

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM

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I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.¹

-Billy Joel

¹ "ThinkExist.com Quotations," [ThinkExist.com](http://thinkexist.com), 1999-2006, 19 April 2009
<http://thinkexist.com/quotation/i_think_music_in_itself_is_healing-it-s_an/199752.html>

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INTRODUCTION

I arrived in Ireland with very little knowledge of what the 'Transformation of Political and Social Conflict' semester would entail. As music major, I had to be prepared to study and learn about particular subjects that were completely foreign to my normal area of concentration. During my experiences throughout Ireland, however, I was surprisingly able to soak up even more of my two passions in life: music and children. After one afternoon with children from the Foundation Project, I realized how my two areas of interest are universal and that studying about music and children is never-ending. I recognized that there were differences between my personal music background and the music education in the primary schools of Ireland. As a result, I made a decision to look into the lens of local students and teachers in the Dublin area to comprehend the significance of music education in the primary school curriculum.

***Why?:* Factors that Influenced the Topic**

There were several personal factors that influenced the focus and making of this project. Ever since I could remember, I have been playing the piano and violin. I have received private lessons for both instruments at a very early age and played in my elementary and secondary school orchestras as well as my church. My music involvement had followed me into college, where I had the opportunity to accompany singers and teach piano to little children. I decided to continue studying music because I wanted to become more aware of how much other countries value music, especially in their school curriculum. I felt that being more aware of how significant music is to the individual and society would also

enhance my personal interest in music. I chose to focus on music education in the primary curriculum, not only because I am passionate about children, but because I hope to become an elementary school teacher in the future. I felt that studying abroad in Ireland was a great opportunity to observe classrooms in a different setting as opposed to the classrooms in the States. Therefore, I have gathered research information to make this study not merely a research project, but something that I can use in the future. These are the reasons why I chose to concentrate on the music education for primary school curriculum in Ireland.

How?: Connections and Personal Sources

When I told my director about my decision to do my Independent Study on music education, she introduced me to one of her friends, Muireann Conway, who was a music trainer providing in-service training to teachers in the revised curriculum in music. She became my advisor for my Independent Study, which immediately gave me connections to the primary school, St. Oliver Plunkett N.S, where I was able to observe the development of children learning music in their curriculum. The home stay family that I stayed with in the Dublin area has quite a strong connection with music and has encouraged my study in music education. Therefore, staying in the Dublin with the home stay family made it very comfortable for me to do my study in the local areas of the Dublin area.

What?: Opportunity to Experience & Understand Topic

I started my Independent Study by considering a broad issue: What is music education? This led to the question of whether music education is significant, in general. The research gave me a deeper sense of what music

education is all about. Through the interviewees of students and teachers, I was also able to understand what music education means to them. The opportunity to observe teachers in their homeroom gave me a chance to see how crucial it is for music education to be part of every primary teacher's agenda. Experiences such as learning the tin whistle during the three weeks particularly taught me the rewards of practicing music, which should be an opportunity for all teachers and children.

Downfalls?: Problems Encountered

There were obvious downfalls of doing the Independent Study during last month of the semester, such as the conflict with the Easter holiday for teachers and children. This was problematic due to the lack of time I had for observing the different classrooms and for me to have the opportunity to see the whole picture. With more time, I could have had the chance to see how much a student can develop academically through music education. However, it all worked out in that I was able to observe two particular schools and interview various music enthusiasts and teachers in the local area for my study.

What was it like?: Image to Reflect My Experience

Overall, this Independent Study experience was like practicing piano. You know what piece you are playing because it is right in front of you in the music sheet, but you have to go about it the right way until you get it right. With practicing a piece on piano, there are going to be harder parts than others. In that case, you just have to focus on that particular section and play it over using new techniques. There are so many different styles that you can use to play an

individual piece. The performance style can depend on the environment, the type of piano used, the methods you used, how much time you had available, the amount of time you had to prepare with your private instructor, etc. Similarly, I felt that in order to make this a worthwhile project, I had to do my best to get something out of it. I needed to find different connections and interviewees that can lead my project to perfection. Of course, it is difficult to perform a piece with absolute perfection. This is why I consider my Independent Study to be a long-term project that can only aim to see how music can be available for all children and teachers.

Glossary

Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 92-94.

The definitions below are commonly understood working definitions for use with the primary curriculum and teacher guidelines

Accent	the emphasis on a selected beat or beats in a bar
Beat	the steady, continuous pulse underlying the music
Body percussion	using different parts of the body to create different sounds and rhythms, for example, clap, stamp, slap, etc.
Cabasa	a percussion instrument, cylindrical in shape and covered in strings of metal beads that rotate freely on the curved surface to produce a grating sound
Descant	an added part above the melody line in the treble clef
Diatonic	built on the notes <i>d, r, m, f, s, l, t, d'</i>
Drone	long, held note or notes
Dynamics	the loudness and softness of a piece of music, for example lullaby-soft (<i>p</i>), march- loud (<i>f</i>)
Hand signs	gestures used to indicate pitch in solfa
Harmony	the distance between two notes of different pitch
Interval	the distance between two notes of different pitch
Key signature	indicates where <i>doh</i> lies at the beginning of a piece of music
Major scale	a scale built on the notes <i>d, r, m, f, s, l, t, d'</i> , also known as the diatonic scale
Metre	the basic grouping of beats in each bar of music, as indicated by the time signature
Minor scale	a scale built on the notes <i>l, t, d, r, m, f, si, l</i> , beginning on <i>lah</i> instead of <i>doh</i> , with the sharpened seventh note (<i>si</i>)
Modal scale	a scale built on the notes of the major scale but starting and finishing on notes other than <i>doh</i> ; for example the <i>re</i> model: <i>r, m, f, s, l, t, d', r'</i>
Mood	type of feeling created by music, for example happy, sad
Octave	the distance between notes of the same name, eight letter notes higher or lower: for example D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D
Ostinato	a constantly repeated musical pattern, rhythmic or melodic

Pentatonic scale	a scale comprising five notes: <i>d, r, m, s, l</i> , widely used in folk music. Pentatonic scales can begin on any note
Percussion Inst.	instruments that are struck or shaken, for example tambourine, triangle; tuned percussion instruments are tuned to a specific note at concert pitch; untuned percussion instruments are not given specific tuning
Phrase	a natural division in the melodic line; similar to a sentence or part of a sentence
Pitch	a term referring to the high-low quality of a musical sound
Pulse	the underlying 'throb' in music
Rest	no sound for a specified length of time
Rhythm	different durations of sounds, long and short
Rhythm syllables	words or syllables used to demonstrate duration in rhythm
Round	one melody strictly imitated in pitch and rhythm, any number of beats later; usually two, three or four parts, repeated any number of times
Staff notation	notes written on a five-line stave
Stick notation	a form of shorthand used for notation rhythm quickly and easily
Structure	overall plan of a composition, for example, AB: two contrasting sections
Style	refers to the combination of tempo, timbre and dynamics
Syncopation	the occurrence of unexpected accents in metred music
Tempo	speed or pace of the underlying beat
Texture	refers to combinations of sounds: single sounds or sounds together
Timbre	tone colour; refers to the characteristic sound produced by different instruments, for example trumpet, violin
Time signature	the sign placed at the beginning of the music indicating the number of beats in each bar
Tonic solfa	moveable pitch names, <i>d, r, m, f, s, l, r, d'</i>
Treble of G clef	the fixed pitch sign placed at the beginning of the staff to identify the fixed pitch name G
Tremelo	rapid iteration of a note, or alternation of two notes

Children learn to talk by experimenting and listening; they can learn to make music by experimenting and listening--unless we stop them! Place children in surroundings that are full of "invitations to learn," provide them with encouraging and sympathetic attitudes from adults, as well as knowledge, and amazing things can happen--especially to the sensory perceptions that are central to the arts...do we have the courage to embark with them on what are frequently unknown seas?
--Emma D. Sheehy²

² Acker, Gregory. Music Quotes. 1990. The Improvisor. 19 April 2009 <<http://www.the-improvisor.com/muquotes.html>>

METHODOLOGY

My research is focused on Ireland's music education in the primary school curriculum. Initially, I was ambitiously planning to do a comparison study on the differences between the curriculum of Ireland and of the United States. However, I realized that the research could only be one-sided since I was based in Ireland for the span of three short weeks to complete the study. That meant that I would only be able to interview teachers from primary schools in Ireland and base the curriculum of the States solely through my personal experiences. I have been immersed in the study of music for practically all my life back in the States, but my personal experience would not be sufficient to make that comparison. Therefore, I decided to narrow down the study and concentrate on the significance of music education in the primary school curriculum.

Locating and Approaching Students/Teachers

I decided to do my field study in the Dublin area for several reasons. Once I proceeded to do my study, I discovered that my home stay family could be a lot of help in regards to the connections for possible interviewees and a more in-depth field study experience. To study the role of music education in primary schools, I wanted to be able to spend some time observing an actual classroom. Luckily, my home stay brother, Scott, goes to a primary school and has one of the few teachers who practice the recorder with his students. Therefore, I was able to meet Scott's teacher and a few others before the Easter vacation. I wanted to have the opportunity to observe the teacher-student interaction in the homeroom classrooms of the Dalkey School Project. I knew that being with the

home stay in Dublin would be a more comfortable decision in regards to speaking with musically involved individuals since Fiona Allen, my home stay mother, is a music enthusiast and has been very supportive in regards to my research process.

Another reason why I decided to do the field study in the Dublin area was because my advisor, Muireann Conway, is from Malahide. Staying in Dublin would make the process of meeting with my advisor at least two or three times so much more convenient than if I was located elsewhere. Also, Muireann suggested that I observe the primary school where she works, St. Oliver Plunkett National School. I was able to observe other primary school students and their connection with music in the curriculum. In order to have a personal experience that involves children in their own classrooms, I realized that I would need to be in the local area rather than discovering new schools by expanding the field of study. It takes a lot of time and understanding for the teachers and students to open up their classroom to a stranger, and so I was reluctant to broaden my area of research. Therefore, for my personal approach to the *Listening and Responding* content of the curriculum, which will be discussed in the main body portion of the paper, I decided to observe the homeroom classroom in the two primary schools: Dalkey School Project and St. Oliver Plunkett School.

When I first made my decision to do my study on music education, two SIT students suggested that I interview their home stay brothers who are deeply involved with music in their schools. Even though I knew that they were in the secondary level and not primary, I wanted a chance to speak to their brothers to

hear about their personal experiences in regards to music education. Not only that, but speaking to students who were around my age was a more comfortable situation for my first interview experience for this particular field study. Especially since I was introduced by the fellow students in the SIT program, I felt at ease to make the interview as informal and comfortable as possible for both the interviewee and myself.

Interviewing

The first interview experience was with the Falkner residence, Jake Wyrick's home stay family, over dinner. From what I had heard from Jake, there are two brothers, a fourteen and seventeen year-old, named Adam and Iain Falkner who are both passionate about music. Iain is also currently taking music classes at his school as an elective. Therefore, I decided to focus my interview on the music education experiences that Iain has had in his school.

I happened to have come during Adam's band practice and so I had the opportunity to sit in and listen to them play their songs. They call themselves the "Chequered Baam," and surprisingly, they had a lot to say about their music education and their opinions on why they feel that music is not valued enough. I really benefited from their stories and conversations, especially because I was able to feel their passion about music and see how much they enjoyed each other's company. It was very unfortunate that I did not have my notepad and recording device with me because they mentioned some very interesting issues on music that I have never even considered. After our conversations, I quickly ran down to jot any notes down from memory. After this experience, I realized

that I may happen to run into someone very informative at any time, and so I should always be ready in all circumstances.

After the conversations with “Chequered Baam,” I sat down with Iain Falkner to talk about his musical background and his opinion on music. Before I arrived at the Falkner residence, I wrote out a couple of standardized questions that I was prepared to ask Iain to remain concentrated on the topic of discussion. I tried to think of open-ended questions so that it would give Iain a chance to elaborate on the topics that he wanted to talk about in more detail. These were the questions that I had prepared:

- Describe a little about yourself/background.
- What is your musical background/ what is music to you?
- How are you involved with music today?
- How much music education have you had/ or been having?
- In your opinion, how much do you think Ireland values music education?
- What support is given for music education?
- Any regrets about the lack of music education that you have had?
- Do you feel like it is important for schools to provide music education?
- Do you think enhancing music education in the schools will better the future of the children? In general, of Ireland?

Of course, I did not follow the exact outline that I had arranged, but having the questions in front of me did guide me in the appropriate direction during the interview. I had my recording device during the conversation, which made the transcribing procedure more simple and reliable in that there was no way of using his words out of context.

With the second interviewee, Ronan Healy, I tried to do something different. I was invited over to the Healy residence, where I again, used a recording device but did not use the standardized questions. I believe that as much as the prepared questions kept the interviews more concentrated, it was

easier to have an informal conversation without it. Instead, I brought a piece of notepad paper and pen to jot down the key words and phrases so that I can ask him about the ideas that he had put across more in-depth.

I had spent most time with my third interview and advisor, Muireann Conway. By this time, I had done research and obtained more knowledge of music education, and so the questions had developed and the conversations were more profound. This meeting with my advisor was educational in so many levels. First of all, Muireann was prepared for me in that she had a folder which contained all the music materials she used during her teacher training seminars on music education. Not only that, she also had the music curriculum for primary schools along with other books and CDs. We had our informal conversations over tea and when she introduced me to her son, but other than that, we went straight to work. Muireann taught me how the seminars are run and the major contents of the curriculum. She also taught my sister, Minzy, and me how to play the tin whistle, which was quite an experience. Since I was there for a lot longer than my recording device could handle, I had turned it off and on for whenever I felt it was appropriate. The questions came pretty naturally and Muireann was able to give me such thorough answers that it was not as problematic in terms of coming up with open-ended questions.

During this past semester, I was also introduced to Barry Haughey, who works for the Foundation Project. The Easter vacation made the process of person-to-person interviewing more difficult because so many people were out of town. Therefore, rather than interviewing Barry during his vacation time, I

decided to send an e-mail with various questions that he could answer for my Independent Study. These were the following questions:

- What is it that you do? Your background? Tell me a little about yourself.
- Do you think music is beneficial for children [in your experience]? How?
- How does music fit in terms of self-esteem in children?
- Do you think that there is a lack of music education? If so, what do you think is the factor?
- Do you feel that learning music is too pricey for children?
- Do you feel like there is enough support for music in the general classroom?
- If children did not have the opportunity of proper music education, how do you think this effect the children?
- As much as there are homeroom teachers who are willing to work with music in their lesson plan, would you say that there are teachers who do not?
- If an individual student were to want to exceed with music, how are they to do it?
- How do you think music education ties in with the Transformation of Political and Social Conflicts [even in terms of social conflicts such as homelessness & heroin addicts, etc]?

I found Barry's answers to be very beneficial in terms of discovering how music correlates with children's self-esteem. Since Barry is a youth worker for the Foundation Project based in Dublin city centre, he has had plenty of experience with children who are underprivileged. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to support the children so that they can gain self confidence. Barry supports that this can be achieved through music, which can offer children a sense of identity and benefit their self esteem.

Personal Response to the Interview Period

I feel like the overall interview period was quite comfortable for me. Since I was staying where I had spent my first month of this semester, previous connections seemed to lead naturally to newer people who could benefit me and my Independent Study. I wanted the selection of interviewees to be students and

teachers that were somewhat in relation to music. I realize that their opinions can be biased, especially because I have not heard from people who are not involved with music. However, I felt that I would get the most amount of information about past experiences with music through people who were generally interested in this subject. I assumed that the teachers who went out of their way to talk to me were those who valued music in their curriculum more than other primary teachers. I feel that they wanted me to see what they do with their students so that they can show the progress in their music lesson plans, such as playing the recorder.

Since the focus was on primary school students, I felt rather uncomfortable with the idea of interviewing children that were underage. Therefore, I felt that the secondary level students that I had the privilege to talk to were more acceptable than speaking to younger children. It was even difficult to get the fourteen year-old students to talk more elaborately about their experience. I had a feeling that my recording device and the interview session made them feel quite uncomfortable. This made me realize that with students, it would be more helpful to make it as informal as possible. If it is too formal, the students would be reluctant to say what they really want to say. Nevertheless, I was glad that I had a chance to hear about what the students do with their music education and how music has been involved in their lives.

An unfortunate experience that I had dealt with was when I attempted to interview a music organization that is funded by the government. I knew that this particular interview would not be one that is quite related to my area of study, but I figured that it would do no harm in hearing what they had to say. However, their

tone with me was as if they did not trust who I said that I was. I told them that I was an American study abroad student, who was doing an Independent Study on music education and that I wanted twenty minutes of their time to ask a couple of questions. The member of the organization then asked about how legitimate the SIT program actually is, and mentioned how careful she needs to be with this situation because I may use her words out of context in my research. I understood her position, but I realized that I liked the informal and comfortable interviews in which I had strong connections with a lot better than a stranger who questioned my objective. Luckily, I did not have to interview many strangers because I had many connections through my advisor, director, and home stay family. Rather than interviewing each music-related organization, I have provided the description and mission statement of certain organizations in the Appendix.

The Easter week period made the process of interviewing teachers quite difficult, especially since most people were off to vacation and the schools were not open for me to have a chance to observe. Therefore, I began to research the different music centers that work with educating children about music. It turns out that music centers, such as the Walton's New Music, and many others, were closed for the week. Not only were the music centers closed, but the Ilac Central Library was not open for another week due to the Easter holiday. Thankfully, I had a few books already checked out and I knew that learning an instrument in three weeks time was not sufficient. Therefore, with my tin whistle and the other resources available, I decided to continue with my Independent Study in spite of the long Easter holiday.

Writing the Research Paper

Upon writing the research paper I was faced with the task of deciding what questions and issues I wanted to address. During the preparation process of the Independent Study, I remember our director mentioning that this project was not about writing up a research project that could be written in the library. Rather, she wanted us to gain a certain development of understanding by experiencing and reflecting upon the topic of choice. Therefore, I did my best to have a good balance between the research and the reflective portion. I believe that a good balance is necessary because with just a strong research paper, I would have experienced nothing but finding good sources at the library. If I were to have only a strong experience, then I would not have the knowledge to understand the base of my study. Therefore, I went to the Central Music Library at the Ilac Centre, and borrowed a few books that could give me some background information on the significance of music education. These books focused on the general importance of music education for children, which was very beneficial in answering the following questions I had on this topic. There were several issues that I wanted to address:

-Why music education?

-What does it mean to have an education?

-How is music education shown throughout history?

-How has music education developed?

-How is Music Beneficial?

-How does it benefit an individual?

-How does it benefit the society?

-What can Music education achieve?

-What is the importance of the generalist teacher's role?

-How is music education beneficial in the long-term?

-What is the music curriculum?

-What are the contents of the music curriculum for primary school students?

Since I was fortunate enough to get my hands on the actual music curriculum for primary schools, I used excerpts from the handbook to support the outline of the experiential portion of my project. The access to the curriculum gave me a detailed outlook on music education, specifically in Ireland. This was beneficial, especially since I only had sources based on the general music education to complete the background information portion of my project. I decided to use the three strands in the primary school music curriculum to cover the main layout of my personal approach to the strands.

The three strands that make up the content of the music curriculum are *Listening and responding*, *performing*, and *composing*. Initially, I wanted to learn an Irish song by receiving lessons on the fiddle or even on the piano. Due to the lack of time and financial support, I worked on *performing* strand using the tin whistle instead, which was an instrument that was more accessible. In terms of going into someone else's classroom, I felt that even my presence was disrupting the class atmosphere and I knew that the teachers were going through all sorts of trouble for me to have a chance to observe. Therefore, even though I constructed or composed my own lesson plan, I was not able to try it out on the children in the classroom. For me to create a lesson plan for a particular group of students, it would take longer than three weeks to comprehend how much they know and what they have been studying so far. I would also want the children to feel comfortable with me before I instruct them. Nevertheless, these experiences

helped me understand what primary school teachers had to focus on when preparing their music lesson plans.

Outline: Personal Approach to the Strands

The content of the music curriculum is presented in three strands at each level: listening and responding, performing, and composing. These are not discrete categories as you can see from the diagram. In fact, they are integrated within each other. For instance, the listening is an important activity in both performing and composing and the listening response itself may inspire a performance or composition at another stage. Similarly, while performing, the performer will listen to the music he/she is playing with consideration to the expressive and technical qualities of music and the structure of the composition. Later, he/she may want to improvise, arrange, or compose something new. I wanted to concentrate on the integration of different activities in order to comprehend music for my Independent Study experience. Therefore, I experienced different activities such as learning the tin whistle, observing the classroom, and preparing lesson plans, which are described in the main body portion of this research paper. By actively participating in the areas of listening and responding, performing, and composing, I believe that I now have a better understanding on the significance of music education in the primary school curriculum.

Listening and Responding

Since my Independent Study is on the music education in the primary school curriculum, I wanted to explore how I can use the experience of 'listening and responding' to learn more about my topic. There is a huge emphasis on becoming an 'active listener' in the music curriculum which I pursued when I got the chance to explore the different primary classrooms. I listened for what the teacher had intended for the students and whether a music lesson plan is incorporated in the teacher's plan. I observed the music lesson to see if there was a variety of style or a melodic instrument that the classroom particularly focused on. Another important aspect that I observed was the response from the younger children who were practicing their musical skills. The way they respond to the teacher and how they react to the process of learning a new instrument or music knowledge would be quite significant to my study.

After thoroughly observing the classrooms that became available for me, I responded to what I have seen and heard by taking intensive field notes for my Independent Study. This allowed me to practice the process of recording, organizing, and analyzing the data that I received from my observations. This process of 'listening and responding' allowed me to comprehend the importance of field study notes when attempting to fully become aware of what is being studied. Rather than simply doing research in a library or the convenience of my own home, being in a classroom setting provided the opportunity for me to learn through experiential learning. By actively listening to students learning the

recorder or the teacher instructing the students about music, it inspired me to take activity in both performing and composing as well.

Performing

Initially, before I even made my decision to do my Independent Study on the significance of the music curriculum, I had been trying to find a way to get my hands on an instrument. After having lessons frequently back in college, it was strange to not be playing the piano for such a long period of time. Once I had learned about how traditional Irish music was played in groups, I felt like playing an instrument with a group could lead me to a good group of musical individuals. However, after observing several groups of Irish music performers in particular pubs, I realized that piano was not a popular instrument that they used to play Irish music. I thought about renting a violin, which I have been playing for as long as the piano, so that I can learn about the differences between the violin and the fiddle. However, due to the short span of time and the renting fee, I decided to go in a different direction.

During my interview session with Muireann Conway, she was generous to give my sister and me tin whistles as a gift, which emphasized the importance of active music making. Tin whistles are quite inexpensive and are still very useful in developing musical understanding. Similarly, recorders are also often used in primary classrooms to give the children the opportunity to make music. In fact, my host brother, Scott, plays with his recorder while he watches the television and even during dinner. His enthusiasm for learning the recorder inspired me to want to learn a new instrument as well. After listening to several Irish tunes on

the tin whistle, I realized that it may be too difficult for me to learn a brand new type of music. Therefore, I have decided find out how to play a simple tune like “Amazing Grace” on the tin whistle and do a musical literacy analysis of the familiar tune.

Composing

According to the music curriculum, the compromising strand is considered as the ideal listening response and the best way of gaining an understanding of performing activities.³ Rather than composing an actual piece of music, I wanted to experience the task of creating simple lesson plans that can be introduced to primary students in their classrooms. Of course, it would be a standardized lesson plan that I create, but once it is put into effect, I am sure that there would have to be a lot of improvisations depending on the musical skills of the students. I also wanted the lesson plan to tie in appropriately with what they had been learning thus far.

Since I hope to become a successful elementary school teacher in the future, I felt that this activity would be a great way for me to grow in confidence and be able to express my ideas. Of course there is no way of knowing whether these lesson plans accomplish the task that I had intended until it has been tried. Nevertheless, I tried to think of creative ways that I can get children to become enthusiastic about music and develop their own creativity. Through this kind of composition, I also had a better understanding of what teachers have to go through to create a music lesson. This leads to the background information that I

³ Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 9.

have researched in regards to why music education is significant to the individual and society.

“Every student in the nation should have an education in the arts.”
-The Value and Quality of Arts Education: A Statement of Principles,”⁴

⁴“The Benefits of Music & Music Education,” Encore Music Lessons, 2008. The National Association for Music Education. 19 April 2009. < <http://www.encoremusiclessons.com/benefits-of-music-and-music-education.php>>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WHY MUSIC EDUCATION?

The generalist teacher only needs some formal background knowledge of music to expose all different kinds of music and ways that music activity can be used in their classroom. Music activity is too important for the development of the children to be overlooked. According to D.J. Elliot, music activity is an integral part of young children's intellectual, cultural, emotional, and spiritual development and should not be treated in isolation from the rest of the curriculum, nor should it be the only subject taught from a music specialist.⁵ The study of music can open opportunities for the children to undergo particular experiences that can only be beneficial to them. These experiences will broaden children's thinking and facilitate a deeper understanding of the world in which they live. In fact, music is significant in all of our lives, not only during certain times and occasions, but also as an everyday experience that enriches our thinking. This leads to the issue of education itself and what it can contribute to the lives of children.

Education: in Broader Aspect

There is already some controversy on the nature of the curriculum, teacher competency, assessment, and appraisal.⁶ Some people believe that education should be done in a more formal manner while others favor a more informal, progressive, teaching method. It is evident that education is the forefront of political thinking throughout the English-speaking world such as the

⁵ Elliot, D.J. Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 27.

⁶ Ibid. 29.

UK, USA, Canada, and New Zealand, for example.⁷ The notions of education, however, of what education really is about sometimes get lost in all the political debate. It is important to comprehend how vital education is regardless of the mechanics of how it is done.

So what is education about? To educate someone is essentially about expanding their thinking and giving them the chance to develop and act confidently in the world. It gives them the opportunity to see the world in a different perspective and to have greater control of themselves and how they want to live in the real world. Education must substantially involve the capacity to comprehend and make use of the knowledge rather than carrying out a task in a mechanical fashion.⁸ Robert Hutchins states, 'It must be remembered that the purpose of education is not to fill the minds of students with facts... it is to teach them to think, if that is possible, and always to think for themselves.'⁹ If someone is properly educated, it should imply that he/she has knowledge and better understanding to be able to appraise situations, which is a deeper sense of learning than just knowing about them.

The teachers then have the challenge of motivating the children to engage in tasks which do not initially interest them. The achievement of doing such a task is in the learner's hands, and the teacher's success should be measured by the learner's achievements. It is easy to see how one can learn without being taught, but something is wrong when teaching takes place without learning.

⁷ Durrant, C. & Welch, G. *Making Sense of Music*. (New York: Colin Durrant and Graham Welch, 1995) 4.

⁸ Cutietta, R.A. *Raising Musical Kids: A Guide for Parents*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 9.

⁹ "ThinkExist.com Quotations," [ThinkExist.com](http://thinkexist.com). 1999-2006, 19 April 2009 <[http:// thinkexist.com](http://thinkexist.com)>

Music Education: in Broader Aspect

The nature of music is multi-dimensional in that music is recognized in the cognitive, affective, social and/or spiritual aspect. The existence of music as an intellectual pursuit can even be traced back to its foundations in ancient Greece.

¹⁰ Music played an integral role in the lives of ancient Greeks and was almost universally present in society. In ancient Greece, any form of artistic and intellectual activity was considered intrinsically good. The esteem in which music was held by certain nation in ancient times was related to the progress of their civilization. The Greeks acknowledged both the mathematical and intellectual qualities of music, and made it the subject of speculative philosophy.¹¹ Much of what defines western European culture in terms of philosophy, science, and the arts has origins in the culture of ancient Greece which is well-connected with music. This recognition of music's emotional and social components was apparent in the Romans' association of music with the cultivation of pleasure.¹² When Rome fell, the esteem of music within that culture fell below that of all the other arts.

In the nineteenth century, the Church had much influence on the progress of music education.¹³ A significant influence came from the schools that were connected with the cathedrals and churches. Among the students that attended these schools, some pupils were selected and taught not only to sing, but also was educated in mathematics, Latin, and other subjects. Later in England,

¹⁰ Elliot, D.J. Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 6.

¹¹ Ibid. 8.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid. 14.

various methods were created and taught in hopes to aid the development of singing and to help pupils with sight-reading notation.

Developments in Music

In the twentieth- century, there were significant advances in music education by educators such as Zoltan Kodály (1882-1967), Carl Orff (1895-1988) and Jacques-Emile Dalcroze (1865-1950).¹⁴ They each believed that music should be accessible for all children, regardless of their ability. They also felt that the essence of music was a creative experience that could take place through the act of singing, movement, and instrumental work. In the recent years, significant moves have been made to broaden the musical perspective beyond western music.¹⁵ Even the western 'classical' culture has expanded their spectrum to include music of contemporary composers as well. Bringing about the sounds and structures of the music of other cultures can benefit in understanding related musical concepts, such as rhythm and pitch, to the children's own musical inventions. The development of music will enable children to develop respect and understand for all human musical cultures in their richness and diversity. This leads us to the question of how music can be beneficial for the individual and for our society.

¹⁴ Durrant, C. & Welch, G. Making Sense of Music. (New York: Colin Durrant & Graham Welch, 1995) 7.

¹⁵Ibid.

“Music is one way for young people to connect with themselves, but it is also a bridge for connecting with others. Through music, we can introduce children to the richness and diversity of the human family and to the myriad rhythms of life.”
– Daniel A. Carp, Eastman Kodak Company Chairman and CEO¹⁶

¹⁶ “ThinkExist.com Quotations,” [ThinkExist.com](http://thinkexist.com). 1999-2006, 19 April 2009 <<http://thinkexist.com>>

HOW MUSIC EDUCATION IS BENEFICIAL

Music Education for the Individual

Despite the cultural and societal influences, there are many ways that people can perceive music. There are those who believe that music is a form of a language, and that the structures and patterns in music conveys to the mind, particularly associations and meanings. Others think of music as more a symbolic structure of human feeling that expresses an individual's emotional experience. Since both language and emotion are part of our everyday lives, there must be truth in both of these beliefs. As individuals, we are able to relate to music at various levels because we can make sense of it as a form of language and at the same time, it can generate considerable emotions within us.

Howard Gardner, an American psychologist, has put forth the belief that music is a distinct and separate form of intelligence.¹⁷ For an example, the evidence of musical abilities as being distinct from linguistic abilities can be found by observing the responses of disabled children in a music class. David, a 12-year-old who attends a school for the visually impaired, had learning difficulties and emotional disturbance. However, when he was seated at the piano, it was apparent that he had an acute and keen sense of pitch and musical memory. He was able to play quite complicated music after hearing it only once. In the same school, there are many children who exhibit a wide range of physical and mental disabilities and are still able to pick up tunes with accurate pitch and rhythm. Many children respond positively to structured instrumental tuition.¹⁸ The benefits

¹⁷ Reid, S. How to Develop Your Child's Musical Gifts and Talents. (USA: Contemporary Books, 2001) 3.

¹⁸ Reid, S. How to Develop Your Child's Musical Gifts and Talents. (USA: Contemporary Books, 2001) 5.

of music for the individual are often in improved social behavior and with the physically disabled, it is the improvement of learning and performing capabilities, as well as a general increase in children's concentration span.

Psychiatrists often encourage the use of music relaxation tapes for their patients. Lowenstein (1982) reports that listening to music is an effective therapy when it comes to treating cases that deal with extreme shyness and maladjusted children.¹⁹ Music has the ability to create confidence and higher self-esteem to any individual. This is supported by Fred Behning, a life-long musician who states:

Much of what I learned in the classroom is obsolete or, at best, only marginally useful. What has made a difference in my life has been the ability to learn as I go, to adapt to new ideas, to have the courage to take risks, and to feel confident I will be able to perform and successfully meet the challenges of new situations. These skills I learned through participation in band and drama.²⁰

Another case in which music has been proven to be beneficial for the individual is reflected through Edward Elgar's work with inmates.²¹ Throughout his career, the composer Elgar was interested in the relationship that people had with music and the effect that it could have upon them. For five years, he was the bandmaster of the County Lunatic Asylum, where he discovered how music could transform and quality in the lives of the inmates. There was also an experiment performed at Queen's University, Belfast in 1986, where researchers

¹⁹ Ibid. 7.

²⁰ "ThinkExist.com Quotations," [ThinkExist.com](http://thinkexist.com). 1999-2006, 19 April 2009 <<http://thinkexist.com>>

²¹ Durrant, C. & Welch, G. Making Sense of Music. (New York: Colin Durrant & Graham Welch, 1995) 8.

explored the use of Balinese gamelan with a group of physically and mentally disabled people.²² It was evident that they were able to attend to particular properties of the music sufficiently enough to be able to take part in its performance.

These particular case studies relate to the active making or receiving of music, which is one of the key concepts in the music curriculum. The benefits of music for the individual become more apparent when the making or receiving of music is an active process. Research has demonstrated that music can be activated and controlled by those who have difficulty in communicating through language.²³ This gives further support to the argument for music as a specific intelligence.

Music Education for Society

Music can be a shared social experience. This experience enables us to be bonded to a social group and to strengthen and stabilize our personalities and self-concepts. Sociological analysis of society further indicates that different cultures, both historical and contemporary, identify with certain types or styles of music.²⁴ There is a notional 'type' of person who sings in the local choral society, which may be a different 'type' of person from one who 'jams' with a rock group. The difference between them may well be reflected not only in their musical interests, but also in the clothes they wear, verbal language and other identifiable

²² Durrant, C. & Welch, G. Making Sense of Music. (New York: Colin Durrant & Graham Welch, 1995) 9.

²³ Reid, S. How to Develop Your Child's Musical Gifts and Talents. (USA: Contemporary Books, 2001) 6.

²⁴ Swanwick, K. Teaching Music Musically. (London: Routledge, 1999) 22.

behaviors. People will tend to conform to what they perceive as normal within a cultural grouping.

What is thought to be 'good' music by one group may not be perceived as such by another. This can make the role of the music teacher problematic. The legitimate concerns of music education have been presented and analyzed by a number of music educators and sociologists in recent years.²⁵ Music education cannot ignore the influences that cultural groupings have on musical taste, nor can it ignore the proper aspirations of ethnic minorities who seek a cultural heritage for their children. Nevertheless, the most fruitful approach to the identification and appreciation for such cultural diversity is for music education to be concerned with musical structures, musical manipulations of sound and with the development of an understanding of ways in which computers, both historical and contemporary from all social groups, have organized sound into meaningful statements.²⁶

Different types of music affect different people in different ways. This is the reason why teachers have to be aware of the developmental processes involved in the formation of children's musical concepts. Maturation and previous experience, both educational and societal, are crucial factors in the levels of perception and conception of music that the child brings to the music lesson.²⁷ Therefore, the task for the teacher is to provide appropriate activities which allow the children to grow musically, emotionally, and intellectually at their own pace.

²⁵ Elliot, D.J. Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 5.

²⁶ Durrant, C. & Welch, G. Making Sense of Music. (New York: Colin Durrant & Graham Welch, 1995) 11.

²⁷ Ibid.

WHAT MUSIC EDUCATION CAN ACHIEVE

There is a question of what 'musical' children have that makes them musical. The most commonly accepted phenomenon is a technical mastery of one or more instruments. This is evidenced by the fact that most people, on hearing that someone is a musician or likes music, will ask 'What instrument do you play?' However, people's perceptions of themselves as musicians, or even being musical, are often at variance with reality. For instance, Eric who spent four years at a music conservatoire to study the piano, came onto the such a program with very little self-esteem as a pianist.²⁸ He had spent four years being told how inadequate he was, and so he came to believe it. If you ask a group of non-specialist primary teachers at a music in-service session if any regard themselves as a musician or a singer, the answer is predictably nobody. Yet, it is likely that such respondents have been engaged and would engage in musical activity.

However, while acknowledging that many people have greater musical skills than they give themselves credit for, it should be recognized that being musical means more than simply having the facility to play an instrument or sing to a high technical standard. The essence of musicianship is to convey something to the listener, to communicate at emotional and aesthetic levels.²⁹ In addition, musicianship includes an understanding of music and an appreciation of its value. The music education in the classroom should consist of ways to educate children musically by developing their creative potential as well as their

²⁸ Reid, S. How to Develop Your Child's Musical Gifts and Talents.(USA:Contemporary Books, 2001) 8.

²⁹ Ibid. 9.

craftsmanship.³⁰ This could be done by extending their knowledge of the functions of music in the world as well as in their own immediate environment, and by encouraging a deeper understanding of music as a form of language and symbol of human feeling. Rod Paige, the former U.S Secretary of Education states, 'Moreover, the creative skills children develop through the arts carry them toward new ideas, new experiences, and new challenges, not to mention personal satisfaction. This is the intrinsic value of the arts, and it cannot be overestimated.'³¹ This creative and artistic skill can not be achieved by simply teaching the theory behind music. It requires the encouragement of children to engage actively in musical experiences.

Importance of the Generalist Teacher's Role

Some schools have been considering having a specialist music teacher in their school or buy from their resources someone to teach music on a couple of days during the week, class by class. There is no doubt that a degree of expertise is needed to run a successful choir or instrumental ensemble. This opportunity for children to practice in fine performing groups as part of their extra-curricular activities is an important part of school life, and hopefully will continue for many years to come.

Nevertheless, musical activity is but one from the wide range of possible activities and, for some children, the notion of music as a technical competence may well put them off the subject. They may feel inadequate in comparison with

³⁰ Cutietta, R.A. Raising Musical Kids: A Guide for Parents. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 117.

³¹ Ibid.

the 'musical' children or they think that school music is largely irrelevant to them. Yet, for the non-specialist, the music activities of composing, performing, and appraising can be part of an integrated learning process, linking naturally with and feeding into other areas of the curriculum. If teachers adopt a similar philosophical stance to that which they hold on the development of reading and language skills in children then musical activity can be regarded as a normal human behavior, like reading. The skills required for this growth will be concerned with fluency, building confidence, creating and appraising as well as certain technical skills.

If teachers recognize the musical potential that lies within themselves as well as in their pupils, they are in a better position to facilitate effective musical learning and understanding. To know how this can be achieved is not easy. Essentially, it has to do with the attitude of the teachers, combined with a readiness to review their own perceptions of themselves as musicians and music facilitators. One step forward is for them to recognize their own musical interests and skills, at whatever level, as legitimate and developmental. Musical ability and musical awareness can and do develop. It is more likely to be increased through engagement in musical activity, by listening, by exploring musical elements, than by accepting limitations.

Learning: A Lifelong Process

Teachers are not diminished if they acknowledge their ignorance or uncertainty but only if they accept them. The relationship between teacher and student should be symbiotic in that each learns from another. The role of the teacher is to establish a keen sense of exploration, which must be activated, maintained and directed, as part of the learning process. For example, the composing process is one of discovery without necessarily specifying a particular outcome. The teacher is the guide, the facilitator, advisor as well as being the expert. This is not to deny that teachers must be knowledgeable but rather to emphasize that knowledge is rarely sharply defined, with distinct boundaries. Both teacher and child will continue to learn because that is part of the human condition. It is hoped that teachers will develop alongside their pupils and grow together in their understanding of, and pleasure in, music. In order to understand the importance of music, I found that it would be best to undergo some experiential learning in regards to music education. This leads to my personal approach to the three strands that make up the content of the music curriculum for the primary schools in Ireland.

“MUSIC IN A CHILD-CENTERED CURRICULUM”

Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 2.

Music is an indispensable part of the child-centered curriculum as one of the range of intelligences and as a special way of knowing and learning. Musical activity challenges the child to act in unique ways to listen discerningly to his/her own music and the music of others, to sing, play or read sensitively and accurately, and to evaluate critically. In posing these challenges, music contributes to the development of artistic awareness, self-expression, self-growth, self-esteem, and multicultural sensitivity, and therefore, to the development of the whole child.

An important aspect of music in the curriculum is the way it contributes to the personal, social, mental and physical development of the child. Coordination of mind and body is achieved through singing action songs, playing singing games, tapping rhythms, moving to music and playing in time while simultaneously listening to others, following directions or reading from notation.

Speech development is fostered through working with vocal sounds, chanting, singing nursery rhymes and songs, experimenting with vowel and consonant sounds and learning to control breathing. Language development is enhanced through exposure to a wide variety of songs, containing new words, idioms and phrases. These words are used and extended in responding to music, describing sounds heard, feelings sense, or stories related.

The development of listening skills, a critical aspect of all learning, receives special attention through the exploration of sound and the identification of and discrimination between sounds in the environment, leading to increased sensitivity to musical works. Listening skills are also emphasized in performing and composing activities, where the development of ‘inner hearing’ (or thinking in sound) is nurtured.

The development of both long-term and short-term memory occurs mainly, but not exclusively, through performing. Musical activities such as echo-singing and clapping develop short-term memory, while rote learning of songs, rhymes or games help to extend the capacity of long-term memory.

Opportunities to develop the imagination arise in unique ways in the music curriculum, through listening to familiar and unfamiliar musical works, hearing sounds internally, creating sound pictures or stories and expressing feelings and emotions in sound. This type of imaginative work also enhances spatial reasoning, which is the brain’s ability to perceive the visual world accurately, to form mental images of physical objects, and to recognize variations in objects.

As a collaborative, interpersonal activity, music develops social skills through group performing or composing projects where ideas, instruments or specific skills are shared. It also provides opportunities for the development of lifelong leadership skills and fosters verbal and non-verbal communication. Music enhances the child’s self-esteem through allowing him/her to see his/her own inventions valued and enjoyed by others, and to participate in singing games, songs, dances, and group performances where each individual’s contribution is vital to the group’s success.

Music is an integral part of the child-centred curriculum, not just because it enhances other areas of learning but because it deepens the child's sense of humanity, teaching him/her to recognize beauty and to be sensitive to and to appreciate more fully the world in which he/she lives.

Key Messages

According to Muireann Conway, one of the key messages that teachers explored at In-service in Music training session was the following – Music is for all teachers and for all children. This important message is fundamental to music education in every class and in every school in Ireland regardless of children's abilities or the teachers' perceived confidence. It is an entitlement.

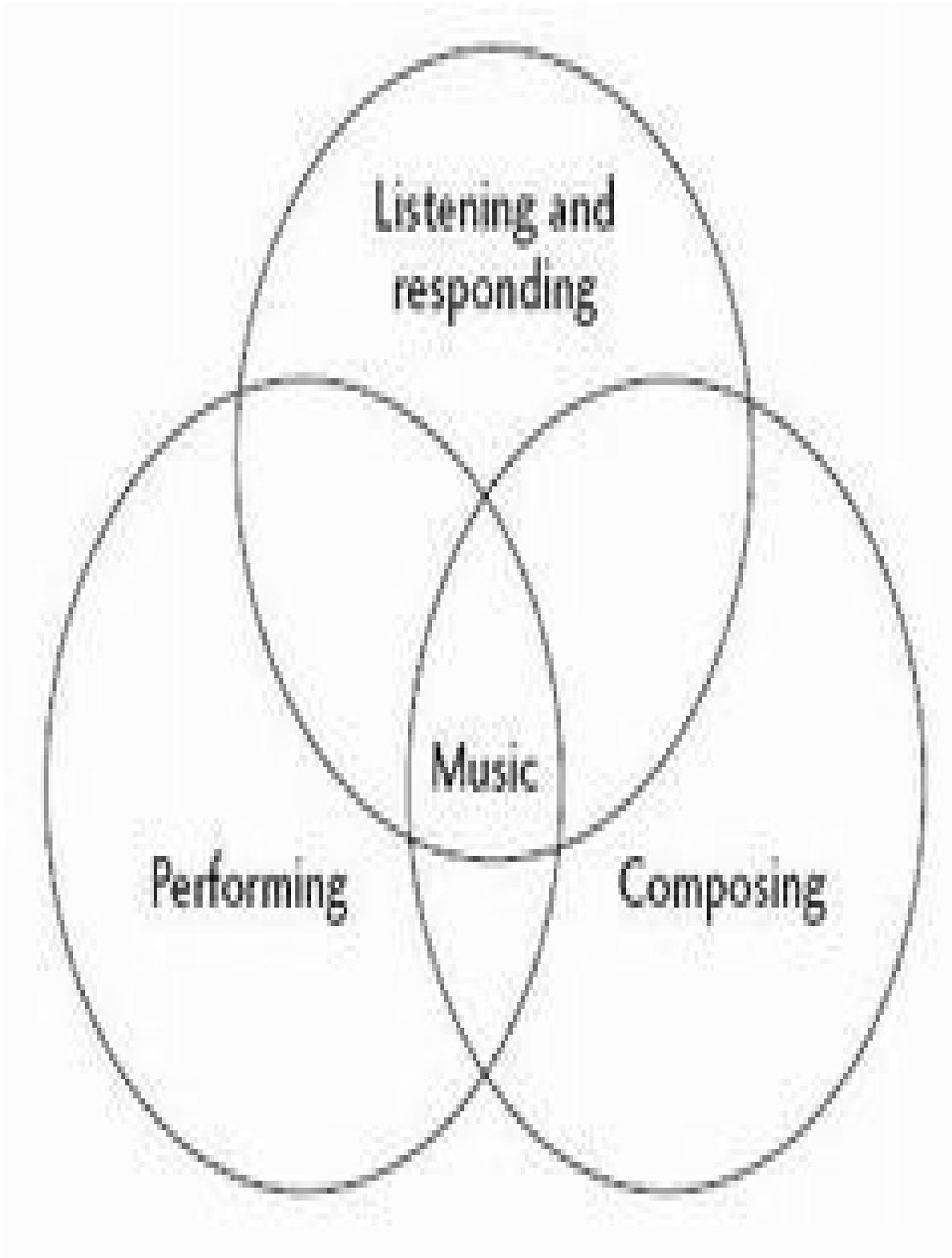
The other key messages are:

- The three strands are equally important – Listening and responding, performing and composing
- Active enjoyable participation is fundamental to the Music Curriculum
- Music enhances and enriches the child's life.

The Content of the Music Curriculum

Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 6.

[for levels: infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes]



Listening and Responding

Excerpt from Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 7.

In the *Listening and responding* strand, new emphasis is placed on the range and depth of experiences in listening to music, and on becoming an 'active listener.' The child is encouraged to explore and listen to a range of sound sources, from ordinary household sounds to a variety of percussion and melodic instruments, as well as music in different styles and traditions. Chief among these is Irish music and folk music of other cultures, along with music in the classical and popular vein. While younger children respond instinctively through movement, the importance of a movement response is encouraged at all class levels. Several approaches to listening and responding in a variety of ways are exemplified. These extend into the process of performing and composing, where the child is encouraged to be an active listener while playing with, improvising or arranging his/her own music.

The teacher may set targets for the child to focus his/her listening specifically in the two strand units 'Exploring sound' and 'Listening and responding to music'. Listening activities that require 'listening for' (a structure, a specific feature or an associated idea) may be described as more active listening than 'listening to' which may be considered a more passive activity.

In the strand unit 'Listening and responding to music,' the teacher may use recorded music as a focus for the child's listening, although the experience of listening to live music will be of immense value to the child whenever this is possible. The range of responses that the child can make, such as gesture, movement, speech, written or graphic forms, will allow for active involvement with the music and encourage the child to sustain concentration throughout the listening period.

Personal Approach to Listening and Responding

Mr. Finnucane

Grade: 3rd class

Date: April 21, 2009

Time: 12:45- 1:20 PM

Location: Dalkey School Project (Primary School)

Glenageary Lodge, Glenageary Co. Dublin, Dun Laoghaire

-Rathdown South County Dublin

Observation

I was introduced to Mr. Finnucane since he was Scott's (my 9 year old home stay brother) teacher. He teaches 3rd class and unlike the other teachers in the school, he is known to use music in his classroom. From what I have heard from Scott, Mr. Finnucane teaches the children to play the recorder whenever he feels like it during the day. That was why when I asked him what time I should come in to the classroom to observe, he could not give me a straight answer. He told me to come at approximately 1:00 PM, which confirmed that Mr. Finnucane did not have a set schedule for his music lessons.

Initially, I thought that I would have to sit around a bit and wait for the children to transition from their previous work. I even considered the fact that they might be too busy during that day to do their music lesson and that I would be asked to go home. Surprisingly, when I came into the classroom, I was introduced as a guest and had a chance to tell the children a little about myself. They asked me questions about the States and how their classes are different from the ones that I am familiar with. I also told them about how I was studying music education and that I will be going around observing them. Some of them seemed really excited to have someone to perform for. They quickly transitioned

from their story writing and brought out their binder that included a collection of simple tunes that they learned to play on the recorder.

Once the children got into position, Mr. Finnucane turned on his CD player and called out a song name. The students would flip to that song and play along with the CD recording of the song. The CD player as an accompaniment to the children's playing made them sound very together as a class. I assumed that there were certain ones that they found to be more exciting to play. For an example, when he told them that the song that they will be playing is 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious,' the students showed their confidence and excitement with certain phrases like, "Yes! I love this song," or just by a nodding approval. There were other gestures that I saw throughout the music lesson such as movements of conducting or dancing.

Mr. Finnucane also gave the chance for the students to volunteer and play a solo piece or even a duet with their fellow classmates. They would choose a song that they feel most comfortable with to perform in front of the class. It was delightful to see so many hands that rose, which shows that most of the children were confident about their performance and wanted to show off their musical abilities. After a student finished playing, the rest of the class would applause, which showed a very good class dynamic.

Reflection

From what I had observed, Mr. Finnucane's class mainly practiced the musical activity of playing the recorder. This exercise was emphasized in the *Performing* strand of the music curriculum. The experience of active music

making is a good way of introducing children to musical literacy. I had a chance to look at one of the binders that he had provided for the children, and it consists of the actual piece with both staff notes and notes written down under the staff, e.g. e, e, b, b, f, g, etc. He also had check marks above certain places of the staff, which indicates that there is a rest, or for the children to stop playing. There were also helpful diagrams of fingering for the recorder, which the children can go back to when they do not remember how to play a certain note.

Recorder is an ideal classroom instrument because it has excellent pitch and it is extremely sturdy. Children can bring it out of their desks and backpack whenever it is time for their music lesson and there is no need for the instructor to go around the tune the instruments. It also gives the class the opportunity to make music as individuals, groups or a whole class. This consistent program of the recorder in a classroom will enable the child to learn any other instruments with great ease and confidence. Even after only a few lessons, a child will have mastered enough to play simple folk songs and take part in a group music making in an enjoyable and meaningful way. I felt that the fact that each child had a copy of the music in front of them was very important and helpful in that it facilitates practice and it encourages familiarity with printed music.

I realized that Mr. Finnucane had a way with the children to make music seem fun and I could tell from the children's response that they had a great time with their music lesson. The experience of playing the recorder does not only fit into the music curriculum. In fact, I feel like it can integrate with learning of other cultures as well. For an example, when they were playing something that was

considered as “American music,” Scott made a comment about how I should be familiar with the tune. This was impressive because they were also learning about the background and the culture of the piece.

Of course, it was a very light session, and it was easy to assume that the children were not graded and did not have homework in regards to what they have learned during their music session. It seemed like it was more of something that they can all enjoy. This made me think about the kid I noticed in the back who had a hard time playing along with the song because it was too fast. Eventually, it seemed like he gave up. What does Mr. Finnucane do with the particular children who are having a harder time following with the rest of the class? As much as children showed confidence in their playing, did recorder playing lower the particular boy’s self-confidence? Overall, I was impressed with Mr. Finnucane’s effort to keep music alive in his class, seeing that he is the only 3rd class teacher in Dalkey School Project who makes music available for his students.

Mr. Dennehy
Grade: 5th Class
Date: April 22, 2009
Time: 1:00 – 1:50 PM
Location: Dalkey School Project (Primary School)
Glenageary Lodge, Glenageary Co. Dublin, Dun Laoghaire
-Rathdown South County Dublin

Observation

Along with Mr. Finnucane's class, I was also introduced to Mr. Dennehy, who is also very enthusiastic in exposing music in his classroom. From the observations of his class today, it seemed as if the students were quite familiar with the routine of doing a small drama session in their agenda. Mr. Dennehy also mentioned that they will be working on movement and how music changes the way we move.

The students brought out their lyrics of "King's Men and Rebel," a rap song that is based on the play "Macbeth." I found this to be a good way of integrating some of the literature and drama curriculum in with the music curriculum. It was a good blend of subjects that this musical activity exposed to the students. From performing this song, students were able to sing with an accompaniment from the audio recording. The children had the chance to sing in sections as well as in unison with the rest of the class, using rap and beats in their song. After practicing it a good two or three times, Mr. Dennehy then explained to the class how using words to battle symbolizes power because words can be used as a weapon. With this idea that power and emotions are expressed with voice, he told them that the louder they sang, they will be more likely to conquer their opponent.

The class then transitioned into the hall, which was an open space for them to move around with music. He focused on the idea of space and instructed them to fill in the space as best as they can while moving. Then, he gave the students certain excerpts of familiar tunes and told them to walk in the same pace of the music. This challenged the students to change their pace to fit to the tempo of the music. He gave them other situations where they had to pretend that they are catching a train, or needs to say “How do you do?” or “oovar oovar” to those they make eye contact with. He emphasized that the class is now too busy concentrating on doing the certain tasks that they forgot about the main purpose, which was to fill in the space. Rather, there were students following around other classmates in front of them and was creating a circular motion in their movements.

For their final exercise, Mr. Dennehy incorporated the previous song, “King’s Men and Rebel” into movement. This was the opportunity for the students to practice moving around while singing. He asked the students to stand facing their partner, as if they were in battle against each other. Since they were trying to create a battle scene, the students were asked to move together like an army. He also instructed them to walk menacingly and to become threatening by using stronger voices and marches.

Reflection

According to the music curriculum, Mr. Dennehy was using both the *Listening and Responding* and the *Performing* strands in doing his musical activities. When the children had to stop and listen to the music to find the right

pace that they had to walk in, it was a clear example of becoming an 'active listener.' The students then responded to the music that they had listened to by speeding up or slowing down their walking pace. This showed that movements are quite expressive and are closely linked to musical elements such as tempo and rhythm and dynamics. These movements came naturally to the children and were quite enjoyable.

The simple activities that Mr. Dennehy exposed to his class today proved that music can be for all children. I am sure that not all the students in his class were naturally talented musicians, but they were all able to keep a strong beat and rhythm together along with their classmates. Music is also for all teachers because activities such as these do not require a specialist teacher. In fact, generalist teachers should be able to introduce the simple yet effective activities to their students without a problem. It did not cost anything and yet children are able to explore their imaginations and comprehend how music changes their movements.

It was apparent that these students were a bit older than the previous students that I had observed in Mr. Finnucane's class. It made me wonder if these students were exposed to any instruments, such as the recorder, in the past. I was very impressed with the strong voices of the children and their natural ability to sing as well as they had. I felt like it was such a privilege to watch this class perform their song. This also made me wonder if these students would later have the opportunity to perform "King's Men and Rebel" in front of their parents. I

feel like if they were able to perform what they learned in drama practice, they will gain confidence in what they have worked so hard to accomplish.

Mina Won

Proposed visit to St. Oliver Plunkett National School

Date: Thursday 23 April 2009

Co-operating teacher- Muireann Conway

[Muireann Conway is a Learning Support and Resource teacher where she visits her regular five classrooms and teaches them primarily Math and English of various levels. During my visit to St. Oliver Plunkett N.S, I had the privilege of shadowing Muireann to some classes from Junior Infants to 6th class to observe the children engage with the music curriculum.]

Purpose of Mina's visit-

To help develop an insight into the Music Curriculum in Primary Schools in Ireland through visiting some classes from Junior Infants to 6th class and by observing the children as they emerge with the music curriculum.

Time table and outline of the day

9:00 - 10:00 Ms. Connole 6th Class

- Song singing
- Tin whistle playing
- Listening and responding to music- *1812 Overture by Tchaikovsky- integration with recent topic in history re. Napoleon*

10:00 - 10:45 Ms. Coffey 6th Class

- Song singing including rounds and partner songs *America the Beautiful; Frere Jacques; Row row row your boat*
- Composing *Chinese style*
- Listening and responding to music- *form and structure- "Spring" by Vivaldi*

10:45 - 11:00 - Break

11:00 – 11:45 Ms. Hudson Junior Infants

- Song singing through the integrated curriculum- *Irish, Maths, English*
- Movement to music
- Listening and responding to music- *Music of the Dolphins*

12:00 – 12:30 – Break

12:45 – 1:15 Ms. Dixon Junior Infants

- Song singing
- Improvising with untuned percussion instruments

1:15 – 1:45 Mr. Byrne 1st Class

- Performing – tin whistles *Irish tunes, Spanish song*

1:45 – 2:30 Ms. Leahy 3rd Class

- Song singing
- Performing (recorders, hand bells, chime bars, dance)
- Listening and responding to music *Supple- Light Cavalry Overture*

Ms. Connole
Grade: 6th Class
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 9:00 – 10:00 AM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

[When I walked into Ms. Connole's class, I immediately noticed something that I have never seen before in a school classroom. The children were asked to pray for one of the teacher's father, who had just recently passed away. They had a moment of silence and ended their prayer with the sign of the cross. This was not seen in the Dalkey School Project because they were under no religion. I asked about this later to Muireann and she explained that St. Oliver Plunkett N.S is a Catholic school and so the children do receive the sacrament. However, not all the children are Catholic, and if children from other denominations such as Church of Ireland and want to attend their church, they have a close church that they can attend to. This made me realize that the objectives of the particular school may also influence how significant music is to their school curriculum.]

Muireann Conway had previously mentioned that the students in Ms. Connole's class had recently gone over Napoleon in history. Therefore, for the Listening and Response portion of the music lesson, she had the *1812 Overture* by Tchaikovsky prepared for the class. Before she played the music for the students, she asked them what kind of music they would have written if they were a French or Russian composer. Since the French had lost, the students came up with ideas such as a dull, deep, opera-like melody with instruments such as violins. If they were to be a Russian composer at that time, they would have written a happy, celebrating, victorious melody using instruments such as the trumpet, drums, and the cymbals.

Then, Muireann explained that a church called 'Church of the Redeemer' opened in Moscow fifty years later and Tchaikovsky had the task of creating a piece that was appropriate for this particular celebration. She also stated that

Tchaikovsky was trying to tell the story of the battle between the French and the Russians through the music. Tchaikovsky had also used bits of the French national anthem along with the Russian anthem at that time. To review what these particular anthems sound like, Muireann played a little bit of it on the piano, which was in the classroom.

While the children were asked to listen to the piece, they were asked to also use their imagination to see if they hear the music, for an example, exploding cannons. After they had finished listening to an excerpt of the piece, the children reflected on what they had heard and responded with various comments. The children came up with responses to the music, such as how it sounded busy, dramatic, prideful, victorious, and hard hitting. Muireann then asked the children to think of what they would have drawn if they were asked to draw a picture of what they heard. Children came with all sorts of ideas such as men flying off horses, cannons and soldiers, as well as church bells ringing.

For the performing portion of their music lesson, the children played the tin whistle along with the accompaniment with the piano. Students played pieces such as the 'Polka' and the theme song from 'Titanic.' From what I had observed from their notebooks, the children had just the written notes of the piece such as D, E, F, etc. They also had learned to sing songs in Irish such as 'Land of the Youth' and the Irish national anthem, which was also accompanied by the piano.

Reflection

I was very impressed with the children's background knowledge of Napoleon and it was interesting to see how they were able to use their imaginations to express how they understood the French and the Russians. Immediately, I was able to see that they are able to use music in a more intellectual level and how it expands their knowledge and imagination. I saw the importance of integration between subjects such as history, language, etc. By listening to the *1812 Overture*, I felt that the children were able to comprehend their topic in a more profound way than reading about it in their textbooks.

When I heard Ms. Connole accompany the children when they were playing the tin whistle and singing their songs, I felt that these children were very fortunate to have such a musical teacher who can make use of the piano in their classroom. It made me wonder about other classes who do not have such talented teachers or the benefits of having a piano in their classroom. Even when Muireann played a few notes to show the different tunes of the national anthems, I felt it was very helpful for the children because they were able to recognize it by listening. Overall, it was interesting to hear what the children had expected from the mood and use of instruments in the piece, *1812 Overture*, from their previous knowledge of the topic.

Ms. Coffey
Grade: 6th Class
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 10:00 – 10:45 AM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

For the performing part of the music lesson, Muireann prepared *America the Beautiful* for the kids to sing in the honor of my visit. They had a keyboard in their classroom to accompany their singing. They also practiced singing rounds with songs like *Frere Jaques*, which is when they split in two parts with the second part coming in halfway through the song. This way, it creates the effect of two sets of voices singing together, like a two-part harmony.

The class also practiced the composing concept of the music curriculum by creating a Chinese style melody, which is something the students had done previously in honor of the Chinese New Year. They used chime bars, which are tuned percussions, to accompany the song. To create the Chinese style melody, the chime pitches were all pentatonic notes. Muireann also provided woodblocks to make the sounds of the beats. All the children raised their hands to participate in composing music. In groups, the students practiced getting louder and softer with their individual chime bar. They also practiced using different rhythms, such as “sweet-and-sour chicken” or “noodles, too.” Then, they combined both sections of different rhythms to compose their music.

They also covered the listening and response to music by thinking of ideas of what Vivaldi was trying to portray when composing the piece, “Spring.” The class came up with ideas such as the happy spring theme, birds, thunder and

lightening. For an active response to the form and structure of the music, Muireann prepared scarves in the colors of red, which represented the reoccurring spring theme, and orange, which represented the other themes. The children got into groups and waved around their scarf as they listened to the form and structure of the song.

After they had listened to the song, they formulated a structure which was like the layer of a cake. The structure, with 'A' being the reoccurring theme and the other symbols as other themes, was described as:

A Happy spring theme
! Bird's Song
A Happy spring theme
@ Shimmering on the water
A Happy spring theme
Thunder and lightening
A Happy spring theme
A ! Birds and Happy spring theme

For their response, the children were to draw a picture of what they had heard.

From observing the children's work, some drew a colorful illustration of sun and thunder, and others did a graphic representation or diagram to demonstrate how they responded to the particular piece.

After their response to "Spring" by Vivaldi, the students were able to listen to other songs in which they had to describe without knowing the title of the actual piece. They were asked to imagine the certain piece of music as a background to a scene in a film. Muireann emphasized that we all taste food in a different way, just like how we hear music in a different way. Therefore, the students came up with all sorts of ideas such as Tom chasing Jerry in "Tom and

Jerry,” a black and white film with a chase scene, and a bee buzzing. She later revealed that the title of the piece was called “Flight of the Bumblebee,” but that everyone’s idea was right.

Reflection

Personally, it was interesting to see the idea of form and structure being used in an elementary class, especially because I spend most of my term in college learning about specific forms and ways of analyzing them. I feel that I have learned about form and structure in a more formulated way, whereas this class was able to have a more active and practical experience by using scarves to demonstrate the different themes of the particular piece. The listening and responding content of the music lesson seems to be a powerful tool to use in expanding the children’s imaginations. It would be a great way of integrating creative writing with the music curriculum, because the children will be able to use what they had heard in the music into their writing.

Ms. Hudson
Grade: Junior Infants
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 11:00 – 11:45 AM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

Muireann had mentioned before we went into Ms. Hudson's class, that integration is the key to teaching junior infants. I was able to observe song singing through the integration of Irish, Math, and English with the music curriculum. The majority of the lesson covered the performing content of the music curriculum. Not only did they sing songs, but the children also practiced moving to the music. They did the movements to Irish songs and math songs, which helped them with counting and adding. They also marched around the room while singing and doing the movements to a marching song. This class also had a piano available for them in the classroom, and so the students sat down around the piano and sang songs to practice English and their movements.

The children in this class also had a listening and responding to music portion to their music lesson, where they had a chance to lay their heads down as they listened to "Music of the Dolphins." After they finished listening to the piece, they were asked to explore their imaginations of what they had dreamt of while they were relaxing. The children came up with a variety of ideas, which Muireann put up on the board. An example of this would be the sentence that states, "Nicci was thinking that everything was made of sweets." As Muireann wrote this up on the board, the class helped her spell out the words to complete the sentence.

Reflection

The activity of writing out sentences with the class of what the individual students had imagined is a great way of integrating English with their response to music. It really showed how the integrated curriculum of Irish, Math, and English truly enriches the children's vocabulary. Even if they did not know the meaning of a certain word, the movements to the song is most likely to help children comprehend the vocabulary used in the music. Another thing I had observed was that Muireann used the concept of recognizing an individual student's performance and complimenting his/her efforts in the activity. This was a way of using reverse psychology because it improved everyone else's performance in their efforts of catching up or doing the same as the awarded child.

Ms. Dixon
Grade: Junior Infants
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 12:45 – 1:15 PM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

The junior infants in Ms. Dixon's class practiced their song singing by performing simple nursery rhymes such as "I'm a Little Teapot" and "Itsy Bitsy Spider" while doing the movements to the song. They also had the opportunity to play and improvise with untuned percussion instruments such as shakers, triangles, drums, and woodblocks. Muireann had provided two sets of triangles but one was bigger than the other. The children had to predict which one was being played by listening to the pitch that each triangle made.

The class continued with different instruments to create different sounds. They explored with what kinds of sounds each instrument can make. The children were able to close their eyes and listen to the instrument and then be able to identify which instrument was being played. They used these untuned percussion instruments to play along with their nursery rhymes and practice dynamics. Each group of students played the role of the band while Muireann played the role of the conductor. They were able to follow Muireann's instructions to play louder and softer on their instruments. She also performed a piece on the recorder for the children to listen and respond. The children came up with many possible responses that matched with the calm mood of the tune.

Reflection

The activity that the junior infants did with identifying the kind of instrument they had heard with their eyes closed was very useful. In terms of listening and responding, performing, and composing, students need to be able to know what kind of sound certain instruments create. That way, when they hear a certain instrument played in a recording, they will be able to respond to the instrument by saying that it is trying to express something cheerful or sad. Another reason why it is important is that when children try to perform, they should be able to identify the appropriate instrument of sound that they want to create. This can help the children with composing music using the right kind of sound they want in their song.

In a certain way, I feel that this experiential learning integrates well with science because it makes children think about the texture and materials used. It allows them to differentiate between the sounds that they would hear if they heard a wooden instrument as opposed to an instrument made out of steel. This can lead children to question the sounds of their environment such as the knocking of a door or the tapping of their pencil. They may be able to see that sounds can depend on even the size of the instrument, such as the small triangle and the large triangle.

Mr. Byrne
Grade: 1st Class
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 1:15 – 1:45 PM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

Mr. Byrne has prepared his class with performing the tin whistle, especially because he an excellent performer on the tin whistle. They played Irish tunes such as “Polka” and “The Castle of Dromore.” They were also able to play and sing a song in Spanish. The notes were all written out on a large poster board for the class to follow. It had the letters of the notes such as D, E, etc. Sometimes, there were symbols such as an underscore, to show that you need to hold down the notes. In a way, it demonstrates the concept of note values.

He had also taught his students about combining melody and harmony while playing together as a class. Mr. Byrne would sometimes alternate between singing songs and the tin whistle after a verse. Other times he would ask the students to play just melody for the first verse, and then a combination of melody and harmony on the second. For the piece “Mack the Knife,” the children were asked to play in staccato, a musical notation to indicate that notes should be played in a short and separated manner. I even saw a child trying to imitate Mr. Byrne’s playing skills by adding tin whistle techniques such as vibrato.

Reflection

Through their performance in tin whistle, I saw that the children were very confident in their playing. It was like a concert of seven year old tin whistlers and it was very interesting to watch. It was apparent that playing tin whistle was not

only under the music curriculum because it integrated Irish and Spanish language as well. Whether the children knew what they were singing about in Irish or Spanish was not something that I was able to notice, but even if they did not know, I think learning a language through song is a helpful method.

I noticed that I would not be able to come into this classroom and try to perform along the students for several reasons. First of all, I did not recognize the tunes that they were playing. Therefore, even though the letters of the notes written down, I do not know the rhythm of the song or the way these types of melodies are meant to be played. In my opinion, Mr. Byrne plays in the traditional ways of Irish musicians. This means that he plays music by relying on his ear instead of using the standardized way of reading staff notes. Muireann was able to accompany the class with the keyboard, but as someone who is unfamiliar to the songs, I would have a hard time accompanying the class.

It was also brought to my attention that Mr. Byrne writes out the note 'F' on his music sheet when it is actually an 'F- sharp.' This can be problematic to students who want to transcribe the pieces that they are playing in class to the piano because it would not sound the same. As Muireann described, it would be like telling a child to believe that the fork is actually a spoon. I see how writing out the letter of the notes in Mr. Byrne's own style can be easier for the children to follow. Staff notes are sometimes quite intimidating not only to children, but to teachers as well. However, in the long run, I find that it may be more beneficial for children to learn the standardized way of reading notes.

Ms. Leahy
Grade: 3rd Class
Date: April 23, 2009
Time: 1:45 – 2:30 PM
School: St. Oliver Plunkett N.S

Observation

The children in Ms. Leahy's class started with the performing content of the music curriculum. They used their recorders and played pieces such as "Roundabout" and "French Folk Song." The children have been provided music sheets that have been pasted into their notebooks which have staff notes written without letters to indicate what note is on the staff. Along with the staff, of course, was the time signature and key signature. In the more difficult songs, I did notice there being a few letters under the note on the staff, but there was not a letter written under every note. When they played "French Folk Song" on the recorder, the children made up a dance in partners in previous classes, so some volunteered to perform in front of the class. They also played a piece called "Au Claire de Lune," which alternated with the playing of the recorder and then singing in Irish in the appropriate verse.

They also performed using chime bars, which are tuned percussion instruments. With the use of chime bars, the children were able play certain chords such as the combination of the notes F, A, and C. Some of the children got into groups and used these chords to accompany the song "An Faoilean" while the other children sang in Irish. There was another song in which they sang while playing an instrument called "Pebble Passing Game from Africa." During this song, the children would circle in groups with their classmates and use the

accompaniment from the sound of passing a stick in the circle in order to keep a steady pulse.

In addition, they performed with hand bells, which are tuned bells that play an octave from C to C. The eight volunteers stood up in front of the class in the appropriate order and sound their bell to songs such as “Joy to the World” and “Doe a Deer.” With the song, “Doe a Deer,” they played the tuned bells while singing. The rest of the class participated by singing as well as playing along with the recorder. In addition to that, Muireann accompanied the class by using the keyboard. It was fun to see the music in the classroom build up as the children became more excited about creating music all together.

Reflection

I was very impressed that the children were able to read staff notes. In fact, this was the first class where I actually saw staff notes used by the students. In my opinion, this would be the more standard way of learning music. That way, no matter where they go, it would be universal and other people would be able to play along with them as well. I believe that they would probably comprehend music sheets more than those who practice with just the letter notes since they have time and key signatures. Even if they have not gone over what these musical notations actually mean, these children would be more familiar to the concept than those who are seeing it for the first time.

I think the hand bells are a great way of learning about the scale and how the pitch gets higher in one direction and lower in another. Hand bells are also a great way for the students to feel involved, like a team. Recorders are a great

approach for performing in unison as well, but there can be a few who try to hide from playing along with everyone else. There are a few times that I have seen children who just finger along with the rest but do not actually play. However, with the hand bells, you are more exposed and you really need to be part of the group in order to create the song. The children will also realize through the use of hand bells that it is crucial to come in during the appropriate beat and rhythm or else the song does not sound correct. Overall, using tuned percussion instruments such as recorders, hand bells, and chime bars are great devices to exercise the performing concept of the music curriculum.

Performing

Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 7-8.

The *Performing* strand emphasizes the importance of active music making, beginning with the voice and later including instruments, as a means of developing musical understanding. The importance of experiencing a wide range of musical activities before the introduction of musical literacy is also emphasized in this strand. Opportunities for the children to make music, as individuals, groups or as a whole class, will occur in two strand units: 'Song singing' and 'Playing instruments'.

The approach adopted in the music curriculum seeks to build on the familiar song-singing aspect of music making in a number of ways. Firstly, the musical elements are developed through a range of simple activities, which gradually increase in difficulty, for example tapping a steady beat while singing, showing when the pitch moves from high to low or vice versa, or feeling the tempo as fast or slow, or the dynamic level as loud or soft. Secondly, simple part singing, which is introduced in third or fourth classes, is prepared in the early classes through simple activities, again incorporating the elements of pulse, rhythm, dynamics, tempo and so on. By fifth and sixth classes, children will have experienced song singing in innumerable and exciting ways and will enjoy the further challenges of part singing while seeking to achieve a more expressive singing quality.

The third and most important departure in the performing strand is the inclusion of music literacy as an integral element of song singing. The simple tunes learned and practiced in junior classes are given new meaning in more senior classes, when the child is guided in the discovery of their rhythmic and melodic elements. While specific intervals are not prescribed, several examples of melodic patterns are suggested that may be used to develop an integrated approach to interval training. However, participation in music making at all levels is not contingent upon knowledge of or fluency in musical literacy, and the teacher may run a literacy program successfully in parallel with an aural approach.

As in the *Listening and responding* strand, playing instruments in infant classes will begin with simple percussion (for example wood blocks, drums or triangles and home-made musical materials such as shakers) to support rhythmic elements. In addition, tuned percussion instruments (for example chime bars or xylophones) are introduced to show how a simple song can be represented on different media. As listening and singing skills improve, the child will be able to perform familiar tunes on a melodic instrument, such as the recorder or tin whistle, and by fifth and sixth classes will have acquired sufficient knowledge and skill to attempt playing tunes from sight.

The Tin Whistle

Excerpt from Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 109.

The tin whistle is a very popular instrument in many schools. It is the cheapest instrument in many schools. It is the cheapest instrument available. In the hands of an expert it is capable of great sweetness and expressive tone, yet children

can successfully use it to reproduce their favorite folk songs, Christmas carols and simple classics.

For reading music, the method most favoured by tin-whistle players is tonic solfa, combined with staff notation. The tin whistle in the key of D is the most appropriate for use in the primary school, as this key is suitable for combining with the singing class. The D tin whistle is also a manageable size for children's hands.

A variety of tin whistles are available in the music shops in brass or nickel. Nickel is slightly more expensive. It has a more durable finish, and some players claim its tone is superior. When teaching a class, it is worth while making sure that every child uses the same brand of tin whistle, so that the tone will be consistent.

The teacher should ensure that the mouthpiece is fully pushed down before playing. This affects the instrument's tuning. Also, the instrument should be warmed, either in the hand or by blowing lightly through it.

The range suitable for class playing is usually *doh* to high *soh*. Of course it is possible to produce notes higher than this, but individual players and instruments vary to a considerable degree in the upper notes (which are achieved by harder blowing), and squeaking and inaccurate pitch become a problem.

Accidentals (sharpened or flattened notes) are possible on the tin whistle, usually by half-covering a hole. However, these are not ideal for group playing, as thirty different children will have thirty different attempts at 'half-covering'. In this respect, the instrument may not be as versatile as the recorder.

As with recorder playing, if the children are taught the tin whistle through notation they should be encouraged to clap the rhythm and sing the melody in solfa or with words before playing. This helps them to hear the sound internally (inner hearing) and contributes to a more musical performance.

Personal Approach to Performing

When my sister and I were over at Muireann's residence, Muireann had taught us few of the basic keys on our D – tin whistle. She taught us the fingering of the first three notes, B, A, and G. With only these three notes, Minzy and I were able to play little tunes such as 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' with Muireann accompanying us with her piano. Even with the small session of learning to play a few notes, I felt a sense of accomplishment and was very glad that my sister was able to experience it with me. After my first encounter with the tin whistle, I wanted to learn more about the instrument and how it is played.

Tin Whistle

The tin whistle, also known as the pennywhistle or Irish whistler, has six holes and is classified as a simple wood wind instrument. It has a range of two octaves and is labeled as a diatonically tuned instrument. The term "penny whistle" was coined on the streets of Dublin in the late 1500s because of the whistles' prevalence among the beggars and vagabonds in Ireland.³² The word "tin-whistle" was also coined as early as 1825.³³ The most common whistles today are made from brass tubing, or nickel plated brass tubing, with a plastic fipple (mouth piece). Whistles are a well-known starting instrument in Irish traditional music, since they are often cheap and relatively easy to start with. In fact, the tin whistle is the most popular instrument in Irish traditional music today.

³² Cunningham, Sean. Whistle Tutor. 2000. Software Knowledge. 19 April 2009
<<http://www.whistletutor.com/>>

³³ Ibid.

The whistle is identified by its lowest note, which in my case, is in the key of D. The D whistle is the most common choice for Irish and Scottish music. It is possible to get notes outside the principal major key of the whistle by a technique called half-holing, which can be done by partially cover the highest open finger hole. Another way would be cross-fingering, which is done by covering some holes while leaving some higher ones open. Since half-holing is difficult to do, I found a song that fit the key of my whistle design. This means that the familiar tune, “Amazing Grace,” is in the key of D.

The note played when blowing through the tin whistle is selected by the opening and closing of holes with the fingers. When all the holes are closed, the lowest note that the whistle can generate is played, which is D in my case. When you successively open the holes from the bottom upward, it produces the rest of the notes of the scale in a sequence. With the lowest hole is open, it generates the second notes, and with the lowest two holes open, it produces the third and so on. When you leave all the six holes open, it produces the seventh note of the scale, which is a C.

Traditional Irish whistle playing uses a number of ornaments to embellish the music, including cuts, strikes and rolls. Most playing is legato with ornaments to create breaks between notes. This concept of the word “ornamentation” differs from that of European classical music in that it changes how a note is articulated rather than an addition of separately-perceived notes to the piece. Of the many different ornamentation techniques, I decided to try to the two that made most sense to me: Strikes and vibrato.

Strikes or taps are similar to cuts except that a finger below the sounded note is briefly lowered to the whistle. For example, if a player is playing a low E on a D whistle the player could tap by quickly lowering and raising his or her bottom finger. Both cuts and taps are essentially instantaneous; the listener should not perceive them as separate notes. Vibrato can be achieved on most notes by opening and closing one of the open holes, or by variation of breath pressure. Of the two, fingered vibrato is much more common than diaphragmatic (breath) vibrato, except on notes like the lowest note on the whistle where fingered vibrato is much more difficult.

Traditional music from Ireland and Scotland is the most common music to play on the tin whistle, and has a vast majority of published scores that are suitable for whistle players. Musicians who play Irish and Scottish music on the tin whistle perform as members of bands. Many traditional musicians frown upon the use of musical scores, believing that learning “by ear” from recordings or live instruction is the best way to learn the aspects of whistle performance. Students of the tin whistle, therefore, are not advised to use musical scores and are encouraged to spend a substantial amount of time listening to other performers even when scores are used.

Performance: Listening and Describing

I wanted to learn how to play “Amazing Grace” the traditional way by listening to recordings and live performances. I first listened to Irish group musicians like Paddy Maloney from *The Chieftans* and then solo artists like Mary Bergin playing *Feadoga Stain*. Mary describes her playing experience as she

states, "One fear I would always have, even in my class situation, is that the emphasis is on technicality, whereas for me, the whole thing is the feeling and heart and soul, that's what the older musicians had."³⁴ Initially, I planned to do a thorough analysis of the piece that I am going to learn, but I wanted to understand the oral traditions of Irish music, which led me to focus on musical elements through ear.

First of all, I wanted to get some background information on the song that I was going to perform. I discovered that "Amazing Grace" was a well-known Christian hymn by Englishman John Newton.³⁵ The melody of the song is believed to be Scottish or Irish in origin. It is pentatonic and suggests a bagpipe tune. In essence, it is a very basic tune in which singers can easily alter the melody to match their own style of singing. Using YouTube, a video sharing website where users upload and share their video clips, I searched for various recordings of the music. It was interesting how each clip had its individual style, even when they are playing the same piece of music. After listening to several recordings, I decided to focus my attention on the musical elements.

Amazing Grace:

Pulse: strong, regular beats

Duration: long notes in a continuous running pattern

Tempo: walking tempo

³⁴ "Mary Bergin," Rambling House, 2009. Rambling House. 19 April 2009 <<http://www.iol.ie/~ronolan/bergin.html>>

³⁵ Pockett, Graham. Amazing Grace: The Story of John Newton. 2009. Anointed Christian Links. 19 April 2009 < http://www.anointedlinks.com/amazing_grace.html>

Dynamics: quiet, yet powerful

Pitch: hovers around a few at a medium pitch, moving up and down in small steps

Timbre: played mainly through voice, traditionally played by bagpipes

Structure: repeated section through various verses

Mood: calm and peaceful

When performing 'Amazing Grace,' it is also important to express what the song is actually trying to portray. Newton's lyrics to this song were based on his reflections on an Old Testament text he was preparing to preach on.³⁶ This song has become a favorite for Christians, particularly because the hymn vividly sums up the doctrine of divine grace. It has also become a favorite with supporters of freedom and human rights, both Christian and non-Christians because many assume it to be Newton's testimony about his slave trading past. With this in mind, I have decided to learn 'Amazing Grace' with extensive listening to various recordings.

I believe that this simple act of learning the tin whistle has opened gates for me to build new and stronger relationships. Even with just learning the tin whistle with my sister at Muireann's place for a few minutes, I felt that it was something that Minzy and I could enjoy together. Our relationship with Muireann felt even stronger even if it was just for that brief moment because we were all making beautiful music together. Ted Turner from the Turner Broadcasting System once said, "Music has a great power for bringing people together. With so many forces in this world acting to drive wedges between people, it's

³⁶ Ibid.

important to preserve those things that help us experience our common humanity.”³⁷ Actively learning music built confidence in me as an individual and I am sure that it would do the same for children who undergo music education. This leads me into the composing portion of my experiential learning, which is well-connected with performing in that it has the ability to expand student’s horizons.

³⁷ “Success in Life,” Ted Brown Music Outreach, 2009. Ted Brown Music Outreach. 19 April 2009 <<http://www.tbmoutreach.com/facts.php>>

Composing

Excerpt from Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 9.

The importance of developing the child's own creativity through music making is central to the *Composing* strand. In many ways too the composing strand could be considered the ideal listening response and the best way of gaining an understanding of performing activities. Additionally, through the process of composing, the child is given opportunities to recognize the purpose of recording and notating music: to store sound patterns for future revision or retrieval and to enable others to read and interpret what has been previously composed.

Many simple tasks can be easily and effectively incorporated into the music program as an introduction to composing. In infant classes, improvising rhythmic or melodic 'answers' to given 'questions' can take place as a natural extension of song singing, while selecting appropriate instruments to create a sound effect can also link successfully with familiar songs and games. As the child grows in confidence, so too will the need to express his/her ideas independently, as in language and other arts areas. Listening to a wide range of musical styles and traditions, singing and playing will extend naturally into composing activity. Graphic notation, invented notation, simplified notation or standard notation may be used to record ideas, in addition to electronic recording.

Personal Approach to Composing

For the *Composing* strand, I decided to take the teacher's approach in finding ways to engage children in musical activities. I decided to create separate lesson plans that deal with the three strands: *Listening and responding*, *performing*, and *composing*. The teachers, even those who are less experienced with music literacy, can come up with various enjoyable activities for the children. They need to be creative and think of ways to contribute to the children's knowledge and develop their creativity and uniqueness. When coming up with lesson plans within the three strands, the teacher needs to think of the aims and objectives of the teaching and map out how these musical experiences can be beneficial to the students.

After observing several of the primary school classrooms, I was eager to process a lesson plan on my own. I think it would be the best way to gain understanding of what it takes to carry out these tasks and to incorporate the music program into the classroom agenda. I feel like the best way of learning is experiential learning and so I tried to think of active ways of getting to understand music. If the child grows in confidence with the musical activities done in the classroom, it can provide an avenue for self- expression. In order to make up a music lesson plan, one needs to develop a structural and organized mapping of what the lesson is and how it is to be carried out.

MUSIC LESSON PLAN

Excerpt from Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 48.

Date:

Class:

Time:

Resources Required:

Main Focus: Listening and Responding Performing Composing

Organizing the lesson

The strand or strands of the curriculum that the lesson will focus on (listening and responding, performing, or composing); the use of a stimulus to begin the lesson (for example an instrument, a song, a listening excerpt, a picture, a poem, a story, an object); how the children will be organized; how the resources will be arranged within the room

Introduction

Teacher-directed task to introduce topic, establish rapport and group dynamic; warm-up game or song based on, or associated with, the musical features of the lesson.

Development

Main teaching points in the lesson:

e.g. particular features to observe in listening, new concepts or skills in singing, playing or reading (music literacy), selecting or using instruments.

Activities for composing, setting of parameters, structure and purpose, organization as groups or individuals; talking about the process, reworking and recording using electronic equipment and/or notation.

Linkage within music:

i.e. how the main activity links with listening and responding, performing and composing

Assessment opportunities

Teacher observation of individual or group tasks, noting involvement of pupils, effectiveness of teaching strategies and any difficulties encountered; teaching-designed tasks, homework, group project, items to be retained for portfolio collections, pupil self- evaluations

Concluding activity and follow-up

Revising and summarizing the main teaching points of lesson in addition to a concluding, music-making activity, such as listening to or performing familiar music. Note integration with other subject areas and implications for future planning.

Music Lesson Plan #1
Class: Third to Sixth Classes
Main Focus: Listening and Responding

Organizing the lesson

This approach of listening and responding to music provides the opportunity for exploring different visuals using their creativity from any given song. In this case, the song the class will be listening to “Port na bPucal” by Davy Spillane from the album, *Behind the Mist*. When the instructor plays this recording, the students will come up with visual ideas or stories that they come up with listening to this song.

Materials used:

- Drawing tools such as crayons, hard and soft pencils, pens, charcoal, pastels
- Paper, distributed for each student
- Recording of “Port na bPucal” by Davy Spillane from the album, *Behind the Mist*

Development- Part 1

Once the materials are distributed, the instructor will ask the children to close their eyes and listening to the song. The song will be played once or twice- however long it takes for the children to illustrate their picture. The teacher should assure the children that there is no right or wrong ways of approaching this activity.

With the song completed, the children can then discuss and compare their illustrations as a large group, small group, or in pairs. The song can be played in the background, soft enough so that one can hear the other person speaking as each child gives their reasoning behind their illustrations.

Development-Part 2

After listening to the recording of “Port na bPucai” by Davy Spillane from the album, *Behind the Mist*, the piece can be discussed with attention focused on the musical elements. For younger children, the teacher can refer to descriptive language, such as fast, slow, loud, soft, short notes, etc. Elements that can be explored with this particular piece include:

Port na bPucai

Pulse: Was the beat steady? Can we clap to the music?

Duration: Was there long notes or short notes?

Tempo: Was it fast or slow?

Dynamics: Was it loud or soft?

Pitch: How high or low were the sounds?

Timbre: What instruments were used?

Structure: Were there separate or repeated sections?

Mood: How did this song make you feel?

Follow-up

This lesson allows the children to become “active-listeners” and expand their creativity to illustrate a picture that describes their way of thinking. It allows children to listen and respond visually and also focus on the different musical elements that are used in the recording. This gives the children the opportunity to create a story or analyze the piece using music literacy. This activity also is successfully integrated with the strand unit of ‘Making drawings’ in the *Drawing* strand of the visual arts curriculum.

This particular song also enables teachers to familiarize the children to Irish traditional music using traditional instruments that are used to create such a piece. After listening to a variety of different styles of music, children will be able

to differentiate the different styles. The next time they hear an Irish traditional music, they would be able to recognize the style and respond to the music in a more familiar way.

Music Lesson Plan #2

Class: Infants to second classes

Main Focus: Moving to Music [Performing]

Organizing the Lesson

This approach of performing provides the opportunity for the students to enjoy their musical activity through movement. In the curriculum, it stresses that, “Children should be encouraged to think about music as they move or to think the music.”³⁸ Movement should be performed naturally as they express a musical element and extends children’s coordination. Children can move to a given tempo and focus mentally and physically to the musical task. It covers many aspects of music literacy such as pulse, tempo, rhythm, and dynamics. This aspect of the music curriculum also integrates very successfully with the dance program in providing children with new learning experiences.

Development- Option 1

The instructor will ask the children to stand in a circle. Since this action song deals with a lot of movement, the children should be spaced out accordingly so that they are able to wave their arms and move their body to the beat of the music. The instructor will recite the action song, “Hello, my name is Joe,” and encourage others to sing and move along to the directions from the music.

³⁸ Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 59.

Hello, My Name is Joe- Peter & Ellen Allard

Hello, my name is Joe and I work in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "No".
He said "Turn the button with your left hand."

Hello my name is Joe and I work in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "No".
He said "Turn the button with your right hand."

Hello my name is Joe and I work in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "No".
He said "Turn the button with your left foot."

Hello my name is Joe and I work in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "No".
He said "Turn the button with your right foot."

Hello my name is Joe and I work (real hard) in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "No".
He said "Turn the button with your head."

Hello my name is Joe and I work in a button factory
I have a house, and a dog, and a family
One day, my boss said to me, "Hey Joe, are you busy?"
I said, "Yes!!!"³⁹

Development- Option 2

Another game or activity that involves movement to music is by adding another movement. The children stand around in a circle. One child, or in this case it can be the instructor, will move a part of the body to the beat of the music.

³⁹Allard, Peter & Allan. "Hello, My Name is Joe," 2002-2009. Songs for Teaching. 19 April 2009
<<http://www.songsforteaching.com/allard/hellomynameisjoe.htm>>

The music will consist of making a rhythm and beats with the phrase: “boom-chika boom-chika, boom boom.” The movement of the body can be any thing from waving an arm and spinning around in a circle. The student who is to the right of the instructor will go ahead and copy this movement. Then the next child in the circle will copy this movement as the instructor thinks of another. The game is continued in this way for as long as it can before having to begin again.

Follow- Up

These lessons allow the children to be active participants in their response to the music through their movements. These exercises are essential to children in encouraging them to respond by moving or dancing to music. Not only does it provide a kinesthetic experience but movement is also used to develop technical and expressive qualities. It can help children build better relationships with other classmates through the cooperation in doing such a task. It allows the students to act a bit silly, which is another way that the children can come out of their comfort zone and enjoy the musical experience.

Since the phrase “boom chicka” and the song “Hello, my name is Joe” are very catchy and easy to recall, these activities can be used repeatedly with the children. The students will familiarize with the concept and become active and creative with their movements the more they do the activity. These action songs that can be sung with accompanying movements are a great way to expose the children to musical elements such a rhythm and a sense of pulse.

Music Lesson Plan #3
Class: Infants to second classes
Main Focus: Composing

Organizing the lesson

This approach of composing provides the opportunity for the children to develop their creativity to explore the different sounds for the accompany story or feature. As the children compose, they become increasingly aware of the sounds they make as well as the discovery of how to use their surroundings to create particular sounds. It takes improvising, evaluating, and decision-making, which stretches the children's minds of what could be possible. This is another way of getting children to improvise in a 'hands-on', instinctive approach to music. It is their own experimentation with whatever instrument that is available to them.

Development

The instructor will explain the situation to the children and they will be able to use any part of their body, any kind of sound, or any kind of object around the room to make the particular sound that the instructor describes. Sounds are selected from a variety of sources to illustrate the situation that the instructor is describing.

Example:

"Today you get the chance to test drive your brand new Mercedes Benz and you are in for a nice ride.

You are going to start your engine (sound of engine)

You are driving out of your driveway (sound of gravel)

You get out on the highway (sound of fast driving)

You decide you want your sun roof open (opening of sun roof)

You get off the ramp and go on a few speed bumps (sound of bumps)

It gets a little windy so you put up your windows (sound of windows close)

It starts to rain (sound of rain pattering)

You start your windshield wipers (sound of windshield wipers)
You start driving on cobblestone (bumpy ride of cobblestone)
You put in your favorite CD (sound of CD going in)
and it starts to play your song (sound of your song)
You start to get faster, and faster, and FASTERR (revving of engine)
And then you hit a squirrel (sound of a squirrel being hit)

Concluding activity and Follow-up

After finishing the story, I will conclude by showing them the clip of the 'Honda Civic Choir commercial,' where it shows how others have done the same activity. This way, the children will be able to compare and contrast the same activity done and how even when creating the same sound, it can be done in different ways. The task of accompanying the various parts of the scenario will heighten the awareness of the meaning of specific words and phrases. It will lead into a deeper understanding and more expressive performance of the story. It also integrates with the work in visual arts and in the language area.

Music may achieve the highest of all missions: she may be a bond between nations, races, and states, who are strangers in many ways; she may unite what is disunited and bring peace to what is hostile.⁴⁰

-Dr. Max Bendiner

⁴⁰ "Quotes about Music Education," [SupportMusic.com](http://www.tmea.org/025_Advocacy/musicquotes.htm). 2005. TMEA. 19 April 2009
<http://www.tmea.org/025_Advocacy/musicquotes.htm>

CONCLUSION

The culmination of my research on music education in the primary school curriculum has led me to believe that music education is very significant in children's education. Music itself is an art form that is deeply rooted in human nature. It is a unique form of communication and a way that feelings and interests can be expressed. It is a profound and aesthetic experience for both the individual and society. Music can heal and unite. It can bring peace. The role of music for the individual and the society is endless.

Children are guided to explore the world of the imagination to develop their awareness of their cultural environment, both past and present. They are to be encouraged to develop their natural abilities and potential, and acquire techniques by participating in different forms of art. If the child becomes aware of their potential to use their creativity through imaginative thinking, it will encourage them to be unique and individualistic. Music education can enhance children's confidence and self-esteem through valuing self-expression.

Throughout this past semester, we were exposed to so many different people in Ireland who expressed their difficulties with the political and social conflicts in their society today. There were so many speakers and tours that explained what kind of struggles that the Irish people had to deal with in terms of sectarianism and their own identity. It was a shame to see how the Irish past was affecting the children and their outlook of Irish society.

In particular, I felt that my encounter with the Foundation Project and the Fountain Youth Centre had affected me the most. Children from these

organizations and many others need an outlet where they can express their pain and suffering. They need to find something stable in their lives that can give them a sense of confidence so that they can transcend all the conflicts in the Irish past and present and pursue successful lives. Music can help these children to develop their self-esteem and feel like they belong to something or that they accomplished something in their lives. With a society with social conflicts such as homelessness, poverty, heroin addiction, and more, there needs to be music in these individuals' lives to overcome such struggles.

Throughout our past semester, we had discussions on how it is important to remember the past to heal the sufferings that people undergo today. As much as I do believe that this is true, I also think that making sure that the future generations do not go through the same kinds of pain is equally as important. The children are our future, whether it is in Ireland or in the States. It is a universal acknowledgement that if our way of life fails the children, then it fails us all. Music is a catalyst for change, and so if children are deprived from music education, then it can only be disadvantageous to not only the child but to our society.

All my life I have been a dedicated musician, but what I have discovered through my Independent Study is that there is more to music than just playing an instrument. I came to Ireland to become more aware of the world we live in today so that I can appreciate the life that I live now. Similarly, music education gives the chance for children to comprehend music through musical activity and appreciate the world in which they live in. There are some who think

that learning music is too expensive. I learned through my personal approach to composing that music is free and available all around us. I have also learned that the music curriculum can be integrated with so many other subjects such as science, math, language, history, physical education, and art. In fact, music is all these things and should not be seen as a separate subject.

This experience has developed my thoughts in my personal life and hopes for my future. I had always thought that my appreciation for music and my degree will be wasted once I dedicate myself in becoming a homeroom teacher. This leads into the cross-cultural insight in comparing music education from the States and from Ireland. According to Muireann, the United States has its strengths in that there is a specialist music teacher in each school that has a music room for what they need to teach the music lesson.⁴¹ The weakness to this is that the classroom teacher was missing out on seeing the child in the music class. Also, the music teacher plans independently from the home room teacher. When I learned about how the Ireland music curriculum states that, “Music is for all teachers and all children,”⁴² I embraced this message and decided that in my future classroom, I should use aspects of the music program that I feel comfortable with doing in class.

I believe that one of the key concepts or themes that I have learned throughout this semester is the importance of experiential learning. I tried to continue this idea in my research by observing the primary classroom, learning how to play to tin whistle, and by creating my own lesson plans. Of course

⁴¹ Interview #3

⁴² Music: Arts Education Curriculum (Dublin, Ireland: Government of Ireland, 1999) 3.

because of the Easter holiday and the three weeks we had available to us, it was difficult to experience all that needs to be learned in such a short span of time. Nevertheless, I believe that I used my time wisely and that I am taking back a very memorable experience back home to the States with me.

This issue of how significant music education in the primary curriculum will be something I will always be considering as a long-term project. In college, I will get the chance to focus on this topic for my senior thesis and when I go to graduate school for elementary education, I am sure that I will look back to this experience. I enjoyed my topic because it is not something that ends within this three week period. The importance of music education ought to be developed not only in Ireland but worldwide. Of course this can not be done in a generation time. An issue such as this is something continuous and needs to be worked on through generations after generations. Maybe then we will see the value of music in that it will bring peace and unity among all nations.

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Acronyms

PCSP: The Primary Professional Development Service

SDPS: School Development Planning Support (Primary)

NCCA: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

DES: Department of Education and Science

INTO: Irish National Teachers' Organisation

IPPN: Irish Primary Principals Network

NPC Primary: National Parents Council Primary

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Groups

Altan, Blackwater
Na Casaidigh, Oro na Casaidigh
The Chieftans, The Chieftans albums
Clannad, In Concert
Donal Ring Ceili Band, Come to the Ceili

Solo artists

Derek Bell (harpist), Ancient Music for the Irish Harp
Mary Bergin (tin whistle player), Feadoga Stain
Willie Clancy (piper), The Piping of Willie Clancy, vols. 1 and 2
Martin Hayes (fiddler), The Lonesome Touch
Matt Molloy (flute player), Stony Steps
Colm Murphy (bodhran player), An Bodhran/The Irish Drum
Eilín Ní Bheaglaoich (singer), A Clock of Many Colours
Sharon Shannon (accordion player), Out the Gap, Each Little Thing

Compilations of traditional Irish music

Bringing It All Back Home (BBC)
Ceiliuradh (Clo Iar-Chonnachta)
River of Sound (RTE)
Seoda Sean-Nois as Tir Chonaill (Various Artists)
Trad at Heart (Dara)
Traditional Music of Clare and Kerry (RTE)
Traditional Music of Galway and Limerick (RTE)
Traditional Music of Ireland (HMV)
Traditional Music of Ireland, vols. 1 and 2 (Clo Iar-Chonnachta)

Traditional Irish music in a modern style

Anuna, Omnis
Enya, Shepherd Moon
Tadhg Mac Donnagain, Raifteiri san Underground
Noirín Ní Riain, Soundings
Colm Ó Foghlú, Echoing
Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, Cry of the Mountain, Between Worlds

Recordings of concert music by contemporary Irish composers available from the Contemporary Music Centre:

John Buckley, Three Lullabies for Deirdre
Patrick Cassidy, The Children of Lir

Shaun Davey, The Brendan Voyage
John Gibson, Reflections in the Water, Imaginaire Irlandais
Ronan Hardiman, Lord of the Dance
Bryan O' Reilly, The Children of Lir
Sean O Riada, Mise Eire, Saoirse
Bill Whelan, Riverdance, The Seville Suite

Compilations

Contemporary Music from Ireland, vol. 1

-featuring music by Sweeney, Deane, Martin, Barry, O' Leary, Gardner, Kinsella, Boydell, Buckley

Contemporary Music from Ireland, vol. 2

-featuring music by Guilfoyle, J. Wilson, Hayes, I. Wilson, Bodley, Corcoran, Johnston, Farrell, Doyle

Irish Fantasy

-featuring music by Ferguson, Esposito, T.C. Kelly, Stanford, Nelson

Romantic Ireland

-featuring music by Victory, Pottor, O' Connor, Larchet, Duff, O Riada

Jazz

-Ronan Guilfoyle, Septet Music

Information Sources

The Ark, Children's Cultural Centre
11a Eustace Street
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Tel. (01) 6707788
Email info @ark.ie
<http://www.ark.ie>

The Contemporary Music Centre
95 Lower Baggot Street
Dublin 2
Tel. (01) 6612105
Email info@cmc.ie
<http://www.cmc.ie>

Central Music Library
ILAC Centre
Henry Street
Dublin 1

Tel. (01) 8734333
Email cicelib@iol.ie

Music Association of Ireland
69 South Great George's Street
Dublin 2
Tel. (01) 4785368

Folk Music Society of Ireland
15 Henrietta Street
Dublin 1
Tel. (01) 8730093
Email npupipes@iol.ie

Irish Traditional Music Archive
63 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
Tel. (01) 6619699

The Arts Council
70 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
Tel. (01) 6611840

Music Network
Developing Music Nationwide
Ship Street Gate
Dublin Castle
Dublin 2
Tel. (01) 6719429

Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann
32 Belgrave Square
Monkstown
Co. Dublin
Tel. (01) 2800295

Interview Information

Interview #1

“Chequered Baam” and Iain Falkner

Date: April 03, 2009

Time: 6:00- 8:00 PM

Location: Falkner Residence

43 Grange Wood

Rathfarnham

Dublin 16

Interview #2

Ronan Healy

Date: April 04, 2009

Time: 8:00- 9:30 PM

Location: Healy Residence

88 Silchester Park

Glenageary

Co. Dublin

Interview #3

Muireann Conway

Date: April 06, 2009

Time: 12:00- 4:00 PM

Location: Conway Residence

APPENDIX

Interview Transcriptions

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Interview Report: “Chequered Baam” and Iain Falkner

Date: April 03, 2009

Time: 6:00- 8:00 PM

Location: Falkner Residence

43 Grange Wood

Rathfarnham

Dublin 16

When I mentioned that I was interested in doing my study on music education in Ireland one of the SIT students, Jake Wyrick, brought my attention to his homestay brothers. Jake suggested that I interview his fourteen and seventeen year-old brothers, Adam and Iain Falkner because they are both passionate about music and go to a school that is musically involved. I was invited over to the Falkner residence for dinner and an informal interview on their opinions on music.

“Chequered Baam”

Group Members:

Andrew McGurk - Acoustic Guitar/Vocals

Michael Naudé - Bass/Vocals/Piano

Ben Healy - Lead Guitar/Bass

Adam Falkner - Drums/Bongos

Genre: Alternative

Interview Notes:

-“...Celtic Tiger- how people having too much money for their own good has created children to be more involved with computer games such as X-Box, Playstation, etc.”

-Andrew: My parents lived somewhere between the big cities- Dublin and Derry- and they had nothing else to do but do music. There was nothing else better to entertain during those times. That’s why I think kids were more eager to pick up instruments back in time than children today.

-“... Ireland is made up of smaller schools and so it may be that it is just not worth it to fund for music.”

-“Ireland is dominated by athletics and so music doesn’t seem to be as supported.”

-“No, we don’t have music classes- We usually do it before or after school as a kind of extra curricular activity.”

-“... Its not a matter of time, because despite the seven courses that are needed to taken, we have plenty of time to get involved with our own things.”

-“I feel like through this recession, people may get more involved with music”

-Andrew: “Honestly speaking, no offense to the rest of the group, but I feel like in the future, Micheal will become a rocket scientist, Ben will become a businessman, which leaves me and Adam who truly want to become part of a rock band. We don’t have anything else to look forward to other than this group.

It makes me feel like I am part of something and with such a strange collection of friends, we're able to create something together.

URL

<http://www.bebo.com/chequeredmusic>

Iain Falkner

School: Wesley College

Grade: Second Level

Mina: What is your musical background?

Iain: I have been playing piano since I was about six and I stopped when I was ten to pick up guitar, which I am still doing now- and I recently got a bass guitar. In school, I am doing music class, which is covering all aspects of music from rock to jazz to classic to folk rock- all that stuff.

Mina: Is that part of the school curriculum?

Iain: It is one of the subjects that I do. You choose it, which means that not everyone in the school does it.

Mina: Is music well-supported in your school?

Iain: Yeah, they support music hugely. Our school hosts the National Music Festival for the inter-schools- which means all the schools around.

Mina: Are there opportunities to be part of an orchestra/band in your school?

Iain: Yes, there are three orchestras which you are encouraged to join- also five choirs- and you have to do a practical for the music exam. You are encouraged to make bands for your practical piece or even write your own songs, which is how my brother's band came through.

Mina: Did you have a chance to have music education in primary school, also?

Iain: No, not really. It was not properly in our curriculum, but I guess occasional singing- Nothing proper.

Mina: Any thoughts on "there should be more of this [for music] in Ireland"?

Iain: The government should invest more on music- music studios and music festivals.

Mina: In the future, what do you hope they use the funds for in Ireland and how do you think it will be beneficial to children?

Iain: In general, all the music artists- U2- have moved out of here for recording because it is too expensive because the government raised their taxes. If the government took down those taxes, we would have more internal artists in our country- recording, which used to happen a lot until they raised the taxes, and then any taxes we get off them is in millions. That money could go towards music or education.

Mina: What do you think of music?

Iain: I think music is very important to most people. People like all types of music- like pop, rock, jazz, etc. It is compulsory for me- I love it- keeps me happy and I have music wherever I am.

Mina: I understand how passionate you are with music. How much would you have to go out of your way to become successful?

Iain: I would probably have to be like U2, and record elsewhere. There is a lot of extra funding towards schools, which is ridiculous because we pay a lot of money to go to private schools- My school is able to pay for music because it is private, I think. But I mean, U2 was from a public school in Dublin somewhere.

I really enjoyed my evening with the Falkner family. The “Chequered Baam” group members made me feel right at home and they were not at all uncomfortable with the questions that I asked. They were very proud of themselves and they felt like what they had to say for me was very important and that they were very influential for other bands that followed after them. I was only expecting to hear the band’s performance and not a full Q&A session and so I was not as ready as I was with Iain’s interview. In fact, after hearing what they had to say, I had to quickly jot down key phrases and quotes that came to mind after the interview. With Iain’s interview, I realized asking a second level student to gather information on their experience in primary is quite difficult and I had to come up with questions that fit more with Iain’s interest. This experience gave me more of an insight on their individual musical background and their perception on music.

Interview Report: Ronan Healy

Date: April 04, 2009

Time: 8:00- 9:30 PM

Location: Healy Residence

88 Silchester Park

Glenageary

Co. Dublin

Eli Rinaldi, another SIT student, has mentioned once or twice before about how musical her homestay family is and so I asked if there was anything particular about how they are educated in music. Once I found out that Ronan Healy, a fourteen year-old bass guitar player, goes to a school particularly fond of music called Newpark, I set up an appointment to learn about how he perceives music and what kind of music education he received/receives from primary and secondary school. It was also interesting to get some insight from his mother, Fidelma Healy, and her feelings towards the importance of music.

Mina: What school do you go to?

Ronan: It is called Newpark, which is a public secondary school.

Mina: And what instrument do you play?

Ronan: Bass guitar

Mina: What is your music background?

Ronan: I used to play violin and I learned that for four years and I took lessons in Dun Laoghaire and I stopped that and started bass guitar because my older brother plays electric guitar and so I started bass. I got it during my fifth class and have been playing since then.

Mina: So when in Dun Laoghaire did you learn violin?

Ronan: There is a music school- which my parents had to provide for- a separate private violin teacher.

Mina: Other than learning from Centres, do you learn music in school?

Ronan: I learn music as a subject in school- as an exam subject- so I take proper music classes for that. I started learning music from the age twelve or thirteen, in general in school. This class is just optional, and so not all the kids get to take it.

Mina: What kind of things do you learn?

Ronan: Theory and history, and a bit of practical section where you have an instrument and get an exam on it. I play bass guitar for that.

Mina: What else do you do with your bass guitar and what do you hope to go with that?

Ronan: A few of my friends play together in class, but we haven't got a proper band formed. There could be, though. I play with my brother sometimes- all of it is a bit informal, nothing huge. Just for fun.

Mina: What do you think is the value of music in Ireland?

Ronan: My school that I go to has a history of being an art school, and so there is a lot of art and music. I am not really sure about other schools, but my older brother's school- they don't have music as a schedule. I think it's the lack of facilities- not enough music teachers.

Mina: Do you remember having music education in primary school?

Ronan: I think we did for maybe events or fairs?

Mina: Do you have a theory as to why music is not considered as a core subject?

Ronan: Not enough demands for it-

Mina: In terms of children of children who don't have enough financial aid, do you think it would effect their music education?

Ronan: Yeah, it will be a lot harder because of lessons- since its outside school- they would have to pay for it, and there is not much provided from inside school. I think music can be very beneficial in that it can bring people together. One time, me and my brother- there was a jamming session with the West of Ireland and we didn't know anyone there, but through playing music, we were able to meet people. It helps with connections and gets people to know each other. I think it also keeps impoverished people off the streets. I think music in general, is important to keep up.

Mina: Do you think primary schools should better the music education?

Ronan: I found the little things we did in primary school was very useful. I think if music was more available in schools- like an optional subject- then people can be more involved. My school provides it but I know that not all schools do.

Mina: Is there anything else that you would like to share about music?

Ronan: Newpark is very different from other secondary schools. I consider myself pretty lucky. If I want, I can get a third level education and get a degree by specializing something in say- jazz.

Mina: In what ways would you say that kids may be deprived from music- other than the lack of facilities?

Ronan: You need to pay for it- so lack of financial aid-

Mina: How does your school's timetable work for you in terms of music?

Ronan: Well, we get thirty-minute sessions on our own, and get out of a subject, like history or English, but they make sure that we don't consistently miss the same one every time- They alternate.

Mina: Anything particular about music in Ireland?

Ronan: Irish people, I guess are more into sessions- especially during festival times, where you have to just be able to pick up an instrument and follow along with the regular tunes. Irish music can be romantic, and express sadness as well be that stereotypical- Irish pub, for just entertainment. I think traditional music has become more like fusion music- mixed with other styles, and that has become definitely more popular.

Mina: I remember playing my instrument during school [in the States], not before or after school.

Fedelma: We don't have that here. We definitely don't have kids playing their instruments during school, except for Ronan's school. Not everyone does it, but you do have to pay for it. And plus the lessons outside of school would be very expensive. In terms of primary school, I think they teach recorders and get kids to sing in choirs. As you get older, they may have a band in school. You can get a chance [in Ireland] if you are good at your instrument, but I think there should also be a chance for those who are not.

Fedelma: Have you considered music therapy?

Mina: No, what is that?

Fedelma: I work in a rehabilitation hospital, people who have accidents- and there is a music therapist there who works with children and plays instruments with them. They are children who cannot talk or have behavioral difficulties or, are very withdrawn; she would play instruments with them. It's absolutely fascinating watching her and it's really interesting. Say a child can't talk at all but would make noises or move in a certain way- she would play flute along with his movements- maybe moving his arm- and he'll learn after a while to do it again and again. They enjoy that session and she has recorded the developments of certain children using this therapy- and later they are able to pick up instruments themselves. It's really beneficial. Music can help overall wellbeing- emotional well-being. Even in terms of kids who always get into trouble or having nothing else to do, they can express their anger or if they are depressed, music can be pretty beneficial for them.

Based on Iain Falkner and Ronan Healy's interview, I was able to see some similar responses in terms of how their secondary school is run. I was

particularly interested in the idea of music as a form of therapy and have decided to look further into the idea of music as a form of healing.

Interview Report: Muireann Conway

Date: April 06, 2009

Time: 12:00- 4:00 PM

Location: Conway Residence

Mina: What is your background?

Muireann: I am a primary school teacher for thirty seven years. I have taught classroom teaching for most of my career, where I would have always incorporated music- not just having the one hour a week, which is the requirement- but where music can be appropriate to use in other areas- whether it be English, or history, or teaching the Irish language- music and chant, song, can add wonderfully to the curriculum. I took a three year period where I wasn't working at my school at all. I was seconded to the department of education where I was a music trainer providing in-service to teachers in the revised curriculum in music. I did that for a year in a half and that involved giving seminars on the changes of music to teachers.

Mina: How is music beneficial for children?

Muireann: Music has huge benefits, cognitively- children who can learn to play an instrument can learn to do math, or anything else. I have heard consultant IT specialist say, that he would consider it to be more value for children to receive music education- which develops their whole brain and their thinking and ability to use abstract code that interprets it into music and so on- than to expose them to just the computers that we have currently. Because when they finish college in fifteen years time, all of those will become obsolete. What you really want to develop is children's thinking. Just even from a very narrow point of view- is very beneficial. Socially, music is great since children tend to create music in groups. So, the social benefits, the cooperation that is involved, the fun, the self-esteem, and the idea of success and creating something beautiful together. Sometimes you have gifted individual performers but people tend to like play together, and you can see that when you come to the school. Children who play the tin whistle in one class and children who play recorder in another class- put them together, with a piano accompaniment or something- you end up with a beautiful sound with big smiles on their faces. How can it be anything but wonderful? So there are big benefits to music.

Mina: Some people have to been telling me that the physical education [eg. Rugby] is very valued within the Irish community. So there is a question of- Where does everyone else go? How do the others get to boost up their self-esteem?

Muireann: That's right. And for a large amount of the people, it's just then by being participants by watching at a football game or match. Whereas, we sing in a church choir here and there was a lady beside me yesterday and she proudly

told me that she was eighty-six years of age. She was singing in the alto line and she was wonderful. She felt so proud of herself and when mass was over, we had sung all sorts of beautiful motets- and she sang right beside me, note perfect. With rugby, at forty-six you can't play. So, you can be involved with music all your life. People who are in Alzheimer's homes, one of the great joys of the day is when there's singing and music together. And there is somebody, perhaps, who can play that piano- who is not able to cook or live independently- and yet can experience true joy and live in the moment as they play because somewhere deep in them they remember where the fingering goes for the music, and everyone creates this beautiful music together. You might not pay music to hear it in a concert hall- it doesn't matter. People are enjoying it and having a great time.

Muireann: Remind that there has always been great love for music, ballads that people would sing together, but is uncomfortable to read staff notation, so music teachers who came into the music in service came with various apprehensions, but at the same time they would be able to sing all kinds of great songs.

[Primary School Curriculum: Music, Arts Education (2)]

Muireann: Teachers have been given these two books. In many cases, they haven't had time to open them. They came to their music in service and they were told- part of it was- that music curriculum is divided into three areas...

Mina: Previous interviewees have mentioned that one of the factors in the lack of music education may be due to the financial reasons- That the musical instruments are too expensive. What do you think about this statement?

Muireann: A lot of the rhythmic instruments can be homemade and can be made homemade quite easily. This music curriculum- it's called the revised music curriculum- and its based on what was there before. I remember going down to the local hardware shop and buying broom handles and chopping them into one foot lengths, sanding the tips of them, and putting a little bit of tape of them. Shakers? A little bit of dried rice in yogurt containers or small camera tubes, empty plastic bottles. To be honest, the percussion instruments can be made very effectively for the children. Two cardboard paper plates, stapled together with some rice inside, add a few little ribbons, you have a little rhythmic kind of a tambourine-effect. The difficulty would be with the tuned percussion instruments. You can get xylophones, but school has some money for the art curriculum. A good investment can be the chime bars which can be divided amongst the children to make chords, and it's fantastic. You can also buy boom whackers- lengths of plastic tubing, graded from low C to high C- and you can use them against your hand and they are very effective with children with specific learning disabilities- if they can actually feel the sound and hear it as they whack it against their hand, for example, they get the joy of hearing the music right through them and they are really interesting. So there are some financial problems, but they can be overcome, in my opinion. And the board of management can donate some money towards the percussion instruments.

Mina: So what do you think is the factor of why there is a lack of music education?

Muireann: Confidence. Confidence in teachers. I think there is a need for more workshop situations for teachers. The in-service days, there were two days of in-service, and that was not sufficient. I think they could do it again because it is a very specialist area and for people who have confidence issues- it's not easy. Anyone can teach math, English, science, but in an area like P.E or music, where you can feel pretty exposed as a person- that's not an easy place to be.

Mina: What were the big differences that you saw from the States in comparison to the music education in Ireland?

Muireann: The strengths as I saw them, in the United States, there was a music teacher- a specific, qualified, confident, music teacher in each school. And that there was a music room, which was all set up with what she/he needed to teach the music curriculum- with the five-line stave on the blackboard, the music instruments, and a beautiful CD player. I thought that was fantastic. The weakness for me would be that the class teacher was missing out on the whole seeing your child in the music class. For instance, if you have a child struggling with math, would you ever be able to see the same child shine in the music class? Also, in terms of planning, if it's fragmented-as I thought I noticed- that the music teacher is planning independently the music curriculum that the children will experience, that was a shame. I'd like to see it integrated into the other curriculum area that the home class teacher was involved in. So, wouldn't it be great if there was planning that went on between the teachers- not just by email, but also with some face to face as well. This should be built into the timetable or teachers may be okay with staying after school for a little while to take thirty minutes planning once a month to see where we are going. We could make more links for the children.

Mina: So in Ireland, do you think there should be separate music teachers who specialize in music, or should the homeroom teachers receive more education in music to teach it on their own?

Muireann: One of key messages for our curriculum is 'Music is for all teachers and all children,' and I think that those aspects of the music program that is comfortable for the class teacher to do should definitely be done in class. For an example, exploring sounds, listening to the environment, recording sounds of the environment, should be in the comfort zone of all teachers. Similarly, listening and responding to music [can help with children using their imagination]. But in terms of the symbols, pitch, and sight-reading, and playing certain aspects of music, it would be wonderful to have a specialist music teacher in the school who could support the classroom in that area- whether it be that the specialist teacher goes in to work alongside the teacher in the classroom or that there would also be a music room that from time to time – the whole class could come and out and down to the music room – but I wouldn't see the classroom teacher ever giving up completely, but I think the support would be fabulous. And then there could be some classroom teachers who can say that they are managing well on their own and that they are comfortable in this area. In that case, they can take their students down into the music room, where all the instruments are set up in their

pigeon holes, so that they can use them readily, rather than having to send for them and have all the hassle involved.

Muireann: It would be hard for me to work in total isolation if I was a specialist music teacher. So in science, there is a lot of planning and making some sound instruments and you are building on the same concepts and you have to link the work on sound in the science curriculum with the work in the music curriculum. As we said in the environment- being able to understand, "What is sound?"- These are the scientific elements and the emotional response to it would be the musical element.

Mina: So are you saying that what is missing in the music curriculum of Ireland is the support for music teachers?

Muireann: It boils down to a lot of money, too. I think if there were a specialist music teacher, certainly in every big school or available in small schools, that there would be clusters and timetables, and that they can work alongside teachers in their classrooms- or if there was a music room, it would be wonderful. In America, you have the specialist music teacher, you have the timetable withdrawal to that person, and it is just fantastic.

Mina: How do you think this effect the children- not having the opportunity of proper music education?

Muireann: It deprives them of something very important in their lives. When we talk about a four-legged chair, you have to have four legs on the chair- you have to have it equally balanced- whether it is our emotional stability and our cognitive and so on. Similarly, in terms of children's education, it is their right to have music education. We have curriculum requirements to fulfill. Teachers are more than willing to do their best, but we need to support teachers. That is in terms of training and giving them confidence and you need support for teachers in training in the colleges of education when they are training to be teachers, but equally, we need to support teachers once they have been qualified- To build up on their strengths and confidence. We can't just ignore it.

Mina: As much as there are homeroom teachers who are willing to work music into their agenda, would you say that there are teachers who do not?

Muireann: I certainly do. There are some teachers who are comfortable with doing some of the music curriculum but when it comes to the differentiation between intervals, and all that kind of thing- that is very specialist. So, support is necessary- that is it.

Mina: With this kind of circumstance, if an individual student were to want to exceed with music, how are they to do it?

Muireann: You are hoping for a present. In fact, the families pay for expensive music lessons for students and if the families can't afford it, there is no other way out. Music, however, is best done with others. So if you are going for your solitary music lesson in violin or your solo music in piano, that's one thing and it's fantastic. But there is nothing like being able to play with others and do music in a group- whether it is a small group, a rock band, chamber, or a quartet, or in an orchestra school band- there is nothing as good as that. Children will remember

that forever and it stands to them and it stands with them. And if we were just even being selfish, it educates people to be the audience of the future who will appreciate the art form of music and enjoy music no matter what genre- it does not have to be from the opera house or concert hall, but just music in the world and appreciate it. It certainly helps refine people. It is very hard to be a hooligan or a thug when you are into music as well. It does something for the soul.

Mina: How do you think music education ties in with the Transformation of Political and Social Conflicts?

Muireann: I think it transcends it all. I think with politics, an awful lot of it is talk, talk, and action, and talk, and intellectual debate and discussion. Whereas with music, there is an ease beyond that- that you no longer have to have the argument or correct wording with what you have to say- but just that you unite with others, you are more than just your individual self- you are with others- as you create something that is more beautiful than you can do on your own- whether that is playing a pop song, singing in a choir, or in a group, or being involved in a world of music. And you are better because of it, and so are the others. It has the power to break down barriers.

Mina: What about in terms of social conflicts such as homelessness or heroine addicts?

Muireann: People who have big problems as you described, have often had terrible experiences in their lives and their self-esteem is at rock bottom. If you can be creative in some shape or form and do something that you feel proud of, that can only add to your self-esteem and you may not be as much at risk. There can only be of benefit to the individual and to the community so if the government is serious about helping society, to improve in a good caring way towards each other, to support teachers to help students gain a better music education can only be of benefit to us all in the long-term. Absolutely.

After my meeting with Muireann, I became very excited about my independent study, especially because her responses to my interview questions were exactly what I wanted to hear. Also, I am looking forward to observing the different school teachers who were trained through her seminars. I will have the opportunity to see the development in the children as they go up levels in their primary music education. Contrast to the two previous interviews that I had done with secondary level students, my interview with Muireann was very easy flowing and I did not struggle with what kind of questions I should ask. Rather, the questions were pretty automatic and her answers were so thorough that I did not need to think of ways to hear more in-depth replies. Going through the seminars that the teachers attend to prepare to teach their own students also gave me a clear sense of the objectives and the comparisons to the music education of the States.

E-mail Correspondence

To: "Barry Haughey" <Barry.Haughey@parnell.cdvec.ie>

Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2009 9:47 PM

Subject: Re: Mina Won

Dear Barry,

I have a couple of questions to ask- in regards to- The Significance of Music Ed. In the Primary School Curriculum and yourself-

- What is it that you do? Your background? Tell me a little about yourself.

I'm a youth worker for the foundations project based in Dublin city centre. I have a BA Honors in Graphic Design and Post Grad in Secondary Education. I've also worked as a Childhood Support Worker with the ISPC (Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

- Do you think music is beneficial for children [in your experience] ? How?

I fully believe that music, both being played and listened to can benefit all ages of children, this is evident in our group when children will ask to have music on, or experiment with some of the instruments that we have available.

- How does music fit in terms of self-esteem in children?

I think that music offers children an identity, and with this identity I believe it can benefit self esteem.

- Do you think that there is a lack of music education? If so, what do you think is the factor?

I think there's a lack of appreciation of music in education, most schools have the equipment, however we'll find that music (and art) is offered as a 'prize', or perhaps allowed on a Friday afternoon as a form of space filler to the final bell. I believe that both art and music should be considered more important within education

- Do you feel that learning music is too pricey for children?

Music lesson perhaps could be pricey for our attending children, however if there is a strength in music it should be identified and nurtured by home/school/after school club.

- Do you feel like there is enough support for music in the

general classroom?

No, again I think there's a sense of music and art being 'allowed' when the rest of the subjects have been addressed and the week is over

- If children did not have the opportunity of proper education, how do you think this effects the children?

Problematic behavior due to frustration, low self esteem, bullying/being bullied, education not being held in high regard,

- As much as there are homeroom teachers who are willing to work with music in their lesson plan, would you say that there are teachers who do not?

Definitely! Naturally there are teachers who are not musical, however I believe this can be addressed (having a tutor come into class for example). Music can be taught despite the teacher not being a musician.

- If an individual student were to want to exceed with music, how are they to do it?

Approach parents/teacher/youth worker. Attend after school music club if available.

- How do you think music education ties in with the Transformation of Political and Social Conflicts [even in terms of social conflicts s.a homelessness & heroine addicts, etc]?

I believe that any level of creative engagement can help focus children and adults onto something positive which will assist in them feeling proud.

GIRLS AND BOYS ALOUD!

Claire Ryan meets the staff and children involved.

A noisy revolution is taking place in the music rooms of a small group of Dublin schools. They may yet turn out the next Beethoven, but they're about far more than teaching kids the basics of melody.

Noise, glorious noise. It may not be music to everyone's ears at first, but when a school resounds to the racket of crashing cymbals, sawing violins and honking horns, it's often the beginning of something wonderful. Ask Bishop Desmond Tutu. After opening a music room for the Ballymun Music Project at St Joseph's Senior School last month, the venerable churchman told the children who performed at the reception that they were "now beautiful butterflies".

St Joseph's is remarkable for its emphasis on music education, a policy it shares with another Dublin school, St Agnes's Primary in Crumlin. The two schools are evangelical about bringing music into children's lives and how it can make a massive difference to their academic, social and musical development.

Ron Cooney, music teacher at St Joseph's, remembers the beginnings of his school's music programme. Back in the mid '90s he started recorder lessons using funding from a government initiative for schools in disadvantaged areas called Breaking the Cycle. "We'd been teaching the recorder to the kids for a few years, when a young lad called Wayne kept telling me he was going to get a saxophone," he says. "Then one day he turned up with a saxophone. I didn't really have enough time that day to teach him anything but he came back a week later and he'd learned 'Down by the Salley Gardens' or something, all by himself, having only been taught the recorder. It was fantastic. We could suddenly see all the possibilities, so by hook or by crook we got more instruments."

Now St Joseph's is home to a wind band, string ensemble and choir that have recently played in the Helix. Together with eight other schools in the area, it forms part of the Ballymun Music Project.

"Music is part of the fabric of St Joseph's and all the children benefit from being musically aware," says principal Maura Doyle. "It's a rising tide – the morale of the whole school has been raised. All of the children are very proud of it, though not all the pupils are in the orchestra or the band. The wind band has 30 to 40 in it and the strings would be the same, but every child who is interested and willing has the opportunity to take up an instrument.

"The children make the commitment to come in at 8am four mornings a week to practise. We've built up a store of instruments bit by bit over the years and all children in the school have use of them while at St Joseph's."

On the other side of the city, at St Agnes's in Crumlin, involvement in music is total. "Every child in this school from three years of age plays an instrument.

That's over 400 students and it doesn't cost the children a cent," says principal Sr Bernadette Sweeney. "I wanted to give the opportunity to every child here to play an instrument and we have achieved that. When I came to Crumlin, I discovered that there was a great tradition of music, particularly with the older people and I wanted to reawaken that in the children."

Since 2006, under the guidance of Joanna Crooks – the former general manager of the National Youth Orchestra, or the "violin lady" as she is known to the children – progress has at St Agnes's has been extraordinary. The music programme received some well-timed start-up money from the AIB Better Ireland Awards, as well as the Religious Sisters of Charity, among other funders, and the orchestra has won every accolade imaginable. St Agnes's community orchestra now has 11 players in Dublin Youth Orchestras.

Sr Bernadette believes the school's hands-on approach to musical education is the key to its success. "The big problem is that the [music] curriculum has long been too theoretical," she says. "I believe that children can only start to fully understand music when they begin to play, like they can only really start to understand language when they begin to speak."

Clearly the young pupils at St Agnes's are as enthusiastic about the school's music programme as their teachers are. "The children come as a class to learn music, every single class, just like they would with maths or Irish," says "violin lady" Joanna Crooks. "But they choose to be in the orchestra, which is extra practice. And by and large every child who wants to be in the orchestra will be in it. We've got 55 in it at the moment and that will grow to 70 by next year."

Crooks believes the benefits that arise from teaching music to children go far beyond the possibility of turning out a class of little Beethovens. "All children benefit through exposure to music," she says. "It helps their phonetics, their attention, their concentration and their ability to persevere. They learn in a really fun way that you've got to be consistent and work hard if you want to learn an instrument.

"Playing an instrument also teaches children and teenagers about the world beyond music. If they are going to perform, they must have confidence in themselves that they can walk out on stage and play. There is only one chance. The baton goes up and that's it, they begin. I think that carries over into interview situations and life in general. They learn to deal with situations. They stand tall. They respect each other. They get confidence and start to believe in themselves. Then they just get out there and do it."

Sr Bernadette says teaching music will not only help the children as individuals, but wider society: "If you begin to teach children music from an early age, like we do with our three-year-old early starts, it can have an amazing effect. I truly believe you can close the prisons. Music will calm society."

The teachers at St Joseph's are of a similar frame of mind with regards the general role of music education. "Personally I've learned loads through the music programme," says principal Doyle. "Teaching can be a lonely profession. You close the door and go into your classroom. But I've learnt if you open that door through music, it's truly amazing what can happen."

Ron Cooney believes the key to fostering a love of music in children is to reach them when they are at their most receptive. "I find that here in Ballymun, when they hit teenage years, the peer thing is much bigger than maybe somewhere else. That's really where we need to focus the real creativity in the next five or six years, and the music room will help. We need to keep them involved.

"This isn't about discovering diamonds in the rough. This is about access for everybody. This is about kids gaining a sense of achievement, and being involved in something different. Some kids will come in and they will stay with it for a couple of years and they will go. And that's a challenge."

An added incentive for the kids might be if their music shows commercial potential – which, it seems, is already the case.

"When we performed at the Helix recently, Darragh O'Toole, who has worked with U2, wrote this piece of music for us called 'A New Day'," explains Cooney. "The kids wrote the lyrics and the reaction to it has been so overwhelmingly positive. We want to get a professional recording done and release it. I'm badgered by people in Ballymun asking where to buy it!"

"I think I started playing the drums in fourth class and I only started the saxophone a couple of weeks ago. My music teacher Ron told me to try the saxophone and I chose the drums because my uncle has a band and I play the drums with him. It's not really difficult to play the drums. It's quite easy when you follow the beat of the music. It's a bit hard to play the sax but it gets easier. My cousins and myself are trying to make up a band. We don't have a name yet. I play the sax and the drums in the band. We want to play pop music. I love the Jonas Brothers and the Pussycat Dolls."

"I started playing the cello when I went into fourth class and I really enjoy it. It's brilliant. I come four mornings unless I'm sick. I don't find it hard to get up. Some of the songs are hard but I do cop onto them after a few days. I might get my own cello to practise at home, so I can cop on even quicker. I wanted to play the violin first but then I was chosen to play the cello instead. I just love it. I played down in the Helix. Do I get nervous? Well, it depends on how big the stadium is. I think that everyone should give an instrument a good ole bash and if you don't like it, try something else. I love Ozzy Osbourne music and metal rock."

Kayleigh: "I've been with the orchestra for a year and a half. It's great. We've won a few competitions. I play the violin. I like playing the violin because you can

make all different sounds with it. I'm in sixth class. I practise every day. It's a bit hard because I get tired. We practise in the morning, sometimes at lunch and sometimes in the evening after school. When you start, you don't have a clue. It gets easier. I think that the double bass is hard because you have to hold it and it's heavy. The violin is bit easier. I love hip-hop dancing as well."

Aishling: "I've been going to the orchestra for two and a half years. I play the double bass. I really like it but it can be hard because it's so big. Sometimes when we go to competitions it's heavy to carry. I only bring it home at Christmas or the summer holidays. Kayleigh is older than me. She's three minutes older. We have different friends. My two best friends are in the orchestra; one plays cello and one plays bass. But me and my sister are the best of friends as well."

"I play the double bass. I started playing four months ago. I wanted to play in the orchestra and my teacher gave me the double bass. I practise during school and after school. I'm not allowed bring it home because it's too big.

"I have to do three lessons – I have to do two in class and I have to do one after school. It's kind of hard, like when you get a new book of music and you don't know what notes are in it. It takes me about two or three weeks to learn. Then I know it forever.

"I can't practise my music with my sister Lauren because I can't bring my double bass home. My sister is five years older than me."

"None of my friends play instruments. There are five boys in the orchestra and the rest are all girls. It's hard when you start and go over to the orchestra and you learn how to play an instrument but it gets easier and easier every week. I think the viola is easy. It's easier than a double bass.

"If I was telling somebody how to learn an instrument I'd show them the strings and tell them to get an easy music book with the letters underneath. Then it's easy to learn. My mam thinks I'm brilliant."

April 12, 2009

Education: Sing and you're winning

The benefits for kids in learning to sing aren't trumpeted enough, says Karen Robinson, especially for those with low self-esteem

Is singing a once-a-year event in your family, confined to cathartic rendition of carols at a Christmas church service or round the tree? And if you did belt out favourite carols last week, did you find it surprisingly enjoyable? And you might have noticed that even the usually too-cool-for-yule teenagers felt better for exercising their lungs and vocal chords.

The real benefits of singing reach into many areas of teenagers' lives, says Jo Thompson, a London singing teacher and author of *Find Your Voice*. "It increases the heart rate, reduces tension and raises energy levels. And it helps kids to raise their self-esteem. A lot of young people are very self-conscious and singing helps them express themselves. And if they learn to control their breathing they can use that to help in situations where they feel anxious.

"Singing gives a great sense of accomplishment, especially for academic low achievers. I worked with one girl who was excluded from her comprehensive school, and singing really made her feel better about herself, that she could achieve something."

So wouldn't it be marvellous if children and teenagers could have more singing in their everyday lives? But what opportunities do young people have for singing? Singing is a statutory requirement of the music national curriculum from the age of five, but it ends at 14. And as there are no set time allocations for singing, it can be pushed to the margins.

Thompson reckons a lot depends on the budgets schools have. The lucky ones, such as state primaries in the wealthy London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, can employ specialist teachers but others, such as her sons' primary in cash-strapped Ealing, have to make do with a weekly sing-song with the deputy head.

And singing teachers need imagination if they're not going to turn their young charges off for life: "Kids I know are being told they can't sing in tune so they can't be in the choir — now they'll never open their mouths again. Yet anybody can sing — to different degrees. Some are born with a great natural instrument, but you can teach anyone and make them better."

MJ Paranzino, an American singer based in Brighton, is proof of this. She runs regular day-long vocal workshops, where clients — including professional singers, actors wanting to improve their speaking voices, adults who just want to get in touch with their inner diva and pop and rock-mad youngsters — spend a day together seeing just how much fun they can have.

The effect on the boys — aged 12 to 15 — at a class I attended was a revelation. You wouldn't have thought that a grey-haired middle-aged woman who, before we'd been there long, had already told them to sit up straight and take their hands out of their pockets — and then got them to stand up alone in front of the others and sing Tonight from West Side Story — would be a figure the lads would warm to, but after a few Kevin-esque snorts and nudges they gave her their total absorbed attention.

Without baffling us with musical technicalities, she brought out the best in everyone, improving their tone and, more importantly, their confidence. "Mike is a real singer," she remarked at one point. "He just doesn't know it yet." But he had a good idea by the end of the day.

Paranzino demands energy and commitment. "Oh, you are so lacklustre," she chided them. "Don't hold back, go over the top — then you can put it right. If you don't go over the top, you'll never discover what you can do."

The boys weren't allowed to give less than their best. "Oh, I'm bored!" she exclaimed at one point. "Have some magic about you, don't be boring." After that, they weren't.

A day with Paranzino is a mixture of breathing, vocal exercises, choral improvisations and work on a selection of songs, from a "girly" Louis Prima number to Nina Simone's Feeling Good.

Maria Boyle, who sings with Drivin' Miss Daisy, a Sussex-based semi-professional jazz band, got some useful tips about how to tell the boys in the band what key she wanted to sing in — as opposed to what key they wanted to play in — while the lads with rock-band aspirations learnt how to move their bodies, and especially what to do with their hands while singing, and were advised to "embrace the rhythm" when writing songs.

"Harry, baby, I love you, you're so groovy," she enthused at one point. "She really makes you feel like you can sing," Harry told me afterwards.

There was a lovely moment in the afternoon when the boys were doing the "doo-wah, doo-wah" backing vocals as each of us girls took turns to belt out a couple of verses from Bonnie Raitt's Give It Up or Let Me Go. When eight-year-old Nancy took her turn, in her sweet but tiny voice, they all, quite spontaneously, lowered their "doo-wahs" almost to a whisper so she could still be heard. They were so unselfconsciously "into the music" it happened quite naturally.

Thompson says that working on the singing voice also helps the speaking voice: "With singing, you feel good in the moment, but it's also a confidence-builder."

Yet another reason why children should be given every encouragement to carry on singing at every opportunity.

“But if they’re not singing what they want to sing, it doesn’t work, they’re not excited by it. My experience in schools is that they’re quite classical, and none of the kids I come across want to do classical music.”

Parents should encourage their children to sing around the house, she says: “Don’t tell them not to sing along to their CDs.”

Paranzino also supports more formal group activities. “Encourage them to join a group or a choir,” she says.

And if you or your children want to find a singing teacher outside school, both Paranzino and Thompson agree on the following points.

Poetry Music and Sounds

BCP DRAFT LIT 94

First Grade - Poetry - Lesson 17 - I Know All the Sounds the Animals Make

Procedure

Introduce the poem by asking the students to imitate the sounds that various animals make. Ask: What sound does a cow make? (moo) What sound does a duck make? (quack) Continue to ask the students to tell the sounds of several other animals.

Tell the students that the poem you are about to read is called I Know All the Sounds the Animals Make. Suggest that the poet, Jack Prelutsky, is saying that the speaker of the poem

knows quite a lot. Tell the students to listen to the poem and see how many animal sounds the speaker really knows. Read the poem exaggerating the names of the animals who supposedly produce the sounds.

I Know All the Sounds the Animals Make

I know all the sounds the animals make
and make them all day from the moment I wake,
I roar like a mouse and I purr like a moose,
I hoot like a duck and I moo like a goose.
I squeak like a cat and I quack like a frog,
I oink like a bear and I honk like a hog,
I croak like a cow and I bark like a bee,
no wonder the animals marvel at me.

Ask the students if the person speaking really does know all the sounds. Ask: Why do you think he said them this way? (to make the poem funny) Would this be a funny poem if he gave all the correct sounds? (no)

Tell the students that you would like to have them participate in the recitation of the poem as you read it again. Tell them that they may make the actual sound after you say it (e.g. roar [ROAR]), and imitate the animal you name (e.g. mouse—draw arms up to chest, hunch shoulders to make body look small). Read the poem again, this time pausing to allow the students to participate. Displaying the poem and pointing to the animal sounds and names would be helpful.

Ask if the students think that it is possible that the animals and sounds are simply confused. Using a chart or an overhead transparency (master provided), have the students identify the correct animals for each of the sounds listed.

You may wish to read other selections by Jack Prelutsky or listen to or watch him performing his poetry.

The Sound Collector

A stranger called this morning
Dressed all in black and grey
Put every sound into a bag
And carried them away.

The whistling of the kettle
The turning of the lock
The purring of the kitten
The ticking of the clock.

The popping of the toaster
The crunching of the flakes
When you spread the marmalade
The scraping noise it makes.

The hissing of the frying-pan
The ticking of the grill
The bubbling of the bathtub
As it starts to fill.

The drumming of the raindrops
On the window-pane
When you do the washing-up
The gurgle of the drain.

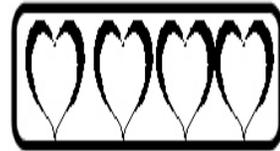
The crying of the baby
The squeaking of the chair
The swishing of the curtain
The creaking of the stair.

A stranger called this morning
He didn't leave his name
Left us only silence
Life will never be the same.

Roger Mc Gough [The Ring of Words-An anthology of poems for children Faber and Faber 1998 ISBN 0-571-20030-3]

Concepts Worksheet

pulse



duration



tempo



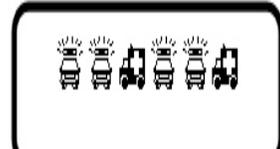
pitch



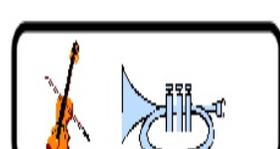
dynamics



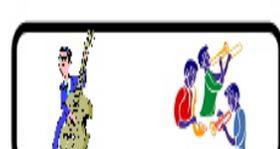
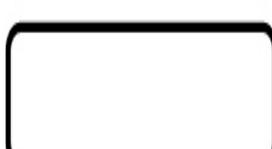
structure



timbre



texture



style



JAZZ Traditional
world Classical

Some Ideas for Homemade Musical Instruments:

Scrapers:

Guiro – use any empty corrugated plastic bottle (e.g. “Crisp n Dry” cooking oil). Remove label, soak to remove any oil and play by scraping with a dowel.

Sand blocks – cut out 2 pieces of sandpaper and super-glue onto wooden blocks. Play by scraping one off the other. You can try different types of sandpaper (coarse, fine etc.) to explore different sounds.

Shakers:

Shakers – Use a variety of different fillings e.g. salt, sugar, dried peas/lentils, popcorn seeds, pebbles etc. to fill a variety of containers e.g. vitamin pill jars, hot chocolate/ “Bisto” containers, camera film holders etc.

Maraca(s) – Blow up a balloon to required size for head of maraca. Put papier mâché (newspaper dipped in wallpaper paste) around the balloon. Let sit for a day until it has hardened. Burst balloon with a pin and remove it from the papier mâché. Fill with dried peas/lentils/rice. Place dowel or piece of wood/card into the bottom of balloon and tape onto the head as a handle. Paint the instrument.

Fruit Shakers – Select a fruit (orange, apple, banana) and cover in papier mâché. Allow to dry overnight. When it has hardened carefully cut the fruit in half and remove it from the papier mâché. Fill the shaped papier mâché with seeds/rice/dried peas/lentils/popcorn and tape together again. Paint the fruit shakers appropriate colours.

Jingle Sticks - Items such as keys or buttons can be threaded onto piece of fishing gut/string. Alternatively old metal bottle tops can be threaded onto wire from a wire clothes hanger (this activity requires holes to be pierced in the bottle tops by an adult).

Rainstick- Use the cardboard tubing from a roll of tinfoil/ kitchen roll/ wrapping paper. Pierce hairrips in through the cardboard all along the length of the tube. Paint the tube. When dry cover the protruding edges of the hairrips with coloured/masking tape.

Strikers:

Copper Chimes - Use a pipe cutter to cut different lengths of copper piping or purchase pipe cuttings from a hardware shop/plumber (they'll be glad to get rid of them). Use an open shoe box and thread a length of fishing gut through one side of the shoe box, through a copper pipe and then through the other end of the shoe box. Tie in a knot. Try this with several more lengths of fishing gut and different lengths of copper pipes. Decorate box when finished and play using a dowel or spoon to strike.

Boomwhackers – Simply use two or three empty plastic mineral bottles of different size/shape and discover the different pitches they produce when you whack them off something!

Drum - Stretch a piece of material/plastic bag /balloon over a container and attach with tape and/or super glue. Play using hands or dowel.

Bottle Xylophone – Obtain several identical empty wine bottles. Remove the labels from the bottles. Place the bottles in a line. Fill each bottle with a different amount of water. Tap each bottle with a spoon and listen to the pitch of the note produced. Experiment with different levels of water in each bottle to see if you can arrange a scale of notes going from lowest to highest.

String:

Harp – This is very similar to the copper chimes. The difference is that you thread different lengths of fishing gut diagonally across a shoe box. Play by plucking the strings.

Guitar - Place elastic bands (perhaps of different thickness) across the opening of an old tissue box. Play by strumming like a guitar!

Wind:

Tube trombone – Take 2 tubes of cardboard (from wrapping paper/ tin foil etc). One of the tubes should be narrow enough to fit inside the other. Tape a sheet of paper around the end of the bottom of the larger tube to create a “loud speaker”. Paint both tubes. Place the narrow tube inside the large one. Sing / talk through the tube. Notice what happens when you make the trombone longer by pulling narrow tube out a little more.

Straw Oboe – Flatten about 2cm of the end of a drinking straw with your teeth and use scissors to cut off the flattened corners to make a point. Put about 2cm of the straw end in your mouth with your lips closed but a little loose. Blow hard into the straw. If there is no sound blow less until a sound is made. Notice what happens to the notes if the straw is made shorter by snipping a piece from the end of the straw.

Panpipes - Use a selection of straws/narrow tubes connected together. Blow gently over the top to produce a sound. If using ½ inch PVC piping you can achieve the pentatonic scale by cutting the pipes into the following lengths:

d = 15.2cm	s = 9.8cm
r = 13.8cm	l = 8.7cm
m = 12.1cm	

You will need to tape the openings at the bottom of the pipes using duct tape.

Comb Harmonica - Fold a small piece of tracing or tissue paper in half and place over the teeth of a small comb. Hold the comb and tissue paper against your lips and hum a tune.

GENERATING MELODY WITH A GROUP

Display Chime Bars , Indian Bells and Triangles – instruments with a delicate / gentle timbre.

Invite a group of about 12 people to pick an instrument.

Explain that you will count 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 when they start to play.

Pick one number between 1 and 8 ; play on your number as conductor mouths the sequence of numbers and finger counts . 4 sets of 8 beats [32 bars]

Emphasise slightly first beat [number 1]

Repeat with dynamics in mind , i.e. 16 bars loud and 16 bars soft.

Choose a title for the piece !

Record it on a tape recorder if possible .

Are there any observations / changes you would like to make ?

If you would like to play that piece on another occasion , suggest a way in which we might devise a way of recalling and recording what was played [names of notes and their sequence]

Extensions ; [1] Play on one number only.

[2] Play on two numbers- an agreed number for all e.g. number 5
and a

Number of your own choice.

[3] Play on any two numbers of your own choice.

STRUCTURE

Repeat with structure in mind , i.e. 16 bars loud , 16 bars soft and maybe 16 bars loud , with a rall [slowing down] on last 8 bars .

TEMPO

Tempo Change – Waltz Time – so change sequence of numbers to 1-6 , emphasising slightly the first beat in the sequence. Pick one number .

Repeat as above .

Group composition- 5 people only

Five people choose any 5 chime bars at all .

Number the volunteers 1,2 ,3,4,5.

Write numbers 1-5 on black board.
Second line mix up the number .
Third line mix up the numbers .
Fourth line numbers 5-1 in reverse.

Example	1	2	3	4	5
	3	1	5	2	4
	5	3	4	1	2
	5	4	3	2	1

Invite the group to play on their number . Have a little pause at the end of each line.

Invite ideas for development , for example Structure .

Structure

First play the 4 lines loudly .Second time the four lines soft..

ABA [A section loud and B section soft]

ABBA

Invite ideas as to how to make B DIFFERENT – e.g double each note .

Try Structuring the melody in ABAB , ABA and ABBA

Introduce the PENTATONIC SCALE idea.

Pentatonic Scale : doh , re . mi . soh . la

Invite the group of five to swap chime bars [which were randomly chosen and sounded beautiful because of their TIMBRE] for the following notes ; C D E G and A. These are the notes of the pentatonic Scale in C .

Repeat the above sequence.

Invite discussion about preferences.

PENTATONIC SCALE

Development of Chime bar Selection – only use the Pentatonic Scale . For ease of organisation ask group to use Black Chime Bars only { Pentatonic Scale of F Sharp]

Four beats in a bar [counting 1-8 for convenience, emphasising 1 slightly] group picks one number only .

Procede as before .

Pick TWO NUMBERS of your choice and sequence as before.

Development for STRUCURE A/B/A/

A section LOUD

B section SOFT or EACH NOTE TO BE DOUBLED or

A section as Loud

A section SOFT and B section LOUD or LOUD AND DOUBLED or DOUBLED NOTES PLAYED IN TI –TI RHYTHM or DOUBLED NOTES PLAYED AS FIRST NOTE LOUD AND SECOND ONE SOFT – LIKE AN ECHO !

Development of structure ; A B B A etc.

Music. Pulse games.

Names

Slap clap click click – Repeat many times

1 2 3 4

Child says name on clicks

Group repeats child's name on clicks

Continue around the circle.

Slap clap click click – Repeat many times

1 2 3 4

Count 1 2 3 4 and do the actions above

Build up the pulse

Omit 1 (silent beat) twice

Put 1 back in and get the pattern back

Omit 2 twice

Put 2 back in and build up the full pattern again

Omit 2 and 3 and leave out actions.

Then resume as before

Stamping game

Count sets of 4 beats.

Stamp on 1 only and say 2,3,4

Repeat till secure

Count sets of 3 beats .

Group stamps on 1 (first beat) only and counts rhythmically 2,3

Mix up (hold up fingers to denote how many beats in the bar)

Sets of 2 beats

Sets of 3 beats

Sets of 4 beats.

Stamp always on 1 only.

This lesson is perfect for teaching primary grades about the value of ti, tah and toh before they are ready to read.

1. Have your students stand.
2. Have them step to a slow beat saying "toh, toh" several times. This should be the value of a half note.
3. Next, they should tap their thighs to what should equal a quarter note, and say "tah, tah, tah, tah".
4. Finally, have them clap their hands to "ti, ti, ti, ti" at what should be the speed of an eighth note.
5. Mix and match patterns of eighths, quarters and half notes with the appropriate step, tap or clap.

Echo clapping

Four beat pulse.

Teacher claps a 4 beat pattern and class repeats. Everyone together claps the beat.

After a while leader claps a new sequence but the class still claps the original sequence.

When leader says change on 4th beat of the sequence the new rhythm is recognised and played by all.

After a while leader quietly introduces a new sequence.

Main group does not join in.

When leader says Change they are allowed to join in.

Brilliant for concentration doing 2 things at the same time. Clapping one sequence and being aware of another one.

Differentiation. When the group changes to the leader's rhythm the period of everyone being together can shorten until when as the group changes to the new rhythm the leader introduces the new pattern immediately.

Rhythm dictation

Teacher claps a sequence – ta ta ti-ti ta and children write the stick notation .

Standing up – 4 beat rhythm patterns.

Using head, shoulders, clap and stamp leader performs a rhythmic pattern and the children copy it..

Put up 4 charts with a different 4 beat pattern on each one.

Games

Hide one. Clap the rhythm of the hidden one. Identify..

Composition

Start with clapping first – palm on hands.

Person 1 claps a 4 beat rhythm ta ti-ti ta-fa- te-fi ta. And repeats it several times.

Person 2 claps a new rhythm and joins in.

Each person in turn in the group invents a complimentary 4 beat pattern.

Repeat over and over till secure.

Introduce an instrument for each person...

Using Animal names for composing.

Dog

Rabbit

Elephant

Alligator

Go over the rhythms and claps.

Now teacher clasp a rhythm – what animals were there?

Dog elephant alligator dog.

Alligator dog Alligator ^

Invent 4 beat patterns using clapping of animal names

Children guess what animals teacher claps.

Teacher writes up the names { or pictures} on the blackboard and claps one of them. Which one did I clap?

Lots of practice.

Give out untuned percussion.

One child claps and then plays a 4 beat pattern.

Transfer that pattern to a tuned percussion – glockenspiel.

Other children compose an animal pattern ostinato to accompany e.g. dog, rabbit, dog, rabbit etc.

Listening to music – Let the music take you on a journey.

Senses – Where did you go?

What did you see?

What did you hear?

What did you smell?

How did you feel?

Sound and Music ~ some background information

“It will be important that the work on sound be linked to the music curriculum”
Science Teacher Guidelines, p92

Primary Science? “Children thinking, talking, doing and making”

In science, Sound is a strand unit of the strand Forces, the others being Magnetism and Electricity, Light, Heat and Forces. When working scientifically children will be Questioning, Observing, Predicting, Investigating and Experimenting, Estimating and Measuring, Analysing, Recording and Communicating, and Evaluating.

Science also includes, importantly, opportunities for Designing and Making. Pupils are enabled to Explore, Plan, Make and Evaluate. There are, therefore, many opportunities for Integration, not least among Music, Science, Visual Art, Language and Mathematics.

Exploring Sound is a strand unit of the Music curriculum. This workshop is particularly aimed at Science and Music, and especially considers the importance of investigation.

Science Curriculum objectives: through Science the child is enabled (progressively/sequentially/developmentally from Infants to Sixth) to:

recognize and identify a variety of sound in the environment; appreciate the importance of noise control

identify and differentiate between high and low sounds, loud and soft sounds,

explore ways of making different sounds using a variety of materials ~ tins, metals, bottles and paper

design and make a range of simple percussion instruments ~ investigate how changes in materials, volume and beaters affect the sound produced; design and make a range of simple string instruments using a variety of tools and materials ~ investigate how changes in length, tension, thickness and types of materials affect the sound produced;

design and make simple woodwind instruments ~ investigate how the length, thickness, diameter and types of materials used will influence the sound produced

learn that sound is a form of energy

understand and explore how different sounds may be made by making a variety of materials vibrate ~ skin of drum, plastic ruler on table, string of an instrument, 'seed' in whistle

explore the fact that, and how, sound travels through materials ~ air, water, wood, metal; identify materials that muffle sounds; design and make a pair of ear muffs

appreciate the importance of hearing

A Sound Foundation! – a few snippets to know

Sound is all around us – except in outer space. It is caused by vibrations. A vibrating object causes the air around it to compress and decompress, usually in all directions at once. Think of the Slinky® and the waves we produced, longitudinal and transverse. Think also of concentric spheres.

As the sound travels, the energy of the vibration is absorbed by soft materials and reflected by hard materials.

When the vibrations are very rapid the pitch of the sound is high; similarly, when something is vibrating very slowly the pitch is low. One vibration per second is a very low frequency and is a Hertz (Hz). The human ear can detect waves with frequencies 20Hz to 20,000Hz. Our ability to detect high-pitched sounds declines rapidly and at a predictable rate as we age. Ultrasound is when something is vibrating at more than 20,000 Hz – so we can't hear it; infrasound is very slow vibration. [Hz is the measure of any frequency, not just the frequency of sound waves].

Pitch

Strings: The pitch produced by a vibrating string depends on three factors:

Thickness (mass) ~ bass strings on a guitar are wound with wire to make them heavy; tightness ~ to raise the pitch you tighten the string.
Length ~ longer strings make a lower-pitched sound.

Pipes: Pipes such as organ pipes, recorders or bottles will, when blown into or across, produce a low-pitched note if they contain a long column of air.

Bottles or tumblers of water: Just to complicate matters, a bottle nearly full of water will produce a low-pitched sound when struck. In this case the glass and the water are vibrating, not the air.

Tuned Percussion: Larger xylophone bars, chime bars or drums produce a lower-pitched sound when struck.

Loud or soft? The volume of a sound depends on the amount of energy in the vibration, e.g. hit it, blow it or pluck it harder.

Sound Travels. Sound travels faster through solids and liquids, and slower through gases, but does not travel at all through space; this is because, unlike light, it needs a medium to travel through.

What materials transmit sound, and how quickly?

Air 330m/s; You hear the sound of thunder after you see the lightning, which has heated up the air to the point where the air expands explosively.

Water 1400m/s;

Steel 5,200 m/s; Brick 3,500m/s

Wood 3,800m/s; Glass 4,500m/s

Let's not confuse the children!

The difference between pitch and volume is important. Teachers sometimes confuse children by using high/low when they should use loud/soft. Reserve high/low for pitch

Sound in our lives

- Socially and Leisure – communication,
- Warnings – buzzers, sirens, doorbell, phone etc.
- Work - machinery
- Mood – church, supermarket, tone of voice
- Noise control
- Weather/natural sounds
- Animals/birds

The language of sound

- High(er), highest; low(er), lowest
- Soft, loud, quiet, whisper, shout
- Banging, booming, tapping, tinkling
- Gurgling, gushing, rippling, flowing
- Whirring, scratching, scraping
- Sweet, rough, rasping, shrill, cooing

The Sense of hearing

- Consider hearing-impaired child
- Less acute as we grow older
- Often Augmented, modified or protected:
Listening Trumpet, Stethoscope, Water Inspector, Burglar, Bomb Disposal,
Hearing Aid, Headphones, Mufflers, Sound-proofing

Speed/Frequency/Pitch

- Humans can hear 20 - 20,000Hz
- Elephant, 5 – 18,000Hz
- Pigeon, 0.1 – 15,000Hz
- Bat, 1,000 – 210,000Hz
- Dog, 15 – 50,000Hz
- Cat, 60 – 65,000Hz
- Dolphin, 150 – 200,000Hz
- Frog, 50 – 10,000Hz

How loud is too loud?

- Measured in Bels – decibels dB
- More than 120dB????
- Conversation 20-50dB; Loud 50-65dB
- Hair Dryer 80dB; Heavy Traffic 90dB
- Thunder 90-110dB; Banger/car! 100dB
- Rock Concert 100-120dB; Plane 110-200dB
- Space Shuttle Lift-off 200dB

Care/safety

- Care of the ear- never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear!
- Never make loud noises into someone's ear
- Discos, industrial/domestic machines, traffic noise,
- Volume control on electronic equipment
- Handle instruments with care

Materials (One of the Strands of the Science Curriculum)

Material of container used to make maracas, small shakers

Materials put into containers to make maracas and small shakers

Materials used in making drums/bodhrans/beaters

Strings: elastic bands, nylon, paper, wool etc. one-string guitars: length and thickness of elastic bands used

Material of container used to amplify the sound made by one-string instruments

Material used to make sound by blowing

Health and Safety Issues

Wash out all containers before use

Bottles/Glass- demonstration by teacher

Sharing straws/pipes used for sound by blowing

Safe use of all tools, e.g. cutting and filing copper pipe; cutting and smoothing other materials

Safe use of adhesives

Volume control

Investigations – the heart of the Science curriculum

Shakers/maracas

- How does the size of container, material of container affect volume? Timbre?
- How does the type of filling used affect volume? Timbre?
- How does amount of filling affect volume? Timbre?
- How should you hold the shaker? How can you use your hand to absorb some of the sound?
- If your eyes are closed can you identify the material of container, or the material poured in, by the timbre?
- Find out if water could be used in a shaker?
- If you applied paper or paint to decorate your shaker, would it affect the volume? Timbre?

Chime Bars – wood, metal, other

- How does the length of the piece affect volume? Timbre? Pitch? Duration of note?
- How does the diameter of dowel affect volume? Timbre? Pitch? Duration?
- How does type of wood affect volume? Timbre? Pitch? Duration?
- How does type of beater – wooden, plastic, metal affect volume? Timbre? Duration?

- What is the best way to hold the wooden bars to get volume? To get a clear sound? To lengthen/shorten duration?
- Could we make a scale (five note, eight note) using wood? Metal? Can we compose/play a short tune?
- Does a longer piece of wood always give a lower note? What about metal?
- What is the shortest piece of copper (or other) pipe we can use and still get a clear sound? Does it depend on the diameter? Or how we hold the pipe?

Strings

- What materials can be stretched and plucked to produce sound?
- Can you identify, from the timbre, the material stretched and plucked?
- How is pitch influenced by length? What about thickness? Tension?
- What factors affect volume?
- How can we amplify the sound?
- If we stretch an elastic band across a box, what factors affect volume? Timbre? Pitch? Duration of note?
- If we amplify the sound by stretching a string across a box, how important is shape of box? What about size? Material?
- In making a two-string guitar, what is the best material for a bridge-piece?

Wind Instruments

- (And don't forget that pupils should not share pipes!)
- What factors combine to give a clear note when blowing across the end of a pipe? E.g. even edge
- How is pitch affected by length of pipe?
- How is the timbre affected by length, material in pipe, thickness, diameter, size of hole?
- What factors affect the volume?
- How can you change the length of the column of air vibrating in the pipe?
- Could you build a short scale using one pipe? Using several pipes?
- When investigating the reed of an oboe, or bagpipes, what factors affect volume? Pitch? Timbre?

Drums and Bodhrans

Size, shape, material of 'container'

Material used for skin of drum – timbre, volume, endurance/wear, duration of sound

How best to fix skin to container

Material, length, diameter, shape of beater; best way to hold beater

Other investigation ideas

Bottles and Water

Size of bottle (glass, mug etc)

Amount of water

Other liquids – same amount, same bottle, same sound? E.g. cooking oil

Type of beater used

Make a 5-note scale? 8-note? Play a tune?

Exploring Sounds – integrated with Music and Science

Do you hear what I hear ?

Test objects : - baby rattle , maraccas , radio , bell , whistle , stapler , cellotape , two spoons , a cup , sandpaper .

1 Cover test objects .

2 Children sit with their backs to you . [Teacher at the back of the room perhaps ?]

3 Create sounds with each object and children record in their copy what sound they have heard.

4 When sounds are complete have children face forward and discuss , predict etc.

5 Conclusion : - Sound consists of invisible vibrations that travel in waves – Sound Waves . Sound Waves enter the ear when they are changed into nerve signals and sent to the brain for identification .

DIFFERENTIATION

1 For very young children display all sound sources first .

2 To encourage Oral Language have children work in PAIRS whispering their guessed answer to one another before recording it in their copies

Clapping Patterns

1 . Have children listen to and repeat clapping patterns.

First students watch , listen and repeat patterns. Then students close their eyes and repeat patterns by listening only

"FIND THE SOUND"

Materials needed: 1. A chair in the middle of the room 2. Favorite percussive and/or pitched instruments. 3. a blindfold.

OBJECTIVES: 1. To help reinforce listening skills. 2. To help children in knowing the particular sounds of certain instruments.

GAME: 1. Choose a student to sit in the chair and blindfold him/her. 2. Choose an instrument and go to certain place in the classroom. 3. Begin to play the instrument with a continuous rhythmic pattern. 4. Ask the blindfolded student to stand up and walk toward the sound. (make sure that their hands are outstretched as to assist them finding the sound) 5. Once they've found you, have them name the instrument being played. If they name correctly, then they get to choose an instrument to play and they choose a student to be the "blindfolded one". I guarantee that the students will love it!!

Music Listening

Junior Infants

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. Allegro Finale from "Fireworks Music" | Georg Friedrich Handel |
| 2. Air on the G String. | Johann Sebastian Bach |
| 3. Les Toreadores, from "Carmen". | George Bizet |
| 4. Morning, from "Peer Gynt Suite no.1". | Edvard Grieg |
| 5. Andante, from ("The Clock") Symphony no.101 | Franz Josef Haydn |
| 6. Allegro, from "Spring" | Antonio Vivaldi |
| 7. Radetzky March | Johann Strauss |
| 8. Traumeri (Dreaming) – "Scenes from Childhood" | Robert Schumann |
| 9. The Swan, from "The Carnival of the Animals" | Camille Saint- |
| Saëns | |
| 10. Waltz, from "Coppelia" | Leo Delibes |

Senior Infants

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Polovtsian Dances, from "Prince Igor" | Alexander Borodin |
| 2. Badinerie, from "Suite no. 2" | Johann Sebastian Bach |
| 3. Can-Can, from "Orpheus in the Underworld" | Jacques Offenbach |
| 4. Largo, from "Xerxes" | Georg Friedrich |
| Handel | |
| 5. Trumpet Voluntary | Jeremiah Clarke |
| 6. Allegro, from "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" | Wolfgang Amadeus |
| Mozart | |
| 7. Overture, from "The Nutcracker Suite" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 8. The Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy, and | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 9. The Dance of the Acrobats, from "The Nutcracker" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 10. Rondo from "Horn Concerto no. 4" | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart |

First Class

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Rondo, from "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart |
| 2. The Flight of the Bumble Bee | Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov |
| 3. In The Hall of the Mountain King, from "Peer Gynt" | Edvard Grieg |
| 4. Overture, from "William Tell" | Gioacchino Rossini |
| 5. Arrival of the Queen of Sheba, from "Solomon" | Georg Friedrich Handel |
| 6. Minuet, from "String Quintet" | Luigi Boccherini |
| 7. Habanera, from "Carmen" | George Bizet |
| 8. Golliwog's Cake Walk, from "Children's Corner" | Claude Debussy |
| 9. Waltz, from "Swan Lake" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 10. March, from "Karelia Suite" | Jean Sibelius |

Second Class

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Dance of the Swans, from "Swan Lake" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 2. Chinese Dance, from "The Nutcracker" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 3. Menuetto, from "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart |
| 4. Sabre dance | Aram Khachaturian |
| 5. Adagio, from "Clarinet Concerto" | Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart |
| 6. Overture, from "1812" | Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky |
| 7. Presto, from "Water Music" | Georg Friedrich Handel |
| 8. Ride of the Valkyries, from "Die Walküre" | Richard Wagner |
| 9. "Raindrop" Prelude in Db | Frédéric Chopin |
| 10. Hut on Fowl's Legs, from "Pictures at an Exhibition" | Modest Mussorgsky |
| 11. Mars, the Bringer of War, from "The Planets" | Gustav Holst |

“Spring” – by Vivaldi

Vivaldi lived in Venice around the time of Gallileo [3rd Class History] who was the first person to look at the moon with a telescopehe noticed craters on the moon. Gallileo also noticed that with a telescope he could see that Jupiter had 4 moons...

If you were painting a picture about Spring what would you draw? What colours would you use ? Would you have some dark colours and some light colours in your picture ?

Why?

Mucha , the Czech painter who painted in the Art Nouveau Style and who lived in the early part of the 20th Century painted The Four Seasons . Show . Talk and discuss.

If you were a composer setting out to compose music for Spring what instruments would you use ? What instruments would you not use ?

Would you have the music loud all the time ? Soft all the time ? Why ?

Listen carefully to the music. Can you hear the following instruments ?

- A] Violin
- B] Drums
- C] Trumpet
- D] Cellos
- E] Flute
- F] Harpsichord

Why is there thunder and lightning in the music for Spring ? Do we sometimes get showers of rain etc. in Spring ?

What do we hear in the Music ?

1. Spring Theme
- 2 .Birdsong.
- 3 Spring Theme
4. A brook glinting in the sunlight
5. Spring Theme
6. Thunder and Lightning
- 7 . Spring Theme
8. Birdsong “The birds resume their magic music”.
- 9 Spring Theme

Active Response ..

Listen with your mind and heart . What did you see ? What did you feel ? Is it happy / sad music ?

Pretend you are the Conductor . Let's see how you would conduct!

Pretend you are playing some of the instruments as you listen to the music.

Draw a picture of Spring

Using Spring colours of your choice draw a design .

Sing the Spring Theme to "La" – the first time in a medium voice – on the repeat more quietly

Movement

Pretend you are a daffodil bulb planted deep in the soil. As soon as you hear the Birdsong part you start to grow upwards to the sunlight.

P.E. – Act out all the stages of birds building nests , laying eggs. Hatching , teaching little fledglings to fly , catching worms , roosting at night on branches , evading local cats etc.

Marla – Make a bird's nest with little eggs inside..

DESCRIPTIONS OF PROGRAMS

The Ark, Children's Cultural Centre

The Ark, Europe's first custom-built Children's Cultural Centre, programmes, promotes and hosts high quality cultural work which is by children, for children and about children.

The Ark is a charitable organisation, founded on the principle that all children, as citizens, have the same cultural entitlements as adults.

We work with a diverse range of Irish and international artists to develop original, inspirational and playful programmes for children (aged between 3- 14) so that they can extend their imaginations and horizons.

The Contemporary Music Centre

The Contemporary Music Centre is Ireland's national archive and resource centre for new music, supporting the work of composers throughout the Republic and Northern Ireland.

The Centre is used, nationally and internationally, by performers, composers, promoters and members of the public interested in finding out more about music in Ireland. Its library and sound archive, open to the public free of charge, contain the only comprehensive collection in existence of music by Irish composers. Extensive reference and advice services are available and the Centre's web site provides access to CMC's resources for those who cannot visit in person.

The Contemporary Music Centre engages in an ongoing programme of development work to promote new Irish music at home and abroad, and is a member of the Forum for Music in Ireland and the International Association of Music Information Centres (IAMIC).

Irish Traditional Music Archive

The Archive has four main aims:

Collection:

To collect all the materials of Irish traditional music and to make a representative collection of the traditional music of other countries. It does this through the donation, copying and purchase of materials, and by a programme of audio and video recording in the field and in the Archive's recording studio. This programme has recorded over 1,300 singers, instrumentalists and dancers since 1993, and in addition has recorded lectures, public recitals and concerts, and other traditional music events.

Preservation:

To preserve these materials indefinitely for present use and for future generations. It does this by such techniques as digitising, binding, security

copying on paper and different digital formats, and by specialised archival and digital storage. The Archive has won a Gulbenkian Museums and Archives award for 'Best Collections Care'.

Organisation:

To organise the information and materials held by the Archive. It does this by such library techniques as accessioning, classifying, stock-listing, cataloguing and indexing. Since its foundation the Archive has taken advantage of the development of information technology, and its holdings are organised on a networked computer system to a degree of detail not found elsewhere. This digital control of information is a major aspect of the Archive, and will be the basis of much future dissemination of information through the Internet

Dissemination:

To make the materials and information held as widely available as possible to the general public, consistent with the preservation of material and within the limitations of copyright law and Archive resources. It does this by giving full direct reference access; by giving limited remote access by phone, fax, post and Internet; by extensive broadcasting and lecturing, exhibiting and publishing activities; and by cooperating with a wide range of other organisations engaged in performance, teaching, broadcasting, publishing, and archiving. This is in support of the living tradition and contemporary traditional artists and audiences. The Archive's secondary aim, of collecting traditional music from other countries in a representative way, is to provide a national access point to those musics and to the world of ethnomusicology. It has a particular coverage of those traditions closest to the Irish: the Scottish, Manx, English, Welsh, and North American.

The Arts Council

The Arts Council's core functions under the Arts Act 2003 are to:

- * stimulate public interest in the arts;
- * promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts;
- * assist in improving standards in the arts;
- * advise the Minister and other public bodies on the arts.

We do this by:

- * providing financial assistance, mainly, but not exclusively, to artists and arts organisations; we also support others who develop and promote the arts;
- * offering advice and information on the arts to Government and to others;
- * publishing research and information as an advocate for the arts and artists;
- * undertaking a range of projects to promote and develop the arts, often in partnership with others.

Music Network

Music Network was established by The Arts Council of Ireland in 1986 to make live music of the highest quality available and accessible to everyone in Ireland, regardless of their location or circumstance, while supporting the career development of musicians. Our main strands of activity are:

CONCERTS: Each year, we subsidise approximately two hundred and fifty concerts of classical, jazz and traditional Irish music. We work in partnership with a network of approximately one hundred and twenty regionally and locally-based organisations throughout the country. This partnership approach develops the capacity of local communities to provide musical activity within their region, and develop the musical life of their community in the longer term.

DEVELOPMENT: In order to support professional musicians, we provide performance opportunities as well as resources such as award schemes and professional development programmes. We also provide a range of support services to our network of partner promoters such as audience development programmes and our annual promoter's forum.

INFORMATION RESOURCES: We are a source of information to the music sector and general public about music resources, services and activities. Our monthly newsletters carry the latest information on opportunities for musicians. Other resources include our online database of music teachers www.learnmusic.info, and the Irish Music Handbook Online, a one stop shop for information on the music sector in Ireland.

ADVOCACY: As the national agency for the development of music in Ireland, Music Network has initiated research projects in music in healthcare settings and is campaigning for increased provision for music education in Ireland.

Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann

What We Do

Because we're so many different things to different people, it can be hard to keep track of the true scope of our activities! You might have been involved with a Comhaltas event and not even known it.

- If you're a student of Irish music, you might know about the music, dance and language classes that we teach through our network of branches. If you're interested in learning the music, you might want to find which one of our 1,000 weekly classes is closest to you.
- For musicians who like to play socially, you might be interested in finding a local Comhaltas music session. And if you're not sure, how about just going along to listen?
- Audiences around the world have seen our touring groups bringing Irish music, dance and storytelling on annual tours.
- We also run the definitive system of competitions for Irish music, called the "Fleadh Cheoil" (literally "feast of music"). Musicians compete in a series of qualifying rounds, culminating in the annual All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.
- We've collected an archive of thousands of hours of Irish music recordings, a large print library and a growing collection of videos. You can get a sample of some of this material in the Music section of our website.
- In an effort to promote the music of Ireland, we publish recordings, books and tutorials of Irish traditional music. You might want to take a listen over in our shop.