

4 Synergy between social and artistic goals: the challenge for learning and development in the arts

4.1 Towards a new paradigm

During the research phase of this paper I was privileged to draw on the inspiration, imagination, and sheer energy and resilience of a number of artists and practitioners from various sectors committed to making a qualitative difference to people's lives. In all cases the going has been tough and challenging as individuals and organisations have had to keep modifying their practice in order to respond to constant change. Everything is in a state of flux, with priorities shifting and funding increasingly precarious. But what stands out as a constant thread is the strength of motivation and integrity of people who have a deep belief in what they do really matters. For them, addressing social issues through engaging in the arts is a *sine qua non*. There is no place for self-absorption. Inner strength, yes, but always focused on others – on strangers, on other communities, on other contexts. A dialogue between the inner and the outer, between the artist and his or her sensibility to social needs, is the motor that lies at the heart of socially engaged creative practice. But this dialogue can only flower in a cultural milieu, a learning environment that is in tune with the values and philosophy that drives socially oriented arts practitioners.

As was indicated in the introductory chapter, there has been a shift in attitude and practice in many higher arts education colleges and arts organisations towards the learning and development of artists who intend to pursue a more differentiated 'portfolio' career, including the kind of participatory work discussed in this paper. There is growing recognition that this work matters and that conservatoires and colleges, for example, now have a responsibility for providing appropriate learning opportunities in socially engaged creative practice.

The evidence discussed in this paper inevitably represents only a small sample of what is going on in many different sectors. Nevertheless they are strong examples of what is possible and what can be achieved given the will, the imagination, skill and resources to make something happen. But this raises a fundamental question:

In what ways can arts practitioners respond to the creative and social challenges arising from a cultural landscape in constant flux, and from educational, health and criminal justice systems undermined by constantly changing demands within a precarious funding climate?

This major question is increasingly being addressed by conservatoires, colleges and other training organisations as they seek new and more appropriate ways of preparing students and emerging artists for the wide-ranging demands of a workforce that is far more differentiated from that in the past. Are the old tried-and-tested models of professional preparation sufficiently flexible and responsive to meet changing needs?

Personally I think not and a similar critical point was made recently in a conversation between Daniel Barenboim and Alan Rusbridger (2013), Editor of the *Guardian* newspaper. Barenboim, taking music as his example, considers that the culture of contemporary classical music is trapped in an 'ivory tower' that has become far too specialised – a specialised audience

listening to specialised people play. "Therefore you get a community made up of artists and audience that is an ivory-tower community, because both have lost a great part of the connection between music and everything else" (Rusbridger, 2013, p.210). To Barenboim, this disconnection between music and the wider world is a serious indictment of the dominant voice in mainstream contemporary classical culture. For him, the value of music is that:

It gives us the tools to understand many things about ourselves, about the human being, about society, about how we live, what we live for, etc. (ibid., p.210)

It seems to me that this perspective on the responsibility of the arts in society must be at the forefront of the thinking underlying the learning and development of arts practitioners as they prepare to use their craft creatively in response to the many diverse social, educational and cultural needs. This has certainly informed my proposition that learning and development programmes in the arts need to be underpinned by a new paradigm that draws together five sets of interconnections:

- Between a social and artistic imperative
- Between access and quality
- Between context and excellence
- Between creativity, innovation and risk-taking
- Between research, personal, artistic and professional development

I will now sketch one way of viewing the different elements in this paradigm

1.2

The interconnection between the social and the artistic

The link between the social and the artistic underpins all the other interconnections in this proposed model of learning and development. Socially driven practice without an artistic core is mono-dimensional – it lacks the *raison d'être* of being an artist. Artists working in participatory settings have a distinctive role and unique contribution to make in society; they are not teachers, social workers, carers or therapists, for example. Of course, they have to have some of the qualities and attitudes of these other professionals in order to connect to different contexts, but the roles and responsibilities of the arts practitioner are necessarily different. All, whatever their role, will be concerned with integrity and the quality of practice and performance. Everyone interviewed in this research emphasised the place that artistic quality plays in the success of participatory arts projects. The challenge is to ensure that there is a synergy between the social and the artistic – a synergy that brings with it a sense of dynamism and a confidence in risk-taking.

The importance and subtlety of this relationship was picked up by Helen Nicholson, Professor of Theatre and Performance in the Department of Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London. For Helen, in any participatory project the artistic voice of the artist is critical but that has to connect in a meaningful way to the context in which the artist is working. When discussing what artists need to work in participatory settings she said:

I think they need to be good artists and confidently aware of what their art form is and how they're using it...In terms of participatory arts I'd want the students to have a sense of their own work as artists, a kind of body of practice that they are developing. Ideally I think they need to be making some kind of work, as well as working in participatory

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settings. It seems to me that one of the things that has emerged, certainly in applied theatre, are people developing a set of games and workshop skills that they then do very successfully in a particular way. But they just get repeated in different contexts. And that seems to me quite reductionist.

In the context of learning and development, Helen stresses the importance of establishing a connection between the artistic, personal and professional. Often the emphasis is on the professional (e.g., workshop skill training), but an artist's development is very much linked to nurturing both the personal and artistic aspects of their life – they are interdependent. Helen sees the relationship between these three aspects of development as fluid and “if the artists themselves have got a sense of their practice, then they're not just falling back on recipes or formulae”.

An integral part of an artist's personal development that informs their artistic practice is an awareness of 'place' and 'identity' – two critical elements in any meaningful interaction with others. Helen considers that:

The other thing I would like emerging artists to have is a deep understanding of place. And I say place rather than context or setting or community because I think it is more layered. So it might be the place as in the school or the hospital or the care setting or the prison. But it might also be the places that people are attached to in multiple different kinds of ways. So for example, I'd like them to think about the network of relationships, the 'invisible relationships' that aren't in the room that people are experiencing, whether that's people with dementia or people in prison or children in schools. Can they think a bit more deeply about the place and the places that these people are attached to, or are escaping from or whatever?

This level of understanding can only deepen the artist's response to the human context they are working in. It sensitises them to the unknown, to the unexpected, alerting to them to the vulnerabilities of others. In our conversation Helen makes a crucial observation:

There's something about knowing what you don't know, in order to be able to think about it and find it out. And what arts practice in participatory settings does best, is the artist has got a sense of what they know and what they bring, but also what they don't know about that place, so it leaves a kind of openness.

In a sense, this openness to place and to others is a necessary precondition to understanding the identity or multiple identities of the participants in any collective creative process. As Helen points out, “the link between place and identity, and multiple identities...stops emerging artists fixing people in a particular place”. Understanding individual identities and the collective identity of the group is fundamental to shaping the artistic language, the artistic voice, in the creative process. But this presupposes that the artist has to be clear and grounded within themselves to make sense of this complexity. Helen feels that:

You certainly need to know who you are in that space in that moment...There's a really interesting relationship between openness, warmth and empathy and the ability to be still in that space, and to be who you are in that space. One of the things I was picking up from your line of questioning is that there's an awful lot of mobility, you know, everybody is sort of rushing about, whether it's surfing the net or whatever it is – that sense of 21st century life... being 'on the move'. I think sometimes there's a place to allow the walls to be still for a bit.

Helen has identified something very important – the place of 'stillness' both within the artistic and social domains, but also in the organic relationship between the artistic and social. Paradoxically, within the state of stillness can lie the source

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of creative energy. This echoes the view of Giles Fraser (2013) writing in the *Guardian* newspaper about prayer, which he claims is like art as "it simply requires being attentive to that which is other". In his discussion of prayer he goes on:

There is not much that you have to do other than make time for it. For Michael Ramsey [a former Archbishop of Canterbury] prayer was not the heaping up of pious chatter. It was not a peculiar way of getting things done in the world. Rather, it was about listening and waiting – being attentive to that which is beyond oneself, a form of concentration on that which is other....Prayer is like art, or rather prayer demands the sort of attention that art demands. It takes time. It requires silence. (16.02.13)

But what a challenge this is to the arts practitioner trying to chart a journey through the complexities of a creative process within a context of many unknown variables! In order to make some sense of this complexity and bring to the process a degree of order, clarity and coherence, it is a help to be together within one's self, to know one's self – or at least to be comfortable with the process of 'coming to know' one's self. In a way, one carries this knowledge gently within oneself and it is learnt in many subtle ways. Helen agrees with this and feels that this process of learning is "entirely affective":

It also goes back to what I was saying about place, because I think some places encourage stillness....It is interesting because I talk to the students about 'holding the space', not actually rushing people through lots and lots of stuff. You know, hold it, hold that space. And if there's something you think is actually really moving or interesting, then just take time with it.

What stands out in Helen's view of the arts is that whatever context one is in, "the arts invite you to pay attention". The artist has the responsibility to "hold things long enough to pay attention". This lies at the heart of the "aesthetic of living".

This question of 'stillness', of 'paying attention' and of 'holding the space' was also highlighted by Padraic Garrett in our discussion of music and dementia. Although Padraic is a firm believer in the importance of the musicians and care staff reflecting on the outcomes of the creative process, he also thinks that too much analysis can lead to disengagement from the felt experience. He says to the people he is working with:

Let's try and get a bit of time where people can just be quiet and let it soak in. And by all means, let us then talk about different individuals and so on, but let it soak in. Then whatever has soaked into you, maybe express a little bit about that. I think that's quite a fine art or skill....I think a lot of people find it very hard to believe in the value of that because if you go back to staff, they are very task focused. I know that I'm also very task focused but I strongly believe in being able to just have time. And if you give yourself that time, then it will make a difference.

Both Padraic and Helen Nicholson are drawing attention to something very important not just in their respective fields, but also in the life of artists. That is, giving oneself permission, allowing oneself to pause, to be and to reflect: giving oneself time and space to 'soak in' before reflecting on a process one has just experienced. But in some instances this can feel threatening because one has to be 'in tune' with oneself, be secure enough in oneself to be able to meet this personal challenge. Padraic adds that:

The more secure someone is in themselves as a person, the better able they are to connect with someone with dementia, and particularly with someone who is suffering. There is a lot of suffering around and I think staff carry that. So I mean, you could talk about healing. And I think that would be a very important theme, about music and healing. Because I think that's what it is really. You're talking about healing at an emotional, psychological level in particular but probably also at a physical level.

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In our conversation Padraic also identifies some of the qualities he feels that artists need when engaging with people with dementia. For him, warmth of personality is number one.

I think warmth communicates itself. And I don't think there's any particular personality type that radiates warmth, because I think you have some very quiet, shy people who radiate it, whilst other people express it in a very outgoing way. But I think warmth communicates itself very strongly and people with dementia pick up on it very strongly.

Others include openness, generosity of spirit, being able to share one's own vulnerability – qualities that presuppose one is comfortable within oneself. Padraic thinks that for anyone working in the area of dementia it is necessary to feel settled in oneself, otherwise the emotional challenges could be too great. Similarly, the musicians have to have a good rapport between themselves to work effectively as a team, but within a care environment they also need a respectful and non-judgemental attitude towards the care staff.

What began to emerge in my discussion with Padraic is the need to acknowledge the importance of a reciprocal relationship between the social and artistic elements in any human transaction involving artists and other people. In the context of Music for Life the musicians have to be highly skilled intuitive people who not only have something to say artistically but who can say it in a way that speaks to the people with dementia in a care environment. The integrity of their artistic engagement embodies the qualities of listening, care and love. But these same qualities are equally embedded in their human engagement. For me, this is a prime example of the synergy between the social and the artistic.

There is no doubt that working with people with dementia brings one up starkly with questions concerning the human condition and what it means to be human. As Padraic says:

What is it to be human when you know there are parts of my brain that are no longer functioning? So what is that? What is it to be human? I think what happens in Music for Life is that you can really see the person, in spite of the dementia. You know, the personality, the person comes out.

This illustrates the connectedness between art and understanding what it is to be human. It strengthens the view that artistic and social engagement can feed each other.

Echoing this, Julian West, a musician working for Music for Life, commented that "there must be a fundamental interest in your art form and a desire to be creative within it. And there has to be a fascination with other people – wanting to know and find out about other people". The connection between the two is critical in this kind of creative engagement.

This discussion clearly demonstrates the link between the social and the artistic. Basically, creative engagement in social settings becomes a pale shadow of what is possible if it is not driven by an artistic voice that is appropriately nuanced in its response to the particular human context. But I would also maintain that even if an artist is not especially interested in working in the wider community, their artistic life, their artistic insight would benefit from experiencing some sort of social engagement during their initial period of training in a conservatoire or other higher arts education college. This broader experience can only expand their horizons and open new doors of awareness. It can help to place their artistic voice in a wider human context and deepen their understanding of what it is to be an artist in society. Artists of any kind must feel that they have something to say, otherwise what is the point of doing what they do? It is my contention that in the most creative practice in participatory settings, there is a symbiotic relationship between social and artistic engagement. This serves as the primary guiding principle underpinning learning and development in the arts.

4.3 The interconnection between access and quality

For some years now there has been a debate raging about strengthening the link between access and quality. On the one hand, it has been felt by professional arts and education, along with funding bodies, that opportunities should be open for all people, especially young people, to have access to quality experience in the arts. On the other, all children should be entitled to an education in the arts, irrespective of background. Basically the debate has focused on access to both arts experience and learning in the arts, neither of which should be dependent on parental income or social circumstances.

At first the pressure was on widening opportunities so that all children, irrespective of social and economic background, have access to arts education. More recently the emphasis has shifted towards providing access to experiences of artistic quality, rather than just opening up access. In other words, another manifestation of the link between social and artistic engagement. Although budgetary constraints are making it increasingly difficult to deliver this ideal, the debate about access and quality remains high on the educational and cultural agenda.

I now want to flag up the importance of this issue in the context of exploring some possible pathways into high-level training in conservatoires and higher arts education institutions that have a different trajectory from the norm. What is customary at the moment in music for example, especially in the classical music tradition, is that those parents who have certain aspirations for their children, along with the money to support them, tend to pursue a conventional route into conservatoires. This might involve private instrumental teaching, a place at a local music school, or a junior conservatoire or a centre for young musicians, supplemented in some cases by playing in an orchestra like the London Schools Symphony Orchestra or the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. There are other children who have the talent and opportunity to enter conservatoires via the route of specialist music schools.

But in addition to this conventional pathway some recent initiatives that are both socially engaged and artistically driven have opened the doors to a much wider group of young people. They are all concerned with marrying social and artistic aims without sacrificing quality. The first example is Sistema Scotland (2013). Based in Raploch, Stirling and Govanhill, Glasgow, this model was set up in the belief that children can gain huge social benefits from playing in an orchestra. These challenging neighbourhoods in Scotland are in the process of being transformed by the lives of young people engaged in music-making. Although at one level Sistema Scotland is about the discipline of learning an instrument and playing as well as possible in a group, it is also very much focusing on social change and changing civic society. Through its intensive programme of learning, making and playing, Sistema Scotland is creating another reality for the children involved, their families and their wider community. This is quite deliberately aiming at achieving a transformative experience for whole communities.

Another closely related example is In Harmony Liverpool (2013) – a project led by members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic in initially one primary school. Again this is a powerful inclusive model designed to support every child achieving their full potential through music making, but also recognising how this experience can change people's lives and aspirations in their communities. This work in Liverpool forms part of the national project, In Harmony Sistema England (2013), which seeks to transform the lives of young people and their communities through making music together. The principles and values underpinning its work are drawn from those developed by El Sistema in Venezuela. They include two principles that are particularly relevant to this paper:

- **Music as a joyful agent of social change**

El Sistema is a social improvement and youth development programme that uses playing music together as its vehicle. Students are encouraged to feel an ownership of the music making process as an aid to their social development, taking responsibility for both individual and group improvement.

- **Access and excellence**

El Sistema includes as many children as it can, bringing young people into its community whenever possible... whatever their background or abilities. As El Sistema strives single-mindedly toward musical excellence for all students, it also provides intensive training for the most committed and gifted, preparing them for the highest-level national orchestras and cultivating them as leaders in their own communities. In this way and others, the ideals of access and excellence are maintained in a productive balance that aims to maximise both the fullest success and highest accomplishment for all. (In Harmony Sistema England, 2013)

In London, LSO On Track, working in partnership with the music services of ten East London boroughs, is breaking new ground providing enriching programmes in music making and performance. Launched in 2008, LSO On Track offers a wide range of musical opportunities for young instrumentalists, from absolute beginners through to advanced musicians, plus an intensive continuing professional development scheme for primary school teachers. Its aims include:

- To develop a strong and strategic music partnership in London which harnesses the skills and expertise of world-class arts organisations and local authority music education practitioners
- To offer a range of projects for 8- to 18-year-olds, which add value to the core activities of the borough Music Services, provide pathways for young musicians to develop their music making, and encourage excellence throughout
- To offer inspiring, innovative and high-quality projects and performance opportunities which bring young instrumentalists of all ages and abilities into contact with professional artists and world-class venues
- To bring together communities in creative activities encouraging young people to meet other young musicians, and progress socially and personally, as well as musically
- To offer school teachers, instrumental tutors, HE students and LSO musicians a variety of ways to develop their skills and confidence in music, education and leadership. (Barbican Centre and Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013, p.17)

One of the things that stand out with many young people today is their passion for creating and playing their own music in groups. Creative engagement is seen as an important way of enabling their voice to be heard. With this principle in mind, the national youth music organisation, Music for Youth (supported by the Vivendi Create Joy Fund) has just launched a new Young Artist Development Programme for young musicians who write their own material, between the ages of 14–21.

Music for Youth (2013) is particularly interested in musicians working with jazz, traditional, world, rock, pop and urban genres. The 10-month long programme provides an opportunity to develop a person's writing style through collaborations with other young performers, working with and supported by a mentor and experienced professional musicians. The work produced will be performed in public on a national stage.

One important aspect of this programme is the responsibility it gives to the young musicians to draw up their own development plan, which is expected to include the following components:

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- Specialist mentoring from professional artist(s) that is appropriate to the young person's music and learning style
- Attendance at composition-based workshops by professional composers
- Collaboration with a young performing group, supported and facilitated by the mentor
- Public performance of the music by the identified performing group
- Access to events that support the person's development over the course of the year

This programme is in its pilot phase but it provides an imaginative opportunity for opening doors and developing the creative and performing talent of young musicians.

My final example of organisations opening access to quality music making is Aldeburgh Young Musicians (2013), who are seeking to shape the young musicians of tomorrow by pushing the boundaries of what can be achieved. It brings together like-minded young musicians to rehearse, perform and exchange creative ideas. It has a close link with the Leadership programme at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Remaining in the domain of music, the challenge now is to find appropriate destinations for those young musicians who wish to move on into higher levels of training but who have pursued different pathways from the normal conventional route into a conservatoire, for example. The wide-ranging artistic experience embedded in bodies like LSO On Track, Sistema Scotland, In Harmony Liverpool, Barbican Drum Works, Future Band, Aldeburgh Young Musicians and Music for Youth Young Artists Development Programme are producing young musicians with an eclectic artistic palette and broad cultural outlook that will need deepening and extending at the next stage of their development in higher education. Are they likely to feel comfortable within the current conservatoire culture? How might they respond to a selection process that is not necessarily geared to making judgements about young musicians coming from very different artistic, social and cultural backgrounds? How far are conservatoires fit for purpose in a contemporary world that is challenging them to redefine who they are in a rapidly changing cultural landscape?

These are fundamental questions that are beginning to be addressed by some people in some conservatoires. There is a growing recognition that change is necessary and that all higher arts education institutions should become more socially engaged. Technical virtuosity alone within a 'cult of precision' (Rusbridger, 2013, p.163) is seen for what it is – meaningless and musically irresponsible. Artists have to have something to say and one way of feeding this is by engaging with the wider world.

As an example of responsiveness to the challenges being encountered through these new pathways I will take the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, which has a long track record of working in community settings, but whose work in this area has tended to remain in the margins of the institution. Nevertheless, more recently there has been a significant shift in thinking, so much so that proposals are now being discussed about starting a new BA programme, focusing on theatre and music (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013a, p.3).

This BA degree is being designed to meet the needs of musicians and actors who have come via different pathways into higher arts education and who want to develop portfolio careers as creative leaders, collaborators, devisers, workshop leaders, project managers, arts administrators, teachers and performers. In the context of this discussion about access and quality, the Guildhall proposes to develop strategies that will recruit talented young people from hard-to-reach backgrounds. It is intended to attract dynamic, diverse, creative young people who are not currently being recruited into more traditional conservatoire training, but recruitment will depend very much on the help and support of several key partners. For example:

- Barbican and Guildhall School East London and City Cultural Partnership, comprising six Music Education Hubs representing eight East London boroughs and the City
- National Skills Academy, connected to London's Further Education networks and apprenticeships
- A new Barbican Guildhall Young Artists Academy, a development of the Connect/Creative Learning young ensembles – e.g., Future Band, Drumheads, Impossibilities, East London Creative Jazz Orchestra, Barbican Young Poets
- The Guildhall School's Young Artists Division
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation ArtWorks networks, a nationwide initiative to develop artists working in participatory settings
- Nationwide arts organisations: e.g., Youth Music, Music for Youth, LSO Discovery, Spitalfields Music Festival, Generation Arts, Ideas Tap, Young Vic Taking Part, Lyric Young Company, National Theatre Connections, Old Vic New Voices, Hi8us, Islington Community Theatre
- Summer schools and CPD training projects
- Strategic taster sessions led by core tutors, delivered in partnership with pupil referral units, schools, youth and community services

This ground-breaking initiative comes at a critical time in the development of the Guildhall School. By creating a more open and responsive culture, the institution is strengthening its sense of social responsibility and continuing to act as a catalyst for change. It would be hoped that initiatives like this will become pivotal in the strategic debate about access and quality.

4.4

The interconnection between context and excellence

In chapter two the discussion focused on the work of several distinctive arts organisations and creative ensembles – Boy Blue Entertainment, Barbican Drum Works, Future Band, The Messengers, Magic Me, Music for Life, Synergy Theatre and Punchdrunk. In the previous section examples were taken to illustrate issues arising from the debate about access and quality – Sistema Scotland, In Harmony Liverpool, LSO On Track, Aldeburgh Young Musicians and Music for Youth Young Artist Development Programme. If questioned they would all say that they are striving for excellence within the parameters of the context they are working in. It is critical that any judgements made about the quality of both the process and product in each case have to take into account the various elements of that particular context. As was observed in *Creating a Land with Music*, a report for Youth Music (2002):

It is increasingly recognised in the professional arts community that no single immutable standard of excellence can exist. Any valid view of excellence has to be defined in relation to context and fitness for purpose. All musical activities must strive for excellence, but the criteria used to judge this will vary depending on the aim and context.

An urgent task, therefore, is to produce a common framework for evaluating and assessing quality that accords with diversity of need and purpose across all music genres. (p.11)

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For example, music activities can only be judged fairly by the appropriateness of their aims and the way in which they make meaningful connections to their particular context. In the following cases, for instance, it would be wholly valid to make qualitatively different judgements according to a wide spectrum of criteria:

- A music therapist working with an autistic child in a special language unit
- A violinist performing a concerto in a concert hall
- A master drummer leading a drumming workshop in a community context
- A collaborative arts workshop in a young offenders' unit
- An open-access ensemble performing a genre-free collaborative composition in a club for young people
- The experimental work of a sound and image lab for young musicians, visual artists, singers, DJs and programmers. (Renshaw, 2007, pp.37-8)

Although there are similarities when judging quality at the level of the form of various artistic experiences, significant differences have to be taken into account when regarding the aim, content and context of any particular activity. For instance, the criteria used for evaluating a creative project in a non-formal setting are determined as much by the workshop/performance context (e.g., school classroom, hospital ward, prison, youth club, neighbourhood) as by the shared values and expectations of the participants and their leader (see Renshaw, 2010, p.61).

For the purpose of this analysis of excellence and quality, a distinction can be drawn between:

- Generic criteria that apply to judging quality across all forms of music experience and
- Specific criteria that apply to quality music making (including process, project and performance) in particular contexts

Generic criteria

Examples of the criteria that might be used for judging quality across all forms of music experience would include:

- Focused listening to the music, to oneself and to the other musicians in the group
- Openness to the spirit of the music and the performance
- Capturing an authenticity of sound, where the sound reflects the connection between a person's inner listening, musical intention and past musical experience
- Conveying the meaning of the music by showing an understanding of its inner construction (this is relevant to both interpreting and creating music)
- Demonstrating strength of conviction, inner confidence, engagement, risk-taking and an independent spirit in performance
- Displaying an approach to music making that reveals curiosity, integrity, honesty, humility and a clear musical intention

Specific criteria

In a conservatoire, for example, where the emphasis is on striving for excellence in the context of performance within the Western classical tradition, judgements regarding quality would refer to the above generic criteria, but they would also

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include the following specific criteria that are especially pertinent to assessing high level instrumental performance. For example:

- Mastery of the instrument, achieving a balance between technical and interpretative skill
- Technical control of the instrument and medium in order to convey the expressive elements, emotional content, power and passion of the music to an audience (e.g., balance and focus of sound production, intonation, dynamics, tautness of rhythm and groove)
- Having something to say and having the technical ability to sustain freedom of expression and a creative response to the music
- Accepting personal responsibility for one's artistic position

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it is clear that these specific criteria make sense in certain performance contexts rather than in others.

On the other hand, in non-formal participatory learning settings, in addition to the generic criteria, different specific criteria need to be adhered to when judging quality music making. Also, any framework for making judgements has to make a distinction between the work of the participants and that of the music leaders. For the purpose of illustration, the following frame of reference applies to judging quality in the area of collaborative creative workshop practice.

Participants

- Demonstrating a practical understanding of the knowledge and skills entailed in being a resourceful musician through improvising, composing and performing
- Communicating the 'feel' of the music by demonstrating an understanding of how its structures and layers work through the direct experience of making the piece
- Presenting a strong convincing performance that conveys an engagement in the music due to an aural, physical and emotional understanding of the creative process
- Displaying a sense of individual and collective ownership in which the voices of the participants are heard and acknowledged

Music leaders

- The effectiveness of the leader in managing and understanding the variables arising from the profile of the participants (e.g., age, numbers, experience, range of instruments, materials generated) and from the social and cultural context
- The effectiveness of the leader in planning, structuring and providing the artistic leadership in all the interconnected elements of a creative workshop – i.e., warm-ups, interpretation, instrumental skills, composition, arranging, improvisation, performance, listening, evaluation
- The effectiveness of the leader in having a broad, informed social, cultural and musical perspective and in being able to speak a number of musical 'languages' simultaneously
- The effectiveness of the leader in being able to perform the diverse roles of composer, arranger, facilitator, improviser, performer, conductor, teacher and catalyst

- The effectiveness of the leader in being able to demonstrate the generic and artistic leadership skills referred to previously

Again, this frame of reference is not exhaustive. What the analysis indicates is that if all these generic and specific criteria are adhered to, high quality creative workshop practice is a complex artistic activity that can hardly be accused of 'dumbing down' traditional views of musical excellence. It is just qualitatively different. Basically, 'like has to be compared with like' (Renshaw, 2007, pp.38-40).

1.5

The interconnection between creativity, innovation and risk-taking

The synergy between creativity, innovation and risk-taking lies at the core of this new paradigm and in many ways it serves as a motor for future change and development. It is also the backbone of a learning environment that nurtures different forms of collaboration as a response to the challenges raised in this paper regarding isolation and dislocation in society. As indicated at the end of chapter one, organisations responsible for the training of arts practitioners have to create a cultural milieu in which taking risks, seeing new possibilities, seizing opportunities and challenging established boundaries are seen as central to the learning process. This philosophy should underpin every aspect of practice in a conservatoire or higher arts education organisation – from leadership to learning, teaching, creating, devising and performing.

Whether it is in the performing arts or the visual arts and digital technology, creative innovative practice can only flourish in an enabling environment that encourages collaboration and risk-taking. In a recent book examining collaborative learning in higher music education, Helena Gaunt and Heidi Westerlund (2013) identify four key elements that are fundamental to learning and development across the arts:

- Collaborative learning is central to transforming the master–apprentice transmission model of teaching, and to re-examining ways of learning in music education (*and in arts education in general*) so that they reflect more closely the fundamentally collaborative nature of the art form itself
- Collaborative learning is critical to developing, deepening and transforming shared expertise and understanding
- Collaborative learning is a powerful means of liberating creativity, bridging social and cultural divides, and meeting the challenges of the 21st century in the arts, education and in the wider society
- Collaborative learning is a fundamental skill for contemporary practitioners in the arts. (p.237)

In terms of this provocation paper, the success of each case study discussed in chapter two is partly dependent on the ability of the participants to make connections and to engage in collaborative learning within whichever context they are working. This is fundamental to the culture of each organisation or ensemble of artists. I believe that:

Within an organisation a culture that respects 'conversation' and shared critical reflection is likely to encourage the process of making inter-connections, of cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices, of exploring collaborative ways of learning in order to promote creativity and innovation. This is not achieved in isolation, in a silo of convention and predictability, but by people choosing to work together, celebrating how their different talents, perspectives and insights can create something that transforms their practice and ways of seeing the world. It is through interaction, with its unique chemistry, that creative ideas and leaps of imagination begin to fly. Creative challenges emerge from the group responding to the unexpected. Nothing will ever seem quite the same again. New knowledge is 'co-

constructed' through dialogue, risk-taking and the shared exploration of ideas and meaning within the group. This is the nub of collaborative learning, with 'conversation' being the engine driving the creative collaborative process....

[It is also important] to acknowledge the complex emotional dynamics of collaboration. If creative conversation is to flow, this process necessarily has to draw on both cognitive and affective support from within the group – and ideally from across the whole organisation. The emotional connectedness that helps to bind a group together can be characterised by a sense of shared motivation, shared purpose, solidarity based on shared values and a reassurance knowing that feelings of fear, vulnerability, self-doubt and marginality can also be shared (John-Steiner, 2006, p.124). There is little doubt that collaborative learning best flows and thrives in an environment that is emotionally supportive and understands what makes collaborative processes work. The synergy and connectedness arising from a supportive context, one which is sensitive to the place of physical and psychological space, can help to unlock the creative capacity of a group as well as impacting on the development of an organisation. (Renshaw, 2013, pp.238-9)

One example of a conservatoire creating a learning environment that enables connections to be made and collaborative learning to take place is the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (2013a). At the forefront of its Teaching and Learning Strategy for 2013–17 is a commitment to building up a reflective learning environment that is responsive to the challenges of the outside world and fosters a positive attitude towards creativity, innovation and risk-taking. Its vision for its graduates is for them to be:

masters of their craft, alive both to inner voice and outside world, confident in risk-taking, driven by shared passion to enhance our understanding of what it is to be human. (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013a, p.1)

In addition, the learning environment of the School is underpinned by the following principles:

- Setting clear standards and seeking to raise expectations of what can be achieved artistically and professionally;
- Valuing intrinsic motivation and deep learning over extrinsic motivation and surface approaches to learning;
- Providing regular and timely high quality feedback (between peers and between students and staff) that informs further development;
- Providing opportunities to engage across departments and divisions, to create new contexts for work, to learn from and with peers, and to develop entrepreneurship;
- Stimulating curiosity, creativity and a research attitude; providing a safe space with opportunities to experiment and learn from mistakes;
- Opening doors to a variety of professional pathways; encouraging students to seize relevant opportunities and develop sustainable careers;
- Fostering self-awareness and the ability to reflect; fostering energy, well-being and resilience including a balance between individual self-reliance and mature interdependency;
- Championing open-mindedness, emotional engagement, mutual respect and interest in others, and the ability to communicate both on and off the stage. (ibid., p.2)

Synergy between social and artistic goals: the challenge for learning and development in the arts

These principles of learning are gradually being embedded in the culture of the Guildhall School and they have helped to inform the recently formulated assessment criteria in Music, Acting and Technical Theatre Arts (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013b). As an example, the School-wide undergraduate assessment criteria are as follows:

Technique and knowledge

- Command of craft
- Embodiment of learning
- Accuracy of skills
- Breadth and depth of understanding and reference points

Performance and/or creative output

- Imagination and insight
- Response to context
- Expression with range and artistic instinct
- Choice of material or repertoire

Communication and artistic values

- Commitment to artistic exploration through technical, intellectual, creative and emotional processes
- Connection with presence to audience
- Resilience and courage to take risks, improvise and problem solve
- Openness and empathy in working with others

Professional protocols

- Preparation
- Punctuality, attendance and personal organisation
- Attention to communication styles including performance and rehearsal etiquette, and academic conventions
- Ethics in respect of equality and rights (Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2013b, p.2)

What stands out in this discussion is the measure of coherence between the principles of learning and assessment criteria now adopted by the Guildhall School and the philosophy of socially engaged creative practice being articulated in this paper. Coherence and interconnectedness, problem-solving and risk-taking, contextual responsiveness and collaborative learning – all are central to the learning and development of arts practitioners as they strengthen and deepen their creative role in society.

4.6 The interconnection between research, personal, artistic and professional development

As can be seen from the previous section, establishing an appropriately responsive, open and interconnected learning environment is fundamental to the development of any higher arts education organisation. Being in the vanguard of creative and performance practice necessarily presupposes a commitment to fostering programmes of personal, artistic and professional development, underpinned by action and artistic research. Over the last decade serious steps have been taken to extend and deepen a culture of critical reflection in many conservatoires, colleges and training organisations, but it is not surprising that at times the pressure of immediate pragmatic demands prevents some staff and students from developing their practice in a more reflective way. This can result in a certain intransigence regarding exploring new territory and new directions, both artistically and professionally, but especially in those areas concerned with addressing wider diverse social, educational and cultural needs. In the current political and economic climate though, a college would have to be blind not to take its social responsibility seriously.

I would now like to return to the fundamental question raised in section 4.1 – a question that invites us to search for a new paradigm of learning and development in the arts:

In what ways can arts practitioners respond to the creative and social challenges arising from a cultural landscape in constant flux, and from educational, health and criminal justice systems undermined by constantly changing demands within a precarious funding climate?

In many ways this is not a new question. Arts organisations, arts councils, funding bodies, researchers, educational and community leaders have been addressing the issues arising from this question for at least 30 years. But in the current climate of accountability and uncertainty it has a sharper edge to it, especially as the quality of work is increasingly under critical scrutiny.

The onus is now on those organisations responsible for the training of arts practitioners for socially engaged creative practice to re-examine the nature and quality of their respective learning and development programmes. As the contexts in which people work become more challenging and unpredictable, it is necessary to revisit the changing needs of practitioners. What would enable them to raise the quality of their practice? What further insights, knowledge and skills are necessary in order to make a qualitative difference? Each organisation will have its own views on what is needed and where priorities should lie. My own perspective draws partly on research conducted for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation on the Guildhall Connect creative ensembles (see Renshaw, 2005, pp.11–15; Renshaw, 2010, pp.66–80; Smilde, 2009, Chapter 4). But for this paper I present an embryonic framework arising from observations made by the people interviewed for this research. It pays specific attention to the qualities, skills and attitudes perceived as central to effective creative practice in participatory settings.

Artistic qualities

- A high level of craft and artistic skill: creating and performing with confidence to a high standard so that it communicates to audiences in diverse settings and is a source of inspiration to participants
- Artistic integrity and awareness of intrinsic artistic standards
- A passion for one's art and for communicating this to people in a wide range of contexts

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- A commitment to one's specialism but also having an openness and generosity towards a broad artistic palette (e.g., in music, having a respect for all genres)

Interpersonal skills

- Having the ability to connect to the context in which one is working: knowing where the participants are coming from
- High level interpersonal skills: warmth, empathy, openness, spontaneity, flexibility, respecting, trusting, caring, listening to people's voices, absorbing different perspectives and understanding other people's worlds
- Having a sense of presence: being connected and at one with what is happening – this feeling can be caught by participants
- Having a strong inner confidence and sense of security enabling one to be interactive and collaborative in challenging circumstances
- Having a mature self-awareness but not self-absorbed. Artists have to be 'together' in themselves in order to communicate to others
- Being hyper-aware of what is going on in a space at any given time: noticing and responding to cues, valuing and celebrating other people's contributions
- Having finely honed relationship-building skills as a way of getting people to work together

Creative skills

- Having strong creative skills (e.g., in improvising, composing, arranging, writing, devising, designing, making and building sets)
- Creative responsiveness: openness, flexibility and spontaneity within the creative process; seeing and adapting to the ways different participants are learning at any one time; responding creatively to their ideas
- Having the skill to get young musicians, actors and dancers to improvise and create a piece that can be critically engaged with by the group. This participatory, creative process enables each person to connect to their own emotional voice and artistic identity
- Having the ability to produce cutting-edge work that resonates with the participants
- Having the ability to set individual goals for participants and to support work that allows them to progress and achieve their goals
- Having an informed awareness of quality but being non-judgemental in one's approach to people and their work
- Having the confidence and experience to trust one's judgement and responses to the flow of ideas and information within a workshop context

Communication skills

- Building up a sense of intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy in young people: helping them to understand and master their own abilities; validating their creative output and supporting them to develop their skills and raise their expectations
- Developing the self-esteem, self-confidence and positive self-image of all participants in which each person recognises the value of what they are able to do and gains the self-respect of being accepted and acknowledged by the group
- Being able to draw on a range of leadership styles: e.g., directive, non-directive, facilitatory, shared leadership
- As a leader and an inspirer the arts practitioner has to be able to be centre stage, yet knowing their main responsibility is to facilitate others in their making, creating, devising and performing
- Maintaining a subtle balance between offering their talent and skill, but in a way that it is there for the participants to take but not to have forced on them
- Having the confidence, understanding and skill to take risks in challenging environments
- Always remaining open and receptive to new ideas and experiences, recognising that you don't have to know everything and that you are always continuing to learn

Attitudes

- Key attitudes include: openness, respect, integrity, generosity of spirit, personal responsibility, authenticity and high aspirations
- Understanding and respecting the broad social and cultural background of all participants, especially of young people
- Valuing the voices and perspectives of all participants
- Having the confidence and skill to reflect on one's practice. Being able to shift from what, how, when and where questions to more reflective 'why' questions
- Understanding the pivotal place of reflection in the creative process. Generating a learning environment in which all practice is underpinned by critical reflection. Participants can catch this reflective attitude from the arts practitioners
- Building reflection into the DNA of all partner organisations

Arts organisations and higher arts education institutions have reached a critical stage in their development as they begin to build up a more reflective culture that is underpinned by research. Although research is fundamental to the life of a university, it is only comparatively recently that colleges in music, drama and dance, for instance, have begun to embed a research attitude into their work. Much of the momentum for this has come from major research organisations and funding bodies with an interest in supporting and enquiring into the nature, scope and quality of arts practice.

The following organisations, for example, are active in supporting and engaging in practice-based research in the arts. Increasingly this is of a collaborative nature which is breaking new ground and creating new forms of arts practice.

National funding bodies and research organisations

- Arts Council England
- Arts and Humanities Research Council
- Centre for Music Performance as Creative Practice
- Creative and Cultural Skills Council
- Creativeworks London
- Cultural Learning Alliance
- National Foundation for Educational Research
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation – ArtWorks
- Society for Education, Music & Psychology Research
- The Culture Capital Exchange
- Youth Music

London-based higher arts education institutions

- Centre for Creative Collaboration, University of London
- City University
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- Guildhall School of Music & Drama
- Institute of Education, University of London
- King's College, University of London
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Royal Academy of Music
- Royal Central School of Speech & Drama
- Royal College of Art
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance
- University of the Arts

Despite a proliferation of research activity, it understandably takes time for a research culture to take root in those institutions with little history in this area. Nevertheless, the 3rd International Reflective Conservatoire Conference, *Performing at the Heart of Knowledge*, hosted by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in March 2012, demonstrates the shift in attitude towards research in the conservatoire sector. A rapidly growing international community of research practice is strengthening all the time and this must bode well for individual institutions and for the profession as a whole.

Being – In Tune

As arts practice is increasingly informed by different forms of research, this adds an important dimension to the work of conservatoires and colleges of higher arts education. The challenge now is gradually to embed research into each institution so that it begins to inform the work of those artists responsible for teaching their craft. In the context of this paper, research should play a major role in furthering knowledge and understanding in the five interconnected elements of the proposed new paradigm for learning and development in socially engaged creative practice: the interconnections between the social and the artistic; between access and quality; between context and excellence; between creativity, innovation and risk-taking; and between personal, artistic and professional development.

Research in these key areas will have greatest resonance if it is operating in a culture of critical reflection. In a sense, research and reflection go hand in hand, but as we have seen earlier in this paper, reflection is challenging and many people are fearful of changing their practice and moving into the unknown. This can have major implications for the personal and professional development of teachers in conservatoires and colleges. In the hurly-burly of the workplace, with its pressing demands and uncertainties, it is only too easy to avoid reflecting on one's practice. Yet in the spirit of this paper, all teachers should be given the space and time for building up a sense of connectedness – a sense of 'being in tune' with themselves and others. This is the bedrock of reflection and is as important for artists as it is for the people they may be engaging with in the wider community.