

DIFUSIÓN DE PUBLICACIONES

Con esta sección, inaugurada en el nº 20 de esta revista, el equipo editorial pretende difundir fragmentos seleccionados de publicaciones relevantes en nuestro campo y que, por diferentes motivos (escasa distribución, tiradas limitadas, inaccesibilidad, etc.), no han tenido la merecida difusión en castellano.

Fuente:

Odam, G. (1995) *The sounding symbol*. Cheltenham, UK: Stanley Thornes.

Music as language

In contrast to the imperfection of verbal thought, which painfully encounters its own limits, language being insufficient ("If one cannot say a thing, one must be silent about it": Wingenstein), musical thought is constructed exclusively on its; own material, not upon an abstraction lying outside the discipline, but upon the supply of musical tones, infinitely enriched by timbres. It formulates with the greatest possible differentiation and precision

But what does it formulate Music has at least as definite a meaning as words, although it cannot be translated into words (Mendelssohn).

The problem I "wish to identify, that of lack of emphasis on real musical experience in the practice of music education, is focused a great deal in our use of and attitude towards language, most particularly on what is written down, and this includes music notation. Somehow this reliance on the written fundamentally affects our willingness to trust in and develop our aural memory. It can lead to an attitude towards music that gives preference to concrete meaning and pays little attention to overall metaphoric and analogous relationships. Since a performing musician's concentration tends to be on the exact interpretation of the surface detail of music, it can often become difficult, as it were, to see the wood for the trees. But understanding music as metaphor, or identifying in music those procedures that have clear analogies with other life areas, can help musicians to place their art alongside other arts and to begin to perceive connections between them.

The understanding of metaphor in brain terms is fundamentally opposed to the understanding of language and linear logic, and this will be better explained in Chapter 2. But the brain can integrate both of these kinds of understanding, like a hidden stereoscopic image, producing a new image in a new dimension. We have, through experience and, one hopes, through education, to learn to enliven and control these two opposed areas, and it needs some practice. AU artists, musicians included, need to learn to develop their appreciation of metaphoric relationships and to stimulate that intuitive part of our thinking process which appreciates them just: as much as that which prefers the computational and linear. On the whole, traditional Western music education strengthens the latter at the expense of the former.

Memorable set lecture on the subject, summarized the position with typical clarity and wit. His central point hinged on the lack of any dictionary which spells out what this so-called language really means, despite Cooke's persuasive arguments. The terminology commonly used to describe Cooke's focus on the expressive function of musical intervals is "designative meaning". Sloboda (1985) analyses this issue in great detail. Designative meaning, he explains, is that which refers outside the music to objects or events in the non-musical domain. Reimer (1970,2/1989) uses the term "referential meaning" for the same phenomenon. The more we treat music like a language, the more important the written notation of music becomes in the study of it as we increasingly seek for certain forms of meaning.

Historically, music education has preferred to explore embodied meaning, which is that which we understand and feel from knowing about, and making predictions about, the actual substance and structure of the music itself. It is language-based, and this search for embodied meaning can easily be enhanced through studying notation. The search for embodied meaning can lead to learning which concentrates on technique as an end in-itself, increasingly ignoring both the world of ideas and aesthetics and that of sound. It can also encourage a kind of "check-list" attitude to music that does not engage with feelings or meanings below the surface. At its worst it can treat the actual sound as a sort of optional extra, relying on verbal descriptions of sound or notational equivalents. Formal analysis teachers in higher education

sometimes find that the use of sound in their sessions merely holds things up. The intricacies of harmonic frameworks, set analysis, invariants as compositional determinants and so on soon take the place of sound and become separately intriguing.

"Good-enough" music teachers need to be aware when they are using music as a quasi-language and when they are not. In other words they should be sure when they are engaging in designative meaning and when in embodied meaning. Both forms have their tale to ten. Such teachers need particularly to be able to engage their students in the world of ideas and to create in them a feeling of ownership for their own programmes of study. At the same time they need to create excitement in using and respect for the actual substance and structure. It is the exchange between designative and embodied meaning within teaching that can bring about the richest form of synthesis and provide the best basis for such an aim. As in most things, finding the balance is all, and to find the balance you need to know where the weight is.

Music as metaphor

"The linguistic analogy", Sloboda (1985) says, "is neither true nor false. Like all analogies, it achieves a partial fit with its subject." I would wish to push the argument a little further in observing that analogies, or metaphors, don't function if they do fit. If they fit they cease to become analogies and become, rather, descriptions. It is in the tension between fit and non-fit that their power lies. Their function is to exist as a certain form of truth in conveying meaning alongside other forms of meaning whose function is always to "fit". Musical thinking and experience draw as much upon metaphor as they do upon rational analysis. To be able to progress successfully in anything we have to be able to synthesize both of these areas of thought, the metaphoric and the logical, through some form of action which acts as a mediator between these two incompatible areas. My position throughout this book is that such synthesis is paramount. It is what is fashionably labelled "holistic".

My book's title, 'The Sounding Symbol', as well as punning on the word "cymbal", plays with the words and symbols of a well-known quotation and arrives at a combination which in terms of normal language doesn't make conventional sense or appears to be nonsyntactical. In

violating the original expectation I have provided a surprise - a new combination and new resonance. One of the distinguishing features of the artistic is being able to provide surprising new combinations of previously disparate things. Our logical brain considers the combination and accepts or rejects the proposition. The question it must ask itself in this case is "do symbols sound?" A first answer might be that symbols, which are mainly the province of the eye, do not sound. A further consideration might produce the thought, 'li,ut if you speak the word or give the pictograph a name then it does make a sound!'

Making musical symbols sound so clearly in the memory that they can be converted to appropriate live sound when required is a central task of good music education. In this manipulation of sense and image, logic and sideways thinking, I am putting forward a central metaphor referring to the core problem of music teaching, that of stimulating opposing areas of thinking and feeling and integrating them into a new whole: making symbols sound.

Symbols and sounds

As music has developed in the Western world it has evolved a variety of systems of symbols for sounds whose function it is to record accurately.

The evolution of both the art of music and its notation has been mutually interdependent. The easier it was to record musical thoughts and structures, the longer or more complex the music could be. In early times, Western musicians relied solely on their aural memories to preserve the music they invented or learnt. As the use of notation grew and it became readily available in printed form, musicians relied on it increasingly for the complete storage and retrieval of music, no longer finding it necessary to memorize. Most parameters of the music are stored in Western notation, leaving only a small area for personal interpretation.

In our society, however, a considerable proportion of practising musicians exist, and have always existed, who only occasionally need or use music notation. For them, the sound stored well in the head does not require such a complex written record. Where it has been necessary

to write something down, general labelling and simple graphic symbol systems have evolved and are still in common use. Their use depended, and still does depend, on a keen aural memory of the style and type of music to be played. Since the function of such labels and symbols is largely mnemonic, much is left to individual decision. Aurally based musicians are concerned principally with manipulation of the sound

It is impossible to read much about music or talk about it with interested people without coming across the notion that music actually is a language. It is a commonly held, perhaps central, metaphor. Much has been written on this over the last forty years, in particular the wellknown book *The Language of Music* by Deryck Cooke (1959), the philosophic writings of Suzanne Langer (1951) and the musicological texts of L. B. Meyer (1956,1967). In the late 1970's Hans Keller in a itself, but those who rely upon notation must concern themselves with interpreting the symbol.

Our music education system is biased towards the practice of the latter group of notation users, yet the larger number of pupils we teach aspires to the former. The best practice in music education takes the virtues of both approaches; we need to strengthen the aural memories of notation readers and to encourage less dependence on notation, and aurally reliant pupils need to discover the benefits of the skill of reading. This study is not centred on notation as such, but I have come to see, in the way in which we make use of notation, a central problem for all music teachers that derives from a need to strengthen our musical memories and, ultimately, from the way we approach musical learning.

The more we rely upon symbol systems, the more important education processes become. Thinking in sound, imagining sound, constructing possible sounds in the head and improvising music an have to be established as skills before the symbols for these things are learnt. When we eventually use the symbol, we have already to know how they will sound.

I am keenly aware of the benefits inherent in learning to read and use notation and I consider access to notation to be a key issue of music education policy Reading and writing music is

empowering; it also has its dangers. In exploring how we best teach about the sound as well as the symbol, I will try to focus on the detail of what a teacher actually does, identifying some of the features of what I consider to be good practice. I will also attempt to synthesize from them some of the guiding principles of delivery which best bring real musical experience to pupils. By the term "delivery" I mean those things the teacher actually does in the classroom to bring the curriculum to life.

Music in the curriculum

The years from 1990 to 1994 have proved to be milestone years in the development of music education in Great Britain. The decision to include music as a foundation subject in a statutory National Curriculum has provided a concentration of thought and action in music education theory and practice. Many documents have been prepared for public debate and have been subject to intensive enquiry from many sections of society. Through general consultation on the National Curriculum, music has raised considerably more positive public reaction than was expected by the government, and this has given a real boost to music's place in the curriculum at a time when "rationalization" means cutting out whatever is considered superfluous by ministers, governors and senior management teams. The arts can too easily appear superfluous to many of those in power.

There are powerful arguments against the central dictation of the school curriculum since it militates against the individuality of teachers' ideas and imposes values and systems on them about which they have no choice. This is inevitably, of course, what teachers do to children, with or without a National Curriculum. On the other hand one can view an individualistic system as too loose and anarchic, open to abuse and only working well in the hands of inspiring teachers. For better or worse, Britain has chosen to set out a statutory National Curriculum, and that it actually includes music at all can be seen to be something of a miracle. Its exclusion from a statutory curriculum would have been disastrous. The documents for music have come out clearly in favour of an analysis of that structure of the music education curriculum articulated in the work of Bennett Reimer (*A Philosophy of Music Education*) and, most importantly, Keith Swanwick (*A Basis for Music Education and Music, Mind and*

Education). They have taken over Swanwick's proposition of a tripartite programme based on listening (audition in his terminology), composing (inventing in Scottish terminology) and performing, assisted by literary knowledge and executant skill development. Compared with the much more prescriptive curriculum plans in England and Wales proposed for core subjects such as mathematics and English, where a fierce debate has ensued over a prescribed canon of literature and the teaching of grammar, music has been provided with a flexible enough model. Both music and art operate through guidelines rather than prescriptive programmes, and the slimmed down versions of both, produced after only two years' trial, have offered teachers considerable room for freedom of action. The immediate result in those British schools governed by the National Curriculum has been that they plan in some detail for music education. The short-term effect has been in the considerable upgrading of interest in and commitment to music education in the classroom, especially in primary schools. Its long-term success will depend on how much teachers are prepared to make the system their own and to find ways within the operation of the guidelines to express their own feelings and priorities.

Teaching the curriculum

The experience of teachers who have had little or no formal training in music education is that music is difficult to teach, particularly at ages seven to eleven. (In English and Welsh government terminology this is known as Key Stage 2 - ages five to seven being Key Stage 1, 11 to 14 Key Stage 3 and 14 to 16 Key Stage 4. For convenience I will adopt this terminology throughout the book, although I am keenly aware of the differing jargon in other parts of the British Isles, and the implications use of such jargon carries.)

The most prevalent reason given for this insecurity about teaching music is that the challenge to the teachers' personal skills is too great and exposing, since the model of music education for most adults has been of the teacher playing an instrument, singing and leading the group. This can be a great disincentive to many teachers, although modern resources are beginning to provide new support.

A more insidious and fundamental problem lies in the way that most of us actually perceive music. For the majority, a musical experience is taken in through appreciation of overall shape and contour, pulse and pattern and is enjoyed in a very general and unenquiring way. As we listen we are free to form images or metaphors which are personal and our feelings can be affected. Listening to music for structure, sequential thought, logics and predictions, for instance, requires a differently concentrated mental set, and many people have simply never experienced this. Similarly, many get a peripheral pleasure from looking at paintings or sculptures and reading or listening to poetry and drama without ever having "enquired within" - I hope to show how this problem in perception is linked with the way our society demands use of certain mental skills and accentuates particular types of perceptions and understandings while underplaying, or even dismissing, others. As teachers, we need to be aware how much this is reflected in our actual biological make-up and in the methods society has evolved to equip us with life-skills.

Curriculum development in all subject areas has focused strongly on the key issue of strategic planning, and this has been heightened for us by the introduction of the National Curriculum. In the past, planning for music in schools was never a strong point, particularly in those schools for older children where specialists relied heavily on public examination syllabuses for overall structure - if, indeed, such structure existed. Far too many of our secondary schools had no music education syllabus, and the lack of such a syllabus was sometimes even seen as a matter of pride. Primary schools have suffered for decades from a severe lack of expertise, and there are still many around the country where a whole school staff lacks any real specialism or experience in music. In~ce support is at best sporadic, and diminishing in the face of local government reforms.

Planning for music education is now a priority for all primary school class-based teachers as well as for specialists at all levels, and examples of good practice are beginning to emerge in many parts of the country. For several years new music education support materials for use in schools have become readily available. Alongside Silver Burdett Music (1989) have appeared such publications as Music File (1988-95), Music Matters (1992), Growing Up With Music (1992), the WOMAD Foundation's Exploring the Music of the World (1993) and many others.

Considered together with the extensive advice documents published by the government authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland there has never been such a wealth of available ideas and plans for the subject. Practical books and information packs have been arriving both from publishers and from regional and county authorities on planning the music curriculum, and these are aiding the establishment of good practice in a great many schools. Despite this, there appears still to be a large problem in putting such advice and information into effective practice in the classroom.

There is a commonly held opinion that music education is the province only of schools. My contention is that it takes place whenever a person endeavours to explain or reveal some new aspect of music to someone else. Music education is not simply the business of schools and teachers. It is the business of parents who wish to introduce their children to music, of instrumentalists who teach others to play and who play to other people, of composers who write music for others - most particularly music for those of us who are modest in our skill. It is the business of composers who teach others to compose, of lecturers, tutors and professors of music and music education, of those who work as musicians in our communities and of those who train others for a lifetime of working with music in some aspect.

I have never found the job of teaching music basically very different, whether I am teaching children in an infant class, a junior class, a secondary class or in higher and continuing education. The same principles apply, although the language, articulation, speed of delivery, tone of voice, facial and body language and all those things which go to make up communication skills do vary. It is those basic motivating structural principles which lie beneath the "wrapping" that I will attempt to identify in this book.

Resumé

- When we treat music like a language we can become ensnared in linear and logical thinking processes appropriate to the understanding of language but antipathetic to the achievement of musical experience, By drawing upon both metaphoric and logical thought processes through action, music provides an essential activity for the development of the brain. Language functions differently from music Teachers need to understand this and to balance approaches to embodied meaning and designative meaning to help to provide access to musical meaning and experience.
- The evolution of symbols for sound typifies the development of Western music. How we can imagine that sound in our head, and how symbols can stand for those sounds, are crucial matters in Western music education. The provision of real musical experience through music education is the most important focus for teachers.
- Music education is not confined to the school curriculum. Its principles cover pre-school, further and higher education and all instrumental teaching, and they are equally affected by the same fundamental matters.
- After generations of random neglect, music is now a statutory subject in all schools and considerable public support has been shown for music education via the national consultation process. The quality of music education has been enhanced by curricular statements based on good principles of leading music education.
- Effective delivery in the classroom is rooted in strong strategic planning, but many teachers, lacking good music education in their own formative years. have problems in the perception of music and of identifying and understanding its procedures. Music lessons often lack real musical experience which engages cognitive and affective responses in synthesis. Lack of real musical experience in our classrooms puts the new curriculum strategy at risk.

Teaching implications

In teaching a song or a movement activity, listening to music with pupils, directing their performance, teaching them to play an instrument, analysing a score, it is too easy to initiate the activity and to ignore the musical impulse which lies at its heart. The song can be taught for the words only; the movement activity can use music peripherally as a background; listening can be simply a passive act while the pupils are engaged in something else such as

writing or drawing; performing can be concerned merely with the doing process; instrumental teaching can be focused solely on technical matters and analysis on the shapes and logics of the notation only. In doing all this we can bypass real musical experience, sir- in every case the main focus of the learning is not in the sound of the music which is at the heart of the musical experience.

It is important to plan lessons, taking into account what we know about process music. But despite all our best planning, how we receive and learning is such an unpredictable thing that we have to be prepared for a moment of revelation to take place without our having planned it and to go with it when it does. Moments of revelation occur when the class and teacher are caught up by the power of the music and stem from actual experience of the sound of music. Lesson planning over both long and short term is essential, as is syllabus design, but teachers have also to know when they can be drawn away from it. Planning must aim for a high exposure to musical sound.

Teachers should consider how much talk there is in their teaching and whether it gets in the way of the musical experience, and how much opportunity there is for music to be heard and to be repeated. They should examine the balance between the two and allow the musical experience to dominate.

Musical experience requires focused attention from those encountering it. Teachers must provide the focus and act as knowledgeable guides. In providing such a focus, they should consider how many other forms of communication can be used that are not verbal. They should consider also how much of a lesson can be taught without actually saying anything or using written language. How much they could use shape, line, texture and colour, and how much they can draw parallels with other arts and help to increase students' sensitivity to them should be matters of concern. They should also think whether they could play or sing a lesson; be concerned about how visually stimulating is the environment provided for the students and how this might enhance musical learning, or consider how often it should change.

In questioning pupils teachers should use those questions which stimulate holistic macro-thinking - questions which have many alternative answers - and those which ask 'What if'? They must ask themselves how much they can balance these questions with those alternatives that stimulate detailed thinking, logical detail, sequenced thought and verbal reasoning.