*Magical Nexus: A Philosophy of Playing Drum Kit* is my attempt to explain how playing drum kit matters to me. It’s an autoethnographic study, so it takes account primarily of my own experience in making music with other people. I make music at the drums; this is my favourite and primary instrument. I’ve been playing drum kit for most of my life, and it’s become such a profound part of who I am and what I do – professionally, and in my leisure time and spare time – that I felt it was important to articulate how that is the case. Many people have similar, although necessarily different relationships with music making and with their instruments. As someone who’s taught music for 20+ years, I find that reasons to play are not really part of what’s included in music education, yet that’s so profound a part of how people are involved. And it’s through the ways in which making music at the drums is important, that I think we can get at some of the ‘why’ people who are not me also engage in making music. So I’m hoping the book resonates with other musicians, other music makers, in terms of helping them to understand their place as musicians in the world.

The book draws on two theoretical frameworks. One is Tim Ingold’s ‘Correspondences’, which deals with deep connection with musicians (in my case) and the environment that we’re in, and it talks about how correspondence is a slow process of getting to know and taking time to be with people, instruments and our environment. The second theoretical framework is June Boyce-Tillman’s concept of ‘Spirituality’, which has four parts to it. Those are Materials, Construction, Values and Expression. Together these things become greater than the sum of their parts and form Spirituality – a non-religious version of spirituality. That’s where the ‘magical nexus’ in the book’s title comes from. My suggestion is that when these things align – when these four modes or these four arenas of experience align – they can create a kind of transcendence, spirituality: magic, if you will. And I should caveat that ‘magical nexus’, the phrase, comes from a colleague of mine, Kevin Shorner-Johnson; he coined the phrase in a prior publication.

Ultimately the book could be reduced to something like ‘drumming is fun for me’, but I think it’s more profound than that; I hope it is. I hope the implications of the theorizing and the discussion in the book (and the multiple audio tracks can hopefully bolster this) provide a sense that music is important, and it is important in ways that have been discussed in prior scholarship. But I think it’s important in other ways that are not always included in the discourse we have about making music.