the last octave, which I remind her to do, she plays OK. She seems flustered, but I say, ‘OK let’s hear E-flat Major left hand’, to which she replies with the same concerned sigh. (Lesson 20 Synopsis)

Finn often needed a very direct and literal style of teaching that was not open to misunderstanding, but flexibility was necessary in order to afford him time to process my requests. I did find that as the study progressed, affording him the opportunity to reformulate and write down my directions in his own words was the best way forward, as this fostered his autonomy and growing sense of responsibility for his own progress. Further, having specific instructions that he himself had written left no room for forgetfulness, and was a valuable way to encourage his growing understanding of critical reflection, and its role in increasing overall progress. Like Jade, I found that by asking Finn to write harmonic indications, fingering and articulatory detail in the score, he was much more likely to ‘notice’ them and remember their purpose. Finn’s inquisitive nature led to many fruitful discussions, where instruction was veiled within conversation, further enhancing his understanding and memory for musical detail.

Adrian started the research period with signs that if I had not reined him in, he would likely dominate the lessons, wasting time fulfilling his own agenda with irrelevant
questioning and a powerful need to be in control, seemingly without insight. For this reason, he needed definitive master–apprentice boundaries, where it was necessary to remind him who was the teacher and who was the student. Nonetheless, once he realised that it was he himself that would benefit by making effective use of my experience and knowledge as the ‘senior’ learning partner, he took to the ‘new’ arrangement as co-collaborator with his typical zeal.

Kelly was an unusual case. She thrived by being directed and would complete tasks as required, watching the recordings of her lessons in order to make specific improvements, and making explosive progress within a relatively short period of time. While this was certainly exciting to watch as her teacher, I did feel that confining her to such a dependent role did seem to invoke a certain passivity, and inhibited her expressive ability where her playing seemed to lack energy and authenticity. By involving her more in the lessons, and encouraging her to discuss her learning, I found that she started to open up more, and I feel that that change was reflected in her playing by the end of the research period.

5.5.4 Room Set-Up

Duet playing with a strong, vigorous, musical individual is the best way to catch rhythm as one might catch measles. Rhythm is infectious.

– Josef Lhevinne

The data indicates that an effective tool to expedite the uptake of expressive gesture within the learning environment is the use of two instruments in the teaching room. The teaching studio utilised in the study was equipped with two grand pianos and adjustable stools, important for favourable seating. The students were supported from the feet up, achieving lightness in the arms. This maximised the ability to reach register extremes and minimised the possibility that students would use the keys themselves as their main support structure. Pedal extenders that double as footstools were useful for very young students, Andrew in particular, though he was not included in the final report. In ways that working from a single instrument may not,
demonstration of expressive gesture, rubato and critical reflection provided immediate feedback for the students in this study. Further, the opportunity for ensemble playing seems to have provided the means for the students to ‘catch expression’:

It seems that ensemble playing is an often underutilised, yet valuable way to encourage critical listening in developing expressive tone colour and rhythmic reliability. (Reflective Journal, Adrian Lesson 25)

The advantages of ensemble playing were highlighted during the study: students might ‘catch expression’ and might just ‘enjoy playing’:

Q – Do you like it when I play along with you?
A – Yes.

Q – How do you … how come you like that?
A – Um, I just enjoy playing, playing with you. (Kelly, Interview 2)

Further, in her second interview, Kelly said that she found the immediacy of demonstration at the second piano useful, helping her to imitate expressive gesture more readily:

Because it shows me … it sh … it … it sounds clear to me how to do it because like if you sort of do it, I can memorise what it looks like and I sort of copy it. But, um, if you just say it, I uh … it’s hard for me to picture in my mind. (Kelly, Interview 2)

During their interview, I mentioned to Jade and Julia that as a teacher, I enjoy teaching at the Conservatorium, as the room set-up provides ample space to demonstrate pedagogical concepts relating to expressive gesture in a very physical way, rather than relying solely on verbal rhetoric (Jade Interview 1). Similarly, my Reflective Journal reads:

42 As Kelly plays, I sit and add the right hand at the second piano. As we come to the triplet bars, I ask her to play them faster. I play along with her and it works very well in helping her ‘catch’ the rhythmic stretch (Lesson 36 Synopsis).
As opposed to a small studio with one piano, teaching at the Young Conservatorium gives me the mental and physical space that I need to do the job well. (Reflective Journal, Adrian Lesson 13)

Owing to time constraints and venue availability, occasional lessons and rehearsals were held while working with a single instrument. This proved to be less than optimal in terms of time efficiency, coaching of rhythm\(^{43}\) and part playing, inhibiting the general flow of learning:

Duet rehearsals definitely need a double instrument set up – not only is there not enough space to coach them, but rhythmic errors can often be quickly remedied by coaching a tricky section with one student and then the other, each time either playing the same part in unison, then opposite parts, before the students play their individual parts in ensemble once again. (Synopsis of Adrian and Andrew’s duet rehearsal, May 2014)

While I often used the iPad or iPhone throughout the study to record the students’ playing in order to encourage body awareness and critical reflection, it was not until recently that I noticed a curious absence of mirrors in the piano teaching studios at the Conservatorium in contrast to other rooms that instrumentalists and singers utilised. Such a simple measure as providing mirrors might have a lasting impact. The studio where I teach is now equipped with a mirror that can be moved, and I have started to consider the potential benefits of having the entire studio mirrored, including all walls and the ceiling. A less impractical and costly option may be the installation of cameras, facilitating both a top-down view of the keys, as well as right and left sides. This is not so unusual, as many teachers who utilise Skype in their teaching studio may attest to. In October 2016, I presented a piano masterclass for the MTAQ, in which such technology was utilised for the visual benefit of teaching professionals in the audience, but I found that I garnered valuable information from such visual angles, which I could then draw the students’ attention to and incorporate into the teaching.

\(^{43}\) When I am coaching Adrian with the rhythm of his part, it seems that I am restricted by the physical set-up, where there is only one upright piano, and I have to rely mostly on verbal instruction (Synopsis of Adrian and Andrew’s duet rehearsal, May 2014).
5.5.5 Selection of Student-Centred Repertoire

The data indicates that if a student is curious and fascinated by the piece(s) they are playing, it is far more likely that they will be emotionally invested in their learning, and perhaps more likely to be implement concepts that capitalise on their ability to communicate this interest to others. Prominent educational psychologists have recently reminded us of the causal link between intrinsic interest and productive learning.

We learn when we want to learn, when something interests us and seems relevant to our lives and wellbeing, when we think our lives or the lives of those important to us will improve through the learning, when we are intrinsically motivated to make the effort. Contrary to what some educators think learning … cannot be forced on students through rewards, raising one’s voice, or punishment. (Ben-Yosef & Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2012)

In line with other academic subjects, Renwick and McPherson (2002) have provided empirical evidence to suggest that when given the option to select repertoire that interests them, students are more likely to focus on their pieces for longer periods of time, persevere in the face of difficulty, enjoy their learning and display a marked increase in cognitive and metacognitive strategies that typify the practice of more advanced musicians. To many this would hardly be surprising, yet research has shown that the majority of instrumental teachers in the English-speaking world continue to hold themselves responsible for choosing most of the repertoire played by their students, while primarily directing attention in the lesson to ‘learning the notes’ (Reid, 2001). Reynolds and Symons (2001) have found that providing students with choice results in superior learning outcomes and even seemingly trivial choices can lead to increased intrinsic motivation, perceived competence (Cordova & Lepper, 1996) and self-determination (Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith & Deci, 1978). Renwick and McPherson (2002) have suggested that qualitative research in instrumental music learning confirm these findings (Brändström, 1995; Jorgensen, 2000; Mackworth-Young, 1990). Within general classroom contexts, Pink (2009) has suggested that triggering motivation clusters around creating opportunities for autonomy, providing tools to attain mastery and encouraging learners to find purpose in the learning task. When indexing musical motivation, Austin, Renwick and McPherson (2006) have
found that ‘children will be inclined to continue learning only if they feel competent and believe that their learning is useful or important to what they plan to do in the future’ (p. 232).

Along with mastery orientation, importance and extrinsic utility value, intrinsic interest has been one aspect measured as part of task value, a set of variables used to assess students’ learning goals and beliefs in academic settings (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) and in instrumental music learning (McPherson & McCormick, 1999). Interest theory has recently been the subject of extensive research (Krapp, Hidi & Renninger, 1992), with Hidi (2000) suggesting that interest in a learning situation results in increased cognitive function, focused attention, persistence and emotional involvement. Further, interest (Schiefele, 1991; de Sousa & Oakhill, 1996), like task value (McPherson & McCormick, 1999; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990) is associated with higher-order learning strategies and enhances learning quality, subjectivity and meaning-oriented processing of text (Schiefele & Rheinberg, 1997). Of obvious significance to this study is whether the degree of choice and intrinsic interest in the pieces that students play affects their uptake of the expressive performance strategies described herein, and whether the deployment of such strategies may lead to an increased perception of musical competence, emotional involvement, task value and overall learning satisfaction.

High levels of intrinsic motivation or ‘inner drive’ have been identified as being crucial to sustain the years of investment that a child needs to learn an instrument successfully (Davidson et al., 1997, as cited in Pitts et al., 2000, p. 45). Faber (2004) has recently outlined the Facilitative Factors Model, a two-stage dynamic that may lead to increasing intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement with musical study. The Facilitative Factors Model provides a theoretical basis for the two transitions between the three stages of Bloom’s (1985) Stages of Talent Development (Faber, 2004). ‘As the facilitative factors increase in mutual correlation, they induce the motivation, commitment, and effort to launch the student into the next qualitative stage described by Bloom’ (Faber, 2004, p. 13–14).

The student begins in the exploratory stage where activity is based on playful exploration of the subject and the synergistic interplay between increasing self-esteem and a sense of competence is capitalised through reinforcing social experiences.
Increased motivation and commitment catapult the student towards the Industry Stage where the repertoire increases in difficulty and the lessons are more business-like as per the second stage of Bloom’s (1985) model (Faber, 2004). Though more intense than the first stage, the student finds their esteem needs are met (Maslow, 1954, as cited in Faber, 2004) and sees the activity as important to the self (self-determination theory) due to increased competence attributed to industrious engagement (Erikson, 1959, as cited in Faber, 2004). Feeling empowered by motives of self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954, as cited in Faber, 2004) and the need to form an identity (Erikson, 1959, as cited in Faber, 2004), the student focuses time and energy due to their passion for the subject. This of course leads to higher degrees of intrinsic motivation and commitment as competence, identity and passion grow stronger and stronger (Faber, 2004). Finally, the student transitions to the Identity Stage where intrinsic motivation and demonstrable competence have peaked, development is of professional or conservatory standard and the student/mentor relationship is of principal importance, the third stage of Bloom’s (1985) model (Faber, 2004). Of interest here is the role of expression in building levels of musical competence and whether expressive skills influence the reinforcing found in the first stage of this two-stage model. Environmental considerations aside, careful selection of repertoire that builds on a student’s strengths while providing scaffolded challenge is preferable to assigning material that is too hard for their ability in terms of expressive content and motor complexity. These factors cannot be ignored and one has to wonder to what degree the troublesome rate of injury amid child (Ranelli, Smith & Straker, 2011) and adult (Milanovic, 2011; Wristen, 1998, 2000) pianists is the result of physical and mental tension due to less than optimal combination of challenge and skill level.

Based on the above research literature, my own reflections and the analysis of semi-structured interviews with the research participants, I have come to understand that the ‘environmental factors’ that might facilitate the uptake of expressive gesture, must include not only the physical and emotional environment of the teaching space, and the personal and pedagogical interactions therein, but also the metaphorical environment – the style and character of the repertoire that encapsulates their learning, through which expressive pedagogy is disseminated. It seems that if students are encouraged to play what they are interested in playing, the whole pedagogical process is imbued with curiosity and a sense of ownership through which expressive gesture
may be fostered in a meaningful way. Student-selected repertoire and a ‘fascination’ with playing it seems more likely to provide a vessel in which to foster curiosity, self-efficacy and learning autonomy, while providing a level of interest that might facilitate expressive pedagogy, and ultimately promote an authentic connection to the student’s expressive inner landscape. The four case studies and their various repertoire choices appear to demonstrate the versatility of gesture as a gateway to expressive playing, and yet, they highlight the need to treat each student as a unique individual. Giving students permission to express themselves through repertoire for which they feel affinity might encourage their desire to continue piano studies in the long term, perhaps due to increased self-efficacy and overall learning satisfaction.

When compared with the other pieces that she was playing at that time, I noted that Jade had a clear sense of expressive connection to Takács’ *Spanish Donkey Driver*:

Jade smiles and then starts playing *Spanish Donkey Driver*. This is clearly her best piece – the tone is beautiful and the languid nature of the writing suits her style. The connection that she has with the piece as compared with the others is unmistakable – she moves her trunk in and out with the phrases, her arms ‘dance’ and her head is involved in expressing piece as much as her body. Did I choose the right pieces for her initially? One can only wonder whether I should have involved her much more – I remember that I chose the pieces for her, without any consultation. Nonetheless, there is a real sense of width, shape and confidence here. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 16)

Similarly, after not seeing Adrian for a couple of weeks, his interest in learning Mozart’s *Alla Turca* seemed to generate quick progress:

He tells me he got four pages finished in two weeks (Mark – amazing). He looks at Jane and smiles proudly. Jane says that he picked it up quickly, because he likes it and he enjoys playing it and put the time in to practice it. Adrian tells me, ‘Grandpa has the CD for it’. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 29)

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44 A ‘fascination’ with the piece seems to help Adrian learn quickly, and impacts positively on his ability to successfully convey the pictorial character, increasing its expressive potential (Reflective Journal, Lesson 5).
During the same lesson, Adrian played a little of Beethoven’s *Rage Over a Lost Penny*. Though the amount of material was not substantial, the amount of expressive detail that he had independently implemented in the playing impressed me:

Jane suggests to Adrian that he show me *Rage over a Lost Penny*, which he plays the first couple of pages with hands together. I smile and say, ‘Wow! That’s actually really good! (Really?) Yeah! (Yay!)’. Oliver laughs and Jane says that he didn’t learn anything new on this piece this week, due to the octaves being unmanageable, and what he had just played he had learnt in the first week or our two week hiatus. I comment, ‘You’re getting so fast’ and Jane says, ‘Because he enjoys joyful pieces, that’s why [he] pick [picked it] up quite quickly, yeah’. (Reflective Journal, Lesson 29)

In her second interview, Kelly told me that she enjoyed learning pieces that she already knew:

I think it (learning famous pieces) sort of makes it more fun. Yeah, ‘cause I already know some … It’s less boring when you, like, play pieces you like.

This is not unusual, but I was surprised that she meant Chopin and other ‘traditional’ piano literature:

I say to Jean that it can be tricky to find appropriate pieces for those who are advancing while still young. Then I say, ‘I know! What about Chopin?’ Jean and Kelly laugh. Jean says that Kelly loves Chopin, and mentions *Fantasie* and *Prelude*. I ask which *Prelude*, and they are unsure, as Kelly listens to the whole CD and likes them all. I sit down and start playing a little of *Raindrop Prelude*, saying that this is probably the most famous one. Kelly smiles as she recognises it, but when I whisper, ‘It’s too big for you’, both her and Jean laugh. I suggest that a Chopin *Nocturne* that would be suitable. (Lesson 9 Synopsis)

While not included in the final case study analysis, Andrew’s response to my question regarding which was his favourite piece was revealing and is included here. He won first place at the Gold Coast Eisteddfod in August 2014 for a captivating performance
of the *Aria* from J. S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. He was clearly emotionally invested in the performance, perhaps due to his love of the piece:

> It [*Goldberg Variations*] just hypnotises me. I like it. It’s very, very romantic. (Andrew, Interview 2)

### 5.6 Secondary Research Question 3: What Factors Might Explain Differing Degrees of Perceived Success in the Uptake of Expressive Gesture among the Research Participants?

#### 5.6.1 Variability of Motor Skill

The data suggests that proprioceptive awareness, spatial perception and motor coordination can vary significantly between individuals, and could contribute to the rate and ease at which expressive gesture may be assimilated, perhaps due to variation in the ability to detect and imitate subtle changes in body movement. Challenges with body awareness may lead to over-extension of the fingers and twisting of the wrists, both of which appear to cause rigidity in the forearms, thereby inhibiting gestural freedom and overall fluidity of movement. Many teachers will recognise that some students seem to play with superior motor skill and physical coordination, and are generally able to ‘pick things up’ more quickly than others. Less noticeable is what may be happening ‘inside’ the student, and how proprioceptive awareness, spatial perception and motor coordination can vary significantly from person to person, especially as its acuity is age dependent (Ferrel, Crighton & Sturrock, 1992, as cited in Smitt & Bird, 2013, p. 469) and it can vary across the lifespan, becoming more accurate through childhood and adolescence, peaking in young adulthood and progressively deteriorating thereafter (Suetterlin & Sayer, 2014, p. 313). It is all too easy to dismiss a youngster as being ‘uncoordinated’, ‘clumsy’ or ‘not suited to playing the piano’, when they may have other abilities, and just need time to mature until their kinaesthetic abilities ‘catch up’. Coined in 1906 by Charles Sherrington to describe our ‘secret sixth sense’, proprioception\(^{45}\) provides

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\(^{45}\) Proprioception refers to the ability to spatially sense where the parts of one’s body are in relation to each other.
information on the physics of the body, the momentary distribution and dynamic of masses, forces acting on the limbs and their highly nonlinear interactions. The maps derived from these complex calculations not only guide body movement, they also (together with touch) sense the size and shape of objects and measure the geometry of external space. (Smetacek & Meschsner, 2004, p. 21)

According to Cech and Martin (2012), ‘proprioception is the foundation for purposeful movements such as imitation, reaching, and locomotion’ (p. 220). Specifically, the three commonly accepted subdivisions that comprise proprioception are joint position sense (JPS), or statesthesia; kinaesthesia, or the sense of movement; and dynamic position sense, the ability to monitor position during motion – an amalgamation of statesthesia and kinaesthesia (Proske & Gandevia, 2009; Goble, Coxon, Wenderoth, Van Impe & Swinnen, 2009, as cited in Sutterlin & Sayer, 2014, p. 315). With the above in mind, proprioceptive input must be considered an essential part of any physical activity, and in teaching such a dexterous activity as pianism, we would do well to consider such matters with more than just passing interest. Indeed, proprioceptive feedback is particularly important in instrumental playing (Carpinteyro-Lara, 2014; Clark, Holmes, Feeley & Redding, 2013; Smitt & Bird, 2013; Watson, 2009) and in the gestural pedagogy of expressive conducting (Mathers, 2009), and the ability to detect and replicate subtle changes of body position and spatial patterns that are so important to a musician’s skill set might be taken for granted (McAllister 2012, p. 171). Of interest to this study is that the adoption of expressive gesture seems to be easier for some than others, perhaps due to differing proprioceptive ability. What will be of wider significance are the pedagogical tools that may enhance the adoption of expressive gesture, why this might be so, and how these strategies may deepen our understanding of how one learns to play the piano more generally.

5.6.2 Security of Notation

If you are thinking about your steps, you're not dancing. (Anonymous)

If the rudiments of notes, rhythm and fingering are confident, gestures start to become more automatic and there is spare cognitive space to align these
with expressive nuance, sound, and communication of the musical character.

(Reflective Journal, Jade Lesson 8)

In order for cognitive resources to be more readily directed towards expressive
gestural uptake and concepts involving spatial information, three-dimensional
directional movement, and a deeper ‘connection’ to the piece, the data suggests that
reasonable proficiency with notes and fingering be demonstrated first. An extract
from the Lesson Synopses illustrates this:

I say to Jane that Adrian has done a good job to stabilise the piece by using
the metronome, so that we are able to ‘do something with it’, i.e. He is more
readily able to implement expressive ideas without the notes, rhythm or
tempo become a distraction. Jane pats Adrian on the back and compliments
him for ‘meeting your teacher’s expectation’; Adrian seems pleased. (Lesson
24 Synopsis)

The data indicates that knowledge of these rudiments may be facilitated by assisting
the student to set goals that enable scaffolded development, whilst recognising and
validating student effort. Further, the data advocates the employment of specific
practice techniques that foster the self-confidence to play with expressive insight. For
Adrian and Kelly, the process of merging notation with expressive gesture and
expressive tone colour was relatively easy, for Jade, it is not as easy, and for Finn, it
was quite challenging, at least during the research period. Adrian and Kelly
demonstrated greater weekly practice commitment than Jade and Finn, but even so,
there were differing degrees of engagement and success with the strategies explored
within the lessons. Adrian and Kelly seemed better able to sequence their learning by
breaking down large projects into more manageable tasks, and the implementation of
the underlying gestural information that lay between the notes appeared to be more
successful. Individual poeticisms seemed to reveal themselves when supported by
such foundations, with the individual confident enough with the material to be able to
‘let go of the notes’, and to envisage the piece as more of a dance, where ‘rolling’

46 That said, Kelly wasn’t a perfect student and if she didn’t know her notes well, her ability to generate
the momentum required to employ expressive gesture was inhibited:

In terms of the Chopin Nocturne, a lack of confidence with the left-hand notes appears to
inhibit the momentum required to cover the notes with ease: ’Aim to memorise the notes, then
slide over the top of them, picking them up along the way’ (Reflective Journal, Lesson 28).
fluently through the spatial patterns that link the notes became the main focus. Merging multiple senses can prove challenging, and often the exploration and refinement of expressive gesture and tonal nuance became possible only when the students’ playing contained a high degree of prior automation. Nonetheless, each student’s expressive gestural vocabulary increased in complexity, reliability and reproducibility over the research period, with various pedagogical tools and practice techniques encouraging this unique process to occur.

It seems that the students themselves can provide a valuable triangulation of these observations. When I asked Finn if employing expressive gesture distracted him from the notation, he replied:

    Say if you don’t know a couple of notes then you’re a little bit like restricted … but if you do know, know it all fluently and have it all prepared early, then it all just flows real good. (Finn, Interview 2)

Similarly, Jade appeared to draw an analogous conclusion:

    Sometimes like if I don’t know the section very well or something, then like if I don’t know the notes, then it is difficult to actually focus on it (body movement) more … Like if I don’t know the notes, then it’s just hard. (Jade, Interview 2)

5.6.3 Self-Confidence and Personal Ambition

The data suggests that during the research period, there were differing levels of perceived self-confidence and personal ambition among the research participants, both in their musical ability and within their own view of themselves. It seems that pedagogical effectiveness will, to a certain extent be coloured by an individual’s self-perception, which is of course subject to change across the lifespan. For example, Kelly describes herself as ‘stubborn and picky’, with Jean commenting, ‘She doesn’t like to lose something; she wants to be special’ (Interview 1). Further, Jean describes Kelly as a hard worker who can become bored easily (Lesson 3 Synopsis). When asked what I should know about him, Adrian said, ‘I’m more special than the other kids … I was born to be special’ (Interview 1). When describing her son Finn, Sarah says, ‘gentle, caring, loveable, respectful, likeable, though pretty anxious’ (Interview
1). Sarah said that Finn learns best by having measurable goals, lest he leaves things until the last minute:

I’ve got to have this done for Mark by Saturday … It’s got that little bit of pressure but not too much pressure. Your terminology of little chunks works well with him, because he’ll see the big picture and go, ‘Oh, I can’t do that’ … Little chunks are awesome. (Finn Interview 1)

George relates to me that Finn does not really understand incremental learning, and needs a definitive deadline to accelerate his effort and progress:

It becomes overwhelming for him … then those other things we talked about, his anxiety takes over … then he doesn’t do it … it's almost like following the yellow brick road (Interview 1).

One has to also wonder to what extent the teacher influences the confidence of the student to strive for their best. For example, while I was absent during Lesson 32 doing some photocopying, Jade played the two pieces that she would perform at the piano recital the following day. While her Czerny study was not as successful, I was struck when reviewing the lesson some 12 months later by how vastly different her performance of *La Vision* was when she was alone in the room with her mother, compared to when I returned a few minutes later to listen. With my presence, and possibly anticipating forthcoming criticism, it seemed that she became much more vigilant in the second performance, keeping a firm eye of the score and second-guessing her decisions regarding keyboard geography, to the point where her hesitancy and physical restriction were palpable, and all of her expressive energy had seemingly evaporated. Whether this is due to a perceived negative influence on my part, a degree of performance anxiety on her part, or perhaps a combination of both, it does seem that coaching in ways to manage performance stress may be an area of consideration when looking at the bigger picture regarding expressive performance instruction. Perhaps there are better ways of enhancing a student’s confidence and energy in performance that I am yet to utilise? After the second performance mentioned above, I did coach Jade in having the confidence to ‘let go’ of the notes, with multiple references to being ‘an actor’ and having the courage to ‘tell the story’ being made. Despite being within the context of the conservatoire (tertiary)
environment, the concepts espoused by Rea (2015), where alongside instrumental skill, an authentic, confident personality is nurtured as a gateway to enhanced expressivity in performance could be of use here, albeit in the pre-tertiary context.

To produce a convincing performance, full of life and colour, one must put such characteristics into one’s movement at the piano, through the arms, fingers and body, as these are the only physical properties of the person that contact the keys, and no amount of intellect can replace such physical dependency. (Reflections, Jade, Lesson 16)

5.7 Secondary Research Question 4: How Do the Students, Parents and Teacher Perceive the Effectiveness of Such Pedagogy, Particularly Expressive Gesture and Concepts Relating to ‘Whole Body’ Playing?

5.7.1 Students’ Perception

While the students involved in the study have engaged with the research aims successfully overall, the degree of their subjectively perceived success with the adoption of expressive gesture is, as expected, variable. No two students are alike, and their physical, emotional and personal attributes are unique. Possible reasons for this variation were discussed in the previous research question. Along with varying degrees of familial support, a child’s intellect, concentration, interest, curiosity, ambition, memory, aural perception, expressive intention, confidence, resilience, ability to accept feedback, proprioception, core strength, motor skills and coordination may be highly refined at a young age, and they may therefore demonstrate a comparative advantage. However, it is encouraging that despite many variables, each student found their work with expressive gesture valuable, albeit in their own way.

During the interviews, the students reported that an expressive gestural approach to playing enhanced tone colour, dynamic control, technical-ease, physical comfort and self-confidence. While expressive gesture could be distracting if he was unsure of the notes, Finn reported that expressive gesture gave his playing more colour:
I think that it’s worthwhile to study them (gestures) because, well, especially in the (Chopin) *Nocturne* I’d say that’s where a lot of gestures were used. Like it gave it its colour and like …the way it sounds. (Finn, Interview 2)

Adrian said that the use of expressive gesture served to make his playing more expressive and flowing, much like a professional recording:

> Um … it (my playing), it’s more um, it’s more um, expressive. Um, it sounds more flowing. Um … um … more in, more um … um … um … sounds more like a CD. And it sounds better. (Sounds better. Why does it sound better? Does that … ‘cause I tell you it sounds better?) No. Because um other people tell me it sounds better. (Other people tell you it sounds better?) Not just one person. (Who tells you it sounds better?) … Um, random people. (Adrian, Interview 2)

From an alternative perspective, Kelly said that the use of expressive gesture helped to alleviate muscle fatigue in her hands:

> My hands used to be sore when I didn’t use like the gestures. So, like I can just progress smoothly without having any pain. (Kelly, Interview 2)

While he was not included in the final four case studies, Andrew’s perspective on the usefulness of expressive gesture is included here, as it summarises the dual function of expressive gesture, where ease of execution is coupled with resultant tonal shape:

> It just feels like I can play dynamics more like ease … easily because like, mm, I’m gliding … I’m like … flying across the keyboard. (Andrew, Interview 2)

During the study, it seemed that the research participants began to understand that the intrinsic correlation between sound and gesture could be applicable to frameworks that at first appear novel, yet are essentially quite similar:

> A lot of pieces will have like similar ways I guess, like how they go up and down … and similar like arm movements for it. (Finn, Interview 1)
Once I learn something in one song and I go onto a different song … that requires the same things (Kelly, Interview 2)

Each time a get a new piece, it’s like, um … um … I just seem to um get it a bit more. Like I understand like the technique and style a bit more … I understand, how, like, you’re supposed to be playing. (Adrian, Interview 2)

5.7.2 Parents’ Perception

Additionally, it is encouraging that during the study, the students’ parents were able to notice quantitative differences in their child’s playing, particularly with regards to improvement in facility, expression and sound quality. During, Lesson 17, I was encouraging Finn to sense his arm being ‘switched on from the elbow up’ in order to activate the expressive gesture that would in turn colour the melodic line of Say Something. Without prompt, Finn’s father George comments on the ‘organic’ nature of Finn’s sound, which I interpreted to mean that the tone sounded ‘alive’:

I can see it … I can see the difference, it’s very … it’s fluid. Organic is the best word I can use. (Finn, Lesson 17 Synopsis)

Similarly, Adrian’s father Oliver could sense a quantitative difference in Adrian’s playing after coaching with expressive gesture. In Lesson 16 and Lesson 19 he is heard to excitedly say, ‘I can hear, totally different’ (Adrian, Lesson 16 and 19 Synopses).

During Kelly’s third lesson, Kelly’s mother Jean mentions that the use of expressive gesture seems to enhance the expressivity of Kelly’s sound. She says, ‘It’s very musical … before I remember it was quite tough and rough’. I agree, suggesting that at the previous lesson, the playing did sound ‘a bit buttony’, which I explain by combining critical comparison, demonstration, physical sensation and dramatic play with the analogy of rolling through the notes, ‘like butter’. This analogy does seem to help Kelly inject wider tonal shape into the phrases by ‘sliding’ through the notes, in what may otherwise sound dry, like a finger exercise. Jean goes on to say, ‘It sounds really different … I’m not a musical person, but I can tell’ (Kelly, Lesson 3 Synopsis).
5.7.3 Teacher’s Perception

The whole idea of those gestures is so that you’re actually landing on the notes with different weights therefore producing different sounds and colours … without using pressure … it’s like playing tennis … you’re just using the natural wave of the body to roll through the notes and produce different colours and textures … but to get there you need to know your notes and the fingerings. You know how I change all the fingerings? That’s to facilitate the most economically fluid movement. Most of those pieces are not fingered well … they’re fingered with the brain and not the body.

– (Mark) Finn, Interview 1

As I reflect on the project and the manner in which the research participants have engaged with the research aims, it seems that the successful uptake of information relating to expressive performance, and in particular, expressive gesture, is dependent on a number or a combination of factors. These may include:

1. Aptitude for the physicality and manual aspects of piano playing, including an ability to imitate physical (gestural) movement with relative ease
2. An ability to critically analyse and imitate tonal properties that are resultant to physical movement (gesture)
3. Familiarity and self-confidence with the notation in order for cognitive resources to be directed towards an awareness of such tonal and physical properties without undue distraction
4. A strong interest, curiosity and personal affinity with the repertoire being studied
5. An innate desire and ability to express oneself poetically in a confident and physical way
6. Grit, the ability to keep striving for one’s best, despite obstacles, frustration and criticism
7. A strong sense of self-efficacy, personal competence and ambition
8. An ability to successfully manage the negative effects of MPA.

For example, Adrian and Kelly have good physical coordination and are able to mimic expressive gestural information and tonal nuance with reasonable ease. While Adrian is not as adept with rhythmic detail as Kelly is, one might say that he is more blessed in terms of manual dexterity. Both Adrian and Kelly did remarkably well with the expressive gestural aims of this research, and improved measurably in terms of the quality and expressiveness of their playing, their overall engagement and their ability to work independently. Jade is able to produce a beautiful sound and understands the purpose of an expressive gestural approach, but challenges with self-confidence, practice commitment and an overly cautious personality did seem to limit her overall progress. She is not as ambitious as Adrian and Kelly, does not find practising intrinsically enjoyable and does struggle to remember the sequential nature of the tasks, even though they are worked through in the weekly lesson. Jade often came to her lessons seeming tired and somewhat lethargic, and I did feel that affected her ability to play energetically, and to retain information in a meaningful way. During the data collection period, I started to help her to articulate and then write her learning goals for the week in a homework diary during each lesson, and towards the end of the data collection period, her mother or grandmother began to record the lessons for her to review during the week, and I began to request that she record sections of her work to send to me via email, as this seems to provide her with smaller, achievable goals to work towards. As a result, I did notice an improvement in her overall engagement, her ability to play with greater confidence, energy and expression when performing in recitals, and the likelihood of her ‘choking under pressure’ is now minimal. At her most recent performance, she was able to play a solo piece and sing while accompanying herself at the piano.
Finn may not be as dexterous or as perceptive of his body in space as the other three cases, but during the study, he began to realise the amazing musical potential that he has, which furnished him with increased confidence in performance and, in turn, provided a boost to his self-esteem. Like Jade, he has historically struggled with tasks involving sequential processing, and his general forgetfulness has proven to be a major stumbling block in recent times. During the study, I found that helping him to formulate his own learning goals while writing them in his own hand, meant that he was much more likely to achieve them. He is a sensitive soul, and a worrier, and even though he has aspirations for a career in music, I think that at times he becomes so overwhelmed with everything in life that he procrastinates to a point where the window of time to complete tasks becomes too small. His mother constantly references these points, and his is a ‘work in progress’. Nonetheless, he had two successful performances during the data collection period and another four since, and on each occasion, he has risen to the challenge, performed competently with a pleasing degree of expressive intention and, like Jade, is accompanying himself in vocal performance too. He was much slower with the gestural uptake when compared with the other cases, but with perseverance, encouragement and support from his parents, he began to show good progress. Interestingly, in lessons, he is very aware of what I am asking and is quick to ascertain its applicability, but he just needs more time and more review than one might expect, given his age, sensitivity, intelligence and acute interest.

5.8 Chapter Summary

Using the research questions as its point of departure, this chapter has sought to highlight the thematic commonalities of each of the final four case studies, with research reflections, video extracts of the one-to-one lessons, synopses of the one-to-one lessons and the research literature. Chapter 6 summarises these thematic commonalities, outlines thematic incongruences and possible reasons for same, and draws the thesis to a close, suggesting future research on the topic. It also discusses the significance of the research and reflects on the lessons learnt.
Chapter 6: Discussion

It seems that to play with expressive intent and confidence, a strong degree of ownership and drive needs to come from the student. The question is how to foster that ownership and drive. I think that [this involves] constantly referencing the fact that it is their lesson, how they control much of their progress, how their mindset either limits what they can do or opens doors that they may have not thought possible, and an environment where this is encouraged and in some cases expected … At a time where the student is often dividing their time between academic success and sporting commitments, it could be that a lack of time, a fear of failure and an underlying sense that ‘all my hard work will be for nothing’ limits a person’s potential to do their best and ultimately reduces the authenticity and expressive potential of their playing. (Reflective Journal, 17 August 2015)

6.1 Summary of Research Findings and Implications for Future Research

Using the established approaches of reflective practice and case study, this research has explored the viability of using expressive gesture as a way to foster the expressive performance skills of pre-tertiary pianists within one-to-one studio teaching. This section discusses recommendations that may prove useful to teaching professionals, and seeks to utilise the commonalities and differences between the research participants as its point of departure. Despite the variations among the case studies, the prevailing congruity is one of a student centredness that aims to meet young learners where they are at any given time. It requires the teacher to be prepared to be flexible with curriculum, repertoire and pedagogical strategy over time. This research gives credence to other studies that have argued for an embodied, gestural approach to expressive musical performance (Davidson & Dawson, 1995; Davidson & Correia, 2002; Doğantan-Dack, 2011; Muñoz, 2007; Pierce, 1994, 2010), where demonstration (Dickey, 1992; Ebie, 2004; Karlsson & Juslin, 2008; Woody, 2003), imagery, analogy and metaphor (Arrais & Rodrigues, 2007, 2009; Barten, 1998; Froehlich & Cattley, 1991; Martin, 1995; Persson, 1996a; Schippers, 2006; Watson, 2008; Woody, 2002)
facilitate learning by connecting to and ultimately expanding a student’s existing knowledge.

This research highlights the need to foster a student’s self-confidence in order to develop the prerequisite self-efficacy and metacognitive literacy (Coutts, 2016; Wiezbicki-Stevens, 2009), upon which expressive performance seems to largely depend. As identified with Jade and Finn, this research acknowledges that a student’s mindset, autonomy, practice methods, motor skills and proprioceptive awareness may need parallel development to support the development of expressive gestural skills. As observed with Adrian and Kelly, this research demonstrates the need to strike an ongoing balance between transfer and transformative learning when fostering expressive performance skills, where an atmosphere of collaborative enquiry is upheld. It confirms the benefits of establishing a nurturing environment where a fascination with learning is triggered with passionate commitment on the part of the teacher (Chmurzynska, 2012). Further, it corroborates findings by Davidson et al. (1998) that suggest that a positive, empathic emotional climate fosters long-term engagement and, perhaps ultimately, a student’s ability to play with expressive intention without fear of being harshly judged or rejected. While this may seem to be common sense, there were times during this study when teaching the research participants to play expressively diverted my attention away from what the students actually needed to learn, creating pedagogical and interpersonal discord in the process.

This research supports existing studies that see repertoire choice as an important factor in building student engagement and, ultimately, a personal connection that may promote expressive performance (Coutts, 2016; Renwick & McPherson, 2002). Finally, the findings confirm the importance of the student-parent-teacher learning triangle as a factor for overall student success (Creech, 2009), with the potential to enhance progress, engagement and a student’s confidence to play with enhanced expressive fervour. Future areas of related research endeavour may include testing the efficacy of feedback styles and modalities in the one-to-one context, the efficacy of using video tutorials in piano pedagogy where expressive gesture is demonstrated, the training of one-to-one students as reflective practitioners, the teacher’s use of expressive gesture and behaviour, studio teaching as expressive ‘performance’ art,
strategies to manage musical performance anxiety in adolescent pianists, and the pedagogical applications of motion capture technology to illustrate expressive gestural choreography within music notation in real time.

6.2 Summary of the Research Participants’ Research Journey

I set out to improve the expressive skills of the research participants thinking that all they really had to do was utilise expressive gesture in the way that they were directed. Among other things, I now realise that I underestimated the degree to which their unconscious attitudes towards their own learning would influence this process. In the case of Finn, for example, he may have been negatively influenced by his family’s attitudes towards music excellence being a matter of ‘talent’ rather than work ethic. This, in turn, may have contributed to his inconsistent and often unconstructive practice habits that significantly impeded his progress. That said, I now realise that as much as my role entailed furnishing him with techniques to play with expressive intention, such steps were futile without first acknowledging and supporting the development of his organisational and kinaesthetic challenges. Being an independent and self-motivated adult, I had at times an unrealistic expectation that Finn would be able to plan his own practice if I just asked him to. It took time, but I began to realise that he needed more concrete instructions on learning how to structure his practice before expressive gesture would be of any real benefit.

Although I did support Finn to set and achieve his on goals in a written format, 47 I see now that providing him with short video examples to utilise during his practice would have greatly expedited his progress. In light of this, I now regularly upload tutorial videos to my YouTube channel, which I email to my students on a weekly basis. These short videos review expressive gestural choreography through partial practice strategies explored during the student’s lesson. 48 It is a time-consuming endeavour for me, but the benefits to the students do seem significant, as they provide a succinct and

47 Finn kept a practice journal for part of the study. It also served as a homework diary in which he was able to formulate his weekly goals.
48 For example:
  • Caleb - Mozart K330, RH bar 64 (16 Feb 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0KZfZJy1Bv0
concrete demonstration of expressive gestural choreography and of how weekly goals might best be achieved through deliberate partial practice. The shift in accountability and learning ownership to the student, as well as their expedited progress are immensely satisfying for me as a teacher. Demonstrating the repertoire along with detailed reminders of deliberate partial practice strategies explored within the lesson might promote the construction of aural schemata that can assist learning (Hallam, 1998). Indeed, Lisboa (2008) found that not having access to such knowledge during the learning process led to inaccurate and ‘rather inexpressive’ performances (p. 263). While the data collection period was through 2014, it has really been in the two years since that Finn has been able to fully explore expressive gesture, as his metacognitive strategies regarding practice and learning have matured. I am in no doubt that this progress can be largely attributed to the foundations laid during the study itself.

Although Jade was more efficient and consistent in her practice than Finn, I realise now that she needed ongoing support to build her self-efficacy and overall self-confidence in order for the benefits of expressive gesture to be realised. While physically capable and musically sensitive, those qualities were not always enough, as Jade would often struggle with pressure, both in the lesson and in performance, with her expressive intent suppressed or even silenced in the process. I also feel that constructing her learning program without her full input impacted negatively on her level of engagement. While I chose Jade’s pieces according to what I felt would best foster her expressive performance skills, it was perhaps doubtful that my goals would be fulfilled without her ‘loving’ the music that she was playing. I did perhaps underestimate her need to be emotionally connected to her repertoire before any of my suggestions would truly be heard. Consequently, I now consider her repertoire very carefully, discuss these options with her, and then ask her to make a final decision as to what she would like to study. As a result of this research, my own attitudes towards teaching have become more realistic and I am more aware of my unconscious assumptions than before. I see that the student’s needs should come first and expressive playing is not the overriding priority I once considered it to be. Shaping the student’s attitudes towards learning and fostering their engagement must remain central goals.
While Adrian was more receptive to the adoption of expressive gesture and more self-confident in nature than Finn or Jade, I still needed to modify the teaching approach to achieve for greater learning satisfaction for both student and teacher. Despite his self-confidence, expressive sensitivity and manual dexterity, Adrian generally required support for his rhythmic challenges and encouragement towards expressive intention beyond speed of execution. He is a promising pianist, but setting unrealistic expectations in a pending performance or competition did seem to cause stress for all concerned, which in retrospect may not have been productive. I now realise that part of that expectation was from my unconscious attitude that the quality of his playing reflected the quality of my teaching. While in some ways this may be true, my acknowledgement of this assumption and the potential negativity that it can foster has been liberating. In the years since data collection ended, Adrian has benefited from written feedback and video tutorials that he can digest in his own time away from the lesson. Assuming that his intelligence and musical potential would enable him to cope intellectually with detailed instruction within the lesson was perhaps, at times, idealistic. Adrian, like the other research participants, is a unique individual, and while I can encourage him to work hard and aim for his absolute best, he still needs support in deciding what needs to be practised between lessons, and how and why he might do that. I have no doubt that the foundations of deliberate partial practice, flexibility of mindset and kinaesthetic awareness that were laid in the years leading up to the research period were in a large part responsible for the relative ease in which Adrian engaged with the expressive gestural aims of the study.

Kelly generally did exactly what was asked and could be relied upon to complete her work in a timely manner, but there did seem to be a missing element in her playing, despite the apparent ease with which she was able to imitate expressive gesture. While this could have become a source of frustration, through conversation and encouragement, Kelly began to see the need to practise and play with greater energy and personal involvement, in order for her own independent expressive voice to be heard. I was struck by how exuberant and outgoing she was during the interviews, but saw a very different side of her in the lessons. It became apparent to me that her desire to be a dutiful student became a hindrance that suppressed the expressive authenticity of her playing. Nonetheless, I did notice that towards the end of the research period, the dynamic between us began to change, where I felt that our roles were more of a
mentor and mentee rather than a master and apprentice. Unlike Jade, Finn and Adrian, Kelly is no longer studying piano as my student, as she and her parents decided that she should concentrate on her harp and cello studies. Even though this was somewhat disappointing, I can be satisfied that the overall message of finding her expressive independence may be something that she can transfer to her future endeavours, whatever instrument she may be playing.

6.3 Achieving the Aims of the Study

On a micro level, this research contributes to existing studies that have sought to investigate the pedagogy of musical expression, particularly those that have explored such strategies within musicians at relatively early stages of their development. In order to fulfil increased economic and client-based accountability, this research will, on a macro level, contribute to a growing body of work that seeks greater transparency within the one-to-one environment, a context not well represented in the pedagogical research literature. Supporting young pianists in their expressive maturation using the strategies outlined herein could contribute to something more intangible – that of developing more rounded and satisfied human beings whose learning contributes to an educated society. While the outcomes detailed cannot be generalised due to the small sample size of the individual case studies and the investigation of a single teacher’s pedagogical approach, it is hoped that this study will contribute to current and future piano pedagogy, with teaching professionals finding transferable commonalities in their practice. This research points towards the value of reflective practice as a tool for professional development. Others may see the pivotal role that such research has played in the transformation of my teaching, and it may therefore provide encouragement for them to take up this challenge in their own practice.

Teaching the piano is obviously challenging in many respects, especially for teachers such as myself, who have many students. To ‘change gears’ when switching students every 30 to 60 minutes can be difficult. I have come to realise the necessity of meeting the students where they are at that particular point in time, acknowledging them as individual people and not projects, and focusing on what they can do, rather than how they might be compared with others or an unspoken ‘studio standard’. With the extra pressure of a pending examination or performance, slower progress can
become a source of frustration for both teachers and students. However, such negativity may ultimately affect the student’s progress. Retrospectively watching recordings of the lessons has helped me to mitigate such concerns and to understand my student’s strengths and weaknesses as they are, without unwittingly capping their potential or letting go of an expectation that they strive for their best effort. Rather than defaulting into a single way of teaching, the reflective process has helped me to alter the content of my lessons in order to respond flexibly to each student’s best needs. To some extent this involves an ongoing quest for humility on my part, and the need to resist the temptation to be dogmatic about one’s self, methodology and pedagogical lineage. Different students are on different paths, their ambitions about what they want from their lessons vary, and their social, emotional, physical and developmental needs often vary over time. As such, it is central to one’s role as a teacher to constantly question how those needs might be flexibly met.

I have found that the process of reflecting on the effectiveness of my teaching has continued since the end of data collection, and elements of the project continue to permeate my day-to-day teaching practice. I continue to video lessons and keep a reflective journal as ways to further reflect on my teaching practice. For example, recently I found myself saying to various students not part of this research, ‘illustrate the harmonic pull of the secondary dominant to the audience’, ‘roll out of that note with an upward gesture’, ‘take a preparatory in breath when you lift your arm, much like a singer’, and ‘play the chords like you are sinking into a warm bath’. The research has helped me to crystallise elements of my teaching practice that were perhaps in many ways instinctual, into a concrete form that myself and others might draw from now and in the future. The reflective process has also helped me to review the less optimal aspects of my pedagogy, where a tendency towards dogmatism has been somewhat tempered. Even now, having realised the potential benefits of the pedagogy uncovered during this project and its ability to imbue significant and accelerated technical and expressive development, I recognise that this is not for everyone at every stage of their learning journey and must be approached with that philosophy in mind.

This research has helped me to be attuned to each student’s individuality, where the implementation of expressive gesture or indeed principles relating to musical
expression are not necessarily the primary goal for every student at every stage of their development. Indeed, the ability to remain flexible, responsive and ‘pedagogically agile’ is already receiving attention in transforming one-to-one teaching in the tertiary environment (Carey & Grant, 2016). By its very nature, the fertile environment of the one-to-one learning context has the potential to foster the very best in each individual. If students are driven by goals that matter to them, self-expression, engagement, self-efficacy and a sense of accomplishment are worthy outcomes that have ramifications long after one-to-one lessons have ceased. Moreover, adhering inflexibly to an agenda that is imposed by the teacher does not account for an individual student’s often non-linear development – musically, physically, intellectually and emotionally.

During the project, I realised that holding expressive performance skill to be the pinnacle outcome of lessons meant the progress of the research participants could in certain instances be hindered. It was only through writing and then pondering on reflections that I realised that too much focus on expressive playing may have been to the detriment of other areas of instruction. This was particularly the case with Finn, where the approach was perhaps affecting his self-efficacy and self-determination. While I did not lower my overall expectation that Finn would achieve his best, I had to adjust my thinking so that he had greater ownership in his success, and that he would achieve his best in relation to his most recent achievements. Throughout the research process, I was constantly reminded of the uniqueness of the research participants. While my ideals were somewhat lofty, I did need to adjust my expectations to that of improvement, rather than skills accomplished within a specified time frame. In a few instances, the learning environment may have suppressed these outcomes, but the reflective process enabled me to change direction and mitigate the potential cost to engagement, self-expression and enjoyment.

One striking instance that illustrated this sobering point occurred in one of Finn’s lessons. In Lesson 13, I briefly exited the room while the video camera was still recording. It was only after watching the lesson some 12 months later that I heard the conversation between Finn and his mother that occurred in my absence. Both parties seemed excited to be at the lesson, but even so Finn’s mother said, ‘Don’t be nervous … just show Mark how much you’ve improved’. I felt regret as I continued to watch
– instead of ascertaining how Finn felt that his progress was going, I told Finn that I felt he had not improved much since the last lesson and that ‘it certainly wouldn’t be ready for the performance workshop next week’. Of course after writing reflections on the lesson and upon further evaluation, I realised that I had potentially taken away all of his power and the belief that he could continue to improve, whether he participated in the performance workshop or not. While his progress was not as quick as the other research participants, his piece required considerably more skill than those he had previously studied, and perhaps he needed just a little more time and encouragement. It seemed as though the learning environment had been negatively contaminated by my disappointment and, instead of using the experience as a learning opportunity, I ran the risk of inducing despondency.

6.4 Final Reflection

From my own perspective, the journey of this doctoral candidature, with all its benefits both personal and professional, has at times proven challenging. The uncertainty of not knowing exactly ‘what happens next’ has been particularly valuable to reflect on. I have at times felt overwhelmed, as focusing too much on the bigger picture has overshadowed the fact that progress is a process of putting one metaphorical foot in front of the other. I needed to trust that doing something is always better than doing nothing, however insignificant it can seem at the time. To have trust that things will come together if one just keeps working hard on what one can do, and not to dwell on what one cannot, has not always been easy for me. However, it has reminded me that the process is, in many ways, quite similar to preparing repertoire for performance. It has afforded me an opportunity to gain revealing insights into the headspace of all the research participants, most especially into those less confident, and how they might feel at times of struggle and self-doubt. Learning to embrace my current perspective and what I can offer, while avoiding ‘the curse of knowledge’ (Newton, 1990, as cited in Nobel, 2015, p. 1), has reminded me of what it is like to be in the role of the less experienced learner. It has enabled me to see where I could have greater empathy for the students, to look past their (sometimes) apparent apathy, and to rethink how that could be masking the need for greater encouragement towards clearly defined and achievable short-term goals. This principle is well illustrated in this dictum:
It’s natural for novices to seek out experts for guidance … Unfortunately, though, experts frequently make lousy teachers … Experts are sometimes so steeped in expertise that they don’t remember what it was like to be a newbie—in terms of both how much they knew and how they felt back then. The memory gap leads to an empathy gap. (Nobel, 2015, p. 1)

Zhang’s (2015) research investigates how rediscovering the experience of being inexperienced influences experts’ ability to advise novices, and this could certainly be a fruitful area of future investigation within one-to-one pedagogy generally. Indeed, if you get people who are experts to rediscover the feeling of being a beginner, that could actually have powerful implications for how advising takes place in an organisation. It has implications for how experts can better understand those who have less experience than they do. (Nobel, 2015, p. 4)

A pertinent question for future research could be: If instrumental experts who teach in the one-to-one context rediscover what it was like to be a (comparative) novice, how could that influence the type of pedagogy that they employ? Christopher Reddy (2015) has suggested that:

The curse of knowledge places all of our students at a disadvantage. As educators, it's not enough to simply recognise that we are unable to remember the struggle of learning. We need to act. By incorporating facts, highlighting novelty, liberally utilising examples and analogies, cycling our content, telling content-related stories, making our lesson multi-sensory, and harnessing the power of emotion, we can make learning easier for our students. (p. 1)
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