

## **Music Education in a European Dimension**

Music education should be a process of stimulation and sensitive understanding that develops the imagination as well as the emotions. This is done by performing, listening and knowing about music. Music education is a complex and unique process and is unlike other 'curriculum' subjects in both its understanding and experience (see Gardner, 1986 and Hargreaves, 1988).

There are some principle truths regarding the nature of music education and these manifest themselves in different ways: understanding by the amateur, understanding by the professional musician and understanding by proxy, that is as a bi-product which assists the development of the individual as a member of society.

Green (1988) defines a curriculum as being cultural development for an individual in society. Suchomlinsky (in Kabalevsky 1988) says 'musical education is not the education of a musician, but above all the education of a human being. Swanwick (1981) says that music education is a vital element of the cultural process.

We have here strong references to culture and also the idea of the renewing and transforming influence music education can have particularly as an eternally changing process. This is where we can begin our search for a European dimension. If music has a catalysing effect on cultural renewal and transformation, then presumably we can use it in the search for a pedagogy that educates the European and establishes some commonalities and differences amongst the nations, races and cultures that are Europe. But, in such circumstances it would seem that a philosophy of music education which does not place the dynamic relationship between the human being and the musical experience at its centre, would fail, to be a legitimate music education, whatever its cultural origins. We must look for those elements in music education which allow renewal and transformation, whilst not neglecting music of the past which might illuminate our search. The interculturalist argument being developed by scholars involved in the European dimension in the UK and elsewhere attempts to provide a framework which establishes the entitlement of students to be aware of their own culture. (De Vreede, 1990)

The following types of experience could be said to constitute music education:

- 1 Exposure
- 2 Listening
- 3 Music making
- 4 Performing
- 5 Composing

Unfortunately, music education is not something that is experienced by everyone despite various declarations from UK and EC bodies. Many European citizens will be exposed to music in some form, but will they have experienced a music education? Some will, but by no means all. In Ardagh (1988) there is a devastating account of the music rooms in Lycées and Collège d'Enseignement Secondaires in France which are locked and unused as a result of a shortage of music teachers and the lack of a tradition.

Music education is changing for the better, but although the methods are more child/student-centred the taught content is still neglected. However, the old 'academic' style is slowly being replaced by activities involving active participation as well as the informal exposure to recordings in everyday life.

The 'resolution on Music Education' adopted May 1985 by Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education and Recommendation 929 (1981) on Music for All by the Parliament of the Council of Europe should be considered alongside the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of Education of 24<sup>th</sup> May 1988. These documents point to having a regard to relevant European Community resolutions and particularly those concerning the European Dimension in Education.

This therefore must involve including the European dimension explicitly in school curricula in all appropriate disciplines including the arts, and since music is one of the arts we must assume that it is intended that a European dimension will be explicitly included in all music teaching and learning throughout the Community. Yet the evidence is that it receives less visible support than some more vocationally oriented subjects.

***Do the Performing Arts have a special contribution to make?***

Depending on the different models throughout Europe, the European dimension may vary, this should be seen as a positive thing with diversity being a catalyst for greater cooperation and development. One example is the ECYO where students from all EC countries work together. On the negative side it could become a vehicle for competitive nationalism. Different countries tend to have different specialisms and it would be all too easy to ignore a particular discipline that has little or no provision in certain countries. In a European dimension, time must be found for pupils, students and teachers to get together to make music. This already happens to some extent when twinned towns or schools share and exchange their music groups. However, it is the exception rather than the rule and few children expect to have this type of activity as part of their music education.

### ***Is there such a thing as European Music and what do we mean by European music?***

Slater(1990) points out 'the importance of the European Community should not appear to ignore assertions of national identity or the needs of minorities.'

The models for music education that exist in the countries of Europe and EC give us some indications as to the diversity of delivery and relative importance of this subject in formal education. In some countries and regions music education is the concern of a ministry of culture; and in others it is organised by schools and an education ministry. In EC countries there is a wide variety in the course content for prospective teachers of music. A common core appears to be the teaching of the Western European 'Classical' tradition from 1500 to 1900 and sometimes to 1991 (Oboussier & Swanwick, 1984). Could this be the Commission's European dimension in music? The picture is enlarged by the addition of more countries in 2004 with very varied and diverse cultures which are bound to have an influence in the course.

Given all this it is unlikely that a uniform approach to the European dimension will be found since the starting points are so many and so varied. Erasmus and Tempus programmes offer some financial assistance encouraging greater awareness amongst music educators, but are still a long way from agreement on matters of principle.

If EC countries were able to agree fundamentally what constitutes a music education and to resolve the specialist's musical training versus the general music education of a person,

through music, the European dimension might be easier to discern. But such agreement seems a long way off despite initiatives such as the Bologna Declaration (2000).

Present day 'good practice' is not difficult to monitor and the growing use of Erasmus exchanges is making this easier. As the process of change becomes ever more rapid it is a duty to ensure that Music education is always on the agenda and that the European dimension includes wider access to Music for all Europeans.

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