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University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S.A.

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Extra-curricular Music in UK Schools: Investigating the Aims, Experiences and Impact of Adolescent Musical Participation

Stephanie E. Pitts
University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

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Abstract

This article uses contemporary and retrospective accounts of extra-curricular music-making in schools to evaluate the extent to which performance opportunities in the teenage years can shape lifelong engagement in music. Empirical evidence is presented from a two phase study: the first looking at a high school musical production through questionnaires and audio diaries; the second using written life history accounts to gather memories of school music and its lasting impact. The experiences of participants and non-participants are considered, and the benefits and costs of the large-scale performance events which characterise British secondary school music are evaluated in a discussion of the future of extra-curricular music in changing musical and educational times.

Introduction

Secondary schools in Britain are often flourishing centres for musical activities, where students are involved in teacher-directed orchestras, choirs and ensembles, and in student-led bands and informal groups. Teachers and students alike show their commitment to the value of such opportunities, but little research has so far considered the musical, social and personal benefits of performance opportunities in schools, and their consequences for longer-term musical development. This paper sets out to address that deficit through reports of two empirical projects: one exploring students' current engagement in extra-curricular musical performance through a case study of a school musical production; the second involving adults' recollections of their school performing opportunities, gathered as part of a qualitative survey of musical life histories. These two perspectives will be compared in order to address the following research questions:

1. What contribution does extra-curricular performance in schools make to students' engagement in and enjoyment of music?
2. How are adults' long-term attitudes to music affected by their memories of school music, including extra-curricular activities?
3. How might the experiences reported in these studies help music educators, researchers and policy makers to clarify and fulfil the immediate and long-term aims of music in schools?

Research Context and Aims

Extra-curricular activities (sometimes referred to as the 'extended curriculum') are a characteristic and valued part of school life in the UK, and music teachers are routinely expected to provide opportunities for performance in a variety of genres. For many, this is the most satisfying part of the job (Cox, 1999), despite being demanding of time and energy, since it allows teachers to use and develop their own musical skills, as well as fostering similar enthusiasms amongst their students. School performances can act as a 'showcase' for arts departments, and in recent years flourishing performance cultures have been recognised at policy level through the award of 'Artsmark' or 'Specialist School' status, attracting both funding and prestige. But despite the fact that extra-curricular arts activity is a widespread feature of British secondary (high) schools and colleges, there has been little discussion of its purpose or systematic investigation of its qualitative impact; namely, the potential increase in students' sense of involvement and musical identity, the shaping of their longer-term attitudes to music, and the benefits that a thriving musical culture offers to individuals and the school community.

Quantitative researchers have consistently demonstrated correlations between extra-curricular participation and success in school, measured both in terms of class test results and pupils'

attitudes towards school work (e.g. Silliker & Quirk, 1997; Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsay, 1999). These are encouraging findings, illustrating the greater sense of self-worth and motivation that can be generated by involvement in voluntary activities. However, there is a sense in which such ‘proof’ of the value of extra-curricular activity misses the point: adults involved in making music do so not for measurable benefit, but for reasons of personal fulfilment, companionship with like-minded people, and the challenge of extending their performing skills and experience (Pitts, 2005). This paper aims to explore these factors in young people’s music-making, and to consider the extent to which they can thrive within the institutional constraints of schools and colleges.

The paper has a further aim in considering the long-term impact of school musical involvement on adults’ decisions to pursue voluntary musical activities. In the absence of longitudinal data, a life history approach (see below) was used to gather autobiographical accounts of musical activity, from which emerged many recollections of extra-curricular music-making in school. Discussion will show that for these respondents, school music making was a lasting influence on their levels of interest and participation, but this prompts a question as to whether this is a legitimate aim for music education, or merely a welcome result. The lasting benefits of music teaching have been asserted at various stages of UK music education history as being socially desirable as well as offering fulfilment for musically active individuals. Advice issued to music teachers by the government Board of Education included this assertion that the impact of music education should be felt beyond the school years:

The aim of music teaching considered as part of a school curriculum should be rather the cultivation of a taste than the acquirement of a proficiency; it should lay the foundation for the intelligent study and enjoyment of music in later life. (Board of Education, 1926: 238)

Music educators of today are typically more committed to fostering ‘proficiency’ and less confident in their definitions of desirable ‘taste’ than was the case in the 1920s and, now accustomed to producing evidence for their learning outcomes, might also be more cautious about making long-term claims for their teaching. By exploring the expectations and memories of those involved in school music-making, this paper prompts further discussion of the lasting consequences of musical education, and the particular contribution that extra-curricular music can make in equipping students for lifelong engagement and enjoyment.

Research Methods

This project sought to gain qualitative insight on the experience of musical participation in schools, through a two-phase study focusing on immediate and retrospective accounts of adolescent musical involvement. Phase 1, carried out in Spring 2005, consisted of a case study

of high school students' involvement in the Cole Porter musical, *Anything Goes* (see Pitts, 2007). A questionnaire was designed to survey general attitudes to school music, the extent of students' musical involvement in and out of school, and perspectives on the school show (decisions about participation; experiences of involvement and non-involvement; beliefs about its benefits and drawbacks). Questionnaires were distributed by teachers in registration periods to students in Year 7 (Y7: aged 11-12) and Year 10 (Y10: aged 14-15), in order to capture the views of students at different stages in their school careers. Completion under teacher supervision ensured a 100% return rate, such that data were collected from 15 participants and 95 non-participants in Year 7, and from 20 participants and 68 non-participants in Year 10. In addition, the novel method of audio diaries was used to gain further insight on individual participation: five students were given a personal tape recorder and asked to record their own thoughts and interview their friends as rehearsals progressed. This method, while rare in educational research, was familiar to the students from 'reality' television and they approached it conscientiously: only one student forgot to complete her diary, while the four successfully completed diaries recorded the views of 42 members of the cast, band and backstage crew. Data were analysed for patterns of behaviour across the year groups, as well as to understand individual experiences of participation: questionnaire responses were coded thematically and cross-referenced with diary data, and key topics relating to motivation to participation, experience of involvement, and judgement of the show's impact were identified.

In Phase 2 of the study, undertaken from March to July 2007, a survey was carried out with adults who had retained interest or involvement in music since school days, asking them to reflect on the family and educational influences that had shaped their musical attitudes and behaviour. Participants were a self-selecting sample of 71 individuals, ranging in age between 19 and 86, recruited in the UK through articles in professional music and education magazines, and through e-mails and university websites. Participants were asked to give brief biographical details, including age, extent of formal musical education, and nature of current involvement in music, and then to use the following open-ended questions as prompts for their musical memories:

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

Data from the survey were wide-ranging, permitting analysis by generation, age and experience, and covering topics including the relationship between home and school, the influence of siblings and friendship groups, the impact of teachers, and the challenges of maintaining musical involvement into adulthood. These will be the subject of future articles, but here the focus is on performing opportunities in schools, which emerged as the strongest factor uniting the individual narratives that were collected. It should be noted that the term ‘musical life history’ was used in the survey in a colloquial sense, understood by the researcher and participants to mean the retrospective understanding of musical learning and related experiences but, in the interests of gaining a large and varied sample of responses, favouring written self-reports over the interview-based methods of life history research (cf. Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Responses were coded systematically, first in broad levels including home, school and self-directed learning, and then with more detailed categories of parental musical tastes, siblings playing, teacher personality and so on (see Appendix A for coding diagram).

These two phases of empirical research enabled comparisons of immediate and retrospective perspectives on musical involvement at school, offering a practical way to consider long-term impact in the absence of longitudinal data. The experiences of Study 1 participants are framed by the specificities of their school culture and the educational and social climate of 2005, and therefore differ in context from those reported by Study 2 respondents. Nonetheless, similarities of purpose and attitude are evident in the extra-curricular experiences of the two research groups, making comparisons meaningful and enabling each set of data to shed light on the other. The hopes expressed by the high school participants for their future musical involvement can be compared with the memories of the life history respondents, so offering new perspectives on the extent to which performing opportunities in schools can help to lay foundations for lifelong musical involvement.

Results and Discussion

In the discussion that follows, data on participation from the two research phases will be presented separately, followed by an analysis of the experience of non-participants in both groups. The reported experiences raise themes relating to the purpose of musical performance in schools, the impact of different phases of compulsory music education, and the potential for school experiences to affect long-term musical identities and attitudes.

Phase 1 analysis: Intentions for participation

Being involved in *Anything Goes* was an experience reported to be fun, though sometimes tiring and time-consuming, and which offered the chance to develop skills, confidence and friendships in an environment quite distinct from other aspects of school life. Students chose to participate for primarily individual reasons, rather than being influenced by friends’

choices, though the enjoyment of being amongst like-minded performers emerged later in rehearsals to become a valued part of the experience. The questionnaire data revealed a wealth of previous experience even amongst the Year 7 students: almost all had previously performed with youth theatres, church-based or amateur groups, and so were beginning secondary school with pre-established ideas about their musical competence and identity. For secondary school teachers, this is a striking warning that new students who have not previously had such opportunities may already be experiencing feelings of exclusion, and that efforts need to be made to ensure that a fresh start is possible for all who seek it.

Intentions for future participation

Detailed analysis of the students' experiences of participation have been reported elsewhere (Pitts, 2007), but here the new focus of analysis is on what those experiences suggest about the potential long-term musical involvement which might be fostered by school music-making. The participants were asked directly about their intentions for future involvement: of the Year 7s, 87% said that they would participate in a show of this kind again, while 13% answered 'maybe'. By Year 10, affirmative answers came from 75% of participants, with 10% 'not sure' and 15% choosing not to answer the question. Certainty about future participation understandably reduces in the higher age group: there are fewer school years available to them in which such participation might be possible, and the pressures of academic work are greater, so making more significant the commitment of time and energy involved in rehearsals. Nonetheless, it is striking that no students rejected completely the possibility of future involvement, and a high proportion hoped for further opportunities to appear on stage.

Additional insight on participants' long-term goals can be drawn from their responses to questions about their attitudes to school music and their plans for continued musical education. Again, a reduction in planned future involvement occurs between Year 7 and Year 10, reflecting the fact that some Year 10 participants had elected not to take the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) in Music, thereby withdrawing from classroom music education while continuing their extra-curricular activities. By the age of sixteen, respondents are also likely to be more realistic about musical career prospects, stating with relative certainty that they will *not* pursue music at university (75% of Y10s) or in employment (50%), while remaining divided or neutral about the relative importance of music as a school subject. At the start of secondary school, Year 7 students show a greater spread of responses on each of these questions, rating their enthusiasm for music in school slightly higher than do the Year 10s, but otherwise seeming undecided on questions of higher education and careers. These changes of attitude with age are understandable, given the greater maturity and increased awareness of their own strengths that are acquired by students as they progress through secondary education. Once again, though, there is a reminder for performing arts teachers that attitudes are pliable, and strongly affected by the provision of opportunities and encouragement during these critical years.

Students' stated intentions about their future musical involvement might seem an unreliable predictor of later activity, and indeed there is a need for longitudinal research to monitor the lasting impact of extra-curricular music on the type and rate of participation continued into adulthood. There is some evidence, however, that children's musical ambitions and expectations have a self-fulfilling effect on the effort that they commit to those activities: in a large-scale study in Australia, young instrumentalists who predicted short-term involvement in playing made least progress, regardless of the amount of practice undertaken in their first year of learning (McPherson & Davidson, 2006: 357). The spirit in which children undertake musical activity clearly affects their commitment and self-identity as a musician – both factors which have consequences for the child's longer-term engagement in music.

Emotional engagement with extra-curricular music

Asking students directly about their intentions for continued participation produces a reasoned response, but their emotional commitment to performing activities is further demonstrated in comments made at the end of the audio diaries. Here the students reflected on those days after the show had finished, when the sense of anti-climax was similar to that reported by adult members of performing societies (Pitts, 2004: 156). One diarist, a Year 7 member of the chorus, showed how the frustrations of rehearsing were quickly forgotten once the performance approached:

March 1st [two weeks before the show]: *Today we had a really long rehearsal [...] It was really boring, and it was the whole of Act Two, and most of us are only in three songs and there were two near the beginning and then one at the end, and I think it was really annoying being kept in that long, because I had quite a bit of homework that night [...] and then I missed the end of it, and that was really annoying because [...] I could have just gone home after the first two songs and I had to go home right at the end just before the last song.*

March 14th [dress rehearsal]: *[...] we missed a whole day of school to do this dress rehearsal and we didn't have to do the homework, so that was all right [...] I think in the end it's gone all right and I think the show's gonna be really good [...] I'm just excited, I'm not really nervous because there's nothing that I can go wrong on, so it's fine and I'm quite excited.*

This chorus member goes on to recount her experiences of the two performances, and again her changing emotional responses to similar events show that repeated involvement in music-making has its own particular value:

March 15th [first performance]: *just had our first performance, it was really fun [but] we had to stay down in the dressing room [and] they're quite far away from the stage so*

you never know when to come on, and so that was quite annoying, and erm, we couldn't make any noise because they could all hear us up in the audience so we had to be dead quiet which was quite annoying. All my songs went fine and my hat kept falling off because I'm a male passenger and I had to wear a hat and I kept forgetting it and leaving it everywhere and it kept falling off every time I bowed or lowered my head or anything, and I didn't make any mistakes, and I don't know about anyone else because I had to stay down in the dressing room [...] it went really well, and it was really fun and I can't wait to do it again and I think I'll be quite sad when it's over.

March 16th [second and final performance]: *My hat kept falling off again today, and I can't control it at all, and yeah, so we had a lot of fun and we made a lot of noise again down in the changing rooms and we got told off a lot, but I think today was even better than yesterday and we played lots of fun games while we weren't on, so it was quite a good way of getting out of homework and just playing games [...] I can't wait to see the video of it, yeah, and I'm really glad I was in it and I really want to do one again.*

These diary entries show the highs and lows of musical participation, and illustrate the performer's changing attitudes through sustained involvement and familiarity with rehearsing and performing conventions. Her disappointment at not being able to watch the stage on the first night of performance was quickly transformed into enjoyment of the dressing room camaraderie, and whilst rehearsals were constantly judged against the alternative of doing homework, she became obviously more relaxed about the other claims on her time as she became more involved in the show. Her feelings of regret at the production coming to an end were shared by another diarist, a final year student at the school, who with a friend (referred to in the entry below) had been responsible for the show's choreography:

March 18th: *[It's] two days after the play. I think we're both kind of enjoying having the break and not having to do rehearsals all the time, but it is kind of erm, sad now that we've had to stop doing it, but the result was very satisfying, if we're honest, so you never know, it won't be the same without us next year. Bye.*

As this student contemplates leaving school at the end of the year, she notes that things 'won't be the same without [her]', but does not address directly the question of what her own future musical involvement might be. Lucy Green, in her study of how popular musicians learn, has noted that teenagers who make music independently of school are more likely to continue those activities into adulthood (Green, 2002: 56), perhaps because they have taken responsibility for organising their own musical participation from the outset. Similarly, John Finney and Michael Tymoczko (2003) have shown how giving leadership opportunities to disaffected students can transform their engagement with the performing arts, making them more self-motivated and less dependent on their teachers. While schools cannot be held

responsible for their students' musical activities in later years, experiences of extra-curricular participation undoubtedly equip young adults to pursue similar opportunities beyond school. However, once outside the institutional setting, students will require different skills of organisation, initiative and time-management if they are to stay active as music-makers, and there is scope for fostering such skills more deliberately within the school setting as a foundation for continued involvement. The balance between the immediate pressures of performance goals and the longer-term impact on students' musical confidence cannot always be finely judged in the moment, and any attempts to give students greater responsibility for directing or organising a show would require careful mentoring.

Phase 2 analysis: Memories of participation

Turning to the data from the life histories survey, there are wide-ranging accounts of music in the teenage years, illustrating the influence of parents' listening in the home, siblings' musical instrument learning, the personality of individual instrumental teachers, and the experience (or absence) of class music lessons throughout compulsory education. Participants told highly individual stories, largely dependent on the people they had encountered; they reported the sharing of enthusiasms with influential teachers, moments of encouragement from respected adults, or determination in the face of criticism from those they respected less. Some musical lives had been smooth and untroubled, with students passing from one well-liked teacher to the next, before finding a place in a vibrant musical community as an adult. Other histories had seen moments of lapsed musical interest, as off-putting teachers or failed auditions had dented students' confidence, or new living circumstances had temporarily reduced the opportunity to make music. Patterns of behaviour were sometimes rather hidden amongst these personal accounts, with one notable exception: the prominence of performing opportunities in school as a source of inspiration, enjoyment and musical identity.

Primary school foundations

A range of performing opportunities were mentioned by respondents, with a notable prevalence of singing, which dominated performing experience in the primary (elementary) school years and remained a feature of musical life for over a third of secondary school pupils. This is in part a reflection of the age range of respondents: school choirs were particularly strong in English schools in the 1950s, and some older respondents wrote of 'opportunity amounting to compulsion to sing' [UK6, aged 65]. Performing activity reportedly increased into the teenage years, drawing on the greater resources and specialist music staffing in secondary schools, and incorporating auditioned county ensembles for pupils attaining high levels of instrumental performing ability. Nonetheless, primary schools were recognised by several respondents as providing important formative experiences which increased musical confidence and enjoyment at an early stage of education:

‘I was in the junior choir which I enjoyed immensely. I progressed to being head chorister in the school chamber choir which was a little more serious and introduced me to pieces such as *Zadok the Priest* which I loved and still do!’ [UK2, aged 19]

‘We had one teacher who played the piano well and had sung with the D’Oyly Carte company; she produced a G&S [Gilbert and Sullivan] operetta every two years with the top two forms [... The] G&S was a big watershed, as I got a leading part and enjoyed singing and acting hugely.’ [UK64, aged 55]

Respondents writing about primary school performing experiences often mentioned the skill and enthusiasm of the teacher involved, recognised even at the time as being beyond those of other staff. This finding is consistent with reports that primary school teachers are typically lacking in musical training and confidence (Hennessy, 2000), so tending to leave musical provision to ‘experts’ on the staff, where these exist. The importance of equipping all teachers to encourage musical involvement in the early years is reinforced by the views of survey respondents, several of whom noted the significance of formative experiences: ‘There’s no doubt that without the enormous encouragement I received at my primary school, I would never have taken the path I did’ [UK21, aged 55].

Secondary school opportunities

Despite the qualitative significance of primary school opportunities, by far the greatest quantity of performing experience was reported from secondary school years, where opportunities were generally more plentiful, consistent and ambitious than at primary level. School orchestras and choirs were a feature of many respondents’ experiences, and the sense of a thriving musical community was highly valued in all age groups:

‘I was fortunate enough to attend a grammar school with a very strong musical ethos and took part in a wide range of musical activities, including choirs, orchestras and other ensembles, with regular concerts and music festivals as well as a dedicated Saturday morning music school.’ [UK3, aged 52]

‘At school the music department was extremely active the school orchestra was, to the best of my memory, always doing public gigs and little mini-tours. The department regularly put on lunch-time concerts for us to get involved in.’ [UK50, aged 25]

In some cases, respondents attributed their continued involvement in music as adults to the lasting influence of their secondary school or teacher, reporting on how they had acquired not just skills and confidence, but also a sense of music being important in their lives and an area in which they could excel. The opposite was also possible – missing out on school

involvement and becoming musically active for the first time in later years – but without doubt school music shaped attitudes and interest, and formed a backdrop to varied routes into lifelong musical engagement.

Some of the specific benefits of performing in secondary schools were directly comparable to those reported by Phase 1 participants: growth in confidence, development of skills, and sense of belonging to a group of like-minded people. There was an undertone of pride and achievement in the reports of playing complex repertoire, excelling in competitions, or playing a central role in productions – all events that could provide a welcome boost to teenage egos:

‘Regular end-of term concerts took place plus a concert during the spring which was our “main event”. One year it was Britten’s cantata *Saint Nicolas*, for string orchestra, piano, percussion, tenor and choir. The foreword in the score indicated that it should be tackled by a professional timpanist using chromatic instruments – we managed it using hand-tuned drums. I must confess to a certain smugness after the performance.’ [UK29, aged 54]

Where activities were compulsory, or run by less inspiring or well-liked teachers, the effects were predictably less positive:

‘The school orchestra was very poor, but I had to go, otherwise I wouldn’t have been allowed to do A level music. It was conducted by the visiting viola teacher, who was very boring, and would rehearse exactly one piece per term, over and over again, for the end of term concert. The school choir was similar, and had no appeal for the few of us who were seriously interested in music.’ [UK35, aged 52]

School music imbued with a sense of obligation was an alienating experience for some, though others admitted that being ‘conscripted into the choir’ [UK47, aged 62] had resulted in enjoyable experiences that they might not otherwise have encountered. As so often seems to be the case in music education, the provision of opportunity is not in itself enough: the personality of the teacher and the ethos of the ensemble are strong influences on the commitment and motivation of students, and in themselves convey powerful and lasting messages about the purposes of music-making.

Cross-Phase Discussion: The Impact of Non-Participation

The two phases of this study shed light not just on the experiences of those active in school music, but also on the impact of extra-curricular music on the school ethos and on those who, for whatever reason, are not involved in major performance events. Amongst the high school

students in Phase 1, disappointment was evident in the substantial group of 33 Year 7 students who had missed or failed auditions:

I couldn't get in because my American accent was rubbish. [14N7]

I didn't know what it was about, I would of [*sic*] if I'd known. [37N7]

I did not know about the show and I am a very bad singer. [61N7]

As these respondents' candid assessments of their singing and acting ability illustrate, not everyone *can* be involved in a production requiring high level performance skills – though amongst the Year 7 non-participants a number were involved in comparable activities outside school, so talent and confidence were not always the barrier to participation. Others had missed out through lack of awareness of the audition process, or because of concerns about rehearsal commitments competing with school work demands or free time. Overall, though, the Year 7s were highly positive about the show, seeing it as 'a good thing to have in school', and in several cases reporting on the enjoyment that they had heard about from their participating friends.

As with the participant data, a strengthening of individual attitudes was evident between Year 7 and Year 10, with more fixed views expressed by Year 10 students about their reasons for not participating:

I don't like those kind of shows – I'm not interested in them. [24N10]

Rejected from play because apparently my voice wasn't strong enough! [38N10]

I don't act. [46N10]

These students show themselves to be less open to persuasion to be involved, and less forgiving of the staff who have 'rejected' them on this or previous occasions. Non-participation in this show was not necessarily an indication of disinterest, since 9 of the 68 Year 10 non-participants had opted to take the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in Music, and 43 of them played instruments to some level. But whereas the Year 7s were open to future involvement and in many cases planned to go and watch the show to support their friends and find out more about it, the Year 10s were less inclined to be drawn into involvement having made the initial decision not to participate.

The increased rigidity of attitudes from Year 7 to Year 10 offers some insight on how lack of involvement is self-perpetuating, and the Phase 2 survey gave further instances of memories of being excluded from school ensembles and performances, in many cases reporting a consequent lack of confidence or motivation for music in school:

‘I failed the audition to the school choir and could only sing in the second choir which really upset me for a time (but I felt vindicated much later when I had singing lessons and gained a diploma in singing).’ [Respondent 17, aged 65]

‘The first music teacher I encountered [at grammar school] was a rather forbidding character and at eleven years old I felt rather nervous of him. The whole class was auditioned for the school choir, taking pupils two at a time. I was not accepted, much to my great disappointment. This must have had quite a negative impact on me because I did not try again through all the years I was at the school.’
[Respondent 13, aged 58]

Both of these respondents found other avenues outside school in which to pursue their interests in singing, and continued to do so into adult life – the first through singing lessons and choral societies, and the second in her church choir. They show, therefore, that school music is not the only route to adult participation, but it is clear as they compare their own experience with those of their more successful peers that these respondents feel that they missed out on important formative musical experiences. A retrospective study of attitudes to singing in school found ‘more adults who sing now despite bad experiences at school than those who had good experiences at school and who now do not sing’ (Turton & Durrant, 2002: 40): this is hardly a forceful endorsement of school singing, but it does at least offer the hope that exclusion from school activities need not do lasting damage.

Evaluating the effects of extra-curricular music on non-participants raises some pressing dilemmas for music teachers over how the musical achievements and opportunities of some students impact upon those who are, for whatever reason, not included. Of course not everyone *wants* to be involved – and as someone who spent her school years avoiding sporting activities, I can readily relate to that. But as the Year 7 audition-missers and the Phase 2 respondents illustrate, not being involved can create doubts about musical competence and resentment towards those who are seen as denying access to involvement. Meanwhile, the gulf widens between those who are happily involved, gaining confidence, skills and a performing reputation, and those who are left behind. Perhaps more could be done in all subjects and extra-curricular activities to help students recognise and evaluate the defining characteristics of their school identity and engagement – a task that would bring with it an admission that music will not hold a central place for everyone, but is nonetheless a vital part of a thriving school community.

Conclusions: Music for the Long-Term

The two phases of this research show that extra-curricular music takes its place alongside family, classroom and broader cultural exposure to music in shaping participants’ long-term engagement in performing and listening. Future phases of the project will take an

international perspective on these research questions, considering how the impact of music education is different for those whose experience is more centred in the classroom (as in America and Australia) or in specialist conservatoires (as in much of Continental Europe). The research offers a reminder that teachers hold significant responsibility in shaping musical futures, and raises the question of whether school music should reflect these longer-term consequences, or be concerned primarily with the immediate experiences of young people making music. It is undoubtedly the case that music education *will* have a long-term effect on students, as illustrated by the vivid memories reported in the life history survey. Teachers and researchers alike, therefore, need to consider what that effect is – or should be.

The role of extra-curricular music appears to be particularly crucial in shaping attitudes to music that are carried into later life, and offers one of the strongest points of connection with the independent musical development that young people engage with out of school:

Certainly, young people are exposed to, and create for themselves, a huge variety of musical experiences outside the school (and additionally, many of course are driving their own learning) but the school is in a unique position to create a solid foundation for lifelong engagement in music – for those for whom it will remain part of their general cultural life, as well as for those who choose to develop their interest further. (Kaiserman *et al.*, n.d.: 9)

The production of *Anything Goes*, and the choral and orchestral activities recalled by the life history participants, are part of a long tradition of teacher-directed extra-curricular activities that have contributed to British music education throughout the past century. The experiences of those involved show that such activities still have a highly valuable role to play in engaging students with music and securing their long-term interest and confidence in performing. Today, though, such activities take their place alongside a growing variety of musical offerings in schools, some led by teachers, some run independently by groups of students, and some involving new roles negotiated between traditional boundaries of leadership and informality (cf. McGillen, 2004). Researchers have a crucial role to play in documenting and analysing such activities, so that the function of extra-curricular activities in musical learning can be more widely understood. The supremacy of classroom teaching as a foundation for lifelong musical engagement is rightly being questioned by practitioners and researchers, and new roles for ‘music leaders’ in schools are combining the skills of performers, composers and educators in a way that more closely resembles the wider musical world (Swanwick, 2008). These are exciting times for music education, in which teachers and researchers need to work together to make sense of the musical needs of young people, and to ensure that schools continue to provide an environment within which those needs can be recognised, met, and even exceeded.

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Appendix A: Coding diagram

<i>Context</i>	<i>Events</i>	
Home influences and opportunities	Parents' musical tastes	Father listening
		Mother listening
		Lack of listening in the home
	Parents' musical activities	Father playing
		Mother playing
		Father singing
		Mother singing
	Parents' musical attitudes	Support for lessons/practice
		Parents recognising musical potential
		Parents <i>not</i> recognising musical potential
	Siblings' musical behaviour	Siblings listening
		Siblings playing
		Making music with family
	Extended family influences	Extended family listening
		Extended family playing
	Resources in the home	Instruments in the home
		Music/books in the home
		Relatives as teachers
		Radio/gramophone
		Financial support
		Financial pressures
	Family social/ cultural network	Church attendance/ hymn singing
		Concert-going as a family
		Music-making with friends
	Own music within the home	Instrumental practice
		Developing own listening tastes
		Singing in the home

Education influences and opportunities	Instrumental lessons/teachers	Inspiring teachers
		Off-putting teachers
		Lack of progress
		Lack of enjoyment/interest
	Primary school	Class lessons
		Recorder playing
		Schools broadcasts
		Assemblies: singing/listening/ playing
		Singing in class/choirs
		Performing opportunities
		Judging own skills as superior to peers'
		Inspiring teachers
		Off-putting teachers
		Trips to concerts
		Lack of music in school
		Secondary school
	Performing opportunities	
	School choir: belonging	
	School choir: not belonging	
	Composing experience	
	Assemblies: singing/listening/ playing	
	Inspiring teachers	
	Off-putting teachers	
	Studying for exams	
	Going to concerts	
	Judging skills as superior to peers	
	Learning from/with peers	
	Making decisions about musical future	
	Lack of music in school	
	County/ youth orchestras and music schools	Making friends through music
		Performing opportunities
		Development of playing skills
	Music at university/ college	Inspiring teachers
		Off-putting teachers
Performing opportunities		
Gaining performing confidence		
Losing performing confidence		
Gaining new knowledge and/or interests		
Making decisions about musical future		
Playing music while studying another degree subject		
Influences outside home/school	Performing influences	Hearing inspiring players
		Summer school courses

Self-directed learning in childhood	Playing/performing	Organising/directing ensembles
		Self-taught instrumental playing
		Composing outside school
Adult learning and/or performing	Learning in adulthood	Taking up a new instrument
		Continuing/resuming lessons
		Performance qualifications
		Academic study of music
		Summer school courses
	Membership of performing ensembles	Singing in choirs
		Playing in ensembles
		Piano accompanying
		Development of skills
		Friendships and social networks
		Directing choirs/ensembles
	Involvement in church music	Membership of choir
		Organ/instrumental playing
		Directing church music
	Playing at home	Playing for pleasure
		Making music with friends
	Composing opportunities	Writing for school/ amateur groups
		Songwriting for performance
		Regrets at not doing more composing
	Difficulties maintaining performance as adult	Lack of confidence
		Lack of opportunity
		Lack of time
	Reflecting on skill levels	Regrets at lack of practice in childhood
		Regrets at not learning (specific) instrument as a child
		Gratitude to teachers and/or parents
		Regrets at lack of specialisation
		Regrets at stopping playing
Experiences as a parent and/or teacher	Learning from own teachers' practice	Desire to avoid own teachers' habits
	Developed views on education	Views on importance of music education
		Views on characteristics of good teaching/teachers
	Desire to provide opportunities for young people	Teaching: class/instrumental
		Running performing groups
Supporting own children		
Broader cultural/social influences in adulthood	Concert-going	Supporting family/friends who are performing
		Knowledge and enjoyment of repertoire
		Motivation for own playing
	Recorded music listening	Listening for pleasure
		Broadening musical knowledge
	Cultural life of locality	Taking/supporting musical opportunities locally

About the Author

Dr Stephanie Pitts is a Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Sheffield, with research interests in music education and musical participation. She has published on topics including the historical development of secondary school music in the UK, children's instrumental learning, and music students' experience of the transition from school to university. Her latest book, *Valuing Musical Participation* (Ashgate, 2005), analyses the experience of adults involved in music-making as audience members, performers and composers; current research is building on these studies through investigation of jazz audiences, and the influences of music education on lifelong participation in music.

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