

Royal Academy of Music

Lecture/Demonstration concerning the Teaching of Music to the Hearing-Impaired

Tuesday March 11, 1986.

Ladies and Gentlemen, what is possibly the only Deaf School Band in the world will now entertain you with two Beatles' songs.

- (1) Band - 'When I'm Sixty-Four'
'Norwegian Wood'

Next, what is doubtlessly the only Recorder Consort in the world made up of hearing-impaired musicians, will now perform two short pieces.

- (2) Consort - 'Galliarde de la Guerre'
Trumpet Tune - by Purcell

How did all this come about? It began in a very informal way in 1975, when I approached a group of sixteen and seventeen year-old boys at the Mary Hare Grammar School for the Deaf and asked them whether they had ever thought of learning to play a musical instrument. The reason I asked them was because my own children were coming into the age when music, especially 'pop' music, was beginning to play a considerable part in their lives. They were beginning to be interested in playing guitar, piano, flute and recorder. It suddenly occurred to me that the pupils I taught at Mary Hare would probably never have the opportunity to learn to play an instrument, though some of them did listen to records.

The initial reaction of the hearing-impaired youngsters was one of surprise mixed with incredulity. The idea had never seriously crossed their minds, though one or two had dreamt of being pop stars in the way that many hearing youngsters do. However, three lads decided that they would like to try the guitar, a fourth wanted

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to be a drummer. The problem was that the school owned neither guitars nor drums! Somehow, from somewhere, we managed to find or borrow the guitars. The initial 'drum set' consisted of two tambourines mounted on sticks plus a small drum which came from I know not where.

From this early primitive beginning there gradually emerged a group calling itself 'Lumpy Custard'. The name came from a recent experience in the school dining room!

Soon after 'Lumpy Custard' began its career, three girls volunteered the information that they had learned to play a few notes on the recorder whilst at junior school. One of them actually owned a tenor, the other two had played descant. So began our first recorder group. Soon after this I taught one of the girls to play the treble, and so emerged a trio of descant, treble, and tenor. One of the first pieces we learned to play was an arrangement of Henry VIII's 'Pastime in Good Company'.

I soon began to realise that musically I was indeed in 'Good Company'. These seven youngsters, Lumpy Custard plus Recorder Trio, blazed the trail of music as music (not as an aid to speech or as therapy) at the Mary Hare Grammar School which has continued ever since.

After a couple of years, in which these musical activities took place outside school hours, the Principal allowed the first and second forms to have one period a week of curriculum time for music. This meant that all first and second year pupils, regardless of musical ability, were to test their skills in this new area of activity. It also meant that a completely new challenge had arrived on the scene. Whilst during the first two years of musical experimentation

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a mere handful of pupils, all volunteers, needed instruction, now up to sixty eleven and twelve year olds, some, if not most, of whom would not be all that musical, were to test their musicality and rhythmic abilities. Such a group would need an entirely different approach from that attempted with the other students.

The fact which emerged from four or five years of experimental method in curriculum teaching of music to hearing-impaired eleven and twelve year olds was the need to return to the absolute basics of music - to begin at the very beginning.

But what is the beginning? How can we be sure that we have left nothing out? It was this problem which led me back to my primary area of study and tuition, history. How did mankind begin musical activity?

The first observation concerning this is that man's musical education, historically speaking, predates the invention and use of musical instruments. The first musical instrument used was the human body and it was used to exercise that most fundamental of musical activity, rhythm. Rhythm is the basic ingredient of music-making and probably predates melody. The fact that we have two legs means that we walk in duple time (hence we find this tempo much easier than triple time, which is of later date, and cultivated through dance). We also have two hands, which we can use rhythmically by clapping a regular tempo. Hands and feet, then, are our natural instruments with which we may make pleasing rhythmical movements. We can also use our bodies in a swaying movement, and finally our voices. These four elements or 'instruments' make up our basic, natural orchestra. Let us now apply this practically.

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(3) Form 2G

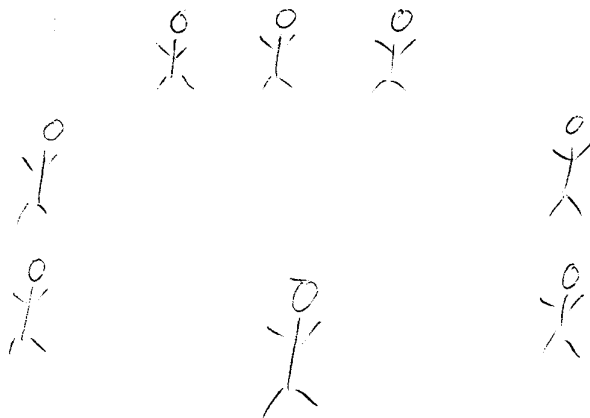
This is a demonstration of elementary rhythmic activities, designed to stimulate rhythmic sense and so prepare the way for the use of percussion instruments.

- (a) Relax - deep breathing. Ah - oo, etc.
- (b) Hand clapping
- (c) 'Marching'
- (d) Clapping and marching
- (e) Body swaying - 12 34
- (f) Singing - 'Old MacDonald'. Combine with clap, etc.

Wall-board notation ♯ ♯ ♯ ♯ | ♯ ♯ ♯ ♯ | e h .

We have now travelled a considerable way down the passage of time and are ready to move to the next stage of human development, the use of musical instruments made by man as an addition to those provided for him by nature. The earliest instruments invented, so music historians tell us, were the rattle and the drum. We are going to take this step with the use of tambourines.

(4) Form 2G



All together beating time, accompanied by keyboard.

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Having got everyone, or almost everyone, beating rhythmically together, we next move on to sectional activity, in which each sub-group performs or does not perform, according to the instructions of the teacher. This is designed to stimulate close observation, and prepares for the division of activities from unison to polyactivity.

(5) Form 2G

Tambourines - section playing.

Having established this idea, we next substitute triangles and maracas for two of the tambourine groups and so introduce new sounds.

(6) Form 2G

Triangles, tambourines & maracas - as 5.

The ground is now prepared for the next stage of development, the use of pitched instruments, such as recorders, melodicas and glockenspiels. Note that we are continuing our historical development of human music-making and are now a few centuries further on our way.

(7) Form 2G

*Begin by clapping the rhythm. Then Recorder + clapping.
melodica + clapping etc. then whole band play.*

'Concert Starters' - 1 piece.

It must be stated that running parallel to this development of instrumental skills is the use of the voice. Songs are learned and 'sung' as best we may. Also, the body rhythms learnt initially are continued by using 'disco-dancing' type activities. Thus rhythmic sense is continuously worked at.

Use of drum machine to stimulate the use of residual hearing and body-rhythm.

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From these activities of the first and second years at Mary Hare Grammar School emerge instrumentalists able to advance further than the generality. These pupils can then be given either individual or group tuition in order that their growing musical abilities may be developed to the full. At Mary Hare Grammar School this results in a Junior Recorder Group plus drummers, guitarists, pianists and so on.

And now to return to our patiently - or impatiently - waiting Band and Consort players!

The Band consists, at the moment, of fifteen members. This number fluctuates from year to year depending upon how many members leave school and how many new musicians are ready to join.

With us today are a drummer, two percussionists, three guitar players, one synthesizer player, one electric bass guitarist, and seven recorder players. They will now entertain us by playing two numbers.

- (8) Band - two songs. *Bye bye Love.*
Bring me sunshine

Continuing our historical-musical analogy the young hearing-impaired musicians have now covered several thousand years of development in rhythm and melody and have safely arrived in the twentieth century, the late twentieth century, since electronic instruments are used by them.

- (9) Solo work - *improvisation and composition by pupils. N. Ringrose.*

Although the popular area of music is very important in these days of the mass media, it is also important to develop the more sophisticated styles of music if at all possible. It is for this reason that the Recorder Consort has become a regular part of the music scene at Mary Hare. The recorder is a somewhat despised instru-

ment by many people. It is considered at best a school instrument, at worst a toy. It is in fact a very respectable member of the instrument world, and particularly so when played in Consort.

Playing four-part music by hearing-impaired youngsters is not easy. It requires much effort and patient tuition, but its rewards are rich in satisfaction and enjoyment. These nine young players have been together now for some three years and have learned to respond to each other in a way that only musicians know how. Their emotional responses are the same as any musicians - they rejoice after good playing, feel annoyed when things go wrong. They turn up regularly week after week during school term for their half-hour practice session. They are very loyal to the group. Let's hear them play again.

- (9) Recorder Consort Purcell - Rondo
Red book - Ronde.

In this brief introduction to the subject of Music and the Hearing-Impaired I have tried to demonstrate two things - firstly - the kind of musical standards possible within the context of a school, and secondly, possible methods of attaining such standards. The actual standard achievable within each school will be determined by the ~~type of handicapped pupils within the various classes and by the~~ skill and enthusiasm of the teacher or teachers involved. Whatever the standard achieved, one thing is certain - the pupils will enjoy

their music-making and will want to carry on. We will end with two numbers. We invite you to participate by using your hands, feet, or body, where appropriate.

- (10) Band } Audience participation.
Y viva España
Birdie Song.

Thank you.