Foreword

Paul Harris believes that teaching music should always be a joy. This book brilliantly communicates the remarkable energy and enthusiasm that has made him one of the great reflective practitioners of our time. Within these pages his fascination with the teaching process proves to be truly inspirational. Paul proposes a style of teaching – 'Simultaneous Learning' – that allows both tutor and pupil to embark on what he describes as 'an invigorating, untroubled, absorbing and stimulating journey'. Teachers are invited to find the courage to ask self-searching questions, to look for new ideas, to adapt and change and to take a real pride in their work. In turn, pupils will gain a new understanding of every aspect of what they are doing. The music lesson becomes a voyage of discovery, where a pupil's spirits are raised and confidence increases; thus the teaching and learning experience will always be positive and effective.

Paul encourages problem solving from as many different angles as possible, taking into account the preferences of different types of learning styles. The breadth of this holistic approach has the potential for rich rewards, as pupils begin to think musically for themselves. Operating an instrument counts for little without musical expression, creativity or imagination. During the course of his exceptionally sympathetic text, Paul emphasises the importance of creating confidence – an empowering self-belief that develops slowly but surely and results in poise, humility and self-assurance.

It was during the generation before Mozart that the great German flautist J. J. Quantz wrote that many musicians of his acquaintance had agile fingers but were reluctant to use their brains. Such sentiments have resonated ever since within the senior common rooms of schools, conservatoires and universities. This book contains an exciting and convincing agenda for redressing the balance. It will surely revolutionise the teaching of music at all levels.

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2 Simultaneous Learning

The first principle

Find a blank sheet of paper and make a list of all the various aspects that *ought* to be included in your lessons. Here's one to get you going: 'teaching pieces or songs'. Playing or singing pieces is what the majority of our pupils enjoying doing most and on the whole they are what we most enjoy teaching!

Don't read on until you've made your list – it will only take you a couple of minutes!

Here is my list based on discussions with teachers at seminars around the world. How many of the following are in your list? Can you think of any more?

- Teacher talking and pupil/s talking
- Teaching pieces/songs; ensemble work
- Aural work, listening, clapping, singing, internalising
- Theory
- Posture, warm-ups (and downs!) and technical work
- Scales and arpeggios
- Rhythm
- Notation work
- Sight-reading
- Improvisation
- Composition
- Teaching pupils how to practise effectively
- Teaching pupils to evaluate their work
- Having fun!

That's all very well (you'll be thinking) but how can I manage more than a few of those in a ten/twenty/thirty minute lesson? There is a way but first here's another question for you:

What did you have to eat the evening of the night before last?

Don't read on until you've remembered!

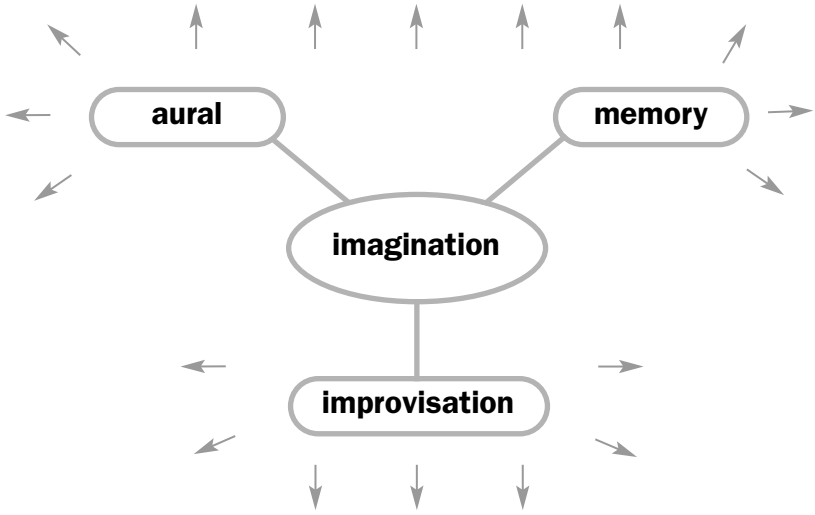
To have arrived at your answer you probably steered yourself through the following (or similar) thoughts: 'what day is it today? … so yesterday was … so we're talking about … now, what was I doing on …' and so on.

The advantages of bringing improvisation into your daily work are many: it is yet another activity that further develops the ear; it develops musical awareness (through playing around with ingredients); it develops creative thinking and sensitivity; it develops the part of the brain which solves problems; it develops thinking speed (very important for all musicians); it develops confidence; and it helps to reduce reliance on notation. Pupils won't simply freeze if there are no notes to hide behind.

Improvisation also has an important effect on conventional performance. The greatest performances have a certain improvisatory feel about them, as though the performer is playing the piece for the first time – there is a sense of spontaneity. Pupils who are brought up with improvisation in their diet will naturally bring a more creative approach to their playing.

Doing it the 'right' way

These three enormously important right-brain activities (aural, memory and improvisation) all draw upon and excite the imagination and they form a *permanent source from which all our teaching should flow*.



This constant right-brain work, together with continually making connections, will begin to cause our pupils to *think musically*. I don't mean thinking *about* music – thinking about the piece or the composer and so on – I mean thinking like we do, thinking like a musician; intuitively beginning to understand how it all fits together. It's very exciting when it begins to happen – you'll be able to detect it perhaps by a pupil suddenly showing concern for tone quality, or playing a phrase particularly artistically, with a shape you didn't suggest, or simply by making a musical comment or observation.

Extending choice

Think back to your own early teachers. Were you their star pupil? Probably. You were musically bright, making those connections, firing on both sides of the brain. To what extent do you copy your own teachers now as a teacher yourself?