

Roots and routes in adult musical participation: investigating the impact of home and school on lifelong musical interest and involvement

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This paper analyses a collection of musical life histories, drawn from 71 British respondents who have maintained a lifelong interest in music as regular concert-goers, amateur performers and/or music educators. These respondents reflect on the influences and opportunities which have contributed to their lifelong engagement in music, and in doing so illustrate the impact of changes in British music education and culture over the last 50 years. Particular analytical focus is placed here on the relative influence of home and school, on the ideal characteristics of each environment, and the relationship between them. The value of a long-term perspective on music education is debated, and conclusions drawn about the challenges to teachers and researchers that are evident from this study.

Academic researchers, classroom practitioners, and sometimes even politicians have contributed over many years to an array of ambitious and varied claims for music in schools:

Music can be magic. It calls for and calls forth all human virtues: imagination, discipline, teamwork, determination. It enriches and inspires.

(Music Manifesto, 2005)

... artistic creativity has an important role to play in education, strengthening awareness of the totality of our global community and of the range of relationships we have with it. The arts do not have a monopoly of creativity, but palpably they stand for an innovative view of the world. Their processes of thinking and making highlight elements of risk and challenge which are likely to be of importance to future generations.

(Paynter, 1992: 11)

... the study of the relations between music and the nervous system of the child, though yet in its infancy, gives cause for hope that it may play a part as a curative agency for maladjusted lives. (Winn, 1954: 1)

While the emphasis may change between authors and across decades, the cumulative message is familiar: when taught well and sufficiently supported, music offers all children the chance for expression, insight and development, and so has lasting effects on their

engagement with the world. But amongst all these hopes and aims for music education, relatively little research effort has been focused on investigating the lived experience of these claims: what exactly *has* music education done, or been perceived to do, for those people going through mainstream music education in Britain? This article begins to address that omission by analysing retrospective accounts of early musical influences, considering in particular the balance between home and school as sources of encouragement, opportunity and musical identity formation for young people.

Understanding musical life histories

Stories of exceptional musical lives are relatively familiar from academic and popular literature: composers' childhoods, with their evidence of early musical genius, were themselves a staple of music history and appreciation lessons in earlier decades, and have been the subject of films and novels more recently. Biographical research with high-achieving instrumentalists has also considered the formative influences on musical success, emphasising the early start and diligent effort required to accumulate the 10,000 hours of practice needed if professional levels of expertise are to be reached (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993). For those with ambitions for a classical performing career, childhood is crucial for acquiring the skills, discipline and determination to succeed, and Maria Manturzewksa states clearly that the absence of live music at an early age may have a severely limiting effect on later achievement:

The musician who made his or her first contact with music after the age of nine may reach the status of the professional musician, even a good one at that, but he or she will probably never attain full ease and naturalness of musical performance. The emotional costs of public performance will always be relatively high [...] Stagefright and emotional insecurity never leave them. (Manturzewska, 1993: 133)

Manturzewska identifies many other obstacles to professional success, and although her adherence to age-related 'critical periods' of learning now seems somewhat inflexible, her strong belief in the power of the instrumental teacher's personality and expertise is convincing. While Gary McPherson (2009) endorses the importance of good teacher–pupil relationships, he notes too that parents are strongly influential in shaping the 'emotional climate' in which a child acquires musical skill, ideally creating 'a loving, supportive atmosphere where high but realistic aspirations are encouraged' (p. 101). Parental expertise in music is not a necessary precursor to a child's success (Sloboda & Howe, 1991): more important is the provision of an environment in which music is an integral part of home life, evident in singing around the home, frequent listening to recorded music and attendance at concerts (Howe *et al.*, 1995). As aspiring young musicians enter adolescence, significant adults contribute to self-belief by affirming or rejecting the emerging 'musician identity' which will help to sustain continued musical effort and interest (Davidson & Burland, 2006: 478).

Music education is concerned not only with identifying and supporting exceptional performers, but also with providing all children with access to musical opportunities. Much less is known about the foundations of 'ordinary' musical lives, and the role of school music within those lives (a topic notably absent from the biographical reports of

the high achievers discussed so far). Helen Gavin's study of adult expertise and musical memories is one of the few to include a 'non-musician' group, whom she found differed from 'musicians' in their more negative attitudes to school music, and in the extent of their early involvement in music-making – 'the majority of the musical group describing memories of active participation, and the non-musical group expressing enjoyment, but passively' (Gavin, 2001: 56). However, one of the professional musicians amongst Gavin's participants offers a useful reminder that the provision of opportunity is not necessarily a predictor of continued involvement or achievement: '[My parents] bought me a flute when I asked, so I suppose that set me off to where I am today, but they also bought me a bike, and I'm not in the Tour de France' (Gavin, 2001: 57).

John Holt, the influential writer on educational psychology, challenges the prevalent view that foundations for musical involvement must be laid in childhood, stating that 'musical people are particularly prone to talk this way' (Holt, 1978: 4). Recounting his musical life story, he gives limited coverage to his school years – 'Did we sing? I suppose so but I forget what' (p. 34) – focusing instead on his membership of the Glee Choir at school, a subsequent failure to get into the equivalent choir at college, and the seeking out of new learning opportunities as an adult, including playing the 'cello and participating in orchestras. Holt's account demonstrates that tracing a line of musical influence through a life story is necessarily a subjective process, involving a degree of selectivity as past events are understood in relation to their longer term consequences. Research in autobiographical memory offers the framework of 'redemption' stories, where difficult experiences have a 'positive life impact', and 'contamination' stories, where outcomes are remembered negatively: 'individual differences in the ways in which people tell their life stories reflect both differences in the objective past and differences in the styles and manners in which people choose to make narrative sense of life' (McAdams *et al.*, 2001: 484). One such illustration from the literature has a musical flavour pertinent to this study:

[A] child who is sharply criticized by a music teacher or sports coach can attach several possible beliefs to this event. Subsequent discussions with a sympathetic parent (or therapist) will help to frame the child's perspective. The offending adult may be cast as villain. The child may be encouraged to pursue other activities in which success is more likely. Or the parent may offer an interpretation that reframes the painful interaction as beneficial and even inspirational: criticism actually demonstrates the coach's or teacher's attention, interest, and a belief that the child has strong potential for improvement. (Pillemer, 2001: 131)

Even amongst well-meaning teachers, who habitually avoid such sharp criticism, the effects of a teacher's personality and behaviour upon his or her pupils can be unpredictable. Tom Barone (2001) presents a longitudinal case study of Donald Forrister, a high school art teacher in North Carolina, using interviews with the teacher and his former pupils to gauge the long-term impact of Forrister's charismatic teaching approaches. In 'a book that is meant to disturb and puzzle' (p. 2), Forrister is shown to be an inspiring teacher, credited with improving job prospects and artistic horizons amongst the socially deprived school community in which he worked. And yet Forrister's championing of particularly responsive pupils is shown to have negative effects on those who are excluded from that inner circle, and concern is expressed too about the extent to which the pupils were dependent on

Table 1 Age distribution of participants

Age range	Number of respondents	Source (see codes below)			
		BBC	MT	ISM	www
19–25	6	1	1	0	4
26–35	9	0	0	0	9
36–45	7	0	3	1	3
46–55	15	7	2	1	5
56–65	21	3	6	6	6
66–75	8	5	2	1	0
75+	5	2	1	1	1

Source codes: BBC = British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Music Magazine; MT = Music Teacher magazine; ISM = Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) Journal; www = University of Sheffield website survey.

Forrister for their sense of self-worth. Forrister himself reflects with anxiety on his choices as a teacher: who to encourage, how to share out insufficient resources, how to use his finite energy, how to shape his students' ambitions and attitudes? Barone holds that such concerns should be at the heart of the educational debate: 'then what often is – narrow and shortsighted notions of educational outcomes – will indeed have become closer to what should be – teachers and schools dedicated to the endurance of the cognitive, the ethical, the aesthetic, and the useful, within lives that stretch out far beyond graduation day' (Barone, 2001: 180). Music educators and researchers are well placed to contribute to such a debate, and to defining more clearly the lifelong purposes of a truly comprehensive curriculum.

Methods of data collection and analysis

This project aimed to collect retrospective accounts of formative musical influences and opportunities from adults who had sustained an active interest in music throughout their lives. Such accounts were loosely termed 'life histories' in my correspondence with participants, but did not follow strictly the methods of life history research, which typically features detailed, multiple interviews with a small number of participants (see Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Here, narratives were sought from a broad range of participants, aiming for an exploratory overview of trends in music education experience, as well as individual accounts of formative events and influences. To aid the collection and analysis of a relatively large data set, written responses were used in preference to interviews, and many of these were detailed and extensive.

Responses were received from 71 British participants between March and July 2007, distributed by age as shown in Table 1. Participants were recruited through letters and articles published in professional magazines: *Music Teacher*, which has an audience of classroom teachers, the *Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) Music Journal*, read mainly by instrumental teachers, and the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Music Magazine*,

which has a wider circulation amongst regular classical music listeners and concert-goers. The survey was also advertised on the University of Sheffield website, attracting responses from current music students, researchers and their friends. These methods of recruitment were effective in targeting a range of age groups and in locating people likely to be active performers, regular listeners or music educators. They were limited in focusing mainly on those working in classical music, a bias which will be balanced by future phases of this study, and which is justified in some measure since so little is currently known about the long-term musical destinations of those who have taken this 'conventional' route through UK music education. The potential for expansion of the life history approach into other fields of lifelong musical activity will be discussed further at the end of this article.

Respondents were asked to provide brief details of their age, musical education and current activities, and then respond to the stimulus questions shown below; some addressed these questions systematically, while others provided a free-form narrative which focused in more or less depth on each area:

1. What kind of music was going on in your home as a child? How influential do you think this was in your development?
2. What are your memories of school music? (These might include people, activities, opportunities)
3. Who has been influential on your musical behaviour at various stages of your life?
4. What have been the highlights of your musical life history so far?
5. Do you have any regrets about missed opportunities in music?

Each response was given an anonymous code (UK1-71), transcribed in full, then broadly categorised into the areas of home, school and adult involvement. As the data set grew, these categories were sub-divided, and the following six fields of influence and opportunity emerged as central to the narratives:

- Home influences and opportunities – including parent/sibling activities and attitudes, extended family, resources in the home, and family cultural activities such as concert-going and church attendance.
- Education influences and opportunities – including primary, secondary and higher education, organised youth ensembles (such as county orchestras), and instrumental lessons.
- Self-directed learning in childhood – self-taught instrumental learning, organising ensembles, composing outside school.
- Adult learning and/or performing – including taking up or resuming instrumental learning, academic study of music, summer schools, membership of ensembles, involvement in church music, making music with friends, and reflecting on skill levels and opportunities.
- Experiences as a parent and/or teacher – learning from own teachers' practice, motivation to provide opportunities for young people, supporting own children.
- Broader social/cultural influences in adulthood – concert-going, recorded music listening, and supporting local musical opportunities.

Table 2 *An example of coded data*

UK16: Aged 60, left school 1962, ABRSM Grade 8 Piano; teaches music in semi-retirement		
Context	Events	
Home influences and opportunities	Parents' musical tastes Resources in the home Family social/cultural network	Father listening Mother listening Radio/gramophone Concert-going as a family
Education influences and opportunities	Primary school Secondary school	Singing in class/choirs Lack of music in school
Influences outside home/school	Performing influences	Hearing inspiring players
Experiences as a parent and/or teacher	Developed views on education Desire to provide opportunities for young people	Views on importance of music education Teaching: class/instrumental

Within these categories, the narratives were coded in more detail to produce individual outlines, showing the influences and events mentioned by each respondent (see example, Table 2). The coded responses were then compiled to give percentage calculations of the most widely reported influences. From these numerical and outline responses, the strongest themes across the 71 responses could be derived, and the qualitative data then re-introduced to shed light on the reported experiences and suggest reasons for the prominence and absence of particular themes.

In coding and interpreting the data, care was taken not to add inferences to the narratives, since the aim was to capture the respondents' interpretation of their life histories, not to impose the researcher's. It could have been inferred, for instance, that those respondents who mentioned having piano lessons also had a piano in the home, but this fact was noted only when it was described as a significant feature of childhood life. The omission of a particular influence – even a potentially substantial one such as listening in the home or primary school education – was not necessarily an indication of its absence in participants' lives, but rather its relative unimportance in the life narrative they were offering for the purposes of the research. Within the broad questions posed to participants, their choices of what to include were as interesting as the detail of their stories, a common feature of reminiscence-based research:

Life stories are based on biographical facts, but they go considerably beyond the facts as people selectively appropriate aspects of their experience and imaginatively construe

both past and future to construct stories that make sense to them and to their audiences, that vivify and integrate life and make it more or less meaningful. (McAdams, 2001: 101)

As part of the data collection, some respondents commented on the process of contributing their life history to the project, reporting the sometimes cathartic insights of their storytelling:

I've really enjoyed writing this. It's Monday, my 'housework' day, so perhaps it's just been an avoidance technique! I have realised how important my family and teachers have been in my life. They are nearly all dead now and I hope they all realised how much they meant. (UK33, aged 56)

I hope some of this is useful to you. I feel better for having written it! I think I sound more bitter and regretful than I actually am – it is only recently that any of this has really occurred to me. (UK37, aged 42)

Relating musical life histories therefore appears to be a purposeful activity for participants, allowing them to make sense of the significant people and events that have contributed to their present engagement in music. The responses have a potential bias, in that they are offered by musically active people, who might be 'predisposed to interpreting their childhood as one full of music and/or longing for music' (Gavin, 2001: 59). However, such interpretations are at the heart of this project, which seeks to determine not just the characteristics of supportive home and effective educational contexts for music, but also the factors which bring them to the forefront of young people's consciousness, such that music becomes a significant part of their lives.

Findings and discussion

The wealth of material generated by the 71 respondents offers many possibilities for analysis and discussion, and here the focus will be on some of the most fundamental questions posed by the data:

- Who is responsible for laying the foundations of musical involvement?
- Where did these participants find opportunity, encouragement and teaching in music?
- How can home and school environments be enriched to provide the best possible musical start for all children?

Strongest musical influences from home and school

An analytical focus on the balance between home and school influences was prompted by an overview of the data, in which the people, events and other factors most often mentioned by respondents were collated into a rank ordering of strongest influences (see Table 3). The percentage figures used in this analysis should be understood as indicating widespread or common influences, rather than being a measure of depth of influence: for this, the qualitative data are necessary, and are integrated in the discussion that follows.

Table 3 shows the considerable influence of the home on these respondents' early musical development, with parental listening, playing and supportive attitudes featuring

Table 3 Rank ordering of home and school influences (% of 71 responses)

Home influences	Rank order	Education influences
	1	Secondary school performing opportunities (51%)
Father listening (42%)	2	
	3	Belonging to secondary school choir (39%)
Radio/gramophone (38%)	4	
	5	Inspiring instrumental teachers (34%)
Parents' support for lessons/ practice (32%)	6	
	7	Singing at primary school (31%)
	8	Inspiring secondary school teachers (30%)
Church attendance/hymn singing (27%)	9	
Mother listening (25%)	10	
Father playing (24%)	11	
Mother playing (24%)	11	
	13	Secondary school class lessons (23%)
	13	Studying for exams in school (23%)
	13	Self-taught instrumental playing (23%)
Siblings playing (21%)	16	
Concert going as a family (21%)	16	
	18	County youth orchestras (20%)

more prominently than any classroom music education. Within school, performing opportunities provide the most lasting memories for participants, and inspiring instrumental and/or secondary school teachers are mentioned by around a third. A strong sense of the importance of practical engagement with music, both at home and school, is evident – and the qualitative data illustrate how often this is associated with sharing the enthusiasms of an influential adult:

Secondary school performing: It was a chance whim on the part of the teacher that I was given a pair of timpani sticks and asked to play a short passage on the drums. By the end of my first year at the school I was timpanist in the school orchestra. (UK29, aged 54)

Father listening: My dad loves popular music and was always getting me to listen to things he thought I should hear because they were great. (UK12, aged 24)

Belonging to choir: The music teacher, Miss Townsend (the only one for 500 girls) was a fearsome lady and from her I learnt the disciplines of choral singing, particularly about watching. (UK43, aged 38)

These respondents make close links between events and people, and it is clear across the collected narratives that receiving encouragement and recognition is vital for children in taking full advantage of musical opportunities. While differing levels of self-confidence were evident in the narratives, almost all respondents acknowledged the presence of an affirming adult in home, school or instrumental lessons – while sometimes lamenting the absence of such a person in one or other of those arenas. In Table 3, instrumental teachers (34%), parents (32%) and secondary school teachers (30%) score closely in their relative importance to respondents – only primary school teachers go without a mention, and can console themselves with the thought that while rarely ‘inspiring’, they were never ‘off-putting’, which was not the case for the other groups of adults.

Comparing home and school influences

A further check of the data was made to ensure that the overview given in Table 3 reflected the responses of a range of participants, not just those who gave the most verbose descriptions and so mentioned the most influences. Respondent numbers in each category were compiled, resulting in three groups: those influenced most strongly by the home environment, those reporting strong school influences, and the overlapping group, who had experienced the dual influence of home and school equally strongly. These three groups were then compared, in order to gain a sense of the characteristics of those home and school environments which had emerged as the most nurturing for respondents (see Table 4, where it should be noted again that the percentage figures are used only to generate the rank orderings that are also provided in each column).

A striking finding from this home/school comparison is that the only factor to feature in all three groups is the ‘inspiring instrumental teacher’, an influential adult who can cross the boundaries between home and educational contexts and so holds a pivotal role in recognising and affirming young people’s developing musical interests and skills. With parents supporting instrumental lessons, and school teachers providing opportunities to use the resultant skills, instrumental teachers bridge the gap between home and school that can otherwise cause young people to feel that their musicianship is going unnoticed. Instrumental teachers can also offer the individual attention and nurturing that seems to be a critical factor in securing musical interest:

My first piano teacher [was] a remarkable performer and person who taught me from age 9 to 18. Without her, I doubt I would have gone on to a career in music (not just due to skills she taught, but also to her passion for music). (UK4, aged 30)

My viola teacher [...] was probably the most influential person, although he only taught me for one year. He motivated me to want to practise, and included in his teaching far more than just the technical aspects of playing. (UK9, aged 28)

The piano teacher I had at school was quite terrifying, but she seemed to think we had a special bond because her surname was the same as mine. So she was not as nasty to

Table 4 Comparison of strongest influences across three groups

Home-influenced group (11 responses)	School/home-influenced group (7 responses)	School-influenced group (14 responses)
1 = Mother playing (73%) 1 = Support for lessons/ practice (73%)	1 = Secondary school performing opportunities (86%)	1 = Secondary school performing opportunities (64%)
2 = Instruments in the home lessons/(55%)	1 = Belonging to secondary school choir (86%)	2 = Father listening (50%) 2 = Inspiring instrumental teachers (50%)
2 = Radio/gramophone (55%)	2 = Radio/gramophone (71%)	2 = Singing in primary school (50%)
2 = Inspiring instrumental teachers (55%)	2 = Concert-going as a family (71%)	2 = Belonging to secondary school choir (50%)
3 = Father listening (45%)	2 = Inspiring instrumental teacher (71%)	2 = Studying for exams in school (50%)
3 = Mother listening (45%)	2 = Singing in primary school (71%)	2 = Inspiring secondary school teachers (50%)
3 = Father playing (45%)	2 = Singing in choirs as an adult (71%)	3 = Parents' support for lessons/ practice (43%)

me as she was to the other girls. And she did encourage me by making me feel special.
(UK26, aged 52)

These examples illustrate the importance of the pupil–teacher relationship in forming a lasting commitment to playing and practice: while not all of these respondents liked their teachers (and amongst those who characterised their teacher as ‘off-putting’ there were much worse descriptions of studio practice!), all felt a connection with them, and were consequently motivated and inspired. Similar relationships were sometimes reported with secondary school music teachers – the larger number of pupils involved making this personal connection a rarer event, but all the more special when it did occur. And inevitably the converse stories also emerged, with off-putting teachers causing pupils to doubt their abilities, or to lose the will to invest in and improve their playing.

The ‘ideal home’

Returning to the three groups identified in Table 4, discussion of each column in turn will give a sense of the ‘ideal’ environments as drawn from the composite accounts of the 71 respondents. In column one, the eleven respondents who were most strongly influenced by the home offer a picture of a well-resourced household, in which musical instruments, the radio and gramophone featured prominently in daily life. Parents acted as role models through their own enjoyment of listening and playing, and provided financial and moral support for the child’s instrumental lessons and practice. Into this supportive environment,

the influence of instrumental teachers fitted neatly as an extra source of motivation and guidance for the child. Notably, there is no mention at all of school music: supportive homes, it seems, can nurture musical interest without the influence of school (while a quick glance at column three shows that the reverse is not the case). Respondents in this group range in age between 30 and 81 (average age 60.36); eight of the eleven were or had been music teachers, including the 81-year-old who at the time of writing still led a music appreciation group and taught piano, and who described his early influences as follows:

My parents: father, tone deaf (!); mother played piano (popular classical), had scarce resources with six children to care for, but chose wisely – and sacrificially – to engage two of us in music lessons from a highly qualified teacher. My sister ‘fell by the wayside’ but I was ‘hooked’, and was forever on the piano at home. (I learnt sight-reading simply through hours and hours at my music.) (UK39, aged 81)

This example shows that parents’ attitudes are potentially more important than their skills – and also that the provision of opportunities is no guarantee of success, the key difference between this man and his sister being the time and interest that he invested in making progress on the piano. Another respondent from this group described the differing influences of his parents as follows:

Each of my parents fitted into the two different definitions of the word ‘musical’ given in most dictionaries: ‘fond of’, and ‘skilled in’ music. Of the two, my mother had a more acute ear and greater natural ability as an executant. My father was a rather ham-fisted piano player, yet of my parents, it was my father who, it seemed, loved music more. My mother had a ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ attitude to music; she never worked at developing her natural musical talent and her tastes tended to gravitate to a limited range of ‘classical’ pieces. It was my father who, to me, seemed really passionate about music and who was also intellectually fascinated by musical ideas. (UK47, aged 62)

These two role models, each demonstrating their love of music in different ways, offered this respondent the chance to make sense of his own musical development by comparing himself to his parents, concluding that he ‘was fortunate to inherit [his] mother’s musical genes’, yet that his father ‘was culturally the greater influence [. . .]: from him, I learnt to look for musicality in the most unexpected of places, to keep an open mind and an open ear and not to take received opinion on trust’ [UK47]. Parents who are still exploring their own musical interests seem to be of high value in encouraging their children on that journey too, and enthusiasm can readily compensate for ‘ham-fisted piano playing’ in presenting a positive image of the benefits of being involved in music.

The ‘ideal school’

Turning to the school-influenced group (column 3 of Table 4), the ‘ideal school’ is revealed to be one in which performing opportunities are plentiful, teachers are inspiring, and singing is a prominent feature of both primary and secondary education. This group of respondents were younger than the home-influenced group, ranging between 19 and 65, with an average age of 43.2. Five were university students, another three were having instrumental

lessons, and several amongst the group had taken music degrees as mature students, suggesting that seeking out lifelong education in music was important across this group:

Took piano lessons as an adult – eventually able to embark on degree course at local new university – achieved first class. Still suffer technical problems but getting on with it. (UK62, aged 50)

Like this participant, some of the school-influenced group had reached adulthood feeling that they had underdeveloped musical skills, but with the determination to remedy those deficiencies by seeking further instruction and opportunity. Their reports of school music were not necessarily glowing, sometimes including an inspirational teacher to whom they had had limited access, or a sense of opportunities missed because of academic or family pressures:

[One] teacher saw an ability in me right from the start and always went out of her way to encourage and nurture that ability through introducing me to playing the violin and later the viola alongside my piano playing. [...] Sadly for me, this teacher left the school as I was about to embark on my O-Level course and her replacement was not well qualified or very competent. (UK3, aged 52)

The sense of having an ability or interest recognised and nurtured by a respected adult runs throughout the life history narratives, and in this group such a person is most likely to be located within school. Whilst the respondent above shows a certain self-confidence in her reference to 'an ability within me', she acknowledges the need for a mentor to affirm that ability and bring it to fruition. Others in the school-influenced group described their teachers as 'patient and influential' [UK2], 'a role model for my musical aspirations' [UK62] and a 'key influence' [UK63]. While they share with the school/home group (column two of Table 4) a strong sense of the value of performing opportunities in school, this group identifies more closely with its teachers, and with their role in the classroom as well as in extra-curricular activities. By studying for exams in music, and being actively involved in school performances, these respondents identified themselves as musicians at an early age, and experienced the encouragement and opportunities needed to take that interest further.

School/home influence – the real ideal?

Respondents who were strongly influenced by home *and* school (column 2 of Table 4), might be thought of as the most fortunate of the sample, combining parental encouragement and home resources with opportunities and recognition from teachers. They are notably few in number, and although a combination of home and school influences is found throughout the sample, these seven respondents were unusual in the equally positive emphasis placed on both contexts. Their experience, however, has some distinctive features: while performing, singing and radio listening are activities common to the other groups in Table 4, this school/home influenced group is the only one to mention concert-going as a family. This activity, like the instrumental lesson, crosses the boundary of home and school, broadening the opportunities available to the child and showing musical activity and learning to be valued similarly in both contexts. The strong influence of both home and school reported by these respondents might be in part a consequence of this

overlap of activities, whereby school music is congruent with that experienced in the home, and parents' support and interests complement those of classroom and instrumental teachers. Several of this group report changing schools and experiencing a variable music education: in such cases, parents had been crucial in keeping open the possibility of musical engagement when school circumstances were less than favourable, allowing for fluctuations in interest and involvement throughout the teenage years.

The school/home group is the only one for whom adult involvement in music-making was one of the highest ranking factors, showing a clear lineage from singing in primary school, through secondary school choir, to singing in choirs as an adult. For several respondents, this interest in singing was linked to involvement in church music, again reflecting a forum for musical learning that is usually family-centred while being compatible with school music activities. Progress through church and cathedral choirs had been a source of recognition for young singers, bringing respondents into contact with particular repertoire and with adults who were committed to high standards of music making:

[The] assistant organist at Bristol Cathedral realised I was a singer, so encouraged me to join the girls' choir at the cathedral – that has had a massive impact on my musical development, as I am now interested in (sacred) choral music above all else. The choir master at the cathedral was very influential in my training, enjoyment and appreciation of the same music. (UK1, aged 19)

As the youngest respondent in this group (range 19–69; average age 52), this 19-year-old skews the trend for such church influence to be a thing of the past: reports of hymn singing in assembly, church attendance with the family and a subsequent exposure to singing and choral training were more prevalent amongst older respondents, some of whom expressed regret at the reduced place of collective singing in contemporary school life. Certainly the prevalence of singing in this school/home influenced group suggests that choral involvement was for these participants an activity in which skills and interests were readily transferable between home, school and wider social settings. Changes to family life, school music provision and the plurality of musical culture for today's pupils perhaps mean that such connections can no longer be relied upon, but need to be actively cultivated by all those interested in young people's musical development.

Balancing home and school influences

The three groups discussed here are those who reported particularly strong influences in home, school or both, so illustrating the qualities in those environments which have had the most lasting significance. Their experiences, and those reported in the wider sample of 71 life histories, show that the separation of home and school influences is difficult to achieve, even with hindsight: influential teachers need the support of parents, while opportunities within the home require recognition and nurturing by other significant adults. The responsibility for musical learning is held jointly, and compatibility between home and school musical lives had been important to many respondents. Where influence was attributed to one or other source, this was often accompanied by a sense of blame or struggle:

My parents had the best of intentions, and would have done just about anything for me, but had no idea how talented I was and also had no idea that music colleges had junior departments. I now know I could have gone. The school knew though, and didn't do anything about it, and I feel slightly resentful about that. (UK37, aged 42)

Most of my encouragement came from teachers rather than my parents, although my mother supported me by financing my first violin [...] paying the princely sum of 50p per week (money was very tight). I lived in a house where praise and encouragement were in very short supply. My interest in music was regarded as being slightly odd but I believe it was my destiny and that I would have (and did) overcome any hurdle that was put in my way. (UK38, aged 42)

In both of these examples, parents were a necessary source of financial support, but the attitudes of teachers are seen to have had a greater influence, through the withholding of advice in the first example, and the provision of encouragement in the second. Teachers can offer the necessary expertise and recognition that, even if parents' musical skills mean that it is available in the home, perhaps has the greatest impact when it comes from an adult outside the family. But parents do much more than provide funding and facilities: they too were recognised in many narratives as a stimulus for musical interest, and a source of patient encouragement, particularly when motivation was temporarily waning. The clash of musical cultures and priorities evident in the examples above show that children can struggle when their teachers and parents have conflicting aims for their musical development – though a determination to succeed despite this is evident in both cases, and can be another source of motivation in itself.

Conclusions and implications

These musical life stories offer challenge and comfort to music educators in equal measure. Music teachers have the potential to be influential mentors who recognise and affirm the developing interests of their students, nourishing a sense of musical identity and providing opportunities for the acquisition of skills and the growth of confidence. They are remembered fondly where their own passion for music was evident, spreading enthusiasm and offering a role model for aspiring musicians. At their best, they are inspiring, nurturing and apparently tireless. These are considerable demands for any teacher: the comfort comes not only in the evidence that such challenges have been achieved by many of the teachers in this study, but also in the knowledge that the teacher's responsibility for musical development is a shared one, taking its place amongst a network of supportive parents, wider cultural opportunities, and the motivation and receptiveness of students themselves. Musical interest can be sustained even when school circumstances are less than ideal: with that as a starting point, the 'added value' to a school of an enthusiastic music teacher and a flourishing musical community is limitless.

It is rare to have the opportunity to examine the long-term consequences of music education: teachers are mainly (and rightly) concerned with the immediate effects of their school music provision, and to consider the lifelong implications of every lesson or conversation could have a paralysing effect. However, the analysis here has shown how values and attitudes are communicated to pupils through teachers' behaviour, and

are formed as much outside the classroom as within it (cf. Pitts, 2008). A teacher's level of ambition for their pupils might be unwittingly demonstrated through classroom expectations, access to ensembles, and advice on higher education and musical careers: the teacher's day-to-day decisions are a witness to beliefs about models of success and opportunity, and have the potential to make music central or peripheral to the lives of their students. This is a powerful responsibility indeed, and means that teachers need to have considered the long-term implications of the provision they make for their pupils (cf. Barone, 2001).

It was noted earlier that the range of musical life histories represented in this study was limited by the recruitment of participants through print media addressed largely to a conventionally educated, classical music audience. Recent writing on informal learning in music has shown that there are many other routes to lifelong involvement – indeed Lucy Green asserts that teenagers involved in popular music independently of school are more likely to continue those activities into adulthood (Green, 2002: 56), perhaps because they have always taken responsibility for their own learning rather than being reliant on a teacher. Likewise, the notable absence of peer influences and role models amongst the sample here would be different for young musicians working together as singer-songwriters, and it would be interesting to find out how long those connections typically continue into adulthood, and to consider their indirect effects in terms of musical identity and self-efficacy. There is clearly much more to be understood about the ways in which adults come to use and value music (cf. Pitts, 2005; DeNora, 2000), and further analysis is needed of the ways in which education, in its varied and changing forms, has contributed to the musical lives of a wider sample of adults.

Even within the limits of this exploratory study, it is evident that the consequences of musical education cannot be reliably predicted: disappointing instrumental lessons as a child will motivate some adults to redress this through tuition decades later, while others will conclude that performance is not for them. Likewise, much of the influence on young people lies beyond teachers' control, as parental attitudes, home environment, and cultural consumption shape young people's musical lives in complex and unpredictable ways. While there is no reliable formula for effective musical education to be drawn from these varied reminiscences, there is certainly evidence that the music educator's work is highly valued, strongly influential and of lasting importance.

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