A CRITICAL STUDY OF A-LEVEL MUSIC AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY.

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ABSTRACT

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'A Critical Study of A-level Music and its relationship with Higher Education and the Music Industry'

This thesis falls into three parts. Part 1 provides a general background of music education. It examines current issues and outlines theories which, in my view, have exerted the strongest influence upon current practices. This section discusses how far the present justifications are working and why there remains a powerful need to justify music in the curriculum. Music education has a long history. The combined influence of traditional concepts of music with the generally slow pace of change in education is also discussed here. The second section of Part 1 examines Music and Performing Arts courses in age 16–19 education. It includes case studies of three colleges which offer BTEC Performing Arts courses.

Part 2 of the thesis consists of the results of an extensive survey. It is divided into three sections; Higher Education, present A-level and undergraduate music students, and the music industry.

Part 3 begins with an investigation of current practices in A-level music. For this section I conducted a separate survey by questionnaire and discussion with A-level teachers to ascertain their views of the revised A-level courses, the impact of the GCSE and the teaching approaches and methodologies they employed. Following a short introduction which details the results of this survey, the specific course components are examined. This leads on to an exegesis of the problems facing A-level Music Boards and begins to define possible ways forward for A-level music. The final section proposes an ideal course structure which integrates both academic and vocational pathways and which embraces those values sought by both university lecturers and personnel in the music industry. The course structure is based upon an active fusion of theory and practice. Although visionary in its conception, it is designed to work in practice as well as in principle. It is not presented as the perfect solution, but rather seeks to illustrate that through an investigation into the values sought by the wider music spectrum a more relevant course could be realistically offered.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an in–depth investigation of A-level music and its main theme concerns the extent to which this course is currently valued as a preparation for further study in Higher Education and for employment in the music industry. A-level music has traditionally been viewed as a rather special course designed mainly for committed musicians who wish to pursue either further academic music study in Higher Education or performance in the Conservatoires. The recent radical changes in music education at primary and secondary levels, juxtaposed with the influence of social and cultural changes upon music, have created a need for radical change at A-level.

A-level music is a unique course, which has remained largely unaltered since its inception in 1951. While being part of the on-going educational system, it has become an educational core which is separate from, rather than integrated with, students' developing musical interests. In my view, it has a responsibility to provide a broad understanding and appreciation of music, and in so doing, to prepare students for the extensive opportunities now available within a much wider musical and sociological spectrum.

This thesis critically examines the current situation of A-level music in relation to changing trends. It endeavours to show how, if the balance was redressed between complying with an existing music education system and the values now sought from a music education in the wider musical field, perceptions of the A-level music course would change. For A-level music to be considered a relevant, valuable programme of study, course designers need to look further afield when revising courses. Market forces have influenced our modern cultural, social and economic, and now educational systems. It is ironic that A-level music keeps at arm's length the possibilities of a

closer relationship with the wider musical world by perpetuating a dangerously inward-looking view of music education.

Since the introduction of the GCSE Music in 1986, A-level courses have changed to increase the coherence between the two. However, while the course content has altered, the nature of the A-level course has remained largely the same. In addition, the preference of A-level Music Boards to align courses downwards with GCSE music has taken precedence over cohesion upwards. There appears to have been little consideration of the *impact* of course revisions on the progression from A-level to either further study in Higher Education or towards employment in the music industry.

The tensions of perfecting a balanced A-level music course to allow for a smooth progression at both entry and exit stages has been further exacerbated by the rise of a new type of student emerging from GCSE music and embarking on the A-level music course. I have observed in my teaching experiences that these students were challenging both the structure and the traditional function of the course as a foundation primarily for further academic music study. They were interested in pursuing careers in the music industry and were therefore looking for a different type of academic music education. But an A-level in music was still considered to be a more beneficial qualification than that acquired from a vocational course, and it is in this direction, therefore, that future reforms should be addressed.

The problems facing A-level Music Boards are not confined to course content. A-level music is at the mercy of a plethora of external problems, as this thesis discusses. The current Government interest in raising the status and standards of vocational courses is blurring the traditional distinction between academic and vocational courses and creating a competitive market in the 16–19 age range. The market forces ideology of modern British politics is exerting pressure upon all courses to increase numbers and

attainment levels in order to meet national targets. This could have serious implications for A-level music. The A-level situation is further complicated by divided opinion within Government circles concerning its future position. In addition, the recent proposal to introduce a voucher system in Further and Higher Education has led to further uncertainty, and speculation as to whether A-levels in their present form could fit into such a system.

Since the changes of the 1980s, there has been a constant stream of further changes to A-level Music courses, which still go on as I write A-level Music continues to be in a state of flux and the direction for change remains as unclear now as ever. Very little writing exists about A-level Music, and the extensive surveys carried out for this thesis provide, in my view, a valuable wealth of information about A-level Music in the 1990s.

This thesis, therefore, concerns the extent to which A-level is valued as a preparation for further study in Higher Education and for employment in the music industry, and attempts to show how the value and relevance of A-level music could be increased through a greater knowledge of those qualities desired. In order to ascertain this knowledge, I conducted a substantial survey by questionnaire, interviews and discussions with music lecturers in Higher Education, present A-level and undergraduate music students and personnel in the music industry. I also conducted a separate survey with A-level teachers to evaluate current practices and methodologies employed in teaching. These investigations form the crux of this thesis, which is designed to lead the reader from general issues in music education, through the results of the surveys and an examination of A-level course components to a proposal for an ideal new course structure based upon the evaluations of my surveys.

1.1 THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN MUSIC EDUCATION

Music education in the late twentieth century is a complex labyrinth of past and present values and practices. Tradition and progression, innovation and inheritance jostle alongside each other in an educational programme, the value and significance of which remains under perpetual scrutiny. Indeed the very shape of modern music education has been largely moulded by the scrutiny that has been applied to its development, by the very act of justifying its *raison d'être*. At the end of the twentieth century, the importance of music in the curriculum is still as rigorously questioned as it has been at any other time in its history, and its status and position in education is still precarious. The following statements by Sir William Hadow[1] in the first Report of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education in 1923 and Keith Swanwick[2] in the February 1994 edition of the Music Education Council Newsletter, were written 70 years apart:

> The study of music, rightly undertaken, can be of the highest educational value. We are in error if we dismiss it as recreation, or seclude it as a remote and technical study which is out of relation to the rest of our intellectual life. Its range is not less wide than that of literature; it appeals to the same faculties of emotion and judgement; it is ... subject to the same general aesthetic principles.... All the arguments which can be used for the inclusion of language and literature in our ordinary scheme of education may be used with equal force in the case of music.
>
> (Board of Education, 1923, 68)

1. Sir William Hadow was Chairman of the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education from 1920 to 1934. He was, among other things, both a composer in his own right and a music historian and critic. His interest in the educational value of the arts, and of music in particular, informed and coloured the deliberations of the Committee throughout his term in office (Metcalfe, 1987, 115).
2. Keith Swanwick is Professor of Music Education in London University (Institute of Education) and Chairman of the Music Education Council.

> Music education may seem to be going through a difficult patch just now, but music educators and other musicians are determined to push towards a better future.... Teachers working in the 'core' curriculum have been so protected by their traditional status and level of resources that there has been little pressure to think through the real 'profile' components of their particular subjects.
>
> (Swanwick, 1994, 9)

Part 1 of this thesis discusses why music education is still in this precarious position, and investigates the nature of the obstacles which are preventing a fuller recognition of the value and importance of music in the curriculum.

The Problems Involved

There are several reasons which could account for the limited recognition of the value of music in the curriculum. Firstly, there remains disagreement and confusion as to precisely what constitutes a valuable music education, how its benefits are of significance, and what should be included in, or omitted from the curriculum. Secondly, since the 1960s, there have been proportionately more theories for revolutionising the principles and practices in music education than at any other time in its history. The wide diversity of theories now present in current practices is confusing. Moreover, these theories have been introduced with such rapidity that many have only been partially digested or implemented in the process. Thirdly, the situation has been further intensified by successive changes in Government educational policy during these years. A variety of reforms and initiatives have been introduced, notably vocational training, education in a multicultural society, and transferable learning skills, which have influenced the directions taken in music education. The recent drives to assess quality through league tables, the concentration on defining the aims and objectives of a subject, financial constraints, and emphasis on administrative

concerns have focused strong attention on justifying music in the curriculum, in order to fend off curriculum marginalisation. Charles Plummeridge[3] writes:

> Because of music's weak status as a curriculum subject in recent times, we have witnessed any number of reasons for the inclusion of music in the curriculum which cannot be supported by proper arguments or evidence. Such views have little value in an educational climate in which ideas are subjected to rigorous scrutiny and rejection where they are shown to be false.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 142)

There are three theories in music education which, in my view, have had the most significant bearing on influencing change in current practices: the concept of music education as a way of knowing and understanding; the child-centred theory which stresses the creativity of children rather than received traditions; and the broadening of the music curriculum to incorporate Afro-American traditions.

Music Education as a way of Knowing and Understanding

The view of music education as a unique means of increasing knowledge and understanding through aesthetic experiences has, perhaps, more than any other in the twentieth century, gone further to establish a coherent and practical philosophy for music education. Traditionally, the arts have not been regarded as 'knowledge'; therefore their place in education has been viewed as being of lesser importance than those subjects which carry with them knowledge deemed necessary for life. A number of writers, notably Malcolm Ross and Robert Witkin, have produced convincing

3. After graduating from Trinity College of Music, London, Charles Plummeridge taught music in primary and secondary schools for a period of fifteen years. He is a conductor, organist and examiner and has lectured in Europe, South East Asia and North America. He is currently Tutor and Lecturer in Education at the Institute of Education in the University of London.

arguments in favour of arts education in terms of emotional development, self-expression, self-knowing, and feeling. Malcolm Ross's *Arts and the Adolescent* (1975) emphasises the view that the creative arts offer a unique opportunity for children to come to know themselves and their world through developing their inner life of feeling in the creating of expressive arts objects. In *The Intelligence of Feeling* (1974), Robert Witkin warns that schooling which neglects 'the intelligence of feeling' is in danger of educating only half the child.[4] Witkin argues strongly that it is through creative arts that people recall their feeling and consequently gain further knowledge of their 'being'. The music educationalist Paul Farmer quotes Paul Hirst, then Professor of Education at King's College, London, who claims that the arts, including music, are a unique form of knowledge, and that their justification on the school timetable is as knowledge rather than as anything else. Thus 'aesthetics' becomes a form of knowledge, with its own intrinsic criteria, which should not be ignored in any general education (Farmer, 1979, 12).

The origins of this concept can be found in two seminal works, Bennett Reimer's *A Philosophy of Music Education* (1970, 1989)[5] and Keith Swanwick's *A Basis for Music Education* (1979). Reimer believes that music education is the education of human feeling through the development of responsiveness to the aesthetic qualities of sound:

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4. *The Intelligence of Feeling* and *Arts and the Adolescent*, Schools Council Working Paper 54, were both outcomes of the Schools Council's 'Arts and the Adolescent' Project of 1968–72. This was set up as a result of *Enquiry One: Young School Leavers: Report of a Survey Among Young People, Parents and Teachers*, HMSO.

5. In the first edition (1970) of this text, Bennett Reimer (Northwestern University, New Jersey) explored the question 'How can music education become aesthetic education?'. The second edition (1989) explains and applies the original ideas, incorporating more recent philosophical, psychological and pedagogical advances into the theoretical basis and its practical applications, under the conviction that 'Music education exists first and foremost to develop every person's natural responsiveness to the power of the art of music' (Reimer, 1989).

> The deepest value of music education is the same as the deepest value of all aesthetic education: the enrichment of the quality of people's lives through enriching their insights into the nature of human feeling.
>
> (Reimer, 1970, 37)

Reimer's main focus is to inculcate 'aesthetic perception'. He suggests that listening is the essential mode of musical experiencing, supported by the concomitant activities of composing and performing. Also indispensable are the conceptual tools – the skills, techniques and a language in which to communicate – but all of these, for Reimer, are secondary to the main thrust and purpose of an aesthetic education through the practical experience of music.

Swanwick's *A Basis for Music Education* is widely recognised as one of the most comprehensive rationales for music education in schools. Swanwick bases his rationale upon direct musical involvement in the three activities posited by Reimer; composing, performing and listening. He concentrates on two levels of meaning in music: 'meaning to', characterised by recognition, understanding 'what is being said', and 'meaning for', characterised by relationship, being moved by that understanding. He describes the difference between the first level of meaning as that which can be taught, and the second as values which are more 'caught' than taught, and upon which the teacher has minimal influence. On the first level of meaning, Swanwick establishes a conceptual framework for teaching, based on the above three activities of composing, performing and listening. For Swanwick, music education is aesthetic education. He writes:

> Why we value music is ultimately not to do with belonging to a tradition or with self-development, as some have argued, but depends on a recognition that music is one of the great symbolic modes available to us. Initiation into this activity is what we look for ... the act of shaping music is a purposeful attempt to articulate something meaningful. It need not be complex or profound ... but it will be expressive and structured and just as 'objective' as the spoken or written word.
>
> (Swanwick and Taylor, 1982, 124–5)

The Child-Centred Theory

The basic perspective of the child-centred theory shifts attention from children as 'inheritors' to children as 'enjoyers', 'explorers' and 'discoverers' (Swanwick, 1988, 13). Children learn about music directly, developing an understanding of how music actually works, through activities calling for decision-making and handling sound as an expressive medium. In providing opportunities for developing qualities of inventiveness, original thinking and imaginativeness, creative musical activities differ substantially from received knowledge and from skills acquired through role-directed learning.

The justification for music education as a mode of activity to be experienced, rather than of knowledge to be acquired, has its roots in the 1931 Board of Education *Report of the Consultative Committee on the Primary School* and in the 1938 *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education with special reference to Grammar Schools and Technical High Schools* (The Spens Report). The 1931 Report contained the following famous statement:

> The curriculum is to be thought of in terms of activity and experience rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. Its aim should be to develop in a child the fundamental human powers.

The 1938 Spens Report went further by stating:

> We think too much of education in terms of information and too little in terms of feeling and taste ... a school ... [must] also foster the creative impulses needed not merely for new enterprises and adventures but even for the daily adaptation of routine and technique to changing situations ... the activities which are the richest in the creative element have the strongest claim for a place in the curriculum. For these spring from the deepest needs of human nature.

It was not, however, until the revolution of the 1960s that 'creativity' in the form of exploring sounds, improvisation and composition, was implemented in the curriculum. The composer Henri Pousseur has since pointed out that it was the avant-garde musical style of the late 1950s and 1960s which made possible developments in school music at this time (Paynter, 1992, 5). In addition, the work of Zoltán Kodály and Carl Orff (who created a series of pitched percussion instruments which were instantly playable by any child) provided opportunities for the classroom teacher to broaden music lessons in a manner more enjoyable for the pupil and less stressful for the teacher. The publication of several books, including George Self's *New Sounds in Class* (1967) and Brian Dennis's *Experimental Music in Schools* (1970) provided further sources. Finally Paynter and Aston's *Sounds and Silence* was published in 1970.[6] This seminal book underpinned a firm philosophy of teaching the Arts in education. Its opening chapter states:

> It is as a *creative* art that music is beginning to play an increasingly important rôle in education. Like all the arts, music springs from a profound response to life itself.... Artists of all kinds function as visionaries and commentators: their job is not simply to entertain us. We rely upon them to help us come to terms with life and its problems.... When, in school, we involve children in the creative use of language or the materials of visual art, we are encouraging them to think like poets and artists.... In this context the arts in education take on a new importance. They are accepted as ways of saying what we feel.
>
> (Paynter and Aston, 1970, 3–4)

A wealth of books have since been published, and compositional activities have become an accepted feature of class music teaching. The enthusiasm shown by music

6. Subtitled *Classroom Projects in Creative Music*, the text of *Sounds and Silence* consists of an introduction together with 36 projects in which teachers are offered an approach which encourages young people to compose music themselves. Though not intended as a course in the formal sense, the projects provide a graded sequence of work through which more formal training in harmony and composition can begin. John Paynter and Peter Aston are Professors of Music at York University, and East Anglia University respectively.

educationalists for composition has resulted in its being placed as one of the two attainment targets in the National Curriculum for Music.

Plummeridge states that 'Compositional activities are of the greatest value in that they enable pupils to develop an insight into the techniques and structures of music. These activities offer further opportunities for children to develop musical understanding' (Plummeridge, 1991, 51). At source, the creative movement overflowed in a fountain of rich, qualitative substance, a strong fusion of theoretical writing with practical exposition. Since then, however, classroom compositional practices have at times degenerated into aimless exercises; groups of children 'playing' classroom instruments, with little understanding of the learning concept of the activity. Such practices have not assisted the process of stabilising music in the curriculum. In 'The Challenge of Creativity' (Paynter, 1989, 235–37) John Paynter reminds us that, whatever guidance may be offered by theorists, researchers, innovators or any other type of curriculum 'experts', it is teachers who deliver the curriculum at ground level. Paynter himself has frequently emphasised the misunderstanding that has arisen in connection with 'creative music.' In her research concerning the teaching of avant-garde/creative music, Lucy Green[7] states that:

> Although there was some enthusiasm for it, the main reason for avant-garde's relative unpopularity with teachers was self-generating: many did not teach it, or only did a little of it, because they self-avowedly did not know much about it and were not, therefore, familiar with the style.
>
> (Green, 1988, 69)

7. Lucy Green is a Professor of Music at the Institute of Education, London University.

The Introduction of Pop and Ethnic Music

There has been a ground swell of opinion in recent educational theory which maintains that practices in music education have been dominated by the methods and techniques of the European 'serious' tradition. Approaches towards making music education more relevant to the interests of children have resulted in the inclusion of pop and ethnic music into the curriculum. The purpose of introducing this was to create a more balanced curriculum, which was not biased towards European Western Art music forms (Department of Education and Science, National Curriculum 1991, 51). Much has been written on popular music in the curriculum and it is outside the scope of this section to embark upon a detailed analysis of this. Suffice it to say that the introduction of pop and ethnic music in the curriculum through, most notably, the writings of Graham Vulliamy[8], aroused controversy not only between the traditional and radical schools of thought, who argued about the debasement of the inherited high culture and bourgeois-dominated value systems, but also between those who, already converted to the stimulation of imagination and feeling, thought that the use of pop as a medium of expression would stifle creativity by prompting mass-media-dominated stereotypes. Both Vulliamy and Paul Farmer have strongly emphasised the immediacy and ubiquity of pop music, as a valid means through which students come to understand musical expression (Vulliamy, 1976, *passim* & Farmer, 1979, 63–4). In addition, Vulliamy launched an attack against the valorisation of classical music as that which counts, and on the prejudiced attitudes of music educators towards popular

8. Graham Vulliamy lectures in Sociology in the Department of Education at the University of Ripon and York St John. He previously taught liberal studies and sociology at Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology. He played drums in various semi-professional rock groups, one of which he also managed. From 1971 to 1972 he was a research student at the London Institute of Education studying the various ways in which music teaching is defined in different educational institutions, from a sociological perspective. (Vulliamy and Lee, 1976, vii)

music. He also warned against using pop music as a stepping-stone to classical music, urging educators to take an open approach which treated pop in its own right.

The methods of approach towards the study of popular music have been and continue to be strenuously debated. While pop and ethnic music have now been accepted in both curricula and examinations, various influences on the manner of their inclusion have resulted in a particularly stifling form of popular music study (discussed later in this thesis). While both Swanwick and Vulliamy strongly advocate pop music in schools, they do so for different reasons and in different ways. Swanwick argues in his book *Popular Music and the Teacher* (1968) for the 'right' kind of pop music, whereas Vulliamy has no such judgements. Vulliamy believes the significance of pop music is 'culture specific', and ultimately bound up with the 'individual psyche'. For Vulliamy, the ultimate issue is not about music teaching but about the nature of music and its very survival in our schools (Vulliamy seminar, Institute of Popular Music, Liverpool University, 1993). Plummeridge states that 'Vulliamy has edited two splendid books which are not only extremely informative about popular music but also provide some excellent suggestions for classroom practice' (Plummeridge, 1991, 55–6). While not wishing to pursue a detailed critique of these books, practical experience of using Vulliamy's *Pop Music in School* reveals some shortcomings. In its proposals for practical work, classroom percussion instruments are frequently advocated (supported by a drum kit and electric guitar, if available). Concerning a practical exploration of the blues, the music educationalist and teacher Piers Spencer writes:

> It is unfortunate that the tone colours of these instruments are so foreign to the 'dirtier' sounds associated with traditional blues such as are obtainable from the harmonica, kazoo or banjo – but these could perhaps be introduced by the pupils themselves.
>
> (Spencer, in Vulliamy & Lee, 1976, 74)

Firstly, my teaching experience has shown that students are not taken in by, nor do they particularly enjoy, playing a blues tune on a glockenspiel. Through CDs and media coverage, children are fully aware of and stimulated by the genuine 'dirty' sound. A glockenspiel is no substitute. Secondly, it is a rare child who has a banjo at home, can play it, and moreover can stylistically imitate the blues. Thirdly, much classroom improvisation methods promote work with pentatonic songs and tunes. The meaning of the word 'pentatonic' only becomes clear if one first understands the wider experience of scales and modes. For children, the use of pentatonic scales in the classroom often simply means a restriction of the notes available.

It is interesting to note that the majority of examples of successful group pop music improvisations cited by music teacher Malcolm Nichols in *Pop Music in School* involve students from the age of 15 upwards. While such success may occur in schools, it is equally attainable with groups outside music education. The three examples for performance experience in class music given by Ed Lee[9] demand considerable resources. One of the examples advocates forming a vocal group. In curriculum music, the present decline of singing in schools would severely hamper this project. Swanwick noted in his research study (Swanwick, 1988, 10), undertaken between 1985 and 1987, that in over 147 lessons observed in 32 schools 'more than half included no singing at all'. Another recommended approach suggests forming a big band in the classroom. Lee does acknowledge that this and other approaches 'are dependent on a fair element of good fortune in the matter of numbers and distribution of talent among the class' (160). The big band project requires ten brass, five

9. Ed Lee is co-editor of *Pop Music in School* and the author of two books: *Music of the People* (Barrie and Jenkins, 1970) and *Jazz: An Introduction* (Stanmore Press, 1972). He is a professional musician in dance bands, jazz groups and rhythm and blues groups, but his most important musical venture was as a full-time professional with CMU, a progressive rock and theatre group, which recorded an LP, *Open Spaces*, for Transatlantic Records (*Pop Music in School*, vi).

saxophones, four rhythm and, if desired, four or five percussionists! It is doubtful whether any but the most outstanding class could provide such a line-up, with all the necessary instruments. In her research, Lucy Green found that:

> Although forty-six out of the sixty-one teachers did say they used pop music in lessons, only thirteen of them went so far as to stress its relevance, value and importance; pop remained overall in an inferior and appositioned role to classical music. It was maintained in this situation, not only by teachers who were against its use, but also by many who used it, and even many who favoured it.
>
> (Green, 1988, 64)

Multicultural education is a major issue in the current educational debate. Endeavours to align music with contemporary trends in education have focused the attention of music educationalists towards integrating a range of music from various ethnic groups into the curriculum. Based on the principle that all pupils should experience a wide range of musical styles, forms and genres, the National Curriculum, GCSE and A-level music courses all now include music from non-western cultures in their syllabuses.

One difficulty with the study of world music at A-level is the pervading lack of interest shown by most students, irrespective of ethnic origin, in the subject. Students are interested in the culture in which they live. In my experience, non-European students are embarrassed by gestural inclusions of world music. Their interests remain firmly grounded in European culture. If European culture is influenced by a particular non-European style – for example, reggae and Bob Marley – only then does it become a focus of attention.

The Influence of Traditional Concepts of Music Education

One of the major difficulties in establishing 'progressive' reforms in music education is the strong allegiance by many music educationalists and leading politicians to the

upholding of traditional values. Emphasis upon the importance of conventional techniques, and the presentation of a 'cultural heritage', has run concurrently with the reforms of the late twentieth century. The traditional methods advocated by Arnold Bentley have many supporters. Bentley claimed that certain progressive approaches and innovations can easily misrepresent and devalue the discipline of music. He advocated an education of formal tuition in staff notation, knowledge of the classical repertoire, and formal tests of aural ability (Bentley, 1966, *passim*).[10]

'Cultural heritage' and its degree of importance in the curriculum has provoked widespread controversy. The major difficulty in establishing the National Curriculum for music – the main theory of our time – was in reaching an agreement between the National Curriculum Council and UKMET (now the Music Education Council) over the balance between heritage and innovation. The then Minister for Education, Kenneth Clarke, in advocating a return to the passive history and appreciation teaching of past times, incited strong condemnation from leading music educationalists, composers and conductors. They criticised not only the bias towards cultural heritage, but also the implied mistrust and misunderstanding of the 'important activities of performing and composing' (*British Music Education Yearbook 1992/93*, xii).

Music is in a unique position in education. While its presence in the curriculum has traditionally been undervalued, extra-curricular music activities have always been held in high esteem. The presentation of the school concert or production is highly valued in promoting the wider glory of the school. Performances fulfil expectations and

10. Bentley found little positive correlation between musical ability and intelligence as measured by standardised tests. The idea that musical ability is different and separate from intelligence has evolved from his widely-used aural tests, and has had a marked influence on forming the 'view' that a person who is musical is not necessarily intelligent – as opposed to another person who might be regarded as intelligent but not musical.

perceptions of an education in music. Pupils learn instruments and notation, and to rehearse and work towards the goal of the public performance. Through this, much can be achieved.

Bernarr Rainbow is one very outspoken critic of those progressive educators who ignore the importance of choral and instrumental activities. While progressive educators advocate a music education which adapts to the present environment, certain writers, notably Ross and Witkin, are highly critical of the use of music in schools which emphasises 'ceremonial music' and the 'conservation of the cultural heritage.' Cultural inheritance is very much a part of the present cultural environment. Outside the classroom pupils are children who play in brass bands and orchestras, or sing in choirs. The problem with extra-curricular activities is that, while having an important educational function, they tend to detract from the value of music within the curriculum. Plummeridge writes that:

> One of the most unsatisfactory aspects of music in schools is the division between the curriculum and extra-curricular activities ... [which] will both be strengthened if they are regarded as complimentary dimensions of one enterprise.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 130)

The value of curriculum music is further undermined by the fact that instrumental and vocal tuition is traditionally acquired outside of the curriculum, either through Local Education Authority music services[11] or private tuition. Performing is *the* most widely understood and recognised musical activity. Indeed, to study music is frequently understood to mean to learn an instrument or sing. Moreover, performance can be examined through external independent examining systems. The Associated Board and Trinity Board have long histories of examining and are well known and esteemed. In

11. In recent years LEA music provision has witnessed severe cut-backs, an issue discussed later in the thesis.

1993, Associated Board examiners 'conducted well over half a million examinations in 86 different countries' (*Associated Board Annual Review 1993*, 5). The Board's recent innovations in Performance Assessment for Adults, in introducing new Aural Tests for Grades 1–5 (workshops for which were attended by around 4,000 teachers), in its Preparatory Test, Advanced Tests, new courses for teachers, and general expansions in music education, could further force music educationalists to re-examine the role and function of curriculum music. Marian Metcalfe[12] points out that one of the main reasons for the general disregard of music in secondary schools at the beginning of the twentieth century was that:

> Significantly, much of the tuition [in music] was provided by visiting teachers, [a practice] which only served to confirm its peripheral nature.... The existence of a large army of private music teachers (arising in response to the demand for piano and violin lessons as cheap mass-produced instruments became readily available) meant that the consciences, if any, of the decision-makers could be quietened by the thought that music instruction could always be obtained privately! Progress could be monitored externally by graded examinations through Trinity Board and the Associated Board which were well established even by the 1890s and therefore there was no pressing need to provide [organised] music [teaching] in the schools.
>
> (Metcalfe, 1987, 98)

Music as a Moral Force

In many ways music education is burdened with its long tradition, and old traditions die hard. Change in education is perhaps more evolutionary than revolutionary. A significant force present in contemporary opinions can be traced back to the Victorian ideals, which viewed musical activity as a wholesome pursuit, morally beneficial and therefore a means of bringing about social control and reform.

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12. Marian Metcalfe gives a detailed account of the developments in curriculum music practice in the twentieth century in Abbs, 1987, 97–118.

In 1881, the Chambers' Journal declared that 'In every house there is an altar devoted to Saint Cecilia, and all are taught to serve her to the best of their ability. The altar is the pianoforte.' The firm of Broadwood dealt in five main types of pianoforte – the grand, the semi-grand, the cabinet, the cottage and the square piano. The instrument was an essential part of domesticity, even respectability, amongst all classes. It was regarded as a valuable social accomplishment for all young ladies for two particular reasons: as an excellent accompanying instrument and as a vehicle for social display. Mackerness writes that:

> The persistence of such motives for 'learning music' is reflected in a Report of the Commissioners issued in connection with the Schools Inquiry Commission of 1868. 'Music is equally demanded of all girls, however little aptitude they have for it ... one of the considerations which mainly influence parents of the middle class in selecting a school for their daughters is that instrumental music is to be the leading subject of instruction for women except in the lower ranks of life. (It is said to be seldom more than the acquisition of musical skill, to be taught without intelligence, and too much confined to instrumental music, to the neglect of singing.)'
>
> (Mackerness, 1964, 173)

W E Hickson, the 'father of English School music', believed the moral influence of music served a dual purpose:

> It has a tendency to wean the mind from vicious and sensual indulgences: and, if properly directed, it has a tendency to incline the heart to kindly feelings, and just and generous emotions.
>
> (Central Society of Education, first publication, 1837)

The main thrust, as Bernarr Rainbow points out, was through vocal music. He states that:

> The moral influence which those early music teachers urged for the practice of singing ... depended, not so much upon the virtue of music itself, as upon the partially subconscious effect of those frequently repeated maxims and moral ditties which formed the texts of the songs concerned.
>
> (Rainbow, 1967, 157)

Originally the chosen texts were to be '... simple in character, but conveying sentiments of pure and exalted morality' (Turner, 1833, 30). This is a view which can be traced back to the Greek doctrine of education; 'If one listens to the wrong kind of music he will become the wrong kind of person; but, conversely, if he listens to the right kind of music he will tend to become the right kind of person' (Grout and Palisca, 1988, 7). The right kind of person was, for Plato and Aristotle, produced through a system of public education in which the two principal elements were gymnastics and music, one for the discipline of the body and the other for that of the mind. The belief that music affected man in different but very definite ways was fundamental to the Greek ethos. Each melody, rhythm and instrument was thought to exert its own particular influence on man's character. 'Thus the Mixolydian mode made man sad, while the Dorian ennobled their minds; the rhythm short, long, long (⏑ – –) was suitable for drinking songs, but not heroic ballads' (Harman and Mellers, 1962, 13).

For the Victorians, the practical method by which to wean the mind from 'vicious and sensual indulgences' and encourage temperance (and vocal accuracy) was not modes, but the tonic sol-fa system. The leading exponents of the system, John Hullah and John Curwen, established different workings of the system adapted from Sarah Glover, who had evolved the system with a religious usage in mind (see Rainbow, 1967, 139–155). The system was instituted in part to instruct the working classes in music and also to keep them out of the gin-palaces. (Illustrations in Pearsall's *Victorian Popular Music* amply demonstrate the cheerlessness of the task of learning the tonic sol-fa system). It replaced the learning of notation as it was believed that 'the children of the poor were obviously too stupid to understand musical notation' (Pearsall, 1973, 111). The tonic sol-fa system exerted a strong influence upon subsequent teaching of music in schools, and its effect can still be detected in the more traditional schools today.

In addition, the tonic sol-fa system was not restricted to school music teaching. It was as much a moral discipline as a musical one. The organ of the movement, *The Tonic Sol-fa Reporter*, which reflected the editor Curwen's own personality (Curwen was an ardent temperance enthusiast and an aggressive clergyman), indulged in both social comment and moral injunction. It warned against the temptation at concerts, soirées and musical parties to flirt with sin and neglect the calls of moral duty. 'Its articles frequently flitted off the subject of music to indulge itself in tirades against Sin and Low Dresses' (Pearsall, 1973, 118).

Finally, the division between school music and the family was discouraged. Music books served a dual role of providing for the school and the family. The notion is still discernible today that the study of music in school, and family involvement and background, are somehow connected. (A frequent comment in discussions with parents of a prospective A-level music student refers to either the lack of, or abundance of musicians in the family. Parents will often express surprise in one of their offspring showing an interest in music if little is present in the family, or conversely, will thrust upon a reluctant child the necessity to study music as part of the family tradition.)

Music Education for Leisure

There is a popular view that music education should equip children with skills and knowledge that will enable them to use their leisure time in a profitable way. According to the 1963 Ministry of Education Report *Half Our Future: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England)* (The Newsom Report), education should be geared to the 'life of work and leisure'. This implies that music, as one of the 'practical subjects', will have a role in many pupils' future lives as a leisure activity.

(The Newsom Report also launched a scathing attack on music in schools, pointing out the vast differences between enthusiasm for it out of school and boredom within.) More recently, in her book *Children and Music* (1979), Atarah Ben-Tovim sees the ability to appreciate music as a 'lifelong enrichment of leisure time'.

Much has been written on this concept of music education. While it is true that many students do continue the musical interests they developed in school in their adult life, the notion of music as a leisure activity neglects to take into account the commitment and discipline required to pursue musical interests as recreational activities. It blueprints music as a passive, easy option, and it demeans the value and significance of music as a worthwhile education alongside other subjects, relegating it to a category of only secondary concern. The ease with which music can be synthetically produced through advances in keyboard technology and computer music programmes further encourages this notion.

Associated with the ever more relevant concept of music education for leisure is the deep-rooted idea of music as 'an elegant pastime' (Cardinal Newman); as 'an innocent luxury, unnecessary indeed to our existence, but a great improvement and gratification of our sense of hearing' (Dr Burney, *General History of Music*, 1776). During an enrolment procedure in 1994 I was faced with a vicar who, upon casting doubt on the value of studying music at A-level, informed me that in his day music was never considered for study, it was for relaxation. (The vicar's son was signing up for Performing Arts!). Bernarr Rainbow points out that 'Prior to the phenomenal growth in school music which began around 1840, music played no part in the education of an eighteenth-century gentleman' (Rainbow, 1967, 9). Music was viewed as an ornament, and the arts, as Mackerness puts it, 'the acquired property of a suitably enlightened *cognoscenti*' (Mackerness, 1964, 8).

Conversely, music has been condemned as a thoroughly undesirable and time-wasting pursuit. Rock 'n' roll, for example, enraged religious and political leaders alike for inciting immorality and sexual indulgence in the late 1950s. Marian Metcalfe makes the point that 'Even today there still exists some distrust of its abstract and ephemeral nature, its bonds with religion, pageantry, culture and ritual, a certain unease at its properties of enhancing emotional states and particularly at its pervasive influence on the young' (Metcalfe, 1987, 97).

Further Issues

A further major issue confronting music education concerns the perceptions of a music education widely held by those outside the educational field. Music is a significant force in social and cultural life: its importance to the human condition is deep-rooted; inseparable from the formal and informal rites of passage through life. It is associated with emotional states: it embodies a mystique; an intangible, abstract quality. Music is an integral part of leisure occupations. Metcalfe questions why music, which is

> ... so clearly a major part of our lives, listened to by most of the population for some portion of each day, with radio stations devoted entirely to its dissemination and multi-million pound industries to its production and distribution, with more and more young people making their own music, going to live performances, buying instruments, recording and reproduction equipment, assiduously practising and attending rehearsals, why, with this massive affirmation of the importance of music to the human condition, is it so little understood, so widely undervalued and so generally under-resourced in our schools, colleges and universities today?
>
> (Metcalfe, 1987, 97)

One of the many differences between the approach and attitude of Western and Non-Western cultures to music is the level and manner of integration of music into cultural life. Philip Tagg writes that:

> Many peoples have no word equivalent to what we seem to mean by 'music'. For example, the Tiv people of West Africa and the Ewe of Togo and Eastern Ghana just don't seem to have much need to single out music as a phenomenon needing verbal notation.
>
> (Tagg, 1993, 13)

Following his field work with the Venda people, Blacking writes that:

> The Venda taught me that music can never be a thing in itself ... music is too deeply concerned with human feelings and experiences in society, and its patterns are too often generated by surprising outbursts of unconscious cerebration, for it to be subject to arbitrary rules, like the rules of games.
>
> (Blacking, 1973, x)

He goes on to state that, 'I no longer understand the history and structures of European 'art' music as clearly as I did.'

The European perspective on music has gradually narrowed over the years to become increasingly more specialised. Demarcations between styles of music of both Western and Non-Western cultures have stratified cultural behaviour in society. Specific codes of behaviour have developed. Music is compartmentalised into such areas as the symphony concert, the salon recital, the brass band concert, the Irish music gig, and so on. It is interesting to note that the most prominent feature of the nineteenth–century musical scene, and one of the many paradoxes of the period, was that music was not compartmentalised. Promenade Concerts, conducted by the popular impresario Louis Jullien, combined serious and popular music. They featured either a part or the whole of, for example, a Beethoven symphony, followed by *Home Sweet Home*, and an aria from an opera, which would subsequently rub shoulders with *Champagne Charlie*. Pearsall writes that

> There was nothing odd in taking in these various musical experiences. Queen Victoria went to see ballet when it was considered slightly disgusting, and the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) was able to visit the music hall with his wife without loss of prestige.
>
> (Pearsall, 1973, 12)

The narrow segregations of Western arts culture have influenced music education. Indeed music education is one such segregated area in the myriad of musical styles and activities constituting current approaches to music in our culture. Music education itself is further split between extra-curricular activities and curriculum music. Within these narrow confines, curriculum music represents a small particle in the spectrum of music where it is largely divorced from its social context. The introduction of pop and ethnic music in the curriculum, while in itself a worthy achievement, is in many ways a token gesture only, a drop in the ocean, towards a genuine integration of music education in society. The plethora of justifications which endeavour to keep music in the educational programme lack potency. Justifications are based upon according music parity with those core curriculum subjects which have always been traditionally valued. Music is thus based on justifying itself within the narrow confines of the educational curricula, which is proving to be a formidable challenge.

Conclusions

While the value of core curriculum subjects is widely recognised and acknowledged, the value of music, for several reasons, is less easily recognised. Firstly, as has been discussed, perhaps the most widely recognised aspect of learning music, that of learning an instrument and performing, is well-known to be developed and experienced outside the curriculum. Secondly, the stimulus and enjoyment gained from responding to music needs no formal education, and is an activity experienced in a variety of ways throughout society, as a source of pleasure. Thirdly, the abstract and ephemeral nature of music, combined with perceptions of the trained musician who has acquired knowledge in an area seemingly unrelated to daily interactions with music, encourages a distancing between those who have mastered the specialism and those who have not. Fourthly, the accessibility of live music entertainment and contemporary 'stars',

exhaustively covered by the media, creates a particularly appealing vision to many of the immediacy of music, of its self-taught nature. This contrasts sharply with the vision of the trained musician. Fifthly, change in education is slow. Music has always been treated as a low-status, 'minority' subject. Metcalfe points out that the first set of regulations for Secondary Schools in 1902 made no mention of music at all (Metcalfe, 1987, 98). The 1968 Schools Council Report, *Young School Leavers*, showed that music was voted top of the list as the most boring and useless subject by fifteen-year-old school leavers. Christopher Small[13] noted that in discussions with a pupil concerning subject choices, the pupil declared that 'Music is what musicians do' (Small, 1977, 213). In an article in *The Sunday Times* (1 January, 1995) Ralph Steadman, one of Britain's most distinctive illustrators and cartoonists, commented that 'Art in this country is something you do when you're not very good at Maths or Latin.'

For music education to have recognised meaning and be a potent, secure force in the curriculum, further and major changes clearly need to be made. While justifications for music remain harnessed to the curriculum wheel, it is possible that it could remain an endangered subject.

Paynter quotes Charles Carter who, in the mid 1970s, drew attention to the inevitability of demographic waves in education, or 'swings for the schools' as he called them; cycles which have implications for everything from buildings to curriculum style and content (Paynter, 1992, 6). It is perhaps time for the 'swings' in music education to move in a different direction. Justifications for music education need to

13. In his book *Music - Society - Education* (John Calder, 1977), Christopher Small presents a radical examination of the prophetic function of music in Western, Eastern and African cultures with its impact on society and its use in education.

embrace wider, previously overlooked, possibilities. These involve finding out exactly what kind of a music education is looked for *outside* of the curriculum, what knowledge, abilities and skills are considered valuable, and incorporating them *within* the curriculum. Music is an integral part of our social and cultural lives. It follows, therefore, that any education in music – a strand in the complex network of the wider music spectrum – should offer a valued education which connects with, and reflects, the ever-changing arts world in which we live.

1.2 MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS COURSES IN AGE 16–19 EDUCATION

From the inception of secondary schools in 1902, music was never regarded as a valuable or high status subject. In the elementary schools, music lessons consisted solely of class singing, regarded as 'an important moralising force, as a way of diffusing passionate emotions and redirecting them towards habits of industry, thrift, contentment, sobriety and patriotism'. This legacy was to a certain extent inherited by the new secondary schools, where, as Marian Metcalfe states, 'classes were often combined for massed singing, generally for administrative reasons rather than musical ones!' (Metcalfe, 1987, 98).

The general disregard for music was reinforced by its lowly position in the First School Certificate Examination, instituted in 1917. This examination was devised as a grouped-subject examination, in which candidates were required to pass in five subjects chosen from each of the three main groups: English subjects, Foreign languages (Classical or Modern) and Sciences/Mathematics. Music was made a Group IV subject, along with art and practical subjects, in which a pass did not count towards the award of the certificate. Although this system of grouping remained in operation until 1951, throughout the 1920s and 1930s the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education attacked the influence of the examination and its resultant restrictions on the curriculum. Concerning the low status of music, the Committee recommended in its 1923 Report that, in order to strengthen the position of the arts in the curriculum, music should be accorded parity with other subjects in the school certificate examination.

The first draft syllabus for music was drawn up in 1923 by Hadow and Somerwell. It contained sight-singing, always considered to be of great importance in the elementary schools, aural tests of the type common in many music examinations ever since, elementary harmony and form, an outline knowledge of music history, and the study of one or more set works. Metcalfe writes that:

> It is ironic that this draft examination, intended to lay the foundations for a major growth in aesthetic education, succeeded in smothering the development of music as a creative and practical discipline for the next fifty odd years. For although the music lesson had often not been very inspiring in its staple diet of class singing, the pupils were at least making and hearing live music. But the legitimization of music as a 'subject', by making it examinable, served only to deflect it from its practical and experiential direction towards paper exercises on a theoretical body of knowledge which could be studied and examined in the same way as 'academic' subjects.
>
> (Metcalfe, 1987, 99–100)

Furthermore, it was still not accepted as a matriculation requirement by the universities, which further emphasised its low status.

By 1938, the restrictive influence of the School Certificate with its five subject requirements had become a major concern. In arguing that examinations should 'follow the curriculum and not determine it', the Spens Report of 1938 criticised the School Certificate as inhibiting a wider choice of subjects and placing 'a heavy premium on certain subjects to the detriment of others.' This view was adopted by the Norwood Committee which, in 1943, asserted that examinations should only play a subordinate role in the assessment of pupils. The reforms suggested by the Report favoured a reduction in university and school certificate domination of the curriculum, and recommended that the examination should be single-subject, not grouped-subject, with no restrictions on the number of subjects for which a student could be entered.

The single-subject GCE examination was finally introduced in 1951, with Ordinary level being intended for those pupils who had passed the 11+ examination and who studied in grammar schools, and Advanced level for a smaller percentage of 18-year-old pupils, designed mainly as a preparation for Higher Education. However, as early as 1954, dissatisfaction was expressed with the new examination system. Lawton points out that 'The Early Leaving Report (1954) expressed concern about the large numbers of able young people who left school at 16 or even earlier.' In addition, the A-level structure of two, three or even four A-levels, 'was producing young people who were over-specialised and lacking a broad balanced education' (Lawton, 1992, 66). Pressure was further placed on A-level examinations by the universities who, in facing an increased demand for Higher Education from students, in part due to the success of the 1944 Education Act, sought higher grades at A-level. This subsequently increased specialisation on A-levels in schools.

In order to review and solve the A-level problem of narrow specialisation, the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations was formed in 1973, and alternatives to O- and A-levels were proposed. The Schools Council advocated a two-level syllabus of Normal and Further Levels (N and F), and an examination structure in which five examination subjects would normally be studied, with not more than two at F level. This system, it was argued, would help broaden the sixth-form curriculum. However, the universities were unwilling to accept the lower standards implied in the proposals without a longer university course, and favoured maintaining A-levels.

In a further attempt to broaden the curriculum, AS-levels were introduced in 1986. Conceived as a two-year course and designed to link with A-levels, AS-levels comprised of half an A-level and provided an opportunity for the broader study of four or five subjects instead of the usual two or three A-levels.

In addition, the establishment of the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) examinations in 1965 incurred a demand at sixth-form level for an extension of vocational courses. Following the introduction and subsequent demise of the Certificate of Extended Education in 1983, the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) and the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) were founded, which established a range of vocational courses, dramatically broadening the choice of courses for 16–19 year olds. These courses were inaugurated to serve the needs of "the new sixth form'; students who wished to continue studying beyond 16 but were regarded as 'insufficiently academic' for A-level courses' (Lawton, 1992, 68). Indeed, by 1986 the profusion of vocational courses in existence led to the establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) to co-ordinate and monitor standards.

To further complicate 16–19 education, O-level and CSE examinations finally merged in 1986 to form the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), followed closely by the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. The new GCSE, with its strong bias towards practical skills and teacher assessed course-work, contrasted sharply with the theoretical approach at A-level.

By the late 1980s, increasing concern that the narrowness of traditional A-levels were out of step with the broad approach of the GCSE prompted the Government to take action to review the entire A-level situation. In 1987, the Higginson Committee was formed to study methods by which the A/AS-level programme could be broadened. However, the proposals to streamline A-levels, and introduce a five subject structure combining AS and A-levels (Higginson, 1988, *passim*), were considered by Kenneth Baker (then Secretary of State for Education) to threaten academic standards, and were rejected in 1988. A-levels were to remain in their gold-standard form, with

AS-levels as the main instrument by which the Government hoped to broaden the sixth-form curriculum.

Following this, other alternative course structures were offered. In April 1991, the Secondary Head Teachers' Association suggested a programme of five foundation subjects in the first year of A-level, and in year two a choice of A/AS or Advanced Vocational Courses with a modular/credit transfer scheme (*16–19, The Way Forward* Report). The Association of Principals of Sixth Form Colleges recommended a national post-16 framework with a single award. In May 1991, the Royal Society declared that A-level was irrelevant to industry and Higher Education, and should be replaced by an Advanced Certificate Diploma (Royal Society, *Beyond GCSE*, 1991). A British Baccalaureate, similar to International Baccalaureate courses in many European countries, was suggested by the Institute for Public Policy Research (Finegold *et al*, IPPR, 1990).

In its White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st Century* (May 1991), the Government stated its commitment to maintaining the A-level gold standard, to encouraging AS-levels as a means of introducing breadth, and to developing vocational courses equivalent to A-level in terms of prestige and access. In addition, the Paper proposed a training credit scheme, worth approximately £1,000 by 1996, in which students would select modules from a range of vocational and academic courses on offer, thereby determining their own education pathways. Debate continues, however, concerning 16–19 academic and vocational pathways in education, and the future position of A-levels remains uncertain.

GCSE and A-level Music

The first music O and A-levels were introduced in 1951 by nine examining boards, five of them founded in English Universities. O and A-level music syllabuses at this time had much in common. Both involved tests of aural perception and practical skills (performance and musicianship), and both were weighted towards the study of music history and techniques. However, with the introduction of the CSE in 1965, with its inbuilt freedom of mode 2 and 3 syllabuses, the first palpable signs of a rift between O and A-level music examinations became discernible. The CSE examination, which was established by new and separate examining boards, enabled teachers to design curricula around the interests and abilities of their pupils, who in turn reaped the rewards of a more flexible examination. Although the CSE examination never lost its second-rate tag, the principles and approaches of the examination eventually merged with those of the O-level to produce a single system, the GCSE.

GCSE music was greeted by many teachers and educationalists as a major reform. With its practical emphasis on listening, composing and performing, taught within a clearly defined aesthetic field, the GCSE promoted new educational ideals and accorded credibility to concepts of a music education which, to a certain extent, were still regarded as experimental. The course was designed to embrace a wide range of talents and interests in its structure of assessment, a large part of which was (and continues to be) assessed by teachers. In 1992, in alliance with reforms to the National Curriculum for music, a further attainment target, 'appraising', was added, resulting in attainment target 1 comprising performing and composing, and attainment target 2 comprising listening and appraising. While there have been those who considered the GCSE music course to be a hybrid, an uneasy synthesis of the CSE and O-level music examinations, it has nevertheless succeeded in increasing the numbers of students taking the examination. The following table illustrates this point (figures taken from

the School Examinations and Assessment Council examination results; 1985, 1988 and 1992), showing the percentage of students gaining grades A–G and U/unclassified:

	Students	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
O-level 1985	18,629	11.9	25.6	27.4	11.9	10.8	n/a	n/a	12.3
GCSE 1988	30,150	13.6	21.2	23.1	16.2	12.1	8.2	3.7	1.9
GCSE 1992	32,712	20.9	21.9	20.4	14.0	10.2	7.2	3.6	1.8

It is interesting to observe the sharp rise in the percentage of students gaining a grade A between 1988 and 1992, a period in which the increase in the number of students taking the examination was relatively small compared to that occurring between 1985 and 1988. The percentage of students gaining a Grade C has consistently fallen over the years, whilst the number of students gaining a Grade B has remained stable. At the other end of the scale, in 1985 12.3% of students' examination papers were marked 'unclassified', as opposed to only 1.8% in 1992, despite there being a 76% increase in the number of students taking the examination.

Since the introduction of GCSE Music, A-level Music Boards have implemented radical syllabus changes. While some Boards have embraced the GCSE ethos wholeheartedly, others have endeavoured to strike a balance between the practical approach of the GCSE and the need to prepare students for music courses in Higher Education. Indeed, the current diversity contrasts sharply with the previous uniformity of A-level music syllabuses, highlighting the confusion prevalent in this sector of education.

Government reviews of the whole area of A/AS-levels, the resurgence of interest in promoting a wide range of vocational courses, and the demand to increase the numbers of students in 16–19 education, has further pressurised the A-level Boards. While there has been a substantial increase in numbers of students taking the GCSE, the

anticipated increase at A-level has not occurred, as the following chart reveals (figures taken from the School Examinations and Assessment Council examination results, 1985, 1988 and 1992, and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) examination results, 1993):

	Students	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1985	4,832							
1988	4,620	11.5	16.0	18.6	19.5	16.0	10.4	8.2
1992	5,447	15.3	18.5	22.6	19.1	13.8	6.4	4.5
1993	5,134	15.9	16.3	21.8	19.6	14.3	7.0	5.0
N=Near Miss, SCAA A-level Information Service, June 1995.								

In contrast with the GCSE figures, there has been only a marginal increase of 302 students between 1985 and 1993. The trends concerning grades awarded, however, parallel those at GCSE level, notably with regard to the increase in the number of students gaining a Grade A between 1988 and 1992 and the decrease in numbers marked 'unclassified'. Recently, questions raised concerning falling standards have incited both widespread debate and increased scepticism amongst lecturers in Higher Education regarding the grading systems of the GCSE and A-level examinations, an issue discussed in Part 3.

Currently, eleven A/AS-level music syllabuses are offered by seven Examining Boards, listed below:

1. Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB)
2. Northern Ireland Schools Examination and Assessment Council
3. Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board
4. University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations (A-level only)
5. University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
6. University of London Examinations and Assessment Council – A
7. University of London Examinations and Assessment Council – B

8. University of London Examinations and Assessment Council – Theoretical Music
9. University of London Examinations and Assessment Council – Practical Music
10. University of London Examinations and Assessment Council – Music Technology
11. Welsh Joint Education Committee

Six of the seven A-level Boards offer one A-level syllabus in music, while the London Board offers five; two syllabuses in music and one each in theoretical music, practical music and music technology. The London Board is perhaps the most significantly pioneering of all the A-level Music Boards. It is a popular Board, attracting 2,148 out of 5,447 students in 1992. The following chart illustrates the eleven syllabuses showing the percentage marks accorded to each component.

A-level Music Syllabuses from 1994											
Areas of Study	NEAB	Northern Ireland	Oxford & Cambridge	Oxford Delegacy	Camb. Syndicate	London A	London B	London Theoretical	London Practical	London Mus. Tech.	Welsh
Aural Perception	20	20	25	28		20	20	20 (part 2)	20		28
Music History & Analysis	20	20	25	24	27	20	20	20			(20) (32)
Additional Music History						(20)		(20)			
Music Techniques 1	(20)	20	25 [with comp.]		27[with comp.]	(20)	(20)	20			*20*
Music Techniques 2						(20)		(20)			
Performance 1 +	(20)	20		24	27	20	40		40		(20)
Performance 2 +	(20) [second instrument]		12.5		(19)	(20) [second instrument]			20	20	(32)
Practical Musicianship ** +	(20)										
Pre-requisite Performance			* 12.5								
Repertoire									20		
Composition	(20)	20	25 [with Mus Tech]		27 [with Mus Tech] (19)	(20)	(20)	(20)		20	*(20)* *(32)*
Commissioned Composition				24							
Project	(20)				(19)	(20)		(20)			
Music Technology			(12.5)			(20)				20	
Studio Music										40	

Figures in brackets denote optional papers. Figures in *italics* denote that this area forms only part of the percentage shown. * indicates pre-requisite only – no marks awarded.

** Separate paper – Practical Musicianship is included in the performance components

+ NEAB – candidates may offer only two out of the three options thus indicated

As the major components of the syllabuses are discussed in detail in Part 3, a general outline only will be given here. While all the syllabuses incorporate traditional elements with innovations from GCSE music, they differ in three major ways: in component content, in the variety of additional areas of study offered, and in their individual combination of components. Significantly, the chart reveals that the emphasis of the GCSE Attainment Targets – performing, composing; listening, appraising – is reversed at A-level, becoming listening, appraising; performing, composing.

Aural Perception and Music History/Analysis are the only compulsory components of all A-level syllabuses, accounting for between 20% and 32% of the total marks each. Apart from the Cambridge Board, which includes listening in its history component, all syllabuses currently use the Inter-Board Aural Perception Paper. The traditional combination of set topics and set works continues in all syllabuses, selected predominantly from Western Art music.

The Performing component, which counts for between 20% and 40% of the total marks, differs from the GCSE course in that it is optional in two of the ten syllabuses which offer it. The GCSE performing component has, however, significantly influenced that of the A-level in broadening the choice of performing activities offered. Performance examinations now variously include improvisation, rehearsing and directing an ensemble, ensemble performance, individual assessment on two instruments, and accompaniment, in addition to the traditional musicianship skills (sight-singing, score-reading, transposing and keyboard harmony).

Traditionally, music techniques, which includes harmony and counterpoint, constituted a compulsory component of all A-level music syllabuses. The inclusion of composition in syllabuses has meant that, in order to avoid overburdening, music techniques is now

offered as an option in four syllabuses, a compulsory separate paper in the Northern Ireland Board and the London Board Theoretical syllabuses, and is incorporated in the composition components in the Oxford Delegacy, the Cambridge Board and the Welsh Board syllabuses. While free composition is compulsory at GCSE level, it is compulsory on only three of the ten syllabuses which offer it at A-level. Only the Oxford Delegacy Board still includes 'Commissioned' composition as a compulsory component.

Further innovations include the music technology component, offered in the London Board 'A' syllabus, in place of one of the options in the music techniques paper in the Oxford and Cambridge Board, and as an A-level in itself (which also involves studio technology) by the London Board. Four syllabuses now provide opportunity for project work.

AS-Level Music

Nine AS-level music syllabuses are currently offered. The number of students taking AS-level music examinations are as follows (figures taken from the School Examinations and Assessment Council examination results, 1992, and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority examination results, 1993):

	students	A	B	C	D	E	N	U
1992	638	13.2	15.0	18.5	19.6	18.2	8.9	6.6
1993	694	13.1	16.6	19.9	20.9	15.4	7.3	6.8

AS-levels, which comprise of half the content of an A-level, are detailed overleaf:

AS-level Music Syllabuses from 1994

Areas of Study	NEAB	Northern Ireland	Oxford & Cambridge	Cambridge Syndicate	London Music	London Theoretical	London Practical	London Music Tech.	Welsh
Aural Perception (Part 2 only)	20	50	25		20	20	20		30
Music History & Analysis	(40)	50	(25)	25	(40)	40			(70)
Music Techniques	(40)		(50)		(40)	(40)			
Performance 1	(40)			(50) (25)					(70)
Performance 2	(40) [second instrument]				40		40 (40) [second instrument]	40	
Practical Musicianship	(40)								
Pre-requisite Performance			(25)						
Repertoire							(40)		
Composition	(40)		(50)		(40)	(40)			(70)
Commissioned Composition			(50)	(25)					
Project			(50)	50					
Music Technology			(25)					20	
Studio Music			(50)		(40)			40	

Figures in brackets denote optional papers.

BTEC Performing Arts Courses

One of the most popular alternatives to A/AS-level music are the BTEC vocational courses in Performing Arts.

BTEC (Business and Technician Educational Council) 'approves work-related programmes of study run by schools, colleges, and polytechnics, in a wide range of subjects in the UK. Over half a million people are enrolled on BTEC programmes and nearly 300,000 new students register each year. Their ages range from 16 to 54, enrolling on either a full-time or part-time basis' (*BTEC Information Brochure*, 1991). In his statement in the *BTEC Review of the Year* in 1991, the Chief Executive, John Sellars, stated that 'BTEC aims to provide more opportunities for our young people to experience the benefits of education and training that can lead not only to a worthwhile career but also to Higher Education.'

BTEC Certificates and Diplomas, studied on a part-time and full-time basis respectively, are awarded at three levels: First, National and Higher National. According to the 1991 *BTEC Information Brochure*, the one-year BTEC First course is 'equivalent to several GCSEs', the two-year National Diploma course 'equivalent to A-levels', and the two-year Higher National Diploma 'is often accepted by industry and commerce as approaching pass degree standard.'

In 1988, 272 students embarked on the first BTEC Performing Arts course – the National Certificate in Performing Arts. There has since occurred a dramatic rise both in the number of students taking the course at National Diploma level, and in the number and range of Performing Arts courses now offered, as the following table illustrates:

BTEC Performing Arts courses			Student Numbers
1990	Performing Arts National Certificate		272
1991	Performing Arts First Certificate		20
	Performing Arts National Certificate		22
	Performing Arts National Diploma		621
1992	Performing Arts First Certificate		8
	Performing Arts First Diploma		191
	Performing Arts National Certificate		4
	Performing Arts National Diploma		1,234
1994	Performing Arts First Certificate		8
	Performing Arts First Diploma		911
	Performing Arts National Certificate		48
	Performing Arts National Diploma		3,482
	Performing Arts Higher National Certificate		11
	Performing Arts Higher National Diploma		281
	Performing Arts–Applied Music	HND	23
	Performing Arts–Community Dance	HND	12
	Performing Arts–Performance	HND	17
	Performing Arts–Theatre	HND	15
	Performing Arts–Dance	1st C	1
	Performing Arts–Dance	ND	59
	Performing Arts–Drama	HND	50
	Performing Arts–Jazz, Popular and Commercial Music	HND	23
	Performing Arts–Music Composition	HND	16
	Performing Arts–Music	HND	31
	Performing Arts–Popular Music	ND	206
	Performing Arts–Popular Music	HND	35
	Performing Arts–Professional Community Arts Practitioner	HND	15
	Performing Arts–Small-scale Theatre	HND	21
	Performing Arts–Stage Management	HND	14
	Performing Arts–Theatre and Media Production	HND	11

(NB – 18.8% of all students on BTEC courses are over 19 years of age.)

The BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts, the most established and popular course, aims 'to provide a foundation of basic skills relevant to many areas of performance and the opportunity to further develop skills in one of four specific areas; Music, Dance, Drama and Stagecraft' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991). The course is modular, with progression depending on success in each module which, if necessary, can be repeatedly taken. The course comprises a compulsory core (10 units) and offers four option modules – Music, Dance, Drama and Stagecraft (8 units). Although it is expected that most students will concentrate on one option module, they may take units from the other options to make up their unit value of 8. In addition, the course aims to develop a broad range of communication, planning and organising, and problem-solving skills. All core and option units are assessed by in-course assignments and a final assignment, which are internally marked and externally moderated. While levels of attainment are accorded to each unit, an overall grade is not awarded; students either pass, are referred, or they fail. The structure of the course is as follows:

BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts			Unit Value
Core Units	Arts in Society		1.0
	Arts Administration		1.0
	Production Techniques		1.0
	Performance Workshop		3.0
	Production Project		2.0
	Common Skills		2.0
Option Units	Music	Language of Music	2.0
		Music Performance Techniques	2.0
		Composition and Arrangement	1.0
		Introduction to Music Technology	1.0
		Recording Techniques	1.0
		Singing	1.0
	Dance	Language of Dance	2.0
		Movement Studies	1.0
		Dance Improvisations	1.0
		Dance Techniques	1.0
		Composition and Choreography	1.0
	Drama	Language of Theatre	2.0
		Acting Techniques 1	1.0
		Acting Techniques 2	1.0
		Directing	1.0
		Writing and Devising	1.0
		Voice and Speech	1.0
	Stagecraft	Setting for Performance 1	1.0
		Setting for Performance 2	1.0
		Stagecraft 1	1.0
		Stagecraft 2	2.0
		Costume Construction and Wardrobe Management	1.0
		Costume for Performance	1.0

The Core Units

1. Arts in Society

The compulsory Arts in Society module involves the study and understanding of the role and development of the Arts in their historical and social context, and the ways in which the Arts have influenced cultures in society. The content includes 'Popular and legitimate performance, literary and oral cultures, folk traditions, and the development of visual performance from mime and gesture.' Centres are expected to cover all four aspects of performance (music, dance, drama and stagecraft), and 'visit a variety of centres in performance in order to achieve the objectives of this unit' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991).

2. Arts Administration

In this module, students study the business nature of performance which includes financial, legal, marketing, and administrative aspects. Copyright law, the Health and Safety At Work Act, budgeting, and selecting and promoting arts programmes are among the specific areas studied. In addition, students gain practical experience in 'box office procedures, the preparation and handling of tickets, security, completion of a double entry book, calculation of tax and insurance for employees, completion of income tax returns, etc.' The criteria are that 'Centres should be the venue for professional performance as well as student performance with the students gaining the experience of organising for visiting performers and groups' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991).

3. *Production Techniques*

The Production Techniques module is designed to incorporate all aspects of production work, the aim being to provide students with an understanding of the performance venue and a working knowledge of the skills of stagecraft, considered to be essential for all performers. For example, 'practical experience and understanding of the procedure of venue organisation is acquired through planning auditorium space and basic ground plans for a visiting company, exploring methods of organising audiences, accommodating the particular requirements for choral, or dance work, front of house etc.' Practical experience in lighting, sound, design and craft skills is required to fulfil this module. In addition, students study the legal intricacies of performance, develop an ability to manage relationships between artistic direction and management, arrange rehearsal schedules, set deadlines for design and craftwork, learn blocking and cueing conventions, and eventually 'acquire an understanding of the role of stage and production management in process from planning to performance' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991).

4. *Performance Workshop*

This unit is a practical workshop enabling students to develop skills in music, drama and dance. It is valued the highest of the modules, and provides an opportunity for students to explore the basic framework of these components while working with others in a performance group. For this unit, students select and interpret their own material by which performances may be stimulated. Assessment includes skills of organisation, leadership and team-work.

5. Production Project

According to the rationale in the syllabus, 'this project brings together the artistic and organisational skills developed in the core and option units by providing the student with the experiences of being a member of a performance team providing a large scale production in front of an audience.' The performance can take the form of a musical, dramatic or variety production. Emphasis is placed not so much on individual contribution as on the ability of the student to work as part of a production team. This module is designated for the end of the two-year course.

The Music Option Units

1. Language of Music

This unit aims to give students a sound theoretical knowledge, a basic general musicianship and stylistic awareness, some aural training, and a heightened awareness of the synthesis between theoretical areas and their practical illustration. On completion, 'students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the function and uses of the elements of music, for example staves, pitch, scales etc, to display competence in the recognition of various forms and textures, to show an awareness of a diversity of musical styles, for example classical, rock, jazz, folk, ethnic, electronic, and to demonstrate the ability to relate a stylistic and aural awareness to effective performance' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991). Aural training includes intonation, sound quality, and vocalisation of specified material. An understanding of blues, classical, and pop harmony can be incorporated into teaching programmes, although the level of analysis on the course requires only a limited harmonic knowledge.

2. *Music Performance Techniques*

The Music Performance Techniques unit requires the student, as in A-Level, to perform on his/her chosen instrument and to be able to 'show an awareness of the various interactions in music performance when playing solo or ensemble.' Students should, in addition, 'develop an understanding of music performance as an interactive, communicatory and aesthetic process.' The unit also includes sight-reading, improvisation, transposition, and 'playing by ear'. On completion, students are required to 'demonstrate a significant improvement as a performer', to 'appreciate the need for systematic and sustained practice, and be able 'to prepare strategies for its effective implementation' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991).

3. *Composition and Arrangement*

Students who choose this unit must also take the Language of Music unit. The objectives stipulate that students should be able to:

a) Arrange their musical ideas for a range of specified ensembles.
b) Identify and use a range of compositional techniques in the performance of a number of pieces of music.
c) Reproduce selected recorded material as a demonstration of those aural and transcription skills necessary for the communication of musical ideas.

The content includes knowledge of the range and capability of individual instruments and voices, score layout, basic general musicianship knowledge, principles of arranging for both instruments and voices, transposition, and conducting skills. Assignments must contain a number of original compositions and arrangements, taped where appropriate, for conventional, electronic, and computer-based sound sources. The

final assignment comprises the live performance of compositions or arrangements, thereby emphasising the links with the Performance Workshop and Music Performance Techniques units. It is recommended that students also take the Recording Techniques unit, in order to gain the maximum benefit from this unit.

4. Introduction to Music Technology

According to the syllabus, this unit 'derives from the increasingly important role being played by micro technology in the world of music and it will provide an introduction to this technology.' It aims to develop an awareness of the importance of music technology in the performing arts in the following ways:

a) The ability to use commercial software for self-instruction, performance, and composition.
b) Recognition of the fact that music technology should not be seen as a set of irrelevant isolated skills but as an integral part of a musician's working life.

5. Recording Techniques

The Recording Techniques unit aims 'to introduce the basic technical equipment used in multi-track recording and the theoretical background to its operation', and 'to enable students to record and enhance their compositions completed on other modules on this course' (*BTEC National Diploma Performing Arts Syllabus*, 1991). On completion of this unit, students should be able to implement and use a range of recording equipment including tape recorders, mixing desks, microphones, and be able to demonstrate correct studio procedures.

6. Singing

The final unit provides vocal training, and aims to develop aural and sight-reading skills and broaden repertoire. Students perform both individually and in a group, and also learn microphone technique and the use of amplification techniques.

In practice, the diversity of the BTEC Performing Arts course poses problems. The colleges which offer BTEC Performing Arts courses need to be in a financially healthy position in order to meet the rigorous criteria concerning facilities, resources and teaching staff required. After visiting several colleges, I observed a marked diversity in approaches and methods used in order to accord with the BTEC criteria. Depending upon the facilities available, colleges offered two or three of the four options units, frequently omitting the stagecraft option. Others presented specific option units as a package, or restricted choice to particular options. Simulated performance and arts administration activities were common. Thus, the danger of diluting the course content, due to over-diversification, was minimised. The group orientated, practically-based nature of the course appeared to encourage variations in academic standards, thus raising questions concerning the credibility of the qualification. In addition, students could continually resubmit modules until they gained a pass.

The BTEC Performing Arts courses at Wakefield District College were organised on a large-scale basis. The facilities were extensive, comprising a large theatre with full lighting equipment, box office, bar and refreshment areas, facilities for visiting companies, a fully furnished, purpose-built dance studio, and full access to the media and technology centre of the college. This area was excellently resourced with over fifty *Apple Macintosh* and *Nimbus* microcomputers, digitizers, sequencers,

synthesisers, multi-track systems, mixing desks, a recording studio, and projectors/video rooms. In keeping with BTEC principles, the department had developed a network of links with local companies, and employed staff from local theatres on a part-time basis to teach the stagecraft option of the course.

In 1991, the college offered BTEC First and National Certificates and Diplomas in Performing Arts (in 1991, this course was the first and only BTEC Performing Arts course offered). Being well into their fourth year of operation, these courses were comfortably established. However, while Drama, Dance and Stagecraft option modules were offered, the Music option module was omitted. In discussions, the Head of Music remarked that, in his experience, few musicians were attracted to the course, as they were generally 'reluctant to don leotards and get up on stage', clearly a necessary part of the BTEC Performing Arts course. The Music Department instead offered A-Level Music and was involved in the then pilot scheme for the new BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music. In addition, A-Level Theatre Studies was offered.

At Hopwood Hall College, Rochdale, BTEC courses were in their third year of operation. In 1991, this college also offered BTEC First and National Diplomas, together with A-levels in Theatre Studies and Music. In contrast to the large-scale operation at Wakefield College, the approach at Hopwood Hall was small-scale and student-centred, with staff working as a team drawing upon individual experiences in addition to their subject specialisms. For example, the pop group management experience of one member of staff was incorporated into the Arts Administration module. In compliance with the BTEC ethos, the course team had developed excellent links with local industries. The department managed to operate on an overall annual financial budget of £1,000 to £1,600 [!], with extra capital being attained through TVEI. The facilities included a theatre with limited lighting equipment, one large room which was in continual use by drama and dance students, a small, sparsely facilitated

music section, and access to a central computer area. The staff operated a streamlined approach to the BTEC course, offering only those areas which were within the scope of their resources. Stagecraft was not offered.

The City of Liverpool Community College (formerly Sandown College) offered a wide variety of BTEC Performing Arts and Popular Music courses, Diploma courses in Light and Commercial music, and A-levels in Music and Theatre studies. Despite the constraints of its rather dilapidated buildings, the college provided excellent tuition, a range of facilities, and had forged and maintained links with local theatres. College productions included *Grease*, *Chicago*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Jack and the Beanstalk*, among many others. They proudly claimed that:

> During recent years about 100 musicians have progressed from our commercial music courses to careers as professional musicians; into session work, into arranging and composing, into teaching and many other aspects of the music business. Some 90% of our Graduate Diploma students have entered post-graduate teacher training and others have entered post-graduate performance courses at the Royal Colleges of Music. Our A-Level dance students have achieved a near 100% success rate every year in entering dance degrees and our first 'graduates' leave the Dance Diploma this year. About 50% of the Performance Technology students go straight into employment after training; most are in work. Our Drama students find work in theatre, cabaret, television and film.
>
> (*Sandown College Profile, 1990/91*)

In their streamlining of the National Diploma in Performing Arts course, the course co-ordinators offered a package of specific Music, Drama, and Dance options, comprising Movement Studies, Dance Improvisation, Language of Dance, Acting Techniques, Voice and Speech, Language of Theatre, Music Technology, Composition and Arrangement, and Language of Music. Stagecraft options were omitted. In discussions with the curriculum co-ordinator concerning the type of student attracted to BTEC courses, it was explained that a large proportion were mature students looking for a change of direction, who have been 'out of education for some time.'

Many were practising musicians, their motives directed not so much towards achieving fame and fortune but towards acquiring a range of skills, thereby building up their confidence. Others tended to be school leavers with low academic achievement levels. At audition, the course team discriminated between those students capable of taking A-level and those more suited to BTEC courses, and advised prospective students accordingly. He went on to comment on both the low academic standards of BTEC qualifications and the course content, which did not 'reach the analytical or technical depth of an A-Level course.' He believed BTEC courses placed 'more emphasis on imaginative skills' and, overall, found very few links with A-Level, viewing them as 'very different courses attracting very different students and gearing them towards very different prospects.' He went on to remark that opportunities in the media/music professions were in reality relatively scarce, and the acquisition of a BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts did not particularly alter this.

The current Government drive to raise the choice and status of vocational courses is challenging long held views concerning academic and vocational training in the British education system. In my recent consultancy work with SCAA one of the key issues for consideration concerned how BTEC (and the proposed GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications)) Performing Arts courses[14] could be accorded greater parity with the A-level Music course.

For BTEC courses to be accorded greater recognition, standards need to be raised. The low standard required to gain a pass needs to be reviewed, together with the current practice of giving students unlimited opportunity to submit a module until a pass is achieved. The content of the four option modules – Music, Dance, Drama and

14. In November 1994, the NCVQ commissioned a consultancy to prepare a discussion document on the scope and content of the proposed GNVQ for presentation to the Performing Arts Steering Committee meeting on 18 January 1995.

Stagecraft – is repetitive and also restricts the integration of common and inter-related aspects of performance in each art form. As such, the course presents an unrealistic vision of the arts world. In reality, those who work in the music industry have developed a range of skills, flexibility, and versatility in order to sustain their chances of employment across a range of genres and settings. BTEC Performing Arts courses need a more effective balance between specialist training in one of the art forms and general multi-skilled training. Indeed, many performing arts students also attend specialist dance and drama schools, music centres, receive private tuition, and participate in extra-curricular activities. The aim, therefore, of a *general* performing arts education should be to broaden students' awareness and understanding of the arts world, through a practical programme of study which integrates, rather than concentrates upon, performing talents. Currently, even the title of the course is misleading. The emphasis placed on performing arts suggests that the course is appropriate only for those occupations in specific performing areas.

Finally, although the course is primarily geared towards employment in the music industry, qualified BTEC students are now applying for places in Higher Education. If these courses are to be considered an adequate preparation for further music study, the present imbalance between academic and practical course content needs to be addressed, an issue discussed further in Part 2.

A-Level Performing Arts

While all six GCSE Boards offer an Expressive Arts course, only the Cambridge Board currently offers an A-level in Performing Arts, awarded to 638 students in 1994. However, a pilot A-level in Performing Arts is being launched in 1995 by the Oxford and Cambridge Board, and a GNVQ in Performing Arts is currently under discussion.

The revised Cambridge Board syllabus for 1996 comprises five compulsory modules, detailed below, each constituting 45 hours contact time:

1. The Language of Performance.
2. Performance Study (1) in Music, Dance or Drama.
3. Performance Study (2) as above, in a different discipline.
4. Student Initiated Performance – a double module.
5. *Either* The Performer and the Audience.
   Or Contemporary and Historic Art Forms.

Assessment for each module is in one of three modes: Coursework, Written Paper, Performance Practical. The syllabus states that 'Emphasis is placed on the understanding of the performance process, as a direct response to the changing needs of the student who has already experienced a broad based curriculum arising out of the implications of the National Curriculum. In addition, the course is structured to promote group work, problem-solving and communication.'

1. The Language of Performance

This is a foundation module designed to provide a range of experience in the three principal areas of the performing arts. Practical skills of playing, rehearsing and

performing are explored, and an understanding of the appropriate technical language used to describe the individual performing activities is developed. The syllabus states that students should be introduced to the following terms through practical work:

Dance	Drama	Music
Gesture	Role	Pitch
Motif	Status	Motif
Structure	Structure	Melody
Harmony	Monologue	Harmony
Dynamics	Dialogue	Dynamics
Mood	Mood	Rhythm
Spatial Awareness	Spatial Awareness	Timbre
Levels	Dramatic Tension	Texture
Focus	Focus	Tempo
Chorus	Pace	Pace

2 & 3. Performance Study – Music

Students selecting music study the social, historical and cultural development of one of the following: John Cage, Popular American Song Writers (from Gershwin to Sondheim), or Contemporary Music (either classical or popular). In addition, students study the work of either a chosen composer or a selection of songs from one of the above areas. The module includes an understanding and practical experience of workshop, rehearsal and performance techniques, and a final performance. Assessment comprises a two-hour written paper testing knowledge and understanding of the chosen composer and of his/her work. This question presumably would be of a very general nature as candidates would be addressing the same question with a diverse range of knowledge about different composers. In addition, candidates also write an essay discussing and evaluating their final performance work. (The syllabus does not appear to include assessment of the performance itself.)

4. Student Initiated Performance

The student initiated performance is a double module which 'represents the culmination of the learning and creative process; a final practical investigation into the arts.' Students initiate a group performance integrating at least two of the three performing components, with a specific function, situation and audience in mind. The syllabus details requirements for performance exposure of individual members of the group and for development within the group of particular roles of director, composer, choreographer etc. The performance is examined and subsequently discussed by an external examiner.

5a. The Performer and the Audience

The purpose of this module is to heighten awareness of the functions of the arts and the contexts in which they operate. It takes the form of a community arts project, with the final performance given to a targeted audience; for example, an old people's home or a church congregation. The module, assessed internally and moderated externally, constitutes a written appraisal and evaluation of the preparation and final performance.

5b. Contemporary and Historic Art Forms

Students are required 'to explore the origins and development of a particular art form' for this module; for example, Ballet, Commedia dell'arte, Music Hall. The performance forms the basis of the individual critique submitted for assessment, in the same manner as the above module.

AS-level Performing Arts

The AS-level course comprises three of the above compulsory modules:

1. The Language of Performance.
2. Performance study in Music, Drama or Dance.
3. Student Initiated Performance.

The A-level in Performing Arts seems to be even further removed from the reality of the performing arts world than the BTEC Performing Arts courses. Although it includes both academic and practical work, it omits the study of the business nature of the music industry, crucial to any aspiring artist. In aiming to develop group and solo performance skills, course designers appear to have overlooked the fact that many students will already be receiving training, and gaining qualifications, in specialist dance, drama and music schools and centres. Thus, concerning performance, the course is in many ways merely assessing skills acquired outside of the course. The greatest benefit of this course lies in its providing opportunity for developing inter-personal skills, team-work and performance relationships, and in its focus upon evaluating and critically judging performing experiences.

Popular Music and Jazz Courses

The first full-time Jazz and Light Music course was established in 1967 at the City of Leeds College of Music. However, popular and jazz music courses remained on the fringe of music education programmes until the introduction of GCSE music in 1986, which stimulated rapid development of such courses in both Further and Higher Education Currently, seventy Colleges of Further Education offer a broad variety of pop/rock, jazz and light music courses under a wide range of course titles including 'Popular Music Appreciation', 'Pre-Professional Music Course', 'Foundation Course in Commercial Music', and 'Music Course for Vocational Musicians'. Many courses constitute internal Diplomas or are devised as foundation courses for the BTEC National Diplomas in Performing Arts or Popular Music

The BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music was launched in 1990. The course is designed for 'aspiring musicians interested in pursuing careers in the many outlets for groups and individual session musicians, and allows for a continuation of study in the same broad stylistic vein as GCSE Music with the benefits of a vocational, music-focused curriculum' (*BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music Syllabus*, 1992). The course comprises recording techniques, music technology, aural training, improvisation, theory, history of popular music, keyboard harmony, arranging and composing, individual instrumental tuition and ensemble playing.

In his article in the *Popular Music Journal* of December 1991, James Birkett[15] stated:

> I believe this course provides the much needed alternatives to 'academic' progression onto A-Level. With the relaxation of traditional distinctions between the functions of Universities and the Polytechnics, the BTEC National Diploma (and Higher National Diploma) in Popular Music should increasingly be seen as alternative 'currency' for existing and new HE Programmes. Comprehensive provision in popular and related musics has long been relevant and needed in the UK. The long-standing integration of this music in the USA and, more recently, in parts of Europe, further endorses the need for its inclusion within the mainstream of music education. Popular Music is now beginning to be formally acknowledged within one of its spiritual homelands. The people's music appears to have come of age!

The inclusion of pop and jazz in music education has been warmly received by several sectors of the business world, who have provided financial support to a variety of enterprises; for example, the 'TSB Rock/Pop Competition' and the 'Daily Telegraph Young Jazz Competition'. Indeed, national competitions have played a considerable part in recent years in raising the profile of both popular music and jazz in music education. The annual Young Jazz Competition, for example, now operates in thirteen regions, covers five age categories, and offers over £20,000 in prizes. The competition, which culminates in a three day National Jazz in Education Festival, held at the Royal Northern College of Music, provides performing opportunities for successful school bands/quartets and jazz orchestras, and includes open rehearsals, master classes, and workshops on improvisation. Outstanding soloists are awarded scholarships to the Wavenden Summer School rather than prize money, which aptly reflects the approach of the whole jazz education enterprise.

The development of the Jazz in Education programme has encouraged involvement from practising jazz musicians. The *1994 Music Education Yearbook* listed nineteen

15. James Birkett is Senior Lecturer at the School of Music and Performing Arts, Newcastle College, and a pioneer in the introduction of popular music to the music curriculum. In 1991, he instigated one of the first pilot schemes for the BTEC National Diploma in Popular Music at Newcastle College.

solo jazz performers and six jazz groups currently working in education, in addition to the sixty-five nationwide Jazz in Education organisations which offer a wide variety of summer schools, courses and workshops. For example, the Manchester club *Band on the Wall* hosts 'Musicroots', an innovative scheme operating in conjunction with the educational services of Inner City Music. This scheme includes band musicianship, sound engineering and recording, jazz foundations, rudiments and theory of music, group saxophone tuition, public workshops given by visiting specialists, and an outreach programme of professional musicians and tutors into youth and community centres in Greater Manchester. In addition, the scheme offers workshops for GCSE students, and courses in 'Practical Music Skills and Technology' for young people between the ages of 16–24 with no formal qualifications, who have been unemployed for at least six months. This liaison between music education and a music club, best known for its avant-garde programmes and its hot, smoky atmosphere, indicates a positive shift in thinking from traditional concepts of music education and the music industry.

2.0 THE SURVEY

Introduction

The recent changes to A-level music syllabuses, to align more coherently with GCSE music, have left A-level music uneasily straddling the space between GCSE music and Higher Education Through my teaching experiences, it became evident that these changes have only partially restrained the developing chasm between GCSE and A-level music, and in many ways have exacerbated the difficulties Furthermore, a new type of student was emerging from GCSE music and embarking upon the A-level music course, who challenged both the structure and the traditional function of the course as a foundation for further study. The new student was often a talented, intelligent musician, with an interest in future employment in the music industry, and who considered the A-level music course to be of greater academic consequence than a vocational course

In addition, I have observed that the recent debates among music educationalists have only peripherally involved A-level music, focusing almost exclusively on the National Curriculum and the GCSE music course. While the changes at primary and secondary levels have clearly had an impact upwards, the perceived expectations of the Higher Education system have created an equal impact downwards A-level music is thus at the centre of these contradictory tensions. While some attention has been accorded to the alignment of A-level with GCSE music, little consideration seems to have been given to the cohesion upwards between A-level and Higher Education. This imbalance further stimulated my interest in ascertaining the value of A-level music as a preparation for both further music study and for careers in the music industry Although predominantly concerned with A-level music, my survey included the extent

to which performing arts courses have been recognised in Higher Education and in the music industry.

Finally, I was interested in evaluating the views of music students concerning their transition from GCSE to the A-level music course, and from A-level to undergraduate music study.

The survey was thus conducted by questionnaire, interviews and discussions in three areas: Higher Education, present A-level and undergraduate music students and the music industry.

2.1 THE SURVEY – LECTURERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

In considering methods of conducting the survey, I felt that the current diversity of music courses in Higher Education would render a survey on a random basis inappropriate, and a more valuable result would be gained from a selective survey. Thus, 25 universities, colleges and conservatoires were selected, primarily on the basis of their interests and courses in music education. In addition, I felt it important to include both old and new universities, and to cover the broadest possible geographical span in the selection process. Questionnaires were thus sent out to lecturers in the following universities, colleges and conservatoires:

Universities

Bristol
Cambridge
East Anglia
Glasgow
Huddersfield
Hull
Lancaster
Leeds
Liverpool
Middlesex
Newcastle
Nottingham
Oxford
Reading
Salford
Surrey
York

Colleges

Bath College of Higher Education
Bretton Hall College of Higher Education
Liverpool Institute of Higher Education
Roehampton Institute

Conservatoires

City of Leeds College of Music
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Royal Northern College of Music

Of the 25 questionnaires sent out, 28 responses were received, three universities returning more than one completed questionnaire. Only one response, however, was received from the Colleges and one from the Conservatoires. The questionnaire asked the following questions:

1) Do you regard any of the current A-level Music syllabuses preferable or indeed unsuitable for students applying for a place on the Degree course in your Department?

2) What reservations do you have, if any, concerning the new BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts? How would you feel about students offering this type of qualification for admission to the Honours course in Music?

3) Please would you choose four areas of study from the following list, which you would regard as essential study for any student hoping to go on to music at degree level, and choose two or more further areas of study listed or otherwise which you deem relevant for inclusion, giving reasons why.

   History of Music

   Analysis

   Aural training

   Performance

   Keyboard Musicianship

   Harmony and Counterpoint

   Composition

   Project/dissertation

During the course of the survey, this question was revised to gain a more precise view of the value placed on particular areas of study. The revised version of this question asked:

> Using the graded system given, please grade the following areas of study in terms of importance for a student hoping to go on to study Music at degree level:

	Rarely Necessary	Extra-Curricular areas only	Desirable	Highly Desirable	Essential
History of Music:					
i) Styles and forms of Western Music from 1550 to the present day					
ii) World music					
iii) Late 20th-century popular music					
iv) Folk music of the British Isles					
v) Jazz					
Aural ability					
Analysis					
Ability to discuss clearly ideas about music					
Music technology skills					
Performance					
Keyboard fluency					
Keyboard harmony					
Score reading skills					
Improvising skills					
Extemporising skills					
Rehearsing and directing an ensemble skills					
Free composition					
Harmony and Counterpoint					
Knowledge of music related industries					

4) How well do you feel the previous training and academic background of an 'average' first year student prepares him/her for the various aspects of the Honours course; eg, analysis, composition, twentieth-century study?

5a) In what ways do you look for musicianship in your entrance tests and interviews?

5b) What grade at A-level Music do you expect or require of candidates?

6) Please add any comments you may like to make about links between A-level and undergraduate studies in Music.

Question One

Do you regard any current A-level Music syllabus as preferable or indeed unsuitable for students applying for a place on the Degree course in your Department?

This question was received with the least enthusiasm in this section of the survey. Most responses were brief, non-committal, and reflected a disinterest (or perhaps even an ignorance) among lecturers in the differences between current A-level syllabuses. In evaluating the responses as a collectivity, however, the underlying message was more powerful than the stated responses; the differences between syllabuses were unimportant, the crux of the problem rested upon the principles which dictated A-level music course structure, and which were deficient in producing the sort of syllabuses which educate musicians and which nurture innate musicianship. Worse, the attention given to revising course components was directing the focus away from confronting the deeper issue concerning the very constitution of a valuable education in music. The comment from a lecturer at Liverpool University illustrated the collective view of university lecturers:

> Our students seem to achieve their results more on the basis of innate qualities (musicality, intelligence) and attitude (diligence, interests) than as a result of previous courses taken at school.

32% of respondents indicated no preference concerning A-level music syllabuses, simply writing 'none', while 7% expressed unfamiliarity with current course content. 4% considered all syllabuses unsuitable without giving reasons, and a further 4% left the question blank.

Only three syllabuses were singled out for specific comment. The Cambridge Board syllabus was highly regarded by the Professor of Huddersfield University, who considered it to be 'very radical, exciting', while a senior lecturer from Oxford University was critical of the Welsh Board syllabus, which he felt had been responsible for 'some of the weakest undergraduates over the years', concluding that 'one tends to look especially hard at such applicants.' The London Board Practical syllabus was criticised by several lecturers for its limited academic content. The respondent from East Anglia University, for example, commented that:

> Practical Music on its own is not acceptable unless a candidate can demonstrate competence in paper work, either by undertaking written harmony tests here or having already acquired a qualification in which a study of tonal harmony is included.

Others regarded the London Board Practical examination valid only if it was offered with Theoretical Music. One respondent discounted the value of the examination completely if a candidate already had attained Associated Board Grade 8. Indeed, grade examinations were regarded by 12% of respondents as being of equal importance to A-level music, one respondent positively advocating Grade 8 piano and theory as preferred requisites for entry:

> The new ABRSM Theory syllabus provides a much better grounding for degree work, not only in tonal music, but in composition. A good mark at Grade 8 Theory is preferable to an A grade at A-level, and will probably become an entrance requirement.

It is interesting to note this shift in thinking from some quarters towards the rigours of theory examinations, at a time when A-level music courses are moving towards the practical ethos of the GCSE music courses.

Syllabuses which neglected the study of tonal harmony were unanimously considered unsuitable as a preparation for music degree courses. Significantly, while some A-level syllabuses are now advocating the use of keyboards in harmony examinations, several lecturers expressed relief that the element of 'silent' harmony and counterpoint was included in some syllabuses, considered by a lecturer from Oxford University as being 'essential to master as a foundation for freer and more advanced technical work later.'

Some lecturers offered comments regarding AS-level Music. Although the Government has stated its commitment to maintaining AS-levels, lecturers reported that 'few applicants offer AS-levels now.' Several were sceptical of the value of the AS-level course and reluctant to accept it. One lecturer remarked, 'I would certainly ask why he/she had taken AS-level instead of A-level Music.' In my teaching experiences in the 16–19 age range, it has become apparent that substituting AS-levels for A-levels do not enhance a student's chance of acceptance for places in Higher Education. AS-levels only become valued as additional areas of study to A-levels, and as such, are regarded by students and teachers alike as being of secondary importance to A-levels.

Question Two

> *What reservations do you have, if any, concerning the new BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts? How would you feel about students offering this type of qualification for admission to the Honours course in Music?*

The response to this question has been tabulated as follows:

BTEC Qualification	
No reservations at all	14%
Preferred to A-level	0%
Diversification of course not desirable	4%
Inadequate	50%
No use whatsoever	4%
Unfamiliar with the qualification	36%
No opinion given	7%

One of the difficulties in the route through music education is the insularity of its various stages, which adhere not only to different sets of priorities but are also subject to enormous changes. Moreover, these changes appear to give scant attention to their effect upon neighbouring stages. The recent rapid development of BTEC courses in the 16–19 education sector is the subject of widespread debate concerning the relationship between academic and vocational courses. However, the reverberations of this debate do not appear to have extended above 16–19 education. Indeed, the current focus upon introducing GNVQ courses at age 14, is again directing attention downwards. Although the BTEC courses are essentially vocationally orientated, my survey showed that the music industry is as unfamiliar with them as is Higher Education. Moreover, despite the recent rapid expansion of BTEC Performing Arts courses, my research revealed that little attention has been directed towards assessing the effectiveness of these courses in preparing students for either Higher Education courses or for careers in the music industry.

It could be argued that as vocational BTEC courses are essentially preparing students for the music industry, there is little necessity for university music departments to know about them. However, my survey showed that students are now offering BTEC qualifications as alternative entry requirements to the traditional A-level music, and

Higher Education courses, finding themselves on the receiving end, are being forced to adapt their entry requirements accordingly.

It is perhaps questionable whether the current BTEC Diploma course should be considered as a preparation for Higher Education. The diversity of this practically-based course, referred to by 4% of respondents, combined with its emphasis towards vocational music careers, casts doubt upon its adequacy to prepare students for an academic music course at degree level – a concern expressed by 50% of lecturers in the survey. Despite misgivings, however, apart from one lecturer from Oxford University who dismissed the course as being 'probably completely useless', lecturers generally adopted an open approach to the qualification, depending upon its ability to 'provide sufficient academic competence' (Newcastle University). Several lecturers were prepared to accept the BTEC Diploma if students also offered advanced practical and/or theory grade examinations, considering this combination to be a more valuable package than the BTEC Diploma alone.

Despite the inadequacies of A-level music courses, stated in the responses to subsequent questions, the BTEC course was never preferred to A-level. However, several lecturers pointed out that, although neither the BTEC nor the A-level music courses, for different reasons, prepared students sufficiently to meet the standards required for study in Higher Education, this was of no real consequence: general standards had fallen to such an extent that emphasis had long since been transferred to the universities' own rigorous interviews. Indeed, of the 14% of respondents who claimed (albeit somewhat ambiguously) no reservations concerning the BTEC course, 11% went on to qualify this by remarking that, regardless of qualifications (including A-level), the deciding factor remained the student's performance in the university's own entrance tests. A lecturer from York University, for example, explained that:

> We accept the BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts (with a Merit in Music) – no reservations. We have a policy of interviewing all potentially suitable applicants. As in the case of A-Level applicants we discuss their syllabus content with them at interview and make offers on the basis of a candidate's overall impression at interview.

This limited recognition of both A-level music and BTEC qualifications clearly indicates the need for an increased awareness of the requirements for entry to Higher Education music courses, and for a reappraisal of the segregation which presently exists between Further and Higher Education. These courses should constitute a strong foundation for study at a higher level. The major problem is the current confusion in the age 16–19 education sector concerning academic and vocational pathways. If A-level is to remain the major route for entry into courses in Higher Education, then A-level Music Boards need to address the means by which their courses can better prepare students. In addition, an increased clarity between academic and vocational music courses would allow students to select different pathways according to their interests, and would subsequently diminish the present difficulties concerning standards, remedial work on music Degree courses, and the general confusion currently prevalent in this area of education. If, on the other hand, the standard and status of BTEC courses is improved, difficulties would similarly be diminished as BTEC students would be better prepared for Higher Education. For example, several lecturers commented upon the necessity to undertake foundation courses in tonal harmony and history of music in order to bridge the gap between A-level and Degree music courses. Given that the BTEC course currently offers neither of these in any real depth, the difficulties at Degree level could be further complicated now that BTEC students are infiltrating Higher Education music courses.

Four university lecturers pointed out that they had not, to date, received applications from students with BTEC qualifications.

Question Three

Using the grading system given[16]*, please grade the following areas of study in terms of importance for a student hoping to go on to study music at degree level.*

25% of respondents answered this question in its original format. The amalgamation of responses to the old and new format are tabulated in the following chart, in descending order of priority:

Specific Areas of Study – University Lecturers	
Ability to discuss clearly ideas about music	95%
Aural ability	94%
Performance	93%
Styles and forms of Western music	91%
Analysis	84%
Keyboard fluency	82%
Harmony and counterpoint	79%
Free composition	78%
Keyboard harmony	67%
Score reading skills	67%
Improvising skills	65%
Music technology skills	61%
Jazz	56%
World music	48%
Late 20th-century popular music	35%
Knowledge of the music industry	28%
Folk music of the British Isles	26%

16. The grading system comprised five categories: Essential, Highly Desirable, Desirable, Extra-curricular areas only, and Rarely Necessary. In evaluation, scoring ranged from 5–1 points respectively. Thus, the maximum score which could be gained for any one specific area was 140 (28 respondents each regarding a specific area as being 'Essential').

While the National Curriculum, GCSE and A-level music courses focus attention upon the content of the various course components, the approach at Degree level is completely different. Although respondents volunteered detailed information concerning specific areas of study, the overwhelming need expressed was for intellectual skills, a curiosity about music, an ability to apply musical knowledge, and a willingness to learn. The comments from a lecturer at Oxford University are representative of the majority view:

> The exact or even general nature of the music A-level course is not particularly significant; applicants will have done something useful with their time, and a good candidate will reveal the benefits of his course. My task is to estimate the chances of a candidate making a good showing on our course, for which he will need a basic grasp of harmony, a reasonable ear, and the sort of intelligence which is given to enquiry and analysis. Needless to say, the candidate should have a good track record in achievement and industry over his school career.

Thus, *ability to discuss clearly ideas about music* received 95% of the points awarded, being valued most highly by university lecturers. While the five minute viva included in the Performance component of the London Board examination, 'which may include asking candidates to relate their course performing to the rest of their musical studies' (London Board syllabus) is, in my view, a worthwhile inclusion, it is the only Board which provides such an opportunity. Moreover, this style of viva still does not fulfil the wider educational implication indicated in responses to this question – that of nurturing a student's intellectual and reasoning abilities in his/her approach to music study. Although specific areas of study at A-level parallel those studied on music Degree courses, the methods and approaches of tuition and learning, and indeed their very constitution, do not. One lecturer from Liverpool University commented:

> It seems to me that at A-level there is too much passive, uncomprehending learning (eg, of the form of a composition selected as a set work) where what a student says or writes about music bears little relation to his/her experience of, or practical involvement with it. Music as talked about and music as experienced in performance (or silently gleaned from a score) seem to inhabit separate, unconnected worlds.

Views concerning performance varied. Predominantly academic courses, such as that offered by Oxford University, were sceptical of performance as an A-level component, one lecturer stating that 'since most students do performance anyway in Associated Board examinations, I would rather this was not an option at A-level' – a view echoed by several other lecturers. Keyboard fluency, however, was extremely desirable, gaining 87%. The acquisition of some keyboard facility was clearly viewed as a major means of correlating a theoretical understanding with practical execution, particularly in harmony and composition. One lecturer from York University commented:

> I see keyboard musicianship and harmony/counterpoint as related; proficiency in one often aids proficiency in the other. Of the two, I'd go for keyboard musicianship – for fluency in score reading, harmonising, transposing, understanding jazz chord symbols and figured bass.

At A-level, keyboard skills are not included for the non-keyboard player. Similarly, score reading (again a skill to which importance is attached at degree level) has all but disappeared from A-level music syllabuses. A lecturer from Liverpool University commented that:

> Keyboard harmony, score reading and improvising skills are virtually non-existent nowadays (except for the occasional organist). As a result, we are forced to modify our demands from applicants, and adjust our courses accordingly.

It is interesting to note that the main changes to A-level music syllabuses, to include jazz, popular, world and folk music – a direct result of developments in GCSE music – constitute those areas considered to be of least value for music Degree courses. This illuminates the lack of correlation between A-level and Degree level music courses, and is a clear indictment of the limited awareness, or disinterest, in improving the progression from one stage to the other in music education.

This segregation is not exclusive to music education. In placing *knowledge of the music industry* in a lowly position, university lecturers mirrored the views of respondents in the music industry, who similarly accorded limited value to formal music qualifications. However, while neither sector was particularly interested in the other, their views were remarkably similar concerning values placed on particular abilities and knowledge about music – notably the ability to discuss ideas about music, practical experiences and a broad knowledge of musical styles. This was one of the most illuminating findings of my survey.

Question Four

> *How well do you feel the previous training and academic background of an 'average' first year student prepares him/her for the various aspects of the Honours course, eg; analysis, composition, twentieth-century study?*

The following table illustrates the responses to this question:

Previous Training for Music Degree Courses		
	Inadequate	Adequate
Harmony and counterpoint	57%	0%
Styles and forms of Western Music from 1550 to the present day	53%	0%
Free composition	47%	25%
Literacy skills	21%	0%
Performance	18%	11%
Analysis	18%	0%
Aural ability	11%	0%
Keyboard fluency	11%	0%
Music technology skills	7%	11%
Keyboard harmony	7%	0%
Improvising skills	7%	0%
Rehearsing and directing an ensemble	0%	7%
Extemporising skills	no comment	
Folk music of the British Isles	no comment	
Jazz	no comment	
Knowledge of the music professions	no comment	
Late twentieth-century popular music	no comment	
Score reading skills	no comment	
World music	no comment	

Despite the wide diversity in music Degree courses, opinion was unanimous concerning weaknesses in A-level music study. Of the 57% of lecturers who offered specific comments, all were critical of students' weak harmony techniques. The comment from a lecturer at Huddersfield University is representative of many:

> The general attainment in this area is a disgrace to music education. All students should have some experience in this discipline since the study of styles impinges on improvisation – another pathway to composition.

One lecturer admitted being now 'forced to review the entire first year course content' because of defective knowledge in harmony and counterpoint.

The A-level approach to the study of styles and forms of Western music was criticised for its narrow specialisation upon the study of set works and set topics, and the resultant effect of students' patchy knowledge as opposed to a more highly valued broad historical and musical understanding. One lecturer from Bristol University stated that 'history knowledge is always patchy, hence our 'year dot to present day' first year history course.' Others felt students would be better served were the historical component at A-level to 'involve an analytical study of various styles, providing a broad framework for creative style' (Huddersfield University). Several lecturers advocated increased focus on the study of music within a broader social and cultural context, one lecturer criticising current A-level programmes for stipulating set work study 'unrelated to world events, eg; French Revolution etc.' Similarly, aural ability, again valued highly, was criticised for its narrow concentration on dictation skills at the expense of developing intonation and inner ear skills.

21% of respondents referred to students' under-developed literacy skills, and limited ability to write about music in a logical, coherent manner. The fact that many students are now only introduced to writing about music at A-level again highlights a need for basic technique in essay writing in music to be developed at an earlier stage, or for specific tuition in this area to be included at A-level. Concerning this, one lecturer cited two basic skills which he believed to be in short supply among students:

> 1) Literacy in their own language (style of argument, logical organisation, spelling, etc).
> 2) The ability to translate an imagined sound into a) notes sung or played and b) notes written in a score, and vice-versa.
>
> Ability 1 is badly needed for history, analysis, etc. Ability 2 is needed for composition, harmony, improvisation, etc.

The lack of rigour and general attainment level at A-level gave rise to several criticisms of this course as a preparation for Degree level study. The respondent from East Anglia University commented that 'most A-level courses are totally inadequate in

preparing students for degree work, particularly those where the syllabus does not include a study of tonal harmony.' Another lecturer remarked that

> The average attainment at A-level is so low in 'real terms' (ie; the ability to do something well unaided), that it makes little difference in the end what most university students' A-level experiences have been.

References to the limited ability of students to think for themselves frequently arose, a lecturer from the Liverpool Institute of Higher Education stating that 'most students seem to find 'independent' study rather hard. They are lacking in self-confidence, particularly in composition skills.' Indeed, the general assumption of A-level study as being that of largely passive rote learning, the successful student being 'amenable to drilling and not real learning' (Liverpool University), has resulted in a collective scepticism among university lecturers regarding attained grades at A-level and the degree to which these grades genuinely reflect a student's musicianship and potential. One lecturer from Oxford University commented that 'A-level is generally an imperfect preparation for, and indication of an undergraduate's potential.' Another observed that

> It is quite uncanny how many outstanding students performed indifferently at A-level: [conversely] several of those students with grades A and B in music and other subjects perform quite badly even at an early stage in our course.

The inadequacy of A-level music courses in preparing students for music Degree courses was compensated for at degree level by foundation courses to make up the deficiencies. Several lecturers referred to remedial work at the beginning of their courses. The Professor from East Anglia University remarked that

> The average first year student is not ready for work at Honours level – hence our first-year preliminary programme which is designed to bridge the gap between A-level music and Honours degree work. It includes courses in the history of Western music and a foundation course in bibliographical methods; in technical studies (aural perception, keyboard skills, stylistic work in tonal music); and in creative and performance studies (composition, conducting, instrumental or vocal performance).

For some lecturers, the diversity in individual syllabus content at A-level constituted the major reason for remedial courses. The respondent from Newcastle University, for example, commented that

> There is an enormous variety in new students' abilities and knowledge on arrival. The wide differences between A-level syllabuses make it unwise to assume much specific 'common ground', in any case. Our first-year courses tend to allow for remedial work – particularly in harmony work.

The fact that music Degree courses can accommodate foundation work in their first year and can quickly make up the deficiencies, indicates a low standard of teaching at A-level. Several lecturers highlighted this problem; the respondent from Bristol University, for example, remarked that 'a poorly taught student can often be very responsive to good teaching and new ideas.' John Paynter (York University) believed that received tuition was *the* critical influence on a student's achievement at A-level:

> It entirely depends upon the quality of teaching the student has received relative to the student's talent for music. You cannot legislate for conditions that will make any difference to this situation. That is to say, no-one can provide an educational programme that will ensure the quality of teaching or its compatibility with individual student ability.

Question Five

a) *In what ways do you look for musicianship in your entrance tests and interviews?*

The following chart lists, in order of priority, the methods and approaches used in interviewing candidates for music degree courses:

University Entrance Tests and Interviews	
Discussion of general music knowledge/interests	100%
Performance	100%
Aural tests	75%
Keyboard sight reading/score reading skills/ keyboard harmony	61%
Musicianship	57%
Written test (essays/analysis)	54%
Harmony test	50%
Love of music	50%
Sight reading	50%
Aptitude	43%
Sound and broad general education	43%
Potential more important	18%
Initiative	11%
Examples of recent essays	11%
Examples of recent compositions	7%
Examples of recent harmony	7%
No tests given	7%
Interviews for borderline candidates only	7%
Recording technology tests	4%
Transcriptions	4%
Ability to grapple with unprepared situation	4%
Individuality	4%
Record of achievement/portfolio	4%
Unwilling to disclose interview technique	4%

In responses to this question, over 50% of lecturers remarked that rigorous interviews (some lasting over two days) were now common. Only 7% of respondents valued either estimated grades or achieved grades as being a sufficiently reliable yardstick of a student's ability to preclude the necessity of interviews. One lecturer cited reports of their being only a 3% difference between a grade B and a grade C, with percentage scales being adjusted to fit a predetermined pattern in each year! The divergence of A-level syllabuses, misgivings regarding predicted grades (which, as one lecturer put it, 'are invariably over-optimistic – at least a grade too high'), and the arrival of the first BTEC students applying for music Degree course places, has resulted in universities placing increased importance on their own entrance tests and interview procedures. Some lecturers have discounted A-level music altogether, preferring 'a good run of GCSEs' (Oxford University) or Associated Board grade examinations. A good pass in A-level General Studies was also regarded as a good indicator of future performance at Degree level. 18% of lecturers regarded a candidate's potential to be of greater significance than academic qualifications, one lecturer explaining that

> I am more interested, as an interviewer, in musicality, general intelligence, teachability and (not a foregone conclusion) love of music, than grades attained at school or in Associated Board exams. Promise is more important than previous achievement (in cases where they are disparate).

Significantly, of the four most commonly used interview methods – ascertaining a candidate's musical knowledge and interests through discussion, performance, written and practical aural ability, and keyboard skills – only written aural ability constitutes a taught aspect of current A-level music syllabuses. A student's ability to discuss music is not a requisite in A-level music syllabuses (apart from in the viva on the London Board syllabuses, previously discussed). Unless the teacher encourages this, it is left to be developed by the student alone, on an *ad hoc* basis. Conversely, in schools, much is made of students' Records of Achievements or Portfolios (especially in Welsh schools) yet only 4% of respondents mentioned these as having any bearing at

interview stage. Instrumental tuition is generally acquired outside the A-level music course, with practical aural ability being gained largely through students' preparation for Associated Board examinations.

The dichotomy between what is looked for from a music education at A-level, and what is actually being studied and achieved, raises questions concerning the very core of A-level music, an issue discussed in detail in Part 3 of this thesis. For example, students whose first/second instrumental study does not include a keyboard instrument are clearly at a considerable disadvantage when applying for places. Despite the recent extensive changes to A-level music syllabuses, the acquisition of keyboard skills seems to have been overlooked by examining boards, even by those which now prescribe examination harmony papers to be completed with the assistance of a keyboard. It seems to be assumed that students will have acquired some keyboard facility along the way. It could well be argued that A-level music should not be solely concerned with preparation for Higher Education. However, study in music at all levels, from GCSE onwards, would be profoundly enhanced with the aid of acquired keyboard skills. Perhaps the answer is too obvious, but the fact that such an important skill is dismissed or left as a grey area points to a lack of realism and understanding from syllabus co-ordinators of the problems facing the A-level music teacher at grass-roots level. It also ignores the requirements of Higher Education, and of careers in the music industry, as the next section of my survey will reveal. In some ways, this problem runs full circle; post-graduate music students with no keyboard skills who embark on teaching careers face daily difficulties, as some keyboard facility is required in an enormous number of school and curriculum activities.

In addition, much debate has recently occurred concerning not whether, but *how* folk, pop, world music and composition should be included in A-level music syllabuses.

With the exception of composition, these areas of study were placed at the bottom of the list of specific areas of study valued by lecturers in Higher Education.

A-level music justifies its *raison d'être* when examples of students' written and harmony work are requested as part of interview procedures. Judging from the comments offered, however, the most popular method of assessing a student's written abilities was by incorporating written harmony, essay and aural tests in the interview process itself. Some universities had explored the value of both. One lecturer from York University commented:

> We no longer set tests; instead we ask candidates to bring examples of recent essays and harmony and counterpoint (and/or original compositions). We look for proficiency as executant musicians, some fluency in essay writing, competence in simple harmony and counterpoint/composition, basic aural ability (interval recognition essentially), broad musical interests, preferably including post-1945 composition, [and] an acquaintance with the history of western music from (at least) Baroque onwards.

While the rigour of interviews was unwavering, the degree of formality of interviews varied.[17] Usually, interviews were held on a one-to-one basis, but occasionally candidates were assessed by two or even three interviewers in one interview, or individually, assessing different parts of the interview procedure.

One lecturer in the survey declined to comment on interview procedure, stating that 'I'm not prepared to be specific, because it would be undesirable for aspiring entrants to be 'trained' towards a test or interview.' This remark perhaps indicates a belief on the part of the interviewer that innate musicianship can somehow be 'swotted up' prior

17. My teaching experiences have included encountering students' interview experiences at Cambridge University, where candidates have been interviewed in lecturers' private accommodation – one notable example being a lecturer interviewing in the warmth of his bed, as the heating in his flat had broken! Another excellent candidate, following his demonstration of jazz piano in the style of Fats Waller, was invited by the interviewing lecturer to the local pub for lunch, to continue their discussions.

to interview, and his disbelief in the value of performance, discussion, and practical/theoretical tests as a means by which the potential of a candidate can be assessed.

b) What grade at A-level music do you expect or require of candidates?

Despite widespread reservations concerning grades awarded in A-level music, it was gratifying to note that grades still carried some credibility as an indication of a student's potential. All lecturers responded to this question. The results are tabulated as follows:

Required Grades at A-level Music	
Grade B and above	64%
Grade C and above	14%
Between grades C and E	14%
Own entrance exam	28%

In general, the old universities and one conservatoire required a grade B or above, the new universities a grade C or above, and the college in the survey, between grades C and E to qualify for entry. The entrance examinations held by Oxford and Salford Universities superseded results attained at A-level, although one lecturer from Oxford University admitted that, at A-level, 'anything less than a [grade] A is a bad sign though occasionally we admit a candidate with a B usually explained by special reasons.'

There was a marked degree of flexibility concerning grade requisites, several lecturers commenting that special circumstances, non-traditional routes to Higher Education, or

a student's outstanding talent in, for example, composition or contemporary music, could supersede normal grade requirements.

In many ways, the final comment by John Paynter (York University) constitutes a succinct summary of the responses, not only to this question but to this entire section of the survey:

> There is very little link between A-level and undergraduate studies, other than in the most general way (of giving some indication of a student having experience of studying certain kinds of things). The only essential qualification for admission to university studies is *ability*; and that is something each candidate must demonstrate in interview and by producing evidence of their achievements to date.

2.2 THE SURVEY – PRESENT A-LEVEL AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

The views of present A-level and undergraduate music students were included in the survey for two reasons: firstly, to ascertain the nature of the relationships between GCSE and A-level, and between A-level and Degree music courses from the student view-point; and secondly, to evaluate the extent of adaptation required from students in their progression from one stage to another.

Present A-level students in the 16–19 age range were selected on a largely random basis, the intention being to include as many establishments as possible. 10% of the survey came from my own A-level students. Of the undergraduate students, 76% emanated from the selected universities, colleges and conservatoires listed previously, thus providing participating lecturers with a more relevant survey. 24% comprised students to whom I had taught A-level and who had continued their music study in Higher Education.

A particular difficulty in conducting the survey with students, especially in the 16–19 age range, lay in assessing the extent to which a precise evaluation could be presented, regarding not so much the collective response, as the minority response or alternative view-point. So much depended upon the capacity of the students to understand the questions asked, their levels of maturity and the influence of their peers in completing the questionnaire. Although several students provided very full, detailed responses, responses in this section of the survey were generally brief. The survey undertaken with undergraduate music students, however, compensated for the brevity of the 16–19 age range survey, and some very detailed and illuminating responses were given. Although the students in the two sectors were asked slightly different

questions, the degree of overlap was substantial, and the responses have thus been amalgamated. 48 responses were received from present A-level music students, and 50 from undergraduate students. The questionnaire asked the following questions:

1a) What A-level Board and syllabus are you taking/did you take?
1b) What grade did you obtain at
    i) GCSE level? (present A-level students)
    ii) A-level? (undergraduate students)

2) *(Present A-level students)* How far would you say the GCSE Music course prepared you for the following aspects of the A-level course?

   (Undergraduates) Please comment on the extent to which you feel A-level Music prepared you for your Degree course in the following areas of study;

   General knowledge of the history of music
   Study of set works and topics/analysis
   Harmony and counterpoint
   Composition
   Aural perception
   Performance (undergraduates only)
   Keyboard musicianship (undergraduates only)
   Overall

3) *(Present A-level students only)* What aspects of music taught at A-level do you consider to be:
    i) Beneficial/stimulating for you as a musician
    ii) Unbeneficial/unstimulating for you as a musician

4) What aspects of music *not* included in the A-level course did you expect, and/or would consider to be/have been important?

5) What are your personal musical interests and tastes?

6) What would you consider to be your most valuable and satisfying musical experiences, both in and out of school/college/university, and why?

7) *(Present A-level students)* Please comment on your career aspirations.

   (Undergraduates) Please comment on your career aspirations and the extent to which you feel your music education to date has prepared you to take on future opportunities.

8) *(Present A-level students only)* Interviews. (This question is for students who have applied for a place on a music course in Higher Education, or for employment in the music industry). Please comment on your interview experiences and the extent to which A-level course content was included in the interview.

Question One

a) What A-level Board and syllabus are you taking did you take?
b) What grade did you obtain at
i) GCSE? (present A-level students)
ii) A-level? (undergraduate students)

The results are illustrated in the tables below:

A-level Syllabuses		
	Present A-level Students	Undergraduates
NEAB	40%	30%
Northern Ireland	0%	0%
Oxford & Cambridge	0%	19%
Oxford Delegacy	0%	11%
Cambridge Syndicate	0%	2%
London A/B	60%	29%
Welsh	0%	5%
AEB	0%	2%

Grades Attained		
	GCSE	A-level
Grade A	50%	42%
Grade B	29%	20%
Grade C	4%	8%
Grade D	0%	0%
Grade E	0%	6%
Not taken	17%	0%

Apart from the London Board syllabuses, which appeared to be universally popular, the geographical position of establishments appeared to influence syllabus choice. NEAB, the Northern Examining Board, was clearly very popular in the north west, the area in which the survey with present A-level music students was carried out. In the undergraduate survey, all syllabuses were represented due to the wider geographical span of establishments.

It is interesting to observe that while all students on A-level music courses had gained a grade C or above in their GCSE examination, 17% of respondents had embarked on the course with no GCSE in music. These students offered alternative practical and/or theory qualifications which were clearly considered to be of more value as a preparation for A-level study than a low grade in GCSE music.

One of the difficulties with GCSE music lies in schools' curriculum organisation. In my teaching experience, I have observed that staff shortages, timetable limitations or low numbers of students choosing GCSE music (compared to other subjects), have restricted subject availability in schools. Music, often viewed as an expensive minority subject, is one of the first to be omitted from the choice of GCSE options offered. In addition, the practice in many schools of placing music in the same option list as drama/expressive arts renders it impossible for students to choose both drama and music. This indicates a lack of understanding of the arts by school management teams, particularly in the wake of current expansions in the performing arts.

The figure of 42% of undergraduate students who attained a grade A at A-level cannot be assumed to be a true representation of A-level academic achievement among undergraduates nationally. In this selective survey, Oxford University undergraduates constituted 65% of the respondents, and thus the figure of 42% is probably disproportionately high. In general, undergraduates with a grade A, B or C at A-level

gained acceptances at old universities, while students with lower grades were accepted at the new universities and colleges.

Question 2

> *Please comment on the extent to which you feel GCSE/A-level music prepared you for your A-level/Degree music course in the following areas of study.*

The results are tabulated in the chart overleaf.

76% of present A-level students felt the GCSE music course to be inadequate as a preparation for A-level music, allocating only 0–4 marks in the *overall* section. The general level of dissatisfaction was high amongst these students, who collectively criticised the basic, undemanding and limited nature of the GCSE course. Many considered the course to be superficial, due to the inability of their teachers to teach the course with conviction, or to encourage any depth of study. Others dismissed the course completely, one student remarking that 'I might as well not have bothered doing GCSE music and just gone straight into A-level.' One of the 16% of respondents who had not taken GCSE music prior to A-level commented, 'I have not found that my not taking GCSE music has put me at any disadvantage in comparison with other students who took it.'

Some students referred to the large gap between GCSE and A-level music courses:

> The GCSE does not, overall, prepare you for A-level music. There is a massive gap. Even aspects like aural, composition, [and] general history, which are covered at GCSE – at A-level the standard is so much higher.

Preparation for A-level/Degree Music Courses

Subject[1]	10		9		8		7		6		5		4		3		2		1		0	
A-level/U/G students	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G	A	U/G
History of Music					3%	4%	5%	20%	3%	12%	35%	24%	14%	20%	19%	6%	11%	18%	3%		5%	
Set Works/ Analysis				2%		8%				12%	9%	24%		24%	8%	22%	5%	2%	8%	2%	70%	4%
Aural		16%	5%	22%	5%	48%	5%	10%	8%		16%	2%	11%		19%		16%	2%	8%		8%	
Composition	5%		8%		19%		19%		11%		16%		11%	2%	3%		5%	6%			3%	18% 76%[2]
Harmony				6%	3%	12%		12%	3%		5%			22%	19%	24%	8%	18%	11%	6%	54%	2%
Performance[3]																		2%				98%[4]
Keyboard Musicianship[3]																		2%				98%[4]
Project/ Dissertation[3]																16%		20%		16%		6% 48%[2]
Overall				2%	3%	8%	3%	2%	14%	2%	5%	52%	35%	20%	14%	14%	19%	2%	5%		3%	

1. Students used a grading system of 0–10 for this question, 0 representing no preparation and 10 representing excellent.
2. 76% of undergraduate students indicated that they had not taken composition at A-level, 48% indicated that they had not taken project/dissertation work.
3. Performance, keyboard musicianship, and project/dissertation areas of study were included in the undergraduate survey only.
4. 98% of undergraduate students reported that performance and keyboard musicianship were not taught at A-level.

It was interesting to observe that criticisms from these students were not levelled against the depth of study at A-level, but against the *lack* of depth at GCSE level. In contrast to the criticisms of GCSE music, many students commented upon enjoying the A-level music course.

Although none of the students in the survey commended the GCSE course, 20% did concede some value for, as one student put it, having received 'a reasonable base of background information.'

A widespread misconception concerning students' learning about music is the notion that they are interested solely in practical activities. My research has shown that while students do enjoy practical work, their interests lie in being able to support these activities with an acquired knowledge of how music works. While established as a predominantly practical course, there is nothing to prevent a basic knowledge of history, harmony and composition techniques being taught on GCSE courses, an issue discussed in Part 3 of this thesis. The current debate among music educationalists regarding the direction in which creativity/composition has turned is indicative of the problems of a music course based on practical work with shaky academic foundations. Indeed, my survey revealed that 76% of students did not continue with composition at A-level, having been dissuaded by either their GCSE experiences of composition or by the lack of tuition offered.

One of the most disturbing revelations in my research occurred whilst giving a talk to 44 GCSE teachers, during which a widespread general ignorance concerning the A-level course became disconcertingly evident. Moreover, I discovered that these teachers continued to advise GCSE pupils on the difficulty of A-level music, which was considered to be a course suitable for only the most outstanding of musicians. A-level music was generally perceived as being unrealistically demanding and

academic. The following comments are typical: 'Even grade A GCSE students and very good 16-year-old musicians find embarking on an A-level course extremely difficult. I know of some of my pupils who did well at GCSE giving up on A-level courses': 'A-level is impossible unless pupils are proficient in at least one instrument, it is therefore, still an elitist subject'; and 'The A-level 'dog' is still being wagged by the university 'tail'. A-level is too high compared with what is expected at university, ie; the same as first year, and what is attained at GCSE'. Several teachers went further, one teacher commenting that

> It [A-level] does not allow for anyone who cannot read or write notation and also demands knowledge of harmony – this I think is the biggest problem with the A-level. I have not found any syllabus that does not need harmony knowledge.

In disregarding the value of musical literacy, many teachers appear to have overlooked the fact they have acquired this skill themselves, yet advocate a music education to students which neglects to provide this same opportunity. This view ignores the clear demand from students, revealed in my survey (and in my teaching experiences), to acquire and develop a range of skills in, and knowledge about, music.

Only 36% of undergraduate students considered A-level music to be inadequate as a preparation for further study at degree level, allocating 0–4 marks in the *overall* section. The following favourable comment is typical:

> Certainly the A-level prepared one for the massive burden of work to be encountered at university by teaching on all aspects of analysis, performance, history, aural and composition. It set very high standards and helped to maintain them.

However, A-level music was not left unscathed. There were similar criticisms of insufficient depth and narrowness in this course, of the lack of correlation between the

various components of study, of the reliance on the 'accepted wisdom' of standard texts, and in two cases, of the irrelevance of A-level music study for Higher Education.

The lack of correlation in the route through music education is nowhere more apparent than in the area of harmony and techniques. At GCSE level, a grade A can be attained irrespective of harmony knowledge; at A-level, the study of harmony techniques is accorded only 20–25% (the option schemes on the London Board syllabuses allow for a higher percentage) and is optional in several syllabuses. But at university level, the survey revealed that harmony was accorded 79%, sixth highest in the specific areas of study list. Moreover, in 57% of cases, students are required to demonstrate a practical understanding of harmony even at entry level.

The limited tuition in harmony at GCSE level was clearly evident in the survey, as 54% of students marked this area 0, and an overwhelming 91%, between 0 and 4 marks. One student commented:

> Corrections of harmony were made by a teacher who tried to explain by playing chord progressions, but without a theoretical understanding of harmony it was meaningless.

The situation improved at A-level, with only 72% of undergraduates according 0–4 marks to the study of harmony as a preparation for Degree level. Undergraduates generally were critical of the over-emphasis on Bach chorale style, which was felt to have severely restricted opportunities for a broader harmony techniques study. A minority felt that tuition in string quartet writing, Palestrina techniques, and figured bass would have been beneficial. However, other students commented favourably, one remarking that 'the harmony covered was much the same as that studied during the first year of the degree course'. Another remarked that, although he felt quite well

prepared for the university pastiche and composition courses, he had received most help in keyboard harmony from his piano teacher.

The survey revealed little analytical work being undertaken at GCSE level, with 70% of respondents declaring they had received none at all. For most undergraduates, the compulsory study of set works at A-level ensured some analytical tuition. However, the methodologies employed in teaching analysis had frequently restricted students' aesthetic and critical judgements. The following comment from one undergraduate is indicative of many; 'analytical work was always undertaken by the teacher and dictated as finished notes'. Thus many undergraduates' first experiences of analysis, and of thinking and reasoning for themselves, occurred at degree level. One undergraduate who had encountered Schenker methods in his degree course complained of 'feeling at a deep disadvantage when confronted with specific analytical techniques'.

It was surprising to note that the GCSE listening component was not generally considered to be a valuable preparation for A-level aural work, despite the A-level Inter-Board Aural Perception paper being modelled on the GCSE Aural Perception paper. As a preparation for degree study, however, it was in this area that a large proportion of undergraduates felt they had been best prepared. One undergraduate described his aural training at A-level as being 'thorough and by far the most useful aspect of the A-level course'. 7% of respondents felt that the test attracted too much emphasis from teachers and enjoyed too great a proportion of the total marks. The reason for its success at A-level could be partly due to the recent Longman and Bowman publications. Directly based on the Aural Perception paper, and comprising a prodigious number of examples, these books serve as ready-made lessons for teachers.

The emphasis upon writing notes, passive learning, and limited scope for original work was commented upon by 8% of undergraduate students. One student at Huddersfield

University, for example, stated that 'there is no original work at A-level. It is all rewriting notes.'

Performance was in general taught outside of the A-level course, in private tuition.

Question Three

(Present A-level students only) *What aspects of music taught at A-level do you consider to be:*

i) Beneficial/stimulating for you as a musician?

ii) Unbeneficial/unstimulating for you as a musician?

The results are illustrated as follows:

Specific Areas of Study			
Area	Beneficial/ Stimulating	Unbeneficial/ Unstimulating	Beneficial but Unstimulating
Broad history and listening knowledge	53%	7%	
Set works/ Set topics	15%	28%	15%
History limited in scope			12%
Aural	82%	10%	
Harmony	76%	10%	12%
Limitation of harmony in Bach style only			15%
Composition	21%	7%	
Orchestration	9%	10%	3%
Performance	71%		
Sight reading/singing	9%		
Ensemble playing	12%		
Improvisation	6%		
All areas beneficial	29%		
Unbeneficial section left blank	40%		

The response to this question was more positive, with 29% of respondents regarding all aspects of the course to be beneficial. Aural, harmony and performance were particularly valued, being accorded 82%, 76% and 71% respectively. A further 40% of students found no aspect of the course to be unbeneficial, leaving the section blank. Broad historical knowledge, accorded 53%, could have been higher were it not, in some cases, confused with set works/topics.

Composition was only awarded 21% which, considering the recent emphasis in music education upon composition, is surprisingly low, and signifies the lack of value placed on this activity by students. This could be partly due to limited tuition, remarked upon in the survey, but it also suggests a misguided assumption by some music

educationalists that all students will enjoy and benefit from composition. As a collectivity, students most enjoy the interaction gained through performing music, and the thrill of performing to an audience. For many students, the isolated task of composing music, especially with little background knowledge of harmony structures, does not capture the same excitement as that generated from performing. Moreover, many students do not have keyboard skills, and therefore cannot play their composition unless it has been written for their own particular instrument. This substantially restricts exploration. Of those who do possess keyboard skills, it is a rare student who can score read three or more parts at once. The development of the inner ear amongst all but the best A-level student is still at a rudimentary stage. The alternative, of course, is to use recording technology. Discrepancies are rampant in this area between the well- and poorly-equipped music department, the technological abilities of the teacher and student, and the time allocation for different subject areas. For many reasons, composition and music technology have been traditionally male-dominated interests. This thesis has not researched gender patterns in A-level students, but it is generally acknowledged that more females than males take A-level music. The combination of these two factors could account for the low uptake in these areas in A-level music. (In my teaching experiences, I have observed that it is almost always male students who have chosen composition.)

The most undervalued aspect of the A-level music course comprised the specific study of set works/topics. 28% of respondents criticised this study area as 'narrow and restricted in scope', reflecting the opinions of many university lecturers in the survey. Only one student appreciated this study, an outstanding student with acceptances from the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal College of Music:

> The several musical extracts we study with ULEAC introduced me to a wide variety of music which is beneficial for aural perception and sight-reading.

This student clearly already had acquired a substantial amount of musical understanding and knowledge and had developed the ability to apply her musical intelligence to her knowledge. It could be that for the average A-level student, the process of analysing music before he/she has built up a background of its riches and diversity (and, moreover, before he/she has been able to web together a patchy knowledge into a coherent understanding) simply falls on stony ground and is therefore rejected as meaningless. However, the survey revealed that students enjoy understanding how music works. 53% of respondents considered 'listening to different types of music', the acquisition of a broad history and listening knowledge, to be beneficial, and 76%, the second highest in the survey, regarded harmony techniques as being of value.

There are a number of reasons which could account for the existing problems with analytical studies at A-level: firstly, for any analysis to be understood, a general knowledge of the whole music spectrum needs to be in place first; secondly, the choice of music set for study; thirdly, the received tuition, which in many cases constitutes 'teaching' analysis through dictated notes rather than through discussion, reasoning and synthesising innate musicianship, harmonic knowledge and musical intelligence; fourthly, an understanding of harmony seems to be weak at A-level, which would inevitably hamper analytical processes. However, it is clearly not the study of harmony itself which is spurned but, again, the enforced strait-jacket of concentrating on one aspect only of a broad area of study; in this case, the harmonisation of Bach chorales, considered by 15% of respondents to inhibit a preferred broader study. One student, for example, commented:

> I dislike the fact that the four-part harmony has to be in the style of Bach which I feel could give students a narrow outlook. It isn't useful for composition if we have to focus on one style of harmony because the Board instigates this.

15% of students considered aspects of the A-level course, in particular set works/topics and harmony components to be 'beneficial but unstimulating', indicating their recognition of the value of these areas of study but the lack of stimulus in the methods and approaches used.

In this question, in fact throughout the survey, there was much blurring of the facts. It was therefore difficult to ascertain whether the responses were implying limitations in the course content, in the received tuition, or in the students' own capabilities and understanding of the concept of a music education at A-level. There are clearly some confused students currently taking A-level music. For example, one student wrote, 'I find aural and harmony beneficial when I get a good mark, and unbeneficial when I get a bad mark'! Another student stated, 'history is unbeneficial but I find it interesting'. This suggests not only a lack of recognition of the value of this study, but also implies that study and enjoyment of a specific area are viewed as unrelated entities, enjoyment diluting the academic worth of the study.

Question Four

> *What aspects of music not included in the A-level course did you expect, and/or would you consider to be/have been important?*

The responses to this question are illustrated below:

Aspects of Study Not Included in A-level Music and Considered Beneficial		
	16–19 age	Undergraduate
A broader historical knowledge	44%	36%
Keyboard harmony/fluency/score reading skills	0%	30%
Broader music techniques including string quartet writing	0%	24%
Composing to a higher level	30%	24%
More performance studies in class	26%	0%
More interpretation/musicianship	15%	4%
Mediaeval and Renaissance music	0%	12%
Contemporary music	4%	8%
Music technology and recording	11%	2%
More integration between components	0%	14%
Greater emphasis on study of music within its cultural context	0%	4%
Broader study of popular music	7%	0%
Music business and industry	7%	0%
More opportunity to reason and think/discuss	0%	8%
Ethnomusicology	4%	4%
Rhythm	4%	0%
Not known what to expect	4%	0%
A lot more on course than expected	4%	0%
None	7%	0%
Left blank	36%	4%
'Not applicable'	2%	0%

In the responses to this question, new areas of study were not proposed, as had been expected. Instead, the majority of students in both sectors emphasised the need for a broader study of existing course components. The highest percentages – 44% of present A-level students and 36% of undergraduates – cited historical knowledge, together with an understanding of music within its cultural and social context, composition, harmony techniques, and some training in keyboard harmony and score-reading as important. They considered that a richer, more expansive approach at

A-level would have assisted their A-/Degree level work. Some undergraduate students expressed misgivings in the low priority accorded to history and harmony (which has decreased from a collective 60%, and above, to 20–25% in history with an optional further 20% in harmony). As one student asserted, this was 'hardly a sufficient amount for what seems to me to be an essential part of a music course.' 12% of students specifically mentioned contemporary music as a neglected area on their A-level courses, and 12% commented upon the limited study of Medieval and Renaissance music at A-level:

> I had great difficulties in my second year course on Early music notation, Gregorian chant etc. Perhaps something introductory at A-level would have paved the way for a better understanding.

14% of undergraduate students were critical of the segregated nature of the various A-level course components, one student complaining that 'the harmony and counterpoint is not necessarily related to one's studies of the history of music ... a wasted opportunity for the connection of ideas.' The need for a greater fusion of theory with practical at A-level is discussed in Part 3 of this thesis, and constitutes the foundation for my ideal course structure.

It was pleasing to note that some students expressed satisfaction with their A-level courses, the London Board, the Oxford and Cambridge Board and the Oxford Delegacy in particular being singled out for comment. One student stated 'I personally found the Oxford Delegacy Music A-level a very satisfying course. It allowed for detailed study whilst also containing a broader scope with regard to history, and gave a good base to start from for a degree.'

8% of undergraduates advocated 'more opportunity to reason and think/discuss', one student suggesting:

> A forum (situation) for individuals to express what they get from music, not what Grout and Palisca say they should. Self-expression comes as a bit of a shock at degree level. If an A-level course could instil enthusiasm into students to find out for themselves instead of being told this would lead to fuller fulfilment at degree level. It would also help the transition to student led study.

The significance of this response cannot be under-estimated. In his remarks, this student struck at the very heart of the difficulties in the progression from A-level to degree. Lecturers awarded the highest percentage in the survey, 95%, to students' abilities to reason, ask questions and solve problems. In his succinct response, another undergraduate student exposed the same disparity between the two courses, commenting that 'the A-level course is not an adequate preparation for the frequency in Higher Education in which, we were asked to discuss, Why?' This important issue, discussed in Part 3, was one of several in the survey in which the collective student view paralleled, or closely resembled, that of university lecturers.

36% of present A-level students left this question blank. My experience of teaching A-level music reveals that many students are unable to be specific about their expectations of an A-level course in music, other than generally wanting to know about different types of music, how it all fits into cultural life, and how music works. This is indicative in the responses of 41% of students, who looked for a greater emphasis on performance studies, interpretation/musicianship in A-level; in short, a greater understanding of emotion and meaning in music.

In some ways, it is disconcerting to observe that, in establishing radical syllabus alterations, A-level Boards strive to arrive at a solution as to how best to serve the student while simultaneously maintaining standards, when they never find out what it is

that the student is looking for. For example, the desire for a greater breadth of academic content on A-level courses again occurred in responses to this question. This view conflicts with the recent approaches of the A-level Music Boards to increase the practical nature of their courses – on occasions, at the expense of academic content – in order to make their courses more attractive. It is equally disturbing to realise that course structure is currently manipulated by direct Government pressure to increase student numbers in this sector of education, and indirectly, through league tables. It is in this particular area of course content where such pressure can be seen to be doing most damage.

Question Five[18]

What are your personal music interests and tastes?

The responses to this question are illustrated below:

18. Questions 5, 6 and 7 were not included in the survey with Oxford University students, as they were added at a later date.

Personal Interests and Tastes			
		16–19 age	Undergraduate
Broad, varied musical interests		28%	37%
Classical music in general		40%	42%
Specifically:	Baroque	6%	17%
	Romantic	15%	8%
	Contemporary	15%	17%
	Keyboard music	2%	17%
Jazz		38%	25%
Big Bands		4%	0%
Acid jazz		8%	0%
Pop:	All types	35%	25%
	Soul	15%	8%
	Dance	8%	0%
	Blues	8%	0%
	The Beatles	8%	0%
	Funk	6%	0%
	Reggae	2%	0%
	50s and 60s	2%	0%
	Chart	4%	0%
Rock		25%	0%
Folk		2%	0%
Opera/musicals		10%	23%
Easy listening		2%	0%
Listening to the radio		6%	0%
Reading critics on music		2%	0%
Non-western art music		0%	8%
Church and organ music		0%	17%
Electro-acoustic music		0%	25%
Educational workshops		0%	4%

The widely held view that most students in the 16–19 age range are predominantly interested in pop music, and in chart music in particular, with a minority interested in rock music, was to a certain extent dispelled in the responses to this question. While 35% of students in this age range declared broad surveillance of pop music, only 4%

admitted to following the pop charts with any interest, 80% preferring to be more selective in their tastes. Moreover, classical music and jazz were singularly more popular than any one particular style of pop music, being accorded 40% and 38% respectively. The response from undergraduates broadly resembled this pattern, although interest in specific genres was transferred from pop music to classical styles, undergraduates having perhaps developed broader musical interests encompassing a range of styles. For example, one undergraduate student commented:

> I am a composer – particularly electro-acoustic music, with a broad area of influences, often combined polystylistically; contemporary music in general is a passion of mine, particularly the composers Alfred Schnittke, Panufnik, Vaughan-Williams and co [*sic*], Britten and Tippett. Also interested in minimalist music and to a certain degree, pop music.

Through my teaching experiences, I have observed a willingness from students to acquire a varied interest in music. Students voice their preferences enthusiastically, both positively and negatively, when introduced to music previously unfamiliar to them, presented by either their peers, the media or in teaching programmes.

The current jazz revival in contemporary culture has clearly secured an enthusiastic following among students and, indeed, has instigated a cross-over style – 'acid jazz'. Similarly, the revival of interest in the music of the 1960s and in The Beatles, as part of a general 1960s revival, is being as much enjoyed by young people as other sectors of society. It is interesting to note that, apart from acid jazz and possibly recent funk music, this chart could have been assimilated in the late 1960s/1970s, as tastes in music among young people do not appear to have significantly changed. (In my years of teaching a general popular music studies course to A-level students, there is little difference regarding tastes in pop music between A-level music students and other A-level students. In general, among non-musicians, there is possibly a higher proportion of students interested in the alternative pop cults, whilst the musical tastes

of A-level music students are usually more diversified, embracing aspects of classical music.)

35% of students enjoyed opera/musicals, the enthusiasm for the musicals of Andrew Lloyd Webber being largely responsible for the percentage awarded (10%) among 16–19 age students. The gender differences are particularly noticeable in students' partiality for musicals; almost without exception it is girls who enthuse about the musicals of Lloyd Webber.

In contrast with the concern among music educationalists to include music of non-western cultures into the GCSE and A-level music courses, students' interest in this music, when given a free choice, was minimal – 0% of students in the 16–19 age range and only 8% of undergraduates indicated an interest.

It was disconcerting to read the comments of one student, who in reflecting upon her renewed interest in music after giving up her music degree course, commented:

> Now no longer a music student, I feel free to listen to whatever takes my fancy. I think that, for me, studying music at university level dampened much of my enthusiasm. Now, quite happily I sit and listen to Bach's chorale music without feeling obliged to identify chord progressions, etc. I like particularly 19th century orchestral music – Brahms, Wagner. But I listen to modern stuff too – I particularly like 60s music.

Question Six

> *What would you consider to be your most valuable and satisfying musical experiences, both in and out of school/university/college and why?*

This question was phrased to encourage as open a response as possible, encompassing listening, performing and any other musical experience considered valuable. However, students overwhelmingly cited performing experiences, as illustrated in the chart below:

Valuable and Satisfying Musical Experiences		
	16–19 age	Undergraduate
Performing in concerts (unspecified)	36%	0%
Performing in large-scale concerts (in and out of college):		
Orchestra	48%	8%
Choir	26%	17%
Brass band	19%	8%
Concert/wind band	13%	0%
Ensembles	17%	25%
Solo	4%	8%
Jazz bands	2%	0%
Performing in competitions	31%	8%
Fusion of course work with performing activities	4%	42%
Performing arts/musical productions	8%	17%
Interaction/discussion with other musicians	2%	17%
Attending summer schools and courses	6%	8%
Playing with professional musicians	0%	8%
Composing	6%	17%
Performance of composition	6%	17%
Conducting	0%	17%
Attending pop concerts/gigs	8%	8%
Attending classical concerts	2%	0%
A-level music course	6%	0%
Concert tours	4%	0%
Assisting/teaching piano to children	4%	0%
Passing Associated Board exams	2%	0%
African drumming	2%	0%
Left blank	2%	0%

The most significant factor to emerge in the responses from students in the 16–19 sector was that valued experiences involved performing in public arenas, either with school orchestras/bands/choirs/ensembles or with community and music centre forces. Performances at, for example, the Royal Northern College of Music, Norwich Choir Festival, the Free Trade Hall, and the Royal Albert Hall were all specifically quoted as particularly valuable and enjoyable experiences. It is interesting to note that while many of these performances were with school-based enterprises, the excitement was generated by giving performances in well known cultural venues rather than in the concert at school or college, which received no interest in the responses here. For students, the entire performance atmosphere – the discipline of the rehearsal and concert schedule, the professional venue, the concert black and white dress – provided a taste of the world of the professional musician.

19% of students played with Brass Bands, all of which were involved in Brass Band competitions. The other 11% in the survey who cited competitions as a favoured part of their musical experience were members of choirs which competed in musical festivals, including the Llangollen Eisteddford. For the Brass Band musician, the peculiarities and intricacies of Brass Band competitions – the adjudicators' box, the discipline of innumerable rehearsals, the hierarchical approach of many bands, and the interaction with players of all ages (not merely their own peer groups) – all constitute cultural life for young band musicians. The thrill of being involved in successful group music-making was expressed by one Brass Band enthusiast; 'producing a winning performance of George Lloyd's *English Heritage* at the NWABBA Championships (Championship section, The Preston Guild Hall, November 1994)'. In a recent barbershop quartet lunch-time concert which I held in college, two of the four singers had spent the previous day performing in the Brass Band competition held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Upon relating their experiences, in capturing the atmosphere and rituals of the competition, the students communicated their enjoyment

of the occasion, marred only partly by the fact that their bands had not been very successful.

For some students, public performances constitute a regular income. For example, one of my A-level students has weekly engagements at an Irish Club playing the mandolin in an Irish band. This student, an excellent player, gained second place in the 1993 International Irish Mandolin competition.

For 96% of students in the survey, performing was a major part of their cultural life. Involvement in pop culture constituted only a part of students' valuable musical experiences; indeed only 8% mentioned attending pop concerts/gigs. As the previous question highlighted, whilst a large proportion of students listen to pop music, a greater proportion were spending more time rehearsing and performing in various activities, including rock/pop bands. The act of participating in a group, and of interacting and discussing with other performers, was a highly important and valued part of the activity. This experience is excluded from assessment at A-level, yet is recognised and included in university interviews as an important indication of a student's musicality and potential. Current exclusion serves only to render the A-level course dry and sterile for some students. There is a need to examine approaches by which this rich source of musicianship and music-making can be recognised within assessment procedures, an issue discussed further in Part 3 of this thesis.

Some present A-level students recognised the value of the A-level course upon their performing experiences and were able to fuse other segregated areas together. One student commented:

> I attend master classes for flute every summer which are great for listening to new repertoire and for confidence. In college, many concerts are organised and we are encouraged to participate in different kinds of music-making groups. This is helpful, particularly for the aural perception paper.

Another commented:

> Being able to identify chords etc at rehearsals – listening to a change of key and knowing how it is done and what key it has gone to – listening and singing music and being able to predict what happens.

The diversity of interests shown by undergraduate students was reflected in their eagerness to provide very detailed accounts of their musical experiences. Examples of the diversity of interests are quoted below:

i) My first trip to Covent Garden (cheap enough to be incorporated in an 'Arts' experience week in London visiting theatres – this does happen in some schools). The results have been tremendous.
ii) 14 years in a cathedral choir – fun, excellent musical training.
iii) Busking lots of music with someone (just to learn more music).
iv) Organising concerts – this was at school. Important because I was able to control my artistic input rather than be told how someone else wanted it.

Another cited:

1) Singing in Choirs – especially *Zadok the Priest*, *St John Passion*, *Nelson Mass*, *In the Beginning* – all at Bristol University.
2) Conducting a band for big university show *Guys and Dolls* – 1988.
3) Playing church organ.
4) Attending all West End shows.
5) My first pop concert – 1991, [the] Pet Shop Boys

And finally, the insight and sensitivity which many of the students espoused was admirable, for example:

- Performing – knowing you have complete control of your instrument, the listener and yourself in a highly sensitive situation and atmosphere.
- Being able to achieve unity even though other players have different ideas.
- Pop music – seeing the world with a successful pop group, playing electronic stringed instruments as a classical musician, contributing to the making of the music using Classical ideas. Looking over the fence.

For several undergraduate students, the enjoyment of listening to music was inextricably linked to their practical interests. For example, the stimulation of performing in ensembles at university had, for one student, 'opened doors' to hitherto unknown aesthetic delights. He commented:

> As a viola player, I have been involved with orchestral playing for several years, which I particularly enjoy. I am also interested in early music; this interest stems from my joining a Baroque group at home, but since coming to Bristol I have taken up the bass viol, and I enjoy consort playing very much. As a final year student, I have chosen to do a dissertation as my major option; my subject, the symphonies of Franz Berwald (1796–1868, Swedish composer), reflects my interest in the orchestral repertoire.

Question Seven

> *Please comment on your career aspirations and the extent to which you feel your music education to date has prepared you to meet and take on future opportunities.*

The responses to this question are illustrated below:

Career Aspirations			
		16–19 age	Undergraduate
Performing – ideally		8%	22%
Teaching:	Higher Education	3%	17%
	Secondary	4%	17%
	Primary	6%	
	Instrumental	8%	17%
	Private	2%	
	With music subsidiary	2%	
Research			11%
Army musician		2%	
Composer – ideally		4%	17%
Music industry		2%	11%
Media/broadcasting		2%	
Music journalism		6%	6%
Session musician		10%	
Sound engineering		10%	
Non-music careers	Business/law	8%	
	Nursing	6%	
	Retail management		6%
	Medicine/medical research	2%	
	Physicist	2%	
	Physiotherapy	2%	
	Town planning	2%	
Not sure, but in music		8%	
Unsure, no idea		12%	11%
Left blank		8%	

Responses to this question revealed that 64% of students in the 16–19 age sector and 83% of undergraduates aspired to careers in music, with 26% and 51% respectively in teaching. For 34% of students in the former group, A-level music was studied as a subsidiary subject to other career interests, although for careers in sound engineering an A-level in music would certainly be an advantage. 23% were unsure of their future career directions.

The 67% of undergraduates who wished to pursue careers in either performing or composing were well aware of the competitive nature and difficulties of these professions, many detailing second career choices, usually in teaching, as a supporting or alternative career. Several students remarked on the inadequacies of their degree courses in preparing them for future careers in these areas, one student, for example, commenting:

> The swings and roundabouts I have encountered so far have been overcome by advice from working with fellow performers. Sure, College has provided me with a few essentials, but SURVIVAL, once you have the essentials, is just as important. I enjoy the uphill struggle, we're all climbing a mountain; some are nearer to the top than others. The learning process never stops as a musician of any type.

In discussion, this student, a previous A-level student of mine, told me that his greatest learning experiences in survival emanated from playing jazz/blues in Hungarian bars and accompanying silent (Hungarian) movies in matinees.[19] This student was an outstanding black musician whose parents (a bus driver and a cleaner) showed little interest in music, nor an understanding of the exceptional talent of their son. He had already overcome several obstacles, including his decision to change direction from the viola to the piano whilst studying at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. As with many others before him, the enormous difficulties of succeeding as a performer had led him to consider teaching. He wrote:

> It is my main aim to work in music in Higher Education as a keyboard specialist, occasionally undertaking outreach work with general school age (5–16(18)). I would like to include performance related studies, performing arts as well into my career as a solo/chamber pianist and teacher of keyboard studies.

19. This student is currently studying piano at the Franz Liszt Conservatoire in Budapest, Hungary.

In my discussions with several county music advisors, each drew attention to the general state of restlessness of music teachers. The limited opportunities in the higher echelons of performance and composition has forced many an aspiring artiste into teaching, and in most cases this is considered as distinctly 'second best.'

Other students were critical of the lack of preparation of their music Degree courses for professional orchestral/chamber music careers, one student complaining:

> Whilst I have received a sound background knowledge in the field of music, most of the knowledge of the business of professional playing has been passed on informally by my instrumental tutors, and 'picked up' by me through freelance playing over the last few years.

For careers in teaching, the route from either the BEd or BA/BSc Degree courses to the PGCE course is clearly marked, with established educational papers advertising posts. For careers in professional playing, my research has shown that those pursuing careers following study at Conservatoires are no better prepared for, or aware of, the requirements and intricacies of professional performing than those following Degree courses in universities. There thus appears to be a need for further training in this area, possibly in the form of a masters course in the rigours of rehearsal/concert schedules, agents, promotion and marketing, workshop techniques and so on, all of which are currently excluded from traditional music courses.

Some undergraduates in the survey, however, acknowledged skills acquired through their music studies, despite some having changed career directions:

> In terms of my retail management career, music has helped me to develop leadership skills (via conducting and directing shows). Music endows one with a reasonably mathematical/logical frame of mind, again indispensable in the retail world.

One respondent felt that her training had deprived her of 'the enjoyment factor of music' and that, while she had acquired some skills, 'looking back, something that I wanted to keep for enjoyment has become a chore.'

Question Eight

> (Present A-level students only) *Please comment on your interview experiences and the extent to which A-level music course content was included.*

Only 23% of students were in a position to respond to this question, as those in their first year of A-level study had yet to attend interviews, and 34% of respondents were pursuing careers in other professions. The results are tabulated in the following chart:

Interviews for Music Degree Courses	
Performance	100%
Aural tests – practical	100%
Discussion – general musical knowledge	65%
Discussion – music interests	59%
Written harmony paper (chorale)	59%
Keyboard skills/harmony	29%
Sight singing	24%
Written history paper	24%
Written analysis	18%
Examples of harmony/essay work	18%
Written dictation of melodies/intervals	6%
Asked to write a Lydian/Mixolydian scale	6%
Question left blank	77%

The survey revealed that, as a collectivity, music lecturers embraced similar values and interests in prospective students. All required performance and aural tests, and all discussed either general musical knowledge or musical interests, or a combination of

both. Questions asked ranged from 'What concerts do you go to?', 'What are your future ambitions?', to 'Do you think society has an effect on today's music?' and 'What do you think about a traditional piece of music being played authentically on the instrument for which it was composed?' Contemporary music frequently cropped up, as did questions concerning students' A-level set work studies, particularly questions concerning tonality and structure. Several students remarked on anxiety in interviews marring their overall performance, particularly when 'a greater knowledge was assumed than is provided by A-level music, in all aspects of the interview' (interview at Cambridge University). Or, as another student explained, 'when I was stretched to the extent of my knowledge in a particular area – only on one occasion was I asked a standard question concerning a specific field' (interview at Glasgow University). Conversely, judging by some of the answers given by students in response to questions, equal anxiety concerning students' abilities must have prevailed among the lecturers conducting interviews. (For example, in response to a question regarding the structure of Elgar's Cello Concerto, a student replied, 'The 'cello plays pizzicato in the second movement'!)

Finally, examples were given of clearly unexpected occurrences in interviews, one student commenting that one of her interviews had included 'inhaling cigarette fumes', while another, whose interviews had included Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff and Glasgow Universities, expressed her views on the response of the lecturer interviewing at Bristol University, who, 'following a short 'informal' discussion concerning general historical knowledge, at which point, the nasty man said to me, 'frankly my dear, I don't think you're good enough to do a music degree.''

2.3 THE SURVEY – THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Section 3 of the survey comprises the responses from questionnaires sent out to personnel in the music industry. An explanatory letter accompanied these questionnaires, encouraging participants to adopt a flexible approach to the format and to alter, delete, or add to any sections as appropriate; or, if desired, to use the questionnaire as a guide only. This method was successful, and rather than respondents simply not answering, several answered in letter form, explaining their difficulties with the questionnaire. In addition, small changes were made to the questionnaire in an attempt to make it more accessible to respondents in the music industry. Thus question one, concerning qualifications, was broadened to include Degrees in both Music and Performing Arts, and the A-level in Performing Arts. The corresponding question in the 'education' questionnaire concerned only A-level music, and I felt a repetition of this question here could pose difficulties for respondents. In addition, I was interested in ascertaining the preferred choices between the qualifications listed. Question two now included brief details of the BTEC National Diploma in Music. The previous question three, which concerned specific areas of study in A-level music, was replaced by a more appropriate, parallel question, and an additional question regarding beneficial training for posts in the music industry was included. The questionnaire thus asked the following questions:

1) Do you regard any of the following qualifications as essential or indeed desirable for a position in your department?
   a) Degree in Music
   b) A-level only in Music
   c) Degree in Performing Arts
   d) A-level only in Performing Arts

2) What reservations do you have, if any, about the new BTEC National Diploma in Music as a qualification to be offered? (BTEC in Music incorporates some general teaching, Arts Administration, Music (including technology and recording technology), Drama, Dance, and Stagecraft, on a broad, practically based spectrum).

3) Please state those qualifications and the experience which you would deem essential for prospective employees hoping for a post in your department.

4) How well do you feel the previous training and academic background of a prospective employee prepares him/her for a post in your department?

5) What specific areas of training not presently covered on A-level/Degree courses (whichever is most relevant) would you see as being beneficial for prospective employees? Please be as specific as you are able here.

6) What specific qualities do you look for in your interviews?

At the end, respondents were again invited to add any other comments they wished to make.

Of the 90 questionnaires sent out, 52 responses were received from all sectors of the music industry contacted, apart from the Theatre and Ballet companies. The interest in my research was clearly evident in the responses received. It was equally heartening to receive comments from respondents eminent in their particular field, who found the survey an exciting and innovatory venture. Several responses invited further discussion, notably those from Andrew Pinnock (Music Officer for the British Arts Council), Sharon Davies (Really Useful Group Ltd), Paul Daniel (Music Director of Opera North), and Jane Dancer (Director of Education and Outreach with the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra and a former student of Liverpool University Music Department). Questionnaires were sent out to the establishments listed below. All major Arts Councils and media networks were selected. The orchestras, opera companies and music publishers were chosen for their keen interests and involvement in music education. Other areas of the music industry were chosen on a largely random basis.

Arts Councils

Arts Council of Great Britain
Arts Council of the North West
Arts Council of Scotland
Arts Council of Wales

Arts Festivals

Bath International Festival
Buxton Festival
Canterbury Festival

Arts Venues

Barbican Centre
The Green Room, Manchester
NIA Centre, Manchester
Palace Theatre, Manchester
Royal Festival Hall

Ballet Companies (Music Directors)

English National Ballet
Northern Ballet
Royal Ballet

BBC TV/Radio and Granada TV

BBC Head of Arts
BBC North Head of Music
BBC North Head of Popular Music
BBC Radio 1
BBC Radio 2
BBC Radio 3
BBC Radio Midlands
BBC Radio Scotland
Granada Television
Greater Manchester Radio
Radio Piccadilly
Signal Radio Cheshire

Music Journalists and Arts Editors

The Financial Times
The Guardian
The Independent
The Observer
The Sunday Times
The Telegraph
The Times

Music Publishers

Banks Music Publishing
Boosey and Hawkes
Cambridge University Press
EMI Music Publishing
June Emerson
Oxford University Press
Really Useful Group Ltd
Rhinegold Publishing

Opera Companies

English National Opera
Glyndebourne Festival Opera
Opera 80
Opera North
Royal Opera House
Scottish Opera
Welsh National Opera

Orchestras

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
Hallé Orchestra
Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
London Mozart Players
London Philharmonic Orchestra
London Sinfonietta
London Symphony Orchestra
Manchester Camerata
Northern Sinfonia Orchestra

Record Companies

Abbey Recording Company
BMG Records
Chandos Records
Deutsche Grammophon
EMI Classics
EMI Records
Harmonia Mundi
Hyperion Records
Island Records
Music For Pleasure
Nimbus Records
Polygram UK
Sony Music Enterprises
Virgin Classics
Virgin Records
Warner Chapel

Recording Studios

Courtyard
CTS Studios
Gateway Studios
Polygram Special Projects
Soho Studios
Sound Idea
The Steel
Strawberry Studios
Swallow
Twilight Sound Studio
Yellow Two

Theatre Companies

Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester
Royal Shakespeare Company

Miscellaneous

ESTA (European String Teachers Association)
PRS Society
Yamaha

Question One

Do you regard any of the following qualifications as essential or indeed desirable for a position in your department?

a) Degree in Music
b) A-level only in Music
c) Degree in Performing Arts
d) A-level only in Performing Arts

The data collated in the following table represents the responses to this question:

Qualifications		
Essential	Degree in Music	22%
	A-level only in Music	5%
	Degree in Performing Arts	2%
	A-level only in Performing Arts	2%
Desirable	Degree in Music	32%
	A-level only in Music (Music Degree also ticked)	19%
	A-level only in Music (Music Degree not ticked)	5%
	Degree in Performing Arts	22%
	A-level only in Performing Arts	21%
Not Applicable	All courses	11%
Neither Essential nor Desirable	All courses	24%

Respondents answered in a diversity of ways to this question. Several answered in letter form. The frequency with which 'desirable' (stated in the question) was replaced with 'useful' or 'preferable' provided an interesting insight into the collective opinion concerning formal qualifications. Fourteen respondents chose not to differentiate between the qualifications listed, citing either 'depending upon position', or 'possibly', or 'probably not' alongside all four options. Others qualified their preferences: for example, one respondent who stated 'yes' for a degree in music further added, 'not essential if other relevant qualifications/experiences are offered'. Another who

considered a degree in music desirable added 'although any degree is relevant' against his tick. The precise value placed on A-level music could not be specifically ascertained, as the 54% of respondents who considered a degree in music essential or desirable could have naturally assumed that this would supersede A-level in music. 24% of respondents either simply stated 'no' to all four qualifications listed, or left this question blank. 11% considered the question not applicable to their particular field, and simply wrote 'N/A' against each qualification listed. The lack of familiarity with Performing Arts courses posed difficulties for some respondents.

The profusion of comments concerning qualifications, however, presented a much broader and more illuminating view than that which could be ascertained through perusal of the statistics alone. The most significant and widespread point of view was one of a casualness, a polite unconcern degenerating to disinterest, with formal qualifications. Performing Arts courses rarely interested respondents enough for them to make any specific comment. The pendulum of opinion swung widely, however. At one extreme were a significant minority who considered music qualifications to be of importance and value in their particular fields, while at the other extreme were those who viewed such qualifications as being totally irrelevant.

The most positive *collective* response to qualifications in music emanated from personnel involved with orchestras. In the music industry, orchestras perhaps maintain the closest connections with education. Nine of the eleven orchestras involved in the survey are listed in the 'Performers in Education' section of the *Music Teachers' Handbook* (1994). These orchestras are involved in a variety of educational projects and schemes concerning composition, collaboration between composer and performance, workshops and pre-concert events. The training for orchestras tends to follow a more mainstream route than for entry into other sections of the music industry. Many orchestral players and management teams are familiar with academic

and performers qualifications, and of the content and nature of the courses. The responses provided a clear indication of the respect for, and significance of qualifications. Questions regarding qualifications and experience were recognised as valid, worthy of serious thought, and as such they established definite guidelines for respondents to exact often quite lengthy answers in the rest of the survey. The results can be tabulated as follows:

Orchestras	Value	Degree Music	A-level Music	Degree Performing Arts	A-level Performing Arts
Hallé Orchestra	Essential	✓		✓[1]	
	Desirable		✓		✓
London Symphony Orchestra	Essential		✓		
	Desirable	✓		useful	useful
London Philharmonic Orchestra	Essential				
	Desirable		✓		
London Mozart Players	Essential	✓			
	Desirable		no	possibly	no
Manchester Camerata	Essential				
	Desirable	✓	✓		
Northern Sinfonia Orchestra	Essential	✓		✓	
	Desirable				
Anonymous Orchestra (conductor responded)	Essential	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Desirable				
Anonymous Orchestra (one respondent)	Essential	✓			
	Desirable				

1. Degree in Performing Arts regarded as being essential 'in a few posts'

A music degree was also regarded as essential for specific posts in the Performing Rights Society, Boosey and Hawkes music publishing, Glyndebourne Opera Company, and for producers in BBC Radio 3.

It is interesting to note the divergence of opinion between the senior music producer of BBC Radio Midlands, who regarded a degree in music to be essential, and the producer of Radio Piccadilly who positively rejected the idea of qualifications as being

of any value, remarking that 'Our jobs in Radio are all about common sence [*sic*], imagination, creativity, [and] self-starting.'

The respondents who clearly felt that music qualifications were not of any value at all were predominantly in music publishing, management of Arts venues, the media and record companies. The most heart-felt response received in the entire survey was written by the owner and director of Emerson Editions Ltd, who strongly criticised the value placed on formal qualifications:

> A person's qualifications are such a very small part of their whole personality and what they are able to contribute. I have no music degree or A-level myself, but have always been a practising musician and have picked up enough in the University of Life to run one of the most successful businesses in Europe. Nevertheless I have always wished that I knew more and had had the benefit of higher music education.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Baroness O'Cathain OBE, the then managing director of the Barbican Centre, who gave a clear account, by letter, of the attributes valued most highly in her field:

> I am not an arts person but I am the managing director of an arts centre. I do not think (quoting here from the questionnaire) it is necessary, essential, or indeed desirable that somebody who would succeed me should have a degree in music or any other qualification in music. My department is an administrative one not an arts one. All I do know is that with many years of experience in industry and commerce, a degree is not the 'be all and end all of everything'. Some of the brightest and hardest working and most committed staff I've had have not been graduates. That is not to say that I do not value a university education – I valued mine enough to work for it through evening courses!

The irrelevance of academic qualifications was equally emphasised by the managing director of Island Records, who gave a brief profile of his own academic background to illustrate this point:

> By way of example, I am the managing director of Island Records, a company with 67 employees and a turnover in the region of £25 million per year. I am 33 years old and obtained a mere five O-levels and one A-level. Academic background is only relevant for lawyers and accountants.

These views reflect the current prevailing mood concerning academic qualifications, which deems it fashionable to diminish the value of formal academic qualifications. The origin of such opinions is frequently shrouded in mystery, but in this particular case, influences from the highest national sources could have infiltrated into, and secured a niche in general public opinion.

Many respondents were keen to promote the necessity for individuality and for 'untypical' routes pursued in the musical development of an individual. Academic music qualifications were perceived as restricting rather than extending musical understanding: 'A shuttered and cloistered university environment can often lead to an inability to cope with daily challenges and problems, since a course is always one step removed from reality' wrote one respondent. A marked separation was drawn between 'the importance of individuality' and 'categorisation into boxes' by another respondent, who was again critical of the restrictive effect of academic qualifications.

It is interesting to observe the wide disparity between the vision of a university education held by those who have been through the system, and those who have not. Those with no experience of a university education appear to have formulated their opinions through the cameo portrayals of life in the academic world perpetuated by the media. For the majority of graduates, this notion of a shuttered and cloistered university existence is risible. The existence of the Old Boy network, which conveniently symbolises the perceived exclusive nature of a university education for many, is equally prevalent in the music industry, as this survey reveals.

Some respondents felt that academic music qualifications did not act as a good indicator of a student's potential. Others, particularly in the music publishing business, considered there to be no connection at all between the academic and the business fields. The music editor of Cambridge University Press, a major music publishing company, commented in a brief letter that 'As I am in the publishing business rather than in any academic post, I don't think any of your questions are relevant to me.'

Five respondents from orchestral and opera companies felt that the questionnaire encouraged generalisation, and as such was inappropriate to their organisations. The Chief Executive of the Hallé Orchestra, for example, pointed out that:

> We have several departments. Professional qualifications and experience are valuable in marketing, essential in finance and artistic administration at management level. Some qualifications are desirable for more junior departments. Depending on the level and exact post. an MBA, a professional marketing diploma, Degree or diploma in arts administration are among the relevant qualifications.

Finally, the survey revealed that in many sectors of the music industry, those in music posts were frequently in small departments. Respondents in these cases found it difficult to be prescriptive about the type of qualifications required, due to the essentially individual nature of their, and other related, posts.

Question Two

> *What Reservations do you have, if any, about the new BTEC National Diploma in Music as a qualification to be offered? (BTEC in music incorporates some general teaching, Arts Administration, Music (including technology and recording technology), Drama, Dance and Stage Craft, on a broad, practically based spectrum.)*

The responses to this question have been tabulated as follows:

BTEC Qualification	
No reservations at all	8%
Preferred to A-level	0%
Diversification of course not desirable	10%
Diversification of course welcomed	2%
Useful but not essential	6%
No use whatsoever	17%
Unfamiliar with the qualification	35%
No opinion given	42%
Arts Administration component useful	7%
Recording and Studio Technology component useful	2%
Lack of Music History component not desirable	5%
Reservations about variable quality of tuition	2%

This question received the least attention from respondents, 77% of whom conceded either unfamiliarity with the qualification or left the question blank. 17% of respondents rejected the Diploma outright. Of those who offered comments, the majority gave only very brief answers. For example, the 8% of respondents who harboured no reservations concerning the Diploma simply answered 'none', apart from one positive comment offered from Radio Piccadilly; 'I like the way BTECs are practically based.'

Although designed as a preparation for the music industries, criticism was levelled at the diverse nature of the course, which many felt would lead to a dilution of specific course components. Several respondents were sceptical of a course which offered training for 'a jack of all trades and master of none', and which so clearly misinterpreted the needs of the industry. The respondent from the Performing Rights Society asserted that:

> No one job in the music industry is going to encompass all of these disciplines; the BTEC Diploma, like any A-level, can be regarded as part of a general education; therefore it is not a vocational qualification, and really cannot be seen as anything more than an indication of an interest in a subject. As such, it is probably a useful broad-based introduction to an industry – but no more than that.

Competition in the entertainments industry is intense. Success demands rigorous discipline in training and a high standard of acting, singing and dancing ability. While the BTEC course offers options in these components, evidence suggests that the tuition is variable, and the allocated hours accorded each discipline inadequate for high standards to be achieved. In addition, a large part of the BTEC course is undertaken in groups. In my experience, the degree of synthesis of individuals working in groups is very variable and can have a marked effect on the overall progress and standard of the group work. It was illuminating to discuss the qualifications and qualities needed for work in the entertainment industry with a past student, who had achieved success as a singer/dancer in leisure cruise entertainment. She explained that

> Students who pursue careers in the entertainment industry have usually had ballet lessons from a very early age, taken private singing tuition and gone on to take up places in Theatre Schools. Proficiency in ballet and modern dance, and singing and acting ability are the sole 'qualifications' required. In fact, I was advised to omit academic qualifications from my CV. Performance at the audition, and previous experience in the field, count the most.

In her experience, the diversity of the BTEC Diploma would render it 'practically useless for students pursuing stage work', asserting that her four A-levels, including Music and Theatre Studies, would provide her with a more solid and useful

background for future choreographic/directing work in the entertainment industry than would a BTEC National Diploma in the Performing Arts.[20]

The inclusion of Arts Administration and Recording and Studio Technology were welcomed by 9% of respondents, including the chief executive of the Hallé Orchestra Concerts Society who remarked that

> I don't know more than the above [details], but a degree [*sic*] including technology and recording technology could be useful, combined with Arts administration content, for several posts in orchestral management and artistic administration.

(My research, however, has shown that the practical experience required for the Arts Administration component is frequently simulated. Many colleges simply do not have the facilities to accommodate outside companies into their colleges – a requisite in the BTEC criteria. Arts Administration practice is frequently gained through college performances, which effects a different experience to that gained through involvement with professional companies.)

Two respondents regarded the BTEC Diploma favourably, but only if it retained a subsidiary position to the more traditional qualifications. The respondent from the 'anonymous' orchestra commented that 'I know very little about it – sounds like a good thing as long as it never replaces GCSE/A-level in music.' It is interesting to observe that university professors in the survey expressed similar reservations, one commenting that 'University applicants with a merit or above in the BTEC National

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20. This respondent's sister accepted the post of Entertainments Officer on the Canberra cruise liner, the interview for which was filmed for an edition of the television series *Situation Vacant*, broadcast in January 1995. Her aptitude for the post was based exclusively on previous cabaret/show experience and inter-personal skills. She had taken no examinations beyond GCSE. It is illuminating to note the progress of these two very similar sisters, with identical training and experience, yet it is the one without formal academic qualifications who is currently the most successful.

Diploma in Performing Arts as well as A-level Music usually have only acquired a grade D (or lower) in A-level Music.' Standardisation between vocational and academic qualifications does not exist at present. Vocational qualifications are assessed and monitored by the NVQ Board, and GCSE/A/AS-levels by SCAA. Whilst both assert rigorous guide-lines, these organisations maintain a juxtaposed rather than a synthesised position.

Question Three

Please state those qualifications and the experience which you would deem necessary for prospective employees hoping for a post in your department.

The responses to this question, illustrated below, were more predictable:

Qualifications and Experience Deemed Necessary	
Practical experience in the field	63%
Inter-personal skills	37%
Ability to work as part of a team	35%
Wide knowledge of music	29%
A love of music	19%
Peer recommendations/useful contacts	17%
Internal promotion preferred	15%
Preference for self-taught practising musicians	12%
Ability to be convincing	10%
Enthusiasm	10%
Flexibility	10%
Ability not to panic	8%
Common sense	8%
Confidence	8%
Sense of humour	8%
Sensitivity	8%
Tact and diplomacy	6%
Stamina	4%
A major European language	2%
Preference for academically trained musicians	0%
Well prepared CV	0%

The firmness and veiled hostility with which many in the music industry rejected the idea of giving credit for academic qualifications was obvious here. While a wide knowledge and understanding of music was essential, it was more highly valued and favoured when acquired through broad experiences in music than from academic music qualifications. The music industry equally valued individuals with a love of and keen interest in music, which was perceived as resulting more from 'non-academic' involvement in music, than through academic study. Emphasis was placed upon a practical, working knowledge of music, not necessarily gained through performing activities, but developed and expanded by broad listening experiences, an awareness of current trends and issues in music, and a realism and understanding of the diversity of

the music spectrum. The perceived abstract nature of formal study appeared to be at odds with the practical involvement of the music industry in contemporary cultural and social contexts, and as such, invoked reservations as to its value.

Following his acknowledgement that 'A music graduate, after all, should possess wide general knowledge of music and be able to deal confidently with a whole range of inquiries ...', the Music Officer of the British Arts Council commented '... but this knowledge can be acquired in other ways. Formal music qualifications aren't essential. Experience – a track record and professional contacts in the right area – counts for more than academic background.' The Scottish Arts Council Music Officer bluntly remarked that 'We are not concerned with bits of paper – candidates must be able to display a deep knowledge and grasp of music, not necessarily obtained through formal education.' The editor of *Classical Music* (Rhinegold Publishing) provided an excellent, succinct evaluation, reflecting the opinions of many of those who responded to this question. He commented, 'I feel that a passion for the subject and a well-rounded personality are a million times more important than academic training.'

The importance of personal skills was a significant factor in all responses. Many music departments in the music industry are small, and the ability to form successful working relationships was essential. The limited attention accorded to personal skills in academic courses was felt by many to be a restrictive influence on the future prospects of students. The Managing Director of Island Record Company commented:

> I believe that more work should be done on explaining and developing the nature of relationships. In my business relationships are the most precious of commodities. Skilled people without social skills have no place in a company like ours. If we believe in an employee we allow them to acquire specific work related skills, but belief in the employee is very often vested in their ability to 'fit in' and work in a team.

Allusions to the narrow discipline and limitations of courses to develop these skills constituted a major underlying reason for the lack of value placed on qualifications. June Emerson, of Emerson Edition Ltd, explained that

> Most of the successful staff I employ have been found by other members of staff who know the sort of person who would 'fit in'. The only one I ever found by advertisement and interview, who had a music degree, was technically fine but quite the wrong sort of personality, and couldn't spell, giving the firm a careless image. My daughter has a music degree, but would not be suitable for this business, yet she is an absolute wow as assistant manager to the LSO, as this requires vivacity, tact, diplomacy and knowing about musicians, none of which she learned at university.

Others suggested that the methods and approaches of formal study repressed individuality, initiative and flexibility. The Vice-President of Artists and Repertoire for EMI Music World-wide explained that while a music degree was preferable for producers, 'self-taught people can be more adaptable and less hide-bound. The psychological approach when working with major artists cannot be taught – it needs intuition and practical experience.'

Similar sentiments were expressed by others, highlighting the subtle shades of elitism prevalent in the music world concerning the self-taught and the formally taught musician. For example, in the Performing Arts arena it is the self-taught, practising musician in jazz/folk/rock/pop music who is sought. His/her 'industrial' experience evokes a particular ambience and atmosphere, an intangible zest and a musical flexibility perceived to be absent in the formally trained musician. The comments offered by the Education Projects Co-ordinator of the Manchester International Festival of Expressionism aptly illustrate this view. Following her admittance that she felt the questionnaire was not applicable to her, the respondent continued:

However, BTEC Art and Design and A-level Drama students at Salford, South Trafford and South Manchester College had productive working experiences in music – skills and devising during the Festival – projects – the Credit Card Opera, and Yellow Sound, and especially with Urban Strawberry Lunch – sound sculptors/percussionists – contributing to an understanding of combined and performing arts work.

It appears to be accepted that Art and Drama students create and perform music for theatre enterprises, but the territory for the trained music student lies elsewhere, in the refinement of the Conservatoires or the classical concert perhaps.

In many ways, the music industry is an insular environment. The responses showed that a substantial amount of training occurs 'in house' and appointments are often made through peer recommendation and contacts within the music industry. 'A great deal of vacancies are filled by 'word of mouth' around the industry as well as by direct application to companies' (EMI Music Publishing). The Concerts Director of the London Philharmonic stated that the most widely recognised route through companies was 'from the ground up', developing 'on the job training; academic background is irrelevant.' The respondent from Hyperion Records remarked, 'As with the music industry in general, one tends to proceed by 'accident'.'

Question Four

How well do you feel the previous training and academic background of a prospective employee prepares him/her for a post in your department?

There was a great deal of overlap with other questions in the responses given here. The collective view, however, suggests that much more attention needs to be directed towards specific training for the music industry on academic courses. While current music courses give limited attention to the needs of the music industry, music

qualifications remain on the fringe of desirability for the music industry. Alternative routes, particularly practical experience in the field gained by prospective employees, were viewed favourably and valued highly by 52% of respondents. In stressing the importance of practical experience in preference to academic qualifications, the Director of Courtyard Recording Studio gave some illuminating insights into the procedures of recording studios:

> Practical experience in the recording business usually means having paid for it by recording one's own music (not doing a course) or by working in a studio for nothing (or next to nothing)! Training and academic background is of little use since the job is so largely experience (hands-on) based. As well as the technical and creative aspect, it also involves developing working relationships with all types of people very quickly.

The difficulty of acquiring experience was acknowledged by several respondents, including the respondent from EMI Music Publishing, whose remarks are indicative of many:

> Although qualifications show a level of attained education, unfortunately there are not enough 'junior' positions available for 'youngsters' wishing to join our industry. They keep getting told that they need 'experience', but this is often very difficult to attain! Perseverance is the only answer and to register with Employment Agencies which specialise in 'Music Vacancies'.

As opposed to Higher Education, academic and practical musical knowledge constitutes only a part of a complex amalgamation of the skills, knowledge and experience required for the music professions. For example, the producer of BBC Radio 3 Midlands asserted that, in addition to a broad and deep knowledge of music, his post needed 'diplomatic, technical, imaginative, administrative, financial etc skills too.' Even for orchestral players, the narrow concentration on performance excellence in the Conservatoires neglects preparation for 'the exhausting and tedious rehearsal and concert schedules and the stamina needed to sustain them' (Violinist, BBC Philharmonic orchestra).

The concept of academic music courses changing to include training relevant for the music industry was clearly not recognised by several respondents. For example, the Music Officer of the British Arts Council commented that 'It would be difficult to plan a college career leading smoothly into work at the Arts Council. Above all, Officers need experience of the real arts world.'

This view of education as a highly structured, inflexible process, producing people with limited skills to cope in the 'real world', has been expressed in different ways throughout this section of the survey. Indeed, this perceived inadequacy of the British education system has been criticised by many. For example, Small writes that

> The point at which the twin concepts, the producer-consumer relationship and knowledge as essentially outside of and independent of the knower, come together most significantly is in the field of education, or rather, to use Ivan Illich's valuable distinction, in schooling, since schooling and education are by no means synonymous: contrary to popular supposition, one does not need to go to school to become educated, and, conversely going to school does not necessarily give one an education.
>
> (Small, 1977, 182)

The music industry, a consumer-led industry, requires of its employees those qualities which constitute a genuine education – liberation of ideas, flexibility, thinking ability and reasoning processes. Education, which should be a 'leading' process, nurturing and developing the mind, is instead producing inflexible, unadaptable young people, with under-developed skills. Small, and others, consider this to be the result of the consumer-led education process, teaching packages of knowledge for consumption, and subsequently making a product, the student. It appears that, for the music industry, music education symbolises fixed course structures and tuition approaches and standardised responses from students. The system is viewed as unchanging, an immutable entity in the perpetuum of life, responding only peripherally to the realities of the musical world beyond its confines. The music industry continually needs to respond to changing shifts in sociological and cultural trends, and therefore requires

similarly flexible and adaptable qualities from its employees. The survey revealed that university lecturers were also looking for similar attributes in applicants, an issue discussed further in Part 3 of this thesis. (Clearly, the self-learning process for some students is a frightening prospect, one student in the survey stating, 'the course [at Oxford University] lacks direction – we are often left alone in the library with a reading list – if one is lucky').

Question Five

> *What specific areas of training not presently covered on A-level Degree courses would be seen as most beneficial?*

The following table illustrates the responses offered here:

Beneficial Areas of Training		
Knowledge of the music business		42%
Music business/administration skills		35%
Knowledge of the 'real arts world'		29%
Arts administration skills:	Secretarial skills	25%
	Computer skills	19%
	Good written skills	17%
	Office experience	6%
	Financial skills	2%
Practical skills:	Music technology skills	21%
	Studio skills	21%
	Practising musician	19%
	Outreach/workshop skills	10%
	Conducting	6%
	Keyboard ability	6%
	Performance skills	6%
	Composing	4%
	Improvisation	4%
	Orchestration/arrangement skills	4%
	Twentieth century knowledge	2%

Responses to this question almost exclusively concerned the need for music courses to correlate a solid academic understanding with a practical experience of the 'real arts world.' 71% of respondents cited 'knowledge of the music business world', not only in responses to this question, but also throughout the survey. For example, the Producer of BBC Radio Scotland considered that future courses should try

> To acquaint students with the 'real arts' world of the music business – so they understand who's who and what's what – who the music director of the Viennese State Opera is; what the Arts Council is etc.

It was illuminating to observe that while there was a strong demand for arts administration skills, a division was drawn between purely secretarial and entrepreneurial skills. Current developments in the music business concerning concert

arrangements, dealing with artists and combined arts enterprises have instigated a pressing need for academic training in business skills for Arts students. 'Arts management can no longer be taught by experience alone', remarked the respondent from the London Symphony Orchestra. Similarly, the respondent from The Really Useful Group Ltd explained that

> Qualifications required depend very much on the posts – while we would expect a PA position to be filled by someone that could type, and was familiar with office procedure, we would definitely need a music graduate for someone practically involved in the music side. Additionally, for copyright we would need someone with experience in the music business.

Several respondents stressed the importance of music technology, studio operations skills and practical skills, which they felt should be accorded greater prominence in academic music study. The Assistant Musical Director of English National Opera, for example, required

> The ability to understand an operatic vocal-score in orchestral terms, and to play it so when being conducted. The ability to play the piano and the ability to work with and understand singers [are] equally important and absolutely essential. Marginally less essential [is the] ability to listen to and understand the wide range and complex nature of operatic music, with an understanding and sympathy for style; to be theatre-minded as well as musical and the ability to conduct. The growing commitment to opera in Great Britain reveals the gap in current music education thinking about opera. In fairness, until very recently opera was a non-event in general British terms – therefore in music education it was no more than an historical necessity to cover the subject. There are practical requirements outlined above which should be taught more effectively.

The Director of Education and Outreach of the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra commented that

> A good base of musical knowledge is important but I feel that practical skills are not developed to a high enough degree. Stress is placed on knowledge and, if possible, instrumental performance (A-level). With the recent trends in Education, the ability to participate in the Arts and the ability to encourage others to do likewise are equally important. Practical skills such as arrangement/orchestration, composition, conducting, in addition to arranging one's own performance (venue, box office, staging etc) are helpful and should be encouraged at the earliest possible time – this would aid transition from GCSE to A-level and form a bridge to Degree level if included in A-level courses.

Many existing University and A-level Music courses do, in fact, include the above skills, although it is interesting to note that composition is one of the most neglected areas in teaching programmes, according to Reports from the A-level Boards. Furthermore, the vast range of music technology courses now offered in both Further and Higher education shows a general ignorance in the music industry about music courses and their contents.

The demand for workshop/outreach skills, particularly from orchestral and opera companies, provoked comments. In explaining the current training programmes for orchestral players, the Education Officer of the Northern Sinfonia explained:

> Their training has not offered the opportunity to work in unusual settings (as a rule). Our Education and Outreach Programme has been running for only 18 months and we are about to embark on a week's training in workshop technique for the full orchestra.

One of the recent ventures of the BBC Philharmonic orchestra involves giving concerts/workshops in Strangeways prison. In his response, the Education Director of the orchestra emphasised the need for training in developing 'the ability to relate well to and maintain the interest of an audience, workshop techniques and some experience of the Arts in the community.'

Several respondents refrained from answering this question, either leaving it blank or explaining that they had no knowledge of the courses stated on the questionnaire.

Question Six

What specific qualities do you look for in interviews?

The survey has revealed that, as a collectivity, the music industry embraces similar interests and values concerning prospective employees. It is, however, the variations in degree of preference accorded to these values which significantly highlights the requirements of the individual fields in the music industry. In many ways, the responses to this question constitute a succinct summary of the entire survey. The following list details, in order of priority, the desired skills and knowledge of the individual music professions. Apart from the occasional comment, included in the list, the responses offered to this question were brief. Music journalists and Arts editors, and respondents from Arts venues, did not give responses to this question.

Arts Councils

1. Broad-based knowledge of music
2. Good grasp of music knowledge
3. Experience – a track record, and professional contacts in the right areas
4. Ability to act with confidence and authority
5. Intelligence, ability to speak with knowledge and enthusiasm on their chosen subject
6. Interest in music and practical music making, relating to both professional and amateur musicians and promoters

Arts Festivals

1. Competence
1. Flexibility and willingness to adapt
1. Practical experience
2. Sense of humour

Music Publishing Companies

1. Communication skills – both verbal and written ('Being able to put words in the right order!')
1. Knowing and loving music
1. Well developed sense of humour; tact and diplomacy
2. Ability to 'fit in'
2. Ability to work under pressure
2. Arts administration skills
2. Common sense
2. Enthusiasm
2. Willingness to learn
3. Experience in the music business
3. Initiative

Opera Companies

1. Experience of Music Management
2. Understanding and sympathy for the vocal element in opera
3. Knowledge of current educational trends
3. Knowledge of opera
3. Pianistic ability
4. Enthusiasm
4. Imagination
4. Sense of humour

Orchestral Companies

1. Experience, except for entry-level posts
2. Articulacy – ability to take a question as a starting point and develop an answer
2. Flexibility and enthusiasm for the task in hand
2. Relevant qualifications
3. Communication skills
3. Enthusiasm
3. Good written English, presentation
3. Inter-personal skills
4. Competence
4. Evidence of the right attributes to fit into a small, hardworking team
4. Initiative
4. Knowledge of twentieth-century music
4. Tact and diplomacy
4. Stamina

'Precise concept of interpretation is essential, plus the means to put this over – good conducting technique, good psychology as part of an overall, efficient rehearsal technique' (Conductor – undisclosed orchestra)

Performing Rights Society

1. Articulacy, good grammar
1. Evidence of interest in music
1. Evidence of interest in people and events
1. Self confidence and warmth
2. Ability to seize ideas and develop them

Radio

1. Knowledge of the music industry
1. Understanding of recording and studio technology
1. Wide knowledge of music
2. Enthusiasm
2. Flair and imagination
2. Originality of approach
3. Communication skills
4. Efficiency in working
5. Aptitude
5. Interest in youth culture
5. Performing experience
5. Self motivation
5. Some administrative experience

Recording Companies

1. Ability to work as a team
1. Enthusiasm
1. Experience
1. Inter-personal skills ('To have got to interview stage the candidate's skills and experience will be known to us.')
2. Openness – direct eye contact
2. Sense of humour
2. Wide knowledge of music
3. Ability to question and challenge
3. Commercial knowledge of repertoire
3. Flexibility
3. Knowledge of artists roster and recordings
3. Knowledge of industry
3. Sensitivity towards artistic temperament

Recording Studios

1. Open approach to music
1. Practical studio and recording experience
2. Ability to develop working relationships with all types of people very quickly
2. Enthusiasm
2. Flexibility

Conclusions

Venturing into the world of the music industry with questions about academic qualifications illuminated the gaping chasm between these two equally 'professional' areas, the music industry and academic music in particular. There appeared to be a substantial desire in the music industry to maintain the *status quo*, by adhering to a particular system of values which disregarded the value of music qualifications, an area in which ignorance, mistrust and prejudice was widespread. Moreover, in discussions with respondents and through evaluating responses, some surprise was expressed that there might even be links between music qualifications and the music industry. It appeared that while qualifications themselves were accepted as an indication of

intelligence and academic achievement, scant regard was accorded to course content, which was widely assumed to be immutable and therefore of little relevance.

Underlying tensions in the survey suggested a certain abuse of power by employers in some quarters. The well-qualified applicant was distrusted and viewed as an external threat, particularly by employers who had no formal music qualifications themselves. In a similar manner to other sectors of the music spectrum, such as the Brass Band world or sociologists in music education, the music industry has developed its own intrinsic code of behavioural and language patterns. Priority rested on a belief that a prospective employee should 'fit in' and work as part of a close-knit team, becoming 'one of the boys' (although in reality, this is no worse than the 'Old Boy' network elsewhere). Once appointed, however, opportunities for training and promotion within the industry were widely available. Indeed, the route through the music industry appeared to largely depend upon contacts and peer recommendations interacting within its labyrinthine structure.

From the profusion of qualities desired, it would seem that the impossible is being sought. In reality, as promotion in the music industry is largely geared towards the existing work-force, the prospect of seeking an employee from outside the ranks rarely arose, and thus the impracticality of finding an applicant who embodied an inordinate range of desired qualities and skills was infrequently realised in real terms. These were ideal qualities, visualised by an industry which has little need to cast its net widely to find suitable applicants.

However, despite this rather bleak situation, respondents communicated a warmth and enthusiasm for my research throughout. The way forward towards a closer integration of the music industry with academic music study is not only desirable, but eminently possible. The solution lies not so much in diluting course content, or in fusing

vocational and academic courses (which could threaten and ultimately demean the entire concept of academic qualifications), but in taking a new look at academic course content in the light of the requirements of the music industry. This will be the ultimate objective of Part 3 of this thesis.

3.1 CURRENT PRACTICES IN A-LEVEL MUSIC

The survey analysed in sections 2.1 and 2.2 of this thesis revealed that a significant influence upon A-level Music courses lay in the tuition provided. In order to evaluate current teaching practices, I conducted a separate survey by questionnaire and discussion with 15 A-level teachers. The questionnaire concerned methodologies employed in teaching, the impact of the GCSE, and sought views about the recent revisions to the A-level courses. The questions posed are detailed below:

1) Which A-level syllabus do you teach?

2a) What impact has the GCSE Music course had on the way in which you teach A-level Music?

2b) Have you noticed any difference in type or numbers of students now taking A-level Music?

3) Please state your views about the following course components:

History/Analysis of Music
Set works/topics
Harmony/Music Techniques
Composition
Performance/Practical skills
[Aural Perception Paper – separate question on this]

4a) Please state how you teach the above – methods, books used, lesson allocation etc.

4b) How do you assess success in these areas?

5) Which area(s) of the A-level would you consider to be the least valuable, and why?

6) What do you consider to be the main difficulties in teaching A-level Music?

7) What are your views on the Inter-Board Aural Perception Paper?

8) What changes would you like to see, if any, in present A-level Music syllabus content?

9) To what extent do you feel the A-level course prepares students for
i) University/College music degree courses?
ii) Employment in the music industry?

10a) What training/in–service opportunities have you received specifically for A-level Music teaching?

10b) How much contact do you have with other A-level music teachers?

11) Any other comments.

A digest of the responses appears below. Comments specifically relating to course components have been incorporated in subsequent sections, where relevant.

The effect of the GCSE course

Although the GCSE course was generally considered favourably, teachers collectively criticised its intellectually undemanding nature. A prevalent opinion was that 'some students who enjoyed GCSE and are therefore taking A-level really shouldn't be doing it [*sic*]'. Deficiencies, particularly in music techniques, were made up through foundation courses. One teacher commented that 'there is now, more than ever, a need for a foundation course for half a term before students embark on the A-level syllabus'. Another remarked that 'The initial introduction to A-level has had to be more rigorous. GCSE is an inadequate preparation for music at A-level'. Some teachers felt that Grade 5 Associated Board theory/practical qualifications provided a more substantial grounding for A-level work than the GCSE music course.

The gulf between the GCSE and A-level music courses is often attributed to the difference between the practically based nature of the GCSE and the theoretical demands of the A-level course. However, in my view, the major stumbling block in the progression from GCSE to A-level lies in the limited necessity for intellectual skills

in the GCSE, and the subsequent ease with which many students attain a high grade. Several teachers in my survey remarked that a pass could be achieved in the GCSE examination if students simply completed composition requirements, performed adequately, and demonstrated a basic understanding of music techniques. One teacher in a reputable 11–18 Manchester school informed me that he actually altered his methods according to whether or not a GCSE student was going on to take A-level. He expressed his relief at being able to avoid teaching harmony techniques fully to those GCSE students who were not proposing to take up A-level music, as, in his experience, success in the GCSE examination did not require this.

If high achievement is too easily attained, it tends to be disrespected. Moreover, it can be damaging, as neither intellectual skills nor the discipline required to learn have been developed. Thus a false impression of academic achievement is presented. For example, one teacher in my survey remarked:

> A-level Music is still perceived by many to be a 'soft-option' subject. Nothing could be further from the truth. A pupil studying this subject uses a wider range of skills, both practical and intellectual, than is the case for any other subject.

Another difficulty in aligning the GCSE and A-level courses lies in the disparities between the teachers themselves. For GCSE teachers, the GCSE course provided opportunities for a more flexible, practical approach, which required less formal tuition than O-level. Criticisms, however, from A-level teachers of both insufficient and poor teaching practices at GCSE level abounded. One teacher, with a large number (48) of A-level music students, commented:

> One of the current difficulties in A-level teaching is the limited teaching occurring at GCSE level; students need more directed teaching; they need to be taught something rather than being left to their own devices.

Despite much of the GCSE course requiring students to work individually, several A-level teachers commented on the inability of students to undertake such work satisfactorily. The following offers a typical observation:

> The particular difficulty I am encountering with the Cambridge Board is the emphasis it places on students' organising themselves and their own time. Although I support this in principle, it is difficult to manage and monitor.

It is, of course, much easier to teach a practical course in which the onus is upon the pupil. It is particularly easy when the consequences of limited tuition do not bear directly upon the teacher responsible. In the Government reorganisation and segregation of schools and colleges in the 1980s, the teaching fraternity became separated between the 11–16 and 16–19 education sectors. In my research, I observed a widespread disinterest among GCSE teachers in the recent changes to A-level courses. Many held prejudiced attitudes through having been forcibly deprived of A-level teaching in the reorganisation, preferring to rely on memories of their own A-level experiences. Others felt it simply was not their responsibility to prepare students for further study; their responsibilities ended with the GCSE examination. In discussions, the Advisor for Manchester Music Service told me 'It's a poor attitude, I know, but in essence, music teachers in 11–16 schools just don't want to know about A-level Music; they don't see it as having any relevance to their job.' This short-sighted approach is at the core of the tensions that exist between the two courses, revealing shortcomings in a system in which the students are more aware of the discrepancies than the teachers.

Smoothing the progression from GCSE to A-level needs to be more of a two-way process. Efforts should be made at GCSE level, as well as at A-level, to align the two courses. GCSE music cannot be solely viewed as the final Key Stage, with A-level as an appendage. A-level needs to be seen as Key Stage 5 with GCSE constituting a

solid preparation for A-level. Furthermore, as my survey has revealed, the constant changes to A-level music courses to align downwards have now affected the progression upwards from A-level to Higher Education. In a genuine progression from one course to another, everything needs to interlock.

Teaching methods and approaches

The conflicting pressures of league tables and increasing student numbers has forced A-level teachers to concentrate on 'producing the highest possible grades' from students. Thus, the requirements of the syllabus dominate teaching programmes, methods and approaches. Moreover, the need for remedial work at the beginning of courses has resulted in their using methods which most speedily cover syllabus content, many of which involve passive learning techniques. Both my own survey and the 1992 results from ALIS[21], detailed overleaf, revealed this clearly.

21. The A-level Information System (ALIS) was established in 1983 by the School of Education, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Designed as an 'indicator' system, it is concerned with how schools and colleges can measure their own effectiveness. The system monitors examination results, students' attitudes to their studied subjects, and teaching and learning processes. In 1992, ALIS conducted a survey with 324 A-level music students from 83 establishments about perceived learning activities.

Music 1992 – Perceived Learning Activities						
	Responses % *					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Presentation of a topic by the teacher	14.8	9.5	8.5	17.0	32.2	17.7
Exercises (working examples)	7.9	5.7	10.4	12.1	40.0	23.6
Working questions from previous exam papers (with help)	22.3	14.5	18.7	20.1	20.5	3.9
Working questions from previous exam papers (exam conditions)	25.4	33.7	21.9	10.8	7.2	0.7
Preparing essays	23.0	18.4	26.5	23.0	8.1	0.7
Reading	29.1	16.3	19.1	17.4	13.5	4.3
Class discussions led by the teacher	21.8	13.7	14.1	16.2	21.8	12.0
Discussions in groups	46.8	15.2	14.5	10.6	8.9	3.2
Having notes dictated to you	29.1	14.2	13.1	15.2	19.9	8.2
Making your own notes from lessons	17.4	7.5	11.0	15.3	27.8	10.6
Using duplicated notes (handouts)	14.6	10.3	15.3	25.6	21.7	12.1
Practical work (using apparatus or making things)	26.6	7.9	11.2	13.3	29.5	11.5
Using audio or visual material	29.5	14.9	14.9	9.3	18.5	12.1
Making use of IT (computers)	74.9	10.0	5.0	3.6	3.6	2.5
Researching a topic (using a variety of reference material)	28.7	13.6	21.1	21.9	11.8	2.5
Working in pairs	56.5	13.7	12.2	7.6	6.1	3.6
Presenting your work to the class	48.9	22.5	15.0	6.1	5.7	1.8
Listening to another student presenting work to the class	48.9	22.7	13.7	7.2	5.8	1.4
Giving help to another student	40.1	13.6	17.9	16.5	9.7	1.4
Receiving help from another student	46.5	14.9	13.8	13.8	8.2	2.1
Receiving individual help from your teacher	17.3	15.1	19.8	21.6	16.2	9.7
Producing original work (experiments, poetry, designing, composing, criticism)	19.9	13.0	14.9	17.0	22.8	12.0

* 1 represents 'never or almost never'
* 2 represents 'about once a term'
* 3 represents 'about once a month'
* 4 represents 'about once a fortnight'
* 5 represents 'about once or twice a week'
* 6 represents 'about three or four times a week or about every lesson'

One of the dangers of any syllabus is that in providing a clear structure, it can also dictate and dominate methods of teaching. Followed in a pedantic fashion, it can stifle imaginative teaching and restrict content innovation. Concerning this, Small writes:

> The outward and visible sign of the subject is the syllabus, a table of contents which lays down what the student is required to learn and on what he is to be examined. At least, that is what the syllabus purports to do; in practice it equally effectively cuts him off from learning, since everything lying outside the syllabus is not examinable and therefore not worth teaching. The syllabus narrows the student's vision of knowledge and cuts him off from precisely those fuzzy areas at the edge of subjects that are the most interesting and rewarding.
>
> (Small, 1977, 186–7)

The A-level Boards are anxious for their syllabuses to be viewed as a focus for the broader study of music. However, they perhaps assume in students a greater level of motivation and capacity to learn over the two-year course than actually occurs, or indeed is possible with the current difficulties. For example, the Boards are very specific in their history and harmony requirements. In meeting these demands, teaching is forced exclusively upon the set work, or, for example, the Neapolitan sixth chord in harmony, with little recourse to the wider understanding of these elements in the music spectrum. Thus, the interesting points about music are relegated to the fringes. (Conversely, composition is given a free rein, the one area which perhaps requires more syllabus guidance.)

Paradoxically, it takes longer to teach history and harmony in this isolated position than integrated within a course of wider study. Teachers resort to dictated notes, worksheets, and so on, in order to pass on the information in the allocated time. In many cases, practical activities are left to the instrumental/vocal tutor, and composition appears to be largely untouched in teaching programmes.

It is noticeable in the ALIS Report that students do very little reading and write few essays. It is little wonder that the Boards and university lecturers complain of poor

standards of history knowledge and little evidence of coherent arguments in essays when students are forcing a mean historical diet upon themselves through their own inertia, and when they are prepared to do so little background work to substantiate this diet. Teachers nowadays need to educate students in how to study, and the importance of learning, rather than merely relying on their often erratic memories. Fundamentally, they need to educate rather than train students so they then can eventually educate themselves.

In addition, the whole approach to the structure of syllabuses needs further thought, ultimately replacing the current framework of separate components with an integrated structure, which focuses more upon fusing theory with practice. The function of a music syllabus is to provide a structure for learning about music together with opportunities to develop and demonstrate skills. A broader, more flexible approach could increase the relevance of A-level, and subsequently raise attainment standards, an issue discussed later in this thesis.

However, there are no clear-cut answers as to how, in practice, greater flexibility and choice could best work. The recent course revisions to increase choice have merely raised a different set of problems for those teachers who do include 'as much practical work as possible'. For these teachers, the sheer diversity of the practical choices now offered, in addition to teaching the traditional academic course content, has increased the 'labour intensive' nature of the A-level. Many of the recent additions – for example, composition, project/dissertation work and conducting ensembles – require individual tuition, which teachers found difficult to accommodate within the same time-table allocation as the previous course. This problem would only probably occur with large A-level groups taught by only one teacher, and in reality may only affect a small number of teachers, as the following results from ALIS show:

Class Sizes and Student Numbers	
Class sizes	Student numbers
up to 8	147
8–14	112
14–20	28
over 20	4

However, the recent cut-backs in education have affected music departments, and many more now operate with only one teacher. Plummeridge writes that one of the conclusions of the Schools Council Working Paper, *Arts and the Adolescent*, was that teachers of arts subjects are often isolated in schools; 'They have little opportunity for discussing curriculum matters pertinent to their own field, and often work in situations which allows for little exchange of ideas' (Plummeridge, 1991, 100). In discussions following a talk I gave recently to music teachers, there was keen enthusiasm for arranging future meetings. Similarly, Plummeridge states:

> From my own experience of working with colleagues from schools on various curriculum development initiatives and INSET courses, it seems to be that most welcome and actively seek professional dialogue.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 100)

There is a need to create regular opportunities for music teachers to get together, discuss common problems and explore solutions for enhanced teaching and learning experiences. Indeed, greater communication links with teachers in the instrumental services and performers in education is urgently needed, particularly in the light of recent radical changes to the system. The general feeling of instability and unease has infiltrated all areas of music education.

Aural Perception

The value of aural perception skills is recognised throughout music education to university level. In the survey, university lecturers awarded 94% (the second highest percentage) to aural skills, with 75% of lecturers including aural assessment in their interview procedures.

Aural perception has changed more than any other traditional component of A-level music. Prior to the introduction of the GCSE in 1986, both O- and A-level aural perception components consisted of melodic and rhythmic dictation, two-part counterpoint and four-part harmony. Since then, endeavours to align the GCSE and A-level courses have resulted in the A-level Boards combining to form a common-core Inter-Board Aural Perception paper. However, since its inception this paper has been subject to rigorous alterations, largely through disagreements between the Boards.

The original paper was widely criticised for being too difficult, irrelevant for pupils whose GCSE encounters with music were primarily through performing and composing, and fundamentally flawed in the approaches it adopted for aural awareness. The Cambridge Board opted out of the inter-board paper while further revisions continued to be made. Other Boards reduced its weighting from 28% to 20%. In discussions, the Examinations Officer of the NEAB commented that

> Students are into other things really. The Board is now concentrating its efforts on making this aspect of the paper more interesting and enjoyable. We are interested in making the syllabus more user-friendly, to suit the needs of the students.

He alluded to a 'conflict of ideas' between the different A-level music boards, which has prevented the further revision and co-operation necessary to produce an Inter-Board Aural Paper acceptable to all. 'Conflict of ideas' had, in his view, clearly

extended beyond this paper, resulting in a polarity of interests between those interested in the music examination as a 'valid product' and those interested only in 'making a fast buck'. (This conflict, basically concerning quality versus quantity, is a factor not only influencing the A-level Boards but extending now into Higher Education, as the relentless drive to increase student numbers intensifies.)

According to David Bowman, Chief Examiner for ULEAC and the 'Responsible Setter' for the Inter-Board Test of Aural Perception, the subsequent revisions to the paper aimed to

> ... ensure a natural progression from GCSE syllabuses, to provide stepped questions which allow all candidates to show what they know and can do, and to reduce the complexity of the paper: all of this within a coherent framework which, while maintaining the expected rigour of an A-Level paper, recognises the multiplicity of techniques for assessing the degree to which candidates have learned to respond to sounds in the simple and more complex textures of real music of all styles and periods.
>
> (Revised syllabus, 1994)

The revised paper thus comprised the following:

Part I *Dictation and Aural Discrimination*

1) Completion of a simple melody.

2) Dictation of a 4-bar melody.

3) Completion of a two-part counterpoint.

4) Skeleton score in which perception of harmony and tonality will be tested by the simple identification of chords, keys and cadences.

5) Identification of pitch differences within the context of either a tonal, chromatic or atonal melody, of up to twelve bars in length.

6) Three-part test of pitch and rhythm with 8 'mistakes' of either pitch or rhythm which the student must identify.

> 'The candidate's awareness of a variety of styles and forms of music, from 1550 to the present day will be tested, by means of recorded extracts. Questions will relate to stylistic and analytical features of the music in an historical/cultural context as appropriate. Up to eight extracts will be set and each will be played three times, with suitable pauses for writing' (1996 Syllabus, NEAB).
>
> Late Renaissance
> Baroque
> Classical
> Romantic
> Twentieth-century
> Late twentieth-century Popular Music
> Folk Music of the British Isles
> World Music
> Jazz

Although this revised paper was modelled upon the GCSE Aural Perception paper, students in both my survey and Piers Spencer's survey[22] criticised the simplicity of the GCSE paper and its inadequacy in preparing them for A-level aural work. Some even poured scorn on the attempt of the GCSE course to address a wide repertoire and to accommodate a range of tastes other than classical music: 'I have not needed to know anything about reggae, potato-digging songs, or Genesis since the GCSE'. This is a fairly typical response disdaining any knowledge other than what is immediately useful for passing the next examination.

A more fundamental problem lies in students' lack of understanding of the importance and relevance of aural skills. George Pratt[23] points out that, when questioned about their experiences of aural training, students admitted 'that they disliked it, thought they

22. Piers Spencer conducted an investigation with a sample of 164 undergraduates reading for degrees with music as a main subject in universities and colleges in London, Manchester and south-west England. A questionnaire invited them to comment on all aspects of the GCSE, including the extent to which GCSE prepared them for their subsequent music studies at A and degree level. The survey was conducted in 1991. Spencer is author of *GCSE Coursework: Music, a teacher's guide to task-setting and assessment* (London, Macmillan, 1988).
23. George Pratt is Professor of Music at Huddersfield University.

were bad at it, and have found it largely irrelevant to their subsequent engagement in music' (Pratt, 1990, 1).

One of the reasons for this lack of recognition, as my survey revealed, is the limited correlation between the various A-level components. In cautioning educationalists on the dangers of isolating the listening component from performing and composing, Brian Loane warned that 'as listening is the normal mode of expression, it cannot be just a third of music education. In an important sense, listening is the whole of music education ... at the heart of all music lessons' (Loane, 1984, 36).

For this reason, the Cambridge Board rejected the aural perception paper, stating that

> In order to stress the fundamental importance of listening, its assessment will no longer be carried out through a separate paper but will be fully integrated into all parts of the examination, thereby reflecting the ways in which listening skills of various kinds are used by practising musicians in every aspect of their work.
> (Cambridge Board, 1994 Syllabus)

This compartmentalisation has resulted in a limited awareness of the interactive functions of course components. In the case of aural training and harmony, for example, one lecturer commented, 'when only a tiny minority of students feel, or calculate – or remember – where a dissonant note 'wants' to go, one's heart sinks'. Indeed, recurrent criticisms from the Boards of unmusical, mathematically-construed harmony answers with 'strained and unnatural progressions which revealed little sense of harmony' parallel criticisms of aural harmony identification in the skeleton score question. 'Answers were generally depressing. Only a few recognised the dominant seventh in first inversion' (NEAB Report, 1993). Similarly, the London Board commented, 'responses to this question were the weakest in Part 3. Only five out of a sample of 300 correctly identified the second chord as G7 ... very few achieved full marks in identifying the chords' (London Board Report, 1993).

In reducing the difficulties of the paper, even the integrated parts of aural perception have been segregated and thus some questions border on the superficial. For example, in question two of the 1994 paper, an extract from Handel's *L'Allegro*, the candidate is asked to 'Briefly state how the VOCAL music illustrates each of the phrases underlined in the text.' The question arises as to why the orchestral accompaniment cannot be included in this answer. We would never consider, for instance, when describing the relationship between words and music of a Schubert song, looking solely at the melody line regardless of the harmonies and textural nuances intrinsic to the whole structure and meaning of the song. Similarly, Pratt asks:

> How can anyone listen to the melodic intervals at the beginning of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony without being conscious of the vigorous rhythmic patterns too? To make the experience worthwhile, once the elements have been broken down and analysed it is essential to put them back immediately into the context of real music, to build up again, by synthesis. Only in this way can the breaking down process become constructive. Synthesis of those parts, ie pitch, rhythm, involves the study of the effect of the occurrence of a selection of elements of musical expression.
>
> (Pratt, 1990, 10)

It is not only in the assessment of aural skills where the problems lie, but also in the teaching methodologies employed– the practice of testing instead of learning. If aural skills are taught in isolation, they become meaningless. Plummeridge makes the point that 'if aural abilities are given undue attention, and taught as ends rather than means, then music programmes can become dull, mechanical and devoid of artistic joy' (Plummeridge, 1991, 53). Spencer noted in his survey that students were wary of aural tests set purely for the sake of testing and assessment purposes, as they felt they could not promote their own musical experience and development in any way.

The crux of the problem, in my view, is that students are unused to concentrated listening. Many are surrounded by background music of some kind throughout much of their leisure time. Thus, the ability to ignore or blur the impact of music is

developed at a far greater rate than concentrated, detailed listening is in the weekly aural lesson. For some students, regular contact with the high noise level of discos/clubs eventually affects their ability to tune their ears to the finer aural nuances. I have observed, as a piano teacher, that only the most musically talented player automatically listens to his/her playing; others need to be taught how to listen.

In aural perception training at A-level, there needs to be less emphasis on merely testing and more on learning how to acquire aural skills. In order to be able to listen and evaluate pitch and rhythm accurately, students need to develop a strong musical memory. It has often been maintained that singing is a great benefit to aural training. However, the dearth of singing now in secondary schools, which examiners assert has reached 'an all-time low', has led to initial reluctance to sing at A-level. Moreover, my teaching experiences have shown that singers constitute some of the weakest aural students I have taught. While they frequently have developed a strong musical memory, they have neglected to connect this with the specific recognition of intervals. Through conducting choirs of all age ranges, I have been quite astounded at times by the abilities of many non-readers to retain vast quantities of music in their memories. Student singers who *can* read music unfortunately seem to adopt the same principle. It is students who actively correlate their playing/singing whilst following a score who, I believe, develop aural skills most proficiently. Singing alone does not solve the problem.

In the Suzuki approach, it is borne in mind that children learn to write their own language after they have heard others speak it and after they have learned to speak it themselves. It seems therefore logical to encourage music students to develop a habit of memorising the musical phrase, singing it to themselves, and imagining how they would play it on their instrument or on a keyboard, before writing it down. The ability to spot patterns in melodies, identify stylistic idiosyncrasies and characteristics, and to

evaluate the likelihood of particular melodic shapes, requires musical intelligence and a background practical and/or listening knowledge. These skills also need to be taught and learned, sung or played and then committed to paper. Completed phrases could be first sung or played before being checked with the correct version. Upon revealing the correct version and highlighting differences, intervallic and harmonic progressions could be better understood and real learning could take place. In my teaching experiences I have observed that students are often surprised by the discrepancies between their version and the correct one, and are motivated to increase their own accuracy levels as a result.

The advantages of acquiring keyboard skills have been emphasised previously, and again in aural training these skills would considerably assist students. As always, regular practice is the key to success. Students would be better equipped when using aural tapes (for example, the Mews Music practice tapes which give a prodigious number of melodies, two-part and four-part dictation exercises) if they could go to a piano and play their renditions, thus gradually developing their aural awareness skills.

Teachers in training need to be tutored in how to teach aural, rather than assuming that playing phrases for dictation purposes constitutes aural training. I have assessed several PGCE students recently who have completely overlooked the concept and value of specifically teaching aural skills.

There has been much debate concerning the advantages of students with perfect pitch. Pratt points out that the only students who gain positive delight in pitch tests are those so gifted. He also asserts that these students often have a weak sense of rhythm. For Pratt, the essential elements of a genuine aural training lie not so much in pitch tests, but in the expressive powers of music which he feels, to a greater or lesser degree, we neglect in examinations. He lists these as the following:

1. The range and tessitura of instruments and voices.
2. The density and the distribution of sounds and the textures within which they are performed.
3. The range of timbral colours, of dynamics, articulations and phrasings of which they are capable.
4. Where sounds are positioned in space and how they relate to each other structurally.
5. Above all, the variations in pace at which all these elements may occur.

(Pratt, 1990, 2)

Although Part 2 of the Aural Perception paper assesses many of these elements, the approach adopted is problematic. Firstly, the breadth of styles from 1550 to the present day, if taught properly, is extremely optimistic on the part of the examiners. Secondly, perusal of the paper reveals that any specific assessment of a candidate's awareness of styles is excluded. Questions relate to the identification of pitch, rhythm, harmony, instrumentation, and texture, with only the occasional token gesture to stylistic recognition by asking for a date, period or composer. For example, in comparing question 1, an extract from Mendelssohn's overture, *Ruy Blas*, with question 10, Mark Knopfler's song *Private Dancer*, from the 1994 Revised Syllabus Inter-Board Aural Perception Test, illustrated below, there appears little differentiation in the type of questions asked concerning these two radically different works:

Question 1. You will hear an orchestral extract which will be played **THREE** times. It falls into three clearly defined sections:

(a) Describe the instrumentation of sections A and C

(b) Describe the two ways in which the instruments are played in section B:

(i)

(ii)

(c) Describe the texture of sections A and C

(d) Describe the two different types of texture in section B:

(i)

(ii)

(e) Name the cadence at the end of section C

(f) How does the cadence at the end of section A differ from the cadence at the end of section C?

(g) In what year might this music have been written?

Question 10. You will hear an extract from the song *Private Dancer* sung by Tina Turner. It has three sections, starting with an Introduction, the outline of which is given below. The extract will be played **THREE** times.

(a) The bass enters with a long, sustained note in the Introduction. At which bar does this occur?

(b) On which note does this bass part enter?

(c) What direction should be printed on the piano entry in bar 5 to show how this part is played?

(d) How many times is the melodic and harmonic pattern repeated in each verse?

(e) The entire extract is based on three drum patterns shown below. Show which pattern is used in each section by writing Introduction, Verse or Chorus in the three blank boxes:

(f) How does the singer vary the final repeat of the chorus?

Not only could this approach be viewed as rather tedious and unimaginative, but also this method of assessing stylistic analysis could have a damaging effect on the student, as the individual stylistic characteristics, the nuances, the distinctions between the music are ironed out and diluted. The student could be forgiven for assuming that the major differences between the music of different cultures solely concern such surface elements as instrumentation, pitch and duration discrepancies. Worse, he/she could assume that there are few discrepancies, and thus totally miss the point of studying music of different styles and cultures. Indeed, as all the questions in Part 2 concern these elements, one cannot help wonder why there has been so much discussion among educationalists concerning broadening musical experiences through folk, jazz, pop and world music, when the only indication of any interest in style identification from the examiners amounts to naming or dating a period or composer.

The difficulties of both teaching and assessing aural stylistic analysis could be partially alleviated by reducing the compulsory breadth of knowledge required and introducing an element of choice in the listening paper. Another approach, detailed later in this thesis, could be to assess students' stylistic recognition through short examples of a wide variety of styles, some well-known, requiring only one-word answers. Other questions could incorporate a more flexible approach without prescriptive one-word answers, giving students the opportunity to point out relevant stylistic characteristics. The rubric for Part 2 explains that 'the use of specific questions has replaced the previous open-ended questions, with the reasoning that candidates were wasting much time writing verbose repetitive answers, or making unnecessary value-judgements.' However, one-word answers can restrict the scope of the high achiever in demonstrating his/her wider knowledge. Indeed, in my survey students complained about the limited opportunity for expansion in this paper, one student commenting that 'the simple questions were almost an insult to a well-trained musician's intelligence.'

The method of assessing aural ability by a timed written paper could be reviewed. The pressure of answering within a restricted playing scheme is not only unrealistic in our technological age, but also serves no apparent useful purpose. It also hampers the ability to think calmly and intelligently. The candidate cannot calculate his/her written answer to specifically coincide with the pauses between playings. The Cambridge Board criticised the restrictions on the number of times an extract was played, asserting that this method inaccurately mirrored the abilities of students who examiners felt would have 'got it right' the next time, and was therefore unreal in its demands (Cambridge Board Report, 1993). The Cambridge Board places no time restrictions on its listening component, other than stating it should not exceed one hour. Students undertake this section individually, using headphones.

Students could be given more imaginative and realistic aural tests. The use of mental imagery is highly motivational, an approach adopted in previous composition papers in which students composed short pieces of programme music. In aural testing, students could be asked to imagine they have to perform, for example, a major theme from an opera, musical or orchestral work. Given the basic harmonic outline, students would then notate the melody from a cassette tape of the extract. Similar approaches could be made with music from films and television. Comments referring to the effectiveness of the music in communicating a particular mood could be sought. One of the benefits of such an approach lies in its correlation of aural and analytical skills. In fusing theory and practice in this, and other ways, not only would the relevance of aural skills become apparent, but also integration rather than segregation of course components would increase students' understanding of music.

History and Analysis

The history and analysis of music comprises a compulsory component of all A-Level syllabuses, counting for between 20% and 27% of the total marks. Six of the seven Boards prescribe the study of set works and/or topics, while the London Board sets 30 extracts from its anthology of 120 for study. In general, the syllabuses aim to encourage candidates to:

1) Acquire a broad understanding and awareness of musical styles.
2) Acquire and apply elementary analytical and critical thinking skills to selected works and topics.
3) Acquire the skills of study, research and written techniques through an investigation of selected topics and works.
4) Develop an understanding of musical repertoire in its historical and cultural context.

The Boards collectively considered a good candidate as one who demonstrated a broad knowledge of repertoire, and the ability for critical appreciation, and who could write in a convincing, coherent manner. In essays, those who could support their arguments with detailed reference to music which was obviously known and understood scored highest in assessments. Criticisms, however, of students' limited general music knowledge and understanding, both from the A-Level Boards themselves and from the university lecturers in my survey, clearly revealed a shortfall in these high expectations. There are several reasons which could account for this.

Broad-based music knowledge

Significantly, a broad understanding and awareness of musical styles is interpreted and assessed in different ways at different educational stages, constituting one of the reasons for the chasm between GCSE and A-level courses. At GCSE, this is assessed

on the listening paper through short questions. All the Boards, apart from the NEAB, include set works, which encompass jazz, pop music and musicals. At A-level, the concept of a broad understanding of musical styles changes. Although the same periods/styles are represented, they are split between two components, aural perception and the history and analysis of music, and examined on separate papers. The Cambridge Board is alone in combining listening and history on one paper. In addition, apart from the NEAB and London Board, which include elements of popular music in their set topic choices and anthology respectively, the set works/topics are drawn from classical repertoire. Jazz, pop, folk and world music are relegated to an aural study only on the aural perception paper. While analytical skills are assessed through essays on the history paper, the popular styles are assessed through short questions only, which require minimal historical background knowledge.

Although this emphasis parallels that of university lecturers, who accorded the study of Western classical styles 91%, with jazz being accorded 56%, world music 48%, late twentieth-century music 35% and folk music 26% (see chart on p70), disparity exists between the A-level Boards and university lecturers. While A-level syllabuses focus on depth of study of particular works/topics, university lecturers advocate less depth and more breadth of study. Lecturers in my survey criticised students' patchy knowledge of music, the limited value of set work study, and the need for foundation courses in history to make up the deficiencies. Indeed, weak general history knowledge was commented upon by the Boards themselves, for example, 'It was distressing to come across several Advanced Level candidates who thought the 18th century encompassed the years 1800–1899' (Cambridge Board Report, 1992).

Students would be better served at A-level if a *general* historical knowledge of all musical styles, including popular music, were taught, assessed and integrated on one examination paper, without being subject to a division into either aural or analytical

study. The value of a broad general musical knowledge was asserted in lecturers' comments concerning interviews, all of which required students to demonstrate a broad general knowledge of music, in addition to discussing their musical interests. Personnel in the music industry held similar esteem for those students who 'displayed a deep knowledge and grasp of music', and 'a wide and succinct knowledge of the history of music'.

A broader historical dimension could be assessed through including short listening extracts of a wide variety of music, students identifying style, period and possibly even composers – an approach discussed in further detail later in this thesis. In addition, well-known works could be included, thereby encouraging a dismantling of the perceived division between academic and non-academic music.

Set Works/Topics

The history component aims to encourage candidates to acquire analytical and critical thinking skills. Set works/topics and extracts are used as the vehicle for developing these skills. However, despite attractive choices for study, the level of student analytical work remains low. In their Reports, the A-level Boards frequently commented upon students' weak analytical abilities, one Board stating:

> Responses to the set works were often very limited. A detailed study of the particular work with the score was not always apparent. Interesting and important details of the works which should have been obvious to both ear and eye were overlooked. Candidates were unable to focus on the essential aspects of the chosen passage and comment critically on relevant details – in other words to explain in simple terms how the music works.
>
> (NEAB Report, 1993)

The use of technical terms was also frequently criticised in comments such as the following: 'technical terms were replaced by unnecessary verbiage', and 'only a small number of candidates could use basic technical terms accurately and confidently: the words fugue, counterpoint, stretto and imitation were frequently used as synonyms, as were unison and homophonic.' One Board commented that, in attempting to define the key of a certain given passage, it was common for a student to write, 'there are three more sharps in the signature, an A# crotchet in the right hand and an F# in the left hand. Describing a score in terms of the names of the notes is not analysis.'

There even seemed to be a general ignorance concerning orchestral scores. One Board commented that:

> A high proportion of candidates interpreted 'cor' as meaning either a cornet or cor anglais and 'tromba' as meaning trombone. A-level candidates ought to be sufficiently familiar with the layout of orchestral scores to know which instruments are in use.
>
> (Cambridge Board Report, 1992)

A major difficulty with analysis lies in the quality of the tuition provided. Firstly, set works cannot be taught in an historical and cultural vacuum. Background knowledge needs to be firmly in place prior to embarking on specific study. The approach can be compared to performance studies. If instrumental/vocal tuition solely comprises preparation for grade examinations without expanding repertoire, progress and musical development is stunted. Teachers need to treat set work/topics study as the specific part of a general study of the history of music, rather than as the sole area for study. Reports from the Boards complained that 'several candidates knew very little relevant music beyond the works specified in the syllabus' (Cambridge Board Report, 1992). One university lecturer in my survey remarked that 'few students have heard any classical music other than the works on their A-level syllabus, and fewer still know how to listen properly.'

Secondly, students need to listen regularly to set works. In their Reports, there was speculation among the Boards as to whether students had, in some cases, actually listened to works they were writing about; 'in several cases it was difficult to be certain that the candidates had actually listened to the recording at all.' Similarly, the London Board stressed that

> It should be realised that the paper favours those who know what the music sounds like. Candidates who do not have this aural knowledge of the extracts are easily caught out, as in the case of a candidate who wrote that Messiaen was 'syncopated and jazzy' – an impression that had been taken from the look of the page and not the sound of the music.
>
> (London Board Report, 1993)

Time restrictions do not allow for lessons to be devoted to listening only, particularly in the case of long works. The responsibility lies with the student to supplement lesson listening at home. Unfortunately, some students either lack motivation or have only restricted access to a CD or stereo system. In neglecting, or being unable to support their analytical studies by further listening, they often only partially understand the process.

In my teaching experiences, I have observed students disinterestedly writing down analytical points in scores in completely the wrong places, rendering the whole educational process valueless and clearly revealing their lack of understanding. Reports from university lecturers in the survey remarked that analysis preparation is usually very poor, 'with students showing little grasp of concepts/terminology, most have experience of a sort of woolly Toveyan theme plan type.' As an autonomous group, lecturers expressed the view that they 'would far rather that basic abilities were developed strongly in school than half-baked rote-learned courses on set composers, set periods and set works were attempted.'

The crux of the problem lies in the lack of tuition in critical judgement and evaluation. Teachers are replacing discussing, reasoning and finding out about how and why the music works with bar-by-bar descriptions, dictated programme notes and worksheets, from which the students learn by rote. The Boards' Reports collectively criticised 'bar-by-bar descriptions which attempt to replace critical thinking, and the trotting out of prepared essays'; 'critical accounts were often very descriptive and some candidates found it difficult to write more than a couple of comments about the piece' (NEAB Report, 1993). Swanwick writes:

> Musical criticism lies at the heart of music education ... if we are really listening to music, we are bound to attend to sonorities, to the management of sounds, the secure control of instruments, the quality of tone itself; we are also conscious of the character of music, whether it is indeed a genial giant, titanic or lighter of heart; we also look for coherence, ways in which musical gestures 'hang together', evolve, relate, find a sense of direction, where the music is going.
>
> (Swanwick, 1991, 139–40)

Teachers are entirely missing the point if they provide students with purely descriptive notes as a substitute for actively studying the music. Description in any form is not analysis. There is a scathing attack in the Cambridge Board Report (1992) on their topic *The Symphony in the Romantic Period*; 'much time was wasted in telling the story of the *Symphonie Fantastique* in an effort to place the Berlioz extract in its context.' Similarly, the NEAB observed that

> As knowledge of the areas of study was so limited, answers to the first section of a question usually exhausted all available information and the second section consisted mainly of recycled material. Candidates have seriously underestimated the demands of this examination if they submit two or three pages of vague descriptive matter without a single specific reference, even to the number of voices in a chosen work.
>
> (NEAB Report, 1993)

In endeavouring to pre-empt irrelevant teaching and learning, the Cambridge Board stated in its 1996 syllabus that 'the principle emphasis should be on listening, rather

than on absorbing irrelevant biographical information or learning historical facts by rote.' However, this practice still continues, as my survey revealed, with students commenting that 'having to learn dates and facts about works, instead of spending more time looking at the actual music, was a waste of time.'

One teacher complained about the amount of preparation needed to teach the set works, seeking refuge in study books. According to major educational music shops in the north of England, demand for these was high, with teachers often 'quite desperate to get their hands on them'. Briefly, these books cover the life and works of a set composer and analysis of the set work. They are not viewed as comprehensive studies by the authors, and users of the books are encouraged to supplement them with other references. The analyses themselves are fond of labelling themes using numbers and letters, and tend to be set out rather like a mathematical puzzle, for example:

> bar 291 – A^1 transforms to B^2 accompanied by A^2 in F#m
> bar 293 – A^2 in vln
>
> (Mayflower Study Guide, 1991, 16)

It is regrettable that this kind of analysis, published as an *aid* to the teaching of set works (and often written by examiners themselves), appears to be replacing genuine analytical tuition. Several students in my survey felt their tuition in analysis to have been, at best, superficial, and at worse, negligible, when faced with the demands of university courses. They would have generally preferred a more focused approach on *how* to study in depth, rather than the 'accepted wisdom' of standard texts.

A genuine approach to critical thinking could involve much more discussion between teacher and student, with less emphasis on the teacher producing the finished analysis, as my survey revealed. There needs to be a greater emphasis upon developing intellectual skills in students through discussing, reasoning and thinking. Students have

become very used to being passive recipients of streams of information, either in education or through the media. Teachers need to alert students to the necessity for actual learning and the discipline required to retain and apply their knowledge. Teachers themselves criticised students for their inability to study on their own, for copying 'chunks out of books', and for 'writing about music they have never listened to'. In many cases, this appears to be a vicious circle. In dictating notes copied out of books, teachers are perpetuating the downward spiral.

The A-level Boards could also look at alternative methods for assessing analytical skills. The point of examining analysis is to assess students' ability to detect stylistic characteristics, and to acquire an understanding of how music works. Instead of set works/topics, unseen short extracts could be presented, some of which require analysis in some detail, and others the identification of period and genre only, the choice being left to the student. Extracts chosen could be clear, easy to identify in terms of period, and frequently familiar – the point being not to identify the particular piece of music, but to identify stylistic characteristics. The absence of set questions would allow for a freer response. The range of music could be extended to include popular music in the broadest sense. Finally, the relevance of analysis could be enhanced through a greater fusion of theory and practice. For example, students could be required to write an essay on their musical understanding of either a solo or large-scale work which they are preparing for performance. My survey revealed that some schools/colleges with large A-level groups frequently mounted performances of A-level set works. However, this is only possible in a few establishments. These points are included in my ideal course structure later in the thesis.

As the current GCSE examination does not include essays, tuition needs to be provided at A-level in essay skills. Not only is this required for A-level examinations, but also for entry into Higher Education. At interviews, essays are viewed as a

significant guideline to a student's potential. My survey revealed that 54% of interviews included written tests and a further 11% required examples of recent essays to be brought to the interview. According to the ALIS Report, only 31.8% of students practice essay writing more than once a fortnight, with nearly a third, 23%, 'never or almost never' writing essays. Comments from university lecturers in the survey included, 'essays lacked a coherent style of argument, logical organisation'. The poor level of literacy skills, from basic spelling to sentence structure and grammar, was also criticised.

Finally, there needs to be a greater emphasis upon correlating historical music study within its cultural context, an issue discussed in detail later in this thesis.

Composition

Composition is now rightly recognised as a vital component of music education in both the National Curriculum and at GCSE level. In defining the value of composition in education, Swanwick[24] writes:

> Whatever form it may take, the prime value of composition in music education is not that we may produce more composers, but in the insight that may be gained by relating to music in this particular and direct manner.
>
> (Swanwick, 1979, 43)

Indeed, the implementation of composition in the music curriculum had its roots in progressive ideologies concerning music education in the 1960s, detailed in Part 1 of this thesis. John Paynter has been at the forefront of developments in composition in

24. Keith Swanwick took a key role in establishing the two attainment targets for music in the National Curriculum – performing and composing, and listening and appraising – and their weightings, working closely with the then Secretary of State for Education, Kenneth Clarke.

education since the publication of his seminal book, *Sound and Silence*, co-written with Peter Aston in 1967–68. In his most recent book, *Sound and Structure*, Paynter writes that 'Creativity should be at the heart of all affective areas of the curriculum. All conscious musical experience is concerned with adventures of feeling, imagination and invention' (Paynter, 1992, 10).

However, the route through music education reveals inconsistency in the degree of value placed on composition. Throughout all key stages of the National Curriculum, composition is important. At GCSE level it is compulsory, and counts for 30% of the marks. At A-level, however, composition is compulsory on only four out of eleven syllabuses, counting for between 12% and 27% of the marks. At university level, the survey revealed composition being regarded as either 'highly desirable' or 'desirable', and awarded 78%, the eighth out of nineteen areas to be considered as valuable preparation for undergraduate study. Lecturers from Oxford University considered composition 'as an option only'. But as a means of assessing a student's ability during university interviews for places on degree courses, composition was rarely mentioned.

The value music educationalists place on composition does not appear to have affected either students or teachers at A-level to any substantial degree. Despite composition being a compulsory activity at GCSE level, when there is a choice at A-level the composition option seems to be selected by few students, as my survey revealed. Similarly, in 1993, according to Spencer's survey, only 34% of students had submitted composition course-work at A-level. The NEAB Board wrote in its 1993 Report that

> Overall, [composition] submissions were varied and often full of interest. It is perhaps rather surprising that such a small percentage of candidates attempted this option instead of the traditional harmony paper.

At GCSE level, composing appears to be an activity enjoyed by most students. Plummeridge states how, in his experience as a class teacher, 'most pupils seem highly motivated by compositional activities. They enjoy taking part and show great interest in listening to each other's musical 'ideas'' (Plummeridge, 1991, 51). Spencer similarly reports students being proud of their compositions at GCSE level, 76% of those interviewed having kept their pieces. He states that the percentage would have been higher, but several students claimed that they had been unable to get their course-work returned from the examining Boards. In my survey, students also gave an indication of the creative and aesthetic nature of their musical activity, for example: 'I found composing to be something I greatly enjoy. Composing made me imaginative; it was a new creative experience.'

However, whilst finding this activity enjoyable, the majority of students perceived composition at GCSE as lacking in intellectual rigour, and an inadequate preparation for A-level study. Intellectual rigour was rather perceived in studies within a specific framework, like harmony and counterpoint – a point which will be discussed in further detail in the next section of this thesis.

The existing A-level syllabuses present attractive opportunities for composition, both in pastiche and free composition. Recently, opportunities to compose in twentieth-century styles – for example, serialism, atonality, jazz, and the 12-bar blues – have been included. The 1991 DES criteria for GCSE level, largely also followed at A-level, stipulates that 'students should produce compositions which demonstrate control of the medium used, technical skills, and a sophisticated development of ideas' (DES, 1991, 6.8). The criteria further state that students should be exposed to a wide range of stimuli, and understand and use a variety of formal structures, invent original ideas, refine their own work, and record their compositions using appropriate notation.

The crux of the problem at A-level seems to be a lack of expert composition tuition in those areas specified by the criteria. According to the ALIS Report, only 34.8% of students receive composition tuition once or more a week, whilst 32.9% never or only 'about once a term' are involved in any activities producing original work. In my survey there were several complaints from students that composition tuition had been the most neglected area of study on the A-level course. The majority of criticisms at GCSE level were complaints about the absence of boundaries. 'We were just told to write a piece of music – we were given little or no advice'. 'We were given very little scope or direction since we hadn't composed before in a serious manner. We perhaps could have had more ideas suggested or at least more listening [in order] to understand more styles.'

One very real problem teachers have is that few specialised in composition during their own training. Many have never composed at all. Because of the influence of some long-established views in music education, composition teaching has, for many, never been a major consideration. Music educationalists are now trying to rectify the balance, seeing the need for more detailed assistance in the composition element, particularly in matters of musical structure and the ways in which students can be encouraged to generate and develop musical ideas.

Some teachers, being aware of the view that to 'interfere' with a student's work is to stifle creativity, have been tempted into the error (however well-intentioned) of leaving students to sink or swim. William Murphy, writing about music in the primary school, talks about the importance of teachers restricting their role to 'organising'. He warns of the 'dangers' of suggesting ideas which could possibly have a narrowing effect (Murphy, 1968, 118). Whatever was meant by this sort of advice, there is abundant evidence to suggest that it has often resulted in non-musical experimentation, and has discredited the whole purpose and principle behind musical creativity. Those teachers

adopting Murphy's indicator have taken to viewing composition teaching as giving boundaries, such as 'compose a 12-bar blues or serial piece', thinking that thereby there is freedom for opportunity, breadth of experience, and variety of expression. They have neglected to teach compositional structures and methods, to study styles and other composers' music, and have espoused the viewpoint of 'students as composers'. Criticisms from university lecturers in my survey highlighted a general lack of awareness of style common in students, together with a lack of understanding of 'what we mean by composition (as distinct from stylistic and other compositional techniques)'.

In the survey, teachers found themselves in a difficult predicament over the question of the standards required by the examining Boards. In discussions, one experienced teacher remarked that he actively discouraged students from choosing the composition option as he had 'no idea of the standard necessary' which would yield a good mark at examination level. He felt it to be a largely subjective area. The London Board have commented on the 'multitude of problems [they have dealt with] over following the syllabus requirements for composition – minimum length of work, [and] specific requirements for the arrangement of and materials to be submitted' (London Board Report, 1992). This again points to a need for clear directives in this area. Unlike the GCSE examination system, where compositions are marked internally and moderated by the Board, there are no A-level standardisation meetings where discussion and advice on particular musical examples, and the marks awarded to them, can occur. One teacher in the survey welcomed the NEAB Board's initiative of providing a tape recording of submitted A-level compositions, which gave her valuable insight into the types of composition produced. She regretted that it was not accompanied with marks awarded, which in her view would have rendered the exercise even more beneficial. At an NEAB Board meeting in June 1994, concern was expressed regarding requirements for composition. The Board answered this question by stating it had no plans to make

public, by tape or standardisation, what they considered to be a 'good composition', fearing that such example material would constrain teaching approaches. The Board insisted that the listed criteria should give enough guidance. Since then, however, this Board appears to have had a change of heart, and has published examplar composition material with comments and marks awarded with its 1996/1997 syllabus.

Other Boards have been similarly generous and helpful in their aims and objectives, in the scope given for composition, and more recently in their detailing of the criteria by which they assess compositions. The Cambridge Board, in particular, has recognised the level of assistance needed as 'Composing is still an emergent discipline within music education' (Cambridge Board Syllabus, 1996). The Board lists its criteria as the following, with additional guidelines for each:

Materials
Content of materials
Communicability of intention, or 'effectiveness'
Range of aural awareness
Interaction with performance (or with music technology)
Basic musicianship
Progress and self-evaluation
Stylistic correctness

This particular Board has also issued a comprehensive assessment analysis of four sample pieces of free composition, possibly in response to its own speculation that, given the completely open brief for free composition contained in its syllabus, 'teachers may have felt unable or unqualified to give advice within the chosen style' (Cambridge Board Syllabus, 1996). The Board comments further that it has often felt that 'more direct tuition could have been given to the work in free composition', and is one of several Boards who specifically state their expectation that candidates should have followed a course in composing techniques.

A solution to the problem could lie in training prospective A-level teachers in the techniques of composition, with specific reference to the standard or quality expected at A-level. Providing ongoing in-service training would perhaps also be beneficial. Training in A-level composition teaching could be based in four critical areas:

i) The development of ideas, with the resulting implications for unity and diversity. Students who have not been tutored in this area tend to use, according to the Boards' Reports, 'excessive repetition, with the music failing to work towards a goal, or excessive diversity in which ideas remain unexplored and the music fails to cohere' (NEAB Report, 1993).

ii) Control of texture, and methods of varying it.

iii) Refinement of ideas. The Boards' Reports frequently point to compositions 'looking like first drafts', being 'hastily 'cobbled together' at the last minute'. Teachers need to encourage students to finish their first attempts well before the deadline and to master techniques of modern musical notation.

iv) Teaching twentieth-century compositional styles. Again, initial training on PGCE courses concerning approaches and methods of tuition in twentieth-century styles would be useful, as would in-service courses which focus on the twentieth century, including the idioms of pop.

One university lecturer in the survey complained that 'composition at school seems impossibly limited, superficial even, revealing a lack of open-ended approaches and a lack of knowledge of the twentieth-century repertory'. Both Spencer's and my survey revealed students complaining that 'we learned no twentieth-century techniques.' The Cambridge Board has expressed concern that, 'as we approach the next century, so

little contact with the music of the present century (outside pop music) seemed to be apparent in free composition work' (Cambridge Board Report, 1994). Their Report goes on to despair at the meagre diet composition students appear to be receiving, noting that 'few composers have worked without the stimulus of other music to enrich their work'. The Cambridge Board intended that the composition part of its syllabus would provide an opportunity to experiment with materials gleaned from the music of set history periods, and extend the range of musical perception by encouraging students to explore different aspects of musical language. They quote music of a current topic for their *Paper 4 – Music in France, 1890–1930*, which they feel offers much in the way of approachable techniques and materials, yet has yielded 'so few pieces exploring whole-tone and pentatonic harmony, using ostinato constructions, adopting *Gymnopédie* form [*sic*], experimenting with simple bitonality or with additive rhythms, to suggest a few examples'(Cambridge Board Report, 1992).

When largely left to their own devices, students take their sources from the music they are most familiar with. For many students, this is pop/rock music. The Boards collectively are critical of the number of 'pop ballads' they receive as compositions whose figuration ambles gently around a plan of four chords, rarely modulating, with little understanding of matching verbal and musical stresses. The influence of pop genres has also affected classical harmonisations, through 'rules' casually being broken. The mismatch between totally free composition at GCSE level and the juxtaposition of traditional harmony work and free composition at A-level is clearly leading to some confusion. One university lecturer in the survey referred to 'a failure generally [among students] to write in a classical idiom, as distinct from 'pop art''. In some cases the use of pop genres is taken by students as a method of avoiding precise notation, or as an excuse for leaving notated scores incomplete, without tempo indications, dynamics, or expression marks.

In the absence of structured tuition, students are also using the technology which accompanies pop. Consequently, much composition work at A-level is undertaken using synthesisers. According to the Boards' reports, the use of synthesisers has led to some weak results in composition. The Cambridge Board commented on what it perceived as being unimaginative use of this technology:

> The materials chosen were thin and the manipulation of them came from the basic functions of the computer program itself – as this technology becomes more familiar and available we should expect a similar advance in its imaginative use.
> (Cambridge Board Report, 1994)

The NEAB was also critical of many candidates who 'were limited by the sort of ostinato procedures which have become a cliché associated with the synthesiser, and the results lacked much musical interest, being based in two or three basic chords and with much tedious repetition' (NEAB Report, 1994). Interestingly, the ALIS Report found that 74.9% of A-level students 'never or almost never' use music technology, while 3.6% use computers 'about once or twice a week'. It would seem reasonable to conclude from this that sources outside the classroom are being used as a foundation and inspiration for composition, a significant issue to which this thesis will return.

In composition teaching, teachers could consider the benefits of positively educating students in popular music composition. Students would study structures, what makes a 'good' pop song, and, for example, the reasons behind the popularity of the post-1935 ballad. The diversity of popular music could be viewed within the broader compositional perspective of twentieth-century music: it could increase curiosity into classical contemporary styles, especially post-1945 and the network of cross-fertilisation between these and earlier styles.

The examining Boards are very keen to receive recorded tapes of A-level composition work, 'not only to get a better grasp of the candidate's intentions, but also for the

candidates themselves, who will gain enormously from the process of rehearsing, performing and recording' (NEAB syllabus, 1994). Spencer noted in his survey that nearly 80% of students had a permanent record of their own composition work on tape (Spencer, 1993, 82). A composer/examiner from one of the Boards crucially observed: 'I think it is essential that students are able to hear what they write in terms of *real sound*. Composition is more than a paper exercise' (London Board Report, 1992). Most music teachers would surely agree with this.

To treat composition as an academic exercise without producing a recording reveals a certain lack of understanding, or interest, from students in this activity. It certainly reveals a lack of curiosity in the music they have composed. Of course, preparing to record a performance involves readable scores, copying out parts, competent and willing players, rehearsals, and access to recording facilities. Problems with recording can occur in schools through shortage of players of the required technical ability, and/or insufficient recording and music technology equipment. Such problems could lead a teacher to abandon ideas for encouraging composition. Recording in a school situation, with its noise, bells, doors, time restrictions and so on, can well be extremely difficult.

Finally, although indulgences in curriculum composition practices have recently raised questions in music education circles, both the Boards' Reports and my survey revealed that there are some excellent student composers who do reveal a depth of approach and originality of inspiration. In addition, the Boards emphasise the vast range of achievement in composition. There seem to be two types of composition students: those genuine composers who largely compose outside the school environment and who do not require the pressure of an examination to persuade them to practise their craft, and those whose modest performance or harmony and counterpoint skills cannot meet the challenge of the standard required, and who therefore take refuge in the

composition component. There is a huge gulf to be bridged between these two extremes, and most students fall into it.

Harmony and Counterpoint

Traditionally, the study of harmony and counterpoint has been valued highly throughout music education. Recently, changes in the National Curriculum and at GCSE level have shifted the emphasis from harmony and counterpoint to composition. The DES criteria for Key stage 4 (GCSE) only mention harmony specifically once – 'a range of harmonic combinations and progressions [should be taught]' (DES, 1991, 7.28) – in an extensive list of detailed provisions for the attainment targets. However, my survey revealed that university lecturers looked for competence in harmony techniques from students as a means of assessing whether or not they were able to 'manipulate notes on paper following a set of stylistic guidelines'. Attaining 79%, harmony and counterpoint ranked seventh highest in the perceived value order for areas of study.

It is paradoxical that while the value placed upon composition studies decreases, that placed upon harmony and counterpoint increases throughout the music education system. These differences in value highlight the lack of cohesion between the views of music educationalists and those held by lecturers in Higher Education.

Until recently, A-level courses have remained fairly traditional. The study of harmony and counterpoint has taken a natural place alongside the study of classical works, the performing of classical pieces, and the testing of aural ability through two-part counterpoint, classically-based melodies, and four-part harmony. Changes, juxtaposing harmony and counterpoint tuition with free composition, have placed the study of

harmony and counterpoint in a confused situation, and with a less certain significance. In addition, the broadening of historical studies and aural perception to include a wide range of twentieth-century styles (including pop, jazz, folk and world music idioms) has further confused the previously clear position of harmony in the course.

The dominance of harmony and counterpoint

Despite less emphasis from the Boards (which are now offering more opportunity to be imaginative), harmony and counterpoint remains a dominant feature of A-level teaching programmes in schools. According to statistics in the ALIS Report, harmony examples and exercises were worked by 40% of students 'about once or twice a week', and for 23% of students 'about three or four times per week'. This was by far the most used learning activity in the ALIS survey.

There are two major reasons why harmony and counterpoint still dominates teaching programmes at A-level. Firstly, the discerning teacher is aware of the requirements for Higher Education courses and particularly of the A-level Examining Boards, which exert strong influence in the light of the current emphasis on the assessable, the quantifiable, in education today. Secondly, the teachers' own formal training and familiarity in this area increases the attraction of teaching harmony, amid the influx of new introductions to A-level syllabuses. When given a choice between composition and harmony, teachers opt for the safe and familiar. Witkin writes:

> Most music teachers' formal training has developed in them a keenly developed sense of order and established structure in the way certain things are taught: they tend to go about harmony training in an ordered, formalised manner.
>
> (Witkin, 1974, 136)

The Cambridge Board Report (1994) stated that the Bach chorale option dominated the admissions, being selected for over 95% of the folios, despite there being a choice on the paper of six music technique options.

Indeed, the harmony and counterpoint component has changed little over the years. Familiar approaches remain: harmonisation of a chorale in the style of J S Bach, choices of two-part counterpoint in the style of Handel, classical string quartet writing, completion of a keyboard accompaniment to a given melody, composition of short variations in Baroque keyboard style, and the completion of a Baroque trio sonata. Generally, candidates are required to 'show evidence of their ability to use a harmonic vocabulary, consisting of all the diatonic triads and chords of the seventh and their inversions, chromatically altered chords, for example, major chords on the supertonic, minor chords of the subdominant, unessential [*sic*] notes, accented and unaccented, chromatic chords of the augmented sixth, Neapolitan sixth and diminished seventh, and modulation to the five most closely related keys' (NEAB Syllabus, 1997). Such work is easily assessable, marks being accorded to the correct application of these chords to a stylistic understanding. However, despite prolific teaching attention, my survey revealed that standards have fallen in this area.

The most emotive attack from university lecturers in the survey was directed towards the poor teaching of harmony techniques. Knowledge of harmony was 'very limited', with prospective undergraduates having 'no real knowledge of harmonic structures and chord functions'. Lecturers commented on being 'forced to review the entire first year' of undergraduate courses, and to set up foundation courses designed specifically to build up a basic knowledge in harmony and counterpoint. The Professor of East Anglia University went further, stating that 'the A-level in music is totally inadequate as a preparation for undergraduate studies, especially in the area of tonal harmony'.

The examining Boards were equally critical. Despite new ventures, such as the London Board's introduction of keyboards and headphones in the examination room to allow students to 'hear their music', criticisms have not changed. The London Board's mean mark for its Music Techniques paper in 1994 was 58.2%. Throughout the Boards' Reports, comments expressing disappointment with harmonizations abounded. Typical comments included, 'consecutives, poor spacings, the overlapping of parts and the awkward angularity arising from the sixth and seventh steps of the [harmonic] minor scale' (NEAB Report, 1993). Disappointment with repeated occurrences of perennial weaknesses prompted the Cambridge Board to remove Bach chorales from its list of stylistic options. Its 1992 Report observed that

> Too often exercises are tackled through formulaic methods, a puzzle to be solved rather than a piece of music with expressive demands. It remains a decontextualized theory capsule giving little scope for increasing a candidate's perception of style, texture, form, or the understanding of a composition as a means of articulating expressive and imaginative concepts.

New approaches

In the light of these criticisms, new approaches towards the teaching and assessing of harmony and counterpoint need to be adopted. First, there is the question of the alignment of course content between GCSE and A-level. My survey revealed that little teaching of harmony was undertaken at GCSE level. Students commented, 'we learned no harmony', and 'there was absolutely no structure to the course – you didn't even have to write notes'. In the survey, A-level teachers reported harmony courses starting from scratch – learning key signatures, sometimes even notes in the bass clef for those students playing treble clef instruments. A student with the Associated Board Grade 5 Theory qualification was regarded by some teachers as being more knowledgeable in techniques than a post-GCSE student. Interestingly, this theory

examination, once viewed as arid and dull, now seems to have gained an elevated status in the light of the GCSE examination.

The GCSE course clearly needs some improvement in the teaching of harmony techniques. This would relieve some of the teaching burden at A-level, and familiarise students with basic harmony procedures before they begin the course. The loose use of harmony at GCSE level, as the sole foundation upon which to begin learning the rigours of harmony, is creating difficulties for both A-level students and teachers alike.

At A-level, a greater emphasis on the correlation of theory and practice could focus more attention on teaching basic practical skills. The acquisition of keyboard skills is of paramount importance to the harmony student. The survey revealed a keen interest in good keyboard skills from university lecturers, one lecturer remarking:

> I see keyboard musicianship and harmony/counterpoint as [being] related; proficiency in one often aids proficiency in the other. Of the two, I'd go for keyboard musicianship – for fluency in score-reading, harmonising, transposing, understanding jazz chord symbols and figured bass.

Singing is a practice sadly neglected in some schools today. The regular practice of singing in four-part harmony could be immensely valuable, as an aid to understanding melodic shape, and linear and vertical conception.

A basic aural understanding is also essential. Students today are deluged with the harmonic idioms of pop music. Tuition is needed to tune students' ears to the full spectrum of harmony and counterpoint and to the balance between vertical and horizontal approaches, which should be evident even in Bach chorale harmonizations.

Traditional methods of teaching harmony have concentrated upon building up the theory of harmony through 'rules', working in an ordered fashion from one chord to

another, starting with cadences or isolated root position primary chords. But the key to understanding harmony, and indeed music, is through the understanding of harmonic processes. Pratt makes the point that undergraduates who have 'been through traditional 'harmony' courses have a generous vocabulary of vertical chords but little grasp of the context in which they occur or of their implicit horizontal drive. A harmony is meaningless in isolation. It takes on meaning only in a time continuum' (Pratt, 1984, vii).

A transference of focus in A-level harmony teaching, concentrating on the function, role and expressive power of chords and their sense of direction, would be of great benefit. When harmony takes on a meaning it becomes a powerful force. My survey revealed that the most commonly used books remain Kitson's *Elementary Harmony*, Lovelock's *First and Second Year Harmony*, Warburton's *Harmony*, and (more recently) Anna Butterworth's *Stylistic Harmony*. Some of these books tend to treat harmony in isolation, laying out the theory of the subject as a method. Abstract harmony exercises are completed by the student in the hope of gaining a technical knowledge of the subject *en route*. Witkin writes that 'in looking for 'controllable props', focus has been on teaching the 'rules' of harmony, spotting consecutive fifths and octaves, unresolved suspensions, missing accidentals' (Witkin, 1974, 136). Rules should be deduced from the musical practice of the great composers – from actual music, and analysed (with guidance) by the students themselves.

Other books include brief extracts from actual works to illustrate harmony points. However, as Pratt points out:

> ... quoting a bar or two of music otherwise not familiar tells us virtually nothing at all about either the impact of the particular device, or the music from which the example is taken.
>
> (Pratt, 1984, viii)

Moreover, while the experienced musician can, to a certain extent, connect the quoted two bars to his/her knowledge of the whole work, the inexperienced musician often has no such knowledge to call upon.

Of paramount significance to the understanding and appreciation of harmony and counterpoint is the development of the inner ear. A significant part of all A-level teaching needs to be spent on developing this skill. Deciphering written music is not easy – it requires extreme precision in the perception of pitch and rhythm.

> ... it involves retaining several symbols at once to assemble the composite sound of a single chord let alone the musical continuity of several harmonic progressions or the flow of contrapuntal lines. It is like reading several texts at once, an almost inconceivable challenge as far as written words are concerned.
>
> (Pratt, 1984, vi)

However, it seems equally pertinent to look at harmonic progressions as text, and studying the constituent notes which make up a chord rather like reading a word of text. When we, as musicians, hear in our imagining ear, for example, a diminished seventh or augmented sixth chord within a diatonic phrase, we do not hear the chord on its own. We take in the whole process; our senses are drawn toward the pull of the notes which need to resolve. The reason for the chord's existence lies in the impact it creates, its function, the tension it creates (if that is its function) and, likewise, the release of that tension to the next chord.

The craft of composition also needs to be understood by students. Reimer points out that

> Craftsmanship is the expertness by which the materials of art are moulded into expressiveness.... There is something almost spiritual about craftsmanship. The absence of craftsmanship is signalled by shoddiness, by disrespect for material, by forcing material to do something rather than doing what it requires, by skill that is devoid of heart – skill that manipulates the material rather than serving its expressiveness. Such work demeans us.
>
> (Reimer, 1989, 135)

Examination Boards could well look at new assessment methods. For example, instead of asking candidates to harmonise a two-bar melody, modulate, and include a specified chromatic chord, the Boards could present opportunities for students to show their understanding of the impact of harmony by, for example, harmonising passages which build or diffuse tension, or which create different moods.

Harmonic usage is a salient part of most musical styles. In the light of the new syllabus changes, students need to acquire an understanding of the significance of development in the use of tonal harmony throughout music history, including the twentieth century. This could include a look at the contemporary pop idioms of the 1990s, with a view to comparing and contrasting modern uses of harmony with those of the past. Students could also explore harmonising a melody from a television programme, a familiar commercial, or a film theme, for example, in a range of different styles, from the stance of 'what happens if I harmonise this melody in a Romantic style, or a Classical style, or a pop or jazz style'. Competency in arranging could be pursued through similar methods. A study of the use and development of the dominant seventh and diminished seventh chords could well be another method of approaching harmony in a meaningful way.

Performance

The value of performance has long been recognised as a vital component in music education. The ethos of the National Curriculum, 'to foster pupils' sensitivity to, and their understanding and enjoyment of music, through an active involvement in listening, composing and performing' can be traced back to the Greek doctrines of Aristotle. It is a view which has been endorsed by music educationalists since the 1960s and provides a framework for both the GCSE and A-level courses.

In the survey, performance was accorded 93%, third highest, by university lecturers. Without exception, all interviews for entry to Higher Education courses required students to demonstrate their musicianship through performance and related skills. Teachers in the survey held performance in equally high esteem, one teacher commenting that he treated a students' performance as his major criteria for 'judging how well a candidate can do'. Although not the highest priority for employment in the music industry, 40% of respondents looked favourably upon prospective employees who had practical experience in areas necessary or useful to their particular field.

The segregated nature of the route through music education has presented difficulties for the Boards in bridging the gap between the GCSE and degree courses. In embracing the ethos of the National Curriculum, A-level Boards now offer unlimited scope for prepared performance and a range of practical skills which are listed in the chart overleaf.

Performance Examination Contents from 1990										
	NEAB	Northern Ireland	Oxford & Cambridge	Oxford Delegacy	Cambridge Syndicate	London A	London B	London Practical	London Mus Tech	Welsh
Prepared Performance: 1st Study	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Prepared Performance: 2nd Study	✓					✓		✓		
Quick study piece	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓
Ensemble playing	✓				✓					✓
Improvisation		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Sight-reading		✓		✓	✓					✓
Keyboard Harmony skills					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sight singing					✓					
Accompanying					✓					
Conducting & Rehearsing an ensemble					✓	✓	✓	✓		
Transposing Score Reading					✓					✓
Offer Grade 8 of the ABRSM, GSM, LCM or TCL			✓							
Performance as coursework					✓	✓	✓	✓		
Viva						✓	✓	✓		

However, by introducing a broader, more imaginative range of options, the skills desired by university lecturers are presented as options only. They are included in few syllabuses and can therefore be easily avoided. These comprise keyboard fluency, keyboard harmony, score-reading and improvisatory skills, which were awarded 82%, 67%, 67% and 65% respectively. The new elements – accompaniment, rehearsing and directing an ensemble, and ensemble playing – introduced to align the performing component with the GCSE, did not even merit a mention in lecturers' responses.

My survey revealed that many A-level students have not acquired keyboard skills. Thus, three of the four most valued practical skills for Higher Education are instantly ruled out. Improvisation is a relatively new addition to the syllabus. However, many teachers are not trained in improvising skills and thus omit it from the choices offered, or, as revealed in the survey, teach it from the traditional 16-bar melody format. One student commented; 'The improvisation – I did it because it came naturally to make up the 16-bar structure, but it didn't stretch me'. The point of including improvisation in the course is to nurture imagination and inventiveness, which is linked to the whole ethos of understanding music through practical and creative means. Given that many teachers are also unfamiliar with composition tuition, it is not surprising that improvisation is either avoided or undervalued.

One of the many paradoxes in music education, however, lies in the *approach* towards performance. Although the 20–40% of marks accorded the performance component at A-level parallels that at GCSE level, the approach towards performance differs. At GCSE level, performing is strategically intertwined with composing, weighted 2:1 against the second attainment target, listening and appraising. (Spencer noted that 80% of GCSE students had performed and recorded their own compositions, in marked contrast to the lack of recorded compositions at A-level, discussed in the previous section). At A-level, performance is treated as a separate component. In

addition, while performance is solidly integrated into GCSE teaching programmes, albeit to the detriment of formal tuition (as has been previously discussed), it is largely excluded at A-level. The survey showed that for 98% of students, performance belonged with instrumental/vocal teachers and in extra-curricular activities. Only one teacher in the survey allocated time – one lesson in ten – to performance studies.

A major problem with this arrangement is that most instrumental/vocal tutors are unfamiliar with syllabus requirements, and have little or no contact with A-level teachers, despite their teaching the same student for the same examination. Thus, the scope now offered by the Boards for prepared performance is not realised, and most students still play Associated Board grade 7/8 examination pieces in their A-level Performance examination. Similarly, although performance on pop/rock orientated instruments is now encouraged by the Boards, traditional perceptions of academic courses still dominate this area. For example, the London Board commented:

> Some candidates thought that they were obliged to play 'classical' instruments and penalised themselves by playing poorly on, for example, the classical guitar when the documentation and viva revealed they were excellent electric guitar players.
>
> (London Board Report, 1993)

This problem also occurred at GCSE level. Although a substantial part of GCSE lessons are taken up with practical activities, Spencer noted that only one out of 164 students in his survey had performed in a pop group in the examination. The majority chose to perform pieces from the Associated Board repertoire.

When presented with opportunities to adopt a more imaginative approach, by encouraging unconventional instruments or popular music/jazz styles, teachers (as in other areas of the course) tend to choose safe options in preference to exploring the choice and scope offered. One of the reasons for this could be due to uncertainty concerning the required standard. It is well known that performing a grade 7/8

standard piece correlates well with the standard required. However, ascertaining a jazz or pop music piece using grade criteria is not easy, and in the face of pressure for students to succeed in their examination, both teacher and student alike seem to opt for the safe, the secure, and the familiar.

The lack of communication between the instrumental/vocal and class teacher has resulted in the important tuition of practical skills falling between two stools; the instrumental/vocal tutor is unaware of the syllabus requirements, while the A-level teacher assumes the private tutor is providing all the tuition. The general ignorance concerning the quick study piece, for example, which has replaced sight-reading on some syllabuses, was commented upon by the London Board:

> It is possible that some instrumental teachers are not aware of the demands of this part; it would be helpful if Heads of Music were to appraise them of the syllabus requirements in good time, so that work on an understanding of technique and stylistic interpretation can form a part of every lesson during the course.
>
> (London Board Report, 1993)

The recent cut-backs in instrumental music services have exacerbated the situation further. Local authority music services now only cater for the 5–16 educational sector. Although some students in the 16–19 age sector are able to continue previous lessons, particularly if they are involved in county orchestras/bands, the tuition provided is often inadequate for this stage, as it is conducted in large groups of pupils of differing standards. Moreover, under the revised system, the student may often be taught by a teacher who is only broadly familiar with his/her instrument.

In addition, only tuition on traditional instruments is offered by local music services. For those students learning unconventional instruments or requiring singing tuition, or indeed those students who are left high and dry at the post-16 stage, the situation remains unclear. Those who can afford it take private tuition; those who cannot are

forced to rely upon the school to finance lessons. However, even if the school is sympathetic and recognises that instrumental/vocal tuition is necessary for the compulsory performance section of the course, such financial support for a whole group immediately renders the subject expensive and further endangers its precarious position on the curriculum. If, on the other hand, school financial restraints or unsympathetic management teams reject any bids for financial support, this can verge on the disastrous. The onus is placed upon the financial circumstances of the student (or parents), thereby risking either the subject being labelled elitist or reducing its wider appeal. My research revealed a variety of solutions to be in operation. For example, some schools offered a grant (£50 annually) to each pupil in efforts to ease the pressure for parents.

The whole approach to performing at A-level is highly idiosyncratic. Firstly, it has to be acknowledged that performance at A-level standard needs to be taught by specialist instrumental/vocal tutors. It is therefore questionable why the responsibility for a substantial part of the examination falls to those teachers who currently remain completely outside of the system, and are generally unaware of the requirements of the syllabus. The Oxford and Cambridge Board requires grade examination marks only as proof of a candidate's capabilities. Similarly, at university level, while performance was placed third highest in the list of valued study areas, its inclusion in the course was frequently questioned, one lecturer commenting that 'since most students do performance anyway in Associated Board exams I would rather this was not an option at A-level'.

There needs to be a greater communication network between the music service or the private instrumental/vocal tutor, and the A-level teacher. In the 1993 Annual Report from Manchester City Council Music Service, much was made of the range covered by the city's 41 instrumental teachers. Tuition covered African drumming, Indian music,

and steel pans along with the more traditional areas. The support Music Service staff gave to schools by directing bands, orchestras, and various smaller groups was admirable, but no mention was made of any involvement in the GCSE or A-level music programmes.

More fundamentally, there needs to be a shift from performance to performance studies. Such study would not only incorporate developing an awareness of the difference between playing and performing, but would also include critical discussion of solo and ensemble performances, conducting skills, reviews of professional performers, and visits to performances. In addition, increased opportunity to perform either in examination conditions and in front of an audience would heighten performance awareness, and decrease tension in the final examination, an element commented upon in the Reports of several A-level Boards.

Of greater consequence is the need for performance studies to be integrated with other course components, thereby more beneficially fusing theory with practice. Reimer states:

> Performing, in the general music program, is an essential but contributory mode of interaction with music. It is a powerful means, among others, for enhancing musical understanding and experience. In the performance curriculum the point is to experience a particular genre of music (choral, orchestral, band, chamber, etc) through the actual creation of it at the performance stage of its being brought to full realisation.
>
> (Reimer, 1970, 185)

In my teaching experiences, I have noted that students rarely connect their extra-curricular playing experiences with curriculum analytical study. For example, following her playing an arrangement for clarinet and piano of 'Voi che sapete' from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, a student was surprised to discover that the Mozart she had played was, in fact, the same Mozart studied on her A-level course!

Finally, account needs to be taken in A-level examinations of students' extensive extra-curricular activities. As my survey revealed, the value of these musical experiences is recognised in interviews for both university entry and for employment in the music industry, a point to which this thesis will return.

3.2 A-LEVEL MUSIC IN JEOPARDY: A WAY FORWARD

The Controlling Forces on the A-level Music Boards

1. Government Reforms

The market forces ideology of modern British politics has brought about a revolution in British education at all levels. Over the past decade, a wave of reforms has been introduced to create 'a modern system of academic and vocational qualifications, both of a high standard and both highly valued, which offer ladders of opportunity right through from school to work and throughout working life' (Government White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st century*, May 1991). Emphasis is placed on extending choice and opportunity, increasing the participation of young people in an education and training which offers a broader and more relevant preparation for life and work, and promoting links between schools and employers to ensure that pupils gain an understanding of the world of work before they leave school. The recent White Paper, *Helping Business to Win* (May 1994), states the Government's intention to enhance participation, standards and attainment levels in education, considered essential to increasing international competitiveness:

> The Government is working to lever up [*sic*] the expectations of students and providers alike; to strengthen standards of teaching, learning and assessment; to promote more effective training by employers; and to foster a culture of lifetime learning and flexibility.

The *National Targets for Education and Training*, launched by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and endorsed by the Government in the White Paper, further legislate:

1. By 1997, 80 per cent of young people [are] to reach National Vocational Qualification level 2 (NVQ2) or equivalent, for example five GCSEs at grades A–C.

2. Training and education to NVQ3 (or equivalent, for example two A-levels, or a vocational A-level) [are] to be available to all young people who can benefit.

3. By 2000, 50 per cent of young people [are] to reach NVQ3 (or equivalent) [present position 30%[25], progress required 2% points per year].

4. Education and training provision [is] to develop self–reliance, flexibility and breadth.

The National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT) was inaugurated in April 1993 to monitor the progress made towards attaining these targets and to advise on policy to achieve them. According to the White Paper:

> The Government is asking NACETT to take full account of what the UK will need from its workforce to maintain and improve our competitiveness in the 21st century, and to consider the case for raising some of the targets to match our competitors' achievements.

These radical reforms have strongly influenced the various A-level Music Boards. There is now pressure on the Boards to increase student numbers and attainment levels in order to meet the national targets. This could have serious implications for A-level music, for the following reasons:

1. A-level music has a small market. Despite the large increases in numbers of students taking GCSE music, A-level music has not attracted a similar increase. The survey revealed that A-level music does not appear to have shaken off its low popularity status; it remains perceived as a cloistered, narrow, academic course. It is still viewed by many students as a one-way route to further music study in Higher Education. Statistics published by SCAA reveal that 734,081 candidates

25. Schools Curriculum Assessment Authority Post-16 Team, *The National Education and Training Targets* (Briefing Note), December 1993.

entered 416 different A-level syllabuses in 1993, covering 25 subject areas. Of those, 5,134 candidates were entered for A-level music, constituting 0.7% of the total candidate number. Only three subjects had less candidate entries: Modern Languages (other than French, German and Spanish), Home Economics, and Welsh, attaining 0.6%, 0.5%, and 0.1% respectively.[26]

2. The Government drive to increase the range of vocational qualifications (and the esteem in which they are held) has led to an increased choice of courses available to prospective 16-year-old students. The sharp rise in popularity of more practically-based courses, notably the BTEC performing arts and popular music courses (as detailed in Part 1 of this thesis), implies that some students are being lured away from the more traditionally based A-level music syllabuses.

The A-level situation is further complicated by divided opinion within Government circles concerning the future position of A-levels. While the need for reform is clear, debate centres on whether the A-level should remain in its current 'gold standard' form, supported by a Code of Practice, or be replaced by an integrated structure of academic and vocational pathways 'to promote equal esteem for academic and vocational qualifications, and clearer and more accessible paths between them' (Government White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21st Century*, May 1991). (At present, there are significant patterns of mismatch within national provision. My survey has shown that vocational courses in the Arts carry no certainty of employment on completion, and seem to fall between two stools; inadequately preparing students for either the music industry or for further music study in Higher Education.)

26. Schools Curriculum Assessment Authority, *A and AS 1993 Examination Results*.

The recent proposal to introduce a voucher system in Further and Higher Education[27] has led to further uncertainty, and speculation as to whether A-levels in their present form could fit into such a system. The Department of Employment, supported by the Department of Trade and Industry, has admitted that 'the GCE A-level does not fit in with the current ministerial drive for new qualifications' (*Times Educational Supplement*, 3 June 1994). Valerie Bayliss, youth and education policy director for the Department of Employment, states that 'the Department of Employment is increasingly interested in the A-level debate because of the country's need to be competitive in Europe, and ... [has] made strenuous efforts to co-operate with colleagues in the Department for Education' (*Times Educational Supplement*, 3 June 1994).

The proposed voucher system, structured on a modular basis and accredited through credit accumulation leading to a full qualification, would allow all 16-year-old students to 'buy' their education and training from a choice of courses on offer at a range of institutions. A weighty report commissioned by the Government, *Choosing to Change, Extending Access, Choice and Mobility in Higher Education*[28], gives considerable support for the voucher system at both Further and Higher Education levels, and the reshaping of all studies along modular lines. This system allows students the flexibility and choice to move around colleges and universities, collecting 'credits' towards their chosen qualifications. The Report recommends a restructuring of Further and Higher Education to meet the needs of rapidly expanding, broader-ability, wide participation markets, while safeguarding standards.

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27. Government White Paper, *Helping Business to Win*, 24 May 1994.
28. *Choosing to Change, Extending Access, Choice and Mobility in Higher Education* was written by Professor David Robertson of Liverpool John Moores University for the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), 27 August 1994.

2. Other Controlling Forces

1. In the past, the major controlling force on A-level Music Boards, and the principal motivating force governing the content of both O- and A-level music, was university entry requirements. Malcolm Griffiths, in *The Arts and Higher Education*[29], states:

> Whilst Higher Education can rightly claim to be on the receiving end of primary and secondary education ... it inevitably plays a major role in shaping students' aspirations, by determining the nature of the qualifications which facilitate access.
> (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1982, 58)

Faced with the impracticability of serving two masters, A-level Music Boards have bowed to the greater pressure exerted by the Government, and have altered syllabuses in an endeavour to meet national targets. In doing so, however, as the survey revealed, the Boards appear to have widened the gap between A-level music and undergraduate music courses.

2. Another major influence on A-level Music Boards is the criteria established for present GCSE music courses, based on the National Curriculum ethos of two attainment areas; performing and composing, and listening and appraising. In discussions, the Chief Examinations Officer of the NEAB admitted that the lack of guidelines for present A-level music courses had led course designers to look to GCSE criteria, and to guidelines laid down by SCAA.

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29. *The Arts and Higher Education* is the fifth publication of a programme of study focusing informed opinion and recent research findings on the major strategic options likely to be made available to higher education institutions and policy-making bodies in the 1980s and 1990s. The programme has been made possible by a grant from The Leverhulme Trust to the Society for Research into Higher Education. The above monograph arises out of a specialist seminar on the arts in Higher Education and was organised and financially supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

3. SCAA operates all syllabus approvals through its 'Principles', 'Criteria and Procedures' and 'Subject Cores'. 'These instruments cover the nature, scope and content of syllabuses and procedures the examining boards operate, seeking to ensure accuracy and consistency in the operation of A and AS examinations' (SCAA Post-16 Team, *A/AS Syllabus Approval* (Briefing Note), December 1993). The Code of Practice, published in September 1994, further seeks to promote quality and consistency in the examining process at A/AS-level, asserting additional influence over, and emphasis upon, assessment and attainment targets. These guidelines strongly influence the decisions of all A-level Boards.

4. The quality and approaches of A-level music teachers also influence attainment levels, and the balance of syllabus content, in terms of what is and what is not taught – as discussed earlier. The present training of teachers, although now progressing towards increased compatibility with present syllabus content, frequently 'leaves students ill-prepared for the challenges of the secondary classroom' (Reeve, 1991, 5[30]) and for the challenges of the revised syllabuses.

5. The interests of the music industry remain under-developed as an influence on A-level Music Boards, which indirectly acts as a controlling force – reinforcing perceptions of A-level music courses and encouraging student gravitation towards 'vocational' courses.

The power of these controlling forces, implicit and explicit, on A-level Music Boards are the key factors that generate changes to syllabus content. Paradoxically, the more the A-level Music Boards alter their syllabuses in the light of pressures put upon them

30. Professor Reeve's paper, *Music Higher Education – Education or Vocational Training*, was given at the MEC Conference at Huddersfield University in July 1991. Professor Reeve is Professor of music at Anglia Polytechnic University and was Vice-Chairman of the Music Education Council until 1994.

by the various controlling forces, the more entrenched their difficulties become. This is because the real problems of A-level music, as discovered in my survey, are not being properly addressed.

Transferable skills

There has recently been much debate about transferable skills in music education, as a means of raising its value and relevance. In 1993, the annual Music Education Council Conference devoted its entire programme to transferable skills in music education. Entitled *New Skills for a New Era*, the conference had a dual aim:

i) To provide for participants an opportunity to acquire and develop the skills necessary to further develop quality in music education and training in the United Kingdom as we enter a new era.

ii) To examine the relationship between music education, society and industry working with colleagues from commerce/business and identifying transferable skills required across all vocations and ways in which these can be developed through music.

However, while there is much evidence to support the view that these skills, and others (for example tolerance, divergent thinking, and imagination), are acquired in performing and in creative activities, these are attitudes that one would look for in any educational activity. They are not peculiar to music, any more than the ability to concentrate or the need to persevere. The current enthusiasm to raise the validity and relevance of a music education through development of transferable skills not only reduces music to a 'servicing subject', but also detracts from the significance of music in its own right. Plummeridge points out that

> If these [transferable skills] become the main reasons for including music in the curriculum, then its aesthetic value is likely to be diminished, or lost altogether. To dwell on the 'servicing' potential of music is to adopt a very precarious position ... that can easily lead to practices that are just as aesthetically sterile as the old type of musicological studies.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 143)

Addressing over 800 delegates at the Music for Youth Conference at the South Bank Centre in London in July 1994, Baroness Warwick stated: 'The Government should value music in the same way as it did sport; both were character building; they increased self-confidence and team work as well as a competitive spirit.' Coming from a Minister of State, this statement is little short of preposterous. The idea of music education as a kind of competitive game disregards the very nature of all areas of the subject, apart from possibly performance. She is doubtless speaking of playing in group music-making activities. However, while team work is a clear skill attribute of sport, it is a skill not readily understood by those unfamiliar with the intrinsic nature of corporate music making. Moreover, students who choose to take up music studies at 16 overwhelmingly do so because they are interested in music or have a natural talent for it. If the value of music study is promoted solely through transferable skills, students may be tempted to choose other subjects at this level which are more widely recognised in promoting such skills.

The fundamental problem with promoting transferable skills as a means of raising the value and relevance of music education is that, for A-level music, it deflects attention from the major problem. This is that present syllabus content and teaching methods are not producing the sort of music knowledge, skills and abilities required for further music study or for careers in the music industry, as my survey has shown. For transferable skills through music to be recognised, music education needs to be valued

and perceived as relevant to contemporary needs. Rosalind King[31] comments that, in Government discussions concerning the present A-level being termed academic,

> Nobody dares to question the meaning of the word *academic* [my italics] in this context, despite the fact that in current usage, including that of Government ministers, its perjorative significances ('irrelevant' or 'overly theoretical') predominate.
>
> (*Times Educational Supplement*, 25 March 1994)

Increasing the Value and Relevance of A-level Music for Higher Education

In my survey, it is suggested that a higher priority needs to be given to the content of A-level music syllabuses in the light of market needs. The term 'market forces' (with all its implications) is sadly one from which no area of education is immune. But A-level Boards need to be clearer about their market and more aware of its needs. If the A-level retains its current 'gold standard' form, to which the Government maintains it is committed[32], the majority of students will choose A-level music in preference to other, more vocational, methods of study as a foundation for further academic study. In order to provide appropriately, the Boards need to look towards some restructuring of their courses in the light of the specific requirements of Higher Education, and possibly to adopt different fundamentals concerning quality control. Professor Reeve cites four such fundamentals:

31. Rosalind King is a lecturer in English at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London.
32. White Paper *Education and Training for the 21st Century*, May 1991.

1. Do appropriately qualified students want to come on the course? If not, why not?

2. Is the balance and content of the course right?

3. What are the levels of achievement it encourages?

4. Does the course lead to career/further study opportunities which meet the expectations of the student?

(*British Music Education Yearbook 1989–90*, 92)

Whilst a degree of autonomy can be argued for A-level music courses, the development of stronger links between course designers at A-level and in Higher Education could enhance the natural progression from one to the other. Discussions with the Chief Examiner of the NEAB revealed that there is very little link between the examining Boards and university course tutors (and no links with the music industry), over course content. This is not a new phenomenon. *The Arts and Higher Education* states that 'Colleges and universities know little of their students' secondary school work except for the record of examination results' (1982, 15). A few university lecturers appear to have completely dismissed the A-level music course, and have turned to other areas in their search for suitably qualified students. Peter Aston, Professor of Music at the University of East Anglia, is among several lecturers advocating Grade 8 Theory of Music[33]:

> Most A-level courses are totally inadequate in preparing students for degree work, particularly where the syllabus does not include a study of the workings of tonal harmony. The new ABRSM [Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music] Theory syllabus provides a much better grounding for degree work, not only in tonal music but in composition. A good mark at Grade 8 Theory is preferable to an A grade at A-level, and will probably become an entrance requirement.

33. Peter Aston, incidentally, was involved in early discussions about the new Grade 8 Theory syllabus and in a minor way with the implementation of agreed policy decisions.

My survey revealed that inadequacies in the present music A-level, together with the variations in levels of attainment and grading systems, have led to university lecturers now looking to start afresh with students, initially at interview stage and subsequently in the first year of degree courses.

Significantly, the most frequently cited interview methods in the survey – musical performance, the ability to discuss musical ideas, keyboard skills, and practical aural ability – are all areas not specifically taught at A-level: abilities which the student is therefore expected to acquire outside his/her course. In a reappraisal, A-level Music Boards could consider including these elements in their courses, as they reveal a student's degree of musicianship and potential. At present, musical experience can only be assessed through examined performance. These assessments (and to a lesser extent composition) allow for only partial realisation of a student's collective musical experiences, because they tend to concentrate solely on technical competency and basic musicianship skills. Some Boards do include ensemble playing as part of the performance choice. However, assessing a student's competence and abilities in ensemble playing can only be comparatively successful, as there is necessarily much reliance on the other members of the ensemble. Only the London Board includes a viva in its examination – a procedure which might well be beneficially adopted by other Boards.

Part of the Performing Arts A-level requires students to choose and document an area of study, perform related works and discuss the performance in a viva. A similar opportunity to evaluate and discuss performances from both analytical and performing perspectives could be developed in A-level music. Following a successful rehearsal, it is very common to see students engaged in lively conversation about their various musical experiences. If students were rehearsing works also studied as part of A-level course-work, these conceptual learning experiences could form an integral part of the

analytical process, increasing understanding of the music studied. Such integration could begin to dismantle the present divide between the understanding and value placed on music experienced outside the curriculum and that placed on music within the curriculum. In addition, the value of discussing music, a requisite of the highest priority for both university lecturers and music industry personnel, could take higher precedence in A-level music. It could be further encouraged and developed as an essential part of a student's education for further study and career pursuits, as has been seen in the survey.

There were frequent examples in my survey of university course designers being compelled to incorporate foundation courses in music degree courses. These concentrated on teaching 'the workings of tonal harmony', and the 'broadening of students' knowledge of Western Classical music, other than those particular sections [which] students have covered for their set works studies.' The survey also showed that areas of study not considered essential as a preparation for Higher Education constitute many of the new reforms which have been incorporated into A-level syllabuses; namely composition, improvisation, rehearsing and directing an ensemble, knowledge of world music, late twentieth-century popular music, folk music of the British Isles, and jazz. Clearly there needs to be much closer alignment between music study at A-level and in Higher Education.

Integration of Academic and Vocational Pathways

In the light of my survey, this integration could be structured upon a common framework, of relevant, attractive course components. Within this, an appropriate balance could be struck between theoretical and practical work and between breadth and depth of study. Using a modular system based on credit accumulation and

transfer, it ought to be possible to develop – within a network of institutions – a wide variety of routes to meet the individual student's needs. Indeed, greater common ground between present music/arts courses in 16–19 provision would release further resources to develop particular strengths. The need to take far-reaching and often irreversible decisions at 16 between courses on an arbitrary basis would also be avoided.

Significantly, my survey revealed that despite mutual disinterest between the university and music industry sectors (lecturers accorded 'knowledge of the music industry' only 28% in the survey), the *same* qualities and knowledge were held in equal esteem by both. The current emphasis on promoting music through transferable skills, perceived by 'progressive' music educators to be the way forward for a greater correlation between music education and the music industry, is entirely missing the point. In listing, in order of priority, all the qualities and knowledge valued by both sectors, a surprising number of overlaps can be seen:

Academic

University Lecturers

1. Broad knowledge of styles and forms of Western music
2. Ability to discuss clearly ideas about music
3. Commitment to music – love of music
4. Performance – practical musical activities
5. Harmony and counterpoint
6. Aural ability
7. Analysis
8. Score reading skills
9. Keyboard fluency
10. Free composition
11. Keyboard harmony
12. Improvising skills
13. Rehearsing and directing an ensemble skills
14. Extemporising
15. Jazz
16. Music technology skills
17. World music knowledge
18. Knowledge of the music industry
19. Late twentieth-century popular music
20. Folk music of the British Isles
21. Literacy skills

Vocational

Music Industry

1. Personal skills:
   - Flair – imagination
   - Flexibility – adaptability
   - Ability to 'fit in' as part of a team
   - Relationships
   - Common sense
   - Tact – diplomacy
   - Sense of humour
   - Calmness – ability not to panic
   - Enthusiasm
   - Well rounded personality
   - Aptitude
   - Self-confidence
2. Love of music – interest in music
3. Deep knowledge and grasp of music – wide general knowledge (including twentieth-century music)
4. Practical music making activities
5. Specific knowledge of the particular company
6. Communication skills
7. Ability to discuss – verbal communication
8. Arts administration experience and skills
9. Real world of music business – professional experience
10. Music technology
11. Sensitivity towards artistic temperament
12. Keyboard skills
13. Literacy skills

The mutually valued areas are:

1. Broad-based general and cultural knowledge of music from 1550, including post-1945 music.
2. Commitment to music, knowing and loving music.
3. Ability to discuss clearly ideas about music.
4. Intellectual skills; ability to solve problems, ask questions, criticise.
5. Practical skills.
6. Music technology skills.

Within a common framework, these essential components could form a core foundation of areas of study, providing the basis for a network of more specific areas of study detailed in my ideal structure in the next section.

No individual course can be 'all things to all men', or include everything. If, however, there is already broad agreement over what the core of a music course in 16–19 provision should be, then vocational and academic courses could move towards a system of integration with areas of specialisation offering choices towards a diversity of careers. In a modular system, students could then select specific module combinations for their chosen careers. For example, according to the survey:

> An education officer for an orchestra requires a good base of music knowledge, some performing experience, practical experience in arrangement/orchestration, composition, conducting, box office management, staging, venue, arts administration, community arts, personal skills including enthusiasm, and communication [skills].

In training for such a course, a student could select from both 'academic' and 'vocational' pathways following his or her completion of core foundation studies. At present, universities are growing accustomed to including foundation courses at the beginning of their music degree courses. In a pluralised system, it would always be difficult to train a

student at 16–19 for the diversity of courses in the same subjects which the universities offer. If there were a common framework at Further Education level, universities would be in a far stronger position to individualise their courses, to maintain their identities, and not be burdened with remedial work. Higher Education could continue to offer distinct varieties of courses, and students could be better prepared to know which courses they were interested in pursuing.

Similarly, results from the music industry survey reveal that a substantial amount of in-house training occurs upon recruiting employees, each area of the music industry demanding quite specific training in specific areas. Again, no one course at 16–19 could provide for this. For example, work in radio requires 'experience in studios, editing, mixing, [and] knowledge of how to create radio programmes'. Opera companies require 'the ability to work with singers'. Several respondents from orchestras looked for 'business skills for art students'. Many posts are in small departments. The overriding requirement, as we have seen, concerns inter-personal skills, particularly the 'ability to fit in as a family'. One of the reasons why it is difficult to infiltrate many companies is, in part, reticence concerning formal qualifications, but also many companies appoint from 'in-house'. 'Promotion is common from within the office', commented the Concerts Director of the London Philharmonic. Ability to work with people was a continual requisite.

Finally, in a restructuring of 16–19 provision, the general skills listed above – communication skills, literacy skills, personal and intellectual skills – could constitute separate courses. This is a proposition mooted by several lecturers in the survey, one of whom called for

> ... a conversion of General Studies to a compulsory course for budding Higher Education entrants, with heavy emphasis on literacy (grammar, writing skills), numeracy (eg, devising and understanding tables and graphs) and comprehension (summarising, combining two reports into one, etc) thus taking off university shoulders some of the burden of remedial teaching in such areas.

He went on to say: 'This very focused supplementation would enable A-levels to retain a multi-purpose character and an emphasis on creativity and exploration.'

3.3 AN IDEAL COURSE STRUCTURE FOR A-LEVEL MUSIC

The conception and structure of this course is based predominantly on my survey and secondly on my teaching experiences. It is a course which integrates both academic and vocational pathways. While containing some overlap with present A-level music courses, it differs fundamentally in three ways: in its approach to a music education at A-level; in its basic structure as a fusion of theory and practice; and in its degree of relevance as a preparation for both further music study and for employment in the music business.

Of crucial importance to this course structure would be a radical change in approach to the study and teaching of the course content. The overriding factor of my survey, that a music education is of greatest value when it nurtures and develops a student's commitment to, curiosity about, and love of music, would constitute the basis of the new approach. A higher priority would be given to the development of an aesthetic response to music, and to aesthetic appraisals of musical experiences. There would be, therefore, less emphasis on taught skills and imparted 'packages of knowledge', which have been strongly criticised by many music educationalists (notably Small, 1977, 182–3).

Much has been written on the subject of music aesthetics, and it is beyond the bounds of this thesis to embark upon an analysis of the complexities of this area other than, perhaps, to quote from Swanwick (a leading proponent of the concept of music education as aesthetic education):

> A fundamental weakness in much teaching ... lies in the failure to bring about any aesthetic response or even to notice that it is central to the situation
>
> (Swanwick, 1979, 61)

Of equal importance, the new approach would be concerned with *bringing about* learning. To generate learning in a music education is to develop musical thinking and a sense of musicianship through musical activities. My survey revealed disappointment among both university lecturers and personnel in the music business in students' inability to think for themselves, the respondents desiring stronger evidence of both intellectual skills and genuine musical perception. The new approach would therefore also focus on teaching students to observe and to reason for themselves, an approach based on the *educative* rather than the teaching process.

In the present climate, confusion exists between 'education', 'teaching,' and 'training,' and the true meaning and function of education has become obscured. The Oxford English Dictionary defines education as 'systematic instruction, schooling, or training in preparation for life or some particular task; scholastic instruction; bringing up'. It is perhaps contestable that *education* involves some kind of systematic learning or development. Furthermore, education has now been distinguished from training, which is used for learning directed towards some specific end. Peters writes that

> Education is concerned with the sort of learning that a person requires qua person [*sic*] and not just in some specific capacity. It will consist in the development of those forms of awareness and skills which he will require generally in facing the various facets of the human condition in the natural, interpersonal, and socio-economic worlds which he has to inhabit.
>
> (Peters, 1983, 42)

Ivan Illich holds a similar view. In drawing a distinction between schooling and education, Illich maintains that schooling does not necessarily give one an education, and that the learner essentially determines his/her own rationale of what is to be learned, what knowledge he/she wishes to have, and the part that knowledge is to play in his/her life (Illich, in Small, 1977, 183). The philosopher Froebel believed that

> Education consists of leading man, as a thinking, intelligent being, growing into self-consciousness to a pure and unsullied conscious and free representation of the inner law of Divine Unity and in teaching him ways and means thereto.
>
> (Froebel, 1906, 2)

The chief characteristic of Froebel's educational work was this principle of life-unity, of education being a process of unification of the inner essence of man and the objects which he studies, and of the inner connection within '... the soul of man which unites the faculties of feeling, perception, phantasy [*sic*] and volition, and determines the law of their unfolding' (Froebel, 1906, 2). Froebel's aim, therefore, was to educate the pupil through self-activity. The time, I think, is ripe for a thorough reconsideration of what music education means, and should be.

It would be the responsibility of the music teacher to nurture and develop students' interests in their music education, to bring about a curiosity, a motivation for further learning, to draw out of them what is latent within and lead them forward. The effect of 'canned entertainment' on television and video has had a debilitating effect on the self-learning activities of some students. These students often appear to expect 'canned education', education 'laid on a plate' and 'spoon-fed' to the passive recipient. Now that watching television has largely replaced reading and other self-educational activities, little more than simplistic cameos of knowledge offered by the media remain to extend the average student's musical understanding and awareness. Misled by the resulting anecdotal information, many susceptible students prefer to blinker themselves to the challenges of broadening their own knowledge.

Froebel believed that 'The essential business of the school is not so much to teach and to communicate a variety and multiplicity of things as it is to give prominence to the ever living unity that is in all things.' In other words, the business of a school is the teaching of principles as opposed to the teaching of isolated facts and rules.

It is interesting to note similar comments made recently by Rosalind King:

> Simply defining the context of individual syllabuses, which is what the Dearing review is doing and SCAA is doing with its implementation of subject cores, will not overcome this basic structural problem.... The structure of the subject-based curriculum forces those in education to concentrate on teaching areas of knowledge. As a result the teaching of skills is haphazard and the development of conceptual understanding is left almost entirely to chance. The National Curriculum should not be a collection of subjects competing in an overcrowded timetable but a series of courses which focus on thinking, experimental and communication skills.
>
> (King, *Times Educational Supplement*, 25 March 1994)

Perhaps the greatest merit of Froebel's system is to be found in the fact that it furnishes a deep philosophy for teachers. Froebel gives a view of the world as a perpetual stimulant to thought and the means through which the teacher can reflect on the immediate fact or event before him, and discover its relation to the ultimate principle of the universe. Froebel believed this philosophy to be the only antidote for the tendency of teachers to sink into a dead formalism, the effect of too much repetition and of the practice of adjusting knowledge to the needs of the less intelligent by perpetual explanation of what is already simple *ad nauseam* for the teacher (ie, once the enthusiasm is gone, the value of teaching is immeasurably lessened).

The basis of my ideal course is its fusion of theory and practice. The existing lack of such a correlation has been a recurring criticism throughout this thesis. For a genuine fusion and integration of theoretical study with practical enterprise to succeed, present staffing restrictions would need to be lifted to allow for greater movement between specialist classroom and instrumental teachers. Present timetabling for music would need to be altered, allowing for sessions to be blocked together. Indeed, the Gulbenkian Committee referred to the inappropriateness of single weekly periods of music (30–40 minutes). In a similar way, according to ALIS, allocation for A-level music study is typically separated into three approximately one-hour sessions per

week. My course structure advocates an integrated study of music (and possibly other arts disciplines) on one afternoon per week, and one or possibly two further one-hour sessions during the week.

The present segregated A-level music course components (history, aural, performance and music techniques/harmony) would be dismantled. The central axes of my ideal course structure are a broad-based general and cultural knowledge of music, synthesised with performance studies. Performance studies, as opposed to mere performing, would be brought into the core of the foundation programme. Evidence from my survey revealed that students' most valued musical experiences were their performance activities, which clearly stimulated their interest in and curiosity about music. While assisting in interviews for prospective PGCE students at Manchester Metropolitan University recently, students showed an enthusiasm for, and pride in performance achievements above all else. One interviewee, for example, discussed his experiences with the Cheshire Chorale, which gave vocal backing for Barry Manilow and Jean-Michel Jarre in concerts held recently in Manchester. It was not only the singing which aroused this student's interest, but the whole situation (the build-up leading to participation, of seeing backstage preparations for the performances, the atmosphere generated by props, lighting, etc) – a type of aesthetic response in action – which he wished to share in discussion.

The Course Structure

The course, detailed overleaf, comprises a core foundation of four areas of study which provide the basis for subsequent diversification through choice from a network of specific areas of study. All students would be taught the core foundation over the two years, which would count for 55% of the course total. They would also

simultaneously pursue one of two compulsory areas of study for *either* academic *or* vocational pathways, counting for a further 25% of the total marks. In addition, in the second year, students would select two options (not covered in the compulsory areas of study) from a list which includes topics of both an academic and business nature. Some students might continue to specialise in one direction or another; others might choose to broaden their interests. For example, a student primarily pursuing a career in the music industry could choose jazz and conducting as his/her options. This diversification would allow for students to play to their strengths while creating opportunities for an expanded future career choice.

CORE FOUNDATION 55%

all students – two year programme

Broad general music and cultural knowledge from 1600 to the present day	20%
Performance studies	20%
Discussing music (aesthetics and criticism)	10%
Music technology and recording skills	5%

simultaneously:

either:

MUSIC DEGREE COURSES

Compulsory:	Aural ability (practical and written)	15%
	Harmony/ Music techniques	10%

or:

MUSIC INDUSTRY

Compulsory:	Knowledge of the music industry	15%
	Arts administration skills	10%

OPTIONS 20%

options taken in the second year by all students, two choices, 10% each

Jazz
World music
Late 20th–century popular music
Folk music
Composition
Harmony/Music techniques
Improvising
Score reading skills
Conducting an ensemble skills
Arts administration skills
Specific 'hands-on' knowledge of a particular company (work placement)
Knowledge of the music industry

The Core Foundation in Detail:

Broad-based general and cultural music knowledge from 1600 to the present day

In my ideal course structure, the present History and Analysis component of A-level music, with its emphasis on depth of study of set periods, set works and set topics, would be removed. It would be replaced by a broad-based general study of music within its cultural and social context, from 1600 to the present day. Emphasis would be shifted from *depth* of analytical study of specified works, to *breadth* of understanding and awareness of the broad music spectrum.

In the survey, comments from the music officer of the Scottish Arts Council are representative of many other similar views: 'We are not concerned with bits of paper – candidates must be able to display a knowledge and grasp of music, not necessarily obtained through formal music education'. Such values indicate a lack of regard for current practices in the study of music history. The preference for narrow specialisation in place of a broad awareness of music has incurred a deep-rooted resistance to the whole concept of formal music qualifications, primarily from personnel in the music industry, and to a lesser extent, from university lecturers.

A broad-based music knowledge is gained through wide listening, reading, and practical musical experiences. It could be acquired in the following ways:

Listening

During the two year course, students would be introduced to an extensive range of music, drawn from the broadest possible repertoire. The vast amount of music which has been composed since the war, particularly in the popular field, would play a far

greater part in listening programmmes. Increased flexibility in teaching approaches would create scope for broad comparisons, for example, barbershop quartets with Elizabethan madrigals. Greater emphasis would be placed on stylistic study through practical rather than theoretical means, and on a general awareness of the music within its cultural and social context. Well-known classics could be freely intermingled with lesser known pieces, thereby encouraging a displacement of the interface which presently exists between 'curriculum' music and music experienced outside the curriculum. Emphasis would be placed on students' understanding and knowledge of period, genre, composer, and where appropriate, the piece itself.

In my teaching experience, the broadening of students' horizons through listening to short extracts of music drawn from the widest possible spectrum incites significant interest. Incorporated on a regular basis into a teaching programme, not only does their knowledge and understanding increase, but students begin to interconnect their frequently patchy acquaintances with music, and the process of moulding an awareness of the wider music field develops. Unfortunately, the present GCSE course appears to have led to a decrease in students' acquaintances with music. Following my discussing and playing of a selection of music to eight students embarking upon the A-level music course recently (all of whom had, incidentally, gained between eight and eleven GCSEs), none could recognise either Pavarotti, Madonna, Beethoven's Symphony No 5, or Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. One student recognised the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*, yet all the students recognised Frank Sinatra! In discussions, no student could name the present conductor of the Hallé Orchestra (all students live in and around Manchester), only two students had ever attended an orchestral concert, none had been to an operatic performance, yet all of them had seen Lloyd Webber's musical *Phantom of the Opera*. Only one student had ever attended a pop concert. Of the four students preparing for Associated Board practical examinations, all could quote titles of their pieces but only one could name the particular composer!

Listening would be assessed at the end of the course as part of a written paper, detailed below, which could involve listening to twelve short extracts of music, whose degrees of significance were related to the results of the survey. For example, six of the twelve extracts could be taken from styles and forms of Western music (gaining 91% in the survey), three from jazz styles (56%), and one each from world, late 20th-century popular music, and folk music (48%, 35%, and 26% respectively). One word answers would be required to questions concerning period, genre, composer and, where appropriate, the piece itself. Possibly multiple choice questions could be included: for example, after listening to a part of a Chopin Nocturne, the answer could be selected from a choice of works (for example, a Sonata by Mozart or Beethoven, a Hungarian Rhapsody by Liszt, an Impromptu by Schubert, or the correct answer – a Nocturne by Chopin).

Analysis

A fundamental part of the core foundation of my ideal course structure would require students to develop an understanding of *how* music works. Through wide listening, both with and without scores, students would gradually build up an awareness and understanding of an extensive range of music. Emphasis in lessons would initially be on developing students' abilities to discuss music, to use technical terms/vocabulary accurately, and eventually to develop a critical awareness, and to be able to express themselves competently in both written and verbal forms.

Analysis would be assessed through the presentation of ten short, previously unseen extracts (including one from each of the previously stated styles of music), three of which require analysis in some detail and seven a short identification of period and

genre only. There would be no set questions. The choice as to which questions would be answered in detail and which by identification only would be left to the student.

While there are basic similarities to the London Board's Anthology of 120 musical examples for study, my proposed approach would differ in several ways:

1. The extracts studied would be *unseen* and 'blank' (ie, no composers or dates would be given). The reason for this is to shift both teaching and learning from specific extracts (which can entail a rote-learned bar-by-bar account in examinations) to a broad understanding and awareness of a range of styles and genres.

2. The extracts chosen would be clear, easy to identify in terms of period, and frequently familiar – the point being not to identify the particular piece of music (although this need not be discouraged) but to identify stylistic characteristics. My unseen analysis would contain ten extracts as opposed to the thirty selected for study by the London Board. (Thirty extracts is a lot to cover on an A-Level course). Constraints of time encourage short-cut teaching methods, and focus solely on aspects of the particular extract rather than on a broader study, which would use extracts of music to highlight stylistic characteristics.

3. The learning experience undergone for unseen analysis would considerably develop and expand the inner ear, placing emphasis on musicianship, and on self-activity rather than the memorisation of points taught by the teacher.

4. There would be no set questions. The absence of 'set' questions, while calling for a change of approach in assessment, would allow for a freer response, thus encouraging analysis not only of rudiments and technical structure in precise bars,

style and form, but also of the mood and expressive power of the music. Such an approach would also allow scope for the intelligent musician to show a depth of understanding not always provided for in examination papers which restrict answers to a number of set questions. The choice as to which questions would be answered in detail and which by identification only would be left to the student.

5 Popular music extracts could extend beyond Lennon and McCartney into the 1990s. Indeed, the study of 'popular' music could embrace a wider sense of meaning, and include a look at musicals (Lloyd Webber and Bernstein are now included in some syllabuses), barbershop, music hall, Victorian music ballads, parlour songs, popular ditties, and particular 'all-time greats' such as *The Holy City*, for example. While the study of 'popular' music is gaining an increased foot-hold in the National Curriculum, GCSE and A-level, a fuller integration is hampered by the widely-held opinion that, somehow, popular music is of less consequence than other music. Thus, at A-level, popular music appears to be both censored and restricted. It is censored in that only particular areas are selected for study (notably the music of The Beatles). A type of two-tiered system appears to operate, based on that which is worthy of academic attention and that which is not. In the examples listed above, all but musicals appear to fall into the latter category. With Noël Coward's aphorism in mind – 'extraordinary how potent cheap music is' – Richard Middleton writes that 'traditional musicology still largely banishes popular music from view because of its 'cheapness''(Middleton, 1990, v). Popular music is restricted in the curriculum, as an understanding of the *study* of popular music has only recently begun to be seriously developed. Of those GCSE and A-Level Boards which do include popular music and produce examplar material, the 'flag-ship' study piece is almost invariably the Beatles' song *Eleanor Rigby*. In discussions concerning the position of popular music in schools today, a senior lecturer in popular music at

the University of Salford commented that *Eleanor Rigby* is most probably chosen for its conventional notation and suitability for *traditional* analysis – a rare combination in popular music.

In addition to analysing unseen extracts, students would also be required to write an essay in the examination on their musical understanding of either a solo or large-scale work which they were preparing for performance. This would involve both analytical study and clear evidence of a grasp of the meaning, content and communication of the music performed. (The methods of achieving this in practical terms are discussed in the next section.)

Music studied in its social and cultural context

The third way in which my ideal course would differ from present A-level music history courses would be the increase in emphasis on the study of music within its cultural and social context, from 1600 to the present. Students would study the cultural and social context of the music which they are rehearsing and performing. In addition, they would choose a separate period to study in greater depth. This would involve an overview of the interaction between music and the wider culture of the chosen period. Stylistic characteristics would be understood through listening, discussions and practical enterprise. It would be assessed in essay form in an examination providing a wide choice of essay questions. Meyer states that

> Meaning and communication [of music] cannot be separated from the cultural context in which they arise. Apart from the social situation there can be neither meaning nor communication. An understanding of the cultural and stylistic presuppositions of a piece of music is absolutely essential to the analysis of its meaning.
>
> (Meyer, 1956, viii)

In teaching, one of the most successful ways of stimulating interest in opera is to discuss the treatment of its original social and cultural position. The most successful teaching approach to a set work is an introduction to the emotions and characteristics of 'the man', in his cultural context, before assessing him as a composer. Liszt's music, for example, is of particular interest to the student because of his dual role as priest and playboy, as is that of Berlioz for his experiences of unrequited and spurned love. Cooke's analysis of Mozart's Symphony No 40 devotes eight out of twenty pages to the character of Mozart (Cooke, 1959, 232–52). A student whose interest in a particular composer's music is captured, delights in relating relevant anecdotes from his or her own research. Interest in a particular pop group frequently involves the personalities of the members, their influences and, fundamentally, the 'position' of the group within the cultural popular music scene, as much as in the music itself. The group is viewed as a favoured part of a vast wheel of popular music, perpetually in motion. Students are not necessarily any more interested in popular music than in many aspects of classical music – it is merely that the cultural position is more easily recognised in the former. Middleton's view of a cultural study of popular music – that is, a study which focuses on music but refuses to isolate it – could have far-reaching implications were it to be adopted in the field of education. He writes:

> To grasp both the 'popularity' of popular music, and the 'musicality' of the processes through which this effect is produced requires a cultural theory of music which will undermine existing conceptions of music and musicology.
>
> (Middleton, 1990, preface)

Finally, contemporary culture would be included. In my survey, one of the reasons for the music industry's disinterest in formal qualifications lay in the neglect of current academic courses to include knowledge of the contemporary music spectrum within its cultural and social context. Including a knowledge of contemporary culture would not only prepare students more realistically for future employment in the music industry, but would also increase the relevance of A-Level music study. Knowledge of

contemporary music would be assessed through short, concise questions (10%) requiring evidence of knowledge of the music industry both nationally and internationally – orchestras, opera companies, eminent conductors and soloists; awareness of major events, for example 'Proms' concerts, Arts Festivals, Woodstock; an understanding of the role and function of music conservatoires, ballet companies, amateur organisations, and so on. Knowledge of 'the real arts world' was a requisite frequently cited in the survey: 'Knowing who the conductor of the Vienna State Opera is, for example', commented the producer of Radio Midlands. In addition, a basic understanding of the functions of the Arts Councils, recording companies, and music in the media, for example, music for the moving image (film, TV, video, video games, CD-ROM, CD-i etc.) would not only serve to increase the relevance of the A-Level music course, but would act as a more relevant preparation for both further study and careers in music, one of the three key principles of this ideal course structure.

Assessment

Thus, a broad-based general and cultural music knowledge from 1600 to the present day, which constitutes 20% of the total marks, would be assessed in the following ways in a final examination:

PART 1 (1 hour)	1.	Listening (20 minutes)	10%
	2.	Unseen analysis (40 minutes)	20%

(There would be a break of 30 minutes between these sections)

PART 2 (2 hours)	1.	Concise short questions concerning general cultural and musical knowledge (20 minutes)	10%
	2.	Analysis of a performed large-scale and/or performed solo work (50 minutes) – essay	30%
	3.	Cultural and general musical analysis question (50 minutes) – essay	30%

As critical analysis requires some music techniques and harmony knowledge, students following the 'Music Industry' course pathway would omit question 2 in Part 2 and instead write *two* essays in section 3, Part 2. The process of analysing performed solo/large-scale works would, in any case, take place in the Harmony/Music techniques component on the 'Music Degree' course pathway.

The whole concept of Performance *Studies* is discussed in detail in the next section. However, it seems appropriate to include a brief summary of the assessment procedures in this section. A candidate's ability in Performance Studies would be assessed in four areas; performance, his/her critical evaluation of a solo performance (a video tape of which would be provided by the examining Board), ability to discuss music and participation in extra-curricular activities. The Performance component would combine course-work assessment of two performances in front of an audience, with a final performance in examination conditions with an external examiner. This approach would serve a dual purpose of reducing the tension surrounding the final examination while allowing for credit to be accorded to students' performances in both concert and examination situations. Critical evaluation of a video performance would be externally marked, as would the viva, which would be conducted in the final

performance examination by the external examiner. Students' extra-curricular activities would be documented in a portfolio, marked by the teacher and moderated by the Board. The acquisition of music technology skills – 5% of the core foundation programme – would be monitored through continuous assessment by the teacher.

Concerning the Music Degree Courses pathway, practical and written aural ability would be assessed at the end of the course, the practical element by the teacher and the written in an examination. The practical component would involve short ear tests, for example, singing/whistling/humming an inner melody, and recognition of intervals, notes of a chord and descriptions of a chord. The written test would be undertaken on an individual basis, with a cassette tape and headphones. The test would assess students' ability to, for example, take down single and secondary melody lines and familiar melodies with a provided harmonic outline, in a variety of styles. The principles of the quick study piece in the performance element would be adopted. Students would listen to a short piece, a song for example, with just a skeleton score of the music provided, and asked to comment on period, genre, composer, stylistic characteristics, timbre, texture, dynamics, articulation, and interesting rhythmic, melodic and harmonic features. (In similar previous aural tests, students were not provided with even the bare bones of the music and thus difficulties arose in their endeavours to describe precisely where, for example, particular modulations or changes of metre occurred). The questions would not be restricted to a limited number of playings, although overall the test would need to have a time limit of probably not more than one and a half hours.

Harmony/Music techniques knowledge would in part be assessed in analysis questions in the broad-based music and cultural knowledge paper. A perhaps more realistic alternative to current assessment approaches here would involve a folio of students' harmonizations of a selected number of styles, moods and even themes from television

and films, assembled over the two-year course. This could be assessed by external examiners.

Ideally the components of the Music Industry pathway – Knowledge of the music industry and Arts administration skills – would be assessed on the merits of the students' practical experience in the work place. However, acquiring satisfactory work experience for all students would be both unrealistic and difficult to achieve. Knowledge of the music industry would therefore be assessed either in an end of course examination or as course-work, taking the form of a project, assessed by the teacher and moderated by the Board. Arts administration skills would be assessed as course-work by appropriate business studies teachers.

The Options taken in the second year would consist entirely of course-work and be assessed by the teacher and moderated by the Board. The studies of jazz, popular, world or folk music, or the music industry would be undertaken as projects, while the composition option would be presented as a folio. The more practical elements – score-reading skills, improvisation and conducting an ensemble – would require a short end of year test, the criteria for which would be stipulated by the examining Boards.

Performance Studies

Performance Studies count for 20% of the Core Foundation. It would replace the current A-Level Music component of performing prepared pieces and displaying related musicianship skills. It would embrace a wide curriculum of musical studies through the medium of performance, and be devoted to enhancing musical awareness of the wider performance spectrum.

Performance Studies has been conceived and structured to merge with academic study, while simultaneously pursuing high standards of performing. For a successful amalgamation, current provision would be restructured in my ideal course structure. A centrally-based practical centre would be established, to which a number of educational establishments would be linked and which would establish a central forum for musical development. All performance and related activities would occur on one afternoon a week, detailed overleaf.

Present music/performance centres emphasise only technical proficiency in concerts. In contrast, the centre envisaged here would, as its core rationale, create performing experiences integrated with academic study. Such a scheme would necessitate a conglomerate of musicians, as it is usually only possible for a few schools to mount operas, large-scale symphonic and choral works. As this thesis has discussed, the present situation is one of mainly isolated pockets of small numbers of students studying A-level music. Drawn together, the potential for success and achievement would be much higher, and the opportunities to explore, create and perform a range of music from jazz to large-scale works, would be much greater.

Such an approach could ultimately begin to raise the value and relevance of overall perceptions of music study, and dismantle the present conflict between the perceived importance of music experienced outside as opposed to within the curriculum. Through a gradual metamorphosis of perceptions of the study of music at this level, students could become increasingly attracted to the subject, be stimulated to enjoy the study of music, ultimately reducing the concern about music as an endangered subject.

Performance Studies Programme

Performance:
- individual instrumental/vocal tuition
- large scale work – opera, oratorio music
- regular performance opportunities:

Keyboard skills

Score reading skills

Conducting skills

Playing in ensembles/jazz groups/rock bands

Music technology/recording techniques

Recording/rehearsing of compositions for performance

Fixed discussions about music

Visiting Arts/Music Business speakers

Performers in education

Improvising skills

Accompaniment skills

Arts Administration/Box Office skills

Wednesday PM		
	Terms 1 and 2	Term 3
1.00 ⇒ 2.00pm (3.00pm during term 2)	*Either* large scale work – orchestral/choral *Or* large scale production – opera/light opera/ musical	Solo and ensemble performances in concert
2.15 ⇒ 3.00pm	*Rotation Basis* Classes in: Composition Keyboard Skills Score-reading skills Conducting skills Music technology & recording skills Discussion groups Accompaniment skills Box Office skills	
3.15 ⇒ 4.00pm	*Rotation Basis* Bands/jazz/brass ensembles	Visiting speakers

Fusion of theory and practice

All students would be involved in the rehearsal and performance of large-scale and solo works. John Blacking draws his reader's attention to the musical practices of the Venda people of Africa amongst whom

> Music is a synthesis of cognitive processes which are present in culture and in the human body: the form it takes, and the effects it has on people, are generated by the social experiences of human bodies in different cultural environments. Because music is humanly organized sound, it expresses aspects of the experience of individuals in society.
>
> (Blacking, 1973, 89)

Swanwick refers to this kind of musical activity as 'encounters' (Swanwick, 1986, 2). He states that these encounters tend to take place outside formal education, often through voluntary participation in musical events in the community. Instruction, the didactic process, tends to be institutionalised and more structured, and is viable only when it is based on an understanding of the nature of music. In his examination of the relationship between musical encounters and musical instruction, Swanwick compares the two learning experiences and argues that three interacting elements of musical experience, or encounters, are necessary for any theory of musical instruction to take place:

1) Delight in and control of sound materials
2) Expressive character or gesture
3) Structural relationships

Analysis of the large-scale and a selected solo work would form the analytical component in the broad-based general and cultural music knowledge paper. Thus, the two major areas of the Core Foundation would merge, and a direct fusion of practical musical experience with analytical study would occur. In this way, an enhanced

understanding of the meaning and communication of music performed could be acquired, and the process of analysis, as Reimer points out, 'not thought of as the dry sterile picking apart of the bare bones of music ... such analysis would be the death of aesthetic education.' Swanwick quotes Reimer as further stating that

> When analysis is conceived as an active, involved exploration of the living qualities of music, and when analysis is in constant and immediate touch with musical experience itself, it is the essential means of making musical enjoyment more obtainable.
>
> (Swanwick, 1986, 2)

This is at the core of my course structure, based on the new approach of nurturing and developing a student's interest in and curiosity about music through direct study of the music itself. Direct study would ask more questions: *why do you think the composer did this? What is he trying to achieve?* It would nurture a critical awareness, an aesthetic response, through conversation between teacher and student in an atmosphere conducive to learning about and enjoying music, from which spontaneous sparks of interest and curiosity spring. Listening to, learning about and being stimulated by music, known well by the student through his/her performing it, should provoke a lively and invigorating atmosphere motivating students to pursue self-learning activities. In teaching, following such a lesson, there is much reward in seeing students borrow music and scores, and subsequently attending local concerts to follow up their own learning.

Music chosen for performance in both solo and large-scale works would be carefully selected by teachers to meet with the requirements of the syllabus and the forces available. The syllabus, valuing a broad music education as its highest priority, would not be prescriptive concerning the music to be chosen but would instead require an awareness of a wide range of styles and specific analysis of a performed 'large-scale work,' and/or a 'solo work', with large lists of works from which to choose.

In addition to performing solo works and participating in large-scale works, the Performance Studies programme would give an opportunity for students to play in a range of ensembles, jazz and rock bands, possibly on a termly rotational basis. Students would thus gain practical experience of a variety of genres and styles, supporting and enlightening theoretical study undertaken for unseen analysis work. Conducting and/or accompaniment experience could further enhance this study in a similar manner.

The acquisition of keyboard skills would be a compulsory part of the programme for all instrumentalists and singers following the 'academic' pathway. Valued as the sixth highest priority by university lecturers in the survey, keyboard skills could improve standards of harmonizations, composition, and initiate opportunities for the practical exposition of musical styles studied, and enhance basic score-reading skills. Moreover, as many young soloists are unfamiliar with accompaniments to pieces performed and therefore inevitably with the overall conception of the piece, the ability to manage a keyboard would improve performance standards through enriched understanding.

Finally, for students pursuing the 'music industry' pathway, 'hands-on' experience of production and management work (box office, programmes, etc) could be realistically fulfilled in arranging, organising and promoting the centre's large-scale productions.

Composition

One of the present difficulties with composing at both GCSE and A-Level is that it is not seen as an activity in which the rehearsal and final performance of the composition is an integrated part. The survey revealed difficulties at A-Level with recording facilities and with having players of the required standard on the required instruments

together at a set time. A central hive of practical activity, with a wide range of instrumentalists involved in rehearsals, could alleviate this problem. The rehearsing and recording of student compositions could be an in-built requisite of the timetable, developing a wide range of skills from performers, 'conductors' and composers alike in rehearsal and performance techniques. There are many restrictions in schools and colleges concerning resources needed for this; Green points out that technical resources acquired through the help of TVEI, initially a vocational scheme, eventually turned into far-reaching experiences, embracing the concept of aesthetic understanding with broad vocational interest (Green, 1992, 158). Similarly, a pool of available wide instrumental expertise, without masterful negotiations and organisational genius needed to get them together, could not only provide broader scope for composition, but enrich listening and rehearsal experiences of other students' work and generally broaden this area.

Music Technology Skills

The acquisition of music technology skills is included in the Core Foundation (5%) as it was considered a minor requisite for both academic and vocational pathways. Music technology skills are strongly developed at GCSE level. According to the ALIS Report, however, at A-Level an overwhelming 74.9% of students 'never or almost never' make use of music technology. Indeed, amongst the diversity of music degree courses on offer, the importance attached to this area differs widely. Basic understanding and awareness of music technology could, however, improve current standards of electronic compositions (criticised by the Cambridge Board in particular), and be of considerable significance in performing activities. Music technology is a rapid growth area. 'Hands-on' familiarity could be of enormous future benefit to students. One of the major difficulties is that many teachers have not been introduced

to music technology in their own training, and in-service courses tend to be financially restrictive. However, in recent years, the demand for such courses for teachers has incurred rapid expansion in this area (for example, Cheshire Music Studios have increased the number of courses offered from six in 1986 to over 30 in 1995, and also offer a Diploma for their residential course). In addition, pioneering courses such as those held in a Liverpool recording studio, *Liverpool Music House*, specifically for teachers and at a realistic cost, are welcome signs of active links between music education and the music industry.

Performers in Education

A considerable number of professional musicians are active in music education. Music and the Performing Arts are among the few subjects where curriculum enhancement by outside agencies such as opera companies and orchestras has become commonplace. This has partly been because the wide range of specialist skills required is rarely to be found in any great number, if at all, amongst the more general attributes of teachers. It is also because arts organisations have seized the initiative over the last 15 or 20 years in approaching LEAs with attractive offers of projects and workshops (Peggie, 1994, 18–19). In its 'Performance in Education' section, *The Music Teachers' Yearbook* (1994) lists over 20 orchestras, 8 opera companies, 68 ensembles of all types (brass, wind, new, medieval, Victorian, and Mexican music, some with dance) and 44 soloists currently offering services to education. Of the orchestras, many have strong links with LEAs, music colleges, adult education, and special needs. The main projects include composers and performers working in schools, often co-ordinating with the GCSE and National Curriculum composition requirements, thereby overlapping the notion of a 'visit' with implementation of a part of the curriculum. Today, with the demise of many LEA music services, some of these relationships are coming

dangerously near to being the only way to fulfil statutory requirements concerning curriculum implementation. Recently, the London Arts Board (LAB), in partnership with Yamaha-Kemble Music (Yamaha are heavily involved in all manner of music education projects), has established, managed and funded a project: the *Partnership in the Classroom Music Education Project*. This is a unique concept, as part of its work involves an action research programme designed to evaluate the learning outcomes of the pupils involved. LAB has involved SCAA in its architectural designs of the scheme, which has led to developing and interpreting curriculum back-up material for the benefit of visiting musicians. This project system works on the basis of extended work in schools, rather than the dubious benefits of the 'one night stand' visit by a composer or performer.

In a Performance Studies centre, closer liaison and links between the music industry and syllabus content could be forged and developed, subsequently improving the potential for interactions of this nature to be recognised as valuable experiences both by prospective employers in the music industry and university lecturers. Professional musicians could be involved as instrumental tutors, section rehearsal leaders, conductors, and theatre mentors. These activities could be treated as teaching and learning experiences for students as part of a restructured syllabus and examination programme. The advantages are numerous. Students experience at first hand the expertise of professionals in these areas and, through regular contact, gain an awareness and understanding of the world of the professional musician.

Professional musicians and representatives from the music industry could also give talks on their particular field, forming a programme of regular lectures attended by both students and staff, followed by group discussions possibly led, in part, by the speakers themselves. The ability to discuss ideas about music was valued highest in the survey, gaining 95%, and constitutes a full 10% of the Core Foundation

programme. This highly valued area is lamentably omitted from present A-Level courses (apart from the London Board), further aggravating the segregation of theory and practice. Talking about music performed and studied is important: the opportunity to practice and be assessed in this is essential. Input from visiting speakers would also stimulate teachers. Creating opportunities to rejuvenate teachers' musical interest, keep abreast of current trends in the Arts, and re-examine their own place in the wider Arts field, would strengthen the effectiveness of transmitted values. Plummeridge makes the point that

> In music education, the music teacher demonstrates a form of behaviour in musical pursuits which is gradually assimilated often quite unconsciously by the novices. The onus is very much on the music teacher to exhibit appropriate musical behaviour or musicianship in his pedagogy. Musical learning can only really occur in a proper musical environment.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 69)

(In discussions with John Paynter, Professor of Music at the University of York, he commented that a major drawback in progress in music education was that teachers don't read recent educational literature!)

The Ideal Performing Centre

An important part of the Performance Studies programme would include the opportunity for all students to perform before an audience. Performances could subsequently be discussed in the timetabled discussion groups, the aim being to develop critical awareness of a performance and an ability to make judgements about contrasting performances. This could be assessed in the Performance Studies examination by students critically evaluating in written form, either a selected live performance or a performance chosen by the examining board. This would take the

form of a video, to be distributed to schools in a similar manner to present Aural Perception examination cassette tapes.

Performance Studies would also value the pursuit of excellence in performance. There is a popular notion in music education that such a pursuit is against the values inherent in a music education. To perform well is essentially 'a public display of the inner artistic shaping of feeling through craftsmanship, sensitivity, imagination and authenticity' (Reimer, 1989, 199). These attributes are not separable from the processes of learning to perform the piece. However, the complex task of teaching performance is usually beyond the expertise of the school music teacher. In my ideal structure, performers in education could, on occasions, turn their attentions to developing excellence by adjudicating aspiring young performers in a formal performance situation, and possibly extending their own expertise through master classes.

Throughout the course, students would assemble a portfolio of musical experiences encountered both within the course and outside. This would form part of the final examination assessment, and could also form a part of discussions with the examiner in the assessment of a student's ability to discuss music.

In the wider context, a centre for Performance Studies would create a 'buzz' of activity, a sense of anticipation, a wide pool of social and musical interaction. Performance experiences need not be exclusive to those students studying music. Students from other courses could be involved, not merely as an extra-curricular activity, but as part of their 'buying-in' voucher system. For this to happen, these skills need to be recognised and esteemed. (At present, many excellent musicians who have acquired skills through local orchestras, bands, and so on, choose to take other

subjects at A-Level as music appears irrelevant to their chosen career. The skills acquired in performing are not fully recognised.)

The present dilemma faced by many local areas through cut-backs in instrumental services, and concern for the future of youth orchestras, has led to an uneven situation nation-wide. While some LEAs have managed to sustain central music activities, others have been forced to take the more draconian approach of reducing music services to schools to a bare minimum. At best, there is rarely a pool of music activity occurring at the same time under one roof. The establishment of a Performance Studies centre would thus serve two major purposes.

Firstly, in my ideal structure, dwindling peripatetic services could be supplemented by school music teachers. Many teachers give private instrumental or vocal tuition. Their expertise could be incorporated in my envisaged 'Performance Studies afternoon.' For example, the rise of vocational courses in Performing Arts has incurred a demand for singing tuition. Few instrumental services are able to provide such tuition, and thus the enthusiastic but unskilled budding singer is left to flounder, or receives fragments of tuition on an *ad hoc* basis. Provision could be more readily available through a central performance forum. Budding singers could then be able to explore their developing skills in a large arena of musicals, choirs, and so on, under professional tuition and possibly semi-professional conductors.

Secondly, under the present system, peripatetic teachers largely remain on the fringe of music both in curriculum and in 'examination' music, frequently preparing students for the practical components of examinations whose requirements are unfamiliar to them. This presents another segregation in the system. In discussing the need for alternative and innovative patterns of staffing, Marjorie Glynne-Jones recommends a notion of 'community staffing' similar to that advocated by my proposed Performance Studies

centre, involving a similar commitment to collaborative team-based teaching (Glynn-Jones, 1986, 4–5). By way of example, she suggests that a team of specialist music teachers might operate in a secondary school, and a number of associated primary schools, and also work with youth organisations and in adult education. This, she suggests, could be a way of improving coherence, progression and continuity in curriculum practice. In a Performance Studies Centre, peripatetic staff would work alongside 'academic' teachers, within an environment of integrated academic and practical study. Peripatetics would assimilate an understanding of the syllabus, while specialist music teachers could experience practical music. Social and musical interaction could be as much a part of the musical life of the instrumental and class teacher as it is the student's. Performances of large-scale works, and indeed ensembles, would incorporate teachers both on a practical and teaching basis. Healthy competition could be more active in the mingling of large numbers of musicians, than in the limited opportunities available in many schools and colleges. Concerning the Government's 'education for life' drive, adult students could be involved in such a scheme.

Local Communities

There could be more of a two-way process with local communities. A very positive educational trend in recent years has been the establishment of closer contact between schools and the local community through arts ventures. These moves are providing further opportunities for personal and social education (PSE). However, rather than viewing community activities as occasions when music can be used for PSE, it would be preferable to think of them as ways of uniting different forms of education. The basic philosophy of the Music Performance and Communication Skills Project, introduced at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, was to break down barriers

which isolate musicians and perpetuate the 'star' image of the performer (Renshaw, 1986, 79–90). Plummeridge writes:

> It is in this isolation of music and musicians, the distancing of performers from audiences, which permeates thinking about musical activity and creates the impression of music as an exclusive discipline.
>
> (Plummeridge, 1991, 119)

Combining social interactions and building relationships through community arts festivals and programmes are possibly the best ways of raising a greater awareness of the arts and the value of arts education, and for creating a sense of community. While numerous examples of successful interaction between education and the community could be cited, further progress could excite a more two-way process with communities. The present system is tricky. Community arts entrepreneurs organising arts activities, who seek to involve a wider, younger participation, tend to approach schools with a local music reputation in the absence of a focal music centre. The school may not have links with the community and thus all but the most dedicated students will be reluctant to pursue interests in unfamiliar territory. The establishment of wider links through consultation and co-operation with arts organisations beyond the schools could lead to community initiated arts programmes drawing upon the music education environment. A central forum of music activities would ease present liaison difficulties, and could present further opportunities for both students and communities in the enactment of amateur music activities.

Summary

Although visionary in its conception, this ideal course structure is fundamentally based upon the results of the survey and designed to work in practice as well as in principle.

In practice, some of the more radical proposals, particularly a Performance Studies centre, would require much good will amongst schools, teachers and LEA music services. However, this prospect is not completely unrealistic, as evidence from the survey shows that the initiatives of some enlightened LEA music services are already integrating these forces.

In principle, the whole concept and framework of this ideal course is based upon a fusion of theory with practice. Comments in the survey show that such an approach would have wide-spread support amongst educationalists, personnel in the music industry, teachers and students alike. Indeed, through my recent consultancy work with SCAA, this framework, combined with a broader historical and cultural knowledge of music, has been implemented into the draft subject core for music A-level, to be published in September 1995.

No sector of education can remain static for long in the current climate. The time is ripe for fundamental changes to be made in the approach to A-level music. The way forward clearly lies in increasing the value and relevance of the A-level course and breaking down the present segregations in music education. Hopefully, one day, some or all of the proposals in this thesis may become a reality.

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