

## Points for Debate

The editors would particularly welcome comments on or responses to articles which appear in the Points for Debate section. These may be in the form of a short paper or letter and should be sent to Dr Stephanie Pitts, Department of Music, University of Sheffield, 38 Taptonville Road, Sheffield, S10 5BR s.e.pitts@sheffield.ac.uk. Selected contributions will be published at the earliest opportunity.

## The subject general knowledge of secondary music PGCE applicants

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*In this paper I explore the musical general knowledge of 46 applicants for places on a secondary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) music course. The applicants took a 35-question quiz designed to indicate something of their subject knowledge in connection with aspects of the Western art music tradition, knowledge of Western musical instruments and world musics. I will discuss methodological problems related to the use of the quiz results, then analyse the results. The analysis reveals patterns of strength and weakness in the subject knowledge of the applicants that are related to their educational and other musical experiences. Significant absences in areas of knowledge needed to teach the National Curriculum are detected. I then move on to consider the findings in the light of the new Benchmark Statement (QAA, 2002) for music degrees in the UK. Noting that no given body of knowledge is prescribed in the Benchmark Statement that both describes and governs the content of music first degrees, I raise questions about the difficulties this creates for all concerned.*

### **Introduction**

Between 1992 and 2001 I worked in two university schools of education, for the greater part of my time teaching and administering PGCE courses. It was crucial to try to select applicants for the PGCE who would become good teachers, who would be effective in the classroom and, I hoped, obtain satisfaction and enjoyment from the job.

Inevitably such questions were at the forefront of my mind when assessing students at interview. I attempted various methods to try to get an insight into each applicant's potential for making a success of the challenging job of secondary music teaching. For example, I included a practical element in the interview process, inviting students to join me in typical classroom activities, singing, accompanying and improvising. I tried to put applicants at their ease but perhaps inevitably this process frightened some of them. Although music graduates (or soon to be graduates) had been studying their subject for a number of years,

many of them found the activities of singing, playing and improvising in a fairly informal way very challenging. Neither their degree in music nor their previous musical experience had equipped them for such things.

Working on the PGCE course I became quite concerned at the level of subject knowledge of some of the people I recruited. Things that I thought were common currency of musical knowledge were sometimes met with puzzlement and even incredulity. Obviously the students came from different backgrounds and had studied on different courses, but where the individual had studied did not seem to correlate with the subject knowledge displayed. Music teachers need a reserve of subject knowledge to put in context what they are teaching and to respond to pupils' interests and enquiries. I decided that I ought to address the question of subject knowledge in the interview process.

### **The PGCE interview music quiz**

I devised a short quiz, consisting of 35 simple questions in seven sets of five, which is reproduced in Figure 1. By all means try it out: the answers are given in an appendix at the end of the paper.

Interviewees were asked to arrive half an hour before the interview. They then completed the quiz and a piece of prose writing, usually in a room alone without any access to reference works. I marked the quiz in front of the interviewees towards the end of the interview and discussed their answers and their performance with them.

Each of the seven sections of the quiz is discrete. One of the purposes of the quiz is diagnostic, to demonstrate to both the interviewer and the interviewee areas of subject knowledge that need development. In fact the different sections of the quiz can be combined logically in various ways: A, C and F are about composers, styles and periods within the Western musical tradition; D and G are about instruments in the Western tradition; and B and E are about musical styles and instruments in different world musics. I wanted to intermingle these categories in the quiz to make a point about not segregating 'Western' and 'world' music too harshly – is the West not of this world? 'World music' is an 'also ran' category dreamed up by record company executives as a marketing device, and it has no rigour as an analytical category. (In similar vein I used to open a 'world music' listening exercise with Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*).

It may be objected that this quiz relates to knowledge *about* music, not knowledge *of* music. The answers to such questions do not constitute what Keith Swanwick has called 'direct involvement' with music; rather the quiz might be described as an activity that might be classified among 'quasi-musical enterprises' (Swanwick, 1979: 43). Swanwick relegated 'skill acquisition' and 'literature studies' to 'activities peripheral to the experience of music itself', which he believed should be at the centre of musical learning (ibid.: 45).

Swanwick's withering and timely attack on non-musical music teaching has been hugely and rightly influential. I have absolutely no problem with the idea that the experience of music should be central to all musical learning. Much that passed itself off as music education in the past was the learning (or perhaps better, the non-learning) of facts about music rather than something resulting from musical engagement.

Yet humans are language using and classifying creatures. We have a need to try to bring order and make sense of our experiences of an inchoate world, including our musical

Name.....

A. From which countries did the following composers originate?

1. Villa-Lobos .....
2. Bizet .....
3. O'Carolan .....
4. W C Handy .....
5. Grieg .....

B. With which places would you associate the following styles of music?

1. Cajun .....
2. Sean nós .....
3. Fado .....
4. Tango .....
5. Township Jive .....

C. Who composed the following?

1. Rhapsody in Blue .....
2. Finlandia .....
3. St Matthew Passion .....
4. Dido and Aeneas .....
5. Different Trains .....

D. If the following instruments play the note they read as C, what note would actually sound?

1. Clarinet.....
2. Alto saxophone .....
3. Horn in F .....
4. Trumpet .....
5. Oboe .....

E. With which countries or regions would you associate the following instruments?

1. Balalaika .....
2. Sitar .....
3. Shakuhachi.....
4. Kora .....
5. Cymbalom .....

F. Into which periods/styles of music (medieval, renaissance, etc.) would you place the following composers?

1. Telemann .....
2. Ellington .....
3. Liszt .....
4. Hildegard of Bingen .....
5. Haydn .....

G. To which family or type do the following instruments belong?

1. Cornet .....
2. Cor anglais .....
3. Synthesiser .....
4. Clarinet .....
5. Cittern .....

[Multiply total x 3 for rough, generous percentage]

Fig. 1 Interview Music Quiz

experiences. We use language to order and to classify, and our classifications are historical, stylistic, generic, idiomatic, descriptive, and so on. Music may provoke in us sublime or ecstatic experiences that we cannot convey in words, but we can discuss aspects of the musical piece that evokes such a response. We can place the music we listen to within a cognitive map which relates different aspects of what we know of the work to our relative aesthetic assessments of music experienced.

Thus answering factual questions is related to 'knowledge about music' but it may also be an indication that engagement with music has taken place. Someone who does not know that the shakuhachi is a national instrument of Japan has probably not engaged much with Japanese music. Equally, someone who knows that the shakuhachi is a Japanese end-blown flute may know little about Japanese music but may have found and enjoyed the sound on a synthesiser and used it in a composition. We all acquire knowledge in various and sometimes indirect ways, but we acquire it through our interaction with things, be they books, recordings, instruments, concerts or other people. I claim no more for the quiz than that it is a sort of 'rough guide' to the musical knowledge and range of experience of those who took it.

In any case, whatever the merits of some notion of a pure and unmediated encounter with the musical work (if such a thing ever exists), teachers in schools are expected to be able to place the music they teach about within a contextual framework. If they do not possess such a framework they will not be able to teach the particular music adequately, or be able to help pupils to build their own contextual frameworks.

So my wish was not to reduce music education to a sort of trivia quiz or musical *University Challenge*, but to have a quick and efficient tool that made a valid contribution to the PGCE selection process and helped applicants to know something of their own areas of strength and weakness. At the same time, I realised that the quiz might provide some interesting information about the state of music graduates' knowledge and provoke some stimulating questions and discussion. I therefore requested permission from all those who took the quiz to use the results anonymously in research.

I recovered 46 completed quiz papers dating from the recruitment periods in 1999–2000 and 2000–2001. All PGCE applicants completed the papers. They had studied at a wide variety of higher education institutions. I have not sorted the answer papers according to whether the interviewees were offered a place or not, although the responses were used to help decide whether the applicant should be offered a place. All the applicants had received or were (according to their references) likely to get first degrees in music. They were pre-selected in that I had considered each application and the references and I thought they were serious potential candidates for a place on a PGCE course. Thus on the evidence available, they represented the best of the applicants both in terms of their suitability for teaching and, generally speaking, in terms of their academic attainment. The point of this work is to investigate the subject knowledge of music graduates and near graduates applying for a place on a secondary PGCE course insofar as it is reflected in their responses.

It could be objected that the quiz, as something of my devising, reflects my own interests and preoccupations. Some people I have shown it to have said this. In some ways I think this must be true. Factual questions, such as those in the quiz, are difficult if you do not know the answers to them, easy if you do. I know that someone could devise a similar

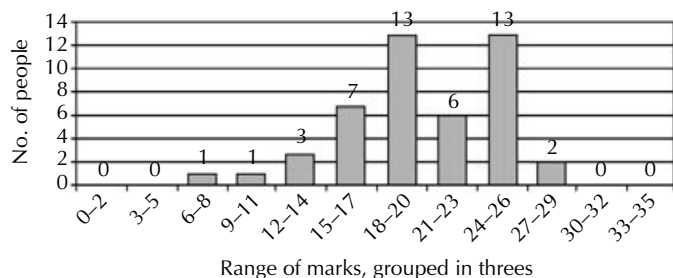


Fig. 2 Range of marks – raw scores

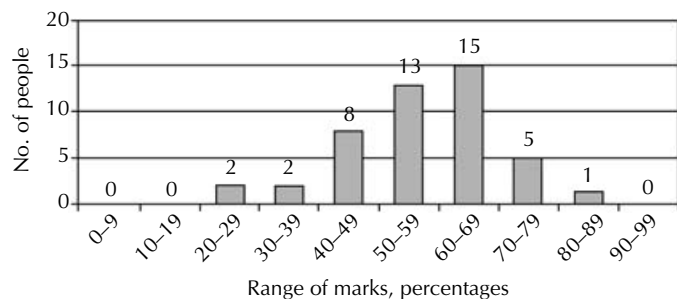


Fig. 3 Range of marks, percentages

quiz in which I would score badly because they could draw on information from musical traditions with which I am not very familiar. Some questions, I recognise, do come from my own interests: I play a modern version of the cittern, and I am interested in Irish music. However, I think the questions are musical general knowledge questions that do give a rough index of the range of the musical experience of those responding to the quiz. I have tried it on people interested in music who have not studied the subject formally and many have achieved scores of between 75% and 95%. One of my colleagues in the School of Music at the University of Leeds tried it and scored 100%.

### Analysis of results

When converted to rounded percentages the range of marks scored by the applicants in the quiz was 23–83% (8–29 out of 35). The range of raw marks is shown in Figure 2 (above). This presentation of the data gives an interesting bimodal distribution centring on 19 and 25. Presenting the marks as rounded percentages in 10% ranges gives a view that approximates more to a normal distribution of the same data (Figure 3). Of the 46 applicants who did the quiz, 12 (26%) got less than half marks, 25 (54%) got less than 60% of the questions right and only 6 people got more than 70% of the questions correct. It might be said that for people with or on the verge of getting a degree in music these are not

impressive scores. I will analyse the results under three headings. Correct answers for each of the questions and the numbers of people who got them right are given in the appendix at the end of this paper.

#### *Composers, periods and styles in Western music*

Sections A (*From which countries did the following composers originate?*), C (*Who composed the following?*) and F (*Into which periods/styles of music (medieval, renaissance, etc.) would you place the following composers?*) can be usefully considered together. These sections seek mostly to test knowledge of the Western art music tradition.

Applicants seemed rather uncertain as to the country of origin of composers. Whereas 76% of the answers correctly stated that Bizet originated from France, only 7% knew that Villa-Lobos was from Brazil. More people thought that 'the father of the blues', W. C. Handy, was English rather than from the USA (perhaps on the basis of the English sound of the name). Less than half the people knew Grieg was Norwegian and only half knew that O'Carolan was Irish (although the name might have helped some decide their answer). The mean score for answering the five questions in this section correctly was 2.15.

Section C (*Who composed the following?*) shows George Gershwin way out in front – 89% knew he composed *Rhapsody in Blue*, whereas J. S. Bach came in a somewhat poor second, with only 72% identifying him as the composer of the *St Matthew Passion* (some thought the composer was Handel). In all cases where answers different from those I expected were given I checked whether it was my own knowledge that was at fault. (As my colleague Rachel Cowgill pointed out, Bach was not the only composer to set a *St Matthew Passion*, but the only alternative answer given was Handel.) Only 6 people of the 46 identified Steve Reich as the composer of *Different Trains*. The mean score for answering the five questions in this section correctly was 2.89.

In terms of periods and styles the knowledge base of the applicants seemed a bit more secure. Liszt, Haydn and Duke Ellington were ascribed appropriate categories by most of the applicants. There was a bit less certainty placing Telemann in the Baroque and under half placed Hildegard of Bingen in the medieval period. The mean score for answering the five questions in Section F was 3.91, significantly better than sections A and C.

Of the fifteen questions in sections A, C and F, 412 out of a possible 690 were answered correctly, or 59.7%. Some of these questions address the sort of general knowledge of music which a lot of music enthusiasts possess; the fact that music graduates presenting themselves to be potential future teachers seemed to have significant 'holes' in their knowledge must, to say the least, raise some questions.

#### *Knowledge of Western instruments*

Sections D and G dealt with the subject of transposition and instrument families or types. The pattern of answers for D (*If the following instruments play the note they read as C, what note would actually sound?*) was very interesting (Figure 4).

That over half the applicants gave 100% correct answers and that the whole distribution is positively skewed indicates that a large number of the applicants had a secure

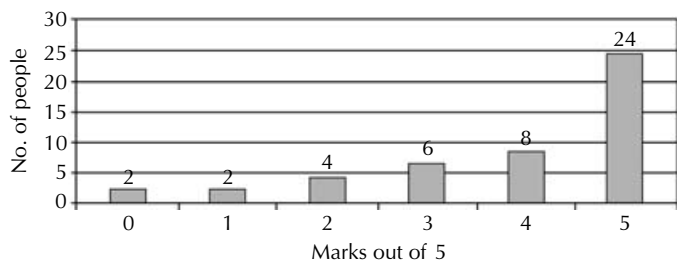


Fig. 4 Transposition – mark distribution

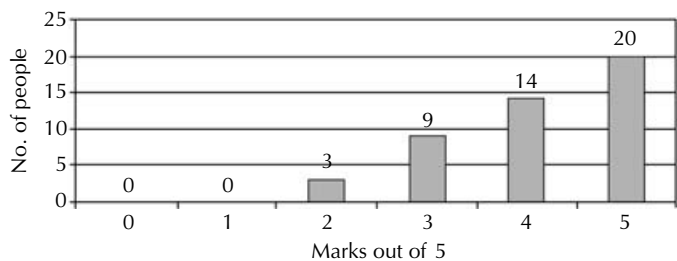


Fig. 5 Instrument families – mark distribution

knowledge in this area. I have no doubt that this is knowledge derived from experience, primarily of performing, but also of arranging and composing both within and extra to academic study. The mean score for attempting to answer the five questions in this section was 3.91.

Not quite so spectacular were the results for section G (*To which family or type do the following instruments belong?*) (see Figure 5). 100% of the applicants placed the cornet and clarinet in their correct families, but the figure dropped to 87% in the case of the cor anglais (four people thinking this was a brass instrument). The synthesiser gave some problems of classification with only 67% of the respondents stating it was an electronic instrument. A significant number wrote that it was a keyboard or percussion instrument and one stated it was a stringed instrument. (Its outward manifestation may be in any of these forms, but such descriptions do not constitute a good response to the idea of family or type.) The cittern (a mainstay of much music-making in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England) fared worse. Only 57% of the applicants stated it was a stringed instrument, one adding an ominous ‘Eastern’ in brackets – an obvious mistake for sitar, same linguistic root, different instrument, one thinking it was a harp, and no less than 9 thinking it was a percussion instrument. The mean score for answering the five questions in this section was 4.11. From this small amount of evidence it would be reasonable to hypothesise that knowledge of orchestral and brass band instruments is good but once outside this category things are a lot less certain. Evidence on instruments from different parts of the world (discussed below) supports this view.

The distribution of correct responses, like that for transposition, shows a marked positive skew. This is a definite contrast to what follows.

#### *The problem of world musics*

Sections B and E asked questions relating to different world musics. B asked for a simple geographical placing (*With which places would you associate the following styles of music?*). The word ‘places’ was deliberately vague but I expected some specificity in the answers: for example, for ‘Cajun’ I was looking for the answer ‘Louisiana’ but accepted ‘USA – deep South’, but not just ‘USA’.

I expected that I might get mixed responses to the questions in these sections, but with the growth of interest in world musics over the last decade or so I anticipated quite a lot of correct answers. I was wrong and probably quite naïve (see Figure 6). I do not think the questions were particularly obscure: most regular listeners to Radio 3’s *Late Junction* or Andy Kershaw’s programmes would have been able to answer them.

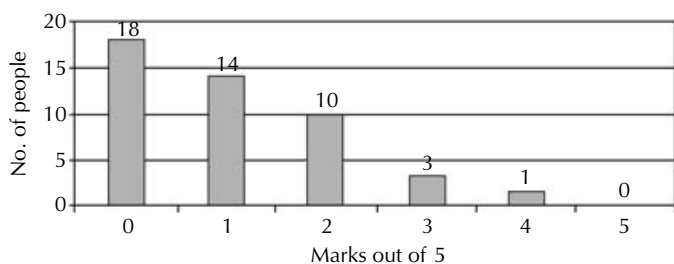


Fig. 6 Places and musical styles

The maximum percentage of applicants getting a single question in section B correct was 33%. Some of the questions were answered by very few individuals: only 3 knew *sean nós* was the ‘old style’ of singing from Ireland and only 3 were able to associate the national song of Portugal, *fado*, with its country of origin. Not one of the applicants scored full marks on this section.

The distribution is skewed completely the opposite way to the instrument knowledge and transposition questions. 32 out of 46 respondents scored 0 or just one correct answer out of five. The mean score for answering the five questions in this section was 1.02.

In the case of section E, I asked for a similar geographical answer but this time for instruments deeply associated with particular musical cultures and styles. Things were slightly different here. The one musical fact that almost everyone seems to know is that the sitar comes from India, and 43 of the 46 applicants knew this. They did not fare so well, however, with other instruments: only 37% were able to situate the balalaika correctly, and a few more (46%) associated the shakuhachi with Japan (although some suggested China as well). Only 6 individuals placed the kora in West Africa and just 3 knew that the cymbalom was used in Hungary. This last fact is particularly surprising as I have seen a well-known and very good picture of a cymbalom, published by the Pictorial Charts Educational Trust,



in a significant number of secondary schools over the last decade or so. I think in many cases illustrations of 'world' musical instruments provide attractive decoration but seem little used in active teaching and learning. I do not think that these questions on instruments and musical cultures are particularly difficult or obscure; the instruments asked about are of central importance in those particular musical cultures and I would have expected them to be more generally recognised.

The sitar seems to have saved a considerable number of people from the ignominy of scoring nothing in this section. Not one person managed to get the entire section correct. Thus the marks distribution is very odd (Figure 7).

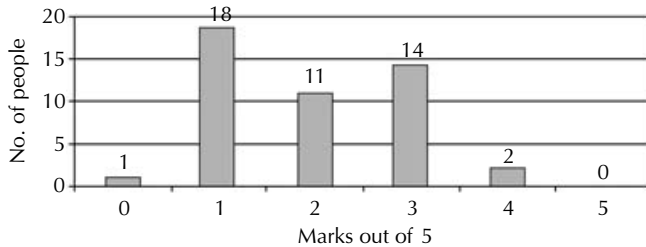


Fig. 7 Instruments and places

The development of 'world music' as a popular phenomenon and the incorporation of the study of world musics in schools and at universities seems to have had little impact on the knowledge base of the majority of people presenting themselves as potential trainee teachers. This is in spite of the music of different cultures being included in one form or another in the National Curriculum since 1992 (most of the applicants were aged around 21 and had experienced the National Curriculum at secondary school). One must ask if there is more tokenism than substance in the inclusion of world musics in curricula in both schools and in higher education. It is, for the most part, excluded from A-level study.

The OCR examining board clearly states the Eurocentric nature of its A-level course:

European traditions of music provide the main (but not the sole) source of repertoire for the music studied in the specifications. Candidates are free to move outside this tradition in performing, and in their choice of styles and medium for their own compositions, but the Areas of Study, which all candidates study at both levels, draw predominantly on music from Austria, France, Germany and Italy as well as England and America. (OCR, 2002: 5)

There is an honesty about this that is admirable: England and America almost end up as also-rans.

In another way the 'problem' of world musics is illuminating. As an area of knowledge it is in certain practical ways in a state similar to that which our understanding of Western art music would be in if we did not have notions of periods and styles and a canon. The world is a big place: which aspects of its music should be studied? There are some favourites: gamelan, raga, African drumming, and so on – but why should these be studied and not other aspects? If you ask people to name a famous musician from, say, India, some would

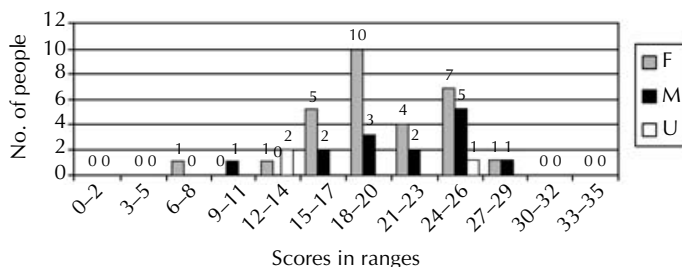


Fig. 8 Raw scores by gender

be able to name Ravi Shankar, but few would be able to go further. If you asked the same question of Africa or South America you would get even less response.

#### *Gender issues*

One gender issue dominates all others: the obvious imbalance in applications to the PGCE course I administered. More than twice as many women applied for places on the PGCE course as men. To be precise, of the total of 43 returns where the gender is recorded, 29 were women and 14 were men, a ratio of just over 2:1 (U indicates the three cases where the gender was unrecorded). In terms of their performance in the quiz the women demonstrated a wider range of marks but the men achieved a slightly higher average score (Figure 8).

The mean raw score for women was 19.8 (56.6%) and for men it was 20.9 (59.8%). The men performed slightly better in the quiz than the women, but, given the relatively low number of male applicants, I do not think we can read too much into these figures. When all the factors are taken into consideration, men and women appear to be performing at broadly similar levels. I am not arguing that significant differences do not exist, but I think a much larger-scale study would be needed to find them.

#### *Control exercises*

I undertook two quasi control exercises in relation to the tests, to assess whether the quiz was a reasonable index of general musical knowledge. First I gave the test to a number of people who were actively interested in music but who were not music graduates. None of these scored below the 70–79% range and a number turned in papers with very few incorrect answers. All thought the quiz a reasonable test of general musical knowledge, though a couple of people commented on the lack of questions on popular music.

Second, I talked about the work I was doing to a friend and colleague who taught in a secondary school. This individual offered to administer the test both to the music staff (some of whom were part-time) and to the Year 12 (16–17-year-old) music students of the school. These students had just taken their Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examination. The school is one with a long and strong musical tradition although it

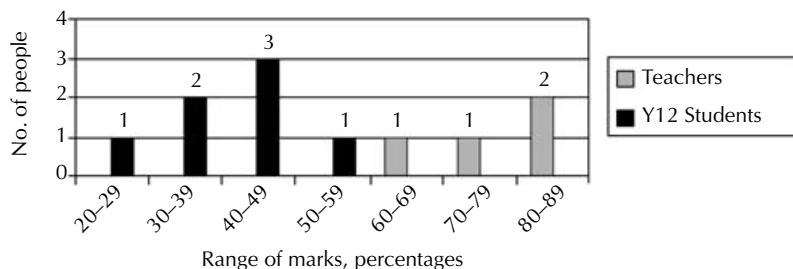


Fig. 9 Results from 4 teachers and 7 Year 12 students

is fully comprehensive in terms of its student intake. The results were most interesting (Figure 9).

Clearly, the teachers outperformed the Year 12 students. Given the low numbers, the student scores look something like a normal distribution and the teachers' scores were all numerically higher than the best student. The individual who gave the test wrote that he/she hoped that 'the learning curve between Y12, your students and "us" [the teachers] is evident'. The results show that education and experience do add value (although as a colleague who read this essay in draft pointed out, the results do not show whether education or experience is the key factor or what is the ratio between them). The gap between the best performing student and the worst performing teacher was a raw score of 6 marks (17%), the teachers managing an average of 27.25 (out of 35) and the students averaging 13.86. In raw scores teachers' marks were in the range 24–30 and students' in the range 10–18. The PGCE applicants' scores were in the range 8–29 with an average of 19.85. The best PGCE applicants were on a par with the teachers; the worst PGCE applicant (who became a graduate) scored less than the worst Year 12 student.

The score ranges and averages of different groups taking the quiz are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

	7 Year 12 students	46 PGCE applicants	4 secondary school teachers
Range of marks (raw scores, marks out of 35)	10–18	8–29	24–30
Arithmetic mean	13.85	19.85	27.25

These results are both interesting in themselves and point to the validity of the quiz as a guide to musical experience and knowledge. It is also worth noting that none of the teachers scored as well as two of the best non-music graduates, who achieved scores of 31 and 33, nor as well as one of my university colleagues who achieved the only perfect result in the research.

A recent publication reported in respect of trainee teachers that

while the quality of trainee is considered by Ofsted to be 'better than it has ever been' – with up to a third being mature students [i.e. 26 years and over] – many still come to a teacher training course with significant gaps in their knowledge, such as composing, lack of knowledge of contemporary repertoire and genres, and using music technology. (Youth Music, 2002: 31 (Appendices))

This is an interesting and corroborative observation, but I do not think it gets to the root of the problem. As I shall show, there is no imperative to make universities and other higher education (HE) institutions ensure that 'gaps' in graduates' knowledge are filled, and many HE music departments would not recognise these as 'gaps' in their provision.

### **Subject knowledge and the new Benchmark Statement**

The quiz was administered between the autumn of 1999 and the summer of 2001, so before the issue of the new Benchmark Statement in 2002 by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). This Benchmark Statement, which will remain in force until 2005, sets a basic framework for the requirements of first degrees (honours degrees) in music (QAA, 2002). In many ways the document represents a sort of codification and rationalisation of the diverse provision for music first degrees in UK higher education and therefore relates to the situation prevailing between 1999 and 2001.

The QAA document is a very interesting one. At times it is rightly inspirational about the subject of music: 'To take a degree in music is to explore an inexhaustibly rich field of study, at once challenging and enthralling' (ibid.: 3). The document acknowledges 'the variety of programmes on offer' and the increasing diversity of provision (ibid.: 5). 'Many specific areas of study can contribute to an award in music, generally in combination, but no area(s) of study can be said to constitute a core' (ibid.: 5,6).

The document goes out of its way to emphasise the diversity of university music provision:

This statement does not define or imply a common curriculum for music. Indeed the diversity of provision means that standards can only be measured against the learning outcomes of individual programmes. Also, because some degree programmes are specialist in nature, the standards expected at each HE level will not be common across the sector. (ibid.: 12)

In addition:

There is not a core area of study in music because the repertoires and practices that form the focus of programmes of study are so numerous and disparate. (ibid.: 12)

The feeling one derives from the document is of a subject that has procedures, characteristic approaches, traditions of scholarship, but does not have a fixed object of study. Here it might be the Western classics, there jazz, over there the sort of music that would be played at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, yet here tribal music from the Papua New Guinea hills.

The problem is that the National Curriculum for Teacher Training requires that teachers 'have a secure knowledge and understanding of the concepts and skills in their specialist subject(s) at a standard equivalent to degree level' (TTA, 1998). It seems to me that this requirement is premised on the idea that there is a definable subject knowledge. There is a problem here. We note the reference to 'degree level' but we know that degree level in music can refer to a considerable number of different areas of learning with no common body of knowledge. As the Benchmark Statement says, in music the 'standards can only be measured against the learning outcomes of individual programmes'; music is a subject in which 'no area(s) of study can be said to constitute a core' (QAA, 2002: 5, 6). The TTA and the QAA would seem to be at odds, and trainee teachers, teachers and teacher trainers are left to muddle through as best they can.

If the first degree will not equip potential teachers with the subject knowledge they require and the means to access what they do not have, then the pressure is on that ridiculously overcrowded and increasingly burdened PGCE course to fill this role. Impossibility and failure would seem to be built into the system.

I think the National Curriculum for Teacher Training builds castles in the air whereas the Subject Benchmark Statement reflects reality: its makers have created an honest document by the approach they have taken. In many ways the subject has undergone and is still undergoing a decentring: the academic study of music contains the fragmented products of dispersed discourses.

One interesting thing that appears to be happening is a sort of relativisation of the different aspects of music as an academic discipline as practitioners of established forms of musical/intellectual practice become increasingly conscious that the methods they use and the musical cultures they espouse are but some among many. This is an uneven and unequal development and it may well be that in many cases a greater fuss is made than is justified by the actual changes in curricula. (I have derived some of the ideas above and in what follows from the writings of Bakhtin: see Bakhtin, 1981; Todorov, 1984.)

There are plenty of people around who feel that Western art music should maintain its central position in musical study. Such people would probably concur with Kerman's view that 'Western music is just too different' from that of the rest of the world. It is this difference (which is perceived as degrees of subtlety and complexity) that becomes the reason (or at least implicit reason) for Western art music maintaining the privileged and hegemonic place it has occupied (Kerman, 1985: 174; Nettl, 1995: 101). Nevertheless, a move towards greater inclusiveness, greater openness, indeed greater open-mindedness is developing, certainly in the English-speaking world and I suspect elsewhere. The cynical might say that some of this movement is in response to market forces, but I think this is only one of a variety of causes. Indeed, a number of 'popular music' courses I have looked at are less diverse and less inclusive than some older established courses which take Western art music as their central focus, so change is no guarantee of progress.

In many ways the practitioners of the dispersed discourses that constitute the study of music do not always understand each other: when they talk their meanings can often fly past each other, if they talk at all. Different agendas, priorities and focuses jostle each other with much mutual incomprehension and not a small amount of mutual suspicion.

Music appears to be undergoing the sort of process that the study of literature experienced a couple of decades ago. With the breakdown of the idea of the validity

of the canon and the demise of 'grand narratives', the knowledge content of many subjects is now thrown wide open. The acknowledgement that previous 'knowledge regimes' – in fact all 'knowledge regimes' – are arbitrary in their basis (they include and they exclude, they celebrate and they ignore) is important. Traditional centres of authority and meaning (privileged by Enlightenment metanarratives such as the idea of progress) have crumbled (Lyotard, 1984: *passim*).

Yet when the excitement and euphoria of those who welcome the postmodern world have to some extent settled, without common objects of study the potential for interaction and shared understanding diminishes. Do we just accept that this is the state of knowledge?

The powerful intellectual movements that have led to the present crisis are, I believe, irresistible. The old certainties have crumbled and it is important that we make space for different approaches and previously ignored aspects of the subject. I have long championed, through my research and my musical activities, forms of music that were once considered generally to fall outside the sort of thing studied in higher education. The opening up of the subject I welcome wholeheartedly. The academic study of music should be able to take as objects of investigation the numerous and diverse manifestations of what Christopher Small has usefully and provocatively called 'musicking' (Small, 1998: *passim*).

The widening of the subject does not mean, however, that we dispense with inherited systems of classification, although we may have to modify or even replace those that have outlived their usefulness. Human beings seem to be innate classifiers, categorisers, makers of genres and distinctions between things. Without categories the world is impossible to cope with. Our brains seem naturally wired to engage in model building and model fitting (Douglas, 1966). The models we build can serve our purposes for better or worse – appreciation of beauty and racism are both the result of creating systems of classification and model building. Through categories we engage with and appropriate 'reality'. The widening of music as a study is not to do with abolishing categories, it is to do with rethinking them and redrawing the boundaries.

There is another interesting and related argument. If one does not know a system of classification, how can one engage with it and criticise it? How can one argue with ideas of periodisation if one does not know how the periods of Western music are generally thought about? It is only through culture that we can begin to understand culture. To admit the arbitrariness (in the Saussurean sense) or conventionality at the basis of our category-making is not the same as saying that categories are dispensable.

The logic of this is that students need to develop relational understanding, to encounter and engage with the common categories of understanding before they can develop a more personal perspective on the world. In brief, they need to understand something of the notions of canon and periodisation, both as they have come down to us and as objects for critical discussion.

In this paper I have shown that aspects of the subject general knowledge of secondary music PGCE applicants (and by extension music graduates generally) seem to be worryingly inadequate. I think this is a problem not because of differences in provision in music degree courses but because of the demands of the National Curriculum. I also feel we should be producing graduates who have an enthusiasm for knowing about their subject. I think this leaves us with some important questions:

- Where and how can general musical knowledge best be developed?
- Are the expectations placed upon the Secondary Music PGCE realistic in view of the actual state of applicants' subject general knowledge?
- Should music degrees be broadened or do we need to think of approaches that encourage students to acquire a broader general musical knowledge at school without sacrificing the gains of a more practically based music education?

I have pushed this discussion in a particular and what some might consider an obscure direction. It is not at all unreasonable that we should expect music graduates to have a good general knowledge of the subject they have graduated in, whether they are going into teaching or embarking on other careers. We might, however, have some lively discussions over what exactly constitutes a good musical general knowledge and how it can be developed.

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### Appendix: PGCE Interview Music Quiz – answers and scores

The number of correct answers out of 46 is given, as is a rounded percentage for that figure. The mean score for each section is given in each case after question 5, and is also expressed as a percentage of the number of possible correct answers.

A. From which countries did the following composers originate?

1. Villa-Lobos . . . . . *Brazil* . . . . . 7 (15%)
2. Bizet . . . . . *France* . . . . . 35 (76%)
3. O'Carolan . . . . . *Ireland* . . . . . 23 (50%)
4. W. C. Handy . . . . . *USA* . . . . . 12 (26%)
5. Grieg . . . . . *Norway* . . . . . 22 (48%)

*Mean score out of five: 2.15*

*Percentage of correct answers: 43%*

B. With which places would you associate the following styles of music?

1. Cajun . . . . . *Louisiana (USA)* . . . . . 11 (24%)
2. Sean nós . . . . . *Ireland* . . . . . 3 (7%)
3. Fado . . . . . *Portugal* . . . . . 3 (7%)
4. Tango . . . . . *Argentina* . . . . . 15 (33%)
5. Township jive . . . . . *South Africa* . . . . . 15 (33%)

*Mean score out of five: 1.02*

*Percentage of correct answers: 20%*

C. Who composed the following?

1. Rhapsody in Blue . . . . . *Gershwin* . . . . . 41 (89%)
2. Finlandia . . . . . *Sibelius* . . . . . 23 (50%)
3. St Matthew Passion . . . . . *Bach (or alternative)* . . . . . 33 (72%)
4. Dido and Aeneas . . . . . *Purcell* . . . . . 30 (65%)
5. Different Trains . . . . . *Reich* . . . . . 6 (13%)

*Mean score out of five: 2.89*

*Percentage of correct answers: 58%*

D. If the following instruments play the note they read as C, what note would actually sound?

1. Clarinet . . . . . *Bb* . . . . . 39 (85%)
2. Alto saxophone . . . . . *Eb* . . . . . 31 (67%)
3. Horn in F . . . . . *F* . . . . . 37 (80%)



4. Trumpet ..... *Bb* ..... 37 (80%)
5. Oboe ..... *C* ..... 36 (78%)

Mean score out of five: 3.91

Percentage of correct answers: 78%

E. With which countries or regions would you associate the following instruments?

1. Balalaika ..... *Russia* ..... 17 (37%)
2. Sitar ..... *India* ..... 43 (93%)
3. Shakuhachi ..... *Japan* ..... 21 (46%)
4. Kora ..... *West Africa* ..... 6 (13%)
5. Cymbalom ..... *Hungary* ..... 3 (7%)

Mean score out of five: 1.96

Percentage of correct answers: 39%

F. Into which periods/styles of music (medieval, renaissance, etc.) would you place the following composers?

1. Telemann ..... *Baroque* ..... 33 (72%)
2. Ellington ..... *Jazz (twentieth century)* ..... 44 (96%)
3. Liszt ..... *Romantic* ..... 40 (87%)
4. Hildegard of Bingen ..... *Medieval* ..... 21 (46%)
5. Haydn ..... *Classical* ..... 42 (91%)

Mean score out of five: 3.91

Percentage of correct answers: 78%

G. To which family or type do the following instruments belong?

1. Cornet ..... *Brass* ..... 46 (100%)
2. Cor anglais ..... *Woodwind* ..... 40 (87%)
3. Synthesiser ..... *Electronic* ..... 31 (67%)
4. Clarinet ..... *Woodwind* ..... 46 (100%)
5. Cittern ..... *String (lute or guitar family, etc.)* ..... 26 (57%)

Mean score out of five: 4.11

Percentage of correct answers: 82%