Within You Without You: Music, Learning and Identity

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George Harrison had died just a few days before I was asked for the title of this lecture, and one of his best known song titles provides my theme for tonight. This song appeared on one of the most famous pop albums of all time, for which Peter Blake's cover design became a design icon of the 1960s. The Beatles are widely regarded by musicologists as the most influential rock musicians ever, and so it is hardly surprising that they exerted an immense influence on all of us growing up at the time – on our social and musical identities – and continue to do so on subsequent generations.

It was John Lennon, not Edward Elgar, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, or Harrison Birtwistle, who was the only representative of the arts, alongside William Shakespeare, in British television viewers' rankings of the '10 Greatest Britons' last year. Many of those viewers did so because of the pivotal role that Lennon and the Beatles played in the cultural revolutions that took place in the 1960s: but this overlooks their *musical* achievements. Many have forgotten that when they first emerged, the pop charts were dominated by artists almost all of whom used material written by others – think of Andy Williams, Helen Shapiro, Petula Clarke, and indeed Elvis Presley, and Bill Haley and the Comets.

The Beatles almost single-handedly introduced the idea of pop musicians writing their own material, and of the singer-songwriter. This innovation, which has had widespread effects on young musicians ever since, is all the more significant in that children are now expected to compose, as well as perform and listen to music, within school music education. Furthermore, the song we have just heard probably represented the first time that many of us had listened carefully to Indian music in any form: we did so because of George Harrison's promotion of it, and these early inroads into world music represent another cornerstone of contemporary multicultural education.

Before we leave the Beatles, let me use them to illustrate another of my central themes: the immense power that music exerts in many people's emotional and social lives, and young people in particular. In a radio interview soon after George Harrison's death, Sir Bob Geldof pointed out that many members of the Beatles generation can still accurately reproduce every single note, nuance and expression of George's guitar breaks on many of the Beatles hits: we played them over and over again in our bedrooms and living rooms, and can remember them just as well today.

My own research interests stem from a strong and enthusiastic interest in many areas of music itself. As you have heard, my background and training is in developmental and social psychology: most of my work has been devoted to applying the theories and methods of psychological research to practical issues in music and arts education, and I

was attracted to Roehampton for its international strengths in these fields. It is appropriate that we meet in the imposing and stately surroundings of Froebel College, as I had the honour being appointed Froebel Research Fellow in 2002. This involves working with staff from Early Childhood Education on a project on young children's autonomy and ownership in their learning, which takes me back to my central theme.

The inner and the outer in childrens' developing creativity

One of Friedrich Froebel's fundamental concepts was that of unity in diversity: that ideas and objects gain their power from the dynamic relationship that they display with their opposites. Like George Harrison, Froebel was interested in the relationship between our inner and our outer selves. In *The Education of Man* in 1826, he wrote that '*We become truly Godlike in diligence and industry, in working and doing... we thereby represent the inner in the outer... we give body to the spirit, and form to thought.*'

I want to develop this idea of the creative tension between our inner and outer selves serving as a source of learning and creativity: it is very similar to the idea of a dynamic equilibrium, which is at the heart of Jean Piaget's monumental developmental theory. Piaget held that the dynamic equilibrium between what he called assimilation and accommodation - between the child's internal world, and the people, places and things she encounters in everyday life - is the primary source of cognitive development. Froebel stated this same idea explicitly: '*When we are being creative we give body to thought: we render visible the invisible*'. Piaget and Froebel both held that it was the child herself, and not parents or teachers, who provide the driving force for these changes: '*Self-activity of the mind is the first law of instruction...from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract, so well adapted to the child and his needs*, he learns eagerly as he plays'.

My lecture tonight brings together three such dynamic equilibria, which underlie different areas of some of my own work: that between the inner and the outer in children's developing creativity in the arts: that between the different agendas perceived by pupils and teachers when children pursue creative activities as part of a school curriculum: and that between what goes on in young people's music inside as compared with outside school, which is emerging as probably the most important issue in music education today.

Various psychologists and educationalists have attempted to develop stage-like theories of children's musical and artistic development. Swanwick and Tillman's (1986) spiral model of the development of musical composition has generated a good deal of interest, for example, as have the ideas originating from Howard Gardner and his colleagues at Harvard University. Maurice Galton and I (see Hargreaves, 1996) proposed a rough and ready mapping of the main age changes in children's activity across various art forms in the form of 5 broad phases. This is an aerial view of the terrain as a whole rather than a detailed 'zoomed in' description: the proposed age levels are broad norms, and are very approximate. The 5 phases are based on different strategies of representation that children adopt: they reflect different levels of the equilibrium between the child's internal, or symbolic world, and the cultural and artistic conventions of the outside world. I will illustrate these by looking at some children's drawings, then go on to look more specifically at music.

As you can see, children's early scribbles might be called 'presymbolic' representations: although there are signs of increasing organisation in the two examples shown here, there is no clear resemblance to any external object, even though the children may tell

you otherwise! These gradually give way to 'figural' drawings, epitomised by the familiar 'tadpole figure'. Why do nearly all children at the age of 2-3 years draw people with arms coming out of the head, when they know that this is not the case in real life? This question and its implications have been the subject of numerous experimental studies and psychological theories: at the risk of oversimplification, I will just say that the answer is probably more to do with the complex business of representing 3 dimensional objects on a 2 dimensional surface, (something which still is well beyond my own grasp!), than with any kind of conceptual immaturity.

What we called the 'schematic' phase is illustrated by these two attempts to draw a pond with some trees around it. Most children below the age of 8 or so will simply draw the trees splayed out at right angles to the pond all the way round: but as you can see, Caroline has gone beyond this. She realises that trees grow upwards rather than downwards, and valiantly attempts to keep this up as she works down the left hand side of the pond: but eventually she gives up and shows the lower trees going underground. Laura's drawing reveals the move towards the next phase of drawing with 'rule systems' that serve to organise them. In this case, she has tried to include a ground line on which some of the trees are planted, but the pond is still drawn as from above, so that two visual perspectives co-exist. Eventually the well known 'air gap' drawing emerges, and persists in most children until age ten or so: the upper blue section is usually designated as 'sky', the lower green as 'ground', and psychologists who ask children silly questions about what lies in between are usually met with dumbstruck incredulity!

Although such developmental descriptions may be helpful in curriculum planning, many researchers have become increasingly dissatisfied with them. The Piagetian idea that development proceeds in a linear fashion, such that all children are seen as working through similar stages towards similar end points, is too inflexible and prescriptive. The alternative 'socio-cultural' approach, which has become the dominant view, is that artistic development has multiple endpoints which can be achieved via numerous routes, and that these directions are strongly shaped by the social and cultural environment. Development is more like a branching mosaic than a single line going 'onwards and upwards'.

Adrian North and I applied this approach to the psychology of music in a book that attempted to re-define the social nature of musical behaviour (Hargreaves and North, 1997): music is essentially something we do *with* and *for* other people. The rapid growth of research in music psychology in recent years, and its impact on other disciplines, has been accompanied by dramatic changes in the nature of musical behaviour and experience itself. Technological developments such digital recording and sound storage, downloading of MP3 files from the internet, and the relatively inexpensive availability of DVD and the Walkman have already had all kinds of effects on the ways musicians work. What might come next we just don't know: but I will mention just three immediate impacts.

The first is that the nature of musicianship itself has changed. Being a musician now often includes some knowledge of improvising and arranging, music hardware and software, and recording and mixing: it could even be argued that one can compose, record and perform music without necessarily having to have spent many years learning and practising a musical instrument. The revolution in the way that music is recorded, processed and stored means that many of the traditionally delineated roles of the composer, the performer, the arranger, the sound engineer, and even the listener, with

their associated hierarchy of status, are becoming blurred. The composer no longer automatically holds a pre-eminent position at the apex of musical creation.

The second effect might be called the 'democratisation' of musical styles and genres. Because almost any piece of music is now available to us at any place and at any time, the old stereotypes of certain genres as 'serious' or 'popular' crumbled years ago. We are now just as likely to hear Vivaldi, Bach or Mozart in the antique shop or on the railway station as we are to hear jazz or folk music in the concert hall, and the existence of 'popular classical' record charts, such as Classic FM's top 100 Hall of Fame, tells its own story. Music of all styles and genres is not only ubiquitous, but also carries far fewer associations of 'respectability' and social status than at any time in the past.

This has led to the third impact, namely the uses that people consciously make of music in everyday life. Adrian North has carried out a series of elegant experimental studies in real life settings including restaurants, bars, banks, shops, computer assembly plants, exercise and relaxation clubs, and even on-hold telephones (see eg. North and Hargreaves, 1997). His work shows that music fulfils many different cognitive, social and emotional functions by demonstrating that it has the power to influence behaviour as diverse as consumer product choice and shopping behaviour; work efficiency; time perception and the tendency to wait in queues; speed of eating and drinking; efficiency on cognitive tasks; people's moods and emotional states, their attitudes to different surroundings, and the likelihood of their staying in them.

These specific findings, and the rapid rise of music psychology more generally, have immense implications for broadcasting, the media, the consumer industry, and healthcare as well as for education. Music is indeed a powerful 'soundtrack to life', in Simon Frith's memorable phrase. Two recent studies have shown this directly by contacting adult volunteers at regular but random time intervals and asking them about their current activities. In the first, at Keele University (Sloboda, O'Neill and Ivaldi, 2001), 8 people who were 'bleeped' by an electronic pager reported that music was heard during 44% of all of those episodes. The second, by Adrian North and I, (North and Hargreaves, 2004), found a similarly high level of involvement with music in a sample of 346 people who were sent one website-generated text message per day on their mobile phones.

Let me now apply the social perspective to children's musical learning by analysing a short musical improvisation between an adult and two preschool children. In case you were wondering, I am not only going to play but also sing for you tonight: the musicians are my two sons and I at the ages of 4 and 5 years. One of them is sitting in the audience: he still complains that I have shamelessly used his material in my talks and publications for years without passing on a fraction of the royalties!

You will hear a spontaneously improvised 12 bar blues, all of which, as you all know, are entitled 'Woke Up This Morning'. I started off the song on the piano, then continued as accompanist: you will hear that my role becomes a very subsidiary one as the boys take over. Listen out especially for the interplay between the three of us: to how Jon takes the lead by developing and transforming the starting idea I give him: and to how Tom functions as a one man vocal backing group and brass section, and tries to gain command of the whole situation at the end.

This short piece deserves closer attention as it encapsulates many aspects of the essence of collaborative creativity. Notice how each member of the trio responds to the other two members in a *conversational* way, such that it is the group as a whole that creates the

song rather than any individual member. The timing is precisely *synchronised* so that each member complements rather than interrupting the others. The song draws on everyday material: it starts with the car that happened to be standing outside, and refers to the jumble sale we had recently visited. Jon's reference to the 'cowboy who turned into a bun' is an unmistakable reference to 'Ernie, the Fastest Milkman in the West', which some of you will remember as a Benny Hill song in the charts at that time. In this song Ernie lost out in a shootout with Dan the baker, who challenged him to 'go for your bun', an awful pun which is picked up by Jon! Even at this age, these two British preschoolers had somehow assimilated not only the verse form of the 12 bar blues, but also the notes of the blue scale, the phrasing and conventions of the vocal style, and the American accent.

Two other features are worth spelling out as far as creativity and learning are concerned. The first is the balance between *arbitrariness* and *structure*. Many aspects of this short song were arbitrary – it could have gone in any one of a number of different directions, and went the way it did because of immediate circumstances such as the car standing outside, and our visit to the jumble sale. This was set within the context of an agreed set of musical and cultural conventions, however - those of the 12 bar blues. The negotiation of the balance between arbitrariness and structure is the essence of successful improvisation and creativity in many domains. The other feature stems from our respective roles: although I started it off and maintained continuity on the piano, the leadership of the song was soon taken over by Jon: who emerged as the teacher, and who as the learner, are by no means clear. Teaching in the creative arts is a two way process involving *apprenticeship* and *scaffolding*: these two concepts are widely used in current studies of teaching and learning, reflecting the influence of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky.

Internal and external agendas in arts education

What happens to children's creativity when they move beyond the family and enter school, which includes the agendas of teachers, curricula, lesson plans, and timetables? Many teachers feel that there is too much central control of children's learning in the National Curriculum in England, and it is instructive to consider Froebel's (1826) perspective on this issue:

> We possess a great load of extraneous knowledge, which has been imposed on us.we have very little knowledge of our own that has originated in our own mind and grown with it…We must cease to estimate the success of our education and our schools in terms of this show of knowledge. Must we go on stamping our children like coins?

This raises the issue of inner and outer agendas, self-activity and ownership once again. If a child creates an original painting or piece of music in a teacher-directed lesson, who is it for - the child or the teacher? This was one of several questions that we investigated in the DELTA (DEvelopment of Learning and Teaching in the Arts) project, an investigation of the problems of assessment in creativity and arts education at Leicester University in the late 1980s. In this project we worked with primary school children and their teachers on activities in music, visual arts, and creative writing over a period of several months. We recently went back to rework some of the original interview data we had collected, in which both teachers and pupils were questioned about their views of the aims of these activities, and about their own roles in them (Hargreaves, Galton, Robinson, and Windridge, 2002).

The teachers' answers were fairly straightforward and predictable: they said that creative arts work enabled pupils to develop conceptual and analytic skills, art form specific skills and techniques, social co-operation, creativity, and self-expression. In other words, they were clear that the basic idea was for them to provide the optimal conditions for children to develop their own skills, and to develop autonomous self-directed learning. In their view, the children clearly 'owned' the work that they had produced.

The children had a much more complex and sophisticated view, however. When asked the question 'how do you know when your work is finished?', for example, one child replied

> You take it to Mrs X (the teacher) and she reads through it and tells you whether it is finished or not.

This child perceived that the agenda was set by the teacher, but a second reply shows that this is not always the case:

> I wouldn't want her to tell us what to do. If she wanted that she should do it herself, it wouldn't be ours.

Ownership is a more complex issue from the children's point of view: although they see themselves as setting the agenda in the sense that it is their own piece of work, it is nevertheless carried out in a framework in which the rules are set by the teacher, the syllabus and the school. One of the main criteria for a good painting, for example, might be that it gets put up on the wall.

The responses to the question 'what would you feel if the teacher asked you to change your work?' also reveal the understanding that there are two conflicting agendas:

> I'd wish I was in her position. I'd wish she were me and I was her and I could tell her to do it again

> She is cleverer than me, she is the teacher and I'm still a kid. She'd know better, but I thought that was good and I did change it a bit and if she still insults me I don't think it is nice, I would get quite cross

Two more responses to this same question reveal an even more sophisticated view of the ways in which one's own effort or commitment might depend on the degree to which the agenda is set by the teacher:

> She has to tell us what to do. She is the teacher. But I wouldn't be very happy. It would make me feel like doing it ten times as good.

> If I had done my best, bad. If I hadn't tried, not bad.

The ultimate importance of self-directed activity and ownership in creative arts work, and the corollary of the supporting role of the teacher, is summarised in these two responses to the question 'what do teachers teach you?

> They can teach you but in a way you have to teach yourself. They can't make you practice a lot (in music)

> They can teach you spelling and all that, but the rest is all up to you….If you want to do a story, it depends on you, it doesn't really depend on the teacher. They've done their job by teaching you, but it is up to you to do it.

Musical identities in and out of school

Creativity seems to be negotiated within sets of implicit social rules, and the question of 'who sets the agenda?' could provide the key to the single most important issue facing music education today, in England at least: what has become known as the 'problem of school music'. Over the last decade or so, official evidence such as examination entry statistics and school inspection reports have suggested that a good deal of lower secondary school music is unsuccessful, unimaginatively taught, and out of touch with pupils' interests. This may or may not be a uniquely English problem: international comparisons such as that I carried out with Adrian North (Hargreaves and North, 2001) show wide national variations, and the problem may be less acute, or different in scope, in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, as well as in other countries.

A large-scale independent research study by John Harland and his associates at the National Foundation for Educational Research (Harland, Kinder, Lord, Stott, Schagen, Haynes, Cusworth, White, & Paola, 2000) examined four different sources of qualitative and quantitative evidence about art, music and drama from 152 secondary schools in England. They concluded that music was 'the most problematic and vulnerable art form' at GCSE level, and that 'pupil enjoyment, relevance, skill development, creativity and expressive dimensions were often absent' (p. 568).

This conclusion was widely reported in the media, and influenced public opinion even though a closer look at the study's methodology reveals some severe limitations in the sampling criteria, and in the evidence cited for the failure of music in particular. But leaving aside the pros and cons of the NFER study, it is nevertheless indisputably the case that only approximately 7% of all pupils opt for music at GCSE level, and that many teachers and pupils are unhappy with the teaching of music in the National Curriculum in England. This is very surprising in that listening to pop music is easily the most common leisure activity of most teenagers: surveys in the UK, in the Scandinavia and elsewhere (eg. Bjurström and Wennhall, 1991; North, Hargreaves and O'Neill, 2000) consistently show that the typical 13 year-old listens for approximately 2/3 hours per day, far longer than time spent on any other leisure activity.

There is an obvious difference between 'school music' and music *outside* school. Pop music plays a central role in the lifestyle of most teenagers, and indeed constitutes a 'badge of identity' for many of them (see e.g. Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2000). How might psychologists explain how these 'badges of identity' develop, and could this explain how young children may or may not see themselves as future musicians, and thus determine their future progress in music? Raymond MacDonald, Dorothy Miell and I have tried to pin down exactly what might be meant by 'musical identities' (MacDonald, Hargreaves and Miell, 2002), drawing on some recent work on 'self-theories', and on the ideas of Carol Dweck (1999) in particular. Dweck suggests that people have differing views about their own abilities: some regard them as relatively fixed, such that there is little that can be done to change them: you either are or are not good at maths, for example, so that doing lots of homework and practice will not do much to help.

Others display 'mastery-oriented' rather than 'helpless' behaviour, on the other hand, because they believe that the work they do *can* influence their abilities. This means that whether or not children *think* they are any good at maths, languages, sport or indeed music may be just as, if not more important, than their actual level of ability. This may be particularly important for pupils who have the idea that they are 'unmusical', perhaps because of an unwitting remark by a teacher, parent, or another pupil, and which could

lead on to a cycle of not trying, therefore becoming less able, therefore trying even less, and so on. In other words, children actively construct their own musical identities, and these can determine skill, confidence and achievement.

This idea may be very useful in trying to explain the authenticity and successfulness of music inside as compared with outside school, and introduces the idea of the 'third environment' (see e.g. Heath, 2001). This can refer to those places that are neither school nor home: off-site locations such as playgrounds, garages, youth clubs, or the street. However, the third environment could also be one's bedroom, or even a school classroom: the critical factor is *the absence of any formal activity or adult supervision*. Musical activities in the third environment are self-directed, and typically engender high levels of motivation and commitment. Lennon, McCartney and Harrison's ground-breaking composition work took place in just such an environment, and had very little to do with school music!

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in England has taken these issues on board in its wide ranging discussions of the future of music education in the 21st century, and I will conclude with a brief description of some findings from a recent project that Nigel Marshall and I carried out on their behalf along with Alexandra Lamont and Mark Tarrant of Keele University (see Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall and Tarrant, in press).

We carried out a questionnaire survey of approximately 1500 primary and secondary school pupils, carried out interviews with the heads and principal arts or music teachers in those schools, and in-depth focus groups with 134 of the same pupils. This generated a wealth of data, the main thrust of which was to paint a much more optimistic picture of school music than the NFER research had suggested only 2 or 3 years earlier. The questionnaire study, for example, showed that approximately 2/3 of all children (across years 4, 6, 7, and 9) reported enjoying class music lessons. The breakdown of this overall figure shows a general decline over the four age groups, as might be expected, but also that the overall levels are surprisingly high. There is also a very interesting gender effect: whereas the girls' enjoyment ratings declined steadily with age, those for boys show a slight increase from years 6 to 9.

My hunch is that this probably stems from the introduction of computers and ICT into secondary music education about 10 years ago, and the corresponding broadening of the GCSE syllabus to include rock and pop music. Ann Colley, Chris Comber and I carried out a Leverhulme Trust funded project when this was just beginning to happen in the 1980s: we investigated the effects of introducing computing, seen as a strongly masculine domain, into school music education, which had and still has a feminine bias. The results of that project presage those I have just described: it seems that technological developments have had the effect of bringing more boys into school music rather than of creating greater technical and expressive opportunities for girls.

Looking in more detail at *why* pupils report enjoying class music lessons shows that 'playing musical instruments and 'singing' are the most popular activities: these are skills which enable them to perform and compose under their own steam. Asking the pupils about their musical activities *outside* school supports this interpretation: we were not surprised to find that over half of the sample reported creating or playing music outside school for a significant length of time each week: and that of those who did not, almost half said that they would like to. What pupils seem to like most about music in or out of

school is develop the skills and confidence to 'do it for themselves': to gain ownership of and autonomy in their own music-making. This takes us right back to Froebel's insistence on the importance of 'self activity' in learning, and the central theme of expressing the inner via the outer.

This shows how we might accelerate the apparent decline of the 'problem of school music'. The *contexts* of music-making are critical in determining its authenticity for learners: we need to get beyond the idea that 'music in school' involves learning, the teachers' agenda, and 'serious' genres, whereas 'music out of school' involves enjoyment, setting one's own agenda, and more popular genres. I am encouraged by the signs from our research that this view may be declining far more quickly than we might expect.

We are currently pursing this issue from the teachers' point of view in the ESRC-funded Teacher Identities in Music Education (TIME) project. Graham Welch, Ross Purves, Nigel Marshall and I are tracking the progress of approximately 150 music teaching students from their University and conservatory courses, and through into their first teaching posts, investigating the changes in their self identities as musicians and/or teachers. Our early results confirm that the vast majority of them are trained in the Western classical tradition, which is clearly a critical factor. We are also investigating the extent to which these issues might be a peculiarly English or British ones by carrying out a parallel strand of the TIME project in Sweden, collaborating with my long-standing colleagues Bengt Olsson and Göran Folkestad of Gothenburg University. I have learnt and gained a great deal from my work with them as Visiting Professor in Gothenburg over the last ten years, and it is good to be embarking on another phase of our relationship.

Music education needs to take these changes on board, and to rethink some fundamental distinctions. These include the distinction between 'specialist', and 'general' or 'curriculum' music at school; that between formal and informal music-making in and out of school; that between institutional and community music making, and even that between the teacher and the learner. The relationship between music in and out of school is a paradoxical one: as soon as teachers and other adults attempt to become involved in the 'third environment', it ceases to be so! The challenge for music educators is to provide the knowledge, skills and resources to support pupils' own 'music within', whilst simultaneously remaining 'without' it.

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