

Celebrating Instrumental Music: Fine Tuning Excellence

14 November 2018, Sheraton Grand Hotel, Edinburgh

Conference report

The joint Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) and Heads of Instrumental Teaching in Scotland (HITS) Instrumental Music Conference held at the Sheraton Grand Hotel on Wednesday 14th November was an opportunity to:

- **celebrate** the high standard and immense worth of instrumental music provision in schools across Scotland
- **explore** the key current issues of excellence and equity as they apply to Instrumental Music (IM) provision in schools
- **bring together** IM teachers who often work in isolation and have few professional learning and networking opportunities, to exchange ideas, share experiences and offer mutual support
- **hear** some of the talented young people who are being taught within the Edinburgh IM service performing; and
- **launch** the new EIS Charter for IM, 'Change the Tune'.

With the support of leading sponsor ABRSM, additional sponsor Trinity Music, and a number of exhibitors with different interests in music education, the EIS and HITS jointly organised this event. The conference brought together 238 delegates from across Scotland for this important event, at a time when the current postcode lottery for Instrumental Music provision is under more scrutiny than ever, and when concerns about cuts are mounting.

Welcome and opening remarks

The Conference was opened by EIS President, Alison Thornton, who as Conference co-chair, delivered a warm welcome to delegates. Jane Ferguson, HITS Executive Committee, was the second Co-Chair, and also welcomed delegates. The day's proceedings were ably guided by Alison and Jane.

Address by Larry Flanagan, EIS General Secretary,

EIS General Secretary, Larry Flanagan, made the first keynote address, focusing in large part on the contribution of IMTs to the life of a school and their role in nurturing and developing young people's talents.

Larry spoke of the EIS AGM always having young people playing music, as a means of showcasing their talents and celebrating their endeavours, and the performances that are often seen at educational events such as the SQA Star Awards, school concerts etc. He reflected on how this creativity materialises, and concluded that IMTs play a pivotal role.

Larry underlined the importance of maintaining this, and that the notion of Instrumental Music as 'extra-curricular' has to be challenged, as outlined by the EIS in its submission to the Education and Skills Committee Inquiry.

Turning to the matter of cuts, the General Secretary stressed that the constant 'salami slicing' approach, making incremental cuts yearly, and increasing charges was creating a growing gap between children with access to music and children without, and a 'who pays, plays' culture. He referenced pupils self-selecting out of activities they can't afford; and the need for equity to be considered.

Referring to the new EIS Charter for Instrumental Music, 'Change the Tune', Larry noted that this was being launched today, which was particularly timely, and that it makes a clear call for IM to be free and available to all pupils as part of their education, which is a big demand but not exorbitant or exaggerated, and could be delivered via ring-fenced budgets.

Larry argued that the Scottish Government must intervene, and that if we believe in creativity being at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence, we need to fight for government locally and nationally to change the tune and invest in instrumental music.

Concluding his address, Larry reiterated that the EIS will continue to campaign to raise the status of IMTs, and raise the status of teachers and teaching (citing the 'Value Education Value Teachers' pay campaign), and wished delegates an excellent day, commending the new Charter to them.

Address by Fiona Gray, IMT

Fiona Gray, a Woodwind Instructor from Midlothian Council IMS, spoke about Excellence in Music Education and said she was pleased to do so "because it is something that I witness on a daily basis."

She referenced her own Instrumental Music Service's delivery of its annual Festival of Music at the Usher Hall in Edinburgh – a monumental feat of organisation and hard work for Music teachers, IMTs, pupils and all involved – which came on the same day that the service learned that it was going to be cut, with a potential loss of 3 full time equivalent staff.

Fiona conveyed that morale was at rock bottom but when nearly 400 excited pupils arrived on a fleet of buses, the atmosphere changed palpably. She said, "we caught the excitement and went on to do what we always do – a fantastic job with world class professionalism and dedication."

She gave some examples of excellence, including her team having among its number an internationally renowned clarsach player who writes and/or arranges all the pieces that her ensemble play at the Festival; a renowned composers and arranger of brass/concert bands in Scotland who arranged (and conducted) the Finale item; and a virtuoso pianist who wrote, and performed on the day, a piece for piano and our regional orchestra.

Fiona also spoke of the ex-pupil volunteers who helped in multifarious ways at that event, and of the many pupils who have gone on to forge highly successful careers in the Music Industry. Fiona remarked, "I know that every region in Scotland can cite a similar list- which all adds up to a formidable catalogue of talent bringing in millions of pounds to the Scottish economy."

However, she added, "the measure of Excellence in Musical Education isn't just about how many famous musicians we produce or how much money that makes for the country; it is so much more about the phenomenal standard of day to day music teaching which gives Scottish children of all standards and levels of dedication a discipline, an activity, a hobby, a passion which brings them so many benefits - confidence, social interaction, great physical and mental exercise and so many more lifelong and life enhancing skills which not only enrich their own lives but the lives and cultural experiences of their families, their communities and our country."

Fiona finished with a plea for this excellence to be sustained by investment and support.

Address by Ronan Watson, IMT

Ronan Watson, an Upper Strings Instructor from North Ayrshire IMS, spoke about equity in IM provision, saying that never before has there been such a postcode lottery, and so many children missing out, which is incompatible with the Scottish Government championing equity.

He said "more want to learn, and there are more we want to teach" but spoke of the huge number of drop-outs when charges are introduced and the facts that decades of hard work are then devastated. Ronan urged that we cannot tolerate a 'who pays, plays' hierarchy of access to music education.

Ronan concluded by speaking of the "vital role played by IMTs in changing young people's lives."

Address by Paul Harris, Educator and ABRSM Examiner

Paul Harris gave a presentation on effective teaching, noting that we live in difficult times but that it's worthwhile to spend some time thinking about what we do, and noting the trajectory from teaching to learning to knowing. He described a lesson as a voyage of discovery, and discussed the shared ownership of learning between pupil and teacher.

The slides from Paul's talk are available on the EIS website:

<https://www.eis.org.uk/Change-The-Tune/FineTuningExcellence>

Address by Rachel Drury, RCS

Rachel Drury spoke to delegates about the power of music, challenging IMTs to think about the impact they have beyond getting young people through National Qualifications, or the thorny question of how we measure success in the arts. She shared evidence that music has the power to change lives, influence children's brain development, help them find a positive sense of self, help them find a sense of belonging and develop a wide range of skills.

The slides from Rachel's talk are available on the EIS website:

<https://www.eis.org.uk/Change-The-Tune/FineTuningExcellence>

Musical performances

Delegates were privileged to hear performances from two excellent ensembles which operate under the auspices of the Edinburgh City Council Instrumental Music service and whose young people currently have access to free music tuition in school.

Both Currie Community High School String Ensemble and the Edinburgh Schools' Rock Band gave tremendous performances, which underscored the value and worth of music education, and acted as important reminders of what can be achieved when music education receives the investment it deserves.

Panel session

Coincidentally, the conference took place on the same day as a Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee evidence session as part of a Music Tuition Inquiry instigated by the Committee, and some of those who had attended the evidence session were able to share reflections from that discussion during the panel session.

Panellists were, Kirk Richardson, Convener of the IMT Network; Kenny Christie, Chair of HITS; and Mae Murray, Scottish Association of Music Educators.

Questions and discussions on a wide range of matters, including teacher and pupil mental health, the role of YMI, creativity in education and the political blame game followed brief statements from each of the panellists.

Workshops

Over the course of the day delegates attended two workshops each, covering a range of topics, some delivered by partner organisations, some by EIS members. EIS staff and IMT Network members were on hand to capture the key elements of each workshop discussion. The workshop themes aimed to reflect the issues of excellence and equity, offering valuable CPD for attendees and a chance to consider issues of access, attainment, enhancing practice, and teacher wellbeing. Notes on the workshops are in the annex.

Closing remarks and thanks

The final words of the conference were delivered by Kenny Christie, Chair of the HIT Executive, who thanked all those who had contributed to the preparations, who had spoken or delivered workshops on the day and ensured the smooth running of the conference, and delegates who had given up their time to attend and participate, before bringing the event to a close.

Evaluation

Delegates had the opportunity to provide feedback via a paper form distributed on the day and/or via a SurveyMonkey link circulated shortly after the conference. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive.

- When asked if, overall, the conference was worthwhile, **87% said Yes, very; 13% said Yes, a bit**. No one said it was not useful.
- Delegates rated the keynote speech from Paul Harris as mostly **Excellent (83%)** or Good (15%), with only 2% of delegates describing it as OK.
- Feedback on Rachel Drury's presentation was that it was also considered by the majority as **Excellent (78%)**, with 18% rating it as Good, and 4% rating it as OK.
- Workshops were mostly rated as Excellent or Good, with particularly positive feedback on the workshops on Improving and Widening Access; Rock and Pop; and Group Teaching Pedagogy, which were rated Excellent by 47%, 67% and 86% of respondents, respectively.
- Delegates' comments commonly noted the value of IMTs assembling to share experience, and feedback in the survey indicated that the opportunity for networking was considered useful, with **69% of delegates finding it very useful**, 24% finding it a bit useful, and only 2% finding it not very useful.
- The venue and catering were also well rated, coming out as Excellent, with 87% rating the venue thus and 79% saying the catering was Excellent.

There is a large body of comments which can be banked and analysed to inform the planning of future events. Whilst there are some small adjustments that could be made in future, and there were some minor criticisms, the general feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with typical remarks being:

- *"It really helped me to be more positive about my job. Thank you so much for putting it on"*
- *"Thanks for this fantastic opportunity to realise the whole country believed in music education"*
- *"Quite valuable to see instrumental teaching from the national perspective. We are a formidable number!"*
- *Thank you so much for an inspirational, well planned and all round excellent conference"*

Delegates were asked what they would do next or differently as a result of attending, as a means of discerning impact, and comments included:

- *"I have loads of different ideas to try out in my lessons"*
- *"Some ideas to incorporate into my daily teaching to improve student learning"*
- *"I will be more proactive in contacting elected members of my local council/MSP/MP when consultations are taking place regarding future budget decisions"*
- *"I will remember what I enjoy about my job"*
- *"I will feed back to colleagues"*
- *Feel uplifted, and fresher in my approach, which will be beneficial to all my pupils."*

Improving and Widening Access within Instrumental Music Teaching

Karen Hamilton, Phil MacGregor and Duncan Maynes, all Senior Instructors with Dundee City Council IMS, delivered this workshop on widening access.

Mike Higgins, a member of the IMT Network, captured the key messages and reported that:

- the IMS is administered by Dundee City Council and has 22 FTE posts
- the IMS covers 34 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 1 special school
- 3,769 pupils reached (20.76% of the total) compared with a national average of 10%
- Dundee has many deprived areas
- Since 2013, all fees gone, except hire of instrument at £85 p.a.
- Dundee IMS is keen to widen access as much as possible
- Example - at band and orchestra practices at Music Centre, it turned out that some families from deprived areas were being put off by the bus fares, so the Music Service spoke to the bus company who were more than happy to help and offered free bus passes to practices.
- Dundee IMS is keen to reach pupils with ASN.
- Example - 'Aaron' from Harris Academy, visually impaired. Work undertaken with computer technology so that one stave of moving music displayed on large screen for Aaron to read, both for individual practice and in bands. Plays flute, saxophone, bagpipes. Able to attend residential courses. When asked 'What does playing an instrument mean to you?', he replied 'Life-changing.'
- In 2013 'Aspire Dundee' programme launched, involving dance, drama and music:
 - In P1&P2, African drumming and singing
 - In P3, recorder
 - In P4, pbuzz (plastic trombone)
 - In P5, wind band with clarinet, saxophone and trombone; reading of 'Figurenotes' music notation
 - In P7, more options for developing musical/instrumental education.
- Additional projects funded through PEF:
 - Pipes, chanters and drumming
 - Whole class orchestras and Class bands (best if class teacher also involved)
- IMS offers performance opportunities for large numbers of children, often from deprived areas, e.g. IMS Live concert in Caird Hall, October 2018, 2000 pupils.
- Statistics show improvements in reading and numeracy skills for those involved in the scheme/projects.
- Something which came across very strongly in this workshop was the commitment, hard work and enthusiasm of the IMS staff involved.

Measuring Impact, Outcomes and Attainment

John Harris, of the EIS Education and Equality department, captured the essence of this workshop. The facilitators were Pam Black, Education Support Officer, IM Service, Glasgow City Council and Emma Pantel, Upper Strings Music Instructor, Glasgow City Council. They shared that Glasgow CREATE was established in January 2016 by Glasgow Education Services to raise attainment and achievement across the curriculum through thinking differently. It is committed to Creativity and Expressive Arts Transforming Education (CREATE) in all sectors and schools across the City.

Pam outlined where IMTs fit in to the objectives of CREATE:

1. Raising attainment in literacy and numeracy through targeted support and interventions in primary schools.
2. Improving children's health and wellbeing through nurturing approaches and increased participation in physical activity and sport.
3. Supporting families to be better able to support their child's learning and development.
4. Enhancing the leadership of senior staff.
5. Raising attainment in secondary schools through providing additional supported study and mentoring and taking a closer look at learning and teaching.

An overview of the Glasgow Instrumental Music Service was outlined. It has 56 FTE staff, and reaches 5,500 young people per week across 30 Secondary Schools and 130 Primary Schools.

The workshop explored how Glasgow's IMS is measuring if impact and outcomes are related to attainment through Glasgow's Improvement Challenge, focusing on several new music initiatives across the city including a Nursery Evaluation Project, Baby Strings4East and Whole Class Musicianship.

The benefits of music and phonological awareness were then discussed, with research showing that there is compelling evidence for the benefits of music education for developing a wide range of skills including: listening skills which support the development of language skills, awareness of phonics and enhanced literacy.

The Glasgow Nursery Evaluation Project (in partnership with Psychological Services and the University of the West of Scotland) was then discussed, with its aim being to measure the impact of music skills on phonological awareness in the pre-school year, consisting of weekly group music sessions comprised of 350 pre-school children across 6 establishments.

The musical skills developed included:

- Keeping a beat
- Clapping a rhythm
- Singing at pitch

- Responding to tempo & dynamics
- Identifying timbre of instruments
- Playing percussion instruments
- Listening and responding.

Observations and feedback on the project were then shared, with the impact on children being:

- Development of fundamental musical skills
- Increased participation and engagement
- Improved listening skills, concentration and turn-taking
- Development of speech and vocabulary.

Teacher observation:

"High level of engagement, listening to instructions, turn taking, actively listening to the new language. Children at early stages of acquiring English listened actively and began repeating familiar words/phrases as the weeks progressed."

Impact on staff:

"Before, I didn't have any musical training and now I have a good understanding of beat, rhythm, syllabification and how to teach these skills through music."

"I feel much more confident about delivering effective singing sessions and how to create balance within a session. Simple tips such as using a chime bar to help with pitch were very useful."

The Workshop then focused on the need for assessment and was opened up to the attendees to discuss, why the need for assessment?

- Gives children a good structure for improvement
- Proves a child is learning
- Children can assess their own progress
- Holds IMTs accountable.

The workshop then touched upon the Baby Strings4East project –

- Project funded through Pupil Equity Fund to close the poverty gap & raise attainment, with the Eastbank Learning Community
- All Primary Schools – whole school approach
- P1-4 Violin, Viola, Cello
- P4-6 Ukulele/Strings
- P7 Samba/Ukulele/Strings

The project allows children to take their instruments home and care for them over the summer, which teaches them an aspect of responsibility. The project puts on performances, where children perform their own compositions. Those in attendance praised the project extremely highly and agreed it was a fantastic offering yet highlighted the unlikelihood of anything like that being put in to place in their own local authority. There was consensus that HTs need to be on board for any project like this to succeed.

Using Technology to Enhance IM provision

EIS Organiser Dee Matthew summarised the workshop, which was delivered by Keith Jenner, a member of the IMT Network, and a Bass and Guitar Instructor with Falkirk Council Education Services.

- This workshop looked at editing backing tracks and gave a rundown of some free available software and apps, for times when e.g. you have a student submitting a song for an exam but need to edit it down for SQA purposes
- There is a website named 'Karaoke Version' which has good quality versions of original songs for £1.99 per track
- If you require to edit the size and length of any track 'Audacity' is the programme – it is a free audio editing software for MP3 tracks only – not M4As
- Most tracks can be converted and saved as MP3s for using on Audacity (Keith then showed the group an application called 'Format Factory' which converts files to MP3)
- Keith then moved to 'Audacity' and showed on screen how the various functions work, e.g. how to import a track, isolate a guitar solo after a musical interlude to cut down the length of the song, select/save/share, fade out the end etc.
- 'Lame Encoder' software converts MP3s free – or export it back to 'Format Factory' to convert track back to MP3
- Statement from participant: *"Only IT within the school can download software onto computers so I would have to ask permission for them to put any new software on school computers"*
- Keith explained that using 'Microsoft Teams' (Office 365) is a good asset as this allows you to share/store large files of music/PDFs etc; there are also compatible apps that allow you to access files straight from 'Teams'
- You can set up an individual 'Teams' for pupils which can be monitored through 'Glow' and this allows them to communicate with you when you are not physically in their school
- To slow tempo you can take a track which you have stored in 'Teams' and move it to a phone/ tablet ap called 'Slow Mo'
- 'Any Tune App' also allows you to take files from teams and slow/sped tempo which is good for students in slowing the track down for the purposes of learning the song at home (the guitar part for example)
- These app's are good teaching aids for licks etc. You can slow down the speed until you learn the part and then speed it up again.
- 'Lexus Audio editor app' is free
- Trinity College have just released an editor app
- Most of these apps are free for basic functions, however, once you want to do something more complex it starts to cost money
- There is an app called 'Music Pal' which allows you to take a photo of sheet music and it converts it into sound.
- Keith's notes are available at:
<https://sway.office.com/uUrxVrMItqD5FNpk?ref=Link>

Instructor Wellbeing

John Harris, of the EIS Education and Equality department, was present to capture the key messages from this workshop. The facilitators were Fiona Gray, Midlothian Council IMS and Ronan Watson, North Ayrshire Council IMS.

The workshop began with welcoming remarks from Ronan Watson, a viola instructor from North Ayrshire Council and the current Vice-Convener of the EIS IMT Network. He stated that by no means did he claim to be an expert on the topic of health and wellbeing, but he hoped to share various examples of technology currently available to IMTs which he believes can alleviate the stresses that come with the job. The first half of the workshop focused more on the technology available to IMT's and how to better understand their working terms and conditions, with the second half being led by Fiona Gray, taking those present through some relaxation techniques and exercises.

Ronan shared some general statistics relating to stress-related illness, highlighting that in 2017/18, 26.8 million working days in Great Britain, were lost due to mental health issues, which costs the UK economy £70 billion each year. He then highlighted:

- the value of keeping good records of teaching time
- the importance of colleagues familiarising themselves with their own working-time agreements
- the importance of taking breaks.

Fiona Gray took attendees through a short relaxation technique that involved colleagues sitting down, closing their eyes and focusing on their breathing, similar to meditation. The consensus in the room was that the technique was very useful and helped them to de-stress.

Group Teaching Pedagogy

Elaine Rietveld from the IMT Network was on-hand to gather the key details of this workshop, delivered by Paul Harris, Educator and ABRSM Examiner.

Paul Harris presented the workshop on Group Teaching Pedagogy in an engaging and enthusiastic manner. The presentation aimed to introduce ideas that would ensure the engagement and motivation of all pupils throughout a group lesson (with each group numbering no more than eight). Many of the ideas were taken from methods such as Kodaly, Suzuki and Dalcroze.

The sample lesson was for a group of three violin pupils and was based around Haydn's Minuet in D. The lesson started with no sheet music and involved internalisation, improvisation, teacher and peer modelling and (objective) discussion.

Some ideas for the start of the lesson involved:

- Play a D
- Listen to the sound –deciding together on a good sound
- Internalise the sound
- D major arpeggio

- Posture / bow hold (embouchure)
- Improvisation based on a rhythm from the piece
- Time signature / character of a Minuet / dynamics
- Clap the beat / internalise the beat then a bar
- Pass a motive around the group
- Call and response

At this point reference could be made to the written score.

Paul Harris noted how this model should be adapted for more advanced pupils and for different learning styles (e.g. auditory, visual, kinaesthetic). He also advised being willing to change an activity if it isn't working and starting and ending each lesson with a reference to practice but without involving too much note taking.

The combination of all or some of the above will ensure that the lesson is fun, everyone is involved and motivated, pupils and teacher are using their imagination and are adapting strategies to facilitate learning throughout the lesson. The lesson should not cover too much but should be thorough, have variety and be fun.

Developing the Whole Musician Using Trinity Rock and Pop

Dan Thompson, EIS Organiser, was present to capture the essence of this workshop, delivered by Adam Saunders, Composer, Pianist and Educator with Trinity Music.

Adam looked at how rock and pop musicians learn and how IMTs can take those practices through to their playing and teaching. The group also looked at strategies for learning by ear, improving and composing.

The session focused on a range of activities which can be put together to form a lesson. The tasks that participants took part in were based on a range of activities where pupils were not to write anything down, and not to use any instruments, instead focusing on vocalising the different parts of a song, gradually building up the different part to build up a piece.

Participants in the session were a range of instrumentalists and vocalists. Parts were created through paired and group working

The song started with participants vocalising a drum groove. Over this they vocalised a bass line. Building on what they had so far, they added a melody. After a short discussion on different types of harmony and the harmonic structures usually found in the relevant style of music, a harmony line was added. Over this some improvisation was added, all coming together to create a final piece which was performed by the entire group.