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A Century of Change in Music Education

Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Practice in British Secondary School Music

Stephanie Pitts



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Preface

This book started life as a work of academic reference, charting the development of music in the secondary schools of the twentieth century, and evaluating the present state of music education in the light of recent curriculum and examination directives. It still does that, and I hope that the information contained here, particularly the access to some previously hidden archive and out-of-print material, will prove useful to those who share my interest in the origins and evolution of ideas in music teaching and learning.

As my research went through the inevitable expansions and shifts of focus, however, I became increasingly fascinated by the connections between generations, especially by those ideas that find a resonance in contemporary practice. The resulting text reflects that interest, and is intended to be questioned and considered in the light of every reader's experience of school music, in whatever capacity. We all construct our own histories, and music education is no exception, arousing as it does passionate feelings about its purpose, content and place in the curriculum. There is much to be learnt from a study of past attempts to resolve these perennial questions, and this book is only one version of the story of changing ideas and ideals in the past century of music education. There are many more stories to be told, and it is my hope that the discussion presented here will help to encourage that important task.

* * *

It is my great pleasure to thank the many people who have supported this research, notably Dr Jane Davidson for her supervision of my work and her inspiring energy in her own. I also thank the practising and retired music educators who have shared their experiences in a variety of ways, with particular acknowledgement to Professor Keith Swanwick and Professor George Pratt for their very helpful interviews. In making revisions for publication, the comments of Dr Gordon Cox and Professor Peter Hill on an earlier version of the text have been valuable, as has the assistance of Rachel Lynch and her colleagues at Ashgate Publishing. I am especially grateful to Professor John Paynter for generating my initial interest in this area of research, and for remaining a source of encouragement throughout. Finally, I offer warmest thanks to my parents, whose generous support has been unwavering and greatly appreciated, in this as in everything else.



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Introduction: researching the development of music education

1 Education today: a political arena

During the course of the twentieth century the perception of music in the British secondary school curriculum has undergone tremendous change, as different aspects of music and musicianship have formed the focus for educators of different generations. Educational, musical and social goals have been continually contested and redefined, with the comments of today's politicians and educators revealing the conflicting aims that years of change have generated. In recent decades, a succession of Secretaries of State for Education have maintained a consistent political message: education is about standards, improved examination results, and the testing of teachers and pupils alike. Politics and education are now inextricably linked in Britain, with education forming the cornerstone of policies and rhetoric for all the major political parties. Educational policy offers governments the opportunity to imprint their ideas upon society, and broader social and professional resistance can seem futile, as the 'politicians charged with running an increasingly discredited system ... seek new ways to demonstrate the legitimacy of their policies' (Harland, 1988: 92). Much has been written about the political and educational implications of recent legislation (cf. Lawton & Chitty, 1988; Lawton, 1994), particularly the development and implementation of the National Curriculum. Later in this book (Chapter 6), the proposing and redrafting of the curriculum orders will be discussed in the light of the historical development of music education. It will be shown that the National Curriculum for music brought the tensions and challenges of change in music education to the forefront of teachers' minds, whilst embroiling the curriculum debate in the broader programme of reforming school organisation instigated by the government of the time.

The portrayal of teachers in the media is another essentially political factor that has contributed to educational debate in the last decades of the twentieth century. Simplistic interpretations of problems and challenges hold the teaching profession responsible for the failings of society in general, and

headlines such as 'Teaching is blamed for low standards' (*The Times*, 6 February 1996) have become commonplace, the *Sunday Times* even running a feature on 'How to spot a bad teacher' (Scott-Clark & Hymas, 1996). Hostility to innovation and debate often comes from official sources such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted):

I have in mind, for example, the belief that the national curriculum militates against the teacher's responsibility to develop the unique potential of each child; the antipathy to didactic teaching, and the reluctance to *challenge* children which flows from the concept of the teacher as a facilitator. Above all else, the continuing commitment to such ideas in too many schools explains why it is proving so difficult to raise standards.

(Woodhead, 1996: 18)

The perception that educational theory is inherently damaging is cultivated amongst 'back to basics' politicians, the assumption being that parents will favour the 'traditional' methods that most closely resemble their own school experience. Homework, discipline and rigorous teaching of the core curriculum are frequently cited as the priorities of parents, governors and politicians, with this 'common sense' approach giving credence to those who observe education from the outside, rather than the teachers who engage with teaching and learning every day. Launching a new National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training in 1996, the then Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, reinforced the popular perception of teacher training institutions as the last bastion of 'progressive' theory, stating that 'the need for improvement is urgent' (DfEE, 1996: 1). The search for an educational scapegoat has led to a 'discourse of derision' (Gipps, 1993: 3) with sinister implications that go beyond the teaching profession:

In the suppression of unwelcome research reports, the rubbishing of academics' arguments, and the marginalising of unproductive pupils and schools we see a further erosion of democracy, and furthermore will see an increase of the underclass by virtue of the type of education system we are developing.

(Gipps, 1993: 9)

Music education occupies an uncomfortable position in this debate, denied the security of a 'core' curriculum subject, and often deprived of the resources for innovative teaching and effective learning. When the *Times Educational Supplement* launched a 'Music for the Millennium' campaign in April 1998,

the reaction of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment highlighted a confusion of aims at government level:

Music can underline our campaign to raise standards and provide other valuable aspects of a child's education. It can be part of a cross-curricular approach, helping with numeracy, developing the talents of those with special needs as well as the gifted. It can also draw on the tremendous history of folk music and ballad writing to reinforce understanding of the history of our culture.

(Blunkett, 1998: 13)

Blunkett's views on music education show the juxtaposition of the early twentieth-century teaching goals of cultural and spiritual education, with the millennial obsession with standards and accountability. The two do not sit easily together, and there remains a danger that as literacy and numeracy are given increasing priority within the curriculum, music will be marginalised (cf. Pitts, 2000). It is evident that, far from the educational debate being over, it needs to be pursued ever more vigorously by teachers, musicians and academics who have an interest in the future of music in schools.

2 The influence of the past on contemporary practice

It is easy to accept the end-of-century media portrayal as accurate, and to assume that education is in a lamentable state. The reality, of course, is more varied and complex, and the music curriculum includes a wealth of opportunities and enthusiasms as children engage with music as composers, performers and listeners. Aldrich, who deplores the 'confrontational culture' (1996: 1) of recent educational debate, asserts the importance of an awareness of the past in understanding the present:

Whilst a knowledge of history cannot enable us to predict the future with any certainty, it provides invaluable data for choosing between different courses of action. Historical study provides an interaction with a much wider range of human experience than is possible simply by reference to the contemporary world. Those who deliberately ignore the mistakes of the past are most likely to repeat them.

(Aldrich, 1996: 3)

The current debates and challenges of music education make the historical study of twentieth-century developments a relevant undertaking, as so much of the contemporary curriculum is rooted in the ideals of past generations. Our

concern that music should be a practical subject comes, not just from the introduction of improvising and composing in the 1970s (cf. Paynter & Aston, 1970), but also from the performance focus of 1950s education (cf. Long, 1959). Likewise, our respect for listening in the curriculum stems from the 'musical appreciation' movement of the early twentieth century (cf. Scholes, 1935), but accommodates the late 1970s interest in popular and world musics (cf. Vulliamy & Lee, 1976; 1982). An examination of these ideas in their original context can provide a new perspective on contemporary concerns, as the priorities and practice of previous generations are evaluated by today's teachers. In making such an evaluation, published texts must be considered alongside evidence of development at a local level, in an attempt to determine the extent to which prominent innovators influenced existing practice. The introduction of new resources, such as the gramophone, schools broadcasting, world music repertoire and music technology equipment, are also of significance in educational change, as are broader changes to school systems and management. From these diverse sources emerges a picture that recaptures the sense of opportunity and change that has characterised the critical moments in music education history.

The temptation to construct a chronology of music education that has contemporary practice as its goal is considerable, but it must always be remembered that the retrospective logic of the historian will not have been apparent to all who were involved at any given time. Holbrook, writing about developments in the teaching of English, goes so far as to suggest that those teachers who are aware of their pioneering classroom practices will keep them hidden for fear of disapproval or ridicule:

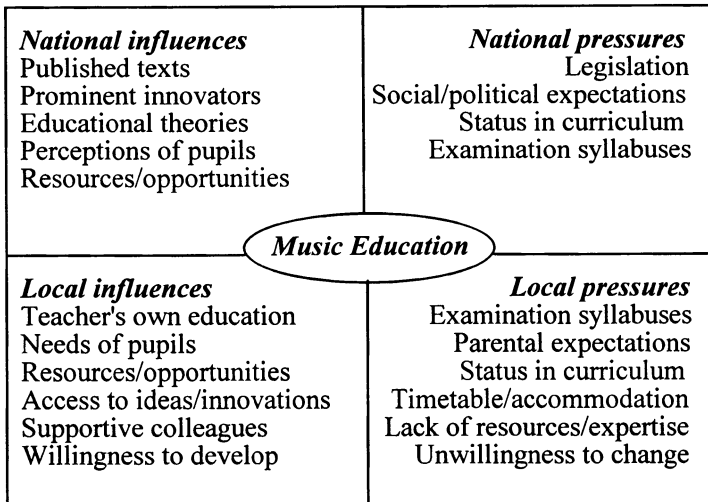
The disturbing thing is the *down* on enjoyment amongst the old hands – raised eyebrows if they see anything unconventional going on in your classroom. Though I'm surprised how some of the young teachers do good work (and how good it is) – you have to find out about such things by stealth, as both teachers and children conspire to conceal them from 'Authority'.

(Holbrook, 1961: 14)

The reality of music education, whether revolutionary or reactionary, is to be found in the experiences of former and current teachers and their pupils, but the researcher can only hope to sample these through interviews and archive research, and filter them through the existing documentary evidence. To a certain extent, the texts discussed in this book are a reflection of my own interests, and different readers will inevitably notice omissions that would form part of their own interpretation. Finding inspiration in the texts and events of

the past is largely a matter of taste, but direct engagement with the ideas of past music educators, be they visionary or pragmatic, is an illuminating route to the appraisal of contemporary practice (cf. Pitts, 1998a).

Simplifying the progress of ideas is always dangerous, but the diagram below provides a framework for the discussion that follows:



It can be seen that at any given time in the history of music education, there are a multiplicity of factors that can work to move ideas forward, or can cause the stagnation or regression of educational thinking. Influences and pressures operate at national and local levels, with access and receptiveness to new ideas essential for the effective use of available resources. National and local pressures, which are in danger of stifling the progress of educational change, can work to positive effect, but only when combined with a willingness to develop curriculum content and teaching style at the classroom level. Throughout the century, the critical engagement with ideas, resources and curriculum innovations has been vital to the development of music education.

It is my strong belief that the history of music education is of direct relevance to teachers, and by implication to pupils, in today's classrooms. The reappraisal of early ideals in music education can help to illustrate present difficulties, with common themes often spanning the generations. So, Yorke Trotter's assertion that learning notation 'should come after, and not before, the feeling for music has been developed' (Yorke Trotter, 1914: 76), is directly comparable with Mainwaring's intention to 'proceed from sound to symbol, not from symbol to sound' (1951: 12), and with Terry's objection, some eighty

years later, to the ‘significant obstacle’ that staff notation presents to ‘creative freedom’ (Terry, 1994: 109). By searching for similarities in the literature of music education, it is often possible to reconsider ideas that have apparently been rejected or forgotten, drawing the valuable points from historical texts, whilst perceiving their flaws with the benefit of hindsight. The vision of some early writings can provide an inspiring context for contemporary debate, with the work of Yorke Trotter (1914), Mainwaring (1941) and Brocklehurst (1962) offering some examples of writers who could see beyond the restrictions of the education system of their time.

Of course, it is not always easy to judge which of the texts published in a given decade were the most forward-looking, and which were providing summaries of contemporary ideas. As much can be determined from the implicit criticisms in a text as from the original ideas presented there, with the problems that the writer addresses offering an overview of the practice of the time. Education committee reports, whether regional or national, are also helpful in their descriptions of current teaching and learning, although their political agendas sometimes shape their interpretation of events. Development in music education has always been a slow process, and the overlap of ideas across the decades is still in evidence in today’s classrooms. In all branches of education, the experiences of individual teachers and pupils contribute to the broader evolution of ideas and methods, and there is a limit to the generalised picture that can be drawn of any moment in educational history. What can be determined, however, is the overall mood and aspirations of a decade, as teachers of all generations responded to those ideas which were new, and those which had formed the basis of their own education. The resolution of these two influences can often be seen as a catalyst for change, with the redefining of musical and educational goals according to the changing social context providing the impetus for the development of new opportunities and ideas.

3 A note on the research methodology

Constructing a history of music education is fraught with the difficulties that attend any historical investigation. To find a continuous chronological argument amongst the fragmented accounts that are available for study is virtually impossible, and some degree of interpretation has to take place in order to achieve coherence. Imposing continuity on the narrative is necessary for an understanding of the vast and often challenging literature, but educational progress is a contested concept, and potential directions, as identified by different authors, are as important as the actual historical

outcomes. There have been several previous attempts to collect the historical facts, notably Rainbow's (1989) account, which surveys developments from 800 BC onwards, and is not surprisingly somewhat limited in its coverage of the events of the twentieth century. Bentley's (1989) thesis, likewise, predates the National Curriculum for music, and does not therefore address the fusion of ideas represented by the curriculum orders. Cox's work on the late nineteenth century (1991a; 1993a) also has some bearing on the early chapters of the present volume, but I have taken care to return to original sources here, rather than following any established interpretation. Plummeridge (1991) and Metcalfe (1987) have recognised the importance of considering past ideas in any appraisal of present music education, but the task of evaluating the pace and purpose of change that constitutes music education in the twentieth century has not previously been fully addressed. The time is right for a review that places contemporary practice in its historical framework, and allows for an evaluation of past ideas and approaches from an end of century perspective.

The intention here is not to create a work of historical reference, but rather to use significant changes in the development of music education to gain insight upon its musical and social purpose for different generations. This involves a consideration of the political and philosophical ideas that have generated change, and constant reference to the way in which educators have perceived their role in fostering enjoyment and expertise amongst future listeners, performers and, more rarely, composers. As a result, the account is less complete than a conventional chronology would need to be, and focuses instead on 'snapshots' of history, using texts to reveal the priorities of the time, and archive and interview material to give a clearer picture of how practising teachers interpreted such recommendations. The division of the century into decades is, to some extent, a false device, but it is convenient to show the broad changes that took place within shorter periods of time. In a recent editorial, Paynter (1996) comments on the gradual changes in attitude that different decades have shown, and questions our position at the end of the twentieth century:

And where are we now? The Niggling 90s? The Nervous 90s? The Not-So-Sure-After-All 90s? The prevailing philosophy seems to be, 'Don't take too much on trust; don't get carried away'. In education, that translates into breaking everything down to small, easily assessable units.

(Paynter, 1996: 181)

The study of earlier writings is one way of recalling a time when music educators were not so nervous, by engaging with the innovative thinking that has contributed to the development of music in schools.

Education changes slowly when it is allowed to evolve according to the convictions and experience of individual teachers, with development only becoming aggressively rapid when government directives, such as those of the 1980s, force the pace. The effectiveness of disseminating ideas is an important strand throughout the century, with teachers bringing ideas from their own training to bear upon any available suggestions and resources. It is almost impossible to determine how influential the texts considered here were upon teachers of the time, even in the case of seminal works such as Paynter and Aston's *Sound and Silence* (1970). Published ideas often reflect a prevailing mood, and Paynter himself has spoken of the letters he received from teachers who had developed ideas concurrently with his own research and teaching (Interview: 6 June 1997). Connections between educators are often made at a local, informal level, and indeed it is often the case that an inspiring person will cause teachers to look again at their own practice more thoroughly than any written text could have done. Receptiveness to published ideas implies that the willingness to develop already existed, and hostility to innovation is not an unusual reaction from teachers whose own practice appears to be successful in its own terms. In considering published texts, therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind that the pace of change will have been varied and flexible, and also that the ideals articulated there will not always have reached fruition in the classroom. Publication dates, necessary for ease of reference, can also give a false sense of the progression of ideas, simplifying as they do the exchange and development of educational thought and practice outside the published text. Some narrative direction is necessary in order to make sense of changes over time, but the dissemination of ideas is a more complex business than the published writings reveal, and the importance of change and discovery for individual teachers and schools should not be forgotten.

Local interviews, observations and archive research from in and around Sheffield are included here, giving detailed accounts of the everyday experiences of music teaching and learning that reveal the history beyond more widely published texts. Clearly, there is much potential for further work in this area, with the study of regional developments open to comparison with the broader national picture. Informal interviews with retired and practising teachers have been an important reminder throughout the research that education profoundly affects individuals, and cannot easily be explained and documented. As Ken Robinson recently remarked, 'Mention education and eyes glaze over, but mention *their* education and they pin you to the wall'

(Neill, 1998: 26). Where possible, I have also sought the opinions of children I have taught, gathering their experiences of and ambitions for music at school. Being in the position of teacher-researcher is interesting educationally, but not ideal methodologically, and there is clearly scope for more systematic investigations of pupils' perceptions of the music curriculum. Their voices are not always clearly heard in the educational debate, but can be very helpful in reflecting on practice and imagining new possibilities (cf. Blishen, 1969; Spencer, 1993; Harland et al., 1995). Discussions with significant innovators, including John Paynter and Keith Swanwick, have provided me with valuable insight upon the developments of more recent years, with George Pratt offering an inside view of the drafting of the National Curriculum. The scope for further research in any of these diverse areas is great, as the ideas and practice of the past offer a wealth of resources for evaluating the present. This book should be taken, not solely as a work of reference, but rather as a stimulus for the unique histories which educators at every level of music teaching construct to help make sense of their practice.

4 Structure and scope

Each chapter looks at a significant period of music education history, in which the ideas and practice of a generation were established and refined. The main educational publications of the decade are considered, with links made between them where common practice or related ideas exist. It must be emphasised that this retrospective view can produce only a generalised picture of the music education of each decade, with the ideas of prominent writers not always mirroring those of the profession as a whole. Whilst archive research and oral history help to provide a context for published sources, the sense of whether an idea was innovative or reactionary is largely a matter of historical judgement. Similarly, the extent to which ideas were disseminated is hard to determine, and it must often be assumed that innovations took some time to reach the majority of secondary school classrooms. The influence of music teachers' own education, for example, is likely to have been stronger than any written sources, and the desire to reproduce a successful musical training more compelling than any need to change the course of music education in a wider sense. Nonetheless, the growing literature of music education in the twentieth century is testimony to the fact that innovatory practice often reached publication and, where the willingness to respond to new ideas existed, will have been important in moving the debate forward.

The historical development of music education is a vast subject, and it has been necessary to define boundaries for the present research. The focus,

essentially, is on music in the secondary school curriculum, with innovations in other subjects and other age ranges considered only where they have a direct impact upon the secondary classroom. So, for example, primary music is given a brief discussion in Chapter 3, as having been influential on the adoption of 'creative' methods in the secondary school, and developments in art, English and drama teaching are considered where they have provided examples of relevance to music educators. By the same token, some of the more famous developments of the twentieth century, notably the work of Orff and Kodály, occupy only a small place in this study, given that their greatest impact was at the primary level. Omissions are perhaps inevitable, but the intention has been to give a sense of the priorities and perceptions of each generation, considering the work of those music educators who have addressed most clearly the preoccupations of their time.

Perhaps the most significant development over the course of the century has been the changing perception of children's engagement with music, with the 'musical appreciation' lessons of the 1920s and 1930s giving way to a performance focus in the post-war years, and gradually incorporating improvising and composing in the early 1970s. With the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1986, the 'composing–performing–listening' combination was given official credence, endorsing a curriculum that gave children access to all aspects of musical experience. The perception of children 'as musicians' is always finely balanced with their status as pupils, with music forming only one part of their total education. Whilst music in schools must have an educational purpose if it is to justify its place in the curriculum, it must also be musically authentic, with attempts to create simplified or sanitised 'music for children' only compromising the validity of the teaching and learning. Music teachers, particularly in secondary schools, are often highly trained specialists, with experience of performing or composing at a level beyond that which their pupils are likely to reach. The challenge is to relate that experience to the classroom in a way that has educational and musical coherence, providing children with the strategies to engage with music themselves. Different generations have defined 'music' in schools according to the wider expectations of society, with the amateur listening and performing of the first half of the century gradually giving way to the diverse demands of late twentieth-century music, where the musical skills of the classroom need to enable access to a wide variety of genres. The continual revision of musical and educational priorities forms an underlying thread to the practical opportunities and approaches of secondary music teaching.

Chapter 1

Music education for all: 1900s–1930s

1.1 Music education at the turn of the twentieth century

The education system of the early twentieth century was only just beginning to come to terms with the needs of the child and with the effects that education could have upon employment and social change. The ‘Report of the Commission on Secondary Education’ of 1895 (Curtis, 1948/67: 308) marked a new focus on secondary schooling, which had previously depended on the wealth of families, so being denied to poorer children whose parents could afford neither the costs nor the delayed arrival of another family wage. The establishment of a Board of Education in 1899, and of Local Education Authorities three years later, meant that education was given increasing political recognition, initiating a process of development and change. ‘Education for all’ was becoming the social and political ambition, and the task of negotiating curricula that met the various needs of pupils had begun.

The newly formed Board of Education was anxious to avoid a dictatorial role, but its co-ordinating function was quickly accepted (Lawson & Silver, 1973: 367). The curriculum suggestions offered in their handbook of 1905 demonstrated an allegiance to the independent grammar schools of the time, which were seen to be providing the most effective post-elementary education. As Curtis notes in his *History of Education in Great Britain*, secondary education was ‘planned according to the needs of the minority’ (1948/67: 323), and the focus on preparation for university or professional life went largely unchallenged.

Music education held a subordinate place in this educational regime, with the public school curriculum model promoting the belief that musical opportunities, where they existed, should be largely extra-curricular (Metcalfe, 1987: 98). Music was partially defined by its classroom context: with passive, silent pupils demanded for almost all other subjects, it was considered radical to have children making a noise, and singing was adventurous enough for most teachers. A tradition of instrumental teaching was already well-established, with performance examinations having been offered by the Associated Board

of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) and Trinity College of Music since 1876. As well as setting the precedent that serious musical skills could only be acquired from a private, expensive teacher, such a system advanced the notion that music was not for everybody, but only for the skilled or wealthy.

The general perception of music in education was apparently limited by its context, but the debate about its purpose and content was growing, nevertheless. The nineteenth-century belief that children were inherently evil, and therefore dependent on adult intervention and discipline for their moral and emotional development, was slowly being replaced by a new recognition of the importance of childhood, as being 'not merely a stage in development towards the valuable state of adulthood' (Wardle, 1976: 90). From this early advocacy of 'child-centred' teaching, a rationale for different curriculum subjects could evolve, and music took its place amongst those subjects intended to foster desirable characteristics in the young:

The concentration of purpose, the clearness of thought, the untiring energy combined with ceaseless patience, the quick and eclectic sympathy needed for and created by the earnest, persevering study of music make it a valuable means of training for the young.

(Mills, 1905: 17)

In the lectures from which this extract is taken, Mills emphasises the universal benefits of music education, focusing on its extra-musical influences, rather than on the development of musical skills. Music learning was perceived as something requiring 'natural taste' or talent, but Mills asserts that music provides 'a potent and valuable means of education' even for those pupils 'more or less wanting' in ability (ibid.: 38). In his description of the ideal music curriculum, he anticipates developments that were to take several more decades to become common practice:

It is good to read about music, better still to listen to good music, but there is nothing so powerful in promoting appreciation of good music, as working at it with either voice or instrument.

(Mills, 1905: 15)

Mills, as an 'Inspector of Music in Schools for the London University', clearly took his duties to include the dissemination of good practice and innovative thinking amongst fellow music teachers. With few published texts available at the time, this sharing of ideas between music educators was a vital feature of the profession, and Mills was to be followed in this vocation by such important figures as MacPherson, Somervell and Borland (cf. Cox, 1991b). MacPherson shared the concern with children's 'whole mental development'

(MacPherson, 1922: 9), but subscribed to the ‘music appreciation’ model of teaching more fully than Mills had. Rhythmic and aural training were the foundations for successful music education, a view that was to prevail for almost half the century, continuing the argument that music learning was of general academic and personal benefit:

It is an acknowledged fact that, when properly carried out, class-work in music (having for its object the training of the ear and the development of the child’s appreciative powers) has most certainly the effect of stimulating the mental faculties of those who take part in it, and as a result, of improving the standard of work in other departments.

(MacPherson, 1922: 13)

Defending musical appreciation, MacPherson criticises the practice of some contemporary teachers, so offering a contemporary evaluation of music education in the first decades of the century. Music teachers, he claims, were often unwilling recruits to the classroom (1922: 11), a fact which probably fostered the belief that a truly comprehensive music education was only suitable for the talented few. MacPherson saw the ‘Music Appreciation’ movement as a solution to the unsatisfactory state of music teaching, claiming that the acquisition of critical listening skills should replace the medley of approaches that existed in some schools:

There are still not a few schools, usually old-fashioned and unprogressive, where the only corporate musical work is confined to a ‘Singing-class’, with the meagre allowance of one half-hour per week, into which there has to be crammed the singing of songs, the learning of notation, the study of breathing and voice-production, the training of the ear – and, nowadays, Musical Appreciation.

(MacPherson, 1923: 17)

For teachers who remained unconvinced by MacPherson’s championing of the music appreciation cause, he provides specimen lessons, intended to demonstrate the skill of making music accessible to young people, whilst avoiding the pitfalls of asking children what they ‘feel’ about the music or insisting that they must like an established ‘masterwork’. These take the form of scripts, from which the teacher is intended to learn the style and spontaneity that should characterise successful music appreciation lessons:

Beethoven to you may still seem a rather far-off kind of person, someone, in fact, whom you have heard older people talk of with

respect and veneration, but who doesn't somehow speak to you in *quite* the thrilling way that some other composers (less highly thought of) undoubtedly do. It may be, too, that you have struggled at the piano with a 'Beethoven Sonata' that has appeared to you somewhat of the nature of an enemy bent upon your destruction, rather than of a friend – and I think that in all this I should be inclined to sympathise more than a little with you!

(MacPherson, 1923: 118)

Following this avuncular introduction, MacPherson's classes would hear, in this case, the themes of Beethoven's first symphony, learning to sing them to help with recognition and recall. Musical examples would be played on the piano by the teacher, with the orchestral instruments mentioned only if 'gramophone records of their tone-qualities were available' (ibid.: 133). So the children would acquire a knowledge of the established repertoire, together with an understanding of music 'closer to that of the artist' (ibid.: 4). This intention was to remain the focus of music education for some years, with the tradition continued by Scholes (1935), and reinforced by the growth in radio broadcasts and recorded music.

MacPherson's ideas can be contrasted with those of Somervell, a school inspector who was responsible for many of the Board of Education documents on music that were published in the first decades of the century (Cox, 1991b: 69). Somervell's loyalties were to aural and rhythmic training, which he saw as a necessary preparation for appreciation work. His ideas are summarised in one of his later publications, *The Three R's in Music (Reading, Writing, Rhythm)* (1931), which is an amalgamation of the ideas that had been current during his career. On music appreciation, which he prefers to term 'Musical literature lessons' (ibid.: 21), he is critical of those teachers who perform the musical equivalent of handing out roses to the class and explaining the scent:

In presenting a work of art to children, be it picture, music or poem, all that the true teacher can do is to have reverence enough not to stand between the artist and the child, but to let the spirit of the artist speak to the spirit of the child; and to have faith enough not to be in the smallest degree disturbed if there is no apparent response.

(Somervell, 1931: 21)

For all the avowed spiritual intentions of Somervell's teaching, his methods were rigorous, and involved aural work, voice cultivation, sol-fa and staff notation, rhythm dictation and conducting. Like MacPherson, he offers a specimen lesson plan, which takes the 'a little of everything' approach that the earlier writer had criticised:

Music education for all: 1900–1930s

	mins.
(i) Voice exercises	3
(ii) Modulator (Sol-fa at first, Staff later)	3
A tune Sol-faed and afterwards sung without the Modulator.	
(iii) Sight reading. Sol-fa a pattern.	7
6 to 8 exercises, sung once each, without unnecessary halts.	
(iv) Ear training. Sol-fa a tune already learned.	1
Rhythm dictation.	2
Pitch dictation.	4
(v) Songs. Learn a new tune.	3
New song. Old songs.	17
	(Somervell, 1931: 34)

This breathless use of a forty-minute session shows Somervell's determination to encourage thorough and comprehensive music teaching, and illustrates the variety of methods that were present at this early stage in class music education. The frequent references to sol-fa teaching show that the methods of Curwen and of Sarah Glover, inherited from the previous century, were an established feature of music teaching. By the 1920s, the debate over whether children should learn to sight-read from the tonic sol-fa modulator or from staff notation had not been fully resolved, but Somervell's compromise, that there should be a progression from modulator to stave, was not uncommon.

Borland's (1927) review of music teaching in the first quarter of the century takes a rather different tone, evaluating the practice and ideas witnessed during his work as a musical adviser and educational inspector in London. His survey offers a helpful summary of the ideas expressed by MacPherson, Somervell and other leading writers of the time, together with a critical appraisal of the manner in which some of those ideas were being implemented. Like many of his influential contemporaries, Borland recommends an education which is fully rounded, incorporating the best of recent practice and innovation, without becoming rigidly linked to one school of thought:

We need voice-training up to the point of eliminating crude and harsh tones; we need ear-training up to the point of enabling the pupil to gain not only general impressions, but also appreciation of detail, without which no full love of art can exist; we need training in notation to enable the pupils to continue a self-education after passing beyond our care.

(Borland, 1927: 8)

Borland describes 'a veritable revolution' (ibid.: 49) in the fifteen years prior to publication, particularly in the growth of 'music appreciation' teaching. His criticisms of this method are amongst the most perceptive of the time, his concern being that the detail of musical skills and analysis were in danger of taking second place to a consideration of the whole, often through the use of descriptive stories or the setting of words to famous tunes. Clearly deploring these extra-musical devices, Borland points out that the vague aim of teaching children to 'love music' would never stand up to scrutiny in any other subject:

To attempt appreciation of music without sound ear-training, and at least some knowledge of notation, harmony, phrasing and form, is about as sensible as to attempt the appreciation of French literature through the mere sound of the words, without any knowledge of their meaning.

(Borland, 1927: 49)

The analogy is slightly flawed, of course, in that music does not seek to convey literal meaning in the same way as a French text, but Borland's point, that music education should aim to increase listening skills beyond the surface enjoyment of the sounds, is valid nevertheless. In suggesting also that appreciation lessons could have an impact beyond the school, he is drawn by the spirit of the time into placing low value on the musical influences the child would encounter at home: as children listened to their teacher's choice of music in school, so they would discover 'that the gramophone is capable of producing good music as well as the jazz dance and the vulgar music-hall song' (ibid.: 67). Borland sees concerts for schools as an important part of this cultivation of 'the right understanding of music' (ibid.: 72), but cautions against the excessively lengthy music and, worse still, spoken introductions, that were offered at many such occasions.

In addition to his evaluation of ideas and practice, Borland's assessment of the relevance of new resources is useful to the historian, with his enthusiasm for the pianola highlighting a trend that was in fact to be relatively short-lived:

Annotated educational rolls produced under the guidance of eminent musicians are being issued in generous numbers, and simultaneously the cost price of these instruments is being reduced by intelligent mass production, so that schools in the near future will be able to possess a pianola at a cost not much higher than that of a good ordinary pianoforte.

(Borland, 1927: 62)