

Preparing beginning music teachers to teach creative composing in the classroom



Listen Imagine Compose
Away Day 7/7/17

 @KellyDNicklin




- Composer
- Teacher of KS3, 4 & 5 music for 10 years (BTEC and IB at KS5)
- Head of Faculty – Performing Arts
- Senior Lecturer in Music Education

Before the PGCE Secondary course begins

Applicants complete a subject knowledge audit prior to interview

Which box do most applicants tick in reference to composing?

PGCE Secondary Music – Initial Subject Audit

Area of Knowledge, Skill or Understanding <i>This list covers major areas required to teach KS3 and 14-19</i>	Level of Knowledge, Skill or Understanding... (tick appropriate column)			
	very little, if any	some but lacking confidence	significant and confident	substantial: an area of expertise
Composing <i>Can compose demonstrating understanding of a range of practices</i>				
Arranging <i>Can arrange demonstrating understanding of a range of practices</i>				
Improvising <i>Can improvise as an approach to composing and performing</i>				
Performing on main instrument <i>(Please identify which instrument)</i>				
Performing on other instruments <i>(please identify and indicate standard of performing for each)</i>				
Vocal skills <i>In relation to those needed to lead class singing effectively</i>				


First week of the course


- Trainees become a beginner again
- They swap instruments and teach each other how to play at least five notes (ideally on a completely unfamiliar instrument).
- Use their new skills to take part in a whole class ensemble – ‘3 Note Blues’ – some improvising involved.
- Composing a piece of music in groups on the same instruments.





First week of the course

[#BCUMusicEd](#) What was it like being a beginner again? What did you learn from the perspective of the teacher and the pupil?

 Great morning of experiencing being a beginner again! Music lessons create feelings of **accomplishment**

 Enjoying being a pupil again and rocking the cello :)

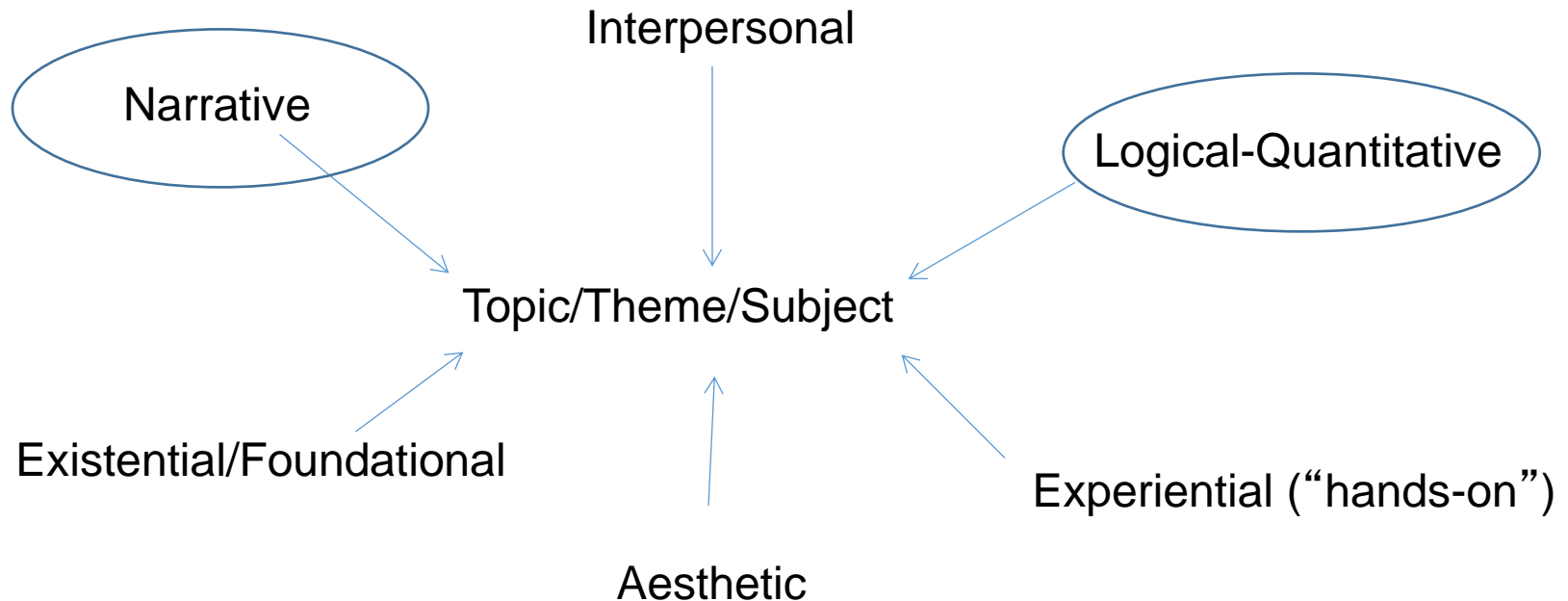
 It was **scary and unfamiliar**, yet incredibly exciting. Learning can be fun.

 Fantastic morning session of improv :) was great that we were all beginners again

Subject Pedagogy Workshops

- ✓ Explore a range of 'starting points' for engaging learners in music making
- ✓ Bigger focus on KS3 earlier in the course through Subject Pedagogy workshops

Howard Gardner (1991): Entry Points Framework:



Kornhaber, M., Fierros, E. & Veenema, S. (2004) *Multiple Intelligences: Best ideas from Research and Practice*. Boston: Pearson



What can you see?

How do you feel?

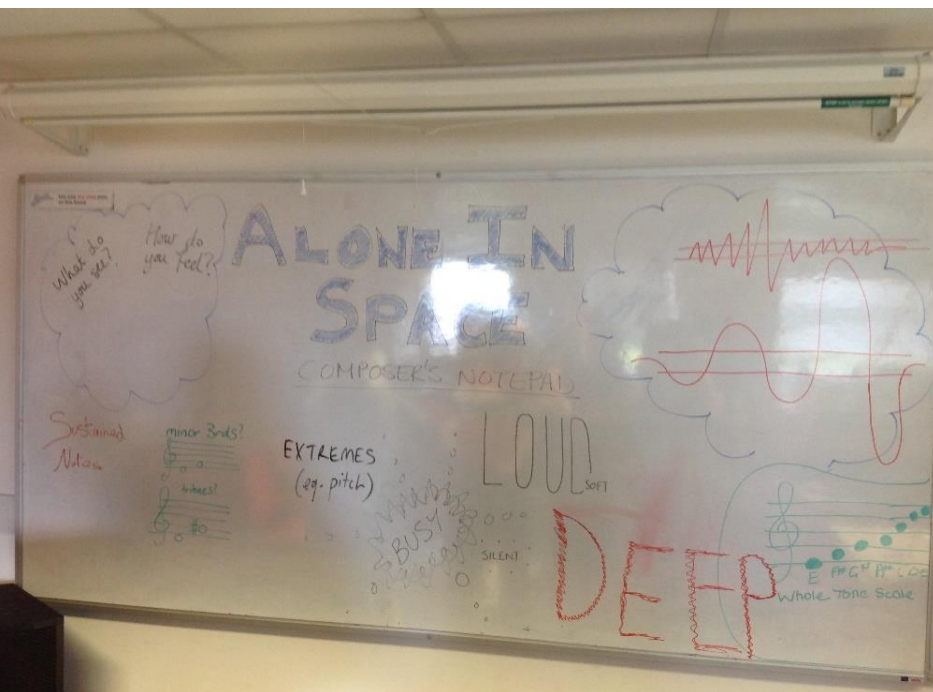
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'Composing is . . . the surest way for pupils to develop musical judgement and to come to understand the notion of "thinking" in music' (Paynter, 1997: 18).

"Working within a given matrix is one of the most powerful stimulants for creativity" (Odam, 2000: 118).

"Acquiring the language of music requires immediate experience of it and the chance to use and experiment with it, finding out what it says and how it works by using it" (Odam, 2000: 125).



Musical Futures 5 Principles

- Pupils work with music chosen by themselves that they enjoy and identify with. →
- Pupils work in the main aurally through listening and copying. →
- Pupils work with peers in groups chosen by themselves. →
- Skills and knowledge are gained in a rather haphazard fashion with whole 'real' pieces. →
- **Listening, performing and composing are integrated throughout the learning process.** →

Links with 'deep learning'

- This exemplifies pupils co-constructing the curriculum and the use of pupil voice.
- Pupils engage in self and peer feedback, a central strategy in AfL.
- The pupils voice is again heard here (as almost everywhere else in the project).
- Here the pupils are learning to learn, i.e. they will understand that learning is not always linear or broken into small chunks.
- **Again, they learn something about learning, i.e. that it can be holistic and is full of connections.**

Being creative with voices

- Learning the song 'Ain't Gonna Let Nobody' (Sing Up repertoire) – singing as a round and combining three parts as a whole class
- Trainees work in groups to create their own arrangement of the song (with supporting resources if needed – starting to think about differentiation in the music classroom)
- Combining two areas of 'perceived' weakness – singing and composing (as identified by trainees on their subject knowledge audits)



Active learning groups

- Active learning is . . . meaningful learning in which something of interest and value to the learner has been accomplished and understood . . . Active learning supports meaningful learning because it enables the learners to develop not only their knowledge of the subject taught but also their skills for learning and their ability to reflect on the processes involved in that learning.

(Capel, Leask & Turner, 2009: 267)

Popular music metapedagogy in music teacher education

“Many secondary music specialist teachers have been trained within the Western Classical tradition, in which music-making is dominated by a ‘professional performance’ career model based largely in conservatoires and university music departments, and this may be inappropriate for the demands of the secondary school classroom.” (Hargreaves, Welch, Purves & Marshall, 2005:1)

“Music graduates arrive for initial teacher education having acquired habitus where an awareness of the informal moment in musical learning can lie ‘buried’, even for those who have learned as a stereotypical ‘informal’ pop musician! Our system of music education (and wider education and culture) has the potential to subvert the informal, a consequence of which is that what counts as musical knowledge, learning and pedagogy for the musicians who embark on teacher education programmes can often be defined in terms of the formal moment” (Finney & Philpott, 2010, p.10)

Popular music metapedaogy in music teacher education

“At Birmingham City University beginning music teachers’ own meaningful active learning was enacted in order to promote their learning about popular music pedagogical content knowledge. Favourable environments, with mutually constituted spaces free from externally determined agendas of compliance or assessment, and independent of any particular school context, were provided where beginning music teachers could take responsibility for their own learning in collaboration with their colleagues. The beginning music teachers were seen as the learners, but at different times had opportunities to become teachers, experts and critical friends. University tutors took background roles, defining tasks and initiating the learning process but avoiding overt interventions so as not to be seen simply as the experts with all the answers.” (Axtell, Fautley & Davey Nicklin, 2017:364)

“I will never look with the same eyes at the process of creating music. My group have inspired me to try new things out at school and use music technology more actively within music education.”

“It made me realise that whatever you do with the pupils at school, you have to make sure that they are doing something musical, playing music is really important. Music is such a creative subject, there is no point in getting bogged down in the history or techniques of instruments, when actually the most important part of music is being creative with it.”

Comments from beginning music teachers
(in Axtell, Fautley & Davey Nicklin, 2017:365/366)

Topics hotly debated by PGCE music trainees

- The 'notation' debate
- Group composing vs. individual composing (KS3 = group, KS4 = individual)
- Composing by numbers at KS4
- Composing limited by performing ability?
- Death by keyboard!

Main challenges for us as tutors

- Building confidence in trainees to use composing in the classroom (across all Key Stages)
- Encouraging ‘performers’ specifically to be more confident in their approaches to creative composing
- Challenging perceived musical identities ‘performers’, ‘composers’, ‘techies’
- Supporting teachers who are composers to ‘unpick’ the process – can be challenging if this comes naturally to them.
- Promoting individual and personalised musical thinking during composing rather than producing a formulaic pastiche.