

Guest Editorial

The new millennium has brought a number of research articles and books that relate to instrumental (including vocal) teaching in higher education (Hunter & Russ, 2000; Jørgensen, 2000, 2001; Ritterman, 2000; Davidson & Da Costa Coimbra, 2001; Davidson & Good, 2002; Froehlich, 2002; Mills, 2002, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, in press; Nerland & Hanken, 2002; Nielsen, 2002; Federation of British Conservatoires 2003; Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003; Mills & Smith, 2003; Mills *et al.*, 2004; Burt & Mills, in press). Many of these publications have been written, at least to some extent, from a distance. The researchers have looked at instrumental teaching in higher education from their experience of schools, ‘academic’ teaching in universities or institutional management, for example, and have set their research questions, and sought the answers to these questions, accordingly.

In the UK, instrumental teaching in higher education, particularly in conservatoires, is carried out mainly by performers who teach. But studies in which instrumental teaching is researched by these performer-teachers are rare. Sture Brändström’s (1995) investigation of what happens if piano students are invited to schedule piano lessons when they feel that they need them, Helena Gaunt’s (2004) study of breathing and the oboe, and the analyses that Kim Burwell and her colleagues at Christ Church Canterbury University College (CCCUC) have carried out of instrumental lessons video-recorded at their own institution (Young *et al.*, 2003) are welcome exceptions. They provide insights into some of the research questions that these performer-teachers find particularly interesting and helpful to address.

Each of the seven articles in this special issue is authored or co-authored by a performer-teacher. Some authors are new (education) researchers, while others are more experienced. The first three articles are written by pianists. Kim Burwell asks how instrumental teachers at CCCUC help undergraduates to become independent learners, and focuses on teachers’ use of verbal questions as she considers how the development of students’ autonomy could, in some cases, be enhanced. Patricia Holmes interviews two professional musicians – a guitarist and a cellist – as part of her check of the good habits for learning and memorisation that she aims to pass on to piano pupils seeking to improve the security of their performance. Carole Presland had long wondered whether she might be disadvantaging students by living hundreds of miles from her conservatoire, so that she cannot routinely visit to hear performances that do not take place on lesson days: by interviewing piano students taught by several teachers, she learnt that students tend to welcome the opportunity to perform without their teacher present, at least on some occasions.

The next article is written by two harpists – Hilary Moore and Fiona Hibbert – who investigate the effectiveness of brain gym in improving the mental and physical performance of musicians specialising in a range of instruments. David Corkhill (percussion) uses ten interviews of professional orchestral players, and ten of students, as a basis for considering whether students who aspire to become orchestral players understand what they are aiming for. David Purser (trombone) addresses the attitudes of some wind players to the instrumental teaching that they carry out in conservatoires, and their philosophies of instrumental teaching. These six articles consider aspects of individual western classical

instrumental teaching that their performer-teacher authors felt were useful, for their own teaching practice, to research: the verbal content of lessons; the optimal use of practice time to generate a secure performance; the extent to which teachers need to be present if students are to learn through performing; the value of an alternative learning technique; whether students have been trained for work in orchestras by their individual instrumental lessons with orchestral musicians; the attitudes of performers to their work as teachers. Finally, we move beyond western classical music to jazz. Elisabeth Barratt, working with Hilary Moore, considers how assessment methods that were devised for western classical music need to be adapted if the jazz performance that is assessed is to remain a genuine group activity. They found that applying 'traditional' assessment criteria encouraged the musicians being assessed towards solo pyrotechnic display, while the other performers would assume simple accompanying roles in the hope that the 'soloist' could be heard by, and not fail to impress, their examiners. This article is an important reminder of how much more of the musical activity of conservatoires and universities remains to be researched.

This special issue is linked with two externally funded research projects, focused on music in higher education, that are based at the Royal College of Music in London (RCM). *Learning to Perform: Instrumentalists and Instrumental Teachers* (www.learningtoperform.org.uk) is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), and *The Employment of Musical Instrument Teaching Specialists* (www.musiceducation.rcm.ac.uk/gmp.htm) is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England as part of its Good Management Practice Programme (GMP). TLRP is committed to the development of teachers as researchers, and the GMP project allowed us to support the development of new researchers, separately from the peer reviewing of their articles, and to partly compensate institutions financially for costs involved when instrumental teachers who are paid hourly work as researchers.

Why is it that so few instrumental teachers working in higher education carry out education research? The sheer fact that most are hourly-paid militates against them carrying out any research at all. But as we talked to instrumental teachers who were interested in submitting articles for consideration for this volume, we also discovered that many of them had only previously been exposed to research that was heavily psychological and fiercely quantitative, and assumed that whatever they did would also need to have these characteristics. We hope that the content of this special issue will help to change this impression for instrumental teachers interested in research. The researchers here have not attempted to imitate any particular scholarly style, but rather capitalise upon their own unique perspectives, experience and understanding as practitioners when exploring the issues in education that fascinate them. There is, of course, room for research that is driven theoretically or empirically in all fields of music education. But we would suggest that there are many research questions, including those relating to instrumental teaching and posed by authors of this volume, which can be grown particularly effectively from many years of experience, observation and participation in instrumental teaching.

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