

Team teaching in the conservatoire: The views of music performance staff and students

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Team teaching – two or more teachers sharing the training of a group of students – has only recently been implemented in the curricula of many higher music education institutions. This article reports on a survey of 142 music students and their tutors from three departments (the Schools of Strings, Vocal and Opera Studies, and Wind, Brass and Percussion) in a major British conservatoire. Team teaching had been in use for one year in the first department, five years in the second and 30 years in the third. The extent to which respondents valued team teaching was not, however, related to the length of time it had been in use. Key benefits of team teaching were seen as exposure to new ideas and additional feedback. Respondents suggested a variety of improvements to mitigate drawbacks such as perceived differences between tutors' approaches and limited time for individual tuition. Provided tutors and students communicate effectively with each other and negotiate where necessary, this method of teaching and learning is likely to be beneficial for all.

Introduction

The teaching of musical instruments and voice at the tertiary level differs from other forms of higher education in that it involves a great deal of one-to-one tuition. Music performance students learn and develop their skills as individuals, often forming enduring relationships with their instrumental and vocal teachers. This study reports on an innovative method of teaching and learning. Team teaching generally takes the form of a series of classes in which tutors teach a small group of students, all of whom normally receive their individual tuition from a different tutor. We investigated students' and teachers' perceptions of this teaching method as it is used in different departments in a conservatoire.

The tradition of teaching music performance on a one-to-one basis goes back a long way. In previous centuries, aspiring virtuosi often lived in their masters' houses and tried to imitate their musical ideas, techniques and sometimes even aspects of their lives and personalities (cf. Cox, 2007; Davidson & Jordan, 2007). The strength of the relationship between teacher and student has often been emphasised in the literature; it is characterised retrospectively by many musicians in terms of warmth and closeness (cf. Davidson *et al.*,

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1998; Lehmann *et al.*, 2007). Such relationships are particularly important in the earliest stages of learning to play an instrument. Groups of children who were more successful in acquiring musical skills had generally received individual lessons, as compared with less successful children who had received group lessons (Davidson *et al.*, 1998). On the other hand, research has shown that peer learning is equally valuable later on (Davidson *et al.*, 1997). Arguably, even very young pupils learn not only from their teachers in the course of individual lessons but also from their contemporaries during group lessons.

In the context of higher education, one-to-one instrumental lessons (including vocal tuition) provide individual students with continuous support and specific feedback. Conservatoire teachers interviewed by Gaunt (2008) revealed high levels of commitment to their students, characterising their roles in their relationships with them as parental ('guiding, moulding and nurturing') and/or friendly, 'collaboratively curious', or even in terms of a 'doctor–patient relationship' (pp. 230–231). One such relationship, described as a form of creative collaboration, is illustrated in a case study undertaken by Barrett and Gromko (2007) of a distinguished composer/teacher of composition and his graduate student, also an experienced composer. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the aspiring music performance or composition student often chooses to apply to a particular institution in order to study with a specific teacher (Presland, 2005).

While we acknowledge the value of one-to-one tuition in music, it has a number of potential limitations. First, the teachers interviewed by Gaunt (2008) felt that it was important for their students to develop the capacity for autonomous learning and an 'individual artistic voice' (p. 240), but these may be inhibited if the teacher is too dominant, and/or the student too dependent. Second, some teachers in Gaunt's study reported experiencing difficulties within the teaching-and-learning relationship that caused a great deal of distress to both parties and which could not be resolved institutionally. Third, it is important that teaching should meet the needs of the profession. Very few music students go on to earn their living primarily as soloists (cf. Gembris & Langner, 2005), and thus to be in a position to impose their own musical ideas on fellow performers; more typically, musicians work with colleagues from a wide range of backgrounds who are likely to hold diverse views on style, interpretation and even technique. Students should thus have the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of approaches, to acquire collaborative skills and to engage in critical dialogue (cf. Bennett & Hannan, 2008). If students are taught by only one teacher, they may not learn all the skills required of them as professional musicians today. Finally, from a budgetary point of view, group classes are less expensive than one-to-one tuition.

For these reasons, many conservatoires have introduced new methods of learning and teaching. One is the explicit promotion of autonomous learning. Lebler (2007) has shown that this approach can enhance the independence, reflexivity, instrumental and social skills of students studying popular music, particularly when learning how to work in a recording studio, and thus prepare them more effectively for the challenges that lie ahead. Another method is group teaching, whereby students can learn not only from different teachers but also from each other. Several studies have been undertaken over the past two decades to explore the interactions between teachers (including music instructors) and groups of students (e.g. Single, 1990; Goolsby, 1997; Young *et al.*, 2003; for overviews, see Hallam, 1998; Price & Byo, 2002). It has been found, for example, that non-verbal communication

has a particularly important role in effective group instrumental teaching at college level (Kurkul, 2007).

Instrumental and vocal classes at conservatoires are often described as 'group lessons', in which students obtain feedback from the teacher – and sometimes from their peers – on their playing or singing. While those who listen may learn as much if not more than those who play in these classes, students' performances can be so well prepared that opportunities for interactions that genuinely involve teaching and learning are limited. The same is true of master classes, given by 'masters' who can be performers and/or teachers external or internal to the conservatoire (Creech *et al.*, 2009). As well as offering advice to the student performer on interpretation and technique, the teacher is likely to address the audience; this may include members of the public as well as other students. Master classes thus provide a group of students with the opportunity to learn, but once again teaching is likely to be specific to the needs of the individual student performer, or only of general interest to listeners and less related to other students' needs.

While team teaching was first introduced in higher education more than 40 years ago (cf. Kugler, 1970), it is a recent innovation in many conservatoires. Definitions vary (Anderson & Speck, 1998; Eisen, 2000) but in a university context team teaching generally seems to involve the preparation and delivery of a course by two or more members of staff (Davis, 1995; Robinson & Schaible, 1995; Tisdell & Eisen, 2000). One of the earliest evaluations of team teaching is provided by Kugler (1970). Three lecturers shared the same course, delivering sessions in turn, and subsequently received high ratings of student satisfaction. Effective team teaching requires staff to take joint responsibility for the course concerned, be willing to learn themselves, and to be prepared to reflect on their relationships with their fellow teachers, since occasional strains seem unavoidable (Davis, 1995; Tisdell & Eisen, 2000; Leavitt, 2006). If all goes well, students have the opportunity to witness 'professional disagreement' between lecturers discussing concepts from a range of perspectives and quite possibly expressing contradictory opinions (Anderson & Speck, 1998, p. 681), thus learning from and indeed contributing to a genuine exchange of ideas. In similar vein, Cowan *et al.* (1995) report on their experiences of team teaching, which they perceive as prolonged conversations, initially between staff during the planning phase and subsequently, during the course itself, with students. This 'pedagogical model of conversation' (Cowan *et al.*, 1995, p. 127), whereby knowledge is not presented in fixed terms but developed and presented, by contrast, as an exchange of concepts and opinions, can widen the perspectives of both students and staff in otherwise more and more specialised academic fields, particularly when lecturers come from different cultural backgrounds or disciplines (cf. Tisdell & Eisen, 2000). Indeed Davis (1995) argues that team teaching can promote interdisciplinarity (i.e. synergy between disciplines); it has also been suggested that it helps develop students' skills in critical thinking and perspective taking (Tisdell & Eisen, 2000; Leavitt, 2006).

We observed at the outset that instrumental and vocal teaching methods clearly differ from those of academic subjects at the tertiary level; similarly, the purposes of practical music and academic teaching are different. Approaches that were devised for use in academic teaching may need to be adapted, therefore, if they are to be as effective in instrumental teaching – just as methods that are useful for teaching certain instruments sometimes have to be adapted for teaching others with different characteristics

(cf. Gabrielsson, 1999; Parncutt & McPherson, 2002). The concept of interdisciplinarity may not seem immediately relevant to instrumental and vocal teaching, for example, although providing the opportunity for music performance students to make use of different teachers' perspectives may help them to manage the demands of their future profession. We are not aware, however, of any investigation into the extent to which team teaching methods are generally accepted by students and staff, particularly in the conservatoire where most tuition typically takes place according to the traditional 'master–apprentice' model involving one-to-one instrumental or vocal lessons (cf. Lehmann *et al.*, 2007). How do students and staff perceive team teaching? How successful is it in achieving the objectives of both?

Aims

The principal aim of the present study was to investigate perceptions of team teaching. In the three departments of the conservatoire where the study was undertaken, different models of team teaching are used according to the departments' specific needs. The School of Vocal Studies, for example, teaches singers who are primarily soloists; the School of Strings prepares a small number of different kinds of string player for careers as solo, chamber and orchestral musicians, while the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion encompasses a much greater variety of instruments and performance contexts. These models will be described in detail below. What they have in common is that – in addition to their individual one-to-one lessons with their principal study tutor – students take part in group classes taught by a tutor who is not, normally, their own principal study tutor. In order to compare the three models, staff and student respondents were surveyed using a questionnaire that was completed anonymously so that they would not be inhibited from articulating their honest opinions, even when these were critical. They were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of team teaching, and propose improvements, on the basis of their experiences. Given the similarities between the three models, we expected respondents in each department to agree on the strengths and weaknesses of team teaching. In addition, we believed that the longer staff and students had had the opportunity to participate in team teaching, the more likely they would be to accept it as a valuable adjunct to one-to-one tuition. Since it had been offered in the three departments for different lengths of time, we were able to ask if acceptance of team teaching was indeed related to overall experience with it.

Three studies: overview and general methods

Students and members of staff in three departments of a conservatoire were asked for their views on team teaching. The three departments had introduced team teaching at different times. The School of Wind, Brass and Percussion was the first, using a model in which students are taught in groups as well as receiving 'split tuition', i.e. individual lessons from more than one principal study tutor (long-term experience of team teaching). The School of Vocal and Opera Studies was the second (intermediate experience) and the School of Strings had introduced team teaching only a year before the present study was undertaken (short-term experience). While the teaching models have features in common, their organisation and content also differ, to some extent, in accordance with the requirements of the students' different levels of experience, instrument and voice type. Staff

and students in the three departments were invited to complete on-line or corresponding paper questionnaires comprising 19 items (rating scales, multiple choice and open-ended questions). Data were collected in the School of Vocal and Opera Studies between January and April 2009, and in the other two departments between April and July 2009. Analyses were made of fully completed questionnaires only; these were provided by a total of 129 students in all years of study, and 13 tutors.

In this article, we focus on respondents' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of team teaching, and their suggestions for improvement. For a detailed analysis of further aspects of the study, see Ginsborg and Wöllner (2011). In the present paper, we report answers to the following three main questions:

- What do you perceive as the principal strengths of team teaching?
- Do you perceive any disadvantages/weaknesses in team teaching? If your response was 'yes', please say what these are.
- In your opinion, is there any way in which team teaching could be improved by the college? If your answer was 'yes', please give up to three suggestions.

Students' responses to open-ended questions were divided into statements and categorised by each author independently (initial agreement $\geq 84\%$). Disagreements were resolved by discussion. Each category consists of statements made by at least two respondents; statements reflecting views that were not shared by anyone else were categorised as 'miscellaneous'. Tutors' open-ended responses are summarised, with quotations where appropriate.

As for our roles as researchers working at the same institution, both confidentiality and independence of research were of central importance. All responses were collected and analysed anonymously, and respondents were asked not to name individuals in any part of the questionnaire, which was particularly vital with regard to students' potentially critical views. Initial consultations with members of staff inspired the development of some questions. There was no further interaction between the researchers and these or any other members of staff with regard to the content of the survey until data collection and analysis had been completed. The findings were subsequently presented to Heads of Schools, resulting in discussions between tutors in staff meetings and in generally positive feedback about the survey. This study was approved by the institution's Research Ethics Committee.

Study 1: Strings

When the survey was undertaken, team teaching had been part of the curriculum in the School of Strings for only a year. Hours for team teaching were limited, so that each student attended no more than two half-hour classes each term. (The academic year is divided into three terms. Each term is three months long.) In response to the question 'Please use your experience over the past term to define [team teaching] in your own words', most students and staff described it as a short additional group lesson with a different teacher.

Students

Respondents. Forty-six undergraduate and postgraduate students (38 female and eight male) from all years of study completed the questionnaire. Their ages ranged from 19 to 25 years,

Table 1 *Strengths of team teaching (School of Strings)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar
Fresh perspectives	36 [34] ¹	New perspective on a piece, fresh input.
Different teaching style	10	You gain knowledge of other teaching styles.
Technical advice	8	Different teachers cover different areas of technique.
Benefits of playing to a different member of staff	7	Opportunity to perform to a different teacher.
Complements own teacher	5	(. . .) has some ideas your own teacher doesn't.
Performance opportunity	4	A chance to perform in front of new people.
Learning from listening	4	Hear things they are doing wrong in others' playing.
Beneficial aspects for teachers	3	(. . .) Gives the teachers an opportunity to meet some of the other pupils.
New ideas about music	3	(. . .) new ideas about music.
Confidence	3 [2]	(. . .) playing for another teacher boasts confidence.
Setting of goals	2	Pushes you to work towards something.
Getting to know staff	2	Meeting other teachers in department.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	11	Good on CV/biography.

¹Numbers in square brackets indicate the number of respondents, if different from the number of statements (i.e. some respondents provided more than one statement per category).

with a mean of 21.59 years ($SD = 1.80$). They comprised violinists, violists, cellists and double bass players who had been taking lessons for a mean of 12.12 years ($SD = 4.27$). They reported practising on their own for a mean of 21.40 hours ($SD = 6.09$) in a typical week, and rehearsing together with others for a mean of 6.58 hours ($SD = 5.10$). The hours they were allocated for team teaching over the course of the academic year ranged from none (four respondents) to three (one respondent); on average they were allocated 1.21 hours ($SD = 0.98$), and attended 1.05 hours of team teaching ($SD = 1.25$). A paired-samples t-test yielded no significant difference between the hours of team teaching that were allocated and attended ($p = .20$).

Results. Strengths: The 96 statements elicited by the first question, regarding perceived strengths, were grouped into 13 categories, as shown in the left-most column of Table 1. An exemplar statement illustrates each category (right-most column). The middle column shows the number of statements in each category. A single comment could include references to more than one strength falling into the same category; accordingly, where the middle column shows two numbers, the first refers to the number of statements and

Table 2 *Perceived weaknesses of team teaching (School of Strings)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar
Not enough time with team teacher	13	Having just half an hour was not enough time.
Perceived differences between teachers	7	Two very different teachers trying to get you to do quite different things.
Teachers do not support team teaching	4	Teachers thinking the idea is pointless!
Problems with allocated teacher	4	If a pupil is not happy with the team teacher allocated, it can be a great disadvantage.
Time is taken from individual lessons/individual lessons more beneficial	3	Teaching time taken out of allocated hours per year of normal teaching.
Observing others is not related to own playing	3	Student being observed playing is nothing similar to you that you could relate to.
Too specific, not beneficial for all students	2	(...) often advice is for an individual and not general.
Boring	2	A bit boring.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	1	I haven't received mine.

the second, in square brackets, indicates the number of respondents (if different from the number of statements) who provided them. The strengths mentioned most frequently were the opportunity to gain fresh perspectives and knowledge of other teaching styles.

Weaknesses: Nineteen of the 46 respondents (41.30%) perceived disadvantages/weaknesses in team teaching, providing a total of 39 statements. These statements were grouped into nine categories, as shown in Table 2. The weaknesses mentioned most frequently were not having enough time with the team teacher, and perceived differences between teachers.

Potential improvements to team teaching: Forty-four respondents answered the question regarding potential improvements to team teaching. Out of these, 37 (84.01%) answered the question with 'yes', indicating that they saw potential for the institution to make improvements and providing 72 statements. These statements were grouped into ten categories, as shown in Table 3. The potential improvements mentioned most frequently were having more time with team teachers, and better organisation of team teaching classes.

Staff

Respondents. One female and four male members of staff with a mean age of 46.80 years ($SD = 9.04$) completed the questionnaire. Four had been team teaching for a year and one for six months, but they had delivered a mean of only 3.60 hours ($SD = 1.82$) of

Table 3 *Potential improvements to team teaching (School of Strings)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar
More time with team teacher	23 [22]	More time with the team teacher.
Organisation of classes	14 [12]	Better arranged/enforced.
More student choice (of teacher)	8	Allow us to request teachers in an order of preference. Don't think anyone would get swamped as many people want very different things from teacher.
More communication between team teacher and student(s)	6	Communication between staff and students.
Teachers should agree on purpose	6 [4]	Ensuring all the teachers are on board with the idea.
More variety	4	Alternative teachers throughout the year.
More time for individual students	3	More time individually.
More communication between team teacher and principal study tutor	2	The team teacher needs to have spoken with the normal principal study teacher.
Not encroach on individual lessons	2	Shouldn't encroach on time with principal study tutor.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	4 [3]	More regular lessons.

team teaching during the course of the term prior to completing the questionnaire: one had taught four classes in total, one had taught two classes and the remaining three had delivered one class each.

Results. Strengths: Four of the five tutors responded to the invitation to list strengths of team teaching (12 statements in all). They all pointed out the value to students of being taught by different tutors who can offer a 'second opinion'; one suggested that it can help students 'develop independence' and another that it may widen students' expectations. Two tutors suggested perceived benefits for staff, in that it gives them 'an insight into how other [tutors'] students are taught', providing a basis for the 'development of relationships between tutors'.

Weaknesses: Three tutors indicated that they did not perceive any disadvantages or weaknesses, while two listed weaknesses. According to one, 'the lessons (1/2 hour) were too short!' The other 'would much rather use the time on my own students'.

Potential improvements to team teaching: Four tutors suggested a total of eight improvements. All agreed that not enough time was allocated to team teaching, suggesting 'more sessions' and/or 'lessons [...] at least one hour long'. One tutor felt that team teaching had the potential to 'interfere' with individual teaching and another argued that the latter is 'more valuable'; finally it was suggested that students should '[choose] how many and with whom [and] whether or not they want a team lesson'.

Summary

While the majority of responses listed strengths based on positive experiences of team teaching, the survey also elicited weaknesses couched in the form of direct criticism or suggestions for improvement that could only have been made with difficulty had the questionnaire not been completed anonymously. Respondents saw the opportunity for students to gain a 'fresh perspective' as the main advantage of team teaching. Disadvantages included differences, perceived or actual, between tutors' approaches, constituting a potential source of confusion. Those students and staff who wished to retain team teaching, however, wanted more hours and/or longer sessions.

Study 2: Vocal and Opera Studies

The School of Vocal and Opera Studies had introduced team teaching five years before the present research was undertaken, and considerably more hours were allocated to this activity than in the School of Strings. Students work in small groups with members of staff who are not normally their principal study tutor. The majority of staff and students described team teaching as a technique class. The remainder described it as a '[master] class with a different teacher' focusing on performance, interpretation or repertoire.

Students

Respondents: Fifty-one undergraduate and postgraduate students (35 female and 16 male) from all years of study completed the questionnaire. Their ages ranged from 18 to 35 years, with a mean of 23.49 ($SD = 3.99$). They had been taking singing lessons for a mean of 8.20 years ($SD = 3.90$), and reported practising on their own for a mean of 8.17 hours ($SD = 4.77$) in a typical week, and rehearsing with others for a mean of 7.54 hours ($SD = 8.90$). In the course of an academic year they reported attending a mean of 8.33 ($SD = 2.75$) team teaching classes, or a mean of 9.44 hours ($SD = 3.78$).

Results. Strengths: The 225 statements elicited by the question regarding perceived principal strengths of team teaching were grouped into 18 categories, as shown in Table 4. The strengths mentioned most frequently were, once again, fresh perspectives and 'listening to other students [and] learning from the advice offered to them'. Having a pianist to accompany the singers in the class was seen as an advantage by nearly half the respondents, which may indicate that this is usually not the case in individual lessons.

Weaknesses: The 113 statements elicited by the question 'Do you perceive any disadvantages/weaknesses in team teaching? If so, please say what they are' were provided by 42 respondents who answered this question with 'yes' (84.0% of the total of 50 respondents for this question). The statements were grouped into 11 categories, as shown in Table 5. The weaknesses mentioned most frequently were perceived differences between teachers and problems in class.

Potential improvements to team teaching: Fifty respondents answered the question regarding potential improvements to team teaching. Out of these, 41 (82.0%) answered the question with 'yes', indicating that they saw potential for the institution to make improvements, providing 68 statements. These were grouped into ten categories, as shown

Table 4 *Strengths of team teaching (School of Vocal and Opera Studies)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar and year group of respondent
Fresh perspectives	41 [38]	They can give you a new perspective on the same problem.
Learning from listening	28 [27]	Listening to other students (...) and learning from the advice offered to them.
Rehearsing, coaching, performing with a pianist	20	It is good to have a pianist there to try out repertoire with accompaniment.
Focus on repertoire	19	Learning about new repertoire from the pieces other students bring.
Focus on technique	18 [15]	It allows you to review your own technique in a different light.
Performance opportunity	17	The master class format challenges the singer to perform in front of one's peers each week.
Group interaction	15 [14]	(...) ability to have an input in other people's singing.
Team teachers' specific expertise	13 [12]	The individual experience a team teacher has that your principal teacher may not have i.e. [e.g.] expertise in specific languages.
Confidence	9 [8]	(...) gain confidence to sing for such a small group.
Getting to know staff	9	Getting to know the different teachers and their strengths and styles.
Focus on interpretation	6 [5]	get in touch with different ideas of interpretation (...)
Problems	6	(...) often conflicting opinions on the conduct of singing with your teacher, can become slightly confusing to the technique.
Focus on teaching methods/styles	5	Diversity in teaching approaches.
Focus on performance	5	Pro-active performance insight.
Getting to know other students	4	Getting to know different students (...).
Complements own teacher	3	A teacher who works in a similar way to your own is a real blessing.
More contact time	3	(...) additional tuition.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	4	(...) can help you realise if you are with the wrong teacher.

Table 5 *Perceived weaknesses of team teaching (School of Vocal and Opera Studies)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar and year group of respondent
Perceived difference	30 [26]	Some students find being told different things from different teachers confuses them and actually [hinders] their learning.
Problems in class	15 [11]	Sometimes classmates can be counterproductive with their ambition.
Not enough time with team teacher	13 [11]	Not enough time to really work with a teacher.
Confusion	11 [10]	For inexperienced singers a new perspective can sometimes be confusing and frustrating.
Need for pianist	10	There are weeks when we don't have an accompanist – I feel that team-teaching is a waste of time on those days.
Would prefer more time with PS teacher	10 [9]	Having team teaching means that we have less time with our principal teacher, I would prefer more time with him.
Perceived disagreement	5 [3]	Teachers clashing.
Specific problems	5	Some teachers are too afraid to give critical advice.
Student disagreement	4	Difficult if you are not able to work well with your given teacher.
Uncertainty as to purpose	3	Unclear guidelines for teachers (to teach technique, not to teach technique!?)
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	6	Rotating around the same teachers too quickly.

in Table 6. The potential improvements mentioned most frequently were, as for students in the School of Strings, more time with team teachers and more clarity as to the purpose of team teaching.

Staff

Respondents. Five members of staff, two female and three male, completed the survey (a sixth tutor reported not contributing to team teaching). Two did not give their age; for the purposes of preserving anonymity we can report only that the age range of the other respondents spanned more than 30 years. The five respondents had been team teaching for between 18 months and 10 years, with a mean of 5.4 years ($SD = 4.26$). They delivered between 12 and 21 hours ($M = 16.25$, $SD = 3.77$) of team teaching each term at the College, representing between 3.5 and 15 team teaching classes ($M = 10.13$, $SD = 4.87$).

Table 6 *Potential improvements to team teaching (School of Vocal and Opera Studies)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar and year group of respondent
More time for individual students	10	More than just 15 minutes a week each in a team teaching class as this is not nearly enough time to work constructively on repertoire.
Agreement on purpose	9	Establish with the staff what team teaching is meant to be so as to allow teaching to take place rather than opinionated lecturing.
Rotation of teachers	9 [8]	(. . .) there should be some sort of system which ensures that you have a chance to work with every teacher, instead of getting the same ones over and over.
Nature of students	9 [8]	To change the students in your class as well so that you can work with different people and hear different feedback.
Need for pianist	8	Pianist every week, it doesn't have to be a staff member, even an accompaniment student would be better.
More classes	4	Make the class run to the end of the year if it is supposed to be an extension of our one-to-one lesson.
Student choice	4	Have students have more say in what teachers they would like.
Delay team teaching for younger students	3	(. . .) possible let first years settle with their teacher for the first term.
Abandon team teaching	3 [2]	Substitute team teaching either for 15 minutes with a pianist, coach or individual principal study teacher.
Miscellaneous	9	Lessons are scheduled too early in the day – can't sing at 8 am it means waking up 2 hours early like you are going for an audition.

Results. Strengths: All five tutors listed strengths of team teaching (24 in all). Three respondents indicated that students can benefit from 'exposure to different approaches' to technique and other issues relating to performance, as well as '[seeing] other students being taught' and having the chance to 'listen and discuss' during or after the class. The benefits perceived echoed those suggested by tutors in the School of Strings: two mentioned '[getting] feedback from students – we don't disagree much it seems to me' thus 'giving

the School of Vocal and Opera Studies a common idea of purpose' and '[encouraging] a sense of solidarity and community within faculty', clearly strengthened by discovering that 'the same things [are] brought to [students'] attention by their Team Teachers as their own Principal Study Tutors'. Finally, two tutors observed that in team teaching classes 'students get to sing with [a] pianist'.

Weaknesses: Only three tutors listed weaknesses (12 in all). Some were systemic: 'No time to consolidate on suggestions made to student'; 'The potential for confusion, especially among first-year undergraduates who are still finding their way at the College and getting to know their new Principal Study Tutors'; '[Team] teacher has no idea of emotional, physical or psychological history of students'. The majority, however, concerned 'lack of communication between staff', colleagues' 'lack of interest in other teachers' viewpoints' or tendency to 'make destructive comments'. One tutor mentioned students' 'occasional poor attendance'.

Potential improvements to team teaching: The five tutors suggested a total of nine improvements, including 'better attendance by students', 'more discussion between teachers regarding feedback' and 'more discussion between students and their own teachers regarding experiences in team teaching'. 'More open-mindedness among staff and students' was advocated by one tutor, and another commented, 'No teacher should make any (...) personal comments about a student's individual teacher (...) Care needs also to be taken when commenting about a student's technique. This needs to be done in a suggestive way rather than 'This is the only right way and you must do it.'" A third tutor recommended that first-year students should be exempted from team teaching altogether.

Summary

Once again, both students and staff identified more strengths than weaknesses, suggesting that on the whole experiences of team teaching had been positive. As in the School of Strings, the benefits for students of encountering alternative or complementary approaches may nevertheless be undermined by perceived disagreements between tutors, which clearly cause not only confusion for students – particularly those who are less experienced – but also distress to members of staff. Recommendations specific to the School of Vocal Studies might include the provision of an accompanist for every team teaching class, and more clarity as to whether tutors should focus to a greater extent on technique or repertoire.

Study 3: Wind, Brass and Percussion

In the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, the traditional one-to-one model of tuition has for many years been superseded by 'split tuition' whereby many students (particularly those who play doubling instruments) have instrumental lessons, on an individual basis, with more than one tutor, and are also expected to attend group classes. The questionnaires completed by respondents therefore referred to split tuition *and* team teaching. The latter was defined by tutors and students as a group class with a different tutor. Fifteen students described it as a 'regular class', seven as being 'like a master class' with an internal teacher. Since split tuition may not always take the form of group classes, for the purposes of this

Table 7 *Strengths of team teaching (School of Wind, Brass and Percussion)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar
More feedback/other opinions (general)	17	Getting to experience others' viewpoints rather than just teacher and student.
Feedback from one or more different teacher(s)	7	Opinions and ideas of different teachers.
Feedback from fellow students	5	Opinions of peers.
Having an audience/learning to perform	12 [11]	Gain experience in performing in front of other people.
Peer learning and teamwork	11 [9]	Learning to work with people.
Learning from listening to others/comparison of standards	8	Learning from other people's mistakes.
Setting of goals/challenges	4	It forces you to perform to well-versed peers. You constantly have to keep working in a proactive way.
Different teaching style/teaching training	4	A more balanced view to music/clarinet teaching.
Playing together	4	Chance to participate in group work.
Repertoire	3	Hear a wider range of repertoire.
Further (musical) skills	3	Musicianship.
Confidence building/encouragement	2	You have more people around to encourage you.
Additional lesson	2	Extra lesson time.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	15 [13]	Picks up on things you may have missed.

article we discounted responses that did not concur with the general definition of team teaching in this department.

Students

Respondents. Thirty-two undergraduate and postgraduate students (21 male and 11 female) from all years of study completed the questionnaire. Six further questionnaires were completed but excluded since respondents did not distinguish between individual tuition and team teaching. Their ages ranged from 19 to 24 years, with a mean of 21.00 ($SD = 1.32$). They had been taking lessons on a range of instruments including flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, saxophone, euphonium and percussion for a mean of 11.22 years ($SD = 2.57$), and reported practising on their own for a mean of 15.75 hours ($SD = 7.16$) in a typical week, and rehearsing with others for a mean of 6.72 hours ($SD = 5.80$). They reported attending a mean of 23.03 hours' ($SD = 15.60$) team teaching over the course of the term prior to completing the questionnaire.

Table 8 *Perceived weaknesses of team teaching (School of Wind, Brass and Percussion)*

Category	n statements	Exemplar
Conflicting opinions/perceived differences between teachers	10	Conflict of opinion with a tutor you are not really taught by (conflicting with your own teacher's tuition).
Nervousness/embarrassment	10 [9]	There can be reason to be nervous while playing to peers: although this is like the real world of music.
Too many students/not all involved or active	7 [6]	Large groups may reduce teacher/student contact time.
Boring/repetitive/slow pace	6 [5]	The teacher repeats him/herself a lot.
Organisation of classes/time issues	6 [4]	No set structure for who gets to play – some people play a lot which leaves less time for others.
Not much active participation/not much individual attention	5	Not much individual attention can be given/received.
Teaching not specific/less relevant	5	Teaching can be too general and not specific.
Too specific, not beneficial for all students/not appropriate	3	Sometimes you can be sat around while people are taught specifically.
Different levels of ability	3	Differing levels of ability may hinder more advanced players in the group.
Miscellaneous/ambiguous	8 [7]	May have to change learned material, e.g. change of recital programme.

Results. Strengths: The 97 statements elicited by the question regarding the principal strengths of team teaching were grouped into 14 categories (Table 7). More than a third of these referred to feedback from teachers and/or fellow students; the other strengths mentioned most frequently were 'performing in front of other people' and 'learning to work with people'.

Weaknesses: The 66 statements elicited by the question regarding perceived disadvantages or weaknesses were provided by all but three of the 32 respondents (90.63%) and grouped into 11 categories, as shown in Table 8. The weaknesses mentioned most frequently were 'conflicts of opinion' and '[nervousness] while playing to peers'. Several respondents reported that 'not much individual attention can be given/received'.

Potential improvements to team teaching: Twenty-seven of the 32 respondents (84.38%) answered that they saw potential for improvements to team teaching. They provided 35 statements, which were grouped into nine categories, as shown in Table 9. A third of these respondents wanted more sessions; others suggested better planning of classes and a greater variety of teachers.

Table 9 Potential improvements to team teaching (School of Wind, Brass and Percussion)

Category	n statements	Exemplar
More of it	9	I think that we should have more team teaching as I feel I haven't benefited as much as I could have done if we had more sessions (...).
Organisation and planning of classes	6	Better planned so that before different year groups exams/recitals they get the chance to play.
More variety, e.g. with guest teachers	5	We could have more diverse tutors, e.g. a trombonist hearing some trumpeters occasionally.
Acknowledge student levels	3	Split the class into first and second years, then third, fourth and postgraduates.
Smaller groups	3	Team teaching in smaller groups so more performance opportunity is available.
Be stricter with (uncommitted) students	3	I think people should really get sacked if they don't put enough effort so that other people won't work in vain.
More master classes/master classes for everyone	3	I believe everyone should be able to experience the opportunity of playing in group master classes instead of the same few.
Teachers should agree on purpose	2	(...) clearer breakdown of what team teaching is.
Miscellaneous	1	(...) and more choice in who takes the coaching session.

Staff

Respondents. Seven tutors, five male and two female, with a mean age of 49.71 years ($SD = 11.66$), completed the questionnaire. They all taught classes of students numbering from four to 31, with a mean of 14. Their experience of split tuition at the College ranged from two to 32 years, with a mean of 9.21 ($SD = 9.87$), and they had delivered between four and 18 hours of group classes (i.e. team teaching) during the term prior to completing the questionnaire, with a mean of 9.00 ($SD = 4.73$).

Results. Strengths: Six of the seven tutors listed strengths (17 in all). All but one pointed out the advantages for students of learning from more than one teacher and gaining 'balanced advice' or '[seeing] other staff in action'; others mentioned the benefit for staff of 'shared responsibility', 'being able to 'compare notes with other teachers', 'social interaction (with teachers especially)' and 'good use of resources'.

Weaknesses: Three respondents listed weaknesses (eight in all). Two referred to ‘conflicting advice’ potentially leading to confusion; one mentioned a range of organisational issues and a third observed ‘I find the policing of group teaching much more tiring (. . .) than one-to-one’.

Potential improvements to team teaching: Two respondents provided four suggestions for improvement. Both wanted more group teaching, and better attendance from students. One pointed to the difficulty of organising such classes, however, and the other argued that there ‘should be no reduction of one-to-one teaching time’.

Summary

There is a long-established tradition of split tuition including group teaching in the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion. The department caters for students learning a wider variety of instruments than in other departments, and they often have lessons on more than one instrument. They can benefit, therefore, not only from group lessons on a single instrument and one-to-one tuition from teachers who are not their principal study tutors, but also mixed-instrument teaching in small groups. Student respondents appreciate the opportunity to play to others – despite the anxiety this can arouse – and the range of feedback available, while some regret not receiving more individual attention. Staff like sharing responsibility for teaching but deplore poor attendance. Both highlight the importance of negotiating potentially conflicting approaches and opinions.

General comparison and discussion

During the past few years an increasing number of higher music education institutions have begun to introduce team teaching. It is generally defined as (small) group classes in which students learn with a teacher who is not their principal study tutor, and although it may present challenges to both students and staff it can also provide a valuable complement to individual tuition. In this article we report three studies carried out in different departments of a conservatoire, focusing on students’ and tutors’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of team teaching, and their responses to the invitation to suggest improvements. The School of Strings had introduced team teaching most recently, having only been offering one to two hours of group lessons to each student over the course of a single year. The School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, by contrast, had been offering split tuition including group classes for 30 years, and currently provides 60 hours of such teaching to each student each year. In what follows we discuss and compare the views of respondents, as they were most commonly articulated, in these three departments.

Strengths

‘A fresh perspective’ was the strength mentioned most often by students of string instruments (37.5% of all statements) and voice (18.2%). This accords well with the findings of research in other academic fields, highlighting the advantages for students of being exposed to different ideas (Tisdell & Eisen, 2000; Leavitt, 2006) so that they must balance alternative approaches and decide for themselves which advice is most appropriate for them. The

opportunity to gain feedback from teachers and fellow students was the strength mentioned most often by students of wind, brass, and percussion instruments (29.9% of all statements). These views were mirrored by staff in all three departments who also saw providing students with a range of opinions and perspectives as the most important advantage of team teaching, in contrast to the more traditional master-apprentice model (cf. Lehmann *et al.*, 2007). As a tutor in the School of Vocal and Opera Studies put it:

The open-mindedness and active discouragement of 'guruism' among tutors as a result of team teaching implementation is greatly to be welcomed, in my strongly held opinion.

The emphases placed on the other strengths listed by respondents reflect their particular needs and perceptions as instrumentalists or vocalists. While students in the School of Strings were more likely to comment on the benefits of learning from tutors' different teaching styles (10.4% of all statements) and technical advice (8.4%), students of voice were more likely to stress the opportunity from listening to each other being taught (12.4%) and singing with an accompanist (8.9%), which may not be the case in individual lessons. Wind, brass and percussion students particularly value performing in front of their contemporaries, as well as playing with them, in group classes; their most frequently mentioned strengths were having an audience (12.4%) and 'peer learning and teamwork' (11.3%). The latter can be seen as a form of 'collaborative learning' (Smith & MacGregor, 1992, p. 10; cf. Cooper & Mueck, 1992; Freer & Barker, 2008) in which students are encouraged to provide feedback on each others' work. These particular aspects of team teaching were mentioned less often by students in the other two departments, perhaps because their experiences of ensemble playing and singing occur in contexts other than team teaching (e.g. chamber music, orchestra, opera) or because team teaching has been introduced more recently, as in the School of Strings, so that students are less accustomed to learning from each other.

Weaknesses

There was less agreement between the departments as to the weaknesses of team teaching than its strengths. Once again this is attributable in part to the extent to which the different departments actually provided team teaching. The criticisms made most frequently by students in the School of Strings, where team teaching had been introduced most recently, were that they did not have enough time with team teachers (33.3% of all statements), followed by perceived differences between teachers (17.9%), and problems with the team teacher (10.3%) or lack of support by staff for team teaching (10.3%). While shared responsibility for teaching was cited by staff in the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion as a particular strength, responsibility cannot be shared equally unless all the staff in a department are committed to the principle of team teaching (cf. Davis, 1995). Thus if students are aware that their principal study tutors do not fully support team teaching, they may be less likely to attend their scheduled team teaching classes, resulting in more work for tutors such as the respondent who described the 'policing' of team teaching as tiring.

In the School of Vocal and Opera Studies, perceived differences between teachers were mentioned most frequently (26.5% of all statements), followed by 'problems in class' (13.3%), suggesting tensions between students. Given that much more team teaching was

offered in this department than in the School of Strings, fewer references were made to time with team teachers being too limited (11.5%). Similarly, perceived differences between teachers were most often mentioned as a disadvantage of team teaching in the School of Wind, Brass, and Percussion (15.2%), although an equal number of statements referred to nervousness or embarrassment when performing (15.2%). Although one respondent commented that nervousness when playing ‘... is like the real world of music’, it should be noted that performance anxiety can be even more acute for students when they perform to their peers and a tutor, whether internal or external (cf. Creech *et al.*, 2009), than when they play to a paying audience. Finally, several students pointed out the disadvantage that classes can be too large for everyone to have the opportunity to play (10.6%).

To summarise the students’ responses, perceived differences between teachers are problematic in all departments. The limited provision of team teaching was seen as an issue in the School of Strings but in the other departments, where team teaching had been established for longer, students experienced challenges within their groups as the result of having to play and listen to each other. Responses from staff echoed these findings. Classes are too short (School of Strings), there should be more solidarity between tutors (School of Vocal and Opera Studies) and students may be confused because teachers use different approaches (School of Wind, Brass and Percussion).

Taken together, the views of both students and staff suggest that, besides the full commitment required for team teaching to produce an effective sharing of responsibility, it is vital for negotiation to take place. Occasional conflicts are of course unavoidable whenever colleagues with distinctive ideas work together (Davis, 1995; Tisdell & Eisen, 2000; Leavitt, 2006). This may be particularly true of conservatoires, where performers’ individuality is prized (cf. Gaunt, 2008), but tutors should not be encouraged to promote only their own methods, excluding others that are equally valid, nor to be critical of their colleagues. Rather, tutors should acknowledge that professional disagreements are common in many, if not all fields, and that used constructively (cf. Anderson & Speck, 1998), they can enrich the experiences of students and staff alike. We would argue that, supported by their institutions, departments should provide an appropriate forum within which discussions between tutors can be facilitated.

Potential improvements

We asked both students and staff to provide suggestions for improving team teaching; these were analysed and the findings presented to those responsible for organising team teaching in each of the three departments. As was to be expected, suggestions reflect the shortcomings already identified. The students in all three departments wanted more time with team teachers (School of Strings: 31.9% of all statements; School of Vocal and Opera Studies: 14.7%); even in the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, where a high proportion of teaching involves split tuition including group classes, more than a quarter of all statements (25.79%) indicated that students want ‘more of it’ – although this may simply reflect a general desire on the part of students for more teaching.

Many of the students’ suggestions related to the organisation of classes in terms of planning, structure and scheduling (e.g. against orchestra or other ensemble rehearsal times – a perennial issue in conservatoires); this was particularly salient for respondents in the

Schools of Strings (19.4% of all statements) and Wind, Brass and Percussion (17.1%). Good preparation and planning is clearly as important for team teaching as any other kind of teaching (Leavitt, 2006); to reiterate, negotiations between colleagues should be facilitated by those responsible for the organisation of team teaching within each department.

With respect to perceived differences between teachers, students in the School of Vocal and Opera Studies recommended 'agreement on the purpose' of team teaching as a potential improvement (13.2%), focusing for instance on either technique or interpretation. Further suggestions made frequently relate to students having more choice of tutors (School of Strings, 11.1%), more rotation of tutors (School of Vocal and Opera Studies, 13.2%) and more variety of tutors in general, for instance by inviting guest teachers (School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, 14.2%). Staff in the three departments suggested more time for team teaching (School of Strings), improved student attendance (Schools of Vocal and Opera Studies, and Wind, Brass and Percussion) and better communication between members of staff (School of Vocal and Opera Studies). Meanwhile some members of staff also pointed out that individual lessons are still vital for the training of performers, and that no time should be taken from one-to-one tuition.

Conclusions

We investigated respondents' view on different models of team teaching as delivered in three departments of a conservatoire. As one-to-one tuition must accommodate the requirements of students with different levels of experience, who play a range of instruments or have different voice types – and therefore different practising and rehearsal behaviours – so team teaching has to take into consideration the specific needs of different students. This was reflected by the responses to the survey; as a consequence it is difficult to draw general conclusions about respondents' views on team teaching. We had expected to find a greater acceptance of team teaching in departments where it had been established for longer, but this was not the case. In the School of Strings, where it was introduced recently, reported strengths clearly outweigh perceived weaknesses. In the School of Wind, Brass and Percussion, where it has been established for many years, students made only a third more positive than negative comments. We have pointed out the need for negotiation between tutors and students, and between members of staff (cf. Davis, 1995; Robinson & Schaible, 1995), if responsibility for teaching is truly to be shared. At the same time it is an inescapable fact that some tutors do not 'buy in' to team teaching, seeing it as a dangerous practice that not only encroaches on their time with students in one-to-one tuition but that may come (if it does not do so already) to substitute for individual lessons. We would argue that team teaching should remain a complement to one-to-one teaching, and that if it is to be introduced for the first time in a particular department, longitudinal research should be carried out to track the development of its acceptance.

One further issue arises from responses to the questionnaire. It was suggested by many students and members of staff in all three departments that students in their first year should be exempted from team teaching, on the grounds that they might be confused by the conflicting approaches of different teachers. This is perhaps truer of singers – who start formal lessons later – than instrumentalists, who are already highly trained and experienced musicians when they enter their institution. For both groups of students, however, it may

be as important in the initial stages of acclimatisation to the new environment of the conservatoire to form a strong and significant relationship with a single principal study tutor as it is for beginners (Davidson *et al.*, 1998; cf. Burwell, 2005). More experienced students can surely benefit, in addition, from more collaborative approaches including learning with, and from fellow students.

Finally, we address the impact of carrying out this research on team teaching in our institution. The findings of the three studies were reported to Heads of Schools as a result of which meetings for discussion between tutors have been taking place in one department. Also, team teaching hours have been increased in the School of Strings. Additional insights were provided by responses to the invitation to make any further comments; students and staff were clearly grateful for the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions. We hope this will encourage colleagues to carry out similar investigations in their own institutions.

Implications for higher music education

While we investigated views on team teaching only in our own institution, and it may well be that different approaches to teaching have evolved elsewhere, we believe the implications of our findings are generalisable to other conservatoires. They could also inform the development of policy in relation to the teaching of instrumental and vocal music at pre-tertiary levels.

First, students and staff clearly believe that it is useful to be exposed to a variety of teaching methods and opinions on music, although this can be seen as challenging tradition. For team teaching to be effective, however, tutors must communicate with each other in ways that are not necessarily encouraged (or possible) when tuition is primarily one-to-one. As well as resolving disagreements between staff that are in any case recognised by students, and perceived as problematic, this may have the additional effect of reducing isolation (cf. Gaunt, 2008; for studies in other academic fields, see Davis, 1995; Robinson & Schaible, 1995).

Second, tutors should plan and structure team teaching classes, and make their purpose explicit to students, just as in other domains (Davis, 1995; Helms *et al.*, 2005; Leavitt, 2006). Heads of department, in turn, should clarify the rationale and learning outcomes for team teaching to the staff who will deliver it – specifying, for instance, whether groups should be from the same or different years, play the same or different instruments or be of the same or different voice types, and if the main purpose of classes is to focus on technique, interpretation or repertoire.

Third, consideration should be given to preparing less experienced students for team teaching (cf. Burwell, 2005; Creech *et al.*, 2009, for a study on master classes) or even exempting them from it altogether, since the potential for confusion may outweigh the benefits of exposure to different approaches.

Fourth, team teaching should not be allowed to encroach on one-to-one tuition, particularly when it is first introduced; it is important that both staff and students see it as complementary to individual lessons.

Finally, more experienced students, in particular, could be given the opportunity to choose how many hours of team teaching they receive, and from whom. After all, they

often participate in master classes and additional courses on their own initiative. It would seem entirely reasonable that students be allowed to create their own curriculum – within organisational constraints, of course – as they and their principal study tutors perceive it to be most beneficial for their musical and personal development.

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