

## Redrawing the Horizons of the Map of Music

Do you know the story of the Sufi clown, Mulla Nasruddin, scrabbling around under a street lamp searching for the key he has lost which he needs to enter his house? A neighbour spotting his search asks him, 'what are you doing?' 'Looking for my key', says Nasruddin. Whereupon the neighbour joins in with the search, until finding no key, he asks, 'so where exactly did you lose this key?' 'Over there,' says the Mulla. 'Then for heaven's sake, why are we looking for it under the lamp?', asks the neighbour. 'Because there is more light here,' Nasruddin replies.

*In relation to this story* I found myself asking, where are we 'now' in music? The answer, concert researchers give us is 1812. Why 1812? Because it is the mean year of compositions offered at Classical concerts today. Thus, Classical lovers of music are basically nowhere near the present. So if, as Anthony Rooley – of the well known Early Music group 'The Consort of Musicke' says, "every age sounds a different tone and operates in a different scale", haven't we lost the key to it.

I found myself also asking how the community in general can find the key to musical participation, given the fact that the vast majority of people I meet at courses I offer nearly every weekend say, "I am unmusical," or "Oh, I can't sing and as for the fear of singing or playing wrong notes!!

How and why has all this come about, because we all came into this world singing our hearts out and freely improvised our own songs, until the learned song and formal education replaced our spontaneous expressive musical utterances? (Just listen to children on swings and in sand pits singing if you do not believe me.) "Why is it that a vision of what music is, so often gets lost in what music education turns out to be?", asks Keith Swanwick of the Institute of Education. He goes on, "must the majority – [i.e. the community] - be made unmusical so the few [i.e. the professionals] can succeed". The fallout from our music education system is the disabling image many people have of themselves musically. All the attitudes such as "I'm tone deaf" seem to me a terrible indictment of our music education. Does our music education system therefore actually teach many people to feel unmusical? Isn't it about time we woke up to the fact that, "our teaching system is not confined to the successors of the cultural elite, but to the successors of the folk." (K.Swanwick)

### **In Tune or Out of Tune. Finding and Changing the Key**

I believe we have lost the key to the authentic present and to music education in particular. I believe we are looking under the wrong light for answers. Many of us are trapped in the cave of our own musical prejudices unable to comprehend and experience music's ultimate realities. This article is an attempt to awaken the questions which will help us to find ways to free *the future of music* so that we can attempt a new art that transcends the old accepted frontiers which weigh us down with old forms and backward perceptions.

### **The Old World Turned Upside Down**

Huge changes have cast today's musical listeners – and musicians – on to strange shores. How many people could have imagined 50 years ago that Electronic, World and Youth musics would no longer be fringe elements in modern cultural life, but that they would have become the mainstream? In fact, African-American music is the predominant music of today alongside which Classical Music is a mere breeze in terms of its influence on modern day life.

Our musical world has been extended historically (e.g. Medieval Music); geographically (e.g. World Musics); scientifically (e.g. Electronic Music); spiritually (e.g. Sacred Music of Tibet, etc.); culturally (e.g. Popular Music).

Today, in a way not available to previous generations, the music of practically all times and places lies no further away than the nearest record store. Chronological and geographical differences are evaporating, whilst our compass shows the East turning up in the West - from Aboriginal digereedooos on our city streets to Tibetan overtone chanting as part of Western spiritual and musical practice. Yet, in spite of the world's doors now being opened and the questions posed by pop music, we are still looking under the same light for answers.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century a revolution occurred in music - and musical beliefs - to compare with those of Copernicus, Einstein and Picasso. But how many of us are conscious of these changes compared to our awareness of what is going on in contemporary visual arts? For instance, prints by Klee, Kandinsky and Mondrian can be purchased as part of home furnishings to adorn our bedroom walls, whilst large multi-national corporations have sculptures by Giacometti, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth in their foyers. But would they have the music of Stockhausen, Varèse or Messiaen greeting their clients? No way!

### **Speaking in Tongues**

Music speaks in many different languages, each of which has its own grammar from Indian to African, etc. We understand that to learn a single language takes a lot of time and effort, yet musics we don't like or understand we tend to dismiss instantly as noise or rubbish. (Witness the arguments between teenagers and parents over music. You know, the ones that go: 'Turn that rubbish off!' 'It's not rubbish it's Jungle/Oasis, etc.' 'But that's not music, ..... etc.')

Even the celebrated conductor Thomas Beecham once said on being asked if he had ever heard any Stockhausen (one of the most influential of the last 50 years), "no, but I believe I have trodden in some".

For many people today listening to our contemporary music is like living in a cloud of musical unknowing where all the familiar landmarks / sound posts have disappeared. (e.g. The tonic or ground tone - along with the first beat of the bar - have disappeared in a lot of Avant Garde music.) On the other hand, Classical musicians have as many problems relating to popular idioms of music which they perceive as melodically and harmonically boring. This evaluation, however, misrepresents the truth, because pop musics work with a different set of values. They foreground other priorities such as elements of music like rhythm, timbre, texture and of course improvisation - towards which Classical Musicians are relatively asleep.

Let me give an analogy. Dr. June Boyce-Tillman tells the story of an African official who was taken to a Mozart concert at the Festival Hall. At the end he said to his British host: 'That was very pleasant but I understood that your Mozart's music was more complicated than that.' Why did he say this, because Mozart's music is complex, but the complexity was not in an area in which an African could immediately perceive it - namely in the realm of harmony. Europeans, on the other hand, faced with African musics - and being untrained to perceive its rhythmic complexity - often perceive it as simple 'beat' music.

In the face of such complexity and lack of understanding, where are we to look for help, given the profusion of different and conflicting maps of musical experience? How can we make sense of the poly-stylism all around us and learn to respond appropriately to today's musical life, for clearly no single theory or idea of music can encompass today's enormous variety, nor can any partial perspective tell the whole story? Indeed, for many people today, Western Music Theory - which has been spread with missionary like zeal all over the world - is now thought of as a form of

'Colonial Music Theory', along with its sidekick the tempered scale which has become a kind of industrial or gold standard for tuning musics.

"All around us life is changing. All sorts of customs and values which have told us for generations how we should think, feel and act are losing their force. Yet this feeling of being uprooted has its positive sides. It gives rise to an inner need to discover new answers to age old questions. Indeed, many people are no longer willing to unquestioningly accept what experts pronounce, but instead want to understand things for themselves". (Paraphrased from M.van den Brink.)

### **Limiting the Potential of Music**

So what preparation – or keys - do music trainees and music teachers receive today to meet today's deeper musical needs? Do we need to change the keys so that they can unlock new doors? Do they have the resources to meet the new musical future? Surely the musical, social, cultural and spiritual changes that have taken place in the last 50 years - and which have pushed back the frontiers of music so completely – would require a reassessment of the way in which musicians are educated? But alas, basically no. We are walking backwards into the future.

From inside the box of music education it seems like new wine is available, but from outside we can still see the same old bottle. Look at the instrumental tutors children are given– e.g. for piano – and with a few minor exceptions they are the same now as when I started learning the piano 40 years ago, albeit with new trendier packaging, pictures, cartoons and colour coding, etc.. Where is the improvisation or composition? Where is the meeting with folk and world idioms? Where is the multi-modal teaching methods that include learning through movement? The rhetoric of music education has surely changed, but in the main the aims, content and structure remain basically unaltered, although in some enlightened cases the study of music theatre, jazz, and even world musics are available, albeit as optional specialised courses. We are thus basically left with a very narrow and limiting concept of music learning.

### **Fundamentalism or Holism**

So can we stand back for a moment and rise above the conditioning influences of our musical education, parenting, culture and tastes? For example, if you are a lover or teacher of Classical music, go and sit in a chair where someone sits who now labels themselves as unmusical as well as having a fear of singing and music notation. Perceive how it feels to be them, and ask how has such negative musical self-labelling come about? What caused all these people to have such a disabling view of their musicality?

In my experience it is not a lack of musicality that blocks many people participating in music. Instead it is their negative memories of earlier music learning experiences which has left them with no confidence in their musical self so that they experience a kind of illearnacy that disables their learning courage when faced as adults with music. Furthermore, their beliefs about what music is or isn't, and what constitutes being musical leads to further blockages. (e.g. Many people believe that a definition of being musical means you must know about music theory and music history whilst being able to sight read and play an instrument to a high standard. Well I know many people who don't fit this definition who are extraordinary musicians!)

Can every musician also view the musical world from the perspectives of Folk, Jazz, Community, New Age, Anthroposophical or Rock musicians? This will enable you to view the gifts each of those musicians brings, but also to perceive your own blind spots, areas of deafness and musical insensitivity caused by your musical upbringing. This is not about cultural relativism. There are many examples of musicing I too find degrading, superficial, unhealthy and seemingly beyond

ethical or social considerations, but it is still my task to listen to and study them before making judgements about them.

I would like to offer a metaphor of where I think a major problem in musicing lies today. With modern cameras we can put them into spotlight or floodlight mode. The one gives a sharp focus, the other illuminates its subject less brightly but detects wider patterns and connections. What is the significance of this image you may be asking? "It is that there is a danger today that every increase in focus simultaneously expands our field of blindness. The risk of getting stuck in a tighter focus is a loss of open-mindedness. All over the world today we can witness fundamentalism in all walks of life. Fundamentalism is the attempt to reduce the manifoldness of human life to one dimension whether religious, cultural or artistic. Tragically today we are also witnessing a new form of closed-mindedness in tertiary education, namely, the epidemic fragmentation of knowledge which leads to so much compartmentalised scholarship." (Paraphrased from G.Claxton and S.Eastham.)

All research on creative thinkers and innovators points to their ability to recognise out of focus images, to spot figures embedded in more complex pictures. This is akin to the way a child's perception is more awake in peripheral space than an adult's and to the way teachers in Steiner Schools sometimes uses colour on wet paper so that form can emerge out of the movement connection of the colours, rather than working with the kind of given forms and clear line definition that colouring-in-books and felt pens offer. Yet musically this is not what is happening in schools. Why are teachers and musicians so keen to give young children fixed melodies and fixed rhythms in finished compositions? Do we only give children toys which are finished and perfect, which leave no room for them to add to the toy through the use of their own imagination? Where is the creative play, the holistic exploration of colour, texture and space in sound before music incarnates into a specific tune, scale, or metre with fixed pitches that no longer glide but hop from fixed point to fixed point?

Tragically, holistic approaches to music have become more and more discredited in traditional training. It is true we now have courses in World Musics, but even if you study the latter, you basically specialise – once again - in researching the music of one particular culture without seeking any kind of relationship to the rest of the human race. (i.e. Puddle research with no reference to the ocean.) The tragedy is that you can now study Pop, World, Medieval and Electronic Musics, as well as Jazz and Music Theatre, etc. but all cut up into specialised compartments with little dialogue taking place.

We have broken the pattern that connects. The '60s and '70s used the language of integration and synthesis to bridge divides. Today, however, we have i) specialisation – albeit as a choice from a greater whole; ii) superficial communication - through 'crossover' music or via the internet; and iii) 'New Age' / alternative' theories of music, many of which have little credibility. (e.g. How can such archetypal phenomenon as the 'Chakras' or the 'Planetary system' be based on a tuning system which a) only arrived in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and b) disobeys natural harmonic laws so utterly and completely? Is it therefore a surprise that musical scientists dismiss such alternative spiritual models?)

*So where do you go today to find out about – or more importantly – experience the whole? Who is responsible for teaching the whole of music?* "Surely", as composer Frank Denyer says, "the time has come for a framework that can articulate mankind's whole adventure with sound from the earliest bone whistle to the Greeks to today." Where is the new map of music that reflects the whole and includes inner and sacred perspectives in music?

Heiner Ruland and Herman Pfrogner have written wonderful books on the archetypal ground or deep structures of music beneath the surface differences of individual musical idioms. Ruland, for instance, has researched how every culture makes its own unique relationship to the one inherent structural factor behind all sound all humans relate to, namely the Overtone/Harmonic series. This series of tones acts as a kind of universal mantra, or chord of nature, which is both the lesson of the world to man and an objective unalterable fact of nature. The Overtone Series represents what we are when we are 'whole'. Everything else is only part of the truth, or, as acousticians will tell us, is only a 'partial'. All tuning systems that are different to ours are not out of tune, but rather 'in tune, but different' to what our cultural conditioning has led us to believe is consonant or discordant. In other words it is in another key. (Sadly however, Ruland's work is largely ignored. Why? Because it is too scientific for those people who only want great cosmic visions of music, or too spiritual for those who want to reduce music to the study only of physical acoustic facts. His work is Spiritual Science.)

Can we recognise that both human and musical life is a balancing act - whether body vs soul or theory vs practice - not one without the other? Specialisation threatens the balance of society, whether the polarisation of Classical vs Folk, or Visual vs Oral Learning, etc.. My problem is I have not been able to renounce the quest to understand, to live in and participate in the whole of music. I find the 'my music/your music', 'our music/their music' syndrome truly appalling, not least today because modern commercial culture increasingly is persuading everyone that an area of freedom and choice open to us is to customise our lifestyle through the way we define ourselves through our musical tastes as a badge of identity. Music can say 'I belong to this group'. You don't believe me? Well, think of a group of people going to church on Sunday. On entering they see electric guitars and amplifiers, so half of the congregation walks in feeling welcome and the other half walks out and wait till next week when the old hymns will return.

### **Renewing Music as a Community Art**

The reality today is our community consists of people from widely different ethnic, social, cultural and musical backgrounds who all have varied concepts of what music is. This makes musical meetings difficult. In the struggle to awaken community some enlightened musicians are today trying to heal the separation and isolation which is the result of our increasing individualisation. The positive part of this is that we are now challenged to face each other as independent individuals, to discover new ways to meet and find each other. Therefore for music to be the source of social renewal that many people sense it could be, we urgently need to ask: **i) is our definition of music (and music training) too narrow to meet the broader needs of our multicultural community? and ii) can music trainings deliver community skills as the norm instead of viewing it as fringe activity, because the lack of a good education for Community Musicians represents the most gigantic gap in today's music training?** So where do we start from?

### **The Ethnomusicologist from Mars**

Ethnomusicology grew out of the need to understand that which was strange and unfamiliar in the music of others without the preconceptions and judgements of our cultural heartland influencing us. The idea was that research would lead to ways of identifying the central musical paradigms that lay behind the music of a particular culture. In the last two decades, these objective methods - developed for studying world musics - have been turned on that last bastion of unstudied musical culture, namely Western Classical Music. Why? In order to view our musical tastes/beliefs, etc. completely objectively from a world perspective and look at these as if one were a complete outsider or stranger, like an 'Ethnomusicologist from Mars', as Bruno Nettl would put it.

I have found that studying World Musics and using its methodologies to explore western musical paradigms has allowed me to see western musics in perspective, as part of the world's music, to value its great and unique contributions, to recognise its freedoms, but also to become aware of its constraints. In addition, studying ethnomusicology has helped me learn to listen to 'all' music with new and more sensitive ears. What would the Ethnomusicologist from Mars understand about the nature of music from the way we teach it? He would notice that:

- Most of the composers studied are now dead and predominantly lived in Germany and Austria between 1650 to 1910. Our Martian would therefore naturally enquire as to what happened to the rest of the world and to earlier and modern music?
- Music is learnt through hieroglyphics we call notation, yet isn't music essentially an aural art?
- Music predominantly takes place in special concert halls which are separated from the outside world – unlike folk musics which are part of the natural soundscape.
- The performers dress up in 19<sup>th</sup> century costume whether the music is Renaissance or Avant Garde.
- A leader, called the conductor - holds it all together and generally does not speak to the audience – unlike performers in folk clubs.
- The musicians often seem bored, sad and even in pain - as children used to tell me when I took them to concerts in the past – a situation exacerbated by the fact that they look at the notated music all night long instead of communicating visually or kinaesthetically with their listeners.
- Music is seemingly created only by so called geniuses who live in solitude, whilst practice is also done individually and takes place predominantly in private. Yet music is a social art, isn't it???

All the above, looked at from the perspective of those other people sitting in their different chairs, namely the Folk, Jazz, and World Musicians looks very culturally specific, not natural or universal. For instance, most musicking throughout the world is orally transmitted as well as being co-created and practised by groups. In addition, it is almost always contextualised as part of life - or as I like to call it, 'Art for Life's sake' rather than 'Art for Art's sake'. Unfortunately, for those musicians brought up to believe Western music was the most evolved, civilised and universal of all music, it can be a problem to recognise the above, for in truth, Western culture doesn't like to see itself as ethnic, but that is precisely what we are - as well as our music - when looked at from the perspective of the majority of people in this world.

Like the 'Ethnomusicologist from Mars' I have spent years calling into question what has been taken for granted and asking what unjustified assumptions and unexamined beliefs have been made. Beliefs are rarely spelled out, but are transmitted insidiously as if the knowledge is incontrovertible.

For instance, young children are automatically given half sized violins without any questions being asked, (the assumption being that it is a great instrument and will enable children a number of years down the road to participate in the music of the great masters). We can even say that the left hand function works with developing the thinking forces and the bow arm with the middle realm of the breath. But hold on! Are we sure this instrument – along with its repertoire and teaching methods - matches children's innate musical developmental needs? Shouldn't we ask, which instruments can meet the unique needs of children's music making year by year – (in the same

way we encourage them to paint their pictures and write their own poems) - rather than offer them the reductionist caricature of adult music making they are often given at present?

I believe the best place to start is to invite students to use their studies as a way of inspecting the values and musical beliefs they have usually unconsciously chosen, for, alas, we tend to select relatively uncritical evidence and arguments that we would like to be true (e.g. planetary tones) and neglect or try and explain away that which is uncomfortable (e.g. what is a discord?). Let us therefore hold our values up to conscious scrutiny.

### **Specialist vs Comprehensive Musicianship**

The main role of music conservatoires today is to produce professional performers. It is the stage performance of music which is held up as the highest aim for musicians to attain to, followed closely by more academic analytical studies. Yet most students graduating from music colleges or universities today - actually 87% of them - will earn most of their income from activities other than professional musical performance as the amount of employment opportunities in the performance world is very small.

So what do most music graduates do with their training? Answer. Many of them become teachers of music. And here lies the root of the dilemma because they rarely have been given the opportunity to study, think about, or practice the art of teaching, that is unless they have been to a centre for Music Teacher Training. In short, there is a tremendous mismatch between the long-term needs students have and the narrow focus often provided in their training.

We need a more realistic view of career goals. Where is the concern with the anticipated contexts of music making because clearly there is a huge disparity between what musicians are trained in and for (e.g. specialist performance skills on just two instruments etc.) and the eventual use of their skills. The problem is that many of these students will teach music often without any understanding or training in the art of teaching or children's musical development. In addition, how are these qualified musicians going to meet popular culture, world musicians, or those who learn/play music orally, let alone the non-specialists who don't read music or label themselves as unmusical? Furthermore, given the fact that many instrumentally trained musicians often end up teaching songs and conducting choirs, I would ask, do they have the knowledge to help children and adults who cannot pitch match or sing in tune? Continuing in this vein, I would also ask why it is that we accept that to play or teach an instrument we need a working knowledge of that instrument, yet believe that no instruction, knowledge or practice of singing is needed for class or instrumental teachers to teach singing.

Are these not some of the root causes of why so many people end up labelling themselves as unmusical, namely because they were taught by people who had never been trained to meet their needs? In short, traditional teaching is not building the real learning muscles the real world requires. Indeed I would say musicians are limited by their particular training as to their involvement in today's world. Can we therefore as a matter of urgency begin to help students master a wider range of skills and to craft new responses to the deeper set of freedoms that our age offers.

### **A Question of Balance. A New Holistic Vision.**

The task of training today must be to provide education for all levels of musical activity - (without any hierarchy as which of these is more important) - namely:

- Performing
- Teaching

- Composing
- Improvising
- Community Musicing
- Soundscape Design and
- Music Therapy, etc.

Our aim today surely must be to equip students with the broader range of skills necessary to meet today's world through offering trainings in comprehensive musicianship, albeit with a vocational focus. These new inclusive trainings will enable all students when qualified to move freely between levels – from performing to composing and teaching, etc. - and thus meet the many unmet needs of today's musical world. (Naturally, those students identified as having a real chance of pursuing a career in the performance world must be encouraged and enabled to do so, but I still believe they also need to awaken to all the roles music can play in life today.)

The 'Old Model of Music Training' concentrates more on music coming from the outside. Lots of time is spent on:

- Mastering Instrumental Technique
- Learning to Sight Read
- Learning the Music Theory that stands behind Western Musical idioms
- The exploration and appreciation of Western Classical Music idioms, predominantly from 1600 – 1910
- A very limited and somewhat abstract view of aural training.

The 'New Model' affirms the value of the above, but for balanced musicing to take place – where the ear can be turned inwards, as well as outwards – we need to give equal amount of times to:

- Improvisation and Composition - so that the inner creator in each human being is involved
- An exploration of Contemporary Music and the new thinking that stands behind it
- The Practice of Inner Listening and Inner Musicality
- Oral Traditions e.g. World & Folk idioms
- The Practice of Playing Music by Ear
- An Exploration of Sacred Perspectives in Music
- The Arts of Practice, Learning and Teaching
- A Living and Deeper Understanding of the Elements of Music as they occur throughout the world, including practising the expressive elements of music such as timbre, texture and dynamics, not only melody, rhythm, harmony and form
- Soundscape Design and Aural Ecology
- The Healing Properties of Sound and Music. Above all, we need to address 'The Musical Future of Children' and how to bring music 'making' into the heart of everyday life – through Community Musicing.

When we work with the above we will create a New Musical, Social and Spiritual Foundation for Contemporary Music Making.

Michael Deason-Barrow  
 Director of Tonalis Centre for the Development of Music