

The “ANDANTE” Report

Music and Music Education in the UK

(From John O’Groats to Land’s End!)



Food for Thought?

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Background:

Lots of people walk from John O'Groats to Land's End – and most of them do it to raise funds for some worthy cause. What was so different about this project?

*Well, I certainly did it to raise funds for my own two particular musical charities. However, there was a very important additional aspect – the emphasis was also very much on **music** and, even more, on **music education!***

Call it a “fact-finding mission” if you like. All along the way, I tried to meet and talk to as many musicians as possible – professionals, amateurs, teachers, students, young musicians, orchestras, choirs, concert promoters, organisers etc. – mainly with a view to sharing ideas and identifying and discussing any problems with funding, rehearsal and performance venues, recruitment, equipment, publicity – and, of course, anything to do with music education!

*Ultimately, the idea (particularly with regard to the government's new “National Plan for Music Education”) was to produce a report or document which would be sent to the Ministers for Culture and Education, the Arts Council and various other agencies to highlight “where we're at” with music and music education throughout the country. **This is that Report.***

I hope it will prove interesting and thought-provoking – and, more importantly, I hope it will make a difference and will have some effect, particularly on the current, sorry state of music education in the UK.

As I write this “preface” (as you might expect, the last bit of the report to be written) I have become very aware that it is far from complete and not in the least bit comprehensive. I have no idea how widely it will be circulated or how many people will read it – and I fully expect that, after a few weeks, copies will lie gathering dust on shelves or in filing cabinets – or will be hidden away and forgotten in little yellow folders on people's computers. However ...

*I do not consider this “Andante Project” to be finished and I don't want it to die (just yet)! I would welcome further input, comment, discussion and debate, on any topic to do with music and music education – and I would certainly consider producing an “updated” version in another year or so. Please, if you would like to contribute ideas, the best way to do so is via Facebook - on the page “**Andante - The big walk**” – I look forward to hearing from you.*

Information about the walk, including lists of those who have donated so far, the people who walked with me, the musicians I met and the many, beautiful and interesting places I visited, is in the appendix. More details can be found on my website: www.xenmus.net

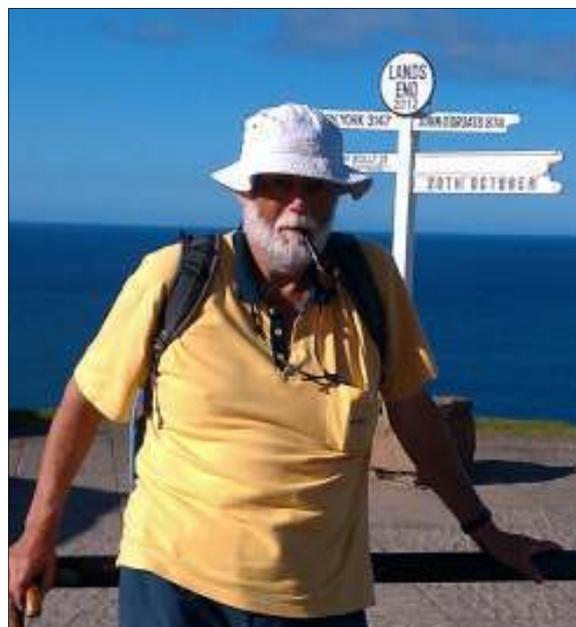
The two charities for which I am raising funds are:

Vacation Chamber Orchestras : www.vaco.net

St Cecilia Orchestra : www.st-cecilia.org.uk

I haven't given details of the amount of money I have raised because donations are still coming in – **and I hope more people will still donate!**

If you find this report useful, or entertaining, or thought provoking, please consider making a donation. You can do so on-line, via my website. Thank you so much!



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The “ANDANTE” Report – Food for Thought?

Music & Music Education from John O’Groats to Land’s End

1) General points about this report

1:1) I freely admit that I do have a reputation for being provocative and contentious! I’ve tried to be constructive and not just to paint a picture of doom and gloom – but that has been difficult, particularly with regard to the present state of music education across the country. I’m sure that nobody will agree with everything I’ve said – and many may disagree with quite a lot of it. I certainly intend to provoke debate and I’m happy to receive contributions from anyone who feels that they have a worthwhile point to make. (See *Preface*)

1:2) There are certainly gaps in the report! There is nothing about Ballet, we barely touch on Brass Bands and Wind Bands, I talk quite a lot about instrumental teaching but not much about teaching piano, organ or other keyboard instruments. If there are glaring omissions, it could be that these are not my specialist areas and so I don’t feel suitably qualified to discuss them in detail – or it could be because I haven’t met any musicians who have raised those issues – or it could be because issues in those particular areas are covered in other parts of the report. Northern Ireland was not on my route – but I am told by several musicians who live or work there that almost everything I have said applies in Northern Ireland as well.

1:3) Throughout this report, I have studiously avoided using the term “**classical music**”. This is because, sadly, the term “classical music” has become meaningless, corrupted by misuse and almost impossible to define. For most people it seems to be a loose but convenient collective term for any music that is somehow “serious” or “artistic”, whatever that means! When we talk about Folk, Jazz, Pop, Rock, Soul, World and a host of other sub-categories of music, most people know what we’re talking about – but the word “classical” seems to be applied to just about everything else, provided it is out-of-date, difficult to understand, high-brow, élitist, written by dead (usually foreign) people, played on old-fashioned (and, God help us, un-amplified or non-electronic) instruments, usually by people in monkey suits, listened to only by snobs, wrinklies or nerds in stuffy concert halls and churches – or on “Classic FM”! When I tell people that my career involves playing in and conducting symphony orchestras, I am immediately branded as a “classical” musician. I usually point out that, of the most recent great blockbuster movies (e.g. Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, Titanic etc.), almost every one has a sound track composed for and played by a symphony orchestra. Is this classical music? Is West Side Story classical? Are Lloyd Webber’s musicals classical? Oliver!? The Sound of Music? No – obviously not! Nor is most of the music that orchestral and chamber musicians play, most of the time.

1:4) Back to the walk and my “research”. Inevitably, funding was a major issue, as was the Government’s National Plan for Music Education (NPME) and the “Music Hubs” scheme. However, discussions were extremely wide ranging and involved musicians and music lovers of all ages and across a whole spectrum of genres and types of activity. I have tried to organise this report by using a number of sub-headings but, as one would expect, there is a tremendous amount of cross-over. Please forgive the occasional repetition.

1:5) I would also stress that not everything in this report is entirely my own idea or opinion – and I don’t agree entirely with every bit of it – I have tried to be fair and to represent the collective views of all the musicians and music lovers I have consulted. However, that’s not an excuse. It’s going out under my name and I’ll stand by it!

1:6) One of the most striking features was the remarkably high level of agreement amongst consultees on almost every issue. The one general point upon which everyone agreed was that **music education** in the UK has been on a downward spiral for years – and is still getting worse! Of course there are examples of good practice to be found; of course there are pockets of excellence here and there – that will always be the case – but they are getting fewer and further between.

1:7) Education is fundamental. Almost every discussion we had, about almost every issue, led us back to education. Most of the problems that now arise, both in schools and in the “post-educational” musical world, stem from the fact that **fewer and fewer adults** (i.e. those in control, including teachers, heads, governors and politicians) **have ever had the benefit of a sound and thorough music education.** As a result of years of decline in music education, fewer people than ever have any real knowledge, understanding or appreciation of music – or of its educational value! Fewer people can read music, fewer people can play an instrument, fewer people have ever experienced (or even want to experience) the joy, pleasure or emotional and intellectual uplift that derives from performing or listening to great music. Music is becoming ever more degraded and commercialised. “Populism” rules – and any attempt to combat this trend and to argue that music is actually a sublime art form is immediately branded as élitist.

So, let’s leave all the other issues until later and jump in at the deep end . . .

2) Music Education

2:1) Right from the outset I must make the point very clearly that we are talking primarily about **education through music**, rather than education **in music**. These two concepts are certainly not mutually exclusive – in fact quite the opposite, they are closely interdependent – but it is essential to understand and appreciate the difference.

2:2) In the aftermath of the Olympics, we have heard and read quotes from several politicians and celebrities arguing that we must build on the legacy of the games by promoting sporting activity in schools and amongst children *“because it is so important to keep our children healthy and fit”* – thus missing the point completely and illustrating my point perfectly! The real reason we (should and must) teach sport in schools and encourage sport amongst children is nothing to do with keeping them fit and healthy – or combating obesity – it is because sport, as an activity, has immense educational value and plays a very important role in developing the persona of the child, whether they have any aptitude for it or not! Of course, sport should (and usually does) have a pretty strong and secure place in the curriculum in most schools.

2:3) It goes without saying that we, as musicians, will always argue that music and the arts should also have a much stronger place in the curriculum. This is not merely because we think that children should know more about music or that they should all be better musicians – it is because we know that music (as an activity, not as an exam subject) has an unique and powerful educational value. The immense educational benefits of (good) music education have been researched, demonstrated and proved time and time again but, no matter how often we point this out, nobody ever seems to take any notice or do anything about it!

2:4) I’m afraid I have to say that there is very little confidence in, or optimism arising from the NPME. Where there is change, there is at least a chance to make it change for the better – but there are so many other obstacles in the way that it is difficult to see how any real or significant improvement can be made until or unless we radically reform the whole structure, philosophy and ethos of the way we educate our children.

2:5) In 1963, the composer Robert Still wrote: *“If education really did what it set out to do, and developed every individual to his maximum potential, there would be less of a problem as between those who “have” brains and those who “have not”. The envy of the “have nots”, and the guilt of the “haves”, at the core of all passion for equality, are themselves the result of ingrained emotional bias, and will colour any social problem of a “have” or “have not” classification.”* (Robert Still was also a music teacher at Eton – see para 23:6 below)

2:6) The Scottish government recently commissioned an evaluation of the work of Sistema Scotland and the “Big Noise” project in Raploch. It stated: *“There is evidence that Big Noise is having a positive impact on children’s personal and social development, including increased confidence, self-esteem, a sense of achievement and pride, improved social skills, team working skills and expanded social networks. For those children with special educational needs, behaviour issues or unsettled home lives, particular benefits include a sense of belonging, improved ability to concentrate and focus on a task, a sense of responsibility and positive behaviour change.”* (See more about El Sistema in Para 4:5 below.)

2:7) The statement above provides a pretty useful summary of what Education is and should be about – nurturing the talents, developing the aptitudes, moulding the attitudes and encouraging and enabling the personal development of every individual child.

2:8) At this point, I would refer all readers to that excellent report: **“The Arts in Schools”** (*Principles, practice and provision*). Commissioned and published by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1982, this report makes a number of key statements and observations and it should, ideally, be compulsory reading for all those involved in anything to do with education. Sadly, it has been ignored by every government since and very few of its recommendations have ever been put into practice! I quote the following few excerpts, taken from just the foreword and the introduction to this report:

- *“ ... we must develop broader not narrower curricula in our schools.”*
- *“The arts have an essential place in the balanced education of our children and young people.”*
- *“ ... actual provision for the arts in schools, so far from getting better, is facing serious deterioration.”*

And, perhaps most tellingly ...

- *“We believe that neither the contribution of the arts to general education, nor the place of general education in the national life has yet been properly recognised.”*

This last is a quotation from the Gulbenkian report of 1982 – but it is actually taken from a report on a conference on “Humanity, Technology and Education”, published in 1957 – 55 years ago! Things have got worse since then, not better!

2:9) One of the major contributors to the Gulbenkian report was Sir Kenneth Robinson. (We strongly recommend everybody to listen to his keynote speeches on www.ted.com) Sir Ken argues, very cogently, that our present system of education is *“educating creativity out of our children”* and that we seem to be *“still educating our children for the industrial revolution!”* I am inclined to agree with this – it was quite a while ago that Tony Blair coined the mantra “Education, Education, Education” but, since then, very little has happened to convince me that education in this country has moved out of the 19th, never mind the 20th century! Worst of all, we have become so obsessed with testing and examinations that we seem to have completely forgotten what “education” should be about. **Education** (it is worth saying again) **must be about developing the persona of each individual child, maximising both the capacity and the desire to learn, to think and to improve.**

2:10) Ever since the idea of a “National Curriculum” was promulgated (and that was well before its introduction in 1988), almost everybody and every organisation interested in music education has tried to argue for music to be included as an essential part of the “core curriculum”. That is perfectly understandable – but it has also created a big problem. It’s time for a couple of definitions. To put it simply:-

- **Curriculum** = that which is to be taught, as opposed to . . .
- **Syllabus** = that which is to be tested or examined.

We don't really have a National Curriculum, what we have is a National Syllabus. Our whole education system seems totally over-dominated by tests and examinations – and the main reason for this is nothing to do with assessing the achievements of children, it is about assessing the schools! (League tables, choice of schools etc.)

2:11) There is certainly a growing body of opinion that our children are over-tested and over-examined but, that apart, there is an additional big problem with testing and exams as far as music and the arts are concerned. The arts (all arts) are, essentially, about quality. There is no other effective definition of what art is, or what makes art “art”, other than that the processes of creating, performing or appreciating it are determined by qualitative value judgements. Therein lies the difficulty – judgements about quality are, essentially, (a) subjective and (b) relative. Our current system of tests and exams is determined to be (a) objective and (b) criterion-based rather than norm-based – i.e. non-competitive.

2:12) Of course, we all believe that music should be an integral component of the core curriculum – but there is no need whatever for it to be part of the syllabus! In other words, there is no need to have tests or exams in it. The same applies to the other arts, especially the performing arts, and the same applies to sport.

2:13) There is an important point to be made here. We would not really argue that there is any exceptional or unique educational value in merely learning to play an instrument, or to sing, or to read music. These are just skills. The real educational value comes from what children can do once they have acquired those skills, particularly those activities that involve other people, such as singing in choirs and playing in ensembles and orchestras. Sadly, it is precisely these “extension” activities that seem to be most under threat from the Music Hubs scheme – but more of that later. (See Section 3)

2:14) Another useful analogy with sport is that, for it to be meaningful, it has to be done with other people. Sport is essentially competitive and, without other people, it isn't really sport. Music is essentially communicative and, without other people, it lacks any real artistic purpose. Therefore, it is impossible to test or examine musical achievement meaningfully (according to objective and/or pre-determined criteria).

2:15) There is a general consensus that GCSE Music exams are a complete waste of everybody's time and serve no useful purpose. The only reason that people are not arguing for them to be abolished is that to do so would (might) weaken the position of music as part of the core curriculum. Hence the recent furore over Michael Gove's proposition that we should move to the English Baccalaureate and that music (or the other arts) should not be an essential part of it. Again, we have this confusion between curriculum and syllabus. There is no reason whatever why music (and/or musical activities) should not be an essential part of the core curriculum – but without children being tested or examined in it at all. The big worry is, quite naturally, that heads and teachers will neglect or sideline the activity if it does not contribute to their position in school league tables – and parents and children will neglect or sideline the activity if it does not add to their tally of GCSE qualifications! People are worried that music will be seen as an “extra-curricular” activity and, therefore, merely as an optional “add-on”.

Today (19/11/12), as I write this, the CBI has released a manifesto of proposed changes to the school system, including a call for abolition of GCSEs and a break from the “exams factory” of the national curriculum and league tables. To quote John Cridland, Director General of the CBI, the emphasis on exams and league tables “has produced a conveyor belt, rather than what I would want education to be, an escalator.” . . . “It's very rigid and it emphasises the typical and the average.”

If, as seems likely, the school leaving age is soon to be raised to 18, the case for abolishing all GCSEs becomes almost unanswerable! (See also below : paras 2:22 – 2.25)

2:16) So, if we are to enshrine music at the heart of the “core curriculum” but not examine it, how do we convince governors, heads, teachers, parents and children that it does matter and it must not be sidelined? And how can we evaluate and assess individual schools with regard to their music education and make sure that any failings in this area are reflected in their positions in the league tables (if we must have league tables!)? Well, surely this is what Ofsted is for! Furthermore, now that the Arts Council is primarily responsible for monitoring the delivery of the NPME, that gives us additional level of quality control. If I read between the lines correctly, under the new Hubs scheme, the Regional Music Hub can call in Ofsted and hold any particular school to account if it does not offer sufficient opportunities or encouragement to children to participate in musical activities. The question is, will (or can) Ofsted and ACE fulfil this role adequately and does either of them have enough power to make a significant difference?

2:17) There is also some confusion and misunderstanding around the terms “extra-curricular” and “out-of-school”. Just because a subject might be taught, or an activity might take place out of school (or out of school hours), that doesn’t mean that it is not part of the curriculum. Even if a subject is part of the “core” curriculum, that doesn’t mean that it can’t be taught out of school or out of school hours. It has to be said that the NPME and the Music Hubs scheme do address this issue to some extent – but I am not sure that schools, hubs or parents have yet grasped the point.

2:18) Whilst we might at least consider getting rid of GCSE Music – the same does not, of course, apply to A Level Music (or, for that matter, to ABRSM Grade Exams). For those more talented youngsters who are considering going on to study music at Conservatoire or University, A Level Music is obviously essential. However, I would suggest that any child who has the aptitude or ability to gain a place to study music at Conservatoire or University (if they have been properly taught and had the appropriate experience) should have no difficulty whatever studying A Level from scratch, without the preamble of a meaningless GCSE!

2:19) ABRSM Grade exams are probably a different matter. There are pros and cons and there are faults with the system (it all depends how teachers, parents and children use them) but at least they are optional – and students can sit them at any time and at any age. The main criticisms are that some teachers over-use them. They should not be the only (or even the primary) means of motivating pupils; the use of accompanists is questionable because pupils rely on the accompanist, which often disguises or hides certain aspects of their musicianship – and the examiners (especially for the higher grades) ought to be specialists, at least for each main type of instrument.

2:20) It should also be mentioned that grade exams are, to some extent, a useful indicator of the numbers of children learning instruments and how they progress. If you look at the statistics, you will probably find that more children than ever are taking grade exams, which would suggest that more children than ever are learning to play instruments. However, closer scrutiny will show that fewer children are taking the more advanced grade exams and that far fewer children are passing Grade 8 with distinction! This is not surprising because there is plenty of evidence that many children start to learn an instrument but either give it up or put it “on the back burner” as soon as the pressure of studying for GCSEs and A Level exams begins.

2:21) When Sir Ken Robinson talks about “*educating creativity out of our children*”, he is making the point that we don’t teach our children to think “outside the box”, to use their imaginations, to question assumptions, to challenge the status quo – in fact we don’t really teach them to think at all, just to learn and regurgitate facts. (Edward de Bono has a great deal to say on this subject!)

2:22) Looking at the “bigger picture”, there are three other main points to make about our exam culture and that fact that, over many years now, our entire education system has been becoming ever more designed and focussed towards getting children to pass exams:-

1. Almost all exams actually act as a cap, or ceiling on learning, rather than an incentive to learn more! (Students will learn only what is needed to pass the exam.)
2. Exams also act as a straitjacket, forcing all students to think in the same way, to learn the same things and to conform to what they are told the examiners will want. (Students are actually discouraged from thinking for themselves and from exploring avenues of learning which might be far more interesting and rewarding – and they are frightened to be wrong!)
3. Over the years, we can see an increasingly prevalent attitude amongst students that the passing of exams carries some kind of automatic entitlement and that, as a result of this, they don't need to do any more. (e.g. Passing GCSEs entitles them to a place in 6th form; passing A Levels entitles them to a place at college or university; getting a degree entitles them to a job!) This is patently not the case but many of us have noticed that increasing numbers of students aged 14 or 15 upwards have become increasingly reluctant to make any extra effort beyond merely studying for exams. If they have done what they have been told is necessary to pass their exams, they think they have done enough. (And, if they fail, they or their parents then blame the teachers for not teaching them properly!)

2:23) Many people believe that our entire “public” examination system is just not “fit for purpose”! This is not surprising. If one were to design it anew and from scratch, no-one would come up with such a bizarre system. Put simply, the current exam system tries to fulfil two completely different purposes at the same time and succeeds with neither. On the one hand, we need a way of assessing and certifying what pupils have learned and achieved during their time at school – and on the other hand, we need a means of assessing each pupil's potential for further, specialised study (i.e. a college/university entrance exam). One exam measuring achievement and another measuring potential (talent, aptitude, ability, desire and determination). There is little to show that adopting the EBacc exams will provide a better solution to this conundrum.

2:24) And (especially if we can think outside the box) we have to ask: “*Why should children all sit these exams at the same time and at the same age?*” There has been another recent furore about the idea (prompted by failings in the marking system) that A Level candidates should not be allowed to re-sit their exams in January! Why penalise the pupils just because the marking system is faulty? In fact, wouldn't it be much better to allow all students to sit their exams as and when they are ready to do so? Furthermore, the idea that pupils should have to apply to universities and colleges before they know their exam results is, frankly, quite ridiculous – especially when the exam results themselves are very dubious indicators of potential.

2:25) This is just one example of how our entire education system (at all levels: primary, secondary, tertiary and adult) is based upon a whole series of questionable assumptions, many of which should be challenged. As a result, there is a rigidity and inflexibility about the system which makes any kind of change extraordinarily difficult.

- Why do we always assume that all children should be taught the same things, at the same time, at the same age?
- Why do we assume that the school day must start at about 9.00am and finish at 3.30 or 4.00pm? And why only 5 days each week? And why only about 36-40 weeks each year?

- Why do we assume that every subject can only be taught in classes of a particular size? And that those classes should almost always stay the same?
- Why do we assume that any particular child or student can and should only attend one particular school or college (at any one time)?
- Why do we assume that everybody should (or would even want to) take their holidays at the same time?

2:26) As soon as we start asking questions like these, we are usually told that anything different would be far too difficult to organise and/or too costly to administer. The government launched an “extended school hours” initiative some years ago but it has made very little difference. I remember very clearly an argument I had with one head teacher when I proposed an after-school music activity: *“We can’t do that, the school buses leave at 4 o’clock.”* When I suggested that perhaps some of the school buses could be booked for 5 o’clock instead, I was told that was impossible and I was being ridiculous!

2:27) I also remember, quite a long time ago, being asked to produce a feasibility study for an independent school that wanted to set up a local music centre to provide a service for their own pupils and for other children in the area. When I suggested that it might be a good idea for most of the lessons and activities to take place in the evenings and at week-ends instead of during the normal school day, the entire music teaching staff reacted with shock and horror! The idea that children should have to miss their lessons in other subjects in order to go to their instrumental lessons is, quite frankly, nonsensical – but it still happens in countless schools. (See also para 3:4 below.)

2:28) Schools have become increasingly bureaucratic over the last few years, especially since Local Management of Schools (LMS) was introduced in 1990. Like most bureaucracies, they tend to be ruled and governed by administrators and accountants rather than by the front-line experts. The NHS is a prime example but, in the NHS, at least there have been moves to hand back power and decision-making to doctors and nurses, rather than “managers”. We need to do the same in schools – and devolve far more decision-making and policy-making authority to teachers. With that should come a responsibility and a commitment to tailor their teaching to the particular needs, aptitudes and abilities of each individual child. Again, we are talking about having a rigorous and purposeful curriculum, instead of a rigid and pre-determined syllabus.

2:29) We also have countless stories of schools that will not open in the evenings or at weekends, usually just because the caretaker does not want to do the extra hours. State schools belong to the state – i.e. they belong to all of us, to the whole community! We pay for them and we should all be able to make best use of the facilities. Most of these facilities are vastly under-used and this waste of valuable resources is ludicrous. Adult education, community education, life-long learning – call it what you will – is every bit as valuable and important as “in school” education and there is no reason at all why children should not be able to benefit from it as well.

2:30) Again, there is a wider point to be made here. If we insist on sequestering our children in the over-protected, over-regulated, segregated, cocooned and isolated environment that is the modern school, is it surprising that so many of them feel alienated from the rest of the community? It may seem a strange idea, but most children do actually want to grow up. How often do we hear kids saying: *“Stop treating me like a child!”* Of course, the usual retort will be *“Well, stop behaving like one!”* but, seriously, if we really do want our children to become more socially adept and aware, better behaved and more valuable and responsible as members of society, then the sooner we start to integrate them into (rather than isolate them from) the “community”, the better!

2:31) That may sound like a dangerous and contentious thing to say in the light of all the ongoing scandals over child abuse! Of course we need to protect children as much as possible from the danger of abuse of any kind – that hardly needs to be said – but let's not forget that we must also teach them to protect themselves. Of course, in primary schools, we need the most stringent security to protect the children – maybe less so in secondary schools – but, whilst we do need to protect the vulnerable, we can at the same time, try to help them to be less vulnerable. Helping and encouraging them to mix and to interact, with confidence, with the adult community, is an essential part of that process.

2:32) There is no reason whatever why a significant part of our children's education should not happen alongside adults. In fact, in many ways, this would be extremely beneficial for everybody. It hardly needs to be said that one of the best subject areas or activities in which this can take place most effectively is music! As mentioned before, the NPME "Music Hubs" scheme does include some vague recommendations along these lines – but it does so rather weakly and without any specific proposals.

2:33) Most of us will be familiar with the arguments for and against mixed-ability teaching, setting or streaming etc. There are similar arguments in the instrumental music teaching world about the efficacy of group teaching as opposed to individual lessons. Of course, there are pros and cons both ways, but does it have to be one or the other? Why can't it be both? It can – and that applies to class teaching in every subject as well as to instrumental lessons.

2:34) Children do not have to stay in the same class with the same teacher all the time, for the same periods each week. There is no reason why they should not enjoy occasional small group or even individual tutorials and no reason why they shouldn't sometimes attend, as part of a larger audience, occasional lectures or presentations from visiting specialists in some aspect of their study – along with field work, visits to museums etc. It doesn't take much imagination to come up with a whole range of circumstances or scenarios in which valuable teaching and educational activities can and should take place.

2:35) The same applies to instrumental lessons. Group teaching can work very well – for some children, on some instruments, with some teachers – but it doesn't suit everybody and it doesn't, generally, produce the best results, especially for more advanced pupils. Why not devise a judicious and structured mixture of individual lessons, group lessons, workshops, master-classes etc. – alongside regular ensemble activities, orchestras and visits to concerts? Give every child the best of every world! (It sounds expensive but, if you work it out, it need be no more costly than giving each child an individual lesson once a week.)

2:36) Whilst we're on the subject of cost, there is another strange anomaly in the instrumental teaching world – at least in the state sector. Subsidised (sometimes free) lessons are usually provided for those who can't afford it : the needy, those on free school meals etc. That is to be applauded, so they should be – but these subsidised lessons are very rarely provided throughout the child's school life. They usually stop after the child has been learning for two or three years. The first two years of learning are usually the least expensive. Dare we ask this question? Wouldn't it make more sense to offer subsidised lessons when the pupil becomes more advanced, when they have proved their aptitude and commitment, when they really do need individual and probably longer lessons, when they need a specialist or more high-powered teacher and when they probably also have to spend more on buying music and buying a better instrument? Apart from the pressure of exams, cost is one of the main reasons why so many talented young musicians give up when they reach about grade 4 or 5 and never progress to an advanced level.

*It is time to consider in more detail the subject of the **NPME** and the **Music Hubs** scheme.*

3) The National Plan for Music Education (NPME) and Music Hubs

3:1) The NPME document “**The Importance of Music**” runs to 55 pages and it is impossible to discuss all of it in detail here. It is full of excellent ideas and good intentions and few people would disagree with most of it – the big questions are: “*Will it work?*” and “*How will it work?*”

3:2) This NPME document was published - and the “Music Hubs” initiative was launched just a few months before the start of the “Andante” project. It has been interesting to see how perceptions and attitudes have changed over the 12 months of my research. Initially, there was a great deal of hostility and scepticism, caused mainly by the fact that nobody (not even the DfE and the Arts Council) seemed to have the faintest idea how it was all going to work! Now that the scheme has begun to develop and examples of good practice have shown some of the positive aspects of the scheme, people are beginning to realise that it isn’t all bad. There is also the point that, if there must be change, it is up to all of us to try to ensure that it is change for the better.

3:3) One of the major issues inhibiting the effective implementation of the Music Hubs scheme stems from the fact that most of the new “Hub Leaders” are (or were) the old LEA Music Services. Understandably – and probably inevitably – they have been concerned to protect or preserve the jobs, career structures and working practices of their existing staff. As a result, they have been reluctant to engage with many of the private and part-time teachers in their areas, in spite of the fact that some of these might be expert, professional musicians and teachers. There has also sometimes been a reluctance to engage with independent schools and with other music providers who have not, traditionally, been closely connected with the work of the LEAs.

3:4) Some time ago, when LMS was introduced and there was a perceived threat to LEA music services, I was asked by one County Music Service to talk to their staff about the pros and cons of them going independent. When I pointed out that “going independent” might mean, in effect, becoming freelance and self-employed – and that whilst they might earn a lot more, they might also earn less, lose some job security, holiday pay etc. and they might have to work more irregular hours – they voted unanimously for the status quo and to stay as LEA employees. (*See also para 2:27 above.*)

3:5) It works the other way round too. There are many excellent private teachers and fine professional players who also enjoy doing a bit of part-time teaching “on the side”. Many of these are very reluctant to engage with the Music Hubs because they prefer to remain self-employed and do not like all the formalities, paperwork and other inconveniences involved with working for the state sector. They do not want to be bothered with CRB checks, they want to charge their own fees, they have their own tax and NI arrangements, they don’t want to have to write reports, they prefer to communicate regularly and directly with the parents, they want to work the hours that suit them and they prefer to teach in their own homes. These are exactly the professional musicians with whom the Music Hubs (according to the NPME) are supposed to engage!

3:6) Many professional musicians and performers who are also freelance teachers cannot understand why anybody would want a full-time teaching job with an LEA! Whilst we accept that being a top-class professional performer does not necessarily mean that someone will also be a good teacher, the fact remains that there is a massive pool of inspirational and expert talent out there that is not being used within the state education sector. Sadly (*mainly for the reasons outlined in Para 3:3 above and 3:10 below*), many Hubs have not made suitable efforts to engage with professional musicians and (*for the reasons outlined in 3:5 above*), many professional musicians have made little attempt to engage with the Music Hubs. Much more needs to be done to bring these people together and to properly implement the recommendations of the NPME.

3:7) The NPME states quite clearly that “*inspirational input from professional musicians*” should be “*available to all pupils*” from the ages of 5-14 but, curiously, not from then onwards! It does, however, state that “*High-quality teaching is fundamental to pupils’ musical experiences*”. It would perhaps be an improvement if Music Hubs were simply required to make a commitment to provide the best available professional tuition and coaching in all aspects of their work! **Do we not think that our children deserve the best?**

3:8) The area where Hubs could most effectively make use of the best available professional expertise is in connection with (what are, rather obtusely, called) “Progression Routes” or “Pathways”. These are precisely those activities that carry the most educational value and precisely those activities that are (perceived as being) most under threat from the Music Hubs scheme! For the child, the real educational value derives not merely from learning to play an instrument (or sing), it derives from the activities that can follow when they have learned to play the instrument. Performing opportunities of all kinds: orchestras, choirs, ensembles, chamber music, operas, musicals, oratorios, master-classes etc.

3:9) Let’s look, for example, at Youth Orchestras. (*See also section 18 below*). Unless there is already an established independent Youth Orchestra in the area, or one run by a professional orchestra, most Music Hubs will assume responsibility for their regional youth orchestra. Historically, this provision has been part of the role of LEAs. We see many cases where the regional Youth Orchestra is conducted by a full-time member of the teaching staff and the coaching in sectional rehearsals is also provided by senior peripatetic teachers. In fact, these roles are often seen as an important part of the career structure within the music teaching service. Whilst I am sure that everyone will be able point to individual cases where these people are doing an excellent job, it is fairly self-evident that full-time peripatetic teachers are, generally, not likely to be the best available professional experts! The same applies to choirs, to chamber music and many other kinds of ensemble work.

3:10) There has been considerable speculation and worry amongst full-time teaching staff that the Music Hubs scheme will result in the engagement of far more part-time teachers and that many existing instrumental teachers will lose their full-time jobs. (Along with their job security, holiday pay etc.) The Musicians’ Union has, perhaps rather strangely, been active in trying to protect these teachers’ interests. Why “strangely”? Well, when I joined the MU (back in the late 1960s) it did very little for teachers and concentrated mainly on protecting the interests of freelance, self-employed performers. Gradually, it accepted that teachers were also musicians and began to look after the interests of teachers too – but, almost exclusively, self-employed teachers. Those who took on full-time jobs, either in schools or for LEAs would usually join a teaching union, instead of (or in addition to) the MU. I don’t have any problem with the MU trying to protect the interests of full-time career teachers – but not at the expense of self-employed part-time teachers, whose careers could well benefit from a shift towards fewer full-time and more part-time teachers being engaged by Music Hubs. There is nothing wrong with preferring to be self-employed – and most professional musicians do not want to teach full-time!

3:11) Two other aspects of the NPME that don’t seem to have been thought through fully are the issues of training and qualifications for music teachers and the requirement for Music Hubs to provide training opportunities and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for their staff. (*The issue of training and qualifications is dealt with in Para 25 below.*) CPD is an interesting one. Does this mean that the Hubs will provide CPD for all the teachers they engage? Whether they want it or not? And, if they don’t want it, will they be “disengaged”? The fact is that a principal player in a top professional orchestra might well be a superb and inspirational teacher and the ideal person to work with a youth orchestra section or to coach chamber music. Are we saying that these experts cannot work within a Music Hub because they haven’t got the appropriate qualifications, or because they don’t want to give up the time to get involved with CPD? We would also emphasise that CPD can and should also apply to teachers’ musical skills, as well as their teaching skills. In many cases, these “professionals” that we are talking about are the ideal people to deliver CPD.

4) Music Hubs – Core Roles - Singing

4:1) The NPME makes it very clear that the two of the four, essential, “core” activities for which Music Hubs will be responsible are **Singing** (Sing Up programme and later adaptations and modifications of the same) and **Learning to play instruments** (Whole Class Instrumental Teaching). Where the NPME falls down most spectacularly is that it doesn’t make any attempt to establish any kind of link between these two activities!

4:2) There is absolute agreement with the idea that singing is, and should be, the foundation stone of all music education and activity. Singing should be encouraged and taught to all children from the start of primary school or, better still, pre-school. (The added bonus is that it is relatively inexpensive because it doesn’t require any instruments or equipment!)

4:3) However, it is not enough just to get children to sing! It is through singing that children first encounter the language of music and it is through singing that children can (and should) learn most of the basic skills and disciplines needed to enable them to express themselves through music, to communicate, to make music effectively with other people and to develop their aptitudes and talents in the future. It is not the fact that they are singing that matters – and it doesn’t matter too much what they sing – what really does matter is how they sing it. Taught properly, singing will not only introduce children to the concepts of pitch and rhythm, it will teach them to begin to understand and appreciate tone quality, dynamics, accentuation, purpose and direction, stress and relaxation, phrase shape and structure – and, most of all, the essential skill and discipline of listening to each other and working together. Part of the process should (must) also be to teach children to read music or, at the very least, to become familiar with the basic principles of staff notation.

4:4) Whilst we are all in complete agreement that class singing should be the very foundation block of our whole music education process, this will only work if it is done properly – and it will only be done properly if we have teachers with the relevant expertise! Very few primary schools have any teachers who are trained to teach class singing and there are also very few peripatetic teachers who have this particular specialism. We have heard some people say: *“Why should primary schools have specialist music teachers when they don’t have specialists in other subjects?”* We could counter argue: *“Why assume that the best way to staff primary schools is with non-specialist teachers?”* There is general agreement that we do need to train our teachers better and that we need to attract more talented, motivated and motivational people into the teaching profession. (See Section 25)

4:5) We hear with amazement the phenomenal achievements of the Venezuelan “El Sistema” and the Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra. Several projects based on “El Sistema” have already been introduced in the UK but it is still a little early to evaluate them properly. What many people tend to forget is that the whole basis of “El Sistema” is singing! Children learn to sing and to read music before they ever pick up an instrument – then they usually progress to “paper orchestra”, where they continue to sing but also learn about the instruments and how they work, about playing in an orchestra, watching each other, playing together, following the conductor – and only then do they begin to learn to play a proper musical instrument. I hardly need to mention that most of the teachers who work in “El Sistema” are highly trained and highly motivated professional specialists.

4:6) Class singing in primary schools is a “must” – but it must be done properly! If that were to be the case, it would provide all children with a strong foundation for musical learning and development in secondary schools and for life-long musical activity. If children have already enjoyed two or three years (preferably at an early age) of singing in choirs – and have already learnt to read music – then learning to play an instrument is far easier and progress will be far more rapid. Equally important – if they have already been singing in choirs at a suitable level, their musical understanding will be much greater and their musical aspirations and ambitions will already be far higher.

4:7) Heartiest congratulations to Lindley Junior School for their superb performance in the Grand Final of “Choir of the Year”! This was of exceptionally high quality and every primary school in the country should be trying to emulate this level of achievement. The children at Lindley Primary are, actually, no more talented than those at any other school – so how did they do it? The answer, they have a head teacher who is deeply supportive, knows about and understands music and takes the trouble to attend every rehearsal and performance. They have a deputy head teacher who is a more-than-competent pianist and accompanies the choir with great dedication and skill and, in Alison North (a regular member of staff), they have a conductor who has great enthusiasm and talent and really knows her stuff. This is what is exceptional – but it should be the norm, in every Primary School. (See Para 4:4 above) I don’t know if Alison North teaches her choir to read music but ...

4:8) Reading music is actually quite a complicated process. There are many singing teachers and choir trainers (in schools and in the adult world) who take advantage of the fact that it is often quicker and easier to teach people to sing without teaching them to read music. We can all point to examples of superb singers and instrumentalists (and even composers) in all genres of music who have been extremely successful, in spite of the fact that they could not read music. That is beside the point. Almost every type of musical activity can be practised more efficiently and quickly if the participants can read music – and for most types of musical activity, the ability to read music is essential.

4:9) Those who teach class singing or direct choirs will point out that it is often easier, quicker and more effective to teach the singers aurally and not to complicate the process by trying to get them to read from staff notation. This is true – most people can learn simple tunes and songs by ear and “sight-singing” is by no means easy. On the other hand, it is both easier and better to teach people to read music through singing than it is to try to teach it whilst the child is also going through the complicated process of learning to play an instrument. It is not surprising that many children find it difficult and confusing when they have to recognise a symbol, relate it to a letter, then relate that letter to a particular pitch and then relate that to a particular fingering, whilst also thinking about their breathing, embouchure, bowing, tonguing etc. When, later, they find themselves being expected to transpose at sight or read different clefs, they can be completely at a loss. (And we haven’t yet mentioned pulse, time, duration or rhythm.)

4:10) This doesn’t have to be done as a chore, or all the time – and it doesn’t mean that children shouldn’t learn what they sing by ear. All I am suggesting is that, right from the start, we should introduce the idea that music can be written down and so it might be an idea to find out how it works. Just occasionally, put the music up on a board or screen and let the children follow it while they sing something that they know. Maybe point at the notes while they sing (or get a child to do this). Maybe, now and then, teach them something really simple, like “Three Blind Mice” whilst showing them the music. Very soon, they will become familiar with staff notation and actually want to learn more about how it works.

4:11) If we can use singing as a means of teaching people to read music, everything that follows becomes so much easier. To put it very simply – the first objective is to get people to hear in their minds what they see on the page. That is basic sight-singing. The next objective, when they start to play an instrument, is to get them to play by ear. This can be done by getting them to play tunes they already know, without music (such as folk songs or Christmas carols) and, later, maybe by improvising. If people can hear what they see and then play what they hear, all the other complicated processes can be bypassed – even transposition ceases to be a problem. But we have to start with singing. (And we have to carry on with it too – right through the school life of every child.)

4:12) Isn’t it sad that the practice of singing hymns in school assembly is becoming a thing of the past? This has got nothing to do with religion or worship; it’s all about bringing people together for a common purpose, introducing children to music and musical concepts and demonstrating that music is (and should be) a part of their everyday lives.

5) Music Hubs – Core Roles – Playing musical instruments

5:1) Of course, nobody would disagree with the notion that every child should have the chance to learn to play a musical instrument. However, it is highly debatable whether “Whole Class Instrumental Teaching” (WCIT) in primary schools the best way to do it!

5:2) It is certainly much cheaper to deliver whole class instrumental teaching than individual or small group tuition – but the general consensus is that that is about as far as it goes! We have seen and heard some impressive examples of very good teachers achieving some impressive results with WCIT. It is very difficult to be critical of any initiative that so obviously gives enjoyment and pleasure to large numbers of children, has an obvious educational value and does start children along the path towards musical involvement and enlightenment.

5:3) However, the saddest thing is that, in most cases, we are starting pretty well from scratch. One has to consider how much more could be achieved if the children could already read music, if they already had experience of singing in choirs and if they were taught in smaller groups (and/or individually) by specialists on each particular instrument. (Bad habits acquired in the early stages of learning are extremely difficult to eradicate later!)

5:4) We also have to look at the bigger picture and the longer term future. Yes, every child should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument – but they don’t all have to do it at the same time and they don’t all have to do it at the same age. Class singing for all children is fine (if it is done properly) but, having introduced the children to music (and taught them to read music), why not offer them the opportunity to learn an instrument as and when they (a) want to do so and (b) are ready to do so?

5:5) The excellent flautist, Atarah ben Tovim, wrote a book about instrumental teaching back in the 1980s. In it, she makes a great many valuable points – and she also published some research into the progress of pupils relative to the age at which they starting to learn to play their instruments. Her findings were that, with the exception of string instruments, there was no real advantage to those who started early. By the time they reached 16 or 17, those who started at 6 or 7 were no more advanced than those who had started at 11.

5:6) Once again, in the well-intentioned attempt to give every child the chance to learn an instrument, we fall into the trap of assuming that all children are the same. Apart from considering what each child might actually want to do, we must remember that children mature and develop at different speeds. They all have different levels of ability, they all have different physical attributes. Some might be suited to playing string instruments, some more suited to wind or brass. Some can handle larger instruments, some have small hands and can only manage small ones. Even the size of the parents’ car (not to mention the size of their pockets) can be an important factor in deciding which instrument is ideal for each child.

5:7) If our “class” is offered the whole range of orchestral instruments, it might just be possible to fit each child to an appropriate instrument – but it is highly unlikely that everyone will be happy and even less likely that the group will have an “harmonious” balance of players on each instrument. Consequently, the results will not be as musically rewarding as they could be for the children and many of them may well wish to give up after their short period of what is, in effect, enforced class instrumental tuition. Yes, every child should have the opportunity to learn an instrument – but that opportunity should be available throughout their school lives, not just for one particular term or year – and, most important, no child should be forced to learn any musical instrument!

5:8) Perhaps the worst aspect of WCIT is that, very often, it is not possible for the children to take the instruments away and to practise them from one session to the next. Some wise person once said: *“Nobody can teach anybody to play a musical instrument – all you can really do is teach them how to practise!”* There is more than a grain of truth in that.

5:9) WCIT will undoubtedly give more children the chance to learn an instrument – and it certainly has a significant educational value – and it is introducing many children to music and involving them in musical activities when they might otherwise not have the opportunity to do so. In spite of that, it is still very difficult to get away from the idea that it is a half-baked notion! The intention is good but it is a way of doing things on the cheap and it will really achieve very little in the longer term. Most of all, it does not really embrace the full concept of “education through music” – because the real and greater educational benefits of musical activity derive in much greater degree from activities at a much higher and more advanced and sophisticated artistic and intellectual level.

5:10) One has only to scroll down through all the points made in Section 6 below to see quite clearly that WCIT does not even begin to address most of these issues.

6) Instrumental teaching in general

6:1) The first point to make is the general maxim that whatever instrument is being taught, in whatever context, it should be taught in such a way that the child is enabled and encouraged to broaden their musical horizons, explore a wide range of music styles and genres and, along the way, learn to appreciate and understand the need to strive for quality at all times. In other words, learn to play the instruments, properly, don't just learn to play the music!

6:2) Thus, for instance, I am more in favour of teaching orchestral brass instruments, rather than brass band instruments. Granted, a cornet is slightly easier to handle than a trumpet – and a euphonium or baritone is slightly lighter for a youngster to hold than a full tuba – but, apart from this physical aspect, it seems pointless to set youngsters off on a musical path that leads only to ... playing in a brass band! I have nothing against brass bands, I've conducted them and adjudicated at contests – and yes, I know that some of our finest orchestral trumpeters began life as brass band cornet players – but that doesn't prove anything. Any respectable orchestral brass player should be able to pick up an equivalent brass band instrument and hold their own in a brass band. The reverse is certainly not true – and most brass band players will find themselves completely out of their depth in a symphony orchestra. This is mainly because few of them learn to transpose or read different clefs – which illustrates the point about teaching in such a way as to broaden (rather than narrow) the pupil's musical horizons.

6:3) Much the same applies to teaching the saxophone (and this is really going to annoy some saxophonists!) I cannot really understand why anyone would want to learn just the saxophone! It is far better to begin on the clarinet (or another wind instrument) and then add the saxophone as an additional instrument later. Any decent clarinettist can pick up a saxophone and be quite proficient on it in a matter of minutes – but it doesn't work the other way round! The saxophone has a very limited repertoire in only a few types of music. Nobody learns the piccolo or the cor anglais first – they learn the flute or the oboe and then add the extra instrument later. (It is interesting to note that in the band parts for most musicals, including West Side Story, the sax players are expected to double on flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet and even bassoon.)

6:4) The teaching of drums (or drum kit) is another example. Lots of kids want to learn to play the drums – but surely it is better to teach them percussion, properly, to broaden their horizons and enable them to play a whole range of other music. Guitars too – let's teach proper acoustic guitar, properly, not just teach kids to strum a few chords on an electric guitar so that they can play pop songs. I myself played in a pretty successful rock group in the 1960s. I taught myself the guitar, graduated to bass guitar, and we played most of the standard hits of the time to a very high standard. I have to say that, from both a musical and a technical standpoint, this was boringly simple to do. (However, there were other aspects of it that were pretty exciting!)

6:5) There is one question which taxes many instrumental teachers. Because children who play instruments are often under pressure to produce performances for exams, concerts, contests and festivals, (and teachers are under pressure from parents and children because they always want to be learning or playing something they like – and because we want to keep them happy) there is often a temptation for teachers to teach pupils to play a particular piece of music, rather than teaching them to play the instrument. That might sound like a “nice” distinction but it is actually very important. We don’t teach children scales in order for them to pass exams, or even because they need to know their scales – the real reason is because scales, when they know them, can form the basis of a great deal of valuable technical practice. We don’t teach studies so that they can learn and demonstrate their ability to play that particular study – we teach it because it will help them to improve specific aspects of their technique. If we have taught the children to read music and we have taught them the technique required to play it, then they can and should be able to learn it and play it accurately themselves. This approach puts the onus back onto the child to think, to analyse problems, to find solutions and to produce the goods. Teach them how to practise and they will teach themselves to play the instrument! The educational benefits of this approach are obvious – and, remember, we are talking about education through music rather than education in music.

6:6) Of course, all teachers want to keep their pupils (and their pupils’ parents) happy and motivated. This very often leads teachers to be wary of spending too much time on technical matters and to let their pupils “enjoy” themselves playing tunes. Why assume that children don’t enjoy learning technique? It’s just a question of how you teach it! We all know that correct technique (particularly basic things like posture, holding the instrument properly, breathing properly etc.) are vitally important and should be taught right from the start. It is much harder to correct faults later and having to do so often causes great frustration for the pupil – yet it is often these basic faults that inhibit or prevent the pupil from advancing to the level at which the greatest satisfaction can be achieved and the greatest educational value can derive.

6:7) There is an answer to this. Frustration (just a little bit) can also be a useful weapon. The trick is to make sure that the pupil’s musical and artistic understanding and aspirations are always slightly ahead of their technical capability. That way, if they cannot do what they want to do, the frustration leads to them wanting to learn the technique required to do it.

6:8) In my long and varied career as an instrumental teacher, I have found that, with almost every pupil, there comes at some point an important “break-through” moment. Sometimes it comes quite early, sometimes it can take years – but the key is to try to make it happen as soon as possible, recognise it and then make the most of it. I find it easiest to describe this as “the moment when they actually start to enjoy the sound that they are making”. It is almost impossible to make a decent sound on any instrument unless the technique is correct.

6:9) We’ve already touched on the idea that instrumental teaching can and should happen in a variety of contexts (group teaching, workshops, master classes, chamber music, ensemble work, sectional coaching with orchestras etc. as well as individual lessons) but I must also stress that it is essential to create opportunities for and encourage students to play with other people as often as possible. Quite simply, it is not enough just to teach children to play instruments! It is worth repeating - the real educational value derives from the activity of playing and performing with others.

“The very best way to learn anything about playing a musical instrument is to play in a group next to somebody who is better than you”

6:10) It is also a good idea to get away from the idea that any one pupil should only have one teacher. Yes, it is good for pupils to have one particular teacher who can guide their development on a long-term basis – but it is always good to have additional input from other (good) teachers or professional players. Many teachers are too possessive of their pupils.

6:11) Strings! Without any doubt (and with very few exceptions) most of the greatest music, written by most of the greatest composers, for almost every instrument and for the voice, over the last 400 years, involves string instruments. (*See my diatribe in Para 1:2 above – we are not just talking about “classical” music.*) Strings are involved in orchestral music of every kind and also in opera, operetta, musicals, oratorio, chamber music, ballet, film scores and the rest. Try making a list of the five greatest composers you can think of and then list their five greatest works – and the chances are that at least twenty out of the twenty five pieces listed will involve strings! Bear in mind that, in a standard symphony orchestra, we need something like 12 violins, 6 violas, 6 cellos and 2 double basses for each wind instrument.

If we do not teach enough string players, we are actually denying every other instrumentalist the opportunity to play most of the greatest music!

6:12) Of course, aficionados of “world” music or of various kinds of ethnic music from around the world might well disagree with this, arguing that we are a multi-cultural society and therefore we must make room for all types of music, such as gamelan, sitars, steel drums and African drumming etc. I would not suggest that we should ignore or dismiss any of these types of music making but, whilst I am conscious that this report could be criticised for being almost wholly orientated towards western “art” music. It is interesting to note that, in many parts of the “non-western” world (South America, the Far East, parts of Africa and the Arab world), the interest in, appetite for and appreciation of high-quality western “art” music is growing fast – whilst, in our country, it is actually waning!

6:13) Interestingly, string instruments are probably the only type of instrument that really can be taught effectively and efficiently in relatively large groups. (Suzuki method etc.) However, there is a problem. Group teaching of strings can produce some amazing results but there does come a time when each child needs to move into a smaller group or take individual lessons to continue their progress at a higher level. Inevitably, this means they have to find and pay for private teachers because the state (LEAs or Hubs) does not and cannot provide or pay for enough teachers of a high enough calibre. Consequently, a great many promising pupils give up! This brings us back to a suggestion mentioned above (*See Para 2:36*) – if we are going to subsidise instrumental lessons for the needy, we should do it at an advanced level as well as (or even rather than) at the outset.

6:14) How do we ensure that we teach a sensible, reasonable balance of instruments? This doesn't only apply to strings – even the most ardent brass-band fanatic will understand that it doesn't make sense to teach the same number of euphoniums and tenor horns as cornets – and even rock music fans will realise that you need at least one drummer for every 3 or 4 guitarists. Yes, even those who do not understand or agree with the idea that string teaching is of paramount importance will at least (I hope) be able to grasp the point that – if the real educational value of music education lies in playing and performing in groups with others – then we must have a reasonable balance of players on each of the various instruments, in order to form suitable groups in which children can play and perform in a meaningful way.

6:15) In the past, when LEA music services had some control over these matters, it was at least possible to engineer some kind of balance. Now that schools have autonomy and can buy in whatever teachers they want, it is rare to see this aspect given even the slightest consideration. The usual practice is either to simply offer what the children (or their parents) seem to want – in which case we end up with a superabundance of guitars, flutes, saxophones and cornets, with hardly a violin in sight, never mind a viola! Or it tends to be at the whim of the head teacher or the head of music. We know of one particular grammar school where the head of music is a jazz trumpeter whose passion is big band music. We have heard of children arriving at this school, having had several years of tuition on string instruments, being told that there is no group for them to play in – and being handed a saxophone to learn instead! (*Thankfully, this situation has improved recently.*)

6:16) There is a fairly simple answer to this problem. If you stand up in front of a class of primary schoolchildren and ask: “*Who would like to play a musical instrument?*” – they will probably all put their hands up. If you then ask: “*What instrument would you like to learn?*” the response will be, as mentioned above – guitar, drums, flute, saxophone etc. with hardly any opting for strings. If, on the other hand, you stand in front of the class and ask: “*Who would like to play the violin?*”, most of them will put their hands up – especially if you have, first of all, arranged for a violinist or a string quartet to go in and play to them!

6:17) To sum this up – first of all, we need to encourage as many children as possible to learn to play **string** instruments – all the rest can follow at a later stage. As Atarah Ben Tovim discovered, there is no distinct advantage in starting early on any other instrument except, perhaps, the piano. Certainly there are definite disadvantages and problems with starting to early or too young on some instruments – notably the oboe, bassoon, horn and (obviously, because of their size) double bass, trombone and tuba. (*Incidentally, whatever happened to the “Endangered Species” project?*)

6:18) I can remember once remarking (probably flippantly and in a deliberately provocative context) that, if we focussed all our resources on singing and string teaching in primary schools, everything else would look after itself! That was about 30 years ago and, the more I think about it, and the more I see the decline in standards of music education in our schools, the more I think I was probably right.

6:19) There is one final and essential point that has to be made with regard to individual (as opposed to class or group) instrumental teaching. This is so important that I will highlight it:

Very often, the instrumental teacher is the only adult (apart from immediate family) that many children will meet regularly on a one-to-one basis. Not only that – the teacher and pupil are engaged in a process that requires a close personal relationship because it involves matters both emotional and physical. This places an immense burden of responsibility on the teacher. For example, the instrumental teacher is better placed than almost anyone else to detect signs of physical or mental abuse, emotional disturbance, learning difficulties such as dyslexia, or behavioural problems – and, if this close personal relationship is working properly, the instrumental teacher is also best placed to exert a beneficial influence on the child in terms of their behaviour, attitude and emotional well-being.

6:20) Even if WCIT does have a beneficial effect and lead to more children learning to play instruments (and it is too early to say yet), the worst possible outcome would be for them all to give up at the end of the year. (Or, in some cases, just a term!) As they progress, they will eventually have to learn in smaller groups and start to have individual lessons.

One-to-one instrumental teaching is so important that we simply cannot afford not to have it taking place in our schools!

(The other two “core roles” of the music hubs: “providing opportunities to play in ensembles and to perform from an early stage” and “ensuring that clear progression routes are available and affordable to all young people” are covered elsewhere in this report.)

7) Class Music in Primary Schools (The “Core Curriculum”?)

7:1) We have already touched on several of the major issues around class music in primary schools. We are simply playing “catch-up” in secondary schools because the level and quality of music education in most primary schools is so woefully inadequate – and has been for years! I am not convinced that Whole Class Instrumental Teaching is the answer – it certainly isn’t anywhere near the complete answer – and, whilst singing is fundamental, singing is not enough on its own!

7:2) If we must have a target, it should be that every child should leave primary school being able to read music, being confident and able to sing in a choir, being able to play an instrument well enough to perform, meaningfully, in a group – and having had the advantage and benefit of being involved in “joined-up” multi-arts activities that include dance and drama along with music. Let’s stress again, it isn’t the level of achievement that matters, it is the educative experience that each child can and will gain from such activities.

7:3) As soon as we begin to look at activities involving drama and dance along with music, it becomes immediately obvious that such activities can also cover a whole range of important educational areas such as religion, philosophy, citizenship, behaviour, emotional issues etc.. The school Nativity Play is at least a start – but it is nowhere near enough. There is so much more that could be done; most of it cross-curricular, with benefits in every possible subject area.

7:4) Music is, in itself, an immensely powerful educational tool. It can be used most effectively as a means of helping children to develop literacy and numeracy skills and to overcome difficulties such as dyslexia and stammering. It is a very effective motivational weapon and it can help children to develop concentration, focus, method and attention span. It has enormous cross-curricular potential to assist with the teaching of English, especially English literature and poetry, with all foreign languages but especially with French, German and Italian, with mathematics, history, geography, ICT, art and with physical education. It can also prove extremely effective in providing a useful aide-memoire in just about every subject imaginable.

7:5) It hardly needs to be said that, in order to make the most effective use of this educational tool, we need, first of all and as soon as possible, to familiarise children with the basics of music. They must learn how to sing and how to read music and they must have at least some experience and appreciation of the language of music. The sooner we get all children to this basic level of musical understanding, the more effective music will be as an educational tool.

7:6) There is a very strong case to be made for a significant element of **training in basic musical skills and singing to be part of the training of every primary school teacher.** (*See Para 1:7 – Fewer and fewer teachers have ever had the benefit of a sound and thorough music education.*) It is essential that all teachers and heads of primary schools fully understand and appreciate the value of music as an educational means, instead of regarding it as just another (less important?) subject or activity to be squeezed into an already overcrowded curriculum.

7:7) And, if we are to make the most of music as an effective educational tool across the curriculum, schools cannot rely only on the expertise of visiting or peripatetic music teachers – the skills and knowhow to do this must also come from within the school’s permanent staff.

7:8) Over the years, various “methods” and approaches to early years music education have drifted in and out of fashion : Dalcrose, Kodaly, Carl Orff, to mention but three! All of these are extremely beneficial, all have their strong points and all are pretty much neglected in our primary schools – the main reason being the lack of suitably trained and qualified teachers to put them into practice. It is all very well to argue that every child should have opportunity to learn to play an instrument – it would make far more difference and improve the lot of every child far more if we could **ensure that every primary school has a properly trained music specialist amongst its staff** – and it would cost less in the long run too! (*See Section 25*)

7:9) As stated before, music education in most primary schools has been on a downward spiral for years. There is a tremendous amount of catching up to do. It is vitally important to capture (and captivate) children’s interest in music as early as possible – and before they become subjected to the musical drivel that is thrust at them incessantly from all sides by television, the media and in just about every other walk of life. (*See Sections 11, 12 & 13 below*)

7:10) Whole Class Instrumental Teaching, done well, can have a part to play in this process but it is only a small part and it must be done in conjunction with and as part of a cross-curricular strategy to educate children through music – not as an end in itself!

7:11) I wish there were time and space here to explore the fantastic benefits of Music Therapy – that is a whole subject on its own.

8) Class Music in Secondary Schools (The “Core Curriculum”?)

8:1) Back in the late 1970s, the **Schools Council** commissioned a “**Music Project**” to examine the state of music education in secondary schools and to recommend measures for improvement. This resulted in a widespread, significant and largely detrimental shift in approach, for two reasons. Firstly, in a misguided attempt to establish music more firmly in the National Curriculum, it tried to turn music into a more “examinable” subject, rather than a practical activity – and secondly (in an early manifestation of political correctness), because music was intended to be an examination subject within the “core curriculum”, it appears that it had to be accessible to all, regardless of their natural aptitude, talent or ability.

8:2) The “anti-élitists” had won the day and the syllabus for GCSE music was consequently dumbed down to the point where anyone who worked hard enough could pass, without necessarily being able to sing or play an instrument and regardless of their musical ability. This is pretty much still the case today. More than ever, **education is determined by what is conveniently examinable rather than by what is intrinsically valuable!**

8:3) The Schools Council Music Project (SCMP) was also guilty of propagating the notion that music (as an examination subject) can conveniently be divided into three distinct activity areas – listening, performing and composing – and then, because performing had been the mainstay of the “old system” (and had distinctly élitist connotations), it proceeded to attempt to give equal, if not greater importance to listening and composing – both of which are actually much more difficult to examine objectively than is performing.

8:4) Listening: Of course music involves listening! The new GCSE syllabus didn’t help or encourage anybody to listen more, or more carefully, or more critically to anything. The best way to encourage children to listen to music is to inspire them with a desire to listen – and the best way to do that is to get them involved in “doing” music, i.e. performing. This needs to be addressed in primary schools – it is far too late to be doing it at secondary level.

8:5) The one aspect of “listening” that really does need to be taught is that of listening to others whilst performing – in other words, the art of playing in an ensemble. (*See Section 19 – Chamber Music below*) Whilst it is an excellent idea to introduce children to the delights of chamber music in primary schools, this is definitely an activity for secondary schools – but it is definitely not a classroom activity!

8:6) Because I was so opposed to the recommendations of the SCMP, I took the trouble to go to York University and to discuss it all with the project leader, Prof. John Paynter. After three hours of heated but friendly argument, we ended up very much in agreement on one thing at least: that the SCMP should have been addressing the issue of music education in primary schools, not secondary schools! Almost all the practical measures it recommended were things that should have been being done in primary rather than secondary schools – and the only reason they had recommended them was because they were not being done in primary schools.

We were trying to catch up then (35 years ago) and we are even further behind now!

8:7) Composing (and improvising): Of course we should encourage all children to compose (and to improvise, which is really the same thing, just more instantaneous and not written down). Writing is an essential and complementary element in learning to read language. We don't just teach children to read, we teach them to write pretty much at the same time – it is all part of the same process – and it is just the same with music. Children should be writing music in primary schools and they should also be improvising, both vocally and, as and when they begin to play, on their instruments. (See *Para 4:11 above*) It is far too late to be starting teaching composition in secondary schools – and it certainly isn't a “class” subject or activity.

8:8) We already teach our children to “compose” using words and language (we even call it writing a “composition”) but I wonder how many schools and teachers encourage children to improvise verbally. OK, a primary school teacher might well ask a child to tell the rest of the class where they went on holiday or what they did at the weekend. That is certainly a start – but we could go much further than that. How often do we hear of children being asked to speak to the rest of the class about a given topic, or even a topic of their own choice? Isn't it a pity that so few schools these days have an active debating society? Improvisation in music is not so fundamentally different from improvisation using the spoken word.

8:9) Just as, when children are learning to write or speak language, we teach them about spelling, grammar, syntax, phrases, sentences, paragraphs etc. – so, when we encourage them to compose and improvise, we also need to teach them about melody, rhythm, harmony, counterpoint, form and structure. Furthermore, just as, when we teach children to speak, we try to encourage them to articulate clearly, not to mumble, and to express themselves more effectively through the medium of the spoken word – so, when they compose or improvise, we should also help and encourage them to give attention to the expressive aspects of what they are doing.

8:10) Ideally, all of this should be done from the start, in primary schools, as an integral part of each child's ongoing musical development. Who is going to teach it? When are they going to teach it? Composition (and improvisation) isn't something that can be taught effectively within the framework of either Whole Class Instrumental Teaching or Class Singing and singing in choirs. On the other hand, it does need teachers who are properly trained music specialists – and we just don't have enough of these in Primary Schools!

8:11) We should and must continue to encourage children to compose and to improvise throughout their secondary school education but, I'm afraid it has to be said, there are also too few secondary school music teachers who are trained and qualified to teach composition and improvisation. Does that matter? Apparently not, when the standard of composition required to pass GCSE Music is what one should be able to expect from any reasonably taught ten-year-old! Improvisation, if taught at all, is usually left to the instrumental teacher. The most important point about all this is that neither composition nor improvisation should be examined or tested – it should simply be encouraged and used as a means of developing each child's musical personality and skills. Improvisation cannot be taught effectively in the context of “class” music lessons and the teaching of composition is far better taught in small tutorial groups. We also have to make proper provision for pupils' compositions to be performed.

8:12) This might sound like a strange digression but it is actually rather interesting: “Rap” is really improvised poetry! I can see a very strong case for teaching children to rap as an aspect of their English study – provided it is made clear that it has very little to do with music at all. The next question: How many English teachers (primary or secondary) would feel confident to teach rap?

8:13) Just one final, brief point about composition. The use of computers and music writing programmes like “Sibelius” should be used very sparingly and always with careful supervision, especially in the early stages. Giving a child a few chord progressions or an ostinato and asking them to invent a melody over it teaches them very little about anything. Composition must come from within, in the mind – and the computer should only really be used as a means of writing it down neatly. Modern technology can be a wonderful thing – but it should not be a substitute for using the brain!

8:14) To sum up: **What is the point of class music in secondary schools?** Quite frankly, if we teach music properly in primary schools – and if we abolish GCSE exams and other forms of testing in music – then there really isn’t much point at all. Perhaps, in the first year of secondary education, there is a case for having one period of class music each week – if only for the teacher to assess the pupils, to find out who can do what and what gaps need to be filled – and to organise the pupils into appropriate groups so that they can all be involved in meaningful musical activities. Thereafter, (apart from A Levels, for those pupils who desire to pursue the subject after leaving school) music provision should consist pretty well entirely of orchestras, choirs, bands, ensembles, chamber music, concerts, musical and dramatic productions, workshops, masterclasses and individual or small group instrumental tuition.

9) Jazz:

9:1) Since we have just been talking about improvisation, let me first point out that jazz is not necessarily always “improvised” and that improvisation is certainly not always jazz. However, jazz is often a neglected area in the training of young musicians. Jazz is just one particular style or genre of music – but there is a tremendous amount of cross-over with other styles and genres and almost every singer and instrumentalist will, on occasions, find themselves having to perform in the jazz idiom. It is something they have to learn.

9:2) Having said that, jazz is not really something that can be taught to a significant extent in primary schools or at an early stage, nor should it be taught as an end or an objective on its own. (See *Para 6:1 above*) Playing or singing jazz can teach children a great deal about harmonic and melodic structure – and playing or singing jazz-based music in ensembles can (if done well) be a great help in developing a strong sense and understanding of rhythm.

9:3) This is a slight digression – but it has always struck me how similar the art of improvising in jazz is to the art of “gracing” in baroque music (particularly the ornamentation of the melody in the da capo section of an aria, sonata or concerto). Also, there are similarities with being able to “swing” and being able to play “inégaies” in early French music.

10) Folk Music:

10:1) Folk music is a very important part of our cultural heritage and it should certainly not be neglected. Kodaly in particular recognised it as one of the best ways of beginning to develop musical skills and understanding. It is also very useful as one of the best ways of “joining up” the two core elements in the NPME and the Hubs delivery programme (singing and playing instruments) and it can also provide the basis for a great deal of cross-curricular work, involving reading, writing, poetry, dance, history, geography – as well as recording, filming and even costume design and production! We would point to the excellent work being done by Wren Music in Okehampton, Devon as an example of “best practice” in this area.

10:2) One has only to watch an Eisteddfod to realise how strongly embedded the Folk tradition is in most parts of Wales. Sadly, it does appear to involve only singers and harpists and it often seems to be taught as an end product in itself, rather than in such a way as to lead on to other types of music and to broaden the musical horizons of the pupils.

10:3) We must at least touch upon the subject of folk fiddle. This also has a strong presence and is popular with many children in Scotland and Ireland, as well as in the north-east of England, less so in the rest of England and Wales. I talked with several folk fiddlers on my travels and they all said that they wished they had also learnt to play (as I put it) “properly”. It is interesting to note that one of our most successful folk musicians, Joe Broughton, is just as strong an advocate of folk fiddlers learning to play “properly” as vice-versa! (See *Para 6:1* above)

10:4) In my several long conversations with folk musicians, they did seem to be surprised that, as a “classical” musician, I would even be interested in their folk music! After pointing out that I was not a “classical” musician (See *Para 1:2* above), I also pointed out that, in my career as a conductor and orchestral player, I have been called upon to perform folk music (or music based closely on folk music) from Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latin America, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, USA, most of eastern Europe, all parts of the UK and probably much more.

10:5) It is all too easy to forget that so much music, of all types and genres, from before Bach until the present day (even listen to the Eurovision Song Contest – if you can bear it!) has folk music at its heart or is strongly influenced by folk music. We have to understand and be familiar with an immense variety of styles and idioms. This is one of the reasons why music is such a powerful force for international understanding and goodwill. We neglect folk music at our peril!

11) “Pop” Music and “Youth Culture”:

11:1) It is difficult to know where to start on the subject of pop music. Firstly, not all of it is bad! Secondly, there are so many sub-genres of pop that it would be silly to generalise too much. A great deal of popular music has cross-over elements, particularly from jazz and folk music. Let’s just say that, for the purposes of this paper, by “pop” music I mean music that is written to be popular (i.e. commercial – designed to appeal to the maximum number of consumers) rather than written with any great artistic integrity or concern for quality.

11:2) The Beatles have a lot to answer for! They did write some good music – and, in doing so, they were also responsible for making pop music “respectable”. When I played in a rock group (just before the Beatles), pop music was mainly Rock & Roll and it was frowned upon by most of the adult world. It was definitely part of our “Youth Culture”. In fact, for most young people in the 1960s, pop music was, distinctly, a form of rebellion.

11:3) There were other “semi-respectable” pop musicians around at that time. The Rolling Stones and Elvis Presley were certainly considered part of the “naughty” brigade but groups like the Everly Brothers, the Bachelors and even Cliff Richard (and the Shadows) were considered acceptable and, in fact, some of them produced some pretty good music!

11:4) Pop music began to become polarised. On the one hand we had groups like the Carpenters producing some quality music and performing it superbly – and on the other hand, a whole series of new, rebellious, sub-genres of pop music (Punk, Garage, Acid etc.) all trying to be as banal and inane as possible in order to try to re-capture “Youth Culture” for the rebellious young! I think that is enough about pop music – other issues around “populism and music” will be covered later in the sections on media influence (12) and Musak (13).

11:5) However, there is one important point about “**Youth Culture**”. Most young people do, actually, want to grow up (See *Para 2:30* above) and we should be encouraging them to do so. Youth Culture is something of an enigma. We know that it exists and we know vaguely what it is - but young people need to rebel and if we, as adults, accept or condone this youth culture, we are actually denying them that opportunity. We (adults) should certainly try to understand it but, if we actually embrace it, it ceases to be “Youth Culture”!

12) The influence of the Media and “Populism”

12:1) I don't wish to get drawn into a debate about capitalism but I think it is safe to say that we live in a “consumer” society that is increasingly dominated by commercialism and profitability – and that this is largely driven by (or through) the mass media. Inevitably, this leads to populism. In order to generate the maximum profit, almost everything is designed to appeal to the maximum number of consumers. The consequence is a continuous process of “dumbing down” that affects almost every aspect of our daily lives. It seems to me that **the only way to combat this is through education!** It is only by teaching people to aspire to greater things – and that quality matters – that we can even begin to redress the balance.

12:2) The “entertainment” industry is massive – and it is immensely profitable! Everything that can be is turned into a form of mass entertainment. Sport is a classic example of this. One need look no further than the 2012 Olympics to see how the whole event was driven by commercial interests and the need to maximise the audience, with massive amounts of money being spent on the opening and closing ceremonies – neither of which had anything whatever to do with sport, athletics, the athletes themselves or the Olympic “spirit”!

12:3) If we look at the bigger picture, it is possible to draw parallels with George Orwell's “1984” and Big Brother's attitude to the “proles” (*Keep them ignorant but happy by providing mass entertainment, so that they don't rebel*) – or even with Juvenal and the Roman Empire (*Panem et circenses*). Are we really living in such an increasingly decadent society? However, we are concerned here, primarily, about music.

12:4) LOCOG's attitude to music throughout the Olympics was a complete disgrace! Apart from the fact that most of the music (and the performances of it) in the opening and closing ceremonies was of distinctly dubious quality, we had the unedifying spectacle of Sir Simon Rattle and the LSO miming to a pre-recorded sound track, we had the ridiculous farce of musicians being expected to perform for free – and we had to put up with copious amounts of “musak” being broadcast between (and even during) many of the events.

12:5) This is but one example of the increasing commercialisation and “dumbing-down” of mass entertainment. Everywhere we look, we can see evidence of vast amounts of money being spent on persuading more and more people to spend more and more money on merely “being entertained”! Theme parks, leisure parks, adventure parks and other pointless “visitor attractions” are springing up everywhere (Land's End is a prime example!) in order to extract more and more money from an increasingly gullible and susceptible public. Sadly, and worst of all, most of these forms of mindless entertainment and most of the advertising hype connected with them are directed at children! (It almost goes without saying that nearly every example of commercial, mass entertainment features music – but it is almost always music of the most banal and inane kind.) I remember someone once said that: *“Nobody ever made a loss through underestimating the taste of the British public!”* – How true!

12:6) Quite a long time ago, the term “couch potato” was coined to describe people who were addicted to television. Maybe we need to invent a new and more derogatory term for those people who are incapable of entertaining themselves or each other! How do we encourage people – and particularly children – to get off their backsides and actually **do** something worthwhile? The only answer is through **education!** Music (along with sport and drama) is, without doubt, one of the very best ways of teaching and encouraging children to think, and act, and learn for themselves.

12:7) I know, I'm probably coming across as an archetypal “grumpy old man”! I probably am one – but I would stress again that these are not just my ideas. Almost every musician I spoke to on the walk would agree with everything in this section. In fact, many of the ideas are not mine but theirs and they have only been included because I agree wholeheartedly with them. The same applies to the following section about the BBC.

12:8) The BBC! Yes, poor old “Auntie” – she has been going through rather a rough patch recently. Unfortunately, the BBC has also got rather a lot to answer for. We all want to see the BBC maintained and properly funded. We don’t want to see the licence fee cut or shared with other broadcasters. We all want to see the BBC as a shining example, a paradigm of public service broadcasting, admired and respected throughout the world.

12:9) The BBC’s charter used to, does, or ought to include the following words and phrases: **“educational”, “informative”, “uplifting”, “excellence”, “best possible quality”**. (Perhaps we should also add “honest”, “accurate” and “impartial”.) If it did, and if these words were applied to everything in the charter, and if the BBC stuck rigorously to its charter, and if the BBC Trust strictly enforced this charter, there would be no problem.

12:10) Because the BBC is a “public service” broadcaster, it should not have to, nor even be expected to compete in the “ratings” with any other broadcaster nor any other channels. Of course, it can and should also be entertaining and produce popular programmes – it has done before (“Yes Minister” and “Yes Prime Minister” are classic examples) and it still does but, in doing so, it should and can still be educational, informative and uplifting, it can still strive for excellence at all times and it can still aim for the best possible quality at all times.

12:11) The same applies to the BBC’s musical output. The BBC does indeed produce a tremendous amount of excellent music. It is the UK’s biggest employer of musicians and it maintains six full-time orchestras (though we now hear rumours that one of them is going to be axed!). However, for some reason the BBC seems to be almost embarrassed by this! We hardly ever see any of these orchestras on television and we never see any of their public concerts advertised on the BBC. Don’t they want people to listen to them? (Incidentally, what a pity it doesn’t still maintain the Training Orchestra.)

12:12) **“The Proms”** has to be described as one of the world’s greatest “festivals” of music – all produced and recorded by the BBC – but many of the concerts are never seen on television and those that are, are usually on the BBC4 channel, so the only people who watch them are those that know that they are there and/or can be bothered to search for them. Quite a long time ago, the BBC produced a few episodes of a soap opera called “El Dorado”. I discussed this at the time with one of the producers and he worked out that the total (additional) cost of broadcasting the entire Proms, live, on prime-time BBC1, would be less than the cost of producing one episode of El Dorado!

12:13) Music is pretty well ubiquitous in all broadcasting: television, radio and on the internet. Every programme must have its signature tune or jingle. Almost all programmes have a soundtrack or background music. It seems that silence is something to be avoided at all costs, so music is omnipresent. We could live with that if the music were always of the “best possible quality” but, sadly, far too much of it is absolute drivel! This is understandable with commercial broadcasters – they have to appeal to a mass audience and, for some reason, they seem to think that the mass audience actually wants to listen to this kind of rubbish. The BBC can – and has a duty under its charter – to do better than that.

12:14) One of the worst offenders in this respect has to be Children’s TV – CBBC and CBeebies. Quite how one equates the output of these channels with “excellence” and “best possible quality” I have no idea! How are we expected to teach children to enjoy and appreciate good music when they have been subjected to this sort of nonsense?

12:15) The BBC could do so much more to educate its audience, especially its young audience – and it isn’t rocket science to figure out how to do so in an entertaining way. Even the “Young Musician of the Year” is being spoiled by too much focus on the personalities and lives of the competitors and not enough on the music. Forget “celebrities”, forget “Maestro” and the like – just give us good programmes about good music and maybe, just occasionally, tell people to switch off the telly and go and learn to play an instrument, or sing in a choir, or even go to a concert!

12:16) We mustn't leave this subject without mentioning the Queen's Jubilee celebrations. Of course, we can't blame the BBC for broadcasting programme content over which it has little or no control. Can it really be true that the BBC commissioned about a dozen new compositions for the Jubilee celebrations and then never actually broadcast any of them? Interestingly, while most of the musical content of the Jubilee events and the Olympics was little short of abysmal, the Remembrance Day broadcasts included some fine performances of excellent music. Can anyone explain this?

12:17) Finally, (on the subject of media influence, not just the BBC!) I would reiterate the point made in Para 1:6 above. Fewer and fewer people working in the press and the media have ever had the benefit of a sound and thorough music education. As a result of years of decline in music education, fewer people than ever have any real knowledge, understanding or appreciation of good music. If the majority of the people working in the media are not interested in good music and don't know anything about it, it is hardly surprising that we are served up so much rubbish!

13) Muzak!

13:1) Muzak, or "Piped Music" does not refer to any particular type of music but to music piped or relayed around a building or room, which people have not chosen and which they may not be able to escape. In short, it is involuntary music, forced on listeners.

13:2) "**Pipedown**" is an organisation that has been formed to fight against this misuse and abuse of music in public areas, encouraging and giving a voice to millions of people who hate piped music but at present often feel totally powerless to do anything about it.

13:3) Amid the many claims and counter-claims made about piped music (also called canned music or elevator music), objectively researched facts about piped music's effects and its real popularity can be very hard to find. However, here are some examples of what Pipedown's research has revealed:

- More people hate piped music than like it.
- Musicians of all sorts hate piped music.
- There are important health aspects to piped music.

More information can be obtained from the Pipedown website: www.pipedown.info
Pipedown campaigns tirelessly against piped music and we heartily recommend people to join and to support the campaign.

13:4) A few years ago, I contacted my local council, invoking the freedom of information act and asking them how much money the council spent each year on PRS licences to broadcast recorded music in public places. The answer was in the region of £17,500! By far the largest part of this was to provide muzak in leisure centres. This is public money, our money – and it is being totally wasted. At a time when local authorities are cutting their arts budgets left, right and centre, I suggest that everybody should try this – it only takes a phone call or a brief letter – and then bring the answer to the attention of your local councillors. Just think how much more we could achieve if this money were to be spent on music and the arts!

13:5) The main argument that I have against piped music is that if it is good music, I want to listen to it properly, without other distractions – and, if it isn't good music, I don't want to listen to it at all!

13:6) Remember that sound and smell are the two senses that we cannot avoid or turn off at will. I love the smell of good food – but I don't want it while I am listening to a concert. Why should I have to listen to muzak whilst eating in a restaurant?

14) Audience Development:

14:1) We hear quite a lot about audience development these days. Of course, we all want to attract bigger audiences for high-quality music. One thing is certain; we will not achieve this in the long term just by better advertising or by simply playing more of the type of music that we think people will want to hear.

14:2) Sometimes we hear people say: *“There are two kinds of people – those who do and those who merely observe.”* In many ways this is true – but I am not convinced that it applies to music. Certainly there are some people who are very active as musicians and therefore rarely go to concerts, but they are the exceptions. I firmly believe that the best way to generate an interest in music, especially amongst young people, is to get them doing it – and, once that interest in (and appreciation and understanding of) music is there, it rarely goes away completely. Today’s young singers and players are tomorrow’s audiences!

14:3) There is another rather strange anomaly about music. People tend to be very conservative and incredibly reluctant to try anything new. I often hear people saying that they *“like what they like”* and, apparently, they don’t like anything else, even if they have never heard or experienced it before. This happens a lot between different genres of music but there is also a reluctance to explore the new within the many genres of music.

14:4) People seem, most of the time, to opt for the familiar. They want to hear music they have heard before, by composers they know and trust, performed by musicians they have already heard (or at least those they have heard about, those with a good reputation, celebrities!). I find this difficult to understand because I am far more likely to go to a concert to hear something or someone new! I wonder to what extent this applies in the other arts. Are people more likely to go to a play they have already seen before, or read a book they have already read before, or go to an art exhibition to see paintings they have seen before?

14:5) It is possible to educate one’s audience. Here in Ripon and the surrounding area, the St Cecilia Orchestra, VaCO and the Cathedral Concert Society have all taken some trouble to gradually introduce audiences to new and unfamiliar items – and it has certainly worked! Audiences in Ripon are now very receptive towards new and different repertoire and VaCO’s audiences in particular appreciate the fact that we almost always offer them something they have never heard before. It takes time and it takes careful and long-term programme planning – but it certainly pays dividends.

14:6) We cannot really change most people’s attitudes in any big way – but surely we can try to encourage them to be at least a little bit more curious and adventurous. This brings us back to the question of how we educate children – the audiences of tomorrow! We have to broaden their horizons and encourage them to explore the unknown. (And that applies in every walk of life, not just in music.)

15) Local & Regional Government:

15:1) I make no apologies for restating Para 1:6 above. As a result of years of decline in music education, fewer than ever of the councillors and officers working in local and regional government have any real knowledge, understanding or appreciation of good music.

15:2) Sadly, music and the arts are, all too often, lumped into the same category as leisure, recreation and entertainment, usually under the general banner of “culture”, which often includes sport, religion and a host of other things too. This is akin to the use of the term “classical music” – whereby we create an all-embracing pigeonhole that allows us to conveniently dismiss something as no more (or even less) important than the contents of every other pigeon-hole! Is it any wonder that local, regional and central government give so little attention to the arts when “culture” is already near the bottom of their list of priorities?

15:3) Culture and Education are inseparable, they are one and the same thing! Culture is all about education and education is all about culture. Education is in itself an art (*see the definition in Para 2:11 above*) – and Blackie’s Compact Etymological Dictionary gives a conveniently succinct definition of culture: - *“improvement, development, refinement; the result of this”* – which pretty well sums up what education is all about. If we are going to do anything about improving, developing and refining our culture, then we have to start by changing our attitudes to education.

15:4) In our part of the country (North Yorkshire) we suffer from having a “three-tier” system of local and regional government – Parish, Borough and County. Although the County does, apparently, have a “cultural strategy”, it seems to leave almost all matters cultural in the hands of Borough and Parish – whilst Parish and Borough have little if anything to do with education because this is the responsibility of County. My impression is that, across the country, separate responsibilities for “culture” and “education” are usually invested in different local and regional government departments and there is far too little collaboration or joined-up thinking between the two.

15:5) I have been involved with many and various arts organisations, working groups etc. and been to countless meetings about culture and the arts, arts development, arts provision and suchlike. I am becoming infamous for always asking the same question: *“Why is there nobody here from the education sector?”* Often I know that schools and teachers have been invited but they never seem to turn up! OK, maybe they are just very busy – but so is everybody else. It seems that most schools and teachers are just not interested in anything to do with culture and the arts – apart from those particular activities they happen to be involved with themselves, in their own schools.

15:6) Just to give an example from my own City of Ripon. I am (or have been) closely involved with the St Cecilia Orchestra, the Community Orchestra, the Ripon Youth Choirs, the Cathedral Concerts Society, the Ripon City Festivals, the St Wilfred’s Festival etc. To the best of my memory, I cannot think of a single schoolteacher who has been active on the committees running any of these organisations!

15:7) Now that the Arts Council has been charged with overseeing and monitoring the development of Music Hubs, maybe we can at least start to break down this inexplicable barrier. When this was first announced, I distinctly remember several people asking: *“What on earth does the Arts Council know about education?”* We shall see! Certainly the NPME is fairly strong on the idea that we need more collaboration between all the different providers of music and music education.

15:8) Local government, like almost everybody else, is strapped for cash at the moment. We do appreciate that, if there have to be cuts in expenditure, everybody should bear their fair share. This does not justify in any way Newcastle’s recent decision to completely slash their arts budget! (I am tempted to think – I almost hope – that this is political manoeuvring rather than sheer philistinism!) We all need to think more creatively, outside the box, about other ways in which music and the arts can be supported and encouraged, perhaps without spending so much money on them. (*Or by making savings, see para 13:4 above for one suggestion.*)

15:9) Just one other point relevant to the role of local and regional government. Most councils do spend (not enough but) a fair amount on the arts – and quite a lot of this expenditure is on supporting festivals and subsidising venues and organisations that provide concerts and other performing arts events. That is fine and is how it should be – but, especially away from the bigger cities, this frequently involves “buying in” most of the performers from outside the area. There is a strong case to be made for councils to devote at least as much energy and resources to supporting and encouraging the development of local, home-grown arts “product” and producers. Don’t just cater for the consumer, nurture the creators – otherwise there soon won’t be any!

16) Music “Festivals”:

16:1) The number of “Festivals” across the UK has grown exponentially over the last few years. Festivals can be an excellent way of focussing attention on particular events and activities, they can bring high-quality music to specific, often rural areas, and they can do so more cost effectively because of a number of factors – not least because they can offer a more effective advertising package to potential sponsors.

16:2) It is possible to divide “festivals” into three broad categories:

1. Commercial Festivals: usually shorter (maybe a week-end), genre specific (pop, folk, jazz etc.), often venue specific (e.g. Glastonbury), aimed at a particular audience.
2. Arts Festivals: usually longer (one or two weeks to a month), usually area specific (e.g. Swaledale, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh), usually run on a charitable basis, festivals promoting high-quality music and arts for public benefit.
3. Competitive Festivals, often geared towards young people, usually music focussed but sometimes including speech, drama, dance etc. (including Eisteddfodau)

16:3) I think we can leave commercial festivals to their own devices – we are concerned here mainly with the second category. There is absolutely no doubt that most festivals of this kind do a tremendous job, especially those in rural areas or places where concerts are rare events. They do a great deal to raise the profile of music and the arts, they encourage tourism and bring visitors and economic benefits to the area and they bring music to a wider audience, providing a quality, quantity and variety of performances that would otherwise not be affordable or sustainable. They also offer scope for more imaginative and original programme content and for a wide range of fringe events and other spin-off benefits.

16:4) There is, however, a downside too. By definition, festivals have to be “exceptional”. The whole point of a festival is that, by bringing a whole series of events under one banner and condensing them into a shorter period, they can be better advertised and be given a much higher profile than just a one-off event. That is why they can attract more funding from sponsors and advertisers. The problem is that by making the festival “higher” profile, it is self-evident that everything else in the area immediately becomes “lower” profile. Unless the festival organisers are aware of this and take steps to address the issue, there is a danger that the area could become a cultural desert for the other 50 odd weeks of the year!

16:5) Because festivals must be “exceptional” and “special” events, there is also the point that they tend to buy in their performers from outside the area (*see Para 15:8 above*), making it more difficult for local professional musicians to make a living – and also a danger that they will not engage fully with local amateur arts organisations, such as choirs and orchestras. This is a great pity because festivals provide a golden opportunity to showcase and to raise the profile of organisations that contribute to the year-round cultural life of the area and to offer local musicians the chance to do something exceptional.

16:6) This question of engagement with local people applies even more strongly with regard to schools and to young people. Most festivals now include educational and “outreach” projects within their work – mainly because this is a key criterion in most funding applications – but there are difficulties. For obvious reasons, the majority of festivals happen during school holiday periods, so it is often difficult to persuade schools and children to get involved in any meaningful way. We can only hope that the new spirit of engagement and collaboration suggested in the NPME will help in this regard.

16:7) Competitive Music Festivals: There are very mixed feelings about these. Some musicians and teachers abhor them, saying that music should not be competitive (or that it is competitive enough already), that they engender a false or wrong approach to the whole concept of making music and that they encourage children to spend too much time working on specific solo items and neglect their ensemble work, chamber music, orchestras etc.

16:8) On the other hand, competitive festivals do provide opportunities for pupils to gain performing experience, they give children the chance to measure their progress by comparing themselves with others, they can be a very useful motivational tool and pupils can sometimes gain a lot from the remarks of a good adjudicator. In many ways, the pros and cons of these competitions is rather like the pros and cons of ABRSM exams. (See *para 2:19 above*) – It all depends on the attitudes of the children, their parents and their teachers.

16:9) Certainly, all the best competitive music festivals place a strong emphasis on ensemble work, offering categories for choirs, orchestras and chamber groups. They also include workshops and masterclasses, providing additional opportunities and encouragement for young musicians to work together and get expert tuition and coaching.

17) Concerts in Schools & Concerts for School Children:

17:1) We all think it is absolutely essential that school children should be regularly exposed to live performances of high quality music. I suppose it would be wishful thinking to imagine that the “core curriculum” might actually stipulate that, between the ages of 11 and 16, every child should attend at least one symphony orchestra concert, one chamber music recital and one opera each year. The words “dream on” come to mind! The funny thing is, it would actually cost the government and the schools virtually nothing to implement this.

17:2) Some years ago the government proposed a pilot scheme costing more than £1 million to offer free tickets to school children in Arts Council funded theatres. I have no idea what became of the scheme but I did write a letter at the time, questioning the sense behind this initiative. Very few theatres, opera houses or concert halls operate at more than 90% capacity. Therefore it would cost them nothing to give 10% of their tickets away free to school children! I suggested it would make far more sense to withdraw funding from any theatre, opera house or concert hall that didn't offer free tickets to children.

17:3) Of course, most primary school children are a bit too young to sit through a whole evening's concert or opera. Most orchestras and opera companies do put on special kids' concerts and other projects to involve younger children and to introduce them to opera and concert-going. They get additional funding for this educational outreach work – and rightly so. That's fine for all those children who live in or within reach of the larger cities where these orchestras and opera companies operate – what about the millions who don't?

17:4) Again, the NPME and the Music Hubs scheme addresses this issue and recommends that all Hubs and Schools engage fully with other music providers in their regions – the question is – will they? Who is going to monitor this and ensure that it happens?

17:5) Meanwhile (or in any case) there is a desperate need for more professional musicians, (especially chamber music groups) to give concerts in schools and to be involved in music projects in schools. Yes, there is a significant cost implication with this – but few schools have yet cottoned on to the idea that if the professional group were also to give an evening concert in the school – and if all the children, parents, friends and the general public were invited and strongly encouraged to attend – the school could probably not only cover the cost, they could possibly make a profit!

17:6) When I was Director of Stockport Youth Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra used to present a series of “Master Concerts” in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, which were never particularly well attended. Most of my staff at SYO were players in the BBCPO and they used to arrive at Friday rehearsals with handfuls of free tickets for pupils for the next week's concert. Large numbers of pupils attended, often with their parents. It cost nothing and everyone was a winner. It isn't rocket science to devise and implement schemes like this – all it requires is the will and a bit of imagination.

18) Youth Orchestras:

18:1) The UK has always had an enviable reputation for the quality of its youth orchestras and, for as long as I can remember, they have been the jewel in the crown of British music education. There are still a great many fine youth orchestras in the UK – but there signs that all is not as it should be and we have identified some disturbing trends.

18:2) Most youth orchestras used to rehearse weekly (or, if the catchment was over a wide area, maybe fortnightly). Increasingly, we find that youth orchestras are abandoning this practice and focussing their activities on courses during holiday periods. This is partly because it is increasingly difficult to persuade children to commit themselves to regular attendance during term-times. (Mainly due to the pressure of schoolwork and exams! See *Section 2 above*.)

18:3) We also notice that some youth orchestras use the “summer tour” as a means of motivating pupils to attend regularly. *“If you don’t attend all the rehearsals, you won’t be allowed to come on the tour”* This is not at all unreasonable, but there should be a lot more to playing in a youth orchestra than just the summer tour – and children should not have to be either bullied or bribed (or even blackmailed) into regular attendance. Discipline and a sense of responsibility should, ideally, come from within, not be imposed from without – this is one example of why these activities can have so much educational value.

18:4) Another worrying trend is that, in the past, most youth orchestras had an upper age limit of 18. Nowadays, we find more and more youth orchestras extending their age limit to 23 or more. This enables students at university and conservatoire to strengthen the orchestra – particularly if the orchestra meets only during holiday periods. The obvious advantage of this is that it helps to maintain or (one could say “artificially”) raise the standard of the youth orchestra. However, there are disadvantages too:-

- It inhibits the flow-through of younger players from feeder or junior orchestras into the senior youth orchestra.
- Students at university or conservatoire ought really to be making better use of their time and looking to improve themselves by playing with other, higher standard ensembles, not just going back to stiffen their old youth orchestras in their holidays.

18:5) The truth is (and we must be honest), most youth orchestras are struggling to recruit enough players, especially good players – and particularly strings and certain other instruments – because our education system is just not producing as many as it did. It isn’t just a question of numbers and balance of instruments (*both aspects discussed above*), it is also about standards.

18:6) Whilst there is a tremendous amount of music that has been written or arranged for junior orchestras, we have to accept that the standard orchestral repertoire – all that wealth of great music that we so want our young musicians to experience – is far from easy to play! Of course, it varies from instrument to instrument and from piece to piece but, in general, it is difficult to see how any player under about Grade 7 could possibly give a meaningful, satisfying or rewarding account of most of the standard repertoire. (And we do accept that ABRSM Grades are an inadequate and inaccurate measure of ability.) Much the same applies to Chamber Music (*See Section 19 below*).

18:7) That doesn’t mean that less advanced players shouldn’t play in orchestras – quite the reverse! There is a long learning process involved before players are capable of doing justice to fine music – and it can be great fun along the way. The point (and the problem) is that, because of exam pressure, fewer and fewer children are progressing much beyond Grade 5 or 6. Because of this, those talented children who do progress to an advanced level, especially string players, are in very short supply and there can often be many conflicting demands on their time and commitment.

18:8) Therefore some youth orchestras can be extremely possessive and protective of their players. We have heard of many cases where teachers and youth orchestras have actively discouraged their players from playing with anyone else!

18:9) This is nothing new! Back in the 1970s, as Director of Stockport Youth Orchestra, I proposed the formation of a Halle Youth Orchestra, along similar lines to the then excellent Merseyside Youth Orchestra. The Halle thought it was a great idea but, when they consulted all the other LEAs in Greater Manchester, every single one (except Stockport) opposed the plan because they thought it would adversely affect their own youth orchestras. I put forward the idea again in the late 1980s, with the same result. The Halle Youth Orchestra wasn't formed until 2002 – and it has now become one of the UK's leading youth orchestras. (Merseyside Youth Orchestra, mainly for political reasons, has become a pale shadow of its former self!)

18:10) Let's look at the situation from the point of view of any promising young string player. Having began learning at the age of 6 or 7 – they'll probably pass grade 8 at around the age of 14 or 15. They'll be the backbone of their own school orchestra – but they'll also be a key player in local and regional youth orchestras. They may well get accepted into National Children's or National Youth Orchestra. Local amateur orchestras will be chasing them. The chances are that they will have outgrown their local teacher and so they may well be attending a junior college on Saturday mornings and playing in the orchestra there too!

18:11) However, for most string players, playing in a symphony orchestra is not the "ultimate experience". String orchestras and chamber music (*see below*) are usually held to be more rewarding, more challenging and better training. So our young protégée might well join NYSA (National Youth String Academy), they may very well also attend Pro Corda for chamber music coaching and experience – and they might be involved in an élite "fast-track" scheme like Yorkshire Young Musicians – designed to provide additional opportunities for talented young musicians. In any case, they should be playing chamber music regularly. (And all of this whilst studying for those wretched exams!)

18:12) There is definitely no shortage of opportunities for young string players – in fact there is such a massive shortage of good young string players that every musical organisation in the country is crying out for them. School orchestras, local, city, county and regional youth orchestras, amateur orchestras etc. all desperately need more string players – so they hang onto them by fair means or foul. What happens then? The child goes and gets a place in the 6th form of a specialist music school, which takes them "out of circulation" altogether.

18:13) The really sad and worrying point about all this that **this desperate shortage of string players seriously jeopardises the possibility of offering suitable opportunities and experience for players on almost every other instrument!** (*See Para 6:11 above.*)

18:14) Part of the role of any instrumental teacher (of any instrument, not just strings) is to ensure that their pupils benefit from the best opportunities and experience that are available and appropriate for each individual child, at any particular stage in their development, with consideration for their personal circumstances and bearing in mind their other commitments. That means that the teacher must know what is available in the area, how good it is and who and what is involved. This is certainly not easy. Furthermore, the teacher must be completely impartial and independent. Even if they themselves conduct (e.g.) the County Wind Band, they must encourage their star pupils to apply for the Symphony Orchestra or to play with the local amateur orchestra instead, if that would be in the child's best interests.

18:15) Youth orchestras must understand and respect this too. They must encourage their best members to move on to something better – not just hang on to them for dear life! It is very difficult to do this when there is nobody ready to replace them – and that is the major problem with our whole education system at the moment – it is simply not producing enough good young players.

18:16) I can honestly say that, in all the forty-plus years that I have been involved with youth and student orchestras, the majority of the very best players I have encountered have not gone on to study music! Most of them have ended up studying medicine, law or sciences at Oxbridge. (I can also think of 3 or 4 wonderful young players who did go to conservatoire and then, having graduated, switched to medicine.) This phenomenon is happening less and less in recent years and this pool of excellent “amateur” players is drying up. Why? Because of exam pressure!

18:17) The next generation of professional musicians will get there anyway! There will always be a large enough pool of exceptional talent that will rise to the top. However, these are mostly the children of well-educated, determined parents who are extremely supportive and affluent enough to rise above the system. There is no evidence that the standard of players leaving conservatoire is going down. (*There are some problems here but these will be discussed below – Para 24.*) Most of the professional musicians of tomorrow will have attended specialist music schools – and this takes them “out of circulation” and significantly reduces the pool of talent available to maintain the quality of musical activities in “ordinary” schools, in local, city, county and regional youth orchestras and in the local community in general.

18:18) The Gulbenkian Report “The Arts in Schools” includes a very telling sentence about élitism: **“We do not accept the charge of élitism ... because we are not postulating the gifted versus the non-gifted”**. It is not surprising, in the light of the last paragraph, that music is becoming regarded, increasingly, as an élitist subject. We must not attempt to counter this by “dumbing down”. Words like “high-quality” and “excellence” do not have to equate with élitism. What we have to do is try to make sure that high quality and excellence are available to everybody and that everybody is encouraged to aspire to and has the opportunity to achieve the best!

19) Chamber Music:

19:1) These paragraphs about Chamber Music are included at this point because we have just been talking about “the best”. For a great many accomplished musicians, chamber music is, quite simply, the ultimate form of music making – and many people would argue that most of the greatest composers wrote their best music for chamber ensembles.

19:2) I use the term “Chamber Music” deliberately – almost provocatively – and I can almost feel the hackles of the anti-élitists rising already. Of all forms of music, chamber music has the reputation of being the stuffiest, most highbrow and aesthetic. Not so! In their purest forms, both jazz and folk could be said to be chamber music – and so could singing in a barber-shop quartet! We are not just talking about music involving small groups or ensembles. Chamber Music has a specific character of its own – mainly in that it was written (primarily at least) for the benefit and enjoyment of the players, not the audience.

19:3) Thus it is that, in chamber music, the interplay and communication of musical ideas between the players is paramount. It is an exploration of the language of music, usually in its most abstract yet most meaningful and expressive form. Just as poetry is the ultimate form of playing with and exploring the meaning of words, so is chamber music the ultimate form of playing with and exploring the meaning of musical ideas.

19:4) It is hardly surprising therefore that we would argue that playing chamber music is not just important, it is an essential activity in the development of any young musician. In fact, I would qualify one of the highlighted statements I made earlier (*Para 6:9*) :-

“The very best way to learn anything about music is to play chamber music – ideally with people who are better than you!”

And it is through playing chamber music, more than anything else, that all the greatest educational benefits of music education derive.

19:5) As with playing in a symphony orchestra (*see para 18:6 above*), the big problem is that most “great” chamber music is far from easy to play! However, there is plenty of easy repertoire too and we recommend that children should be introduced to the concept of playing chamber music as early as possible. There are simple duets and trios for almost every instrument – and we also heartily recommend that the teacher actually plays with the pupils in exploring these. Most sonatas and pieces for solo instrument with piano (pieces in the ABRSM Syllabus) are also chamber music. The important thing is that this music should be approached as chamber music (involving the intercommunication of musical ideas), not just as pieces to be learnt and then played for an exam, or in a festival, or for a concert.

19:6) **Pro Corda** is a long established organisation dedicated to the promotion and teaching of chamber music – and the work they do is far-reaching and excellent. They also run the “International Academy for Chamber Music” and the “National Festival of Chamber Music for Schools”. In association with various other organisations, they are about to launch a “National Campaign for Chamber Music in Schools”, partly with the idea of ensuring that chamber music is enshrined in the core curriculum for music education under the NPME and the Music Hubs scheme. This campaign will be wholeheartedly supported by just about every musician I have consulted.

20) Amateur Orchestras:

20:1) What is it with these doctors? Almost every amateur orchestra I encounter is full of doctors! Much as I would like to, I don’t think we can claim that music is a particularly valuable or essential element in the education of doctors – or that a natural vocation for helping others is a key factor in training young musicians! Perhaps it is safe to suggest that natural ability is often non-specific. By that I mean that people who are naturally good at one thing often tend to be good at others too. Mental and physical ability are both, to a degree, innate – the rest is down to nurture.

20:2) I digress! Amateur orchestras are, like youth orchestras, one of the most successful aspects of the British musical scene – and, like youth orchestras, they are all struggling to find enough players, especially on string instruments. The situation is less desperate (at the moment), probably because of the age range. The “glory days” of instrumental tuition in the UK were the 1960s and 70s – and most of the players who grew up then are still playing. I don’t have any statistics but I would guess that the average age of amateur orchestras is rising steadily, as it is for choral societies and as it is for audiences for high-quality music in general.

20:3) This in itself can make it more difficult to recruit youngsters into the ranks of amateur orchestras – what self-respecting teenager wants to go and play with a load of old fogeys? We have to work hard to break down these age barriers.

20:4) At least funding does not, generally, seem to be a major issue for amateur orchestras. This is probably because (sadly) most of the members of these orchestras are drawn from the better educated and therefore higher-earning, more affluent echelons of society – and they pay to play in the orchestras. The only real problems seem to be finding good rehearsal venues (*See para 2:29*) and, even harder, being able to afford decent performing venues.

20:5) Another little digression – my own local council recently refurbished their main concert venue at considerable cost. The main thrust of their fundraising for this was that it would be “for public benefit”. They now charge local, charitable organisations well over the odds to use the venue. That is exploitation, not public benefit! The challenge I have set them is that they should set aside six Saturdays during the year and invite local orchestras and choral societies to give a concert each. The venue would then handle publicity and ticket sales, retaining the proceeds, out of which they would pay the performers’ costs. Could they make a profit? They haven’t yet accepted the challenge.

21) Amateur Choirs and Choral Societies (as well as orchestras):

21:1) I wonder how I can put this tactfully, without alienating an awful lot of people. Throughout my walk, I contacted almost every amateur orchestra, choir and choral society within thirty-odd miles of my route, probably well over 200 organisations. Apart from explaining the project and expressing an interest in coming to visit them and to discuss any issues they wanted to raise, I also offered them the chance for any of their members to join me and to raise money for their own causes. I think I had replies from fewer than twenty!

21:2) I'm not complaining. Everybody is very busy and, in the current economic climate, every arts organisation in the country is running flat out just to stand still! However, dare I suggest that it is just possible to detect the slightest hint of complacency amongst some amateur choirs and orchestras? (I hasten to add "not all of them" – some of them are doing exceptionally fine, challenging and ambitious things – but, if the cap fits, please at least consider wearing it!)

21:3) Could this "complacency" be because they are not particularly short of funds? I don't think so. Amateur musicians do it for fun! They play or sing because they enjoy it – and, of course, they enjoy the social as well as the artistic aspects of their activities. I've already touched upon the delicate issue of the rising average age of the amateur music world. It may seem a bit brutal to say it but many amateurs will be getting past their best and their skills will be on the wane – but they still want to be involved because they love it. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this. We should certainly be trying to cater for all types, at all levels and doing our best to keep everybody happy and involved.

21:4) However, I do wonder if some amateur groups shouldn't (in the sweetest possible way) ask themselves a few questions: Do they really want to improve? Do they exist for the benefit of their existing members, or for the wider good (their potential membership and their audiences)? Do their members want to be stretched and challenged, to develop their skills, knowledge, appreciation and understanding of music or do they just want to enjoy singing or playing as they have always done? Do they and their groups want to make a more valuable and meaningful contribution to the artistic and cultural life of the whole community, or do they simply want to carry on doing what they do because they enjoy it?

21:5) It is relatively simple to improve the standard of a choir or orchestra. It isn't necessary to audition all the members and weed out the weak ones. All you have to do is give them more challenging repertoire and be more demanding and exacting in rehearsals. Those members who are not able to keep up will leave of their own accord. However, will there be enough new people (who do want to work at the higher level) to fill the spaces?

21:6) The answer to that particular question (given the state of our education system) is: Probably not! The answer to the general problem of how to cater for the needs and aspirations of all types of amateur musicians at all levels and ages is probably to "think outside the box".

21:7) The words "stuck in a rut" spring to mind. Choral Societies tend to sing nothing but oratorios – and, sadly, because of economic factors, they do so with ever more reduced orchestral forces. Other choirs tend to focus on different types of repertoire and often become "specialised" in their approach – i.e. they might love singing gospel music or spirituals but never attempt barber-shop or madrigals – and most of them rarely get the chance to sing with an orchestra at all. Orchestras have to cater for their members – e.g. if they have trombones and percussion players, they will hardly ever play a Mozart Symphony, never mind a work for string orchestra!

21:8) Perhaps one useful suggestion would be for representatives of all the choirs and orchestras in any particular area or region to meet regularly and to devise ways and means of enabling and encouraging all their members to explore new avenues of musical activity.

21:9) This collaborative approach could lead, in each area, to an interesting programme of one-day or week-end courses and other projects, broadening and enhancing everybody's experience and offering the scope for amateurs to be involved in a wider range of types of music at all levels. It could even lead to the commissioning of new works! It would also offer amateurs more opportunities to work with professional experts in any particular field.

21:10) At this point, perhaps I could digress slightly in order to mention another peculiarity about the "British Choral tradition". We should cherish this tradition – it has been a mainstay of British musical life for generations. (Yes, even the tradition of "Messiah" every Christmas!) – However, none of us can understand the apparent reluctance of choral societies ever to use a professional conductor. Almost all Oratorios (yes, even "Messiah") are really works for orchestra and soloists – with a choir! They are not works for choir and soloists "accompanied" by an orchestra! All the best choirs (in the UK and throughout the world) use a chorus master to train the choir and then engage a "proper" conductor to direct the performance. Very few "choral conductors" have any real idea how to get the best out of an orchestra – and yet the orchestra, for most performances in the UK, is expected to produce the goods on just one short rehearsal. This practice is not conducive to the best possible performances! *(I say this not as a conductor but on behalf of all orchestral players.)*

21:11) To return to the idea of more collaboration between amateur groups: by bringing these people together and encouraging joint projects, we could begin to break down many of the barriers that still exist between all the people and organisations that work in different fields and genres of music and the arts. We all know that we would all achieve far more if people would only work together. Persuading people in the amateur music world to work together is incredibly difficult – and this is partly because of entrenched attitudes and, perhaps, because many amateurs do not want to be stretched "out of their comfort zones".

21:12) "Making Music" does make some effort in this direction but with only limited success. Traditionally (more so when it was the NFMS), "Making Music" has tended to categorise organisations rather too simplistically. They are either an amateur orchestra, or an amateur choir, or a concert promoting society – and, whatever they are, they must be "Amateur" with a capital 'A'. Again, let's think outside the box. Why not bring professionals, semi-professionals, teachers, amateurs, students and schoolchildren together in the same organisation? Why can't an organisation be both a performing group and a concert promoting society? Why can't we all work together – for everybody's benefit?

21:13) It is possible that the Music Hubs will begin to address these issues. They are touched upon in the NPME but not in any great detail and not as a "core" function. So far, there is very little evidence that Music Hubs have even begun to think about these matters, never mind take any positive action.

22) Opera, Operetta & Musicals

22:1) It is difficult to explain or understand the British public's attitude to Opera. It has certainly become more popular in recent years – possibly partly due to the "celebrity" cult. (The Three Tenors, Nessun Dorma, Bryn Terfel, Katherine Jenkins and TV programmes and broadcasts like Cardiff Singer of the World, Maestro at the Opera, Rock Star to Opera Star etc.) Opera has become rather more "popularised", which is not necessarily a bad thing.

22:2) It is also rather difficult to explain or define clearly the difference between opera, operetta and musicals. Perhaps it is better not to try – there are so many grey areas in between. Operetta is really just light-hearted opera. Works like *West Side Story* and *Porgy & Bess* blur the distinctions between opera and musicals. Works like *My Fair Lady* and *Oliver!* fall somewhere between musicals and operetta. Perhaps the only relevant distinction could be that musicals, in general, require a less sophisticated or "cultivated" style of singing.

22:3) Maybe a little historical analysis would help. In the 1720s, opera in London had become very highbrow and élitist! It was all very stylised and, almost invariably, performed in Italian. Along came Gay and Pepusch who, in 1728, devised *The Beggars' Opera* – basically a pastiche or satire of opera, with an entertaining, rather risqué story and including popular songs of the time, all performed in the vernacular. This so-called “Ballad Opera” could, in some ways, be said to have reached its apogee in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. A similar and closely related reaction against the perceived élitism of “Grand Opera” was Weill and Brecht’s collaboration to produce *The Threepenny Opera* in Berlin, 200 years later, in 1928. Based on exactly the same story, one can clearly see the influence of this work in (e.g.) the musical *Cabaret*.

22:4) Another example of operatic iconoclasm could be said to be Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* – a “singspiel” (i.e. with spoken dialogue instead of recitative) and written in the vernacular, as opposed to the more usual Italian opera favoured in Vienna at the time. In spite of these (and many other) efforts to popularise opera and to debunk the myth of opera being the “ultimate” art form, beloved by high-society and patronised only by the rich and the cognoscenti, composers like Verdi, Wagner and their musical descendants continued to produce “Grand Opera”. Most of Europe (and, to a certain extent, the USA and South America) lapped it up. The British seemed content with Gilbert & Sullivan! (*Nothing wrong with G & S – they produced some wonderful operettas!*)

22:5) When the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company (the company specialising in performing G & S operas) closed down in 1982, I remember thinking that it would be wonderful if we could have a new, British opera company that specialised in the performance of operetta – rather like the Volksooper in Vienna – but also touring the country, bringing light opera of all kinds to a much wider public. They could perform not only G & S but also operettas by other British composers, alongside those of Strauss, Lehar, Offenbach etc. – and also commission new operettas by British composers. Both *The Beggar's Opera* and *Threepenny Opera* could be part of their repertoire, as could *West Side Story*, *Porgy & Bess*, *My Fair Lady* – and even *Oliver!* The D'Oyly Carte Company did try a revival, partially along these lines, between 1988 and 2003 but it received little support from the government or the Arts Council and it never really “took off”!

22:6) Where does all this leave us? Well, opera is still alive and kicking in the UK (just) but we have far too few opera companies and, arguably, too much subsidy goes to the big, national or regional companies instead of supporting smaller companies in smaller theatres around the country and touring companies. As ever, Opera tends to be seen as “Grand” – big, the ultimate art form, highbrow, superior – and therefore, inevitably, it is seen as somewhat élitist. It is also by far the most expensive musical art form! Does it always have to be so “Grand”?

22:7) If we look at the bigger picture - and if we can be honest – opera is not the ultimate musical genre or art form! (*Pace those aficionados who will obviously disagree!*) In fact, opera is, in many ways, the “layman’s” way into music. The very best way to introduce a non-music-lover, child or adult, to the delights of live music is to take them to a comic opera, operetta or a good musical. Orchestral and chamber music concerts can come later, when they have developed more of a taste for and appreciation of good music.

22:8) Our half-dozen major, professional opera companies do a fantastic job in producing fine performances of great music and in trying to develop and widen their audiences. They are fighting against the odds in having to compete with some fairly tasteless and distinctly “populist” opposition. All strength to their elbows – and they do need to be supported – but I think there is also a strong case for supporting smaller, more locally based companies, outside the big cities, and also the smaller touring companies. A fine example is set by the superb Co-Opera Company – not only bringing reasonably sized productions to venues all around the country but doing so at reasonable cost and providing excellent experience and opportunities to young professionals at the start of their careers.

22:9) Amateur Operatics: Alongside these professional companies, the UK has always had a tremendous number of locally based Amateur Operatic Societies – a tradition that should be (and used to be) as vibrant and as valuable as our Choral Societies and Amateur Orchestras. Sadly, in spite of the fact that many of them still call themselves “Operatic Societies”, many of them hardly ever touch even operettas, never mind operas!

22:10) Why is this? I think there are four main reasons:-

1. Because of the public’s apparent predilection for (mostly second-rate) musicals, many societies think that they will not get an audience if they put on operettas such as those by Gilbert & Sullivan, Strauss or Offenbach (and, sadly, there are not very many more contemporary operettas). Smaller audiences mean less income.
2. As mentioned above, (See Para 22:2) operetta requires a more sophisticated and developed way of singing than do most musicals. Sadly, there are ever fewer amateur singers who feel confident enough to sing operetta or opera.
3. Operas and operettas are, apart from the style of singing, generally more difficult and complex to produce than most musicals. Musically, they are more demanding and require more rehearsal – and they also often need more in the way of costumes, stage sets, lighting etc.
4. Operas and operettas usually require a (much) larger and more capable orchestra than do most musicals. Hiring a professional orchestra is very expensive – and this also necessitates using larger theatres and, more particularly, theatres that have an orchestra pit.

22:11) Does this matter? If we were only bemoaning the fact that musicals are becoming more popular than operetta (or opera) then we could live with it – after all, there are some good musicals around. However, it isn’t as simple as that. Amateur Operatic Societies are in decline, aspirations are lower, standards are falling, there is less work available for professional musicians (musical directors, repetiteurs and orchestral players) and the general public have fewer and fewer opportunities to experience some of the greatest music in our heritage. Again “populism” rules – and, yet again, entertainment triumphs over art!

22:12) Just as a minor post-script – during my years at college, a great many music students gained an awful lot of valuable experience (and a useful supplementary income) from playing in the pit for amateur operatic societies. Nowadays, we see more and more musicals being performed with either just a piano (or organ) and/or maybe a very small instrumental “combo”. Students (See Para 24:6 below) simply cannot afford to do without this experience, or the money!

23) Professional orchestras and musicians:

23:1) Needless to say, the biggest issue affecting professional orchestras and professional musicians of all types is **funding!** Because we (most of us) are doing something that we love and are passionate about, people seem to think we should be happy to do it for love and forget that we also need to make a living. The attitude of the Olympic Organising Committee to the question of paying musicians was, sadly, pretty typical.

23:2) Countless charities and other organisations are putting on musical events as a means of raising money – and so orchestras and musicians are always being asked to play for free, or at least “on the cheap”. The fact that there are so many “charity” concerts often makes it even harder to attract an audience for any concerts that are not in aid of some charity or other – and we should also bear in mind that most musical organisations are charities themselves and they need the audience revenue to survive.

23:3) It is a fact (sad, but true) that it is pretty nigh impossible to put on any type of high-quality orchestral, opera, choral or even chamber music performance without a significant level of funding or subsidy from elsewhere. It was ever thus. Since the days of the renaissance, almost every manifestation of high-quality art has been heavily subsidised by the aristocracy, the church or the state.

23:4) The only other significant source of funding is business sponsorship – but the big danger with business sponsorship is that, obviously, because the businesses want to reach as large an audience as possible, they tend to sponsor only the most popular types of programmes. If the government thinks that philanthropy is the answer, in this economic climate, they are living in cloud-cuckoo land! (It can help, but it is not the answer.)

23:5) Again, the charge of élitism raises its ugly head. So often we hear even leading politicians and others asking: “*Why should we spend money on opera or orchestras when so few people go to concerts?*” They argue that “*the audience is mainly élite, upper-class and well-heeled anyway.*” Or that it is “*an ever-dwindling and ageing audience.*” Even worse, that “*most people aren’t interested in it anyway.*” And, I’m afraid we have to admit it, any pledge to spend more money on the arts is hardly going to win over a majority of voters!

23:6) Hey! Ho! We’re back to the old arguments about populism, “1984”, “panem et circenses” (see Para 12:3 above) and living in an increasingly consumer-driven, dumbed-down and decadent society. And this also brings us back to the point that very few of our politicians and “powers that be” have the slightest knowledge, experience or understanding of the benefits to society or of the value of high-quality music and the arts. (*Having said that, many of them went to Eton – and Eton does have a pretty good music department – but this doesn’t seem to have rubbed off very much on some of its alumni.*)

23:7) Whilst I don’t want this report to become too cliché-ridden, I cannot resist also adding that our modern society appears to be being run, more than ever, by “**people who know the cost of everything and the value of nothing!**”

23:8) And I will highlight this again, because it is so important:-

If we do not subsidise and sustain high-quality music and the arts properly, then we will be denying everybody (including the proletariat) the opportunity of appreciating and experiencing the greatest achievements of humanity!

23:9) Underfunding (and the inevitable cost-cutting that stems from it) has a number of deleterious effects on orchestras and professional musicians: -

- Populist programming: we’ve already touched on this, but the need to attract audiences results in unimaginative and dumbed-down programming, which in turn results in ...
- Fewer commissions of new music and fewer performances of contemporary music.
- Shorter and fewer rehearsals, resulting in lower standards or performance.
- Reductions in forces – (a) cutting back on numbers in the string sections, resulting in less authentic and less satisfying or rewarding performances – and (b) cutting back on performances of the many, great and often iconic works that require additional forces beyond the normal strength of the orchestra. (e.g. many works by Stravinsky, Mahler, Strauss etc.) This, in turn, leads to ...
- Fewer full-time orchestral jobs – but this is also a “double whammy” because these musicians are then forced into the free-lance market – but ...
- There is less and less free-lance work available for all those musicians who do not have permanent orchestral jobs.

23:10) Professional orchestral musicians are not well paid! Their working hours and conditions are very arduous and the stress levels of the job are considerable. Yet we still have some of the best orchestras and musicians in the world. (*But for how much longer?*)

24) Conservatoires (and Universities):

24:1) We also have some of the best conservatoires and universities in the world – which is why so many foreign students come to study music in the UK. I am not going to sing the praises of those “centres of excellence” that are our top half-dozen or so conservatoires – they do that very well for themselves – but I would offer a few observations.

24:2) These conservatoires are, each year, turning out far more would-be-professional musicians than there are jobs available in the music profession (even allowing for migration). In the effort to be “centres of excellence” they do their best to attract the best teachers and they do their best to turn all their students into virtuosi. Sadly, however, not every student has the capacity to become a virtuoso. Only one in a thousand will become a soloist and less than one in a hundred will make a career as a chamber musician. The best that most of them can hope for is a rank-and-file position in an orchestra – and many of them will never even achieve that!

24:3) Of course, every student should be encouraged to develop their technical and musical skills to the utmost level of which they are capable – but pragmatism has its place and experience and “know-how” are also crucially important. If and when a student does manage to get a place in a professional orchestra, they will be expected to play most of the standard repertoire on very little rehearsal – and the sad thing is, most of them know very little of the standard repertoire. We know of students leaving conservatoire never having performed a symphony by Beethoven, Haydn or Mozart!

24:4) Perhaps even worse, those students who don’t manage to get a job (and that is most of them) will often end up teaching – and when their pupils bring along to the lesson a piece they are playing in their youth orchestra, the chances are that these teachers won’t even know it.

24:5) There has to be a better way of designing and structuring courses of study at conservatoires in such a way as to cater more appropriately for the particular talents and aptitudes of each individual student. Students are not all the same when they enter conservatoire (or university) – and we should neither expect nor want them to be the same when they leave. We need a wider variety of courses, a wider variety of qualifications and much more flexibility to allow students to switch from one type of course to another.

24:6) Until quite recently, those enthusiastic and talented students who seriously wanted to become professional musicians would get their additional experience and knowledge of repertoire outside the conservatoire – mainly by playing with other various other orchestras and going on summer courses. Nowadays, with ever increasing student fees and student debt, they simply can’t afford to do this. Many of them have part-time jobs (which doesn’t exactly help them with their studies either) and very few of them can possibly afford to pay to go on any courses during the vacations.

24:7) Sadly, it also has to be said (*refer to Para 2:22 #3*) that, even in our conservatoires, there are significant numbers of students who still think that, if they do the work they are expected to do – and jump through the hoops through which they are expected to jump (i.e. do enough to pass their exams), they will duly get their degrees – and that they will then be able to get jobs that pay decent salaries. That has never been the case in the music profession and it never will be!

24:8) Somebody once told me that music conservatoires are near the top of the “league tables” in terms of the numbers of graduates finding employment within six months or a year after leaving college. I don’t know if this is (or ever was) true but, if it is, I would hazard a guess that a large proportion of those jobs are not in the music profession. However, if it is true, it adds some strength to our argument about the importance and value of education through music.

24:9) Throughout our entire system of primary and secondary education, it has become the “norm” that all forms of testing and examinations, especially public examinations, should not be “norm” based but based on pre-set criteria – in other words, they should not be competitive. That is probably a good thing. Successive governments and many other people, for various reasons, also think that it would be a good thing for more teenagers to go to university – or at least to progress into some form of tertiary education. Yet there seems to be a strong body of opinion that entry into tertiary education should also be by means of a non-competitive examination. Life itself is competitive! Getting a job is competitive, getting promotion is competitive, even becoming a member of parliament is competitive – evolution is competitive! Why do we have this aversion to competition in our education system?

24:10) Maybe, if we are going to raise the school leaving age to 18 – and if we really do want more of these 18-year-olds to then go on to further study at college or university – we should be less reluctant to allow elements of competition in our system of tertiary education. Perhaps all our colleges and universities could accept more students in the first year but then weed a proportion of them out, on a competitive basis, at the end of each year of study. Thus more people would get the opportunity but only the best 40% or so would complete the course and gain their degrees. *Shock! Horror! I can almost hear the sharp intake of breath. What an appalling suggestion!*

24:11) Wouldn't that be incredibly wasteful? What about all those poor students who get kicked out after one or even two years of study, without any qualifications? Well, firstly, we would have to have much more flexibility in the system so that they could switch to more appropriate courses if they wished to continue their studies. (That would be a good thing anyway.) Secondly, education is never a waste of time. Regardless of whether they gain a qualification of any kind – the students will still have learnt something! Thirdly, it is also a complete waste of time having qualifications that are not worth the paper they're printed on – which is what happens when almost everybody passes their exams and gains a degree.

24:12) Auditions at Conservatoires: We have heard recently from several people who have been auditioning for places in Conservatoires. In all these instances, the students and their parents were appalled by the off-hand and callous way in which they were treated. The auditions were conducted in an unfriendly and unwelcoming way, they were far too short, the applicants were not helped or encouraged to give of their best and there was no feedback or comment. Here is a précis of a letter that one parent has written to one of the conservatoires: “... he had five minutes actually in the audition room and was greeted with what he described as a completely impersonal attitude and not even thanked for attending. There was no feedback whatsoever. After the audition he was told the results would be available at 12.30 but ... having asked at the desk ... finally received them at 2.15! Of course he returned home disappointed, having had a completely wasted day and extremely negative experience.” The parent rang the conservatoire to question the length of the audition and was told it should have been 15 minutes.

24:13) Most conservatoires charge quite a lot of money just for an audition. (RC Scotland - £45, Leeds CM - £50, RNCM - £55, RWCMD & Birmingham C - £60, Trinity - £70, RAM, RCM & GSM - £90, on top of the £16 CUKAS registration fee). On the other hand applicants to study music (or any other subject) at our leading universities, including Oxbridge, pay nothing for their interviews! (Apart from the UKAS registration charge.) It does seem rather strange that, whilst universities are expected to do their utmost to encourage applications from students from poorer families, conservatoires are allowed to charge so much!

24:14) Admittedly, the conservatoires do all operate “waiver” schemes for audition fees for those who cannot afford it, but these charges are still a deterrent. Furthermore, even if auditions were completely free, the staff involved do still have a moral duty to ensure that applicants are treated fairly and with respect, that they have a positive experience and, ideally, that they actually learn something useful from the process.

25) Teaching Quality – and Training Teachers:

25:1) In the late 1960s and early 70s, I represented my college on an organisation called the National Association of Music Students' Unions (NAMSU). One of the issues we discussed at length was the availability and quality of "teacher-training" in Music Colleges. If we came to any conclusion at all it was that, whilst it was certainly important to have a stronger element of teacher training in Music Colleges, it was **far more important to do something about the quality of music training in Teacher Training Colleges!** (*Little has really changed and I am much of the same mind today.*)

25:2) Then, as now, the avenues of study leading to qualified teacher status were completely different for primary as opposed to secondary school teachers. Those wishing to teach in Primary Schools studied "education" at undergraduate level (perhaps with music as a specialist option) whereas those aiming to teach in secondary schools either went to University to study music or to Conservatoire – and then opted for a post-graduate degree or diploma in education. University graduates tended to become "class" teachers and Conservatoire graduates tended to become instrumental teachers.

25:3) Now – the last thing I want to do is to offend or alienate anybody in the teaching profession, least of all music teachers. There are a great many fine teachers out there, with genuine vocations, enthusiastic, committed, doing a wonderful job, against the odds, with considerable expertise – and inspiring the next generation. These teachers should be recognised, applauded, much better valued and much better remunerated! However, they are not ubiquitous and I am not convinced that they even constitute a majority. Remember the old adage: *"Those who can, do! – Those who can't – teach!"*

25:4) Let's look at instrumental teachers first. Yes, there will be some students who enter Conservatoires with the idea of becoming teachers and who have a genuine vocation for teaching – but I think it is fair to say that the majority of Conservatoire students who end up as career teachers are the ones who have failed to make the grade as performers. There is nothing wrong with this – in some ways it is inevitable – but sometimes (*see Para 24:4 above*) these same students become somewhat sidelined in Conservatoires (in the pursuit of excellence) and are sometimes not given enough opportunities to play in the college symphony orchestras, or in chamber groups etc. They are pushed hard to develop their technique as far as possible but they are not necessarily given the general, working musical know-how and experience that will be so important when they become teachers.

25:5) Primary school teachers could also be said to fall into two categories: those who genuinely want to teach younger children and have a natural aptitude for it – and those who drift into primary education by default. It may sound cruel to say this (remember, we are talking here about music specialists) but the latter tend to be students who have failed to get into either University or Conservatoire as music students and end up training to be primary teachers as a third option or even as a last resort – this being the only way they can get a place on a degree course! (*These are not rare – I know of far too many examples of this!*)

25:6) All the various institutions that have any involvement in training teachers are, I'm sure, doing their very best – probably with limited and ever-diminishing resources. However, I think there is very strong case for somehow "raising the bar" in terms of the musical skills, knowledge and understanding required of those wishing to obtain a teaching qualification of any kind – and certainly for those professing some kind of specialism in music. (*See addendum.*)

25:7) There is another way of looking at this – and it strongly emphasises the need for change in the way we train teachers. We have already seen how the "Core Curriculum" (*sorry, Syllabus!*) for music in both primary and secondary schools has been dumbed down to the extent that it is virtually meaningless – and how, over the years, in a vain, politically correct, anti-élitist attempt to be all things to all men, it has been loaded with peripheral stuff that has precious little to do with music at all.

25:8) Maybe, now, if we raise the school leaving age to 18, abolish GCSEs because there is no longer any need for them, get away from the idea that music is a subject that needs to be examined and tested all the time – and start to teach music as an activity that has immense intrinsic educational value – and put into practice many of the excellent recommendations of the NPME – the role of music teachers and the skills and training they will require will be very different indeed and of a much higher order.

25:9) It will be fascinating to see what the DfE, the Arts Council, the various other agencies concerned and the Music Hubs will come up with in terms of new teaching qualifications and new ways of training teachers – and, of course, what should be offered through CPD.

25:10) It has always fascinated me how, when talking to most music teachers, it is possible to have a perfectly reasonable, rational discussion about every aspect of teaching from basic technique to educational philosophy. We can talk about what you teach, how you teach, when and where you teach and why you teach – but the one thing that seems to be taboo and almost guaranteed to put them on the defensive is any discussion about music itself. Interpretation, expression, meaning, artistic quality – such things are personal and therefore we mustn't question them – but this is what music is about and this is what we have to teach!

25:11) There is one other little side issue that I would like to mention – perhaps it comes under the heading of CPD. I think that all music teachers should see it as an essential part of their work to be actively involved in the musical life of the community in which they live. They should be singing or playing in local choirs, orchestras, bands and other ensembles, they should be helping to organise concerts, they should be lobbying councils for better facilities and for more money to be spent on music and the arts. They should be seen to be active by their pupils, they should be role models and they should be setting an example by demonstrating their enthusiasm and passion for music!

26) Music Publishers and Music Hire:

26:1) Just a brief excursion to consider the plight of Music Publishers. In some ways, one has to feel sorry for them. Since the dawning of the “digital age”, most of them haven't really figured out where to go and how to cope. I haven't met and consulted with any publishers – I am speaking purely on behalf of all those musicians who have to use their product, most of whom are, frankly, pretty fed up with them.

26:2) We have no real argument with copyright and intellectual property laws – composers should be able to earn a decent living and publishers must be able to make a profit – but we can't really see any need for composers to continue to be rewarded for quite so long after they die. They don't benefit from it and their descendants haven't really earned it. However, that is not the real issue.

26:3) Let me explain, briefly, for those who are not familiar with the problems associated with performing most works by most composers who have not been dead for more than 75 years. First of all, the music (certainly the orchestral parts and usually the score) is only available on hire from the publisher – there is no other way of getting hold of it. The hire charges are often punitive, especially for amateur and youth orchestras or for performances that take place in small venues or to small audiences. Quite often the parts are in a bad condition and covered with markings from previous performers. Sometimes they are just photocopies of old parts, still covered with indelible markings. Very often the page turns are either unmanageable (players have to turn and play at the same time) or they are placed during silent pauses, which completely ruins the atmosphere in performances. Some parts still include glaring inaccuracies, even though the music has been performed hundreds of times from the same parts.

26:4) Hire charges, we are told, are based on a seemingly simple formula. The basic rate should be determined by the length of the composition and the forces required – but this seems to be applied quite arbitrarily and we have come across plenty of examples of short works for small forces that cost as much as big symphonic works. The basic charge usually relates to one month of hire plus one performance. Thereafter, any repeat performances are charged at 50%. Why? The charge for repeat performances should really only relate to any royalties due – charging, in effect, an additional two weeks for one additional day is just profiteering.

26:5) Until fairly recently, almost all publishers charged pretty much the same rates for music hire. I understand there was then some question of them possibly operating a cartel – and now there seems to be no rationale and no way of finding out why any publisher charges what they do. We cannot find out how much is hire charge, what it is for, how much goes to the composer and how much goes to the publisher.

26:6) There is another, even more worrying anomaly. With some publishers, if the repeat performance is in a different country, even in Europe, the full rate is charged again, instead of the 50% reduction. We believe that this practice is contrary to European law.

26:7) Is it really surprising that we hear so few performances of contemporary or relatively recently composed music? Orchestras just cannot afford to hire the materials. Don't forget, this "hire only" situation applies to most of the great works by Bartok, Bernstein, Britten, Hindemith, Poulenc, Shostakovich, Sibelius, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams, Walton and many others. We are pretty sure that, if the publishers charged half as much, there would be more than double the number of performances. And we would all be richer!

26:8) Nowadays, composers don't really need publishers! They can all use programmes like Sibelius to present their scores and parts in usable and printable form – and they can use the internet to market it and to disseminate it to potential performers – many do already. The music publishing world needs to get its act together and drag itself into the 21st Century.

27) The Government, the Arts Council and the National Lottery:

27:1) We have heard quite a lot recently (mainly from Sir Nicholas Hytner) about the government's commitment to maintaining the arts. The jury is still out on that one. We can also all hope that common sense and fair play will win the day and that the government will "pay back" the £millions it raided from the lottery to fund the Olympics. The overall task of disseminating whatever funds are available – and the task of promoting and developing the arts (in England) – is clearly and primarily invested in the Arts Council (ACE). On top of that, ACE has now been given the responsibility for overseeing and funding the NPME and the Music Hubs scheme.

27:2) But ACE's own budget was recently slashed by 30%! Would it be able to cope? Many of us had grave doubts. Certainly there was a very strong case for trimming ACE's staff – an awful lot of money was being spent on paying faceless people in offices to push bits of paper around, when it could have been being spent on creative and artistic product. The major concern is whether ACE has been given adequate funds to support the Music Hubs scheme.

27:3) The government's latest "austerity" measures include further cuts to ACE's budget, whilst funding for education through the DfE is maintained or even slightly increased. Yet, at the same time, the government's commitment to the arts in education seems highly questionable – and the responsibility for certain aspects of arts education is being moved from DfE to ACE.

27:4) Education is essential to the arts – and the arts are essential to education!

You cannot have one without the other. Education is, in itself, an art. Perhaps I should repeat and highlight two particular quotations from the Gulbenkian Report on the Arts in Schools:-

- ***“The arts have an essential place in the balanced education of our children and young people.”***
- ***“We believe that neither the contribution of the arts to general education, nor the place of general education in the national life has yet been properly recognised.”***

27:5) It is absolutely right and proper that ACE should play a significant role in the development and delivery of arts education – but it must be given the resources to do so. Meanwhile, the DfE must also maintain a commitment to arts education and not allow the arts to be sidelined in the curriculum. Most of all, both ACE and DfE must work closely together to ensure that all children benefit from the educational value of music and arts education and that all children are enabled and encouraged to develop their creative talents to the fullest degree.

(I had better be careful what I say about ACE – I am party to a large funding application that is under consideration at the moment!)

27:6) If we look at the whole issue of ACE’s funding process from the point of view of the applicant, it seems that the entire system is back-to-front. It is certainly extremely wasteful in terms of the time, effort and costs involved. It is almost impossible to put together a successful funding application without engaging professional support – and a whole industry has developed around preparing funding applications. Surely there is a better way to do this.

27:7) Presumably, the staff of ACE know what they are doing. It is difficult to find out exactly who they all are or how well they are qualified – but we must assume that they know what is needed, that they have some idea of where there are gaps in provision or where things might need improving – and that they have some kind of strategy about how and where money needs to be spent to improve arts provision across the country.

27:8) If that is the case (and one certainly hopes that it is) then why don’t they simply tell us what they think needs to be done and invite arts organisations and arts practitioners to tender for the funding to do it? Instead, we are expected to dream up schemes and projects, spend our time and money investigating feasibility, spend more time and money filling in and submitting complex applications, with absolutely no guarantee of success – and then ACE spends weeks assessing our applications and trying to find reasons for not giving us the money! We are not allowed to negotiate. We are not allowed even to discuss any aspects of our applications. If there is just one minor aspect of our applications that ACE doesn’t like, even if it is something that could easily be altered, the whole application is refused and we have to re-work it and submit it again. This cannot be the best way of going about it.

27:9) When an application is refused, the feedback is usually pretty cursory – the usual comment is that they liked the project, it was very worthy, but funds are very limited, they can’t fund everybody and that there were other projects that were deemed even more worthy or that were considered to be of greater strategic importance.

27:10) Perhaps the main reason ACE is so reluctant to explain the exact reasons why applications have failed is that, if it did, applicants might simply go away, correct the fault and resubmit the application. Then ACE would have no excuse for refusing the application. Maybe the main reason ACE is so reluctant to discuss and negotiate aspects of applications before and during the application process is because, if it did, it would be much harder to justify refusing the application.

27:11) We had experience of this a few years ago, when we had spent hours discussing a funding application with an Arts Council officer before submitting it. We were told it was a superb application, everything about it was really strong, there were no weaknesses and it had every chance of success. It was then refused on the grounds that “it did not satisfy the criteria”! Perhaps it is time to think again about the whole process and to try to make ACE much more pro-active, open, transparent and accountable.

28) The Spiritual Aspect:

28:1) It is tempting, given the recent ridiculous decision about female bishops, to launch into a critique of the Church of England and its Synod – but that is nothing to do with music. (It might, however, have something to do with education.) Nearer home, we have the equally farcical brouhaha over the closure of Ripon Cathedral Choir School (and that does have a great deal to do with both music and education) but that is too near to home and it denies rational analysis! The church (not just the C of E) does have an important role to play in providing, promoting, maintaining and sustaining quality in music and the arts – and music and the arts have an even more essential role to play in the life and work of the church.

28:2) A while ago, a friend of mine showed me an excellent article written by the Dean of Perth (Australia) – I think it was published in the Times. Out of sheer devilment (such is my nature), I immediately forwarded it to several “men of the church” in the probably vain hope that they, or indeed their congregations, might benefit from the wisdom therein. I didn’t get many replies!

28:3) Anyway, it certainly made me think – and I cannot think of a better way of expressing the fundamental importance of quality in Music & the Arts. If you are not of a religious inclination, try simply deleting all the references to God, the Bible, faith, church, worship, liturgy etc. and replacing them with words like “art”, “people”, “humanity” or “in our daily lives” – in other words, just “secularise” the article – and you’ve got the best possible argument against those philistines in modern society who seem to want to dumb everything down to the lowest possible common denominators of taste and quality in the pursuit of popular appeal and commercial gain.

28:4) I hope (I’m pretty sure) that the Dean of Perth would not object to me widening the scope of his thesis – and the original certainly holds true! It is certainly worth reading carefully and I sincerely hope that neither he nor the Times will mind if I quote it in full ...

Credo: Trite music blocks our ears to the divine in the liturgy

Our worship enables us to enter another time and another dimension - a realm of experience beyond our ordinary human experience.

How can we come to an experience of God? It’s a challenge, because no matter how much we read the Bible, study theology, formulate creeds, devise systems of belief and draw up rules for best Christian practice, all these efforts are only partial, tentative explorations into a dimension that lies beyond any definitive grid we could ever hope to impose.

Which brings us to the worship of the liturgy, for it is in worship that we are immersed in the experience of God. It is here that we engage with the living God.

It is in the liturgy that we are able to enter into another consciousness, probe a deeper reality, strive for a sense of transcendence which lifts us above the mundane, and in the words of psalmist, sets us on a rock that is higher than ourselves. Our worship enables us to enter another time and another dimension — a realm of experience beyond our ordinary human experience, beyond all our known thoughts and understandings.

In monastic terms, the liturgy is the path towards an exalted “ecstasy”, a flight into the cloud of unknowing, the place where God is, and where the true contemplation of the creative stillness of God is possible.

And this is a reality which is beyond the ability of historians, theologians, linguists, biblical scholars or even pastoral liturgists to express. Their contributions may even hinder rather than help. The intensity and intangibility of this experience can only be expressed through the arts.

This is why music of quality is a critical element within the life of the Church. It is a necessity, not a luxury. It is neither a frivolous confection nor an elitist distraction from the real business of faith. Music of quality, in the context of worship, does not entertain or divert. It reveals.

By means of evolving harmonies, rhythms, textures, modulations, orchestrations, melodies, counterpoints, imitations, this rich art form has the potential to create an aural environment which enables us to contemplate the mystery of God.

Music of this calibre draws us into an engagement so profound that its sense can never be exhausted. Any work of art, be it sculpture, painting, literature, poetry or music, whose implications are immediately obvious and can instantly be grasped can never enlist our imagination, and so cannot equip us for mystery; and what cannot equip us for mystery cannot equip us for God.

This is why the Church should have no truck with banality. Yet, sadly, this is not universally the case. Too often, in a quaintly deluded attempt to achieve so-called relevance with a largely unidentified and notional constituency, the words of worship are denuded both of intellectual challenge and poetic imagery, and the music of worship is reduced to the most basic and arid of formulae. This toxic combination has achieved what many thought impossible. The emptying of our churches of those with minds to think, and emotions to inspire.

The power of liturgy was unerringly expressed by the prophet Job (iv, 15): “A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up.” Yet this power can all too easily be surrendered in favour of pedestrian prose and incompetent music. Badly constructed melodies and harmonies can only ever be transitory simply because they are musically inept. Rhythmic patterns devoid of subtlety, trite words incapable of stimulating any kind of imagery constitute some of the most powerful impediments to the possibility of encountering the divine within the context of the liturgy.

Not only does this behaviour testify to technical deficiency (an odd concept in itself for the Church of God to endorse), it offers nothing but spiritual impoverishment to a world clamouring for spiritual fulfilment.

And it goes without saying that the last refuge for those who deny the possibility of a depth of experience of this dimension will always be the accusation of elitism.

True art transcends the ordinary. It invites us to contemplate a presence beyond itself. It entangles us in the divine web of ultimate reality, and so creates an aural environment in which we can experience, in the words of Anselm of Bec, the presence of “that than which nothing greater can be thought”. *The Very Rev Dr John Shepherd, Dean of Perth, Australia.*

After that, there is very little that needs to be said!

But ...

29) Finally: Returning to the subject of education – which is, in many respects, even more important than the subject of music ...

Almost all of the immense educational benefits, which all children can derive from musical activities, will accrue in the greatest degree from the pursuit (but not necessarily the achievement) of excellence in performance. If we accept that art is about quality, then the greater the intrinsic quality of the music being performed, the greater the potential educational value of this striving for excellence and the greater the possibility of significant and worthwhile achievement.

There is nothing “elitist” about the suggestion that our young people deserve the best that we can provide for them.

Can we afford it?

“The only deficit that holds children back when it comes to learning music is a shortage in adult imagination.”

(This last sentence quoted from the Observer)

Xenophon Kelsey

(11 December, 2012)

(See Appendix below.)



Schiehallion, Scottish Highlands

Appendix

i) “Andante – The Big Walk” (*Background Information and statistics*)

I never had any intention to walk John O’Groats to Land’s End all in one go! However, it is something I have always wanted to do, ever since I drove the support van for a sponsored bike ride in aid of Stockport Youth Orchestra back in the 1980s. I’ve already walked most of the long-distance footpaths in the UK and I’ve been looking for an excuse to do this ultimate UK walk for years. I had wanted to do it in my 60th year (2009-10) but too much work got in the way. I didn’t think I could wait too much longer so, with a bit of careful juggling, I managed to organise all my other commitments to enable me to do it in 18 separate stretches, spread out over a year. I wasn’t trying to break any records or prove any points – I wanted to enjoy myself and I wanted to have time to meet and talk to people, attend concerts and rehearsals and visit interesting places along the way.

The walk started in John O’Groats on 1st October 2011. I managed to reach the Forth Bridge on 28th January 2012. I crossed the border into England at Gretna on 24th March and crossed the River Mersey on 26th May. I then headed slightly west of the shortest possible route, past Chester and Wrexham, to join the Offa’s Dyke Path at Pontcysyllte on 8th July. I managed to squeeze in another few miles of Offa’s Dyke (down to Montgomery) in July and then completed the rest of the dyke, crossed the Bristol Channel and made it down to Cheddar in one stint during August. After some major musical commitments at the end of August and the start of September, I drove south and finished the whole thing off in one go – arriving at Land’s End on 20th October 2012.

The signposts at both John O’Groats and Land’s End show the distance as being 874 miles – but this is just an estimate of the shortest route by road. I tried to avoid roads whenever possible and my Offa’s Dyke detour (well worth the effort) added on quite a bit too. All told, it took me 123 days of walking to complete – the total distance was just over 934 miles (1,495 kilometres) and the total height climbed was around 66,420 feet (20,245 metres).

I have to say, I enjoyed every minute of it! I was incredibly lucky with the weather – I only donned waterproofs on 3 or 4 occasions during the whole of Scotland and I managed to miss almost all the rain and floods during the summer and autumn of 2013. The last few days along the South Coast and the arrival at Land’s End in October were blessed with unbelievably fine, warm, clear and sunny conditions. (What a pity the pub was closed for a wedding and we couldn’t even get a drink!)

People often ask me “*What was the best bit?*” I find that almost impossible to answer. Some of the scenery was, of course, superb – but perhaps it was even more fun finding those “out of the way” places that were every bit as beautiful in their own way.

For accommodation and transport I used our converted minibus (i.e. with a bed in the back!) staying mostly on camp sites. If I was on my own, this meant I had to use buses or beg lifts to get to/from the start/finish each day. If I had friends with cars with me, that made life a great deal easier. The minibus (with some seats removed) is already being used by musical organisations to transport people and equipment and part of the fundraising was to purchase this vehicle and to make it available for use by charities and educational organisations.

I would have liked to meet even more musicians and to have had even more company during the walk – but I met and walked with a lot of old friends and made a lot of new ones. Thank you to all of them. I haven’t raised as much money as I would have liked but I’ve certainly made enough to make it worthwhile. (Further donations are always very welcome and I can assure you they will go to very good musical causes!

Finally, I must say a massive thank you to my partner, Jane Lomax, for her unwavering support, for putting up with all the inconvenience and extra work caused by my project, for driving the length of the country several times in the process and for helping me so much! Without her incredible efforts, the whole project would certainly have proved impossible!

ii) List of Donors to date (05/12/12):

Robin & Denise Addis	Angie Harrison	John Ramsden
Pat Anderson	Robert Hart	Doreen Reynolds
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Sheila Austin	Annie Hodgson	Simon Robinson
Yvonne Baker	Jonathan Home	Alice Robson
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May Fores	Helen Patterson	Wheatsheaf Inn, Woodplumpton
Bernard & Tom Foster	Howard Pelling	Katie & Weem Whitaker
Steven & Yvonne Foster	Laura Piplica	Malcolm Whittaker
Clare Glenister	Andrew Powell	Sue Yates
Irene Graham	Fran Pybus	Bay Owl clientele
	David Quarmby	

iii) List of Supporters and Helpers "In Kind":

1 to 1 Computers Ltd, Wellington	Phil Jones
Jo Atherton & Parents	Jane Lomax
The Baron of Beef, Bucknell (and Dave, for the lift!)	The London Inn, St Neot
Dave & Julie Bathgate (et fam.)	Fay & Ced McIlwaine
Jackie & Peter Beesley	The Merry Monk Inn, Monkton Heathfield
Leona & Pauline (Cardrona Village Store)	Laura Piplica
The Bason Bridge Inn	Max Puller
The Bath Arms, Cheddar	Brian Robinson
The Beambridge Inn, Whiteball	Martin (Samaritan) from Tushielaw
The Blackbird Inn, Nr Wellington	Andras Sebestyen
Roger Clark	Moira & Rodney Smith
Comrie Hotel (June)	Moss House Farm Camp Site
The Countryman Inn, Pool	Sam & Emily Stables
Ann & Peter Dangerfield	Henry Thompson
Peter Dodson	Tibbie Shiels Inn (Alistair & Selina)
Bill & Ellie Forrest	Treverven Camp Site
The Fox & Hounds Inn, Lydford	Tushielaw Inn (Gareth & Wendy)
The Halfway House, Nr Bodmin	Mike Trowski
Nick Jennings (Eskdalemuir Community Hub)	Michael Waiting
Katie & Tom Jarvis	Wheatsheaf Inn, Woodplumpton
Scott Jarvis	Wrighton Memorial Hall

iv) List of “Fellow Walkers”:

Joanne Atherton	Jane Lomax	Alexia & Dave Owens
Dave Bathgate	David Manford	Brian Robinson
Eleanor Cooke	Mike Revell	Alice Robson
Ann & Peter Dangerfield	Bea Schirmer	Ian Tate
Howard Haigh	Andras Sebestyen	Tom Verity
Katie & Tom Jarvis	David Sebestyen	

v) List of Musicians “Met and Consulted”:

Joanne Atherton (Violin)	Marcus Moon (Guitar, songwriter)
Gemma Bass (Violin)	Chris Morley (Horn, RLPO)
Simon & Maggie Baynes (Llanfyllin Music Festival)	Peter Moore (Bassoon & Conductor)
Charlie Bird (Oboe)	Jules Munro (Manager, RLPO)
Bristol Cathedral Players	Annie Nethercott (Presteigne Festival)
Kevin Buckland (Sax)	Novar Arms Hotel Folk Musicians
Burnley Symphony Orchestra	Alexia Owens (Oboe)
Roger Clark (Horn)	Peebles Orchestra & Youth Orchestra
Clitheroe Concerts Society	Marjolein Pelling (Oboe)
Lorna Cook (Clarinet)	Laura Piplica (Viola)
Eleanor Cooke (Violin)	Dave Pigott (Horn, RLPO)
Andy Crick (Cello, RNCM)	Mike Revell (Horn)
Teresa Crick (Violin)	Owain Roberts (Trombone)
Matt Crossley (Horn)	Brian Robinson (D Bass & Singer)
John Davenport (Conductor)	Alice Robson (Violin)
Mike Denman (Violin)	Martin Roscoe (Piano)
Susie Denman (Violin)	Andras Sebestyen (Horn)
Peter Donohoe, CBE (Piano)	Bea Schirmer (D.Bass, Halle)
Tony Dykes (Folk Musician)	Charlotte Scott (Violin)
Becky Else (Violin, RNCM)	Victoria Simonsen (Cello)
Exeter Music Group	Graham South (Trumpet)
Ofer Falk (Violin, Allegri String 4tte)	Richard Sowden (Trumpet)
Emily Farren (Clarinet, RNCM)	St Cecilia Orchestra
Arisa Fujita (Violin)	Ellen Stratton (Violin)
Claire Garnett (Peebles Orchestra)	Ian Tate (Piano)
Fenny Gill (Viola)	Gillian Taylor (Violin, ACE)
Howard Haigh (Guitar)	Jon Thorne (Viola, Badke String 4tte)
Danny Hammerton (D Bass, RLPO)	Rafael Todes (Violin, Allegri String 4tte)
Sam Haywood (Piano)	Michael Trowski (Conductor)
Anthony Hewitt (Piano - Olympianist!)	Thurso Live Music Association
Emily Holland (Violin - Benyounes Quartet)	Marilyn Tucker (Artistic Director, Wren Music)
Katie Jarvis (Viola)	Vacation Chamber Orchestras
Phillip Knighton (10 Radio)	Tom Verity (Clarinet, RLPO)
Lesley Law (Cello)	Dorothea Vogel (Viola, Allegri String 4tte)
Blyth Lindsay (Trombone, RLPO)	Andra Vornicu (Violin, RNCM)
Jane Lomax (Bassoon)	Dave Wesling (Cello)
Vanessa Lucas-Smith (Cello, Allegri String 4tte)	Joanna Wesling (Viola, RLPO)
David Manford (Tenor, Co-Opera Company)	Paul Wilson (Music Director, Wren Music)
	Marion Wood (Conductor)
	Wren Music, Okehampton

vi) List of Places Visited and Recommended:

The Auld Smiddy Inn, Pitlochry : www.auldsmiddyinn.co.uk
The Baron of Beef Inn, Bucknell : www.baron-of-beef.co.uk
Bay Owl Restaurant, Dunbeath, Caithness : www.thebayowl.net
Beeches Farm Campsite : www.beechesfarmcampsite.co.uk
Belgrave Arms Hotel, Helmsdale, Sutherland : www.belgravearmshotel.com
Brockweir Inn : www.thegoodpubguide.co.uk
Birch Bank Farm Camp site, Cheshire : via www.ukcampsite.co.uk
Black Rock Caravan Park, Evanton : www.blackrockscotland.co.uk
The Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge : www.cairnhotel.co.uk

The Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore : www.cairngorm.com
Comrie Croft Hostel : www.comriecroft.com
Comrie Hotel : www.comriehotel.co.uk
The Countryman Inn, Piece, Redruth : www.countrymaninns.com
The Courtyard Restaurant (Mains of Taymouth), Kenmore : www.thecourtyard-restaurant.co.uk
Creativity, Kingussie : www.creativity-cards.net
Dalraddy Holiday Park : www.alvie-estate.co.uk
Dandy Dinmont Caravan Park : www.caravan-camping-carlisle.itgo.com
Dunrobin Castle, Golspie : www.dunrobincastle.co.uk
Fox & Hounds Inn & Camp Site, Lydford : www.foxandhoundshotel.com
Gamblins Farm Caravan Park, Greenham, Wellington : www.gamblinsfarmcaravanpark.co.uk
Grantley Court Caravan Site, Llandrinio : www.grantleycourt.co.uk
The Hare & Hounds, Levens : www.harehoundslevens.co.uk
The Hawes Inn, South Queensferry : www.vintageinn.co.uk/thehawesinnsouthqueensferry
Honey Cottage Caravan Park : www.honeycottagecaravanpark.co.uk
InDulge Cafe, Auchterarder : www.indulge-now.co.uk
The Innis Inn & Camp Site, Penwithick : www.innisinn.com
Inver Caravan Park, Dunbeath, Caithness : www.inver-caravan-park.co.uk
The King's Arms, Paul : www.thekingsarmspaul.com
Karelia House Crafts and Coffee Shop, Nr. Kenmore : www.kareliahouse.co.uk
The Laird and Dog Inn, Lasswade : www.lairdanddoginn.co.uk
Levens Hall and Gardens : www.levenshall.co.uk
The Logan Rock Inn, Treen : www.theloganrock.co.uk
Moss House Farm Camp Site, Wrightington : via www.ukcampsite.co.uk
The Moulin Inn and Brewery, Nr Pitlochry : www.moulininn.co.uk
The Novar Arms Hotel, Evanton : www.novararms.com
The Old Crown Inn, Hesketh Newmarket : www.theoldcrownpub.co.uk
The Old Station, Spean Bridge, Nr Fort William : www.oldstationrestaurant.co.uk
Ossian Inn, Kincaig : www.ossianinn.com
The Portland Arms Hotel, Lybster, Caithness : www.portlandarms.co.uk
The Powis Arms Hotel, Pool Quay : www.powis-arms.co.uk
The Punchbowl Inn, Llandrinio : <http://www.yell.com/s/pubs-llandrinio.html>
The Inn at Rodney Stoke : www.rodneystokeinn.co.uk
Rosslyn Chapel and Roslin Castle : www.rosslynchapel.org.uk
The Rowan Tree Country Hotel, Alvie : www.rowantreehotel.com
The Smith's Arms, Lea Town, Preston : via www.visitpreston.com
The Swan Inn, Kington : www.theswaninnkington.co.uk
The Tibbie Shiels Inn : www.tibbieshiels.com
Treverven Caravan Park : www.treverventouringpark.co.uk
The Turk's Head, Penzance : www.turksheadpenzance.co.uk
The Tushielaw Inn: www.-tushielaw--inn.-co.-uk
The Victoria Inn, Rainhill : via www.viewliverpool.co.uk
Warton Old Rectory : via www.english-heritage.org.uk
Whaligoe Steps & Café, Ulbster, Caithness : www.whaligoesteps.co.uk
The Wheatsheaf Inn, Woodplumpton, Preston : www.wheatsheafwoodplumpton.co.uk



Addendum:

30) Pianos & Keyboards: (New Section)

30:1) Because this is not really my specialist area, I have hardly touched on anything to do with pianos and other keyboards. However, two of the musical highlights of the whole walk were going to hear my good friends Peter Donohoe and Martin Roscoe playing duets as part of the Ribble Valley Piano Festival – and crossing paths with “Olympianist” Anthony Hewitt at his concert in Clitheroe. (Anthony cycled from Land’s End to John O’Groats “with a piano in a van”, giving concerts all the way.) Therefore I feel I must include a brief comment or two about piano teaching and pianos.

30:2) From the educational standpoint, I do think that it is vital that young pianists are taught and encouraged to play with other people. Piano teachers do sometimes concentrate rather too much on solo pieces – forgetting that accompanying is an art that needs to be taught – and perhaps thus neglecting the vast repertoire of wonderful chamber music available to pianists. We also find lots of young pianists who have very limited sight-reading skills. As with learning all musical instruments, it is playing with other people that carries the greatest educational value.

30:3) Yes, pianos are quite expensive to buy and to maintain, especially good ones. However, it is amazing how many secondary schools (and concert venues) simply do not have a piano of any kind, never mind a decent grand. Clavinovas and electronic keyboards can be very useful, substitutes for harpsichords in baroque music, or for creating special effects (e.g. not many orchestras possess a celeste!) and, of course, they are useful for practice purposes – but they are not an adequate substitute for a proper piano in chamber music, for recitals and especially for concertos. Furthermore, when a young player does come to perform for an exam, an audition, or in a concert, they very often find that they are required to play on a grand piano. The difference can be frightening for them and they sometimes find it very difficult to cope.

30:4) It almost goes without saying that all secondary schools should have at least one competent pianist on their staff - otherwise, who is going to accompany pupils in concerts and exams? Who is going to accompany the school choir etc.? However, one could also argue that every primary school should also have a pianist. Perhaps (See *Para 25:6*) it could be a requirement for all teachers seeking a qualification in teaching, with a music “specialism”, that they demonstrate keyboard skills equivalent to ABRSM Grade 8 standard. That is not a great deal to ask!

30:5) And it is up to the DfE and ACE to find ways of ensuring that adequate pianos are provided in schools and in concert venues across the country.