

# Postguitar: A Creative Exploration Of The Possibilities And Limitations of Guitar To Inform Music Therapy Practice

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## **Abstract**

This autoethnographic arts-based research focuses on working with the possibilities and limitations of guitar to inspire a wider, less conventional approach on the instrument and to increase its resourcefulness and accessibility within the context of music therapy. The primary research question is: *how can my personal exploration of the limitations and possibilities of guitar inform my music therapy practice?* This research focuses on bringing insight into relationships between guitar, limitations, perception, resourcefulness, creativity, music therapy, social justice, strength and disability. Practice and experimentation with unconventional techniques, approaches and guitar modifications have been undertaken and documented and have been informed by literature around music therapy, posthumanism, creativity and disability studies. Guitars, ideas and approaches have been compiled in musical compositions to represent the research findings. Ideas have been implemented and inspired from my work with participants with different needs, limitations and guitar playing approaches. This research has revealed wider possibilities and resources for the guitar in music therapy practice for both therapist and participant, highlighted the strength and creative potential in interdependence for therapy, music and social relations and displayed how creativity can challenge and reflect oppressive structures.

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## **Ethics Statement**

This research has received approval from The Victoria University Ethics Committee (Ref #: 22131, 2019).

## 1 Introduction

My guitar has wide hips  
round shoulders  
and a neck

Its body is thick and sturdy  
built from giant givers of breath  
Its voice resonates deep from its tummy  
bursting breath further

It has no legs  
It has no arms  
This is where I come in  
Though it appears wooden and highly strung  
it is sick of being strummed  
It wants to be heard

Yelping, scattling, singing, humming, pulsing, slapping, beating, scratching and tinkling

It doesn't want to be seen as an object  
but a symphony in motion, a drum, a creature, a force of nature  
It wants to continue to breathe  
like its source

not to be suffocated by bias or perception  
It is sick of being disabled by those who do not listen  
By those whose confuse its nature as redundant  
Its state as unproductive

My guitar wonders why it can't dance?  
Why it can't be blown, struck, bowed or sequenced like its cousins?  
Why it can't sing outside its presupposed range?  
My guitar contains the seed of life  
It cannot wait to express nature's voice  
It will dig deep inside its' frame

For those willing  
to see and hear  
its limits  
as potential

*(Above) A poem I have written around the ideas of music (therapy), guitar, expression, limitations, disability, social 'constructivism', diagnosis, resources, relationships and creativity.*

## **1.1 Background**

The guitar is a wonderful instrument. It is one of the most common instruments used in music making, songwriting, accompaniment and according to Oden (2014) music therapy in modern times. Its ability to provide harmonic support, create melody, imitate and support the voice, its decent tonal range, songwriting potential, amplification possibilities and its portability give it huge strengths as an instrument. It leaves space for the mouth to sing and the body to move (especially with the aid of a guitar strap). It is relatively cheap, easily accessed and has been involved in nearly every contemporary musical style across cultures. In today's age of electronic and digital music I still believe the humble, huggable acoustic guitar has so much potential and possibility in an array of musical purposes and settings especially in music therapy. I believe it is more than just an instrument to play chord sequences or lead guitar licks. This strung hollow piece of wood has a much wider sonic pallet. With a little inventiveness I am interested in seeing if the guitar can be pushed even further than what is currently presented in the music therapy literature. I have played guitar for about 20 years. It is still a resource I draw on for therapy, comfort, fun, experimentation, self-esteem, escape, catharsis, relaxation, reflection, support, revelation and expression.

My first placement as a music therapy student in 2020 was with primary school aged children with disabilities. During this time, I've found guitar to be a useful resource as well as a nuisance and hindrance. As well as being a bridge in a lot of contexts it can also seem



like a barrier between myself and participants in sessions. Although it is a smaller portable instrument (relatively speaking) it is, more often than not, larger than the small children I have worked with or unsuitable to diverse body types in general. This sometimes creates a physical barrier. I have had trouble “sharing” it as the children want to play it with me or hold it themselves as it towers over them. Sometimes I play the neck while the children strum the lower part. Often, I find it not as fluid as voice or percussion for nuanced and temporal musical conversations. The children were often very attracted to the guitar. They are very interested in its big hole, the strings, the pegs and the wood etc. They would hit it with a stick or their palm, conduct me to play it and generally come at it any way except how it is traditionally played. These are the types of approaches I wanted to explore: To develop guitar playing for all kinds of people based on their unique perspectives and needs, including my own needs as music therapy practitioner and artist.

I am an abled bodied, white, male guitarist and music therapy student who has been working on two music therapy placements in 2021 during the writing of this exegesis and second year of my Masters in Music Therapy. One of the placements has been at a children’s hospital ward, the other has been at a residency for people with neurodisabilities. This research will aim to explore the guitar and develop it further in ways that are influenced and guided by what I learn from my music therapy participants in terms of the ways they engage with the guitar and other instruments. As the participants I work with have a disability or health condition of some kind, the research will also be informed by literature relating to disability studies. It is hoped that this research will be beneficial in exploring new territory for guitar in music therapy practice as well as helping equip myself with deeper tools to connect with participants in music therapy practice. I hope this journey will enrich my understanding of limitations and disability and help me adapt the guitar to meet the diverse needs of participants. I have linked the terms disability and limitations for this project to explore their reflective relationship and to link it to music therapy in reflexive ways. For this project disability and limitations are looked at as opportunities and it is about orientating perception to see these concepts as resourceful strengths. Therefore, I do not understand disability from a medical model perspective in this exegesis but the social model. *“The social model says that a person is disabled by society rather than by their body or abilities. This model looks at what is wrong with and needs fixing in society”* (Digital Govt NZ, 2021). I have intended to challenge creative, cultural and society bias and perception

around what it means to be limited or disabled and build a bank of resources for music therapy.

## **1.2 Research Question and Aims**

### Main Question:

How can my personal exploration of the limitations and possibilities of guitar inform my music therapy practice?

### Aims:

- To extend my understanding of the possibilities of guitar music.
- To change my relationship with the guitar.
- To extend my resourcefulness with the guitar within music therapy practice.
- To engage playfully with possibilities within a limited framework.
- To reflect on and take into account how different participant's limitations can inform guitar playing.
- To explore the relationship between creativity and limitations/disability.
- To challenge societal perceptions of disability and disabling narratives.
- To find new ways of guitar accessibility

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review is relatively short due to literature being dispersed and discussed throughout the research paper. Literature was found in main music therapy journals such as Music Therapy Perspectives and Voices. The main search engine used was <https://tewaharoa.victoria.ac.nz/> as well as the physical library at Victoria University. Topics searched included guitar and music therapy, disability studies (and music therapy), creativity, limitations and posthumanism. References to other relevant authors and articles were followed up as well plus literature was recommended by supervisors. I found a potential need for more literature concerning disability and guitar in music therapy especially around extending techniques for sessions. I found only a few recorded musical examples of guitar being really pushed beyond its usual identity or adapted and presented in an arts-based way, especially when informed by disability studies. There was some literature around accessories and modifications for accessibility (Bell, 2014; Oden, 2014) but little on creativity pushing for unique approaches with/for unique participants and showing this process in action. I did not find music therapy literature where one simple musical resource (a guitar) was tested to see how far its limits could be stretched.

### 2.2 Creativity and Limitations and Guitar

In reference to literature that discusses creativity and limitations, *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* by Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990) describes the creative process and the importance of limitations within it. In this book there is a quote from Jallaludin Rumi: “*New Organs of perception come into being as a result of necessity. Therefore, O man, increase your necessity, so that you may increase your perception*” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.78). Nachmanovitch (1990) writes that limits can be like “rules of the game to which we voluntarily accede, or circumstances beyond our control that demand adaptation” (p.79). Nachmanovitch continues to write that artists often work with tools and materials that come with “inherent quirks, resistances, inertias, irritations. Sometimes we damn the limits,

but without them art is not possible” (p.81). He talks of the term “bricolage” which means making do with the material at hand. (Nachmanovitch, 1990):

*“In bricolage, we take the ordinary materials in our hands  
and turn them into new living matter – the “green gold” of  
the alchemists. The fulcrum of the transformations  
is mind-at-play, having nothing to gain and nothing  
to lose, working and playing around the  
limits and resistances of the tools  
we hold in our hands.”*

(p.86-87)

After the abolishment of slavery in the USA the guitar became a popular instrument for African Americans, birthing the blues singer-songwriter in the later-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In a time of huge systemic racism the guitar was especially popular with those who could not find work. Sometimes this was due to having a disability like being blind or injured. These troubadours would travel around with the guitar as a simple, portable instrument and accompany themselves with a “second voice” as a sort of one-person band. They were often self-taught and drew and shared through aural traditions. These singers spoke and shared the language of the African American experience at the time. The songs often contained information and stories that could travel across communities. Guitars could be played with bottle slides, open tunings, percussive techniques and modified with resonators, all simple resources (Blues, 2021).

Several of my favourite guitarists or styles of guitar playing have pushed the potential of guitar into new places due to limitations or impairments both self-imposed or due to injury or circumstance.

Jon Gomm really inspires me with his resourcefulness on the instrument. He uses it percussively, harmonically, melodically and texturally in beautiful and inventive ways (sometimes all at once) In a BIMM London (2013) video demonstration he talks of guitar percussion as not a gimmick, but completely a part of his approach. He calls it the best percussive instrument there is, a big wooden box. He encourages percussionists to get one for that reason even if they cannot play “guitar.” He discusses that percussive traditions of

guitar playing have been around for a long time but for some reason have lost their relevance in modern times (Total Guitar, 2013). His commitment to creating music with just the “big wooden box” has led to some of the most original modern guitar music: A full, one-person band. The “limitations” (only using a guitar) he has imposed forced him to explore in complete embodied focus - forgoing the laziness, apathy and mindless entitlement that comes with an abundance of resources.

Django Reinhardt lost the use of all but two of his fingers on his left hand in a fire. He went on to invent a style in the late 1920s that was said to surpass his previous abilities that included different chord clusters and voicings, tremolo chords, double stops, harmonics, dissonances and massive chromatic runs. His style predated bebop by about a decade and was a huge influence on jazz guitar (Django Reinhardt, 2021).

Tony Iommi is the guitarist from Black Sabbath. He lost the tips of his fingers in a factory accident and due to this utilized power chords, riffs and a style of soloing that was a huge blueprint for all kinds of metal. His technique and sound were revolutionary for the time (Tony Iommi, 2021).

Jimi Hendrix is perhaps the most famous electric guitarist in history, rising to fame in the late 1960s. He began practicing with a broom while developing immense feel and expressiveness. He was left-handed and struggled to find left-handed guitars so he would flip right-handed guitars upside down and restrung them. This meant the controls and whammy bar being in a different position than usual and informed his style of implementing them with as much importance as any other part of the guitar into his playing. Whether live or in the studio, he always pushed how the guitar sounded as far as he could imagine and no part of its body was deemed unplayable or unmusical (Jimi Hendrix, 2021).

John Frusciante is a well-known pop and rock guitarist. His technical ability on the guitar was severely diminished after injuries he sustained from a heavy heroin addiction. He embraced a philosophy of minimalism informed by his physical limitations and found deeper expressiveness in such an approach. He has been quoted saying; “It’s about the music, it’s not about just showing people what you can do with a piece of wood with strings on it.” (John Frusciante, 2022).

All these guitarists bring a level of authenticity and expressiveness to their playing from not trying to fit into normative model of guitar playing. They embrace their unique position and challenge what a guitar and guitarist actually is. Bell (2014) found authenticity was also

found to be of upmost importance when approaching guitar playing with an adolescent with down syndrome, approaches to guitar could be limited and simplified to create a space of authentic expression. This sentiment is fundamental to this research as it explores these themes within the context of music therapy, creativity and disability.

## **2.3 Disability Studies and Posthumanism**

Relationships between Music Therapy and Disability Studies have been discussed raising questions around identity, power/privilege dynamics, relations, disabling narratives, embodiment, empowerment, social constructions, oppression and therapeutic roles and definitions (Cameron, 2014; Honisch, 2014; LaCom & Reed, 2014; Metell, 2014; Rolvsjord, 2014). LaCom & Reed (2014) challenge notions of fixing, helping and health with relation to embodied perspectives, medical language and identity in a reality of shifting instability. Honisch (2014) discusses music therapy as an alternative to medicalising people through empathetic, equitable creative dialogue for “mutual empathetic empowerment.” He believes music has an ability to enhance individual experience and human relations. Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) discuss how:

Disability has the radical potential to trouble the normative, rational, independent, autonomous subject that is so often imagined when the human is evoked, social policies are made, social and human sciences are developed and forms of activism are enacted. (p.3).

Metell (2014) contrasts medical models with social models and diversity with pathology. This article promotes empowerment and emancipation and reminds that music therapy is not apolitical and can grow from collaboration with disability studies. Cameron (2014) discusses aligning music therapy with community perspectives as opposed to medical ones and that music therapy’s need to prove itself to medical worlds can lead to the oppression of people it is trying to help. Rolvsjord (2014) contributes to ideas of destabilizing client-therapist binary.

In the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* posthumanism is defined as:

A philosophical perspective of how change is enacted in the world. As a conceptualization and historicization of both agency and the “human,” it is different from those conceived through humanism. Whereas a humanist perspective frequently assumes the human is autonomous, conscious, intentional, and exceptional in acts of change, a posthumanist perspective assumes agency is distributed through dynamic forces of which the human participates but does not completely intend or control. Posthumanist philosophy constitutes the human as: (a) physically, chemically, and biologically enmeshed and dependent on the environment; (b) moved to action through interactions that generate affects, habits, and reason; and (c) possessing no attribute that is uniquely human but is instead made up of a larger evolving ecosystem. There is little consensus in posthumanist scholarship about the degree to which a conscious human subject can actively create change, but the human does participate in change. (Keeling & Lehman, 2018, p.1).

Goodley et al.,(2014) relate Rosi Braidotti’s (2013) posthuman themes to critical disability studies. These include life beyond the self, life beyond the species and life beyond death and challenge the humanist model of a fully independent, autonomous being. Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) write that “those of a post-human persuasion are sceptical about the centrality of the individual in our everyday thinking.” (p.9). They go on to state that humanness has historical roots in the rise of science, capitalism and rationality and creates the otherness of a lesser human comparatively. In an article about critical humanism and music therapy Hadley (2018) writes that humanism is more about the humane and “while the basic tenets of humanism themselves do not embody imperialism/colonialism, modern humanism has evolved within imperial/colonial contexts.” (p.6). She goes on to say “in terms of its relevance to music therapy, critical humanism aims to uproot forms of cultural practice that are embedded within music therapy (racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, etc.)” (p.6).

Shaw (2019) claims that posthumanism is an important foundation for Post-Ableist Music Therapy (PAMT). PAMT is a structure that can be applied to music therapy to increase professional awareness of ableism. Ansdell & Stige (2018) however, contend that music therapy can “indeed continue to be a humanist enterprise, but that it needs continuing challenge and extension in order to remain so.” (p.7). Hadley & Thomas (2018) have extended humanism to be close to the borders of posthumanism in their critical humanism.

## **2.4 Music Therapy and Guitar**

In modern times several pieces of literature state that the guitar is one of the most frequently used instruments in music therapy (Hiller, 2009; Krout, 2007; Oden, 2014; Wilhelm, 2004). Its potential advantages include harmonic accompaniment (Clair & Memmott, 2008; Kennedy, 2003; Ricciarelli, 2003), portability (Cordobés, 1997; Kennedy, 2001; Krout, 2005; Oden, 2014; Ricciarelli, 2003; Soshensky, 2005) and dynamics for different clinical settings (Marom, 2003; Primadei, 2004; Ricciarelli, 2003). It is also valued for its unique timbres (Kennedy, 2003; Soshensky, 2005), different tuning possibilities (Cordobés, 1997; Primadei, 2004; Soshensky, 2005), intimacy and mobility (Kennedy, 2001; Kennedy, 2003), and popularity and familiarity across cultures (Kennedy, 2001; Ricciarelli, 2003; Soshensky, 2005). Another value is its ability to be held as well as the sensory aspect of its vibrations against the body which can be useful for providing tactile stimulation and work with those with limited hearing (Berger, 2002; Ghetti, 2002; Hammel & Hourigan, 2011; Hooper et al., 2008; Grocke & Wigram, 2007; Wigram et al., 2002).

This research build's on the guitar's benefits for music therapy described in the literature; To push them further through experimentation and development of techniques and modifications: To embrace the guitar's inherent qualities and extend them to deepen its' resourcefulness for music therapy practice. While the literature shows why the guitar is useful and successful in music therapy, I feel it can be pushed much further as a music therapy tool and its identity as an instrument/entity to be much more fluid and stretchable.



## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework and Approaches**

#### ***3.1.1 Deconstructivism***

This research project is framed in deconstructivism. The ontology of deconstructivism holds that reality is ultimately unknowable and that “truths” are socially constructed. In terms of epistemology, in this paradigm, discourse is considered inseparable from the subject and researcher. For this study “truths” manifest through an autoethnographic arts-based methodology. In this methodology artistic processes that value aesthetics and ethics inform decision-making resulting in data in the form of creative products that, in turn, stimulate further data, analysis and creations.

#### ***3.1.2 Autoethnography***

Ellis et al., (2015) define Autoethnography as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno).” (p.2).

According to Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis (2015) autoethnography is research that:

- Uses deep and careful reflection - typically referred to as reflexivity – to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.
- Shows “people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.”
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion and creativity.
- Strives for social justice and to make life better. (pp.2-3).

Many cultures relating to guitar, disability, and music therapy (ethno) are analysed (graphy) through my own personal stories/experiences, creativity, and writings. Exploring the guitar and its possibilities can generate information that upon reflection can be built on or

discarded and tested in music therapy sessions and further arrangements and compositions. The idea is to ultimately create a deeper connection and resourcefulness with the guitar and a system of approaches and techniques that can suit the needs of different people. “Truth” or “value” are understood through generating one’s reality through creative resourcefulness. Assembling ideas in musical compositions helps to further reinforce the ideas and feelings behind the research in a more abstract and emotive way. This helps express the evocative, creative and emotional qualities autoethnography is valued for.

### ***3.1.3 Arts-based approach***

An arts-based approach was taken for this research. In arts-based research (ABR) artistic practices can be involved in any or all of the research steps (Forinash, 2016; Greenwood, 2019; Leavy, 2015; Viega, 2016; Viega & Forinash, 2007; Wheeler & Murphy, 2016). Arts-based research is valued for its non-linear approach and ability to capture lived experience, complexities, nuances and aesthetic dimensions (Austin, 2016; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Beer, 2016; Greenwood, 2019; Leavy, 2015; Viega, 2016; Viega & Forinash, 2007; Wheeler & Murphy, 2016;) as well as its broad reaching social implications and melting of power dynamics (Austin, 2016; Barone & Eisner; Finley, 2008; Greenwood, 2019; Viega, 2016; Viega & Forinash, 2007; Wheeler & Murphy, 2016). An art-based approach contains potential value to disability studies. Stone and Priestly (1996, as cited in Metell et al., 2014) “identified six principles of emancipatory disability research to transform pawns into partners.” This included “a willingness to adopt a plurality of methods for data collection and response to the challenging needs of disabled people” (p.6). Barone & Eisner (2012) write “Arts based research can capture meanings that measurement cannot” (p.167). Leavy (2015) turned to ABR as a way to move beyond restrictive research jargon and for its potential to reach others deeply. She values the way art can open people up to new ways experiencing the world.

For devices, techniques and less traditional ways of approaching the guitar I began by looking at techniques from Jon Gomm instructional videos (BIMM London, 2013; Total Guitar 2013) as well as MusicCollegeTV (2013). These videos cover harmonics used to create synthesizer like sounds, extended drum and percussion approaches, and tunings. However,

most of the practical guitar-based research was done through personal practice and experimentation as well as client informed techniques and approaches. Assisted playing, alternative tunings and group playing ideas in music therapy settings were also experimented with, expanding ideas from *The Use of Guitar in Music Therapy* (Oden, 2014). I aimed to look at music therapy guitar techniques from *Developing a Guitar-Based Approach in Nordoff-Robbins Music* (Soshenksy, 2005) but quickly became overloaded from ideas from placements and personal practice. Bell (2014) discusses how supporting agency can lead to a successful guitar session when they worked with a person with a disability.

## **3.2 Research Method and Data Collection/Analysis**

### **3.2.1 Data Collection**

As this is an autoethnographic arts-based research project, much time has been spent learning, challenging, experimenting and practicing unconventional and extended guitar techniques. Influence and inspiration for generating new guitar approaches has been drawn from music (especially other instruments and non-guitar styles of music), music therapy participants, people, experiences, self-imposed rules, games and frameworks (both physical and mental), nature, societal observations and other art. Physical modifications have been made to guitars to allow different ways of playability and unique expressions. These guitars have been used during music therapy placements and explored by myself and music therapy participants. Data sources include:

- Video and audio recordings made from guitar practice, experimentation, improvisation and modification as well as embodied knowledge from these sometimes repetitive processes.
- Clinical notes from music therapy placement. I have looked back at notes to see how participants have played guitar and how I have played with them to extend my own understanding and practice.

- Reflexive journaling, poems and writing as well musical/compositional ideas especially around themes of disability, perception and resourcefulness. Appendix 8.7 shows examples of poetry and creative writing.
- Disability studies, posthumanism, and guitar and music therapy literature

These forms of data challenge, relate and inform each other in a non-linear, arts-based way. For example, reflexive examination of a poem about disabling constructs in society influenced by literature can illuminate a guitar modification or playing approach/technique. The improvisation and experimentation is then recorded and further developed through reflexive journaling. This potentially led to further creative writing about the guitar itself as a disabling force, as a reflection of societal or environmental factors that render someone disabled: Further modifications to its mechanics and playing approach can then be implemented. More reflexive writing would follow and so on. This would embody one perspective within the overall conversation. Eventually pieces are compiled and arranged into a series of musical pieces with accompanying writing explaining the process. An example of a day of reflexive journaling can be found in appendix 8.2.

### ***3.2.2 Data Analysis***

As signaled above, analysis took shape through a creative lens where the data generated through aesthetic encounters acted as its own criteria for creating momentum and decisions throughout the research journey.

For this autoethnographic arts-based research, music and creative writing (reflexive journaling, free writing, poetry) were fundamental for data collection and analysis. As discussed by Beer (2016) the artistic methodology is an interactive one, a kind of narrative enquiry that explores intuitive understandings to capture multi-layered, non-linear truths. Self-reflexivity through writing, guitar modifications and music making are forms of data analysis as well as data generation. Most reflections and engagements are creative ones aimed to, as Beer (2016, p. 37) states; “access hidden and subconscious reactions to and identifications with the music being played. Bringing these to conscious awareness allowed me to analyse, triangulate, and synthesize them into trustworthy pieces of information.”

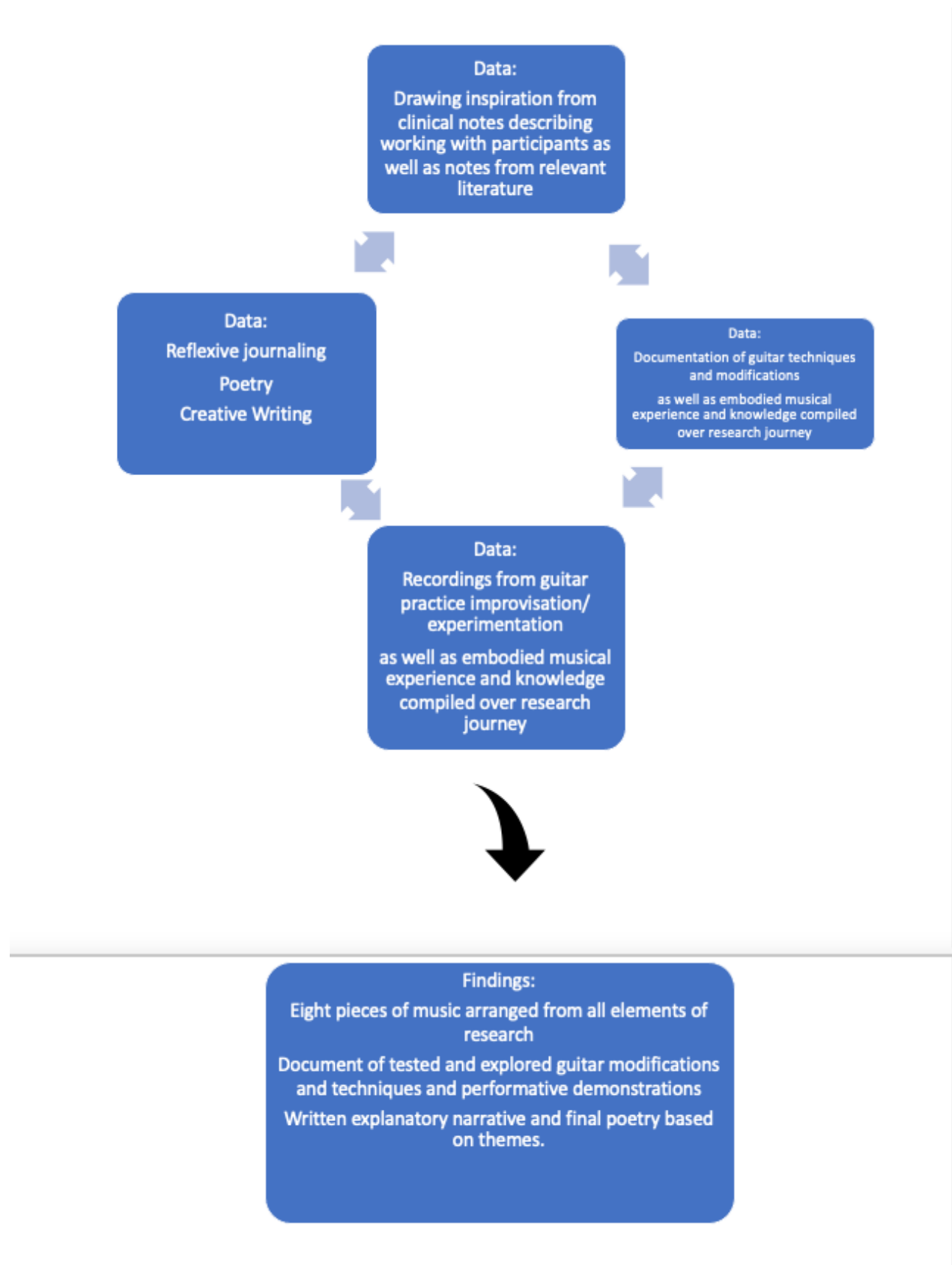
Musical analysis was also implemented when looking at recordings of improvisations and musical pieces. I used compositional analysis and poetic free writing to understand what the musical data was trying to say as well as further improvisation playing along with the recordings. In *Science as Art: Axiology as a Central Component in Methodology and Evaluation of Arts-Based Research (ABR)* Michael Viega (2016) states that “at its center, ABR as a methodology requires a sustained adherence to a creative worldview wherein works of art are also works of research” (p.3). The worldview is shaped by the artist-researchers “aesthetic sensibilities, creative processes that unfold during the research, and the role of art to transform social consciousness” (Viega, 2016, p.3). In this same text Viega (2016) describes a different knowing within the artistic process that is different from usual qualitative or quantitative study. This is a shift from epistemology to axiology. Axiology is said to be an understanding of reality through ethics and aesthetics (Viega, 2016). My cyclical artistic methodology echoes what Viega describes as a “holistic approach” and is designed to gain an “affective-intuitive relationship” with the research and its artistic data and methods (Viega & Forinash, 2017).

Ideas from literature, creative writing, reflexive notes, modified guitars and techniques have been compiled artistically into eight pieces of music. Creative decisions are shaped by “discourse” between all these mediums and continue to reveal more insight through recording, improvisation and arrangement. “Voices” in lyrical and musical elements of conversation during the creative process shape the final product and are informed by the intent, thinking, approaches, techniques, concepts and guitars that relate to the overall research journey. Music is central to this research and artistic processes and presentations are fundamental to the methodology, findings and interpretations. Aigen (2014, p.19) states “a conception of music is necessary for the foundation of music therapy just as a personality theory is necessary for psychotherapy.”

Although this research did not use thematic analysis, I allowed main ideas to emerge to the surface through intuition, as well as reoccurrence and resonance between data sources: Things that felt important to pushing my practice further. This is very hard thing to explain and quantify but it involves conversations between musical elements/devices and ideas found in disability studies, music therapy, posthumanism or social justice. Patterns and arguments emerge and reflect and rebel against each other. For example: there are relationships between disabling narratives and harmonic dissonance, humanism/ableism

and gridlocked meter vs off the grid/swung rhythms, or combined effects of inter-relational sonic textures and the interdependence of bodies. I want the musical pieces in the findings to express such things to the listener in a personally interpretable way, an axiological experience. This is part of a continued creative and generative engagement with the data. These relationships will be discussed later too, but all is just a snapshot in time of the constant propulsion of creative engagement that is the lifeblood of my music therapy research and practice. As Barone & Eisner (2012) write “The purpose of arts-based research is to raise significant questions engender conversations rather than to proffer final meanings” (p.166).

Table 1: Cyclical research method design. Data generation, collection and analysis



### **3.3 Ethical Considerations**

Before this study took place, this project received approval from The Victoria University Ethics Committee (Ref #: 22131, 2019). As this is an autoethnographic exegesis no one is directly implicated in the research. Consent was sought and approved from the facility I was on placement with adults with neurodisabilities to be allowed to review my reflexive clinical notes to see how my practice was influencing my approach and development of guitar use in music therapy practice (Appendix 8.6). To uphold confidentiality, no identifying information has been used during this research report to implicate anyone who had engaged with guitar playing during sessions. This review of secondary data for research is considered low risk.

As this research took place in New Zealand and at Victoria University of Wellington, Te Herenga Waka, this research conformed to the University's Treaty of Waitangi Statute (Appendix 8.8). Efforts to embrace participation, protection, partnership, options, autonomy, governance and equality were made during music making with the guitars on placement and included many Māori participants.



## **4 Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this section, guitars and techniques have become characters and voices in a never-ending discussion. Their voices are all unique and demand to be played, heard, supported and collaborated with. They offer their own support, wisdom, direction, language and framework, limitations, challenges and opportunities.

Relevant readings from the fields of disability studies, music therapy and posthumanism, as well as personal reflections and creative writing combine and meet through these guitars and techniques in eight recorded songs. Here a multidimensional conversation takes place that hopefully yields visceral, abstract and emotive experiences for the listener. These artistic findings are not answers in any absolute sense. They are non-linear experiences that hopefully generate and stimulate further imagination, questions, thinking and feeling around creativity, disability and other ideas relating to my research question which explores the limitations and possibilities of guitar for my music therapy practice.

For the following findings I will introduce each guitar (with accompanying poetry) that was developed in relation with other forms of data. I will then discuss techniques and approaches for each guitar and relate this to my research question, experiences and literature. Videos of each discussed technique will be linked in each section. Next, pieces of music will be presented with accompanying poetry and audio links. These will also be discussed and related to my research questions, experiences, and literature.

## 4.2 Guitars



[Collection of guitars with pussycat]

“But necessity forces us to improvise with the material at hand, calling up inventiveness that might not be possible to someone who can purchase ready-made solutions.”

(Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.80).

### 4.2.1 HMS Bosch

#### 4.2.1.1 Introduction.



[HMS Bosch guitar]

The HMS Bosch carries tones under the ocean  
Below the shadows casted by the ships  
that trade for the  
Capitalistic  
Sky Predator  
Fertility Regime™  
The HMS amplifies the voices of those deemed unproductive  
Their lungs can breathe underwater despite the pressure  
of being forced under  
for the trading ships above  
won't let them come up for air  
The HMS runs on play  
Perpetual flow  
It is a vessel that transforms and supports  
There is no sinking down below  
And those on the surface  
Will never know  
  
How deep  
We  
all  
can  
go

Every nook and corner of this instrument yields mystery and intrigue. It essentially built itself through a series of mistakes on my part that informed its continued manifestation. Mistakes were found in the data to be an important aspect in both the creative process and music therapy sessions. When played, its uniqueness is uncompromising and it often evades dependable or repetitive sounds. It is named the HMS Bosch due to its resemblance to a ship as well as a chaotic Heironymus Bosch type painting. It often invites playful engagement from people I work with in music therapy sessions and I witnessed that its broken appearance seemed to minimise anxiety around playing the guitar. Its character and novelty

break the rules of guitar playing. It returns the guitar to a sonic plaything that welcomes a childlike approach. Adults usually ask: “what is wrong with your guitar?” or “what happened to your guitar?” Children usually just hop aboard and have a play straight away. This reminds me of a session that was interrupted during my placement at a hospital with a young girl in a wheelchair. We were making music outside and a stranger approached her asking if he could pray for her to heal her. He did not know her but immediately assumed she needed his “help” or was a thing to be fixed. She described this happening very often in public spaces. It was a stark contrast to our music making which was just her expressing herself as she felt on her own terms. She was able to make her own choices musically in sessions. This echoes the social model of disability. The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) 1976, as cited in Metell et al., 2014) states “In our view it is society which disables physically impaired. Disability is something that is imposed on top of our impairments” (p.2). This guitar too can be rendered disabled when in reality its uniqueness yields so many creative possibilities. It may have impairments when compared to a regular guitar but would only be perceived to be disabled by a socially constructed environment of comparison the majority adheres to.

#### **4.2.1.2 Dis/Construction.<sup>1</sup>**

I bought this original guitar from a second hand store for \$40. I began drilling holes into the body to attach bottle caps to create snare sounds. Unfortunately playing it by striking it this way ended up warping the neck significantly. Looking at my data, the importance of valuing mistakes in the creative process and in practice was a reoccurring prominent idea. Therefore, once this happened all restraint was off in letting this guitar’s expression fly. It already had a lot of history and was perhaps ready for a transformation. A transformation informed by its quirks and tendencies as well as my own. The neck had started to come away from the body so I clumsily did what was needed to remove it completely. An unintended section of the neck came off too, so this was glued and drilled into the inside of the guitar. It acted as an anchor for the main neck which was then stuck vertically on the

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<sup>1</sup> Dis/construction refers to the way Dis is used by Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016) “Dis/ability usefully disarms, disrupts and disturbs normative, taken-for-granted, deeply societally ingrained assumptions about what it means to be human and what it means to be able (dis/human).”

edge of the sound hole with the exposed truss rod jammed into the anchored part of the neck inside the body. I screwed a thin plate of wood over the nut on the headstock and strung three strings attaching them to the bridge that was left in place but strengthened with some more clumsy screws. Two tuning pegs from the guitar that would become the Chimer guitar (see below) were put on the other side of the headstock to string more strings on the other side. Another string was wrapped around these two strings and covered in tape to form a handle that slides and scrapes up and down. These connected to another bridge taken off the Chimer guitar. This was all connected through a large block of wood that was drilled into a lower part of that side of the neck. Basically it was all a very clumsy, I used what was at hand to develop it. Another string was attached to the other bridge and ultimately held in place by another tuning peg. Chunks were taken out of the neck so the string would have a clear path to loop around the whole guitar and connect with the bridge. Finally, small sections of wood were combined to create a makeshift holder on the fret side of the neck to hold metal from a kalimba.

#### **4.2.1.3 Approaches and Techniques.**

##### ***4.2.1.3.1 HMS Bosch Approaches and Techniques 1***

<https://youtu.be/DqQ0ITKNmdM>

The handle is used to scrape up and down the vertical strings and pulled on to alter the pitch of the bottom strings (or any other strings) by pulling on the wobbly neck. There are two vertical sets of strings on each side of the neck and a single looped horizontal one. All the three sections of strings can be pressed, pulled on or wobbled to alter the pitch of other strings in their own section and other sections. I call these counter strings. Looking back on my music therapy notes, I found this very useful for attracting and inviting people to make music. These sounds usually made people curious, perhaps they were a novel sound for them. It takes very little ability to create sounds with the scraping/ pulling approach, this makes it accessible for a range of people's physical abilities. It can generate rhythm and pitch and participants were able to manifest something immediately.

#### **4.2.1.3.2 HMS Bosch Approaches and Techniques 2**

[https://youtu.be/i3g\\_5Zp1BGo](https://youtu.be/i3g_5Zp1BGo)

One set of the strings is played in this video. Two of the strings are played with the right hand while pressure is applied to the remaining third (counter) string with the left hand thumb (handed wrapped around neck) to alter pitch which tightens or loosens the neck. The neck itself is wobbled by the left hand occasionally to bend all the strings at once. These sounds invited improvised singing in a scat like gibberish style. This approach was used to inject liveliness and silliness into improvisations and to introduce abrupt changes. In some cases this could release tension/self-consciousness for both myself and participants and open up possibilities musically that may have been considered too out there, uncomfortable or “not allowed.” I found it helps create a safer space to be one’s self.

#### **4.2.1.3.3 HMS Bosch Approaches and Techniques 3**

<https://youtu.be/QOHdBIBZIE>

Played from a different angle to the previous video, fingers are placed on each side of the side with the fretboard facing the player. Thumbs are used to pluck the horizontal strings and the vertical strings as well as the kalimba parts on the neck. All are easily reached with just two thumbs. Thumbs also play counter strings to the opposing thumb. Combinations of the kalimba parts and different strings and counter strings create interesting patterns. Similar approaches are possible with just one hand. This was useful for participants who could not hold or handle a usual guitar due to having one working arm or being in a wheelchair. This allowed people have the guitar on their lap or on a table in front of them to join in group improvisations or curiously pluck away by themselves. It has also been an easy guitar to share. People can focus on different areas to combine different sounds. In one session a daughter and her father enjoyed playing games together in this way.

#### **4.2.1.3.4 HMS Bosch Approaches and Techniques 4**

[https://youtu.be/\\_6\\_pPEVO0IY](https://youtu.be/_6_pPEVO0IY)

Here the HMS Bosch has been sampled into the Koala sampler to create percussive sounds. This provides a rhythmic track to play along to in real time. This usually created a space of interest and fun. It was also a great way to get those with very limited mobility to name sounds for me to sample or contribute their voice for sampling and building songs. The technology aided in musical participation and stretched the guitar sounds and techniques into new territory and purpose. Sequencing and playing back samples combined with any of the various guitars played live can lead to many musical possibilities from very little resources. Percussive techniques on any of the guitars were especially useful to sample and sequence for rhythmic patterns.

We could sit around a desk and have little experiments together that had nothing to do with strumming a guitar. People with little mobility could participate in this way. They could just direct me. I feel this relates to Braidotti's (2013) posthuman themes, namely life beyond self: rethinking enhancement as discussed in relation to disability studies by Goodley et al. (2014). I feel the "impaired" guitar adapted and enhanced becomes a larger self, a new self that invites collaboration and interdependence as discussed in this article. Its qualities create new ways to relate and technology adds to this. I feel this challenges both what it means to be a guitar and a human.

## 4.2.2 ZooFang

### 4.2.2.1 Introduction.



[SnareFang Guitar]

The piper of the breath brigade  
Breezing on the inside  
A goofy tube necked mouthpiece  
sits on a sturdy frame  
No strings attached  
Just rattles and wind  
Finger rolls and thumb snares

A huffing puffing chordophone  
Ready to march  
In a call to disarm

The aim from the beginning with this guitar was to bring out as much of the percussive qualities of an acoustic guitar as possible. This was informed by my session notes date where many participants did not have the dexterity for string playing but enjoyed approaching the guitar like a drum. I had developed percussive modifications and techniques for other guitars but I really wanted to push the guitar further into being a drum



to be easily used in that manner. A guitar body has such great resonance and this guitar tries to lean into all the different spots in the body to create various percussive timbres and amplify snare drum like qualities: Sharper sounds than typically found when striking an acoustic guitar.

It is easily portable, can be held and has a range of sounds that are different to both a snare drum or standard guitar. It has no right or wrong way to be played or held it is totally up to the player. It is another instrument that brings freedom through its uniqueness and unfixed identity. It does not need to be struck hard with any sticks or mallets, finger taps will yield a strong enough sound. The kazoo part adds an interesting dimension that is useful when leading improvisations on the instrument in sessions. It can be used to call attention or make signals throughout. It can also turn breath into a percussive instrument. This guitar could be considered a drum and wind instrument but it all comes from harnessing and amplifying the percussive resonance often ignored in an acoustic guitar body. Though it could be considered impaired, lacking or having lost something as it does not have strings or frets etc. This apparent loss has allowed another quality to be embraced and strengthened. Perhaps this guitar is posthuman or postguitar?

#### **4.2.2.2 Dis/Construction.**

There are no strings on this guitar. The neck was removed first to focus on the body as a resonating chamber. The bridge was also removed to leave room for striking different areas of the face. A tambourine was chopped up and drilled towards the bottom giving a great variation of snare sounds around the body. A small fan was taken apart and each side of it was screwed into the wood. One fan sits over the sound hole with the blades able to rotate inside the guitar to create a drone like hum. The other side of the fan cage is screwed into a lower part of the body. The cage grates of the fan give further snare sounds and kettle drum like rattles on scrapes. Lastly a kazoo was glued into a groove that emerged from removing the truss rod. This groove was sanded into a nice contour for the kazoo to fit into. The kazoo can be blown into the fan when it is turned on. Unfortunately the charger cable for the fan is currently broken after snapping off transporting the guitar.

#### **4.2.2.3 Approaches and Techniques.**

##### ***4.2.2.3.1 ZooFang Approaches and Techniques 1***

<https://youtu.be/Kv41RjIK2b8>

Various parts of the body can be struck with hands to provide a variety of snare like sounds. The grates from the fan cages can be scraped almost like little snare rolls. This guitar is great ice breaker in sessions. Its appearance and sonic possibilities inspire curiosity. Like many of the guitars, it starts to return to being like a sonic plaything or toy. It becomes less serious than what one might deem to be an instrument, stripping back to a more childlike and playful experience less loaded with expectations or agenda. Its percussive approach allows for more a more immediate musical response.

##### ***4.2.2.3.2 ZooFang Approaches and Techniques 2***

<https://youtu.be/nATFeRjrpLc>

The kazoo can be incorporated into grooves in a snare like manner. Here it is breathed into like another part of the drum with yelps dispersed throughout. This is a really fun thing to do in sessions especially to lead, yield and define parts of musical improvisations. It is a great technique to offer musical cues and I believe it has much more potential to be explored in the future. I would like to create games led by this instrument with a designated leader in a group context. A situation where the group responds to the leader's calls on the kazoo and the rhythms they create on the drum, allowing different people the opportunity to lead.

##### ***4.2.2.3.3 ZooFang Approaches and Techniques 3***

<https://youtu.be/zMaaYv5dwYc>

The kazoo can be played more melodically and supported by the drum parts of the instrument. Turning a guitar into this instrument also strips me as a guitar player of any experience in sessions. I feel this creates an easier space as a practitioner using an instrument as I am a very confident guitar player. It takes the weight out of instrument I have practiced for years making me more relaxed and makes for a more equitable experience. I am no longer an experienced musician but just part of the mutual exchange of music making. In terms of able bodied standards of musical ability I am rendered innocent, playful and curious too. As with many of the guitars, I feel this helps strip away some loaded power dynamics that disability studies challenges music therapy on (LaCom & Reed, 2014; Honisch, 2014; Metell, 2014; Cameron, 2014; Rolvsjord, 2014; LaCom & Reed, 2014). Bouncing between leaning into musical experience and (dis)experience moment to moment in the flux of creative dialogue has been a huge part of my practice.

#### ***4.2.2.3.4 ZooFang Approaches and Techniques 4***

<https://youtu.be/RP-802GSjLk>

Endless combinations of snare tones can be found between the tambourines, wood and grates. With children on placement this has been fun in a group context where I can blow the kazoo and other children can strike the different parts at the same time.

### **4.2.3 The Mage**

#### **4.2.3.1 Introduction.**



[Mage Guitar]

A past warrior  
Smashed at gigs  
A tool of bravado and aggression  
With a taped up voice  
You finally lost your tune  
Reborn a mage  
With the stream now  
Fists unclenched  
Yielding and flowing  
Powered by simplicity  
on the current of complexity  
Three clues allowed  
Anymore is ignorance  
Booze caps ensnared inside

Sealed by a pure home tone  
A new bassline  
In an old frame  
Spatialized equally  
For collaborative autonomy

I have found this guitar the most the most resourceful of all the modified instruments. Second only to the standard guitar approached with different developed techniques. It has been useful on music therapy placements in so many contexts. It is the right balance of simplicity, percussion, melody and harmony and I have used it as solo instrument, in 1:1 sessions and in groups of various sizes. It has also been the most successful guitar played by participants.

Its tuning, minimal strings, and bottle cap snare sounds allow for more immediate sound production and music making. Its hardiness, looseness and age have allowed myself and participants to push it quite far without fear of breaking it. It has been attacked and twisted in so many ways and is still capable of gentleness too. I will explain some of these approaches further in techniques and approaches.

#### **4.2.3.2 Dis/Construction.**

This is my oldest guitar. I have had it for about a decade and it carried me through countless gigs, recordings and songwriting. After years of intense playing its neck and body warped and it lost its ability to stay in tune. It has several taped up cracks around the sound hole and started to want to sit in a much lower register. It is now my favourite modified guitar for music therapy sessions. At one point it had four strings tuned to C at various octaves but for a long time now has had only three spread out evenly across the neck to allow easy individual playing in different registers focused on one string. It has bottle caps screwed into it for snare sounds and a C note chime attached to its body. The low tuning allows for great expressive bending and the three octaves of C demystify the fretboard by allowing more obvious patterns, note discrepancy and simple chord formation.

All these modifications are aimed to allow easier entry into guitar playing. Its two strengths are in its immediate resourcefulness for solo playing and accompaniment and its ability to be played by multiple people at the same time.

The Mage has been an amazing instrument to lead and follow dynamic music therapy sessions that call for varied approaches in real time. Percussive techniques, its drone like tuning and obvious divisions between strings and pitches make this guitar ready for diverse musical application. For multiplayer it can be placed on the ground and one person can focus on the neck with one finger while the other can strike the body and strings. Both yield immediate sounds. The neck can be played with slides and the body end with mallets too. Several people can also play each string as they are divided with enough space to allow basslines and melodies. Quite simply it is a drum, melodic device and harmonic device all in one. These musical elements can be achieved by one person or can be spread out among 2 or 3. This guitar has been helpful in taking away elements of a traditional guitar to embrace limitations to deepen resourcefulness and creative opportunities in music therapy.

“Sometimes we damn the limits, but without them art is not possible. They provide us with something to work with and against. In practicing our craft we surrender, to a great extent, to letting the materials dictate the design” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.81).

#### **4.2.3.3 Approaches and Techniques.**

##### ***4.2.3.3.1 Mage Approaches and Techniques 1***

[https://youtu.be/t\\_j\\_gsFgBrw](https://youtu.be/t_j_gsFgBrw)

Here the three strings can be seen as can the bottle caps and single chime. The three strings are all tuned to C across three octaves. This makes a full sound possible with just one finger barred across the strings. This is without implying any tonality allowing more of a 12 tone type approach from those unfamiliar with guitar. At least this is the theory I have applied

afterwards. It also allows the guitar to reach a lower register than usual. This can allow the guitar to be approached like a bass guitar for easy entry and use in groups.

<https://youtu.be/81Um3up7Njg>

The strings are tuned to C across three octaves and are spread out for symmetry. This makes for easier recognition of patterns and are spaced far enough from each to allow individual focus on each to be achieved. This string system is spaced to allow focus on each string also as its own world and easy combinations of any of the three. This is especially fun in multiplayer guitar where, in sessions, children have played the highest string while I have done basslines on the lower one or vice versa. This was easiest on with the guitar sitting on the ground.

#### ***4.2.3.3.2 Mage Approaches and Techniques 2***

<https://youtu.be/QfyOeTIWsQU>

Here the thumb is first used to strike the strings while fingers are used to strike the guitar body to achieve pitches and percussion together. Then the right hand wrist is used to strike the body while fingers pick the strings and the left hand changes notes. This demo finishes with a strike of the chime with a finger nail. This is a great technique in sessions to create rhythmic and harmonic movement all at once in to yield to others or to steer sessions. It has also been possible to drive my right hand while a participant plays on the neck, making quite a comprehensive soundscape, synchronised musical conversations and amazing possibilities for play and interaction.

<https://youtu.be/9DPwXL7GkeM>

Here the low string is used as a drone note to allow the two higher strings to play melodic ideas. This is also possible with several people. A person can focus on the body end to create a drone while another alters the pitch on any string focusing on the neck end. One person can also focus on a lower string while another focus on a higher pitched one. Another person can focus on striking the body like a drum too. All combinations of these

things are possible. Pitch can also be altered by applying pressure to the strings are the above the nut. The looser strings make this easier. Many sessions with small children have worked this way. We place the guitar on the ground and sit on either side of the guitar. The child or myself would play the body end of the guitar with a mallet or their hand to create a drone in C (sometimes together). Then myself or the child could play notes on the neck end focusing on different strings with one finger or a slide type prop. The physicality of hitting the guitar percussively can lead to some wild and fun encounters. It is possible to have full interactive experiences, sing along and slip simple songs in during this kind of arrangement too.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Mage Approaches and Techniques 3***

<https://youtu.be/mo5WMjYiadc>

As loud as intense percussive attacks can be with this guitar it is also capable of gentle expression. A stable constant groove combined with gentle melodic ideas is used here. This approach can be used to hold things together and create stable framework. In sessions and on placement this has been most useful when creating an open, calm space. A gentle full sound that attracts people into a session or serves as a gentle beginning.

<https://youtu.be/SjeoNqx-weE>

This guitar can be placed on the ground or lap and played like a drum with mallets. Mallets can also be used to slide or strike the strings to resonate drones. Right hand percussive drones can be achieved while pitches can be added on the neck end as well as percussion on other parts of the body. Combinations of all these things are possible especially with two or three people. In sessions we have had a tremendous amount of fun doing this. Children and adults alike often enjoy the chance to really give the guitar a good whack. This guitar and approaches allows them the freedom to do so and creates a drone that we have often sung along with. A really fun harmonic drum that allows us to get a bit wild.



#### **4.2.3.3.4 Mage Approaches and Techniques 4**

<https://youtu.be/FOyrW5T-3JQ>

<https://youtu.be/5kdCI4YCI2E>

Here the shaker is added to provide a pulse to the grooves. The shaker is attached to the right hand with a belt to still allow guitar playing. With this high frequency sound as part of the ensemble it starts to sound like a full band all played by one person. This can be worn by anyone playing the guitar, playing the guitar with others too or just on its own. The one person band approach is very useful when accompanying participants in sessions as I can follow, support and lead percussively, harmonically and melodically all at once or switch between these modes.

#### **4.2.3.3.5 Mage Approaches and Techniques 5**

<https://youtu.be/KeTY86irQwA>

This is a snippet of a cover of the song is 'Something In The Way' by Nirvana.

At this point the Mage still had an extra string which was eventually removed. The idea was to create a full musical experience combining singing, the shaker and percussive techniques. A cover/arrangement of a full song with just one person. Learning and arranging songs this way helped develop approaches that would provide strong and dynamic supportive frameworks for music therapy sessions. Requested songs can also sometimes be learned quickly this way too. The tuning makes it easy to approximate basic chords along with rhythmic support all at once to try capture the feel of the complete song (or a situationally appropriate version) instead of having to quickly figure out more developed chords. It helps avoid reducing songs to feeling like typical acoustic cover versions too.

#### 4.2.4 Chimer

##### 4.2.4.1 Introduction.



[Chimer Guitar]

When is a guitar still a guitar?

If it has a body but no neck is it still a guitar?

Is it still a guitar when its metal is struck and not plucked?

If its chamber is more open?

If its strings become support for a tone  
but not the tone itself?

A new voice for the same song?

Resonating and contained in the same basic form?

If parts are subtracted

If parts are added

Is it still a guitar?

Of all the guitars made during this research this one has been the least successful in a practical sense. Sound bars, bells and chimes have been very useful in my music therapy practice due to their immediacy, pleasing tone and easily applied tonality. The idea here was to see if I could make chimes more portable and contained for easier use in a practical sense while considering and challenging the identity of a guitar in an artistic/social sense. Though the resonance isn't as pleasing as usual chime instruments it still reflects a lot around the

thinking of this research. It also was embraced with the same creative spirit that often yields interesting results: A spirit that acts as ongoing, restless enquiry of experimentation and modification. Like all the guitars I will continue to experiment with it.

#### **4.2.4.2 Dis/Construction.**

This guitar had the most troublesome journey of the bunch. There was a clear idea to open up the body and turn the guitar from a string instrument to a chime or bell like instrument. Chimes had been successful instruments for their playful immediacy at music therapy placements. The plan was to see how far a guitar could be changed and still maintain the feeling of a guitar in some way, like a smaller, huggable and contained set of chimes. Most of the failed parts of its construction had to do with finding materials to be the chimes. Pipes were found from various household objects and sawed to various lengths by ratios to get scales and pitches. Eventually these were discarded and I ordered some windchimes online which turned out to be great. Holes were drilled into the ends of each chime that did not have holes already with careful consideration to find the nodes (this I had to learn about). This was done by listening to where the chime would still resonate when being held at different positions along its length. The seven coloured chimes were suspended inside the guitar body with its neck and face removed with a saw. They are suspended by guitar strings that are fed through tuning pegs at the end of the guitar allowing for the strings to be tightened and slackened as desired. Finally the inside of the guitar was decorated with stickers that keep with the rainbow theme. The chimes have a weird rattling quality but sound cool resonating in the open guitar body. It certainly is not a high quality mini chime instrument but an interesting instrument in its own right.

#### **4.2.4.3 Approaches and Techniques**

##### **4.2.4.3.1 Chimer Approaches and Techniques 1**

<https://youtu.be/z8KTuxYQbsU>

<https://youtu.be/9K8QWTw-Z6c>

<https://youtu.be/DCAWFC16xdc>

This guitar acts like a contained metallophone you can put on your lap. It is colourful and fun and sounds a bit distorted. It can be combined nicely with the other guitars. I found that its success in sessions beyond usual chimes has been due to how easily it can be handled. However, Most people have seemed to be more intrigued by the usual chimes. I believe this is because of the Chimer's less pure tone in comparison. The only other times I have tried to use it is in groups where we are all playing some sort of guitar. This can create a fun and curious atmosphere. Apart from this, and the instrument's smaller and portable size for handling, I don't feel I have found any great uses for it in ways standard chimes, or tone bars cannot already do. Perhaps more time in the field is needed for this guitar as it is the most recent of the bunch.

#### ***4.2.4.3.2 Chimer Approaches and Techniques 2***

[https://youtu.be/JJ\\_0j2xfY4I](https://youtu.be/JJ_0j2xfY4I)

<https://youtu.be/6HKID6r0gfs>

The strings that hold the chimes in place can be struck with mallets while the pitch is altered with the other hand. I have not explored this approach much in sessions but it has been utilized in the eight pieces of music. It is a fun textural compositional instrument.

#### **4.2.5 Standard**

##### **4.2.5.1 Introduction.**



[Standard acoustic guitar]

The voice won't always trust the clumsy wrist  
Feeling like a new instrument  
Feeling vulnerable on the old certain  
The cohesion of a new beginning must start in the simplest of forms  
What a relief to play without pressure  
Exploring the smallest of pleasures  
A magnitude in tiny dynamics

This section will address approaches and techniques on a standard acoustic guitar. Having a standardised model of what a guitar is has been useful to work within and pushing against. It sets the boundaries but within those there is a world of experimentation.

It also brings insight into how an established form shapes approach. This is full of both traps and possibilities. Approaching the guitar in different ways also renders much of my previous traditional practice over the years redundant. It reverts my playing to a beginner's level, similar to the abilities of many of the people I have worked with on placement. I have practiced and explored these new approaches that have grown and been informed during this year of practice. I will explore this more below. This reminds me of what Zen Buddhism

refers to as Shoshin, the beginner's mind. "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind there are few" (Shoshin, 2022).

#### **4.2.5.2 Approaches and Techniques.**

##### ***4.2.5.2.1 Standard Guitar Approaches and Techniques 1***

<https://youtu.be/8CjR0fgO-v0>

The guitar here is tuned to a D major chord. It allows for playing full major chord up and down the neck with one finger. It also allowed simpler visualisation of note combinations and easier potential for drones. Without using the left hand at all the guitar sounds pleasing to Western ears and can be played by one person around the body as another frets the chords with one finger on the neck end. This has also allowed participants to immediately play a chord on this guitar without needing to use their left (or fretting) hand or fret a chord with just one finger.

<https://youtu.be/E5NRWnm-2k8>

The open D major tuning is another approach that resources the guitar as a full band itself. I have found this useful in therapy because it allows for easier accompaniment on my part. Keeping a drone going and changing chords with just one finger allowed me to focus on other percussive approaches during sessions and keep an eye on things happening in session to respond quickly. Especially during larger groups.

Arrangements of songs and harmonic support for melodies introduced by participants can be approximated pretty quickly in this tuning. Using various techniques, a wide range of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ideas can be combined while the guitar is tuned this way. This fullness can be achieved with one, two or three people.

#### **4.2.5.2.2 Standard Guitar Approaches and Techniques 2**

<https://youtu.be/UWV1-K6CzI>

Here the right hand is explored to create new sounds and opportunities for expression and musical complexity. The wrist is used to strike the wood above the string to achieve a kick drum type sound and fulfil that role. It is combined with the fingers to finger pick the strings creating a combination of pulse and articulation. Fingers are also used to tap the strings creating an interesting timbre with vague harmonics. Endless rhythms can be approached this way by combining the wrist and fingers turning the guitar into a drum. This has been a very useful approach in sessions when limited to guitar and provides more opportunities for dynamics in musical communication with participants. I can accompany moving from intense driving rhythms to more subdued finger picked pulses and everywhere in between.

<https://youtu.be/0bwJfXY5-C8>

There are alternates to the wrist to achieve a kick drum type sounds. The thumb can slap the strings over the sound hole to resonate the strings at the same time. Fingers can then tap or roll on the wood on alternate beats from the thumb. Flicking fingers out while attacking the body with the wrist can also create a unison of kick drum and harmonic resonance. This can also be combined with stroking the strings in grasping motion to create a full rhythm.

<https://youtu.be/uo9favin08k>

These ideas can also be approached in a gentle way and don't just have to be driving rhythms. Soft sustained sounds can also be created by tapping or stroking gently but quickly and can be combined with the wrist kick drum attack. All these approaches aim to bring a deeper expressiveness to the instrument. An attempt to expand the possibilities of musical language between therapist and participant in sessions when using the guitar.

<https://youtu.be/crlyie5ZWLk>

All these techniques can be combined to create dynamic music that moves beyond the realm of typical guitar playing. New and novel sounds can alert and regain attention as well as supporting engagement. It can become a percussion instrument, a gentle sustained instrument or play in between. An instrument ready for everything from energetic dance to more meditative and soothing experiences for a greater range of emotive sounds. Reinventing an instrument that may sometimes be seen as predictable.

#### ***4.2.5.2.3 Standard Guitar Approaches and Techniques 3***

<https://youtu.be/11JVzI3IPMo>

Here the guitar is approached like a piano. Effort has been made to push melodic possibilities. As with many of these techniques my level of experience is quite basic. The left acts like chordal accompaniment and the right hand taps melodies out higher up the neck.

<https://youtu.be/Th6EHlOMeqE>

Harmonics are an effort to expand the range, timbre and sustain of guitar notes. Similar to tapping this is an attempt to explore melodic and harmonic possibilities together at once.

<https://youtu.be/eUxMSxixBQw>

There is fun abandon using a pick to play strings in less traditionally resonant ways. Known as “dead” strings in guitar culture. There seems to be a near limitless amount of curious sounds that can often be used humorously. These are great for abstract conversations with people and adding interesting textures music making.

<https://youtu.be/cVVTCl3NP9Q>

Here the guitar is pushed energetically and sporadically to create unusual sounds using a combination of picking techniques, scrapes, palm muting and dead strings. It is an almost



cartoon like improvisation. These can act as abrupt changes especially when sessions may feel like they are dragging or heading in the wrong direction.

#### ***4.2.5.2.4 Standard Guitar Approaches and Techniques 4***

<https://youtu.be/LLmcmVW-z7Q>

A shaker has been attached to a section of belt with zip ties to become a cymbal like instrument that can be attached to a hand. It can be used by itself making it accessible for those who are unable to grasp. It also can be attached around the knuckles or wrist and not get in the way of guitar playing. Adding this to other techniques creates a good enough imitation of some kind of drum kit.

<https://youtu.be/Pwn3cojYhws>

Various objects (springs, hair pins) have been stuck in the strings near the bridge to provide a variety of tones but a slice of an old guitar string works well. It creates a metallic resonance in the sound hole and an interesting timbre. As it is played it moves around creating lots of happy accidents and variations in pitch and tone colour.

<https://youtu.be/bN1FJblAfRw>

This mallet creates a warm mellow tone and opportunities for unique rhythms and sustained sounds. Its natural bounce on the strings is a fun thing to experiment with. Its handle can also be used on the neck as a slide. It can be a fantastic guitar approach for those who find fine motor activities a challenge.

<https://youtu.be/bQHgyxillbw>

This is a hybrid pick made from combining a metal rod with a wheel from a clothes rack. A guitar has also been glued into the top end. It can be used as a slide and also be rolled

around on the strings with the wheel. Not seen in this video, it can also pick out notes with the pick on the end while holding the handle, but this is quite tricky. The idea here was to create an easier approach to the guitar for those that found it tricky to strum, pick or finger pick. In open tuning I have had some success with children enjoying rolling, hitting and sliding it on the strings while I play chords.

#### ***4.2.5.2.5 Standard Guitar Approaches and Techniques 5***

<https://youtu.be/UCAUBkchYY8>

Here the guitar is used as a dynamic vessel to support vocal freedom, perhaps seen as musically undesirable by some. It is an example of the guitar's adaptability to be a framing device for the unconventional. To hold any kind of voice or expression. Here it supports a non-verbal approach that embraces the break in my voice. The most vulnerable part of a singing voice. One of the guitar's strength is its ability to support the voice. To accompany. Any of these guitars leave space for vocal accompaniment and when they are used in sessions often the voice is present too. I have found all these guitars to often have a symbiotic relationship with the voice. Pushing approaches to accompaniment has been a focus of this research.

Chordal accompaniment can be dynamic in volume and tempo to support my own voice and the voices of participants. Really leaning into the guitar's dynamic weirdness to create a space of vocal freedom. In sessions people who are non-verbal often respond to this directness and expressiveness of voice. We often imitate and converse with each other and the guitar is right there with us. Soft whispers can move into intense animalistic sounds supported by this approach of guitar playing that when embraced wholeheartedly often allows free expression and a cathartic experience. A willingness to embrace the guitar this way helps hold things together and create that space of expressiveness.

#### ***4.2.6 Conclusion***

Through developing these guitars and techniques I have been able to deepen my resourcefulness as a music therapy student. I have a wider range of tools both materialistically and musically but most importantly, a stronger trust and relationship to creativity. I now have several guitars to suit different musical and therapeutic situations that I believe still have potential to meet the ongoing adaptative challenges that a creative therapy requires. Through techniques and modified guitars I can stretch the guitar into new territories to create new musical experiences in music therapy sessions. Musical experiences that can invite easier access and participation, unique opportunities for expression and more dynamic musical dialoguing. Some guitars and techniques can fulfil musical roles not typical to acoustic guitar and some can allow multiple musical elements all at once or collaboratively. The most important resource these guitars and techniques have helped me develop is one of relational creativity, fluidity and curiosity. A willingness to embrace any kind of relationship to an instrument or person to see what can be revealed. An attitude of vulnerable experimentation outside of my comfort zone as a typical musician or guitarist. An attitude that values embracing limitations and playing with boundaries and not writing something off because it doesn't meet a typical model or could be deemed "lesser."

These guitars have helped alter my perception and steer my practice and ideology towards being strength and resource orientated. Less concerned with curing or fixing a perceived deficit but rather amplifying, illuminating and embracing unique strengths. I feel this aligns with Lacom & Reed (2014) writings on the pitfalls of the medical model of disability where they state "when we define a person by means of a medical diagnosis, when we rely on that diagnosis to determine therapy, we are limiting our clients. We are asking them to overcome, rather than to become."

I have found a playful approach to boundaries, both as something to be pushed as well as something to be embraced, has yielded creative fruits. Boundaries can act as limits to work within that create a space of opportunity. Materials, ability and knowledge embraced can create a framework of focus to steer and inform creative direction. Mostly my attempts to modify a guitar or guitar technique have actually given rise to a new framework of limitations to work and develop within. The opportunities and expansions have risen out of these. Nachmanovitch (1990) writes "Structure ignites spontaneity. Just a touch of an arbitrary form can be introduced into an improvisation to keep it from wandering off course, or to act as a catalyst" (p.83). It has made me consider the relative nature of

disability and how even the standard “able bodied” guitar comes with its own impairments: Its own limitations that are in reality creative and therapeutic opportunities.

## **4.3 Musical Pieces**

### ***4.3.1 Introduction***

Findings from the techniques, guitars, experiences and thinking from literature meet in these eight pieces. Each song is limited to around one minute and is built around a theme found in the data, approach or guitar. They demonstrate the fullness of being that can manifest from within the limits of “just a guitar.” Each piece has an accompanying poem. Themes will be discussed in the conclusion.

### ***4.3.2 Postevening***

[https://youtu.be/2cfZ\\_kVAVGo](https://youtu.be/2cfZ_kVAVGo)

Shimmers and slices  
Subtlety through the backwards  
The future calls  
Fore telling masked in reverse  
Never waning  
Ever wailing  
Perspective pulsing on high  
A beacon in a glimpse  
Shards in the sky  
Holding hands through the darkness  
Enough to contain  
To hold the rage  
The roars  
The soars

The conflict and harmony  
The dance, the dirge, the fear  
Backwards we move on together  
Limits abound

Shortcomings and long goings  
Backwards in chunks with momentum  
We heed the call from opposite land  
Until we realise our cohesion  
Our puzzle of peace  
In imperfect acceptance

This piece explores binaries moving in fluidity and relation to each other. It reflects how the conventional can be a dominating force but also a supportive framework for uniqueness when creative and reflexive dialogue is achieved. Vulnerable parts also become stronger in their interdependence and beauty arises from embracing diversity. Instruments, like people have less fixed identities when supported and can fulfill other roles outside of what they are typically expected to do. This piece showed me the beauty, complexity and strength of an interdependent entity and how binaries can be relative and not absolute.

#### **4.3.3 Breaching Calls**

<https://youtu.be/d1bdDjhCbzA>

Fingers hold the voice  
In return they swim and bathe in ocean calls  
Where freed voices drop and sigh out of key  
Two strung entities chat  
One dexterous  
One industrial  
One picked by bone and flesh  
One rolled upon by wheels

Articulate in ways that escape each other  
And richer still when conversing together  
Bosch breaches between the waves  
In her own meter

In her own pocket  
She bobs in interludes  
That sit within the current  
But sail as their own

This piece explores how a simple idea can be approached from different perspectives. Simplicity is a great connecting force as it limits and focuses the window which conversations can take place in in music therapy sessions. The same musical ideas are played with very different techniques to together create something unique and harmonious. A simple idea can allow inclusion of diversity. In this piece uniqueness is highlighted and supported. It showed me how a simple common ground can act as an anchor for different perspectives to relate.

#### **4.3.4 BEVEB (*Breath, Eyes, Voice, Ears, Body*)**

<https://youtu.be/IDiwb1NPGYM>

Fluctuating spines  
A grooving beast  
Marching to harmonic drums  
Made of passages and rudiments of give and take  
A cross dimensional body  
The most unique of forms  
that communes with the ground  
containing and embracing  
highways of sensory infrastructure  
Wordless but not voiceless

Verbless but not inactive  
Selfhood spoken through action  
Heard through feeling  
Witnessed through presence

Hard of hearing but in tune  
A powerful receptor to subtle transmissions  
Sight and wisdom that stretches infinitely inward  
In sight despite the reflective darkness outside  
Breath regulates and transmutes  
As an essence and power  
To fuel the creature  
That reaches further  
More than human

This piece explores transformation, interdependence, resourcefulness and identity. The piece itself is a postguitar. It is a relational entity made of various impaired guitars being played in ways that stretches their typical identity. This piece showed me that a guitar can be anything. Appendix 8.1 shows an image of a Logic Pro X session of one of the pieces.

#### **4.3.5 Jelly Bounce**

[https://youtu.be/J\\_FXc-shOuA](https://youtu.be/J_FXc-shOuA)

Depth of being accentuated  
Weaved and fused with machinery  
Creating a wider soil  
For the self to stretch further  
A gelatinous earth  
inseparable from the sky  
The voice is free  
To bounce everywhere

You can't fall  
If no direction is solid  
You can't go wrong  
With the sounds of support

This piece explores technology augmentation of self and the guitars potential to be a supportive vehicle for unorthodox vocalisations in music therapy when pushed further into unconventional directions. This piece reinforced the guitar's strength and breadth as an accompanying instrument for the human (or posthuman) voice.

#### ***4.3.6 Perfectly Out of Control***

<https://youtu.be/rpCFNdwyn3E>

For one minute lets be ourselves  
No chops  
No licks  
No scales  
No weight  
We don't need a hero's tone  
Nor their posture  
Snort, dance and jiggle  
Contort, prance and giggle  
Bang, thump and screech  
Plonk, stomp and preach  
Cast a grunt  
A wail can respond  
Let's converse as we are  
And build a tune  
A cacophony  
Of Authenticity



Right on course together

It's all perfectly out of control

This piece explores how there is creative potential in limitations or things that are too easily written off. It celebrates embracing uniqueness on its own terms for and basking in the freedom of a fruitful expression of selfhood. It taught me to trust in the unfamiliar and to embrace its qualities.

#### **4.3.7 *The Ground is Leaking***

<https://youtu.be/NXGhWfg1ndc>

Bubbled by rampant individualism

Climbing a ladder made of bones

The apparently stable concrete

Leaks ghostly calls

These are only heard as shadows

For you to hang your mirror on

At the expense of those invisible to you

You reap rewards

in illusory independence

An echo chamber

of vacuous success

This piece explores the call of disability, challenging structures of privilege, ignorance and humanist ideals. Making music around these themes has only deepened my understanding or how interconnected and complex social dichotomies are.

#### **4.3.8 *Puff Propulsion***

[https://youtu.be/S522\\_rwrItQ](https://youtu.be/S522_rwrItQ)

Discorporate infantry  
governed by particles of breath  
Inflating the membrane  
of a translucent balloon  
An unwinding parade  
effortlessly effervescent  
floating in the music of the wind  
A regiment of fluidity  
Expanding and contracting  
Shapes of weather  
that rhyme harmoniously  
never repeating  
or competing  
propulsion and inspiration ripple  
in nature's improvisation  
The spirit of creativity is infinite

This piece explores how in music therapy a whole sonic organisation can be spawned from a single idea that could be easily dismissed as unmusical. It began from a kazoo part posing as a drum and all parts were informed by the previous part and considerate of the next in a relational puzzle piece. This taught me that each entity or being influences each other and creation and change is a rich tapestry of interrelation. It taught me to trust and not censor elements along a creative path even if the wider perspective might not be understood.

#### **4.3.9 Dis/Fable**

<https://youtu.be/8zKpwNYGj24>

Medical supermodels  
Fashionable targets  
Ideal reproduction  
In vacuous freedom

Consequence free independence  
In disabling mythology  
The dis/alarm bell chimes  
Ringing reminders of connectivity  
Breaking the illusion of separation  
Chimes met with entitled cries of oppression  
It frightens those who reap the rewards  
To be reminded they are so much entwined  
With those fabled less human  
The serpents of the desert render the alpha disabled  
Wobbly and sinking on barren land  
Nothing to use  
Not a drop to drink  
If only you weren't the sexiest man alive  
Make no mistake  
There is no push  
Only pull

This piece explores music therapy's potential to promote the oppressive structures and disabling narratives mentioned in disability studies (Cameron, 2014; Honisch, 2014; LaCom & Reed, 2014; Metell, 2014; Rolvsjord, 2014). Musically it makes a point of how music therapy has the potential to be collaborative and equitable due to its relational nature and creative flexibility.

#### ***4.3.10 Themes / Conclusion***

How does exploring guitar in these pieces of music inform my music therapy practice? These compositions reflect the following themes in relation to creativity and limitations, disability studies and music therapy. They demonstrate how complex creative fruits can emerge from a limited framework and resources.

These eight pieces of music are the product of a lot of approaches, reflections, practice and thinking over the research process. They are not truly a final product and are designed to

stimulate further reflection and imagination. Rolling (2003, as cited in Wheeler et al., 2016) describe arts-based research as defined by ten philosophical assumptions. One of these is “proliferative”, where “ABR inquiry invites ambiguity for the purpose of expanding discourse across multimodal domains of inquiry.” Another is “perspectival”, where “ABR acknowledges value-free inquiry, and considers multiple worldviews and perspectives toward a more holistic understanding of how these elements impact and influence complex social phenomena.” I do like to let the music speak for itself, but for the purposes of this research I will unpack themes that emerged and seemed valuable and relevant throughout the creative process and its products. Three main themes are discussed below: interdependence, duality, paradox and fluidity and challenging perceptions.

#### **4.3.10.1 Interdependence**

Music can capture moving parts and relations. Wheeler (2016) also mentions a philosophical assumption of ABR as “prestructural, where arts-based researchers value tacit, intuitive, affective and embodied knowledges.” These eight short pieces reflect unconventional guitars and guitar techniques that each play roles that embrace their personalities. They are diverse yet interdependent voices that combine to create a larger temporal entity as the piece itself. Throughout this research, developing and experimenting with the guitars has been a process of teasing out and embracing the unique qualities brought by each technique and guitar. With these pieces it is a chance for them all to interact and inform each other to steer a greater interdependent structure. Some guitars such as the Mage stretch into the low frequency realm to hold basslines for guitars like The Chimer or HMS Bosch to interlock in higher end percussive grooves. Many of the musical parts are simple, standing alone, but when combined with each they create and become something more powerful than they could as individuals: A sonic ecosystem. It was also only through interrelation that their parts arose in the greater conversation in the music. They shaped something collectively which will then go on to interact with other elements of research and with listener’s imaginations. I relate this to how Goodley et al., (2014) discuss posthumanism disability studies, urging us to think of how we are all made through our connections that challenge humanistic values of independence and autonomy. They go on

to discuss how disability is fertile soil for greater relational selfhood and an opportunity for transformative possibilities.

#### **4.3.10.2 Duality, Paradox and Fluidity**

Music by its nature is fantastic at capturing non-linear discourse and embracing duality and paradox. Compositionally it also thrives on equitable relationships in complex, puzzle like multidimensional arrangements. Parts converse through rhythms, harmony, melody, dynamics and texture over a duration of time. In these short pieces elements constantly shift throughout a piece. Parts move their sonic positions through mixing techniques and change roles compositionally. I wanted it to reflect the fluidity of relations and music that I often heard in music therapy. It is very hard to dictate verbally musical relationships that occur in music therapy sessions so here is what it could sound like. This is also in response to criticisms from disability studies towards therapeutic practice and its potential to indulge disabling narratives and enable ableist power dynamics (Cameron, 2014). These criticisms are obviously important but I wanted my response to these concerns to be answered musically. Music therapy must constantly check itself on such issues, but it has the advantage of being a creative therapy too. Creativity has such value because it is not fixed and I want these musical conversations between “impaired” guitars, unique approaches and unorthodox sounds to capture and reflect the richness, complexity, fluidity, freedom, reflexivity, paradox, openness and ambiguity of relational music making. There was much paradox in the data, so I also wanted it to reflect the paradoxical nature of art and how this can be a valuable way to witness discourse as well as reflecting the therapeutic complexity of music. This is a therapeutic practice that is generative and welcomes possibilities and limitations. In a musical space, dualistic opposing forces can find balance because they are constantly responding and moving in relation to each other. This constantly ongoing creative nature and conversation is an important aspect of music therapy. Finding ways to hear and be heard by each other. It does not have to label someone as something. It doesn’t stand still. It can embrace things as they are and creatively breathe space and life into relationships. These pieces of music allow a space for uniqueness to thrive and aim to demonstrate how much potential there is in within the limitations and impairments of an acoustic guitar. A world of opportunity when approached with resourcefulness and

creativity, orientated towards embracing inherent strengths and quirks instead of making them comply to typical models.

#### **4.3.10.3 Challenging perceptions**

Combined with each piece's accompanying poetry I wanted this music to be somewhat socially challenging. Each poem is paired with a piece and relates in words the creative decisions, feelings and thinking that went into the piece. Perhaps calling it dis/music would be in line with the term dis/human studies as used in Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2016). A term which "simultaneously acknowledges the possibilities offered by disability to trouble, reshape and re-fashion the human (crip ambitions) while at the same time asserting disabled people's humanity (normative desires)" (p.2). It is music made with impaired guitars and approaches developed from practice. Combining these with poetry and decisions influenced by creative limitations and disability studies literature, the aim is to create an experience of music that challenges the way guitars are perceived and used in music therapy. The music also aims to capture the beauty found in non-normative realities. The poetry often muses on structures of privilege and vulnerability in a society that seems obsessed with productivity, individualism and ignores the reality of fragility. It also celebrates non-normative being and creative liberation.

Between guitar (dis)construction, reading, writing and music making this process has been a massive and often overwhelming one. Balancing artistic intuition and academic integrity has been a challenge. The creative data was funneling through academic literature and back and forth to maintain this balance. A creative narrative emerged as I trusted the journey intuitively to produce an artistic cross section of all the data sources. It is one of many that could emerge and is a never-ending process. Appendix 8.3 shows some writing and thinking about the pieces in longer form, considering their qualities through the lens disability studies, music therapy and posthuman ideas as well the guitars themselves. Appendix 8.4 shows some longer form improvisation of approaches exploring before being filtered down through relevance to music therapy and ideologies explored throughout this research. Appendix 8.5 shows guitars in progress, sometimes before their direction became more informed by the other elements of research. Essentially the findings are never ending and ongoing, much like music therapy itself. They have been contained by the time frame of the

research and filtered by a lens of music therapy practice, relevant literature and social justice.

## **5 Discussion**

Drawing on all of the findings, I will discuss three main aspects to answer my research question: *How can my personal exploration of the limitations and possibilities of guitar inform my music therapy practice?* They are:

- 1) Guitar and Interdependence
- 2) Guitar and Oppression
- 3) Guitar and Possibility

### **5.1 Guitar and Interdependence**

Disability studies and posthumanism both challenge the humanist illusion of independence. A traditional humanist perspective defines a human by its qualities of independence and autonomy and as a result renders anything less human by comparison if they do not possess these qualities. LaCom & Reed (2014) refer to this as the illusion of stable bodies and how this can reinforce hierarchies. Goodley et al., (2014) writes this challenge, “should be celebrated because it opens up the self as an extended, distributed, interconnected and relational entity embodied and embedded.” (p.5). Disability and posthumanism break this illusion of independence and in turn offer greater possibilities and implications of relating and being.

The music made during this research also was found to celebrate interdependence. Acts of music making with participants as well as musical pieces themselves were interdependent entities. Each moment or part only took on meaning by relating to another. This is true for the people conversing through time in a session and for the compositional entities in a piece of music. I found the exploration of guitars to be illuminating in this regard. When their uniqueness was adopted, they brought diversity to the way they relate musically. Not only did they respond to and introduce ideas in a different way, they also stimulated the more traditional approaches, guitars or compositional devices and offered something new.

A perceived limit or impairment in a guitar also provided an opportunity for support from another guitar or approach. These things went together like a temporal puzzle and continue to illuminate and inform each other's voices.

From this exploration of the guitar to inform my music therapy practice, I found that interdependence was such a fundamental part of therapeutic relating and music itself and yielded great moments of connection, equity and creativity. The pieces of music displayed that an acoustic guitar can become something much larger when it is supported and connected in a musically interdependent world.

## **5.2 Guitar and Oppression**

### *5.2.1 Change the Guitar or Embrace the Guitar?*

This research challenged what it means to be a guitar and what it means to be a human. In some circumstances the guitar was analogous to an environment/social structure and was changed to fit a person, not to make the person have to fit into the guitar. Guitars modified or approached differently aim to support a person's uniqueness and allow and amplify their voice. This sometimes proved fruitful and successful, but will always be an ongoing practice to be true to the spirit of diversity and creativity.

In other circumstances the different approaches and guitars rendered guitars limited or impaired. Or at least reflective of this socially constructed perception. Orientating and working within this framework without trying to return to an able-bodied, normative guitar or approach led to expansive creative possibilities. Possibilities for unique expression, collaboration, intrigue, beauty and relation. These possibilities continue to grow in sessions and are constantly being refined, challenged and changed.

Accordingly, the exploration of the guitar helped inform my music therapy practice by helping me to work towards a less oppressive music therapy practice as in line with Anti Oppressive Practice as discussed by Baines (2013).

A practice that captures what Honisch (2014) refers to as "a reciprocal encounter in which diagnoses and intervention are replaced by a spirit of collaborative learning" (p.1). There is certainly much learning to do on my side of the collaboration.



### **5.2.2 *Dis/Abling Guitars***

Braidotti (2013, as cited in Goodley et al., 2014) writes “disability is but one cultural artifact that signifies the ‘demise of humanism’ precisely because disability demands non-normative and anti-establishment ways of living life” (p.7). The guitars, approaches and music in this research supported this position. They disrupt normative and idealised views of music and guitar. They captured some beauty, depth and creativity found outside of mainstream guitar music or playing. The instruments seem to support this disruption to establishment by being played with and by non-normative bodies. They reflect the reality of interdependence, human fragility and vulnerability which often goes ignored by non-disabled people.

### **5.2.3 *Disability Studies and Music Therapy***

Mettell (2014) calls for music therapy to reflect on and challenge the medical model and not be accept it as the implicit narrative of music therapy as well as for music therapists to be conscious of language and labels. They also state that music therapy is not apolitical and must be careful not to reproduce the system of disability and disempowerment. Guitars, techniques and resourceful creative approaches to sessions aim to work in line with this thinking. Impairments are seen as opportunities for creation, collaboration and musical meeting both in guitars, people and in music itself. That are not to be rendered disabled because they have an inherent quality that is not considered normative. Thinking about music therapy from this perspective of disability studies will help me develop deepening reflection, accountability and awareness in practice.

Honisch (2014 ) writes that disability studies asks that instead of thinking of a client as someone who we have assumed as needing care due to a perceived loss or deficit, we instead view them as a “full participant in social and musical interaction based on an assumption of the equality of two complete persons which disability does not lessen” (p.4). This research hopefully demonstrates that an openness to possibilities and limitations of the guitar, no matter how apparently impaired, limited, or unique, can lead to musical and social connection and fluidity. Diversity or perceived deficit is possibility in disguise once freed from disabling perceptions or narratives. One that can lead to creativity and relational

experiences. Guitars are posthuman creatures just like all of us. These are sentiments I take with me as I move forward in music therapy practice.

## **5.3 Guitar and Possibility**

### ***5.3.1 Creativity, Limits, Impairments, Mistakes and Opportunity***

A strength of creative therapy is in its name. Creativity allows flexibility, reflection, adaptation, and out of the box approaches. While the guitars and techniques developed in this research will never have a finality or universal application, they embrace a spirit of creativity that is constantly moving. One that can be challenged and/or built upon. Mistakes and failures are steps in an ongoing process. Nachmanovitch (1990) writes “mistakes and accidents can be irritating grains that become pearls; they present us with unforeseen opportunities, they are fresh sources of inspiration in and of themselves” (p.88). Embracing these mistakes and limits have been great keys to the development of ideas. Mistakes and limits have since become a large part of my practice, having the courage to lean into vulnerability to witness its’ strength. A person who may have an impairment provides a unique opportunity for creative expression. One that is part of them and in the contexts of music therapy does not have to be seen as a deficit to be fixed. If someone cannot fret the guitar or hold the guitar it can be modified to meet this. It can be struck instead of fingered or plucked. It can rest on the ground or one’s lap. Through this research I have found limits provided creative opportunities which could then be applied in a therapeutic context. Embracing something as it is, limits and all, without trying to make it something else is a therapeutic experience in itself. It allows an entities’ expression and opportunity for relation and connection. It also minimises oppressive labelling and expectations of compliance or normalising.

Creatively and openly embracing limits, perceived impairments or mistakes can illuminate the power held in such things. It shows their fluidity and highlights labelling things as such is mostly a matter of perception or social construction. It also is a reminder of how much possibility there is when something is valued as it is. Each impairment or limit is unique and full of possibility not a diagnosis to be made to comply to a homogenous model. This

research has led me to believe artistic and social relations mirror each other in these ways. I cannot separate them especially in the context of a creative therapy. I feel this also relates to the spirit of bricolage where work is done with a diverse range of things that happen to be available, using what is on hand

### ***5.3.2 Resourcefulness and Music Therapy***

A creative and resourceful attitude towards impairment or limitations seems to resonate with the social model of disability and music therapy and finds a common ground between the two. The eight pieces of music display how far an acoustic guitar can go to create a whole world. How resourceful an apparently limited entity can be when related to in a non-normative way.

Many of the techniques and guitars have allowed for greater possibilities for participants and myself in music therapy sessions. More importantly they have offered greater possibilities for relating, for our mutuality and multifaceted cohesion as a single moving musical entity. This research has allowed me to build a bank of resources and also shifted my awareness to become more perceptive to what CAN BE resourced in sessions. I link this to resource orientated music therapy. As Rolvsjord (2016) writes “resource-oriented music therapy emphasizes the development and stimulation of client’s strengths and resources rather than the reduction of symptoms or cure of pathology” (p.557).

The states of the guitars and techniques are not still and will continue to adapt and change. Playfulness, creativity and fluidity are resources I wish to deepen both as a practitioner as well as facilitate deepening in participants as well as during the mutual flux of sessions themselves.

### **5.4 Limitations of Study**

Although limitations have been a key part of this research and have been embraced and introduced for learning, here are some that I have struggled with during the research process.

#### ***5.4.1 Art Vs Research***

I have been limited by my own skills as a researcher. Academic research is not something that I have had as much experience with as I have as an artist or musician. Artistry comes more naturally to me and often I would lean into it more because it is more comfortable or makes more sense to me. Keeping artistic processes within the frame of a research process has been a challenge. I am more used to showing and not telling, so striking a balance between explaining things and letting the artistic products speak for themselves has been a constant tight rope. There have been moments of trust in the process without seeing a larger picture, which was sometimes quite difficult. Juggling when something is emotive and free for interpretation, is to be explained or is to be justified has been tricky. Some findings have been intuited through creative processes which can sometimes be challenging to explain. It can be hard to pick where things begin and end. What spawned or stimulated what first. I do hope people who read this research will have an experience that is their own.

#### ***5.4.2 Scale and frame***

This research could go on for much longer and it will. It has been a snapshot of an ongoing artistic enquiry into music therapy practice and social relations. Sometimes the artistic products got away on me and I ended up overwhelmed with poetry, music and guitar ideas. Other times I was not sure how deep into disability literature I should go. I had to return to my research question often to dial things back to meet the requirements of this exegesis. There is so much more to explore and that is part of the idea of this research, to test the possibilities and inspire a future of ongoing creativity and reflexivity for my practice. The more I experimented with things during this research the more I witnessed how much there is to learn and play with. I realised how much each little microcosm of “limitation” has to say. This is very true in a social/political sense as well as a musically and therapeutically. It is a rich and diverse tapestry I am excited to engage with more and more.

### ***5.4.3 Who is this for?***

This research has been a cyclical process of conducting information between posthumanism, critical disability studies, guitars and approaches, reflections from practice and artistic processes and products. Where any of it began and ended is very tricky to see at this stage. Returning to the main research question of how this exploration can inform my music therapy practice helps root things somewhere, but also raises questions on who this research is really for? I am an able-bodied guitarist doing an autoethnographic arts-based research exegesis for the potential benefit of my music therapy practice. It is very easy for this project to become self-indulgent or deluded. My understanding of disability and disability studies is very limited, and I fear contributing to oppressive language from my position of privilege. I have been careful when compounding ideas of impairment, limitations and disability and in no way is this research meant to constrict these terms. I have looked at them as powerful possibilities from a music therapy perspective but I have not addressed the real struggles these can mean for people. I am not trying to bypass this reality, rather trying to demonstrate how a creative change in perception and labels can yield creative and therapeutic fruits.

### ***5.4.4 Music Therapy Student on Placement.***

This research was part of my Master's Music Therapy degree. My placements this year were at a disability residency and children's ward. I was limited by my experience as a music therapist as I have been a student, not a professional. Due to the many dimensions of learning going on I wasn't always focused on experimenting with the guitars while on placement. More often than not I did use the guitars and techniques and they yielded all kinds of responses and insights and contributed to further development. However, I was limited by only looking back at my notes as secondary data (with permission from the facilities) as I did not directly seek consent from participants to be used in this research in any kind of personal detail. I reflected on my notes in a broad sense to look at situations where the guitars had been used, but perhaps more detail of the people's lived involved with the guitars could have been deeper and more informative.

#### **5.4.5 The Guitar!**

Sticking to just a guitar was the whole point of this research. I limited myself to this instrument to push its boundaries and work within its framework to test possibility and build resourcefulness. Sometimes the last thing I wanted to do was play (with) guitar. This could contribute to some of the frustrated necessity to try and transform the guitar but also made me question why I did not just play a different instrument?

## 6 Conclusion

Exploring the limitations and possibilities of the guitar informed my music therapy practice by, helping me to work towards less oppressive practices, developing awareness of the importance and necessity of interdependence, and drawing out the resourcefulness of limitations. The creative process of the research has also created a large resource bank of techniques and unique guitars that I can add to my music therapy toolbox to meet the diverse needs of participants. I believe the interactions with guitars reflects the complexity of my music therapy practice and future journey. It is an ongoing reflexive, imaginative, fluid and social practice. Sometimes emotional and abstract. This research journey has taught me that there needs to be a strong focus on using the malleable nature of creativity to amplify marginalised voices and diverse ways of being; to foster a practice that leans into creativity as an ever deepening resource to make for meaningful musical interactions between all kinds of beings. Perceived limits and diversity need to be embraced as opportunities for expression, relating and communication. This research goes some way in supporting participants to not have to comply to preconceived notions of an idealised, illusory human, as guitars and approaches were made with their way of being in mind. However, it will be paramount to continue to challenge deficit thinking and narratives both socially, musically and therapeutically. This research has resourced me with a deeper sense of unassuming playfulness as a budding music therapist as well as resulting in a bank of guitars and techniques to call upon. It has humbled me to the scope and diversity found in the possibilities of relating to people, including myself and just how flexible the guitar and music in general can be moving forward. This research offers a multidimensional tool kit for future music therapy practice, all informed by an acoustic guitar and relating to diverse human beings

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## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Appendix 1 Logic Pro X Session Example



[Screenshot taken during construction of the piece BEVEB]

## 8.2 Appendix 2 Reflexive Journaling

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6/6/21

### Practice

Harmonics. Song adaption. HMSB. One handed approaches. Dexterity experimentation. Fist Vs fingers.

### CW

Squeezing dandy lions roaring out on corellation street  
One side sees totally menace, the other absoulte harmlessness  
The gooberfolk throw stones in rubber bubbles that bounce back as an enemy  
The war continues due to shortcomings in telempathic service  
Some so unaware of their luck and danger to others  
Some so unware of the rare cases lost in the numbers  
A wall then a door  
A lock then a key  
A productive society  
A you and a me

Bargaining with the threat  
The misplaced control  
Appeasement survival

### Mod

Enjoying approaches to HMS BOSCH.

### Rec

Recording with Nik

### Reading

### Reflex

Themes so far: Inequality. Productivity. Privelige. Vulnerability. Needs. Survival. Post Humanism. Humanism. Ability. Disability. Diagnosis. Capitalism. Production. Consumption. Creativity. Limitations. Potential. Opportunity. Identity. Informing. Packaging. Framing. Conveinience. Time. Voice. Listening. Silencing. Amplifying. Regulation. Fragility. Boundaries. Resonance. Dissonance.

[Example of daily reflexive journal consisting of guitar practice, Creative writing, Modifications, Recording, Reading, and Reflexing]

## 8.3 Appendix 3 Write Ups of Musical Pieces In Longer Form Before Editing

### Postevening

This piece reflects binaries moving in fluidity and interdependence much like in music therapy sessions. It also reflects how a normative perspective has a compulsion to dominate but can also act in supportive framework due to its familiarity or stability. This piece, like all the others, teeters between the unusual and the usual. My habits and compulsion as a songwriter and producer always start to shape the unconventional into some kind logical passage of movements. This compulsion has been with me throughout the research and I



feel reflects deeply ingrained musical and aesthetic bias towards more typically pleasing sounds: Bias that I believe is reflective of purveying oppressive and normative societal narratives that call for assimilation. Musical traditions that I would link to humanist thinking. The rhythms are just off enough to be pulled into stable bars of 4/4 for example. However, compositional choices were made to let the less conventional sounds play major musical roles. Sounds that would not usually be used percussively keep a pulse, such as reversed guitar harmonics. These are combined with kick drum type sounds created by striking a standard guitar body with my wrist and yelps, wobbles and shines from the HMS Bosch. The stability of containment is much like that found in music therapy practice. We have strange and unique sounds reveling in their opportunity to express themselves within the framework of dependable musical devices. Musical devices that we have apparently intuited over human history. Music seems to be such a malleable space for different binaries to meet and move together. The strength and importance of one is amplified by its relation to the other.

This piece also demonstrates the strength, beauty and opportunity in the interdependence of vulnerable parts. The main melodic instrument in this piece is a reversed guitar playing in a Turkish Maqam. I played without thinking and reversed the signal immediately and left it as is. With reversed instruments, I want the opposite world to sing out as it is without editing and forethought. It is a melodic reorientation of thinking I do not want to censor. Vocally towards the end I sing a chant around my break to embrace a fragility and uncertainty in my voice. This is combined with the unstable low end of my voice and a guitar melody played with a metal spring stuck in the strings to sound more metallic and out of tune. These three melodic instruments support each other to create a chant and together are stronger than they are individually in their interdependent selfhood.

Postevening embraces non-western musical ideas too. It is more melodic than some others and blends dissonance and consonance. It is in my approximation of a specific Turkish Maqam which to my ignorant Western ears seems like the fifth mode of a harmonic minor scale. I wanted to include a different culture's musical language (to a degree) in one of the pieces as it is definitely an aid to expanding guitar possibilities and working with different

cultures in music therapy practice. I find it brings a great range of emotion, both sullen and optimistic.

### **Breaching Calls**

Breaching calls reflects how in music therapy simplicity is a key connector. A simple musical can be easiest approached from This piece is based on simplicity. It was generated by a series of guitar chord progressions played with a device made from the bottom of a clothes rack. It is a metal pipe with a wheel stuck in it and guitar picked glued in one end. A nice effect is generated by gentle rolling the wheel across the strings in a circular motion with the right hand while changing chords with left. This guitar is panned to one side while another played the same harmony in a traditional finger picked way and is panned to the opposite side. Together these two guitars create the harmonic framework of the song. The “clothes rack” guitar fills in with sustained sounds where the finger picked guitar cannot. The fingerpicked guitar highlights notes articulately where the clothes rack cannot. They BOTH have strengths and weaknesses despite one being more traditional and dexterous. These guitars sit within an ocean of singing voices that find their confidence to be a little stranger and dissonant at various points. Towards the end The HMS Bosch interjects with different pockets of time within the wave like vocals. These interjections act as a call to be noticed within the waves but also sit within the greater sonic ocean.

### **BEVEB**

This piece is a moving creature. A non-specific, unique being with qualities human and beyond. It is an ensemble of every guitar involved in this research in the DIY spirit of bricolage, a postguitar orchestra. The limits of the guitars led and informed the composition. The quirks, impairments and qualities of each guitar lead each decision. It aims to capture complexity of percussive grooves that happen in music therapy sessions. In my experience the freedom of the types of materials and approaches often used in sessions sometimes create powerful entities. These sonic entities have a dissonant harmonic complexity that derived from rhythm. Like dis/pitched percussion (percussion that not tuned to any standard pitch system but still retains a melodic like quality) it broadens what can be

considered melodic language. Just like broadening an understanding of the contours of unorthodox vocal communications.

These jam creatures truly become hulking beasts themselves that have quite different components and form when compared to “traditional” music. When writing about such musical experiences it is hard to convey them without using words that are very loaded. They could be considered ugly for example but not in a negative way at all. There is joy and beauty in the ugliness. Embracing the apparently twisted with abandon and freedom feels to be a relief. Much like the acceptance of self that can occur in music therapy sessions. This track is also very hip hop influenced, a genre that allows so much freedom when creating rhythmic language. During its construction care was taken to keep every beat immediate and simple. The Mage locks in with the kick drum sounds plus the grunts in my voice. Their sub frequency information is boosted to create a low end typical in hip hop. The ZooFang fills out all the other parts of the grooves with snare sounds, grates, grills etc. The adapted shaker handle is used for hi hats. Riffs are doubled up from The Mage and The Standard guitar (detuned with metal rods in the strings). Grooves try to milk being rooted on one note and the harmonic guitar parts stay on one chord to become part of the rhythmic ensemble. Different relationships of looseness and tightness exist between different instruments at different points of time.

### **Jelly Bounce**

This piece began with experiments in turning the Mage guitar into a bass instrument. This is another direction I wanted to try and push the acoustic guitar. It is already tuned to C below the usual standard E tuning of guitar. The digital audio workstation for Logic Pro X was used for production and recording of all the tracks. It was mostly minimal digital processing on all the tracks to let the guitar’s shine on their own terms but any bass register was boosted with sub enhancing plug ins. This focused Mage to be approached like a bass, forgoing chords and focusing on basslines. Kick drum sounds played with a wrist were also sub boosted. Technological augmentation to emphasize what is already present. With the Mage it ended up creating a nice acoustic bass type sound. Percussion was mostly played all at once using thumb and slap techniques and combined with cues and elements of the HMS

Bosch (wood taps, wobbles, kalimba scrapes, shakers). The scraping sounds using the handle on the HMS Bosch were emphasized and informed the grooves and off beat feel. This was embraced by dueling guitar parts following the harmony of the bass Mage. The music felt fun and called for vocals in the middle. The freedom of the sounds allowed me to embrace non-verbal, gibberish like scat singing. This style of singing has allowed me to build bridges to participants who are sometimes reluctant to use their voice. It felt at home and accepted with the personalities of the guitars. Vocals were done in one take without thinking at all.

### **Perfectly Out of Control**

This piece began with tiny loops of HMS Bosch sounds. Little micro grooves of scrapes, wood taps, kalimba flourishes, pops, bangs and slack wobbly strings that were ordered and assembled and became the basis of the song structures. At first there were heaps of loops fully loaded with parts playing all at once. Subtracting bits and pieces led to the creation of ordering the loops and helped control density and dynamics across the piece. Next ideas were salvaged from another piece which included the Mage guitar played by altering the pitch with pressure pushed on the string past the nut to create a drone that rises a semi tone and back. This worked well with slide parts played on the mage too and all fitted well with some of the HMS Bosch grooves. Extra ambient slides were also added like cheeky wee creatures along for the ride. The Mage guitar parts all had their sub frequency information boosted to act like a bass instrument as did the kick drum sounds played with the wrist on the wood on a standard guitar. Melodies and counter melodies were played on a standard guitar altered by a metal spring wound through the strings. These intertwined with slide guitars and the kalimba sounds from the HMS Bosch. Much consideration was given to spacialising all these sounds so they had their own sonic areas to speak from. Lastly basslines were added with the Mage guitar inform by the harmony of the melodic parts. Care was taken to create simple grooves to let the lines between percussion and melody become blurred. It's a conversation with no clear leader. Pockets of chaos in an overall structure that all have space to breathe in small journey together.

## **The Ground is Leaking**

This is a spooky piece. It sounds desperate and ignored, like it is rising from the murky depths calling for attention. There are lots of reversed sounds which act as ways at hearing voices from an opposite perspective. It began by playing the Mage with a hammer to create deep drones that were emphasized with sub frequency boosts. These were combined with higher drones played with the mallet and Mage bass parts that were approached with bending techniques. The pulse is a reverse harmonic and clusters of reversed chimes supported by wrist kick drums and shakers. There is a cohesion to the chaos. Reversed harmonic falls and reversed HMS Bosch sounds as well as slide techniques weave around each other like ghosts in the background. The piece picks up with a deep bassline, reversed HMS Bosch sounds and harmonics and diminished chords. Then tremolo and HMS Bosch chromatic lines enter and join to rest of the sounds as they all speed up together hurtling towards something.

## **Puff Propulsion**

This piece began as an improvisation on the ZooFang guitar but only using the kazoo part. Breathing and huffing through the Kazoo piece without pitch in mind but considering a beginning, middle and end within a one minute frame. Spaces were considered for answers to calls and which sections would be dense or sparse, stable or free. Layers of snare and grill sounds were added with fingers on the ZooFang with each take informing the next. Each part considered the future parts by leaving space and related to the last. The HMS Bosch was added to accent sections with kalimba parts and string wobbles. The piece made itself quickly as I tried to follow calls and responses between each guitar. Wrist kick drums and the hand shaker were added to emphasise the pulse of emerging grooves. Lastly simple guitar parts were added on the standard guitar playing minimal lines that wind round each other. This style of simple guitar playing is very much influenced by John Frusciante, a guitarist who lost his virtuosic technique from injuries sustained from a heroin addiction. He discovered upon relearning the guitar that he could express deeper things with a far simpler approach that was informed by his physical limitations. Within a minute this track builds and falls several times. Gathering itself for grooves, taking some space then gearing

up again. It was all started from spitting and huffing through a kazoo glued into this particular guitar.

## **Disfable**

This piece is more barren and subdued. It lives in a desert of considerations around music therapy and disability especially concerning music therapy's relationship to oppressive structures and disabling narratives (Honisch, 2014; Cameron, 2014). It is meant to be a gentle space of subtlety and meeting. The conversations between disability studies and music therapy are very complex (LaCom & Reed, 2014; Honisch, 2014; Metell, 2014; Cameron, 2014; Rolvsjord, 2014) and I want to demonstrate musically how music can embrace uniqueness and create new things while still being balanced in musical traditions. This piece both unconsciously and consciously tries to capture a neutrality or harmonious space of meeting that music allows especially in therapeutic context. The guitars can be played any which way, free in a musical desert to roam. Disability studies has criticised music therapy's support of medicalising bodies and disabling language, but music itself is such a hard thing to express within academic discourse. Musical meetings can be equitable blends of creative relating and this piece tries to capture a gentle duality without conceptual language. These are guitars playing in their untraditional ways but adhering to rhythmic, textural, melodic compositional devices. Limits of form inform abundant expression. Music is a place where binaries can coexist and empower one another.

Pinch harmonics are used to outline chords and create ethereal textures. These combine with gentle strums on the standard guitar. Sometimes I learnt these chord progressions backwards to then reverse the signal to maintain the chords but give the guitar a spooky feel. These backwards chords rise in fall in volume as they please. They greet and farewell clusters of the Chimer guitar's bells. The support strings on the Chimer are hit with a pencil while the tension of the string is changed with another hand to create an anxious high end drone. Bursts of the HMS Bosch lurk and drop falling wobbles. The HMS and anxious Chimer strings also pulse together towards the end accompanied by a chord progression played with harmonics that has been learned backwards then reversed.

#### 8.4 Appendix 4 Example of Improvisational Experimentation Guitar Video

<https://youtu.be/6yka37p3wpw>

[Raw extended footage of technique experimentation]

#### 8.5 Appendix 5 Photos of Guitars in Progress



[Early days of HMS Bosch and Chimer Guitars]



[ZooFang and Chimer Guitars during construction]

## 8.6 Appendix 6 Information and Consent Forms for Placement Facility



**Research title:** Personal exploration of guitar limitations and possibilities to inform my music therapy practice

- I have read the information sheet and have obtained sufficient information about the study.
- I understand that from the review of clinical notes clients' real names and details will not be used in any publication or presentation arising from this research.
- I understand that research data will be kept for five years and will be stored securely at the New Zealand School of Music.
- I acknowledge that the study may be presented at conferences and/or in published papers, and will be published in the library at Victoria University.
- I understand that I can contact George's research supervisor Dr Carolyn Ayson if I have any concerns or questions relating to the research.
- I also understand that I can contact the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Convenor and human ethics committee if I have any other concerns about this research.

I therefore consent to George Parker-Brien reviewing reflexive clinical notes and records that were kept during his home at 95 Elizabeth Street for his research.

This has been discussed with me by George Parker-Brien (researcher).

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name \_\_\_\_\_





VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF  
**WELLINGTON**  
TE HERENGA WAKA

26/9/21

Dear [REDACTED]

As you know, I am undertaking research as part of my NZSM 526 Casework and Research course, leading to a Masters of Music Therapy. I am writing to ask formal permission for me to undertake autoethnographic arts-based research as part of my music therapy student practice at [REDACTED].

My research question is: How can my personal exploration of the limitations and possibilities of guitar inform my music therapy practice? Hopefully this will lead to opportunities and accessibilities for guitar playing in music therapy sessions for both myself and participants. I am modifying guitars for different playing approaches, creating and testing different guitar techniques, making artistic products and relating this to literature around disability studies, posthumanism and music therapy as well as relationships between limitations and opportunity.

I am writing to ask permission to use reflective notes I took while on placement at [REDACTED] to mine for data that relates to different approaches to guitar playing for people with different needs. These stories will not implicate any person directly but will help me reflect and build different guitar approaches.

Data will be kept safely at 95 Elizabeth Street and will be destroyed after five years. Project findings will be presented to you. This is an arts based autoethnographic study so I am the main participant and the artistic products and findings will not contain any links to real or specific places or people.

The project proposal has been reviewed by the postgraduate committee of NZSM Te Kōi and I have attached a copy of the proposal to this letter/email.

The research is conducted under the template for Human Ethics applied for by my supervisors, Application Approval (ref: #22131, 2019) and will be considering my own approaches to practice, but I would like to use data developed in my music therapy work on the placement with you at [REDACTED]. I am the main participant in this study, but the people and facility I have worked with may be implicated in my study. However, their names and details will not be used and they will not be identifiable. This sort of research developing the researcher's skills is considered lower risk. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact the supervisor or, if you wish to raise an issue with someone other than me or my supervisor, please contact the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Convenor, Prof Susan Corbett, email [susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz), telephone +64-4-463 5480).

Under these conditions, I would like to request the centre's permission to go forward with my research. If you have any concerns or wish to consult with my supervisor about the conditions of the research please contact my supervisor, Carolyn Ayson or myself.

Carolyn Ayson

Email: [carolyn.ayson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:carolyn.ayson@vuw.ac.nz)

Phone: 0211323651

George Parker-Brien

Email: [drniandracortex52@gmail.com](mailto:drniandracortex52@gmail.com)

Phone: 0273471180

Please could you reply giving your response within 2 weeks of the date of this email.

Kind regards,

George Parker-Brien

## 8.7 Appendix 7 Examples of Creative Writing

Creative writing was a large way data sources were directed, transferred, and reflected upon.

Embodying a song. Breathing a dance. Strung neck with a hole in my chest. Struck to make my insides wobble. To be a tool. To inhabit an instrument to extend from my hands. To hold it tight until it absorbs into my skin. My throat and my fingers are branches of my voice. I retreat into this fusion to dig deep. All my weakness becomes my agent and I lean into every corner of my being to become a thing called music in a way only I can do. The recipe witnessed in the vastness of the universe is also held in my tiny frame. The colours don't matter nor does the scale. The rules mean even less. Their containment however, aligns my sight into the flux of life.

[Above: Wee stream of consciousness writing on embodying creativity]

Does a street puddle recognise an iceberg?  
Does an ocean wave relate to a tear?  
Did an image forget it was a sound?  
Does a breath compete with the wind?  
Does a memory know it is dead?  
Does death know at all?

[Above: Random poem about boundaries and interconnectivity]

Tom turned on his Motormirror Stream  
With his VIPenial dangling in anticipation  
He was greeted with the shiny teeth of some of the most fertile models of industry.  
His VIPenial tingled as the glory of the system was validated by the sheer SUCCESS of the  
idols on the screen.  
"It works" – the subconcubine lingering in Tom's shadow shakily cheered.  
In the stream, under the fabulous shoes of the "Proof" – Tom noticed a puddle with the face  
of a Sherpa. He could almost make out faint screams rippling from the puddle, but before he  
could be sure, the sexy idol scooped up the liquid and ran it through his hair. The gibbering  
weasel to the model's right flapped and nodded its spasming face in adoration, proving that  
this was new hair style  
to measure any  
self worth  
that any self worshipper  
should find worth  
self obsessing over.

Tom then went to his cupboard and pulled out a facelift he had stolen from a starving child  
on the street the night before. He then went to the giant megaphone by his window and  
broadcasted that he had settled on a new look to the entire neighbourhood. They didn't  
actually care but Tom's VIPenial did another tingle. What a great morning. Tom was on top.  
He picked his arrangement of spiritual concepts and bubble affirming narcotics and checked  
the weather of the spheres to see what the universe owed him today. After settling on a  
lovely affirming dicktale he had his last panic attack of the morning and walked out the  
door.

While cursing the public ladder system built from the bones of the homeless, Tom decided  
to twat a message to the skyboard: "Love everyone, wake up sheeple" was projected from  
Tom's asshole and sketched out of clouds in the sky.  
It was immediately zapped by the likability lightning from some of Tom's sensatizers. This  
made Tom's VIPenial tingle so powerfully he didn't notice the sick man he was standing on  
as he casually used him as a stabilising foundation for the strong egogasm he was  
experiencing. "If only more people thought like me" Tom thought. "We need to be more  
aware as a society" he affirmed but decided he would save this twat for a later skyboard  
post - one during peak weather streaming.

Tom finally got to work after being held up by several ambulance drivers who had been  
reduced to work on foot blocking his path. Finally it was time to work on his ART. Tom's art  
was Tom. Tom's goal was to make the world know Tom. This was important. It would be the  
right Tom by Tom's eyes. The Tom their eyes should be made to see. They will not be  
allowed to unlike him. This was important. Tom put on his his fleshphones to block out the  
screams and rumbles from outside his studio and got to work. For this project he would  
siphon the energy from a small village to freeze an ocean wave into a trophy of his own  
face.

[Above: Satirical short story about inequality, self-obsession and privilege]

## 8.8 Appendix 8 Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute



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### Te Tiriti o Waitangi Statute

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#### 1. Purpose

- a) The purpose of this Statute is to outline the principles adopted by Council to enact the University's obligations that derive from section 281(b) of the Education and Training Act 2020.
- b) As a University, we embrace the Treaty of Waitangi as one of our distinctive qualities. The principles, as articulated in this Statute, enable Victoria University of Wellington to realise opportunities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi to further advance the University and contribute to the betterment of New Zealand society.

#### 2. Application of Statute

- a) This Statute applies to staff members, students, and Council members of the University.

#### Statute Content

#### 3. Principles

- a) The following principles have been drawn from Te Tiriti o Waitangi, New Zealand case law, Waitangi Tribunal reports, Crown policy documents, the University's governance documents, and mātauranga Māori.
- b) The principle of Kāwanatanga stems from Article One of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which used Kāwanatanga to mean governance. In the context of the University, this means that the Council has an obligation to provide good governance for the University as a whole and to act reasonably and in good faith, including with its Māori staff, students and stakeholders.
- c) The principle of Rangatiratanga recognises Māori autonomy and self-determination, as guaranteed in Article Two of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. In the context of the University, it means encouraging senior Māori leadership roles and entities, spaces and events where tikanga Māori prevails, and engagement with and rights over te reo and mātauranga Māori.
- d) The principle of Options (Kōwhiringa) acknowledges Māori rights to pursue their own personal direction, whether that be in accordance with tikanga Māori or not. In the context of the University, this means that Māori staff and students have a choice about whether or not to access Māori specific processes, services or support within the University environment.
- e) The principle of Partnership (Mahi tahi) requires Māori and the Crown to work together for mutually beneficial outcomes. In the context of the University, this Principle underpins the integrity of the relationships formed between the University and its Māori stakeholders.
- f) The principle of Kaitiakitanga (Protection) ensures Māori rights and interests are actively protected through honourable conduct, fair processes, robust consultation and good decision-making. In the context of the University, this means actively protecting Māori student, staff and stakeholder rights and interests in relation to University activities.
- g) The principle of Participation (Whai wāhi) ensures that Māori are fully involved in all parts of New Zealand society. In the context of the University, it requires the University to ensure Māori representation in key decision-making bodies and the involvement of Māori across all parts of the University.

- h) The principle of Equality (Rite tahi) focuses on providing an environment that supports equitable Māori outcomes. In the context of the University, it means actively working towards achieving equitable outcomes for Māori students and staff.
- i) The principle of Redress (Whakaoranga) provides for the effective resolution of Māori grievances. In the context of the University, this means actively addressing any inequities for Māori across the institution.

#### Related Documents and Information

#### 4. Related Documents

[Education and Training Act 2020](#)

[Treaty of Waitangi](#)

#### 5. Document Management and Control

Approver	Council
Approval Date	11 February 2019
Effective Date	11 February 2019
Last Modified	10 February 2019
Review Date	February 2022
Sponsor	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori)
Contact Person	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Māori) Ext: 5303