On notes and knowers

the representation, evaluation
and legitimation of jazz

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Abstract

Each discipline has its own way of representing and evaluating knowledge which is reflected in its discourse. Success for students involves appropriately adopting this discourse in order to demonstrate the acquisition of knowledge and the internalisation of both values and forms of valuing. In creative disciplines such as music performance, written tasks are not the main form of assessment but are often required; little research however has been conducted into writing about music. This study represents an analysis of writing about music.

This thesis investigates musical discourse by taking a cohort of six local students of Jazz Performance. Its corpus is formed by the 5000-word research projects each student wrote as part of their Honours year. The thesis focuses on three aspects of musical discourse in the corpus: the multisemiotic representation of jazz through the use and incorporation of music notation, the evaluation of jazz through evaluative language, and the legitimation of jazz through the positioning of knowers. Music notation is considered as part of a social semiotic system and its selection, repurposing and integration into the texts is analysed. The elaboration of the notation through the accompanying linguistic text is also examined to consider how information is variously unpacked and repacked from the notation to enable greater abstraction and generalisation and how the examples are grounded in the performances they come from. The examination of evaluative language reveals underlying priorities in the performance of jazz and in particular how the focal musicians of the research projects are established as worthy of research. The representation and structuring of knowers is held to be particularly important in jazz performance; this is investigated with particular focus on the student writers as well as the focal musicians to reveal the legitimation of jazz performance. The representation with notation and the legitimation with esteemed knowers together demonstrate the jazz understanding which underlies student research into jazz performance.
Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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