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A Practical Approach to Practice Methods:

Encouraging ‘Simultaneous Learning’ strategies in young instrumentalists

Chris Brammeld

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Abstract

My folio falls into the area of music education. More specifically, the main body of work for my folio comprises the preparation of original teaching materials for instrumental teachers. Alongside this, I have conducted research into practice methods and parental support for children learning an instrument, and consulted with professional teachers and experts in music education.

The teaching materials which I have developed take the form of two resource workbooks for teachers of grade 1 clarinet and flute pupils. The overall aim of the workbooks is to promote Simultaneous Learning (see Introduction), by providing additional resources for use in lessons, such as warm-ups, scale studies, technique studies, and rhythmic and melodic studies, which can all be related to the pieces prescribed by exam boards.

As well as the workbooks themselves, and my research into practice, there is also a field study element to my folio. I gave a group of practising instrumental teachers copies of the workbooks, who used them for a trial period with their grade 1 clarinet and flute pupils. Their views and opinion will be sought in the form of questionnaires and interviews.

In presenting my teaching materials and research together in this folio, I hope to have produced a valuable and accessible teaching resource which is of publishable quality, which is supported by an awareness of surrounding issues, and which is based around the learning needs of pupils.

I have presented my research findings within the present volume, and the two workbooks in separate volumes, as they would be used by teachers.

Introduction and context

Instrumental tuition provided by Local Authority music services gives thousands of children and young people the opportunity to learn to play an instrument. As a way of motivating pupils and maintaining progress, teachers will often enter pupils for their first practical music exam within the first year or two of lessons commencing. It is therefore vital that the teacher has clear expectations from their pupils with regards to practice, and that the pupil understands *how* and *what* to practise.

Progressing through practical instrumental examinations has become an accepted route via which instrumentalists progress. Grade 8 is seen as a benchmark by examining boards, universities and music colleges, and they require this level in students who wish to pursue studies at higher level. At this level, teachers may be right to assume that many students have developed their own strategies for effective practice. But what about the

younger instrumentalist who is embarking on his/her first exam? How can we teach them how and what to practise?

Teachers try to instill in their pupils the importance of practising in between lessons, particularly as the weekly lessons provided by music services (which take place during the school day) are often very short (often no longer than 20 minutes). In that lesson, time must be allocated for many other activities than simply playing the three pieces that are required for formal assessment.

The teacher and educationalist Paul Harris encourages a system which he calls Simultaneous Learning, whereby every aspect of musical learning is connected to the pieces that are being taught. Harris is a teacher, examiner, and a prominent figure in instrumental music education, contributing extensively to the development of exam syllabuses for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM). He is an active promoter of the importance of good instrumental teaching and best practice. The concept of Simultaneous Learning should be followed if effective instrumental teaching and learning is to take place. Therefore there is a strong link between my aims for my workbooks, the ABRSM exam syllabuses, and Harris's Simultaneous Learning strategy - and a study such as the present one needs to be based on current *music* education thought, and not on educational philosophies in general.

In Simultaneous Learning, pieces are at the centre of the system "because they represent the core activity from where all our teaching should grow" (Harris, 2006). Linked to this central activity are other aspects of musical learning such as scales/technique, notation, memory, improvisation, rhythm and sight-reading. The connections are generally self-explanatory, and will be self-evident to teachers and musicians. Harris's assertion is that most pupils, however, will need assistance in recognising these connections, and in making them appropriate to learning pieces. For example, pieces would be connected to scales by playing scales and arpeggios that relate to the tonality of the piece being learned. The pupil would then attempt to find where these patterns occur during the pieces.

Although the pupil is obviously positioned at the centre of the learning experience, there are many variables that can influence to rate and quality of learning. Parents, teachers, friends, the learning and teaching environment and other factors come into play. I will set out below some researchers' findings which are pertinent to my own work.

In a range of studies that differ significantly in approach, researchers have looked at young instrumentalists and professional adult musicians, as well as students at music colleges or academies. Pitts et al. (2000) conducted a longitudinal study on young instrumentalists in Australia, which sought to demonstrate the cognitive strategies employed by young learners, as well as to assess the importance of factors including environment, motivation and parental involvement. Three case studies of young woodwind and brass players are given, which were drawn from a sample of 158 pupils. The study was based at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and lasted for three years,

during which pupils' changing attitudes to practice and learning were monitored. The case study results are very detailed, and serve to highlight the wide range of variables that can influence a child during their learning. Detailed observations report the role of parents (and even pets) in the pupils' learning.

McPherson (2008) also observes the importance of the role of parents. Excellent teacher-pupil relationships built up in the school could potentially be undermined by a negative parental attitude at home. Children's perceptions of their own competence is of great importance, and even if this feeling of competence is inspired in part by the teacher and felt by the pupil, the parent still has the power to undermine feelings of competence, which in turn may significantly and negatively influence motivation to practice and achieve. Importantly for the present study, McPherson also lists as factors socioeconomic issues and parental experience of music. This is of particular relevance to the present study, as Stoke-on-Trent is a severely deprived area. McPherson's observations could have been written directly about pupils and parents in Stoke-on-Trent. He notes that:

In schools, the situation for music is even more pronounced. Very recent evidence (McPherson, 2006b) using the expectancy-value motivation framework ... report[s] that their parents expect them to do less work in music compared to other school subjects, view music as a less important school subject and do not expect them to work as hard in music as other academic subjects. (McPherson 2008, p.101).

Several studies have looked specifically at practice methods. Teachers must 'practice what they preach' and be able to show pupils how to practise. Verbal instruction is not sufficient for most learners. The relationship between teacher and pupil will dictate how far this modelling is absorbed and integrated into the child's own practice at home. The idea must be instilled in pupils that more practice will lead to greater performance achievement, which in turn will raise enjoyment and personal satisfaction levels.

Research has been conducted into the role of practice in children's early musical performance achievement. In a longitudinal study of practice and motivational processes, O'Neill (1997) focusses on the early lives and practice routines of concert pianists. In the study of 51 children, a positive correlation is shown between the amount of practice done and level of performance achievement. An important addition to working methods in O'Neill's study was that pupils kept practice diaries during the course of the study, therefore greatly reducing reliance on the kind of retrospective data which had characterised previous studies (e.g. Howe et al, 1995).

It appears that studies about practice can be inherently problematic, especially when participants are asked to keep a practice diary or to recall (as an adult) past practice sessions (as a child). Young learners who fill in a practice diary which will be inspected may be tempted to practise in a way they normally would not, or to record certain items

which they may not actually have practised. Hallam (1997) conducts an overview of research literature on practising, including motivational issues. It also appears that less research has been conducted into how practice strategies and motivation may alter depending on what the purpose of the practice session is (e.g. to prepare for an exam, a concert, or for personal gratification) than into practice methods and the interaction of the roles of pupils, parents and teachers.

However, in a study concerned with learning for exams, Davidson and Scutt (1999) look at the critical importance of the role of the teacher in deciding when an exam is appropriate for a pupil, and at how the learning and motivational processes may alter before, during and after an exam. In line with Harris's assertion that exam pieces should merely form part of a much broader repertoire of pieces (three of which "just happen to be" on the exam syllabus), Davidson and Scutt report that the teachers in their study held the view that the time in between exams was often more important than the actual exams. It is, however, perhaps difficult for many teachers to avoid so-called 'teaching to the test' because the overwhelming majority of university music courses and music colleges require grade 8 standard (and often specify ABRSM rather than any other exam board). As one teacher comments, "...so you've got to teach them to the proper syllabus, in case they turn round to you at fifteen and say 'I want to go to music college'." This potentially narrow curriculum notwithstanding, Davidson and Scutt observe that the pupils in their study practised for much longer when they knew they were being entered for an exam, saying that their motivation to practise had increased. However, it was observed (perhaps predictably) that practice levels decreased post-exam. In addition, they also note that, since pupils' practice is done at home, it is effectively out of the teachers' control. (Davidson and Scutt, 1999).

Music education in England is currently the topic of considerable political debate, and in February 2011 the 'Henley Review' was published. Darren Henley, the Managing Director of Classic FM, had been commissioned by the Government to author an independent review of music education in England. The review is uncontroversial, and most of the 35 recommendations given by Henley at the end of the document are little more than common-sense suggestions which most music teachers (including peripatetic instrumental teachers working for Local Authority music services) would support without question or hesitation. In their official response to the Review, Michael Gove (Secretary of State for Education) and Ed Vaizey (Minister for State for Culture and Creative Industries) agree in principle with many of the recommendations. At the time of writing, the future of the place of music within the National Curriculum is uncertain, and the Government will not promise in the response that music will continue to be a mandatory subject taught at school. Recommendation 9 states that music should be a statutory part of the curriculum, and the response states that the Government will not pre-empt the outcome of the forthcoming National Curriculum Review (Henley, 2011 and Gove and Vaizey, 2011).

The review notes that Government spending to allow schools to purchase instruments has been £10m annually from 2007-11, and acknowledges other areas of spending which

support music education. The review recommends that music education should come from a range of providers (e.g. music services, music professionals, private and public sector music teachers), and paid for by a range of sources (e.g. ring-fenced central Government spending, parents, Local Authorities, funding from Arts Council England), and there is much emphasis on partnership between organisations. The Review is strongly in support of a music education for children and young people which includes high quality instrumental and vocal tuition. The need for strong leadership is also identified, and there is a recommendation about a dedicated qualification for instrumental and vocal teachers who do not necessarily want to pursue a career in the classroom (Henley, 2011).

The design and content of my workbooks have been informed by my research and my own experience as an instrumental teacher. I wanted to create a useful resource for teachers that would encourage best practice, high standards of teaching and learning, and that would be commercially available at an accessible cost to parents of pupils. However, I did not want to produce a prescriptive tutor book which must be played through from beginning to end. Rather, the workbooks contain material that can be easily accessed and used in conjunction with pupils' own individual curriculums.

Developing the workbooks

The core of this research project is my workbook - a resource for teachers whose pupils are taking Grade 1 clarinet or flute. My aims are to:

- encourage Simultaneous Learning;
- provide supporting studies for particular instrumental techniques required;
- improve sight reading
- encourage good practice methods.

Bearing these aims in mind, the book contains the following sections:

- rhythm and melody studies relating to the ABRSM anthology of Grade 1 clarinet and flute pieces;
- warm-up tunes in different time signatures, which can double as sight reading exercises;
- studies for accents, staccato and (clarinet only) low notes (below the staff);
- sight reading pieces;
- scale and arpeggio studies.

How should teachers implement my method in their lessons? My primary concern is that this is not a study book or tutor book which needs to be played from beginning to end.

Rather, the teacher and pupil should 'dip in' and pick out a study or warm-up tune as the lesson requires.

It is the intention that my workbooks will promote good teaching and learning strategies, and provide a resource for teachers which will promote the value and importance of an instrumental music education. I support the recommendations of the Henley Review, and my workbooks aim to promote the high quality of music education provision which the review espouses. Teachers need to be dedicated, well-prepared and enthusiastic about music education, and I aim to provide materials which encourages teachers to provide a rounded musical education for their pupils, where they become musicians, not simply players of an instrument. Although the present study centres around instrumental education in schools, the book is designed so that it is accessible for young learners and adults alike.

The main focus of this study is practice strategies, and in particular, the implementation of Simultaneous Learning. The aim is to facilitate an all-round musical approach to learning which will form a firm basis for the pupil's future development as a musician. The study aims to offer a practical solution to perceived difficulties in musical learning (i.e. the implication of effective practice strategies).

Drawing on research about practice methods, research on the input of teachers and parents, and focussing on key elements of the Simultaneous Learning strategy, my workbook will attempt to help pupils and teachers to follow a balanced musical curriculum which is beneficial to both parties.

The instruments chosen as a focus for this study are clarinet and flute, for several reasons. I play and teach both these instruments, and they are very popular with young instrumentalists. The ABRSM publishes an anthology of selected prescribed pieces for these instruments at Grade 1, which are very popular with pupils, parents and teachers (but see Limitations). For this reason, and for this study, I composed studies and exercises based on these pieces.

Methodology

The study was conducted with teachers and pupils from Stoke-on-Trent City Music Service, which is a department of the Local Authority's Children and Young People's Services. The Service is 'bought in' by schools who pay an annual Service Level Agreement in accordance with the amount of tuition time required by the school. In total, six teachers took part, who had a mean of 8.5 years teaching experience, professional performing, private teaching and the ability to play more than one instrument. The total number of schools involved was 11, and the total number of pupil participants was 20.

There is no specific target age for my workbooks at this stage. For the purposes of this research experiment, however, all pupils were in Years 5 and 6 (aged 9-11).

The field study involved the teacher participants using the workbooks in their lessons for a period of two months. I would then seek feedback from the teachers and pupils which would inform modifications to the books prior to publication.

Permission was sought from the acting Music Service Leader, from head teachers in targeted schools, and, where appropriate, from pupils and parents. I produced an Information for Heads document, as well as Instructions for Teacher Participants. (See appendices).

The six teachers were selected because they currently taught clarinet and flute pupils who were studying for their Grade 1 exam. Each participating teacher was given a copy of the two workbooks during the first half of the Spring term 2011 so they could familiarise themselves with the content and layout. The study itself took place during the second half of the Spring term and beginning of the Summer term 2011.

The pupil participants were pupils who had already commenced work on their Grade 1 music, and some had recently taken the exam, in which cases the study was conducted retrospectively. The teachers were told to use their own expert discretion as to how much time in each lesson they dedicated to using my books. However, the expectation was that the books could be “dipped into” and used when appropriate, for example, if it was felt that a bit of extra scale practice was needed.

The pupils were told that they would have to answer questions about their experience of the workbooks beforehand, so they were aware that they needed to form opinions about its usability. I felt that pupils’ responses and insights would be equally valuable as the teachers’, so they were asked on the questionnaire for two things they felt were good about the book, and two things they thought were not useful.

Teacher and pupils questionnaires were filled in by participants after this period. Results (in the form of completed pupil and teacher questionnaires) were collected and the responses analysed. Qualitative techniques were used in this study, as detailed written responses were being sought.

Results

The results from my questionnaires can more accurately be described as feedback. I have sought an evaluation from my participants, and those evaluations will be used to assess my own understanding of what constitutes effective teaching materials, and their role in instrumental teaching and learning, as well as to inform modifications to my workbooks.

Since the questionnaires have been collected, I have been able to secure a meeting with a publisher, so the feedback will also be useful for the purposes of refining the workbooks for publication. (See Publication section).

Teacher and pupil participants made some useful and insightful observations, and there was a good correlation between the two groups’ identification of strong and weak areas.

Generally, feedback was very encouraging, and I have been able to plan several amendments to implement prior to publication.

The feedback from teacher participants was very positive, and some useful suggestions were made for improvements. All teachers rated the books highly as a useful teaching resource and felt that the aims were met. Teachers thought the materials were well-suited to their Grade 1 learners, and, importantly, that Simultaneous Learning was facilitated. Comments praised the sight-reading exercises (pupil participants also liked this) and the variety of material available. One teacher observed that some exercises were too difficult for pupils to play in the lesson; and that this would not be the case if pupils could take the book home. Another teacher suggested that the pieces could be given imaginative titles, which would give the pupils an idea about the technical focus of the piece, as well as an indication of the musical style.

Of the pupil participants, 11 completed the questionnaire. Of these, eight were clarinetists and three flautists. All said that they had enjoyed using the workbook. Among the elements identified by pupil participants as good things were sight-reading exercises, warm-ups, help with rhythm and the layout. One commented that the exercises were of an appropriately short length. Several pupils commented that the studies for the prepared pieces were too difficult to attempt in lessons.

Discussion and implications

Pupils' musical learning benefits from considerate teachers, who follow a carefully individualised curriculum centred around the particular needs of the pupil concerned. Clear explanation is required, and effective modelling should be supported by use of appropriate teaching resources. Where practice is concerned, my own experience has shown me that some pupils have an instinctive idea about what constitutes good practice methods, while others need clear instruction and guidance. O'Neill (1997) identifies a distinction between mastery-oriented and helpless children, and I think teachers should consider carefully which of these two types their pupils lean towards, before deciding what level of such instruction is appropriate for individuals. I have found that my workbooks generally achieved the stated aims and objectives.

It was interesting that several pupils felt that they had been able to improve their sight reading. I have observed, in my own teaching experience, that some teachers leave far too little time in lessons for sight reading, and yet that teachers generally bemoan the poor standard of sight-reading in pupils of all abilities and across all grades. I have identified the emphasis on sight reading as an important strength of my workbooks. I want to investigate the possibility of having an online version of certain elements of the books (including sight reading), which pupils can access at home. Sight reading is a fundamental skill for a musician of any standard, and the ability to read fluently will increase the speed at which

pieces can be learned. As a result, pupils' feeling of progression is heightened, they become more motivated, and they take more enjoyment from their music-making.

I have taken into account the comments from teacher and pupil participants. In particular, I intend to delete the studies for the prepared pieces and replace them with more 'melody practice' and 'rhythm practice' exercises (see also Publication).

I have received positive feedback from fellow Masters and PhD students about the mature design and sensible layout of the workbooks, and about the possible development of a potentially large and important series of books that really support musical learning.

Limitations and areas for development

There are many ways in which this study can be developed. Firstly, and most obviously, the series of workbooks can be expanded to cover other instruments and other grades. Secondly, I would wish to include studies and exercises for the other prescribed pieces (i.e. not just the ones published by ABRSM in their anthologies). Thirdly, other popular examination boards' syllabuses could provide the basis for completely separate sets of workbooks.

The primary limitation of the workbooks I have produced is that they link only to one exam board's syllabus, only to nine pieces for each instrument per grade, and only for the duration of the current syllabus (but see Publication). I have outlined possible solutions to these limitations above.

Certain elements of the workbooks may need to be re-written because they caused an immediate hindrance for pupils. The studies I have composed would cause a possible copyright infringement if published; I am therefore investigating this issue thoroughly with a sheet music publisher.

Publication

I have conducted research into currently available materials from a range of educational music publishers, and identified a gap in the market for teaching materials which directly relate to Simultaneous Learning and the encouragement of positive practice strategies for pupils taking their Grade 1 exam.

Materials that are already available from commercial publishers include tutor books, duet books, sight-reading books, scale books and aural books. Publishers of educational music include ABRSM, Faber, A&C Black, Queen's Temple Publications, Oxford University Press, Kevin Mayhew and Boosey & Hawkes. None publishes a workbook which draws

together elements of the Grade 1 exam and presents them in a comprehensive fashion, with the emphasis on all-round musicianship.

I had identified Paul Harris's company, Queen's Temple Publications, as a possible publisher for my workbooks. I have met with Paul Harris and discussed my participants' feedback with him. He will publish the flute and clarinet workbooks in due course, and after I have made alterations and additions. These include:

- deleting the difficult studies and replacing them with shorter Simultaneous Learning exercises;
- suggesting ideas for improvisation based on the elements of pieces;
- avoid potentially prohibitive words such as 'study' and 'exercise';
- adding studies for all the other pieces on the syllabus;
- practical amendments such as filling white space and checking pagination.

I expect the present two workbooks to be published by the end of 2011. The current ABRSM syllabus expires in 2013, meaning that pupils can present these pieces for examination until the first exam session of 2014. During that time, I will write further workbooks for other instruments such as saxophone, piano and violin. These new books can then be marketed at the time of publication of the new 2014-19 syllabus.

The workbooks will be marketed as a resource book for teachers. It was decided that to target pupils may be prohibitive, as parents would need to buy an additional book for their children.

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Further reading

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APPENDIX A: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant questionnaire - teacher Grade 1 Workbook for Clarinet and Flute

1. Please circle the book(s) you used during the trial period.

Clarinet

Flute

Both

2. In how many lessons in total did you use the workbooks?

3. Please state your instrumental specialism (first study instrument).

4. How many years have you been teaching? (Please circle your answer).

1-5

6-10

11-15

16-20

20+

5. How many hours per week do you currently do instrumental teaching?

1-10

11-20

21-30

30+

6. How useful, overall, did you find the workbooks as a teaching resource?

1

2

3

4

5

(not useful)

(very useful)

Please comment if you wish:

7. How successfully do you feel the book meets its aims (stated at the front of the book)?

1

2

3

4

5

(not successful)

(very successful)

Please comment if you wish:

APPENDIX B: PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant questionnaire - pupils Grade 1 Workbook for Clarinet and Flute

1. Which instrument do you play? (Please circle your instrument)

Clarinet

Flute

2. Did you enjoy using the workbook? Yes / No

3. Do you think the workbook has helped you with your practice for Grade 1? Yes / No

4. Can you tell me two things you thought were good about the workbook?

5. Can you list two things that you thought were not useful?

6. Do you think you are better at scales after using the workbook? Yes / No

7. Which three pieces are you playing for your exam?

8. Did the studies help you to get better at playing your pieces? Yes / No

9. Which year-group are you in? (e.g. Year 5)

*Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Please return it to your instrumental teacher.*

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION FOR HEAD TEACHERS

A Practical Approach to Practice Methods:

Encouraging ‘Simultaneous Learning’ strategies in young instrumentalists

Chris Brammeld

email: chrisbrammeld@ntlworld.com

phone: 07734 822830

Information for head teachers

My name is Chris Brammeld, and I'm a peripatetic instrumental teacher working for the City Music and Performing Arts Service. I'm currently studying for a masters degree (MMus) at the University of Sheffield, and the present project forms part of my degree.

I want to ask your permission for CMPAS teachers, who teach regularly in your school, to trial the use of a workbook which I have written for grade 1 clarinet and flute pupils during their lessons. No extra lessons will be required and no time will be taken away from pupils. It is hoped that pupils will positively benefit in their preparation for their grade 1 exam by using by books as part of their lessons. Harry Hitchen, manager of the Music Service, has given me and the team of six peripatetic teachers his permission to proceed with this project.

More information about my research project is given on the next page.

I intend to run the project over a period of six weeks, as follows:

week commencing 14 March
21 March
28 March
4 April
25 April
2 May

The teachers and pupils involved will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire about their experience using my workbook. Please find attached to this letter a copy of the questionnaires.

What is this research project about?

This project is based around a workbook which I have written for pupils working towards grade 1 clarinet and flute exams. Based on my experience as an instrumental teacher, and on research into practice methods and issues around practice, the book is designed as a companion book for grade 1 pupils, and contains studies and pieces related to the requirements set by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

The book aims to encourage pupils and teachers to take an all-round approach to learning the pieces and scales etc., so that pupils don't become bored of their pieces and scales, and so they learn the material for grade 1 in a very musical context. This all-round approach has been coined by Paul Harris as a learning strategy called 'Simultaneous Learning'. For your information, please see the next page for an overview of Simultaneous Learning.

I have decided it is not necessary for me to seek individual parental permission for this project. However, if you feel any of your pupils' parents should be informed in accordance with any relevant school policies, please let me know and I will make any arrangements necessary.

Statement of permission

I give permission for the research project entitled A Practical Approach to Practice Methods to run in my school on the dates specified in this document and for the purposes described in this document.

Sign/Date: _____

Print name: _____

Please return to me via internal mail, addresses to City Music and Performing Arts Service. You may wish to make a copy of this document for your records. Alternatively, please scan and email to me at chrisbrammeld@ntlworld.com.

Thank you for your support.

What is Simultaneous Learning?

Simultaneous Learning is about making connections between the pieces we learn and every aspect or element of music that relates to those pieces. Everything connects to everything else.

Paul Harris asserts that pieces are of utmost importance because “they represent the core activity from where all our teaching should grow.”¹ He lists the following elements of music that should be continuously linked to pieces:

- Scales/technique
- Notation
- Singing
- Rhythm
- Performance
- Sight-reading
- Self-evaluation
- Memory
- Intonation
- Composition
- Improvisation
- Aural
- Theory

My workbooks do not intend to cover absolutely every aspect of Simultaneous Learning. Rather, I have selected a few ideas and based much of the material around pieces and scales. There are scale studies, designed so that pupils practise a scale in the context of a short tune or study. There are also studies and short exercises for the prepared pieces, where I have taken melodic and/or rhythmic elements of the piece and incorporated them into a new piece.

¹ Harris, P. (2006). ‘Improve Your Teaching’ (London: Faber), p.11

APPENDIX D: INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

A Practical Approach to Practice Methods:

Encouraging ‘Simultaneous Learning’ strategies in young instrumentalists

Chris Brammeld

email: chrisbrammeld@ntlworld.com

phone: 07734 822830

Information and instructions for teacher participants

What is this research project about?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research project.

This project is based around a workbook which I have written for pupils working towards grade 1 clarinet and flute exams. Based on my experience as an instrumental teacher, and on research into practice methods and issues around practice, the book is designed as a companion book for grade 1 pupils, and contains studies and pieces related to the requirements set by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

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Paul Harris asserts that pieces are of utmost importance because “they represent the core activity from where all our teaching should grow.”² He lists the following elements of music that should be continuously linked to pieces:

- Scales/technique
- Notation
- Singing
- Rhythm
- Performance
- Sight-reading
- Self-evaluation
- Memory
- Intonation
- Composition
- Improvisation
- Aural
- Theory

Harris gives the following example of how a teacher might use S.L. with a pupil about to play a practice sight-reading test (each S.L. musical element is underlined):

“First of all, choose a sight-reading test that reinforces a rhythm occurring in the piece being studied. Play some rhythm games to ensure that the rhythm is understood. Write that rhythm pattern down (theory). Hear it internally (aural). Make up a short tune using that rhythm pattern (improvisation). Now hear the rhythm of the complete sight-reading piece internally (aural). Clap the rhythm. Play the scale of the sight-reading piece ... from notation and also from memory ... Finally, play the test.”³

My workbooks do not intend to cover absolutely every aspect of S.L. Rather, I have selected a few ideas and based much of the material around pieces and scales. There are scale studies, designed so that pupils practise a scale in the context of a short tune or study. There are also studies and short exercises for the prepared pieces, where I have taken melodic and/or rhythmic elements of the piece and incorporated them into a new piece.

For the purposes of this project, I have chosen to include material relating to the first three pieces on each ‘list’ (A, B and C) specified by ABRSM. (These are the nine pieces that are published by ABRSM as the grade 1 anthology for clarinet and flute).

² Harris, P. (2006). ‘Improve Your Teaching’ (London: Faber), p.11

³ Ibid., pp.12-13

How will the project work?

You will need to select one or more pupils who are currently working towards grade 1 clarinet or flute.

Over a course of 6 (weekly) lessons, incorporate the use of the workbook into your lessons, using the exercises and studies and assessing the effectiveness of the materials it contains. For full instructions/advice on how to use the book, please see the first page of the workbook itself.

At the end of the course of lessons, please complete the teacher questionnaire, and ask your pupil participants to complete their questionnaire. I will provide you with copies of the questionnaires in due course.

I will contact you before the first week to collect information about which schools you intend to conduct the project in. I will then contact each head teacher to ask for permission. I will inform you if the head teacher refuses (for whatever reason) to allow my project to operate in their school.

The weeks in which I propose the lessons to take place are:

week commencing 14 March
21 March
28 March
4 April
25 April
2 May

If you are unable to teach the selected pupils for whatever reason in any of these weeks, there is no need to worry. Please let me know and an extra week can be added.

Many thanks again for taking part!