Assessment and critical feedback in the master-apprentice relationship: rethinking approaches to the learning of a music instrument

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The context: higher education

- One to one lessons dominate (Burwell 2005, Nerland 2007, Carey 2010, Watson 2010, Parkes and Daniel 2013)
- Comes from the master-apprentice tradition (Hallam 1998, Presland 2005, Monkhouse 2010)

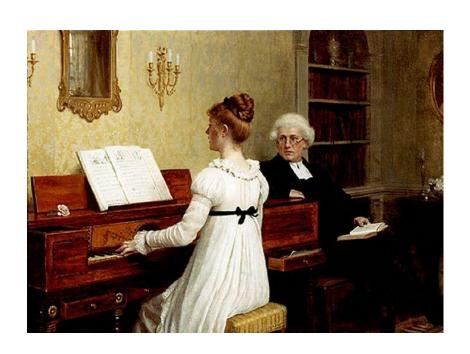




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The 'lesson' culture

• 19th century saw significant growth in the 'private lesson' (de Val and Ehrlich 1998, Golby 2004)





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The context: higher education

- HE studio teachers usually appointed due to their high-level performance skills (Purser 2005, Wexler 2009)
- Few have any formal training in pedagogy (Burwell 2005, Parkes and Wexler 2012, Collens and Creech 2013)
- Some teachers rarely plan or structure lessons (Gaunt 2008, Zhukov 2012)



Extant research: studio lesson

- Growing body of work in last two decades in particular
- Significant work on interaction between teacher and student (e.g. Howe and Sloboda 1991, Siebenaler 1997, Creech 2012)
- The type of questioning approach used has an impact on student engagement and learning (Burwell 2005)
- Teacher talk/direction typically dominates (e.g. Colprit 2001, West and Rostvall 2003, Daniel 2008, Creech 2013)
- For example:
 - Parkes and Wexler (2012) analysed 14 hours of lessons teachers followed "teacher-centric guidelines they are familiar with and that have been held as part of the accepted master-apprentice roles" (p. 56)
 - Creech (2012) analysed 23 hours of studio lessons involving 11 violin teachers and their students (aged 8-16)

Creech 2012: lesson analysis

Table 3 Overall percentage of time engaged in different behaviours

Coded behaviour	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Pupil play (tuning, playing alone and accompanied)	10.24	60.56	38.05	11.38
Teacher talk (direct, diagnose, attributional and non-attributional feedback)	13.14	48.96	29.14	7.64
Teacher scaffolding (model with playing or singing, play along, hands-on practical help, accompany pupil)	2.30	52.74	27.73	14.53
Teacher questioning (open question, seek agreement, check understanding)	3.03	17.11	8.78	3.52
Pupil talk (agree, disagree, contribute own idea, self-assess, choose what to play)	.001	8.96	3.30	2.74

Assessment and feedback: learning a music instrument

- Central is the 'expert' performer and/or teacher
- Lessons, masterclasses, ensembles, exam or audition panels, competition juries
- Significant power in these settings



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Power and control

- Power relationships within the lesson can lead to negative effects or even psychological harm (Creech and Hallam 2010, Gaunt 2011)
- Maris (1997) "many musicians who can recount horrifying tales shared by friends or colleagues who suffered from years of destructive interactions with ... teachers" (p. 18)
- Ames (1998) "some teachers will break students down [and] you're left with a broken person you can't put back together again" (p. 28)
- Fleming (2001) the teacher "really let me have it, and I would start to cry" (p. 18)
- Booth (2009) musicians "carry bruises from [their] past testing experiences" (p. 167)
- Serra-Dawa (2010) 40% of the 64 singing students surveyed indicated a wish to change teacher as a result of interpersonal issues
- Collens and Creech (2013) "one-to-one tuition can develop into a site of interpersonal conflict and high anxiety where the relationship itself can become an obstruction to learning" (p. 151)

Assessment - music instruments

- Teacher as 'centre' of lesson = assessment of learning (Scott 2012)
- Recent push for assessment as learning (Lebler 2008, Scott 2012, Harrison et al 2013, Silveira 2013)
- Scott (2012) argues the need for self-reflective work:
 - Melanie uses formative written feedback from her teacher to further develop her upcoming vocal performance;
 - She video records a rehearsal for this event;
 - Melanie discusses some technical issues with a peer mentor and seeks suggestions and advice from them; and
 - She then applies this learning to the next stage of practice and personal development of the performance.

Self assessment in music

- Proven to offer students a range of benefits and outcomes (Hallam 1998, Flowers 2003, Lebler 2008a)
- Goolsby (1999) students developed stronger listening skills and thus practice and performance skills;
- Daniel (2000) the requirement that students engage in a video review and analysis of performance enabled them to develop stronger critical assessment skills and insights; and
- Silveira (2013) students reflect on recordings of their performances over time as a key element of a music portfolio.

Peer assessment in music

- Hunter and Russ (1996) students prepared more thoroughly for performance, became more experienced in assessment processes, critical listening, evaluation and negotiation skills improved considerably;
- Searby and Ewers (1997) as students became more experienced in assessing peers, they identified greater value in the process;
- Daniel (2004) structured peer assessment procedures had a significant influence on the ability of students to engage in critical evaluation and feedback; and
- Lebler (2005, 2007, 2008) enabled students to enhance their critical skills as well as obtain a greater variety of feedback and opportunity to benchmark their work.

Literature: summary themes

- Master-apprentice tradition remains strong
- Studio teachers typically appointed for their performance skills and expertise
- Role of 'expert' remains strong within lessons, audition & exam panels, competition juries
- Significant need for additional research in relation to the studio lesson which takes place 'behind closed doors'
- While a growing body of work in relation to the lesson, there
 is limited research that specifically interrogates the impact of
 assessment and feedback on learning
- General agreement that musical independence is the goal

Recent research (Parkes, Daniel)

- Survey sent to HE teachers in UK, Australia, NZ, South Africa, USA, Scandinavia
- 171 respondents
- Designed to explore motivation, identity, recollections of teachers and teaching
- Data published in BJME, IJME (in press) and RSME (in press)
- Data explored again for this presentation in order to look for themes relevant to assessment and feedback
- Minimal reflection about assessment and feedback from their own teachers other than expectation setting

Earliest lessons

- Reflections included being evaluated for potential:
 - My teacher said I was not interested
 - It turned out I had some talent
 - [I was] not particularly a front runner
 - Being good at it
 - The stickers that the teacher put in the book if you did well!
 - I was making as a joke some funny sounds and my first teacher said: "great"

Pre-tertiary lessons

- Comments reflected high expectation feedback, for example:
 - He made heavy demands in terms of technique
 - My private instructor inspired me to do my best each and every time I was in a lesson
 - Encouraging highest possible standards
 - My High School Principal who taught the love of ... excellence
 - My private teacher, because of her ... high standards.
 - She ... expected me ...to do my best all the time
 - He was exacting (not as in 'personality') but similar to 'demanding' etc.

Pre-tertiary lessons

- They also reported getting some feedback about their performance:
 - The church made me feel that I was good at singing
 - My bassoon teacher taught me that I could achieve a great deal in a short space of time
 - My private instrumental teacher. ... made me feel like I was very good

HE lessons

Comments fell into two categories

High standards:

- Strive for excellence at all times
- Her ... high standards
- Expect the best and more from each student
- High expectations of my performance

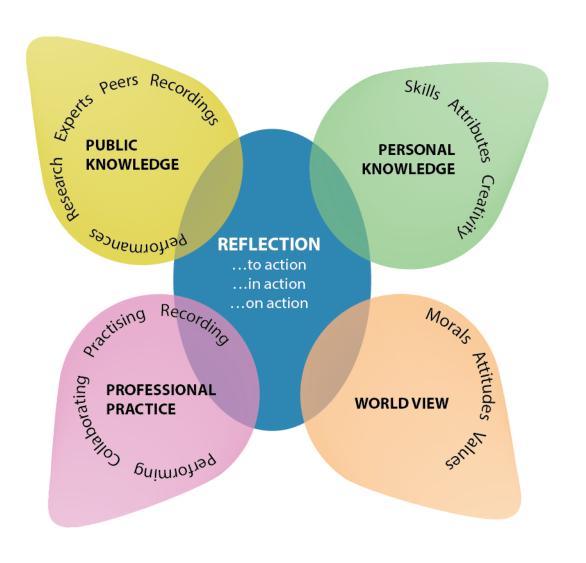
Feedback:

- He was interested in my progress
- He has a fantastic way of explaining things
- Helped me understand what I needed to do to be successful
- Unique ways of explaining on many levels

A new conceptual approach

- Student at the centre of the learning
- Theoretical principles of constructivism as well as Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978)
- Recognises the environment as a community of practice where students learn through social practices as per the theory of situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991)
- Influenced by Butler (1996), who in the context of practising classroom teachers, argues for a focus on professional development led by the practitioner, rather than a focus on 'training' and external input
- Reflects McTighe & Wiggins (2012) view of teachers as "coaches of understanding"
- Also akin to the definition of the word 'assessment', which is "derived from the Latin root assidere meaning 'to sit beside'" (McTighe & Ferrara, 1998, p. 2)

A new conceptual approach



Rethinking assessment and feedback

- Variety of forms of evaluation and feedback
- Shifts focus to the student to evidence that they can plan, act and reflect on learning over time
- Suggests a portfolio of learning as an assessment item:
 - learning plans, recordings, analyses of recordings, research papers, reflective journals, advice or feedback from experts, peers, audiences
- Assessment also becomes a negotiated item done with the student, not of the student

Concluding thoughts

- Studio lesson will retain a place in HE music
- Directions should arguably include:
 - Communities of pedagogical practice are formed
 - Teachers explore different styles of teaching and their impact on learning
 - Teachers reflect on their teaching as part of professional development
 - Students evaluate teachers and teaching
 - Institutional leaders set intended outcomes of the studio lesson and for graduates

