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A degree of independence: teachers' approaches to instrumental tuition in a university college

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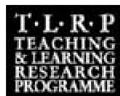
Undergraduate training represents a crucial stage of development for instrumentalists, including singers, as they begin to mature as independent musicians and learners. This paper asks how instrumental and vocal teachers in higher education approach this stage of student development. It focuses on the use of questions by teachers, as they cultivate the students' contribution to their own learning. The basis of the study is a research project in a UK University College, investigating the conduct of instrumental lessons through video evidence, interviews and questionnaires.

Introduction

Performance Studies is a course central to the degree programme in music at Canterbury Christ Church University College (CCCUC), a higher education institution in Kent. In recent years, the process of instrumental (including vocal) teaching and learning has been the subject of an extended research project, investigating the areas of study addressed in lessons, the approaches taken by teachers, and the student contribution to the learning process. Evidence for research was collected through the video recording of lessons in the music department, along with questionnaires and interviews with volunteer participants.

The research findings showed that teachers were engaged in highly sophisticated practices, drawing on advanced levels of instrumental expertise to guide student musicians through a crucial stage of their development. The broadest aim of the research project was to develop a shared understanding of those practices. This would go some way toward overcoming the isolation inherent in the typical setting for instrumental teaching and learning, in the music department and indeed in the higher education sector as a whole. Perhaps the most obvious isolating factor is that, although students of performance at CCCUC are engaged in group tuition and seminar courses, the majority of instrumental lessons take place on a one-to-one basis. In addition, contributing staff are normally engaged on a part-time basis, and are not typically involved in course design and management. Finally, instrumental tutors do not share a background in teacher training: of the nineteen tutors who participated in the research project, none had formal qualifications in either post-compulsory education or specialist instrumental teaching. The project, closely associated with an ongoing staff development programme, was intended to enable good practice to be identified and shared, to articulate issues involved in the Performance Studies course, and to inform any future developments in the department.



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Student independence has emerged as a salient issue, in the findings of the research project and in associated staff development seminars. Independence is a substantial area for development in undergraduate musicians. Approaching maturity as instrumentalists, they are learning to become independent as interpreters and performers; in the context of a degree programme, they are also learning to become independent as thinkers and learners. In this paper, the approaches taken by teachers to the development of student independence are considered, with special reference to the use of questions. The nature and effect of teacher questions would provide valuable insights into the approaches taken by instrumental tutors, and cast some light onto the dynamics of teacher-student relationships (Young *et al*., 2002).

Performance studies in a University College

The development of independence in undergraduate music students is affected by two influential fields of experience. The first is the student's previous schooling. At Canterbury Christ Church, as in similar institutions, the majority of students in the music degree programme have only recently left secondary school, and bring with them a range of habits and expectations:

> In the traditional school setting, students tend to depend on their teachers for the acquisition of information. They expect their teachers to provide learning material, to motivate them, and to take responsibility for the learning process. It is accepted, even expected, that teachers should be largely in control of what is being learned, how it is learned, when it is learned, and to what extent. (Boekaerts & Niemivirta, 2000: 417)

The second influence is the history of instrumental teaching itself. According to Jørgensen:

> Historically, the predominant relationship between teacher and student in instrumental instruction has been described as a master-apprentice relationship, where the master usually is looked at as a role model and a source of identification for the student, and where the dominating mode of student learning is imitation. (Jørgensen, 2000: 68)

The notion that there might be a single tradition of instrumental teaching, rather than a diverse range of approaches, needs to be qualified. In institutions and outside them, instrumental teaching has been characterised by an emphasis on one-to-one lessons, with the transmission of knowledge and skills depending on individual teachers and students. This setting, described as a 'secret garden' in the broader field of education (Young *et al*., 2002) must place significant constraints on the development of a shared understanding that could reasonably be described as a tradition.

In addition to this, current degree programmes often include what were once 'non-conservatoire' instruments and musical styles, and the music department at CCCUC, for instance, embraces jazz and popular music in addition to western classical. Their incorporation into institutional study has probably begun to affect the conduct of teaching and learning within those styles. At the same time, their inclusion has broadened still further the range of approaches taken to instrumental studies in higher education.

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In spite of these reservations, the 'master-apprentice relationship' is one easily recognised by most instrumental teachers, whether referring to their previous experience as learners or to current practices. In the university sector the relationship is commonly described, rightly or wrongly, as the 'conservatoire model'.

In its emphasis on performance as an element of course content, the music degree programme at Canterbury Christ Church stands between the United Kingdom conservatoires and other institutions in the University sector. This may be seen in the relative provision of individual instrumental tuition. Blake (2004) reports 75 minutes' tuition per week for first-year students at the Royal College of Music, compared to 60 minutes provided at CCCUC. Mills (2003) in *Teaching Performance* reports a range of 10–22 hours' tuition provided to first-year students in eleven universities and university colleges, compared to a total of 26 hours for CCCUC students. While the line between conservatoire and university is not always clear, the CCCUC programme includes some features associated with each.

Highly skilled instrumentalists sometimes choose to pursue university degrees, but the range of accomplishment among students on entering the music degree programme at CCCUC is undoubtedly wider than that of the conservatoires. University college students may pursue music alone or as part of a combined honours degree with another subject, and although it is the most popular course available to students, Performance Studies is not mandatory after the first year of study. Graduates of the music department tend to be capable people rather than concert artists, and while the proportion of graduates moving on to either full employment or postgraduate study is high, their range of career destinations is probably wider than that of conservatoire-trained musicians.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy for the University College as a whole includes as one of five objectives 'the development of the ability to engage in and record the outcomes of reflective learning as a basis for personal development planning in relation to personal, educational and career objectives'. Reflective learning is emphasized in the context of music in particular, as a tool for cultivating student independence. Reflection is a term with various applications, and in the context of individual lessons the definition offered by Williams *et al*. is helpful:

> Suffice to say that reflection is used here to refer to aspects of mentor-student interaction *which provoke thought on the part of students* so that they are actively involved in their own learning rather than receiving information or guidance passively. (Williams *et al*., 1998: 229)

'Passive reception' is characteristic of the traditional school setting and of the master-apprentice relationship often associated with instrumental teaching, as described above. The aim of the instrumental teacher in higher education – whether in the university sector or in specialist conservatoires – should be to guide the student from these background influences to a position of independence that can sustain lifelong learning.

The independent student

The development of student independence is central to instrumental teaching and learning. To some extent it is addressed from the outset: even beginners are expected to spend more

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time alone with their instruments than with their teachers, and as expertise increases the quality of private practice becomes ever more crucial. By the time students reach undergraduate level they should have begun to take the lead, in at least some respects, in their own learning.

The independent practice of instrumental students in higher education has been usefully explored by Jørgensen (2000, 2002) though this remains an important area for further research. Addressing skills associated with independence, Nielsen (2001, 2004) has researched the self-regulating learning strategies used by advanced conservatoire students, and Hallam (2001) the development of metacognitive skills as instrumentalists progress from novice to expert.

In addition to its close association with learning skills, student independence is essential for progress in aspects of musicianship that are highly valued in western musical traditions. Interpretation is the obvious case in point, where an element of individuality within certain stylistic parameters is a priority that may affect the approaches taken by teachers. Investigating the teaching of interpretation from an historical perspective, Hultberg (2000, 2002) refers to what she calls 'reproductive' and 'exploratory' approaches to the printed score, and draws clear links between the latter and the development of student independence. Laukka (2004) in his research into the teaching of 'expressivity' in conservatoires in Sweden and England reports a preference among teachers for verbal-based instruction over a model base. The reasons given for this emphasise the element of individuality:

> The teachers were also asked to state why they preferred their chosen method. Proponents of metaphor use and felt emotion [i.e., verbal-based instruction] often mentioned that aural modelling may lead to 'mere imitation' (e.g. 'If imitation is the primary method, is the student truly expressing?', 'You have to tell your own story!'). (Laukka, 2004: 52)

Individuality is regarded as increasingly important as students acquire more expertise. In a study by Mills and Smith (2003), 134 teachers were asked to list the hallmarks of good instrumental teaching, for children and for students in higher education. For children, teachers emphasised the importance of enthusiasm, knowledge, and good communication from the teacher, with an element of fun for the pupil. Referring to higher education, the highest-ranking hallmarks were teacher knowledge, technique, support or praise from the teacher, and the development of the student's individuality.

Complementing this research into the beliefs of teachers, Mills (2002) asked 200 undergraduate students to list the characteristics of instrumental teaching that had been effective for them personally. The results gave witness to a range of teaching styles which were loosely categorized as Transmission, Collaboration, and Induction. The categories seem parallel to the 'exchange forms' defined by Williams *et al*. (1998) with reference to the mentoring of trainee teachers: Mentor informs, Mentor directs, Mentor elicits. The threads are not the same, but both represent teaching approaches which are increasingly aimed at drawing students out, encouraging and empowering them to contribute to their own learning.

The development of student independence has been highlighted as a shared area of concern for instrumental teachers in the music department at CCCUC, and has been

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explored and discussed at a series of staff-development events. The research project, feeding back to participants in staff-development seminars, has helped to identify and explore the issues of student participation, individuality, and independence, and this in turn draws attention to the ways in which teachers may support the development of such qualities.

The research project

The research took the form of a case study, and involved a descriptive and interpretative approach, alongside some quantification of data. The majority of data for study was collected through the video recording of 67 individual lessons and 10 group lessons, given over a period of four years. The sample of teachers was drawn from volunteers, who in turn invited their students to participate; a total of 19 teachers were eventually involved, having been selected according to their availability. The selection was also influenced by a desire to represent as wide a range of instruments and styles as possible. These were: flute, recorder, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, voice, piano, electronic keyboard, guitar (acoustic), guitar (electric), and drum kit. Among the 19 teachers, a majority of 11 were male, and among the 67 students in individual lessons, a majority of 40 were female. For the sake of the anonymity of participants, and clarity of expression, this paper will refer to teachers as being male, and to students as being female, thus reflecting the bias of the sample. 'Instrumental' will refer to both instrumental and vocal lessons.

The verbal dialogue from the filmed lessons was transcribed in full, and analysis was focused largely on this transcribed dialogue, enhanced as appropriate by reference back to the video evidence. Obviously, verbal dialogue could not tell all about the teaching and learning transactions which took place: each transcription would provide only a 'snap shot' of the broader processes involved, and each lesson would include elements of gesture and performance which could not be fully expressed in print. However, transcribed dialogue did provide something tangible – and to some extent quantifiable – for analysis, and this series of 'snap shots' offered some fascinating evidence for study.

Further information for study was gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, with the first 36 participants in the project. These invited teachers and students to comment on the conduct of their lessons, and on the approaches taken to the learning process. Questionnaire responses were collated, and interviews were fully transcribed for further study.

In the first stage of the project, the focus of analysis lay on the balance among the various areas of study in individual lessons (Young *et al.*, 2002; Burwell, 2003a). In response to the findings of this investigation, teachers' approaches to Interpretation as an area of study was explored further (Burwell 2003b). In the second stage of the project the emphasis was placed on the balance between the contributions to lesson dialogue from teachers and students. This was cross-referenced with information about the characteristics of participants, such as student age, gender, year of study, subsequent examination results, and eventually final degree classes (Burwell, 2003a). Here, a relationship emerged between the ability of students – whether measured through their subsequent examination mark, or through their final degree classes – and the proportion of student talk. Put simply, stronger students talked more. Mature-aged students also tended to be higher contributors, and on average, students contributed more with each year of study. The findings strongly

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suggested a clear relationship between effective teaching and learning, and the student's active participation in the process. Further, it seemed that the place of questions in lesson dialogue would mark a significant and dynamic point of interaction between the student's contribution and the approaches taken by teachers in instrumental lessons (Young *et al.*, 2002; Burwell *et al.*, 2004). Both teachers and students, in their semi-structured interviews, typically referred to questions when they were asked to discuss the teaching approaches taken in their lessons. The use of questions clearly warranted further investigation.

Questions

Effective questioning must be one of the most important ways of eliciting a contribution from students, whether verbal or practical. Questions would seem to be essential to developing and sustaining genuine dialogue in lessons, having the capacity to allow, encourage and even require the student to participate actively in her own learning. This in turn must affect a crucial stage of development as the student becomes a mature and independent thinker in her own right. Questions posed by both teachers and students were identified from lesson transcripts, and examined according to their nature, and to their apparent intention and effect. Some quantification of this data has proved interesting, and illustrative examples of various types have been extracted for discussion, below.

The use of questions varies considerably among the 19 teachers filmed: in quantity alone the number of questions posed by the teacher in a single, individual lesson ranges from 8 to 81, with an average of 38; the number of student questions ranges from 0 to 38, with an average of 10. These figures suggest that asking questions is largely the prerogative of the teacher.

Sheer numbers, however, may be misleading. An examination of teachers' questions from the lesson transcripts reveals that many are not questions at all. It is very common for instance for instructions to be disguised as questions, perhaps in order to soften the commanding impression they might otherwise give. Three examples follow, from various parts of a single lesson. No verbal replies seem to be expected of the student: one 'question' is answered perfunctorily, and the others elicit a performed response. In the examples student speech is shown in italics.

Ex. 1 Questions extracted from Lesson F1.

Could you just do it on the vowels now?
[STUDENT SINGS]
Good.

Why don't we have look at one of the others?
Yeah.

Can we go back to the chorus and then we'll have a look at the second verse? 'He makes music for her' . . .
[STUDENT SINGS]

Similarly, a large proportion of questions are apparently rhetorical, in that they do not require a response from the student. Although there might be some guesswork involved for

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the researcher in deciding what the teacher's expectations might have been, the deciding evidence is the student's response, or failure to respond. Several typical examples follow.

Ex. 2 Questions extracted from Lesson Ng1.

And then we'll switch round and you can play in your favourite keys.
All right?
[no response]
So straight away then, C, passing note, C, G.

And straight away the music starts to sound quite different, doesn't it?
Yes.
Right!

Jane, do you see what's actually happening there? You see you've got a third between the bass there and you've also got a third between the tenor there.
Yes.

Among 'real' questions a clear majority are interrogative, in that they are direct and factual in nature. Some of these are hardly more elicitive than the rhetorical questions above, and might even be regarded as clichés. They seem to fall so clearly into previously established patterns that the student's answer is automatic and inevitable. Classic examples are 'Can you hear the difference?', 'Are you happier with that?' and 'Do you understand?' The following three questions are taken from various stages in a single lesson:

Ex. 3 Questions extracted from Lesson B4.

Does that make sense?
Yes.

Does that make sense to you?
Yes it does.

Does that make sense to you?
[no response]

Interrogative questions are also used to test or check what the student has done, remembered or understood. In the following exchange, the teacher asks the student to recall the key points of her lesson before she leaves:

Ex. 4 Questions extracted from Lesson I4.

So what have we talked about?
Starting the piece.
Yeah.
Dotted rhythms.
Form, and what that tells you about how you're going to play it. What else?
Structure of the melody.

Finally, and most rarely, questions might be exploratory, requiring the student to develop her own thoughts. Exploratory questions might be relatively concise, as in Example 5:

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Ex. 5 Extract from Lesson A4

Okay, which is the most important note in all of that?
The F or the A flat?
You may be right, though the D flat is significant. Can you stretch round there – you're probably right, that is where it's going eventually, but that will help.

If the object of exploratory questions is to draw the student out, they do not always succeed, for various reasons. It is surprisingly common, for instance, for a teacher to pose an exploratory question and then – having waited or not – answer it himself. The following example comes from the same lesson as above:

Ex. 6 Extract from Lesson A4

In this particular movement there are lots of very fast crescendos, and small swells up and down. How do you think you should approach this?
[pause]
Effectively you are going from piano to forte in one beat. I think maybe crescendo before that slightly here, so start piano here and mf here and then carry on and crescendo.

The teacher here has accepted 'no answer' as the reply. The next example shows another teacher accepting an answer which is hardly more articulate:

Ex. 7 Extract from Lesson C6

Okay, if you were describing to a child who didn't know how to tongue, how to tongue –
Tuh, T, T, T. Taa Taa.
Why?
Taa, Taa, Taa.
Because what often happens with pupils is they will make the sound, they will push the air out with the use of their tongue and that forms the note, but actually the sound has got to be there and the tongue sits on the sound. It doesn't make the sound, you could play that without the tongue if you played it all in vibrato. All you're doing when you're tonguing is putting the tongue on top of the sound, you're not making the sound with your tongue.

More can be elicited from a student, when the teacher persists, often employing a sequence of questions.

Ex. 8 Extract from Lesson J3

Now how would you make a larger sound?
[pause]
How would you make a larger sound on your flute? If I ask you to do that piano and then forte, how would you do it?
You have to give it more – not necessarily more support but more to get the air speed, but then you don't want to over blow it so then you need to drop your jaw to make more space.
Without playing it loud?

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Yes.
Yeah. You drop your jaw. You don't squeeze. You don't make a louder sound by squeezing and making the air go faster. You make a louder sound by increasing the aperture between your teeth and then supporting a little bit more which it turn makes the volume of the air go wider into the flute.
[STUDENT PLAYS]
That was much, much better, wasn't it?
Yes.
So what would you attribute the 'betterness' to?
I had my flute in a different place than I did before. I suppose I was thinking about it more. Thinking about it, and also thinking 'I can do this' rather than – at the beginning I knew that B was going to sound horrible.
So it's a matter of practising things that will free your head, more than anything in your practice.

In another context the question 'That was much, much better, wasn't it?' might have been redundant, and the student's reply ('Yes') automatic; but in this exchange the teacher holds the student responsible for her answer, and presses for an explanation. It seems possible that this particular student – in the third year of the degree programme when her lesson was filmed – might have come to expect that this is likely to happen, and therefore does not give automatic responses lightly. On the whole however students seem inclined to give what they imagine is the 'right' answer to what are apparently cliché questions. In example 9, the teacher seems to regard the student's initial answer as an automatic one, and by making his second question more specific, and probing further, he elicits a more meaningful response.

Ex. 9 Extract from Lesson I1

Are you happy with that?
Yeah.
Are you happy with the beginning?
No.
[STUDENT PLAYS]
How do you feel about that?
Okay.
Yeah, it's nice. Let's put it into context.
[STUDENT PLAYS]
That's it. Still a slight tendency to push on the down beats. Once again. If you put too much effort to it, it sounds laboured. Don't work, just stand back from it.
[STUDENT PLAYS]
I don't like some of that. The crotchets, I keep chopping off.
Okay, what are you going to do about it?
Do I need to make it more strong or will it go out of tune?
Not if you adjust the fingering. Tell me where you've got to in terms of the music at that point.

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It's got through two different themes, ideas and it seems to be developing from that. Then there's a new harmonic idea . . .

This rather sophisticated exchange lies between Collaboration and Induction. Although the teacher offers information as necessary, the onus is on the student to do the work, and the teacher is clearly not prepared to do her thinking for her. There seems to be a well-established relationship here, characterised by both confidence and trust.

Student views

A basic premise in the music department is that students join the degree programme because they want to be challenged. The aim of developing independent learners is explicit, and it is expected that students will embrace it themselves by the time they graduate.

In the interviews which followed their lessons, students generally spoke of their teachers warmly and positively. They appreciated their high levels of expertise, often admired them as professional performers, and – almost always – reported highly valued relationships with them.

Students often demonstrated a clear understanding of their teachers' aims and methods. Student I1 gave a description of teacher's approach which may be easily related to the exchange quoted from her lesson, in Example 9 above. Her comments indicate something of the scaffolding through which her teacher has supported her problem-solving skills:

Ex. 10 Extract from Interview I1

If I say 'I'm not really sure what I can do with this passage', he will say 'Well, what is it? Do you think it is mainly melodic, harmonic or rhythmic?' and get me to think of at least three different ways that I can interpret it. Then I have to choose which one I think works the best.

Student E2 commented on the broader purpose of her teacher's questions:

Ex. 11 Extract from Interview E2

What sort of teaching strategies did your teacher adopt? Did he give you a series of orders? Did he ask you questions?
He does tend to question, to check that you have really understood. I think he has got that in his mind all the time what would be useful later when people want to teach.

Student B1, whose interview is quoted at Ex. 12 below, showed that she was conscious of how her teacher had guided her toward a degree of independence. Her explanation suggests that their shared understanding of the use of questions had developed over time:

Ex. 12 Extract from Interview B1

When I first came – because I suppose I am quite shy – and to play in front of him was quite strange – because he is – not loud – but a lot louder than me. But I think we have got used to one another now. When I first came he used to ask 'Is that okay?' and I

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would say 'Yeah' and then he kept going on about it because I suppose I wasn't giving much feedback.

In spite of the confidence and clarity demonstrated by some students, others seem to understand their teachers' aims and yet do not want – or do not feel ready – to accept the consequences.

Ex. 13 Extract from Interview D1

Sometimes I wish that he would just give me a few more technical tips, because I know he knows what I am struggling with and sometimes I think he just doesn't want to say 'You've GOT to do this'. Sometimes he will say 'You could try doing this, or this', but [he] doesn't necessarily recommend a certain way of doing things.
Why do you think he doesn't?
I think he likes to get his pupils to experiment with different ways of practising to find the way that best suits them.
Oh, right. He doesn't want to dictate.
Yeah. I would prefer to be dictated to.

The student's attitude here might stem from temperament, or from her stage of development. Although she seems to grasp the situation logically, it remains to be seen whether she will take advantage of the opportunities offered by her teacher, to develop a more independent stance. Example 14 quotes a student whose level of dependence on her teacher seems to be problematic:

Ex. 14 Extract from Interview A2

I had a really good teacher at my old [secondary school] for three years and she was brilliant and amazing and I loved her and she did miracles for me. And then I came here and it was really hard to change teachers. . . . She had this amazing way of making me feel really bad if I didn't do any practice. And it's not that [my current teacher] doesn't push me, it is just that although he wants me to do well, I need to be FORCED to do well. . . . He doesn't shout at me!
Oh! You need to be shouted at, do you?
Yeah. I think the difference [between] going to [school] and coming to university is that you are meant to be able to do everything on your own anyway but it's not that easy.

In a few cases, students gave a clear and critical view of their teachers' approaches, but – referring to video evidence, alongside their transcribed interviews – the candour shown to the interviewer was not matched in their interactions with their teachers. This is demonstrated in the extract below:

Ex. 15 Extract from Interview G1

How appropriate is this style and approach to you at this stage in your development?
It is not really. I want more self-discovery, exploring different ways of doing things. I don't want to be told that there is a definitive way. Today he was talking about playing vibrato on a particular note with three fingers. I was playing it with my little finger. I couldn't hear the difference. I can't see the benefit of putting my whole hand out of position to play it.

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Did you say that?
No. I just take what comes.
[student laughs]

Teachers' views

Interviews with teachers tended to be longer and more discursive than those with their students: it was clear that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss their work, and were keen to offer their own reflections on the processes involved in instrumental lessons. Teachers were invited to comment on the stage of development reached by each participating student, on the teaching approaches they tended to take in lessons, and whether these approaches had varied for each student.

Although they were not explicitly asked about their use of questions in lessons, six of the nine teachers interviewed referred to questions when reflecting on these issues. In some cases, questioning was raised at an early stage of the discussion, of their broad approaches to instrumental teaching and learning. Teacher A for example offered an open-ended question as a cue for students to take the lead in lessons: 'Quite often I would say "What would you like to work on?", and give them the opportunity to bring me the problems as they see them . . . '. Teacher G, in his interview, implied an even greater emphasis on student participation, and, further, seemed to suggest that genuinely independent answers to his questions were acceptable and even encouraged. In these examples, the interviewer is indicated in italics.

Ex. 16 Extract from Interview G

I ask a lot of questions. I want them to give the answers.
Do you always know what the answer is before you ask?
No.
So really this is more like a guiding thing?
Yeah. Because if you just tell them something it becomes [Teacher's] Law. Ask a question, and see what they discover.

When discussing their work with specific students, teachers acknowledged that such open-ended approaches might not be viable in all cases. Teacher B asserted that 'you have got to take personality into account', explaining slightly different approaches to each of his three students. Teacher C described one approach to a rather reserved student ('I am trying to bring her out of herself so I am trying to get her to think for herself a little bit more') which was quite different to the approach taken to another, who had organisational problems related to her dyslexia ('I am probably a bit more directive with [her] . . . I am trying to channel her'). Teacher D, similarly, described one student as being at a relatively sensitive stage of development:

Ex. 17 Extract from Interview D

She just has got so much to do – to think about – her technique – that in order to just play that note, all the concentration goes into that. So everything else suffers . . . . you don't want to destroy her progress by being too critical, and by overloading her. Because she

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won't – I don't think – won't be able to take that. She needs lots of encouragement, and really feeling that she's doing very well, and she is, and focussing on that, and just sort of piecing in the other aspects.

Interestingly, Teacher D's perception of this student's needs was manifested in a different approach to questions, with very specific and perhaps limited questions asked of Student D3, and broader, more challenging questions issued to the more advanced student preceding:

Ex. 18 Extract from Interview D

Well with [Student D2] I usually adopt a much more – 'How do you tackle it?', and that sort of thing. With [Student D3] I'll ask, well, you know, 'Could you relate that note to that note?' and, 'If you can hear that note there, and if that is the same note – ', and that sort of thing, so – pretty much more guiding with her.

Teacher F, in a long and frank interview, acknowledged the importance of student participation in the learning process, citing his own use of questions as examples of how he tried to help students develop their confidence and independence. He asserted, however, that the close proximity of performance examinations affected his scope for incorporating open-ended questions in lessons:

Ex. 19 Extract from Interview F

I felt there wasn't – we hadn't got time now to, for me to say, 'Oh, what do you think about this? – the mood, or the composer – Why don't you go away and have a think about it and come back next week?' At this stage, they should've already done that, and if they haven't, then basically I feel that I've got to say, 'Okay, this is my interpretation of it, this is how you're going to practise it'.

Once again, this was related to the perceived strength of individual students.

Ex. 20 Extract from Interview F

. . . teaching [stronger students], I'm actually much more flexible, and it's to do with – I think – a greater level of trust, that what they're doing is – that they've actually taken part; in their own practice during the week, they've thought about it . . . if there's ever any doubt about that, I always adopt a 'command' strategy . . . . Partly because I just think that it's sort of my responsibility as well. You know. But it's very – so much nicer when –

When you don't have to.

Teacher I, with some prompting from the interviewer, explained how the quality of his questions might differ according to the stage of development of the student involved. His remarks indicate, however, that he regards this stage of development as being incremental, and that he means to influence that, through the use of questions.

Ex. 21 Extract from Interview I

What sort of teaching approaches did you adopt in these lessons? Do you ask a lot of questions? Do you try to get them to come up with the answers?

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> I do. Sometimes it depends on the student and where they are at. In the first lesson I did today which is another student who is a bit weak, I tend to ask questions but they are a completely different set of questions. If I were to ask those questions of these three students they would have thought I was being patronising so I wouldn't dare!
> *What sort of questions do you think they would take exception to?*
> Talking about basic things like 'Is that in time?' or 'Is that note in tune, do you think?' But with some of the more advanced students, I know they are capable of doing certain things. If they have made a mistake and they haven't heard it, then I would say 'It's out of time', 'It's out of tune', 'Better fix that' because I know they will. If I come across students who I know can't fix it, then I have to ask basic questions and go through the process.

Discussion

The evidence given above, from transcriptions of lesson dialogue and from interviews with student participants, suggests that there is a tension in instrumental lessons felt by both teachers and students. This tension is a feature of the teacher's behaviour, and lies between instructing and eliciting. During an undergraduate course a transformation is expected of students, as they begin to become expert musicians and independent learners. They normally meet new teachers as they enter the degree programme, disrupting the learning patterns of perhaps many years, and are expected to display the profiles of graduates within three years. The significance of the change and the time-scale in which it happens make this a crucial juncture in their lives as musicians.

The sheer quantity of student contribution to lesson dialogue increases on average over the three years of the programme (Burwell 2003a), and the teacher's use of questions may provide a significant impetus for this development. Exploratory questions might seem the best way to elicit effective student participation, but other kinds of question – far more common in the instrumental lessons filmed for this project – can be valuable in many ways.

The 'disguised instruction' may be a low-level question, and arguably not a question at all. Speaking in such terms, however, instead of giving direct commands or transmitting information, may have an important impact on student morale and confidence. Young adults, and mature-aged students resuming formal education after some years, may be equally sensitive to modes of speech which suggest mutual respect, and couching commands in question form may be perceived as a significant courtesy. Indeed, students in their interviews often remarked on the fact that teachers whom they regarded so highly were prepared to speak to them 'on the same level'.

Rhetorical questions may not seem to call for a response from the student, but may arguably offer the teacher's thought processes as a model for the student, who is tacitly invited to think alongside him. The interaction might well provoke thought on the part of the student, and thus qualify as being a reflective one. It might also give the student some feeling that she is participating, and even if the actual value of that participation is limited, it may be a gentle way to draw the student in, nurturing her confidence until she is ready to be drawn out. The transcription evidence suggests that rhetoric is not genuinely elicitive, but it might to some extent be described as collaborative in nature, even if the outcomes are not explicit.

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The problem with the use of both disguised instructions and rhetorical questions is that teachers and students are prone to blur the distinction between these, which do not require a significant response from the student, and real questions, which do. It seems that teachers are regularly tempted to cover for their students, by accepting 'no answer', by accepting perfunctory answers, or by answering their questions themselves. *Students can only learn from such behaviour that they are not expected to answer*. Indeed, they may gain the impression that – sitting at the feet of the master – it would be more appropriate, and certainly more polite, to refrain from interrupting the flow of knowledge and wisdom.

Can we blame them? Many students – and perhaps many teachers – simply assume that the ideas of the master are bound to be more valuable than those of the apprentice, and in many obvious ways they are probably right. All participants are likely to feel the pressure of performance goals on their lesson time, too, and instruction, from an expert musician who has already developed his thoughts, must be more time-efficient than engaging in the far more unwieldy process of developing the student's own.

Giving priority to economy of means also makes demonstration important. Gifted students are usually good mimics too, which means that imitation can induce a leap of the imagination to an almost instant result, and some very exciting learning experiences. It should be acknowledged that such experiences may be quite crucial in instrumental teaching and learning: they touch on the non-verbal, the aural, the intuitive, the more purely musical. These are aspects of a musician's education which cannot be easily articulated, but their value may be keenly felt.

Nevertheless, if the student is to learn to be a mature and independent musician – one capable of developing and presenting individual interpretations, and of pursuing her engagement with music beyond the years of her degree programme – more must be attempted. The intuitive aspects of music education must be complemented by the intellectual.

Mere quizzes are not enough to cultivate genuine independence in the student musician. Interrogation may be useful and indeed necessary for checking what the student remembers or understands, but it is the exploratory type of question which demands her full participation. Students in higher education do not necessarily feel equipped to respond effectively to exploratory questions, and as their interviews suggest, teachers feel that some students need to be coached with care toward a point where they can deal with such challenges. It seems significant that when they are employed, exploratory questions are most successful when used in a sequence of interlinking questions and support. Examples 8 and 9, quoted above, illustrate this point. The teachers involved demand a contribution from their students, but balance this with their own, in the form of information and feedback. They are also prepared to give their students time, to think or play, and thus to develop their responses. Further, it seems clear that their students already know that they are simply expected to contribute; and that they have already become confident in the knowledge that their contribution will be respected and supported.

Conclusion

Teachers' approaches to the development of student independence in instrumental lessons in higher education can be neither planned nor studied in isolation. The nature of the

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interaction between teacher and student is affected by the student's previous experience in general schooling, and by the character of private teaching previously experienced by both participants. In addition, instrumental lessons in the music department at CCCUC are embraced by the degree programme as a whole, and this must affect the students' current development. The programme design strikes a careful balance between practical and theoretical subjects, and in courses such as Performance Studies and Ensemble Studies the dividing line between academic and performance-based subjects is deliberately blurred.

The research evidence given above suggests that both teachers and students understand the value and sometimes the methods of developing the student's contribution to the learning process so that it is more active, reflective and responsible. The issue is complicated, however, not only by the context in which Performance Studies is placed, but by individual temperaments, learning styles and stages of development. The research project has provided evidence of teachers who make a subtle and sophisticated use of questions, balancing them carefully with information and support, pitching them at levels the student can grasp, and sequencing them to draw the student out. Collaborative and elicitive teaching approaches, complementing high levels of instrumental expertise, offer the student the opportunity to become a mature and individual musician, and a mature and independent graduate.

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