Incorporating Artificial Intelligence into Performing Arts Higher Education

Ian Bofinger

November 2025

Could the Artificial Intelligence 'bubble' burst in the next few years? The recent explosion in the value of Nvidia shares suggests not, but what will be the educational impact if it did? The *dot-com* bubble burst back in 2000 and it didn't significantly slow the adoption and development of the internet. AI is also not going to disappear from our lives. The narratives for Higher Education in the Performing and Creative Arts will continue to involve the ways in which AI will reshape the roles and responsibility of these tertiary providers.

The next chapter of tertiary music education will involve the balance of automation with accountability, innovation with integrity, and efficiency with empathy. As Alberg (2025) states, AI may power the digital engines of 2026 and beyond, but academic leadership will need to carefully determine their direction. The tertiary organisations that thrive won't simply accept AI tools, they'll build ecosystems of trust, transparency, and inclusion that incorporate the use AI technology into a toolkit for long-term professional resilience and career growth.

The future will not belong to the most automated, but to the most adaptable, most ethical, and ultimately, the most human.

AI In Everyday Life

Agentic AI has usurped itself into everyday life in 2025, and these next few years will be the time that the impact of these autonomous, action-taking assistants really takes shape. AI isn't just powering apps on our phones and the software we use on computers, it's sharing our homes and workplaces as well as redefining our interactions with everything and everybody.

It was only a decade ago when search engines relied on precise keyword commands to display a viable internet response. Many of us now no longer search the internet by typing keywords and using Boolean search functions. We simply ask the question in verbose English by either typing or just talking directly to the device and then are shown an AI interpreted response and a link to appropriate sites for further information.

Marr (2025) notes that children born in the last decade are unlikely to think it's anything other than entirely normal to have natural, human-like conversations with devices and machines they use every day, to the point it's no longer a "thing", it's just how things are.

Generative AI and Synthetic Content

Synthetic content undoubtedly has its place, such as analysing and pulling insights from data that moves too quickly or is too large for humans to deal with. But when it's used to replace human insight and experience, it lacks authenticity and risks swamping us in a stream of generic, low-value content. Periera (2024) reports on a Europol publication on *Law Enforcement and the Challenges of Deepfakes*, that by 2026 as much as 90 percent of online content could be artificially generated.

The ongoing challenge for those of us who engage with authentic creative works will be to find ways to ensure originality and ensure that the human voice rises beyond the tide of "AI slop".

Generative AI in Music Education

The significant developments and improvements in generative AI pose continued challenges to the ways that music is taught in Higher Education. With easy access to GenAI tools, students can now create songs by simply inputting a few keywords into a mobile phone or computer application. This is a significant departure from conventional approaches to teaching and learning music composition.

Generative AI models are trained on vast amounts of human-created data, employing machine learning techniques such as neural networks and reinforcement learning. Once trained, these models can generate new content by sampling from learned patterns in text, images, sound, or music.

GenAI models specifically designed for musical creation are trained by large datasets of music in various formats, including audio recordings, MIDI files, encoded musical notations, and lead sheets. These models interpret music using deep neural networks, extracting musical features and identifying patterns from the training data. These GenAI tools can create musical content in different genres and musical styles, allowing novice users to generate music with minimal input.

Within the context of tertiary music education, these tools can be used to support the teaching and learning of both practical and theoretical subjects. In 2024, Wissner proposed a pedagogical approach using GenAI to enhance students' learning of music history. Similar findings were reported by Lv in 2023 who found that university students enrolled in a piano course that employed the use of an assisted learning tool built on a deep learning neural network achieved better results than those in a control group. Another quasi-experimental study by Yuan in 2024 revealed that AI music generators significantly motivated university music students to learn composition (Cheng 2025).

The incorporation of these GenAI tools provide a scaffold to enhance and give a secondary viewpoint to the teaching of music and are not intended as a singular replacement of traditional and proven teaching strategies.

Concerns over Generative AI integration

Despite the enhanced learning achievements and experiences reported among music students, the use of generative AI in music education has raised concerns about the potential impact on students' creative development. Some academics argue that technology extends human capacities, including managing compositional tasks with sequencers and music publishing software. Scholarly works are now using the term 'co-creation' to describe the use of these generative tools to create musical content highlighting the creative inputs from both users and generative AI. While generative AI has the potential to support students' development of creativity, overreliance on generative AI for speedy and detailed ideas may stifle individuals' creative confidence, demotivating them from exploring ideas beyond what AI can offer.

The emergence of generative AI as a powerful tool in recent years is the result of the convergence of accumulated research and development in neural networks, the availability of large datasets, and other contributing factors. Leslie (2025) notes that although many of these technologies are not as yet overtly sophisticated, public fascination with AI's creative

capabilities has accelerated the deployment of various generative AI tools, to the extent that they often fall short of perfection.

Regulating the use of Generative AI in Education

Aside from the concerns highlighted above, there are also issues related to ethics, originality, intellectual property, and academic integrity, equity, and access. While some of these issues have been addressed by regulatory frameworks for generative AI in various Higher Education Institutions dealing with "the standards of right and wrong, as well as what is deemed to be acceptable and unacceptable" (Hogenhout, 2022) specific considerations within the educational realm and schooling contexts are nevertheless needed in order to ensure that policy and curriculum development can effectively frame the proper integration of generative AI in different situations.

Many universities have adopted a more progressive approach to governing the ethical and transparent use of generative AI among staff and students, addressing both its positive and negative potentials in education (UNESCO 2023). In so doing, the emphasis is on supporting teachers and students in the strategic and effective use of generative AI while simultaneously prohibiting misuses related to academic conduct, such as plagiarism and cheating.

While text-to-music generative AI tools can empower students to make music with minimal intellectual input, even less than loop-based music-making software, the determinism inherent in the technology-enhanced music-making process remains a difficult issue when assessing the material for grading.

The significant changes that will need to be made will involve the redesign of the assessment methods of student works. GenAI has made the traditional Research Paper effectively redundant. The dissemination of a research topic that students then spend significant time researching, collating and finally presenting in a structured paper can now be completed by GenAI in minutes. The lack of supervision in the timeline between distributing the research question and the submission of the final paper relied on trust, integrity policies and penalties.

Contract Cheating and Essay Mills were considerable concerns during the previous decade but with the rapid advancement of GenAI capabilities, Academic Integrity deterrents are not sufficient in the modern tertiary environment. Modifications need to be made to the curriculum to place emphasis on the process rather than just the final product. Analogue, real-time assessment methodologies are returning to the sector as well as reflective portfolio submissions that focus on the journey to the outcome and not just the destination.

Adapting to the New World

While the ability to generate music with only a few clicks might seem to diminish the value of musical training within the realm of formal Higher Education, such practices are becoming integral to the creative industries and people's daily lives. To maintain the relevance of Performing Arts education, it is essential to establish curriculum and assessments that engage and inform students of both the limitations and possibilities of a professional music career that is in symbiosis with Artificial Intelligence. As such Agentic and Generative AI should not be viewed as a threat but an open-ended opportunity for music education. It is not "the end of music" - a term once used to describe the digitalization of music production with the rise of sampling and sound synthesis, but instead a "new beginning".

References

Aberg, R (2025) *Tech Trends in 2026: Signals, Not Noise*
https://sigmatechnology.com/articles/tech-trends-in-2026-signals-not-noise/

Cheng, L (2025) *The impact of generative AI on school music education: Challenges and recommendations*
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10632913.2025.2451373#:~:text=Generative%20AI%20has%20been%20used,teaching%20and%20learning%20music%20composition.

Hogenhout, L. (2023). *A framework for ethical AI at the United Nations* https://unite.un.org/news/unite-paper-framework-ethical-ai-united-nations

Kadaruddin, K. (2023). Empowering education through generative AI: Innovative instructional strategies for tomorrow's learners. *International Journal of Business, Law, and Education*, *4*(2), 618–625. https://doi.org/10.56442/ijble.v4i2.215

Marr, B (2025) *The 8 Biggest AI Trends For 2026 That Everyone Must Be Ready For Now*
https://bernardmarr.com/the-8-biggest-ai-trends-for-2026-that-everyone-must-be-ready-for-now/#:~:text=In%202026%2C%20AI%20isn't,with%20all%20forms%20of%20technology.

Pereira, D (2024) By 2026, *Online Content Generated by Non-humans Will Vastly Outnumber Human Generated Content* https://oodaloop.com/analysis/archive/if-90-of-online-content-will-be-ai-generated-by-2026-we-forecast-a-deeply-human-anti-content-movement-in-response/

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2023). *Guidance for generative AI in education and research.*
UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research(open in a new window)

Professor Ian Bofinger is Chief Executive Officer and Executive Dean at the Australian Academy of Music and Performing Arts (Sydney)