

Instrumental and Vocal Teaching

Summary Report

Michaelmas term 2003

Overview

Instrumental and Vocal Teaching is a long-term research project, combining research, staff development and curriculum design within performance-oriented studies in the Music Department of Canterbury Christ Church University College. During 2002-3 it has enjoyed the support of a generous grant from the LTSN through PALATINE, which has enabled the development and dissemination of a range of research findings.

At the heart of the project has been the analysis of video evidence of instrumental teaching in the department, supported by the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with students and staff. The collected data includes 67 individual and 10 group lessons on film; 36 recorded interviews and questionnaires administered to 36 participants. The most fruitful analysis to date has been based on the study of transcribed lesson dialogue, in terms of the balance among areas of study and of the student contribution to the learning process.

Early hypotheses were confirmed when areas of study, as defined by MANA (1995) were found to be dominated by Technique, and contributions to lesson dialogue to be dominated by the teacher. The further examination of relationships among these and other trends gave rise to some interesting and provocative findings. For instance, there proved to be a clear inverse relationship between the proportion of dialogue devoted to technique, and student achievement; conversely, the most successful students were found to have the highest proportions of lesson dialogue devoted to Interpretation. The balance among areas of study was also related to student age, year of study, and proximity of each lesson to performance examinations. Further trends related to the gender of both teachers and students were also noted.

Similarly, and significantly, a clear relationship was found between student achievement and student participation: the most successful students were the highest contributors to lesson dialogue. Factors such as age, year of study, and gender were again found to have clear relationships to the proportion of student contribution, suggesting that low contributors could and should be identified and supported appropriately in their acquisition of learning skills.

The approach by teachers to Interpretation as an area of study was closely examined as a separate issue. Lesson dialogue devoted to Interpretation was systematically analysed, and divided into clear categories which involved the appeal, in various ways, to either intellect or the imagination of the student. The balances among these were strikingly related to gender issues, and to the nature of the various instrumental families, within or outside the Conservatoire tradition. Approaches through all possible categories were found to be used effectively, but the trends noted often seemed to tie them to prior expectations and circumstances rather than the needs of individual students. One particular teacher was found to be moving freely from one approach to another to employ a different balance for each student, suggesting an interesting model of good practice.

The use of questions in lesson dialogue has also been closely studied, with the balance among various qualities noted. The categories here were student questions; instructions put to the student in the form or disguise of questions; rhetoric; interrogation; and exploratory questions. The balance among these varied from one teacher to another, and, strikingly, between individual and group settings. Specific case studies within the cohort offered, once again, models of good practice, through the sophisticated use of exploratory questions and sequences of questions, clearly devised to build student independence.

The dissemination of findings during the funded stage of the project has been undertaken through conference presentations and papers, listed below. At the same time, the research process and findings have been influential in the development of course design in the Department, including undergraduate courses based on performance, and a new pathway in the Master of Music programme based on Instrumental Teaching and Learning. Research findings have been returned to participating and interested department teachers, through the ongoing staff development programme, which conducts regular seminar and workshop sessions. In October 2003, PALATINE hosted a workshop day at Canterbury Christ Church, based on the project and work related to the area of instrumental education.

Appendix 1: conference presentations

National Teaching Fellowship conference,

University of Ulster, September 12 2002

The Employment of Musical Instrument Teaching Specialists,

Royal College of Music, February 2003

International Conference for Research in Music Education

University of Exeter, April 2003

Canterbury Christ Church University College, June 2003

Royal Northern College of Music, September 2003

Instrumental and Vocal teaching workshop,

PALATINE, Canterbury Christ Church University College, October 2003

Canterbury Christ Church University College, January 2004

Royal Welsh College of Music Art and Drama, April 2004

Appendix 2: papers and publications

1. Burwell, K (2003): The meaning of interpretation. An investigation of an area of study in instrumental lessons in Higher Education. *Instrumental and Vocal teaching workshop, PALATINE.*
2. Burwell, K. (2003): Speaking of instrumental teaching and learning. An investigation of dialogue in instrumental and vocal lessons, in Higher Education. *Unpublished paper, as guest speaker, Royal Northern College of Music, Annual Conference*
3. Burwell, K., Young, V. and Pickup, D. (2003): Taking the lead: the development of student as reflective practitioner in instrumental lessons at H.E. level. *Unpublished paper, International Conference for Research in Music Education, University of Exeter*
4. Burwell, K., Young, V. and Pickup, D. (2004): The dynamics of the instrumental tutorial. *Conference paper from the National Teaching Fellowship conference, University of Ulster, 2002. To be published in Hunter, D. (Ed)(2004): How am I doing? valuing and rewarding learning in musical performance in higher education. University of Ulster Press*
5. Young, V., Burwell, K. and Pickup, D. (2003): Areas of study and teaching strategies in instrumental teaching. A case study research project. *Music Education Research, 5.2*

Appendix 3: curriculum developments informed by the project

Bachelor of Music programme:

Performance Studies, 1, 2 and 3 (30 credits)

Instrumental Teaching and Learning (30 credit Option course)

Master of Music programme:

Instrumental Teaching and Learning

(90 credit Principal Study course)

