

**Promoting Excellence in Small Group Music
Performance: Teaching, learning and assessment**

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June 2010

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Foreword

The initial impetus for this research project was a one day symposium organised by Dr Richard Wistreich, held at the International Centre for Music Studies (ICMuS) at Newcastle University on 20 September 2006 on the theme of *Group Assessment*, part of a wider investigation of aspects of the teaching and learning of collective performance at Newcastle University, funded by a grant of £5000 from the University's Arts and Humanities Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund. This symposium was the second in a series of four annual meetings (the first, in 2005, had addressed aspects of one-to-one teaching) bringing together instrumental and vocal tutors teaching in the department, academic staff, members of the University's Staff Development Unit and representatives from partner institutions of the Newcastle University-led Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in Music and Inclusivity, funded by HEFCE. As a representative of the only other UK CETL in Music, at the Royal Northern College of Music, Dr Jane Ginsborg was invited to make a presentation about their recently-introduced assessment methods in chamber music. Dr Ginsborg joined the other participants in a group performance assessment exercise that involved sample student ensembles in folk, popular and classical music genres. The lively discussions that followed raised a whole range of shared and divergent experiences, opinions and, above all, questions about the teaching and learning of music in groups, about the challenges of comparing practice in different genres and the challenges of assessing individual musicians engaging in group or 'collective' performance courses in higher educational contexts. Dr Wistreich and Dr Ginsborg quickly realised their mutual interest and the advantages of a joint approach to trying to answer some of these questions offered by the different kinds of practices and complementary but diverse genres of music taught and assessed in their respective institutions and it was out of their subsequent discussions that the proposal for this project arose and which was awarded funding by Palatine in July 2007.

Acknowledgements

The researchers wish to extend their thanks to staff at their respective institutions, including Dawn Weatherston (Development Manager) and Thereza Webster (Project Office) of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in Music and Inclusivity at Newcastle; Prof. Linda Merrick (Director of the CETL at the RNCM), Ms Kate Buchanan (Director of Professional Studies) and the late Dr Christopher Rowland (former Director of Chamber Music) at the RNCM; Mr John Ferguson, Mr Stewart Hardy, Dr Desi Wilkinson and Mr Mick Wright (ensemble tutors at the International Centre for Music Studies, Newcastle University) and Mr Alastair Tait (former Director of Chamber Music), Mr Jeremy Young and Mr John Miller (ensemble tutors at RNCM); Ms Lucy Deakin and Ms Danielle Sirek (research assistants, ICMuS) and above all, the many students at both institutions who agreed to participate in the project over the course of two years, by monitoring their own practice both as individuals and as members of a wide variety of ensembles, by taking part in structured interviews, in the course of which they also contributed a great deal of invaluable feedback to the researchers about their methods and also about the many questions thrown up by the research.

Finally, the investigators wish to thank the Higher Education Academy and PALATINE for their generous funding of this research which, it is hoped, will be of use to musicians, educators and higher education institutions – indeed anywhere collective performance is taught and learned.

Executive Summary

The report consists of the following sections:

1. An Introduction recalling the motivation for the project;
2. Detailed responses to a survey of teaching and assessment methods at 26 HEIs (19 universities and 7 conservatoires) demonstrating that
 - a wide range of small ensemble performance is taught in most HEIs. It is more likely to be offered at the undergraduate than postgraduate level, more likely to be optional than compulsory, and in most cases cannot be taken for more than 25% of available performance credit;
 - members of ensembles are most likely to be self-selected and tutored by members of staff on an *ad hoc* rather than regular basis. There is clearly room for improvement both in terms of staff and perceived student satisfaction with member selection, and the time available for / appropriateness of tuition;
 - repertoire is more likely to be negotiated between than chosen by tutor or students; a large minority of tutors specify an appropriate amount of rehearsal to be undertaken each week;
 - assessment practices vary insofar as ensembles are assessed at different stages of their degree courses, process may or may not be assessed alongside product and while more than half the respondents reported that students are assessed as a group as well as individually – sometimes by themselves – it is not always clear how this is achieved. Again there is room for improvement in terms of tutors' views on the suitability of small ensemble performance for assessment and perceived students' views on the fairness of assessment;
- 3.1 A study of three more and less “successful” classical ensembles' practice and rehearsal, using diary methods, revealing differences in
 - hours of practice and rehearsal attributable to their own and their peers' perceived focus, effort and enjoyment,
 - sophistication of goals and plans for practice and rehearsal, attributable to experience, and the effectiveness of different practice / rehearsal strategies;
 - suggesting that there is a need to explore further the role of coaching for more and less experienced ensembles;
- 3.2 A first focus group study with students from RNCM and ICMuS investigating students' thoughts and feelings in relation to group formation and the impact of coaching or tutoring on their learning of small group performance. A number of themes emerged, suggesting similarities between student groups regardless of the kind of music they play:
 - knowing people; the tension between getting on and working well;
 - group aspirations at university/college and beyond;
 - coaching: product vs process vs opportunity, specificity vs variety vs availability;
 - group concerns vs musical concerns;
- 3.3. A second focus group study with students from ICMuS only following up a sub-theme arising from the first focus group study: Can 'band-ness' be taught? Topics arising included
 - forming the band, expectations, working together, practising by yourself;

- the usefulness of tuition, being assessed, university vs the real world, group dynamics;
4. Assessment, addressed by comparing assessment methods, as they have evolved at RNCM and ICMuS. It was evident from the survey reported in Chapter 2 that different institutions have different needs, so there can be no 'one-size-fits-all' model, but we hope that readers will find the possibilities we have described useful in terms of guiding their own future practice, as most appropriate to them. The one firm recommendation we would make is that when marks are given for a group and inflected for individual performance that the system used is made explicit and transparent to students.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The development of music curricula in university music departments and conservatoires has been dogged by the inability to address the assessment of group performance. The reality of professional musicians' working lives is such that students intending to take up careers as classical, jazz, pop or folk musicians, in concert, stage and/or session work, will need not only to have had appropriate experience in directed ensembles such as orchestras, big bands and concert bands but also in smaller self-directed groups (e.g. Mills, 2004, 2006). Likewise, music graduates who go on to careers in music teaching, at all levels of the education system, will find that organising and animating collective music-making in a variety of genres will constitute perhaps the majority of their work. Yet performance assessments are typically based on the model of principal study recitals, involving the award of marks to individual instrumentalists, singers and conductors, even though very few musicians, other than pianists, actually perform unaccompanied.

This is not to say that group performance is neglected in university music departments and conservatoires. Its position in the curriculum reflects, however, the recognition that peer or collaborative learning – more generally – is central to the student experience. A range of collaborative learning opportunities, and ways of assessing them, were developed, for example, in the Music Department at the University of Ulster (Hunter, 2006): these include reports illustrating progress on preparation of joint performances, although the performances themselves are not assessed, and peer assessment of performance (see also Blom & Poole, 2004, for evidence of the latter's utility as a tool for learning). Hunter discusses a number of issues relating to these activities: size and composition of ensembles; how students prepare for working in groups; how long they work together and how they are managed; who 'owns' collaborative learning; how difficulties are resolved and the extent to which assessment focuses on process and/or product. Both are important for the teaching, learning and assessment of group instrumental and vocal performance. Process can be assessed partly through self- and partly through peer-evaluation, which are both crucial to student learning, but also by the tutors involved in face-to-face teaching and evaluation of students' self-assessment reports. Product, on the other hand, tends to be tutor-assessed using criteria that reflect those used for individual principal study assessments.

There is one type of music, however, for which individual assessment is particularly inappropriate: improvised music such as jazz. The traditional emphasis on individual marking has been shown to inhibit students' musical expression such that they are less likely to interact freely and spontaneously, and to take risks in performance (Barratt & Moore, 2005). Innovative methods for assessing 'true' group performance – as opposed to individuals performing as a group – have therefore been devised and implemented, for example, at Birmingham Conservatoire (Miles, 2003), Colchester (Allen, 2003) and Trinity College of Music, London (Barratt and Moore, 2005). We would argue that such methods are as essential to the assessment – and therefore to the teaching and learning – of small group performance in classical, folk and pop genres as they are in improvisation.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Evidence relating to peer learning from developmental and educational psychological research suggests advantages for collaborative learning at different stages of development when students are matched for expertise and benefit from socio-cognitive conflict (Piaget,

1976) and when more competent peers work with those who are less advanced, thus extending their 'zone of proximal development' (Vygotsky, 1978). We compared methods of forming small student musical ensembles along these principles, when students had just entered higher education and when they were close to graduation. Our exploration, evaluation and extension of the resources we use for self-, peer- and group monitoring and assessment would be based on recent literature (e.g. Boud et al., 1985; Schon et al., 1987; Biggs, 1999; Philip, 2006). The development of assessment methods and criteria specifically for the assessment of group musical performance in the context of university music departments and conservatoires would have to involve the participation of all those required to carry out assessment since the basis on which this would be achieved would have to be practical as well as, if not more than, theoretical. It was intended that new criteria would be devised alongside existing criteria – such as those reported by Allen (2003), Miles (2003) and Barratt and Moore (2005) for improvised jazz and popular music – appropriately adapted and extended.

1.3 Aims and objectives

We aimed, first, to address the generic attributes of small group music making as opposed to individual performance by undertaking and reporting an on-line survey of current teaching, learning and assessment methods. A similar small-scale study of European institutions, funded by ERASMUS as a Socrates project, was carried out by Sampsa Konttinen between 2001 and 2004 (Jyväskylä Polytechnic School of Music). We therefore confined our survey to UK conservatoires and university music departments (Chapter 2).

Our second aim was to explore different approaches to the constitution of small groups and ensembles, and how they might affect the teaching and learning process. This was achieved by evaluating the effects of forming student musical ensembles (e.g. folk groups, pop groups, classical small ensembles e.g. string quartets, brass quintets) in different years of study (e.g. first year, final year) and in different ways (e.g. randomly; selecting for comparable levels of musical expertise; selecting for mixed levels of musical expertise) (Chapter 3), using existing self- and peer-monitoring methods and instruments that had been introduced at both institutions prior to the start of the study but which were refined during the course of the study. At RNCM e-portfolios comprising CVs, promotional materials and reflective web-logs contribute to assessment within the Supporting Professional Studies (SPS) strand of the BMus degree, alongside practice diaries, peer observation of performance and observation logs for mentored activities. At ICMuS performance studies diaries and self-assessment questionnaires were used for evaluating process (learning and rehearsal) in group activities and one-to-one tuition and product (individual performance). The contribution of each of these resources to the learning and assessment processes in ensemble performance was explored and evaluated throughout the course of the study.

Third, we aimed to propose a range of methods for assessment that articulate levels of achievement and promote student learning (Chapter 4). These were intended not only to be clear and understandable to students and tutors alike but also appropriate to and workable in the context of a broad range of musical genres and educational settings.

2 The Institutional Context: Survey of current teaching, learning and assessment methods in UK conservatoires and university music departments

2.1 Introduction

In a report on the teaching and assessment of chamber music funded by the European Union, Konttinen (2004) asserts that group performance is seen as a “*separate secondary subject on the side*”. He advocates “*re-profiling and re-organising*” existing resources, suggesting criteria that should be used for assessing ensembles and individual performers *within* those ensembles.

More recently the teaching and assessment of ensemble performance has been approached – particularly at universities – in the context of the recognition that peer or collaborative learning more *generally* is central to the student experience. A range of collaborative learning opportunities, and ways of assessing them, have been developed, for example, in the Music Department at the University of Ulster and – for improvised music such as jazz – at Birmingham Conservatoire, Colchester Institute and Trinity College of Music. These include reports illustrating progress on preparation of joint performances, although the performances themselves are not assessed, and peer assessment of performance as a tool for learning. Hunter (2006), reporting on the Ulster experience, discusses a number of issues relating to collaborative learning: size and composition of ensembles; how students prepare for working in groups; how long they work together and how they are managed; who ‘owns’ collaborative learning; how difficulties are resolved and the extent to which assessment focuses on process and/or product. Both are important for the teaching, learning and assessment of group instrumental and vocal performance. Process can be assessed partly through self- and partly through peer-evaluation, which are both crucial to student learning, but also by the tutors involved in face-to-face teaching and evaluation of students’ self-assessment reports. Product, on the other hand, tends to be tutor-assessed using criteria that reflect those used for individual principal study assessments.

We therefore devised an on-line survey addressing these issues and distributed it to UK university music departments and conservatoires.

2.2 Methods

Respondents

Two versions of the questionnaire, which included closed- and open-ended items, were constructed – one for university music departments consisting of 36 items (Appendix A) and one for conservatoires consisting of 31 items (there was no need, for example, to ask whether solo performance was offered for credit at such institutions; Appendix B) – using the environment provided by SurveyMonkey®. We sent an e-mail to 23 university music departments (representing 32% of UK universities offering music as a single subject) and all nine conservatoires with a link to the appropriate questionnaire. There were 20 responses from 19 university music departments and nine responses from seven conservatoires (see Results for information as to how these are reported).

Materials

We devised the questionnaire and piloted it at our own institutions to ensure clarity before it was circulated. In order to ascertain approaches to teaching, respondents were asked whether their institutions offered small ensemble performance for credit as part of their undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, and if so, if it is compulsory; what proportion of the year's credit for performance it constitutes and what types of small ensemble performance can be taken for credit. Respondents were asked how the members of ensembles are selected, and the extent to which tutors and students are satisfied with the methods used; whether, and if so how often ensembles are tutored, and how tutoring is arranged. Again, they were asked to rate tutor satisfaction with the amount and student satisfaction with the appropriateness of tuition provided.

In order to ascertain respondents' approaches to student learning, respondents were asked if they specify or recommend that a particular number of ensemble rehearsals are undertaken and if so, how many per week or module; they were also asked how the repertoire performed by each ensemble is chosen.

Assessment methods were investigated via questions relating to the stages (years) in which small ensemble performance is assessed, whether formal assessment guidelines and marking criteria are used, whether marks are awarded to individuals or ensembles, in written form or orally, and if assessment is made of the rehearsal process, final performance or both. Respondents were asked if the ensembles' own tutors assess them, and the extent to which students contribute to the assessment process. They were asked to rate tutor satisfaction with the appropriateness, and student satisfaction with the fairness of the assessment process. Finally, they were given the opportunity to provide any further relevant information or comments.

2.3 Results

In order to be able to identify the originators of responses to open-ended items, the university music departments are numbered in this report from 1 to 19. There were two separate responses from one university music department that offers separate courses in classical and pop, three separate responses from one conservatoire that offers separate courses in classical music, pop and jazz, and from representatives of six other conservatoires who submitted one response each. Responses to each forced-choice question or group of questions from each type of institution were re-ordered for the purposes of being reported under the headings *Teaching*, *Learning* and *Assessment* and are provided in tabular form (responses were not necessarily mutually exclusive), followed by responses to open-ended "other" or "please describe" options. The number of responses from each type of institution are indicated in the left-most column of each table. Single responses from the institutions offering different courses, or two or three responses in agreement are identified as single responses from that institution. Different responses are identified in the Tables as originating from classical (C), pop (P) and/or jazz (J) courses as appropriate. In the bulleted lists of open-ended responses, the university music department with two courses is represented by 2 – classical and 2 – pop. The conservatoire with three courses is represented by A – classical, A – pop and A – jazz; the remaining conservatoires are labelled B to G.

2.3.1 Teaching

1. Do you offer small ensemble performance FOR CREDIT as part of your UNDERGRADUATE /POSTGRADUATE degree programmes?

Table 2.1. Numbers of institutions offering SEP and solo performance at UG and PG levels.

	UG SEP	UG solo	PG SEP	PG solo
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 20)	18	19	8	16
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	8CP	9	7CP	9

2. Is assessed small ensemble performance COMPULSORY? Please specify if this varies according to degree programme, stage of degree programme or anything else.

Table 2.2. Numbers of institutions where SEP and solo performance are compulsory at UG levels.

	UG SEP	UG solo
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 20)	4	10
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	5	9

- In as far as students taking music must be a part of a larger ensemble and attend regularly to pass, the smaller ensembles are either extra curricular or part of an optional module. (4)
- At first year (BMus) level, we encourage ensemble performance as part of the end-of-year assessment in Performance and Keyboard Skills. But it is not compulsory; some students choose to offer solo performance at this stage, as well as at second-year level. (12)
- It's compulsory if they choose to take the courses/modules that offer them - Ensemble Studies, or Chamber Music. (18)
- Year 1 and Semester 1 of Year 2 BA Music (A – classical)
- There is a compulsory Ensemble Studies module for BA Jazz in years 1 and 2. However most curricular and non-curricular ensembles (31 in total taking up 54 hours a week over 24 weeks) are not formally assessed. (A – jazz)
- Depends on the department. (D)
- For all programmes. (E)
- Compulsory for UG 1 and 2. (G)

3. What proportion of the whole year's [performance module] credit does small ensemble performance constitute?

Table 2.3. Proportions of credit available for small ensemble performance.

		<25%	25%-50%	51%-75%	>75%
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 16)	Y1	8	2	0	1
	Y2	10	1	0	1
	Y3 or final	7	2	0	0
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	Y1	6C	1	0	1P
	Y2	6C	1	1P	0
	Y3 or final	7J	1	1C	0
	Y4 or final	6	1	0	0

- Ensemble modules are worth 20 credits within each year (4)
- The pop course results are at the 75% level in all three years (2 – pop)
- Students taking performance are streamed either into a 'solo' performance route or a 'chamber music' route (though this can be small ensembles of any type). Each route is

assessed by participation in large ensembles during the year (10%) and an end of year recital (90%) (5)

- Students can take up to a total of 20 credits of Ensemble Studies in years 2 and 3 combined (i.e. either 20cr in yr 2, 20cr in yr 3 or 10+10 across both years) (6)
- varies from year to year (8)
- ...and, as I've said above, it is not in any case compulsory but only encouraged (12)
- Ensemble Studies & Chamber Music have performance tasks worth less than 25%; but students MAY put small ensembles forward in their Performance Studies examinations as well - so up to 50% is possible. (18)
- In either year, SE comprises 20 credits out of 120. Year 2 at XXXX contributes 25% of the overall degree, and Year 3 is 75%. (19)

4. What types of small ensemble performance can be taken for credit at your institution?

Table 2.4. Numbers of institutions offering credit in different types of SEP.

	Classical chamber music	Vocal	Jazz	Instrumental duo	Pop	Folk
UMDs (<i>n</i> = 19)	16	14	10	11	8	9
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 7)	6	5	6	4	1	1

- All ensembles taken on board. (2 - pop)
- On the above model ANYTHING that does it for them is taken. The skills of being a good musician to work with are so similar across the spectrum that anything can be offered and assessed by their peers as above. (2 - classical)
- I run two modules Ensemble 1 (a 2nd year module) and Ensemble 2 (a third year module) which allow musicians of certain standards to work as an ensemble, be it (taking examples from this year's cohort) a classical guitar duet, a vocal opera ensemble, an *a cappella* vocal quartet singing jazz, folk and classical repertoire, woodwind trios, piano trio, and experimental ensembles such as 'Piccola Orchestra' comprising of a Violin (who also plays piano), trumpet (who also plays Flugel horn) and double bass. Alongside these students must attend a large university ensemble which is most appropriate for their instrument. These modules are being renamed next year as Music Group Performance 1 and 2. (4)
- Any. (8)
- Although folk ensemble is a possibility, this isn't something which our students tend to do. (11)
- The only relevant Masters programme here is the MMus in Early Keyboard Performance. Part of the assessment is to include continuo playing; the first candidate to undertake this programme has applied to do so in 2008-9. (12)
- Contemporary Music Ensemble. (14)
- We offer a specialist module on Early Small Ensemble for any combination of vocal and instrumental music pre-1750. (19)
- Only in groups as part of a taught option. (A – classical)
- Vocal ensemble in theory could be assessed although generally comes under our "directed ensemble" category. (G)

5. How are the members of each ensemble selected?

Table 2.5. Numbers of institutions selecting ensembles in different ways.

	Self-selection by students	Audition	At random by tutors
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 18)	10	6	4
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	5	1	4CP

- After the students have set up their own ensemble, there is an audition to assess the suitability of the ensemble at the end of the previous academic year. Sometimes it might be necessary to re-arrange groups. If at the beginning of the new year there is an exchange student from abroad who wants to attend the ensemble classes, it might then be necessary to find a group which might welcome the new member. (1)
- Members for ensemble 1 must have grade 6 performance in their chosen instrument, or audition. Ensemble 2 members must have passed ensemble 1 with at least 50, or have grade 8 in their chosen instrument, or audition. (4)
- Varies, depending on project. (8)
- Students make a group application when course choice forms are circulated. To facilitate combinations, not all students have to be assessed; the quality of contribution of non-assessed members works on a system of trust. (19)
- Students are encouraged to form groups independently. If they cannot do so, I offer help. (C)
- Various methods (D)
- New students are heard in an informal audition which helps the selection by tutors. After a student's first year, they are encouraged to find their own ensemble. If this does not work then they are assigned to groups. (G)

6. How would you rate tutor satisfaction, generally, with the way ensemble members are selected?

Table 2.6. Numbers of responses indicating degrees of tutor satisfaction with selection methods

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 18)	8P	9C	0	0
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	2P	5	2CJ	0

7. How would you rate student satisfaction, generally, with the way ensemble members are selected?

Table 2.7. Numbers of responses indicating degrees of student satisfaction with selection methods.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 18)	8C	7	1	1P
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	3J	5P	1C	0

8. Are ensembles tutored? If so, is this on a regular basis, and if so, how often?

Table 2.8. Numbers of institutions where ensembles are tutored and how often.

	Tutored	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 19)	16P	5C	1	1
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	8CP	3P	0	0

- Every group receives two tutorials per semester. In addition every group is timetabled to play twice in a seminar, followed by group discussion. (1)
- By request, and in a masterclass sort of situation. (2 – classical)
- Or as they ask, and there are weekly public tutoring sessions where all attend and the questions and learning are directed at the audience to get them more critical and aurally equipped. It follows that really duff and bad ensembles are also very useful! (2 – pop)

- Ensembles are timetabled for 4 hours per week, during which time I coach each ensemble individually as well as doing group activities around stage management, tuning, warm up techniques, professionalism. Ensembles are encouraged to meet up for a further session at their own arrangement. Both modules run for the entire year, comprising 24 weeks of tuition. (4)
- Students on the small ensemble route have 5 x 45 minute 1-1 lessons, 5 x 45 minute group lessons (on technique) and a further 10-15 hours masterclasses. This more or less works out to weekly lessons of varying lengths. (5)
- Ensembles receive a minimum of three hours of coaching per 10 credits. (6)
- Depends on student demand. Tutoring isn't compulsory. (11)
- On 'Chamber Music' ensembles have an allocation of time for tutorial support, which they need to book with tutors at the stage in the year when they feel it is most appropriate. (10)
- On an ad hoc basis: partly in regular Performance Seminars, and also in special sessions in the run-up to the assessment. There is a 'mock' performance exam (including ensemble performance) in December and the 'real' exam is in April. Tutoring is offered before both these exams, and written feedback given thereafter. (12)
- By students self-determining coaching support, some opting for near-weekly support, some for only two or three coaching sessions (16).
- In first year module ensembles are tutored every 2-3 weeks depending on number or ensembles on the module. (16)
- Depends on the course. In Chamber Music, weekly; in Ensemble Studies, students negotiate coaching with their individual teachers. (18)
- Officially fortnightly, although tutoring is often weekly in practice. (19)
- Only within the ensemble studies lecture. (A – classical)
- Not possible to classify as above. (B)
- Varies. (D)
- Students are told that all Chamber Music performances must be coached. (E)
- It varies throughout the year depending on availability of tutors, pressing competitions and assessments. (G)

9. How would you rate tutor satisfaction, generally, with the amount of tuition time available?

Table 2.9. Tutor satisfaction with the amount of tuition time available.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 17)	4	8	5CP	0
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	3P	3	1C	1

10. How would you rate student satisfaction, generally, with appropriateness of tuition?

Table 2.10. Perceived student satisfaction with the amount of tuition time available.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 17)	10C	6	0	1P
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	5J	3P	1C	0

11. How is ensemble tuition arranged?

Table 2.11. How ensemble tuition is arranged.

	Negotiated	Timetabled	Both
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 18)	7	4	5
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	1	2CP	4

- But if a group misses a tutorial, a different time can be arranged. (1)
- Weekly class and by request. (2 – pop)
- Timetabled as outlined above though if needed we arrange extra tutorials before concert performances. (4)
- There is an official timetabled slot but in practice many other times are used according to convenience. (19)
- Again some departmental variation. (B)
- There is an official "String Chamber Music Coaching" slot in the timetable, but many students and tutors find other times more suitable. (C)
- Sign up lists which it is the students' responsibility to monitor. (G)

2.3.2 Learning

12. How is the repertoire performed by the ensemble chosen?

Table 2.12. How repertoire is chosen.

	Negotiation	Students	Tutor	Syllabus
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 17)	15P	6P	3C	1
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 9)	6P	4	4CP	1

- But the module handbook provides some guidelines and advice. (1)
- I request students perform a contrasting repertoire. They select pieces, and if needed arrange them as a group, and we discuss the arrangements, the style, technical requirements for the instruments and suitability of the programme. (4)
- All the above ticked items are common. Students often are influenced in the choice of repertoire by competition requirements. (C)
- Some departments (for example, Keyboard) have very specific guidelines on which type of chamber performances satisfy the requirements for each undergraduate year, although postgraduates are free to choose their own programmes. String students just have to do one assessed performance per year, which is a free choice programme (although very short works may be queried by the Head of Department at the end of the year when the marks are processed). (E)

13. Do you specify or recommend an overall number of ensemble rehearsal hours? If so, how many hours' ensemble rehearsal do you specify or recommend [per week]?

Table 2.13. Number of hours' rehearsal specified or recommended per week.

	Specify/recommend	2-3	4-6	6-8
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 19)	7*	4	0	2
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	3PJ	1	1P	1

- One hour of ensemble practice and 2.5 hours of private practice*
- Official tutorial time is 8 hours per ensemble per year. Untutored rehearsal time is not specified. (19)

- 18 hours – unclear whether this latter was recommended per week or per module (A – jazz)

2.3.3 Assessment

14. *If you offer small ensemble performance for credit as part of your undergraduate degree programmes, at what stage is it assessed? Please specify if different undergraduate degree programmes have different rules.*

Table 2.14. Assessment at undergraduate level.

	All years	Y1 only	Y2 only	Y1/2	Y3 only	Y2/3	Y4 only	Y3/4
UMDs (<i>n</i> = 20)*	6	1	1	2	3	5	-	-
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	4P	0	1C	0	0	0	1	1

*Most undergraduate degree courses at universities are three years long while those at most conservatoires are four years long.

- It is inevitably more complex than the two dimensionality of any questionnaire is ever going to be able to exploit. Ensembles are formed, and coached and performed. The assessment is of the audience and what they can hear and see is good and not good about the ensemble - all this after at least six sessions tackling what ensembles do, have, should be etc etc. the audience - the peers of the ensembles - are supposed to be developing hearing and musical performing-analytical type skills of awareness as to what goes to make a successful ensemble and attitude and what does not. This model gets over a lot of the problems associated with ensemble assessment and the build up to an ensemble show - attendance, skills varying in the group, practice/rehearsal time etc. It also gets the students to think rather than just the Do Do Do of too much instrumental/vocal learning. Stop, think, reflect, and then How to put all this into their music making. The popular music side of life does the group thing as assessment in the normal way too - it's just how pop musos work, whereas the classical are still expected to perform the "recital" model as their final assessment, but the ensemble acuity mark goes in as part of the overall mark for classical students in years one and two. (2 – pop)
- Within projects at any stage, if students want it. (8)
- First year (level 4) small ensembles are a possible contributor to performance participation marks, but the effect is very small. At levels 5 and 6 (years 2 and 3 or equivalent), small ensemble activity is compulsory and a substantial part of the assessment if the student chooses Ensemble Performance or Advanced Ensemble Performance modules. For joint students who have a year abroad, they will not be assessed in their third year. (11)
- Those choosing a final-year recital generally offer a solo recital. However, accompanying is also an option, and occasionally we assess both soloist and accompanist. I'm not sure if this quite counts as ensemble..... (12)
- Small Ensemble is available in both Years 2 and 3, but due to other syllabus requirements (relating to Solo Performance) the vast majority of students taking Small Ensemble take it in Year 2. (19)
- First semester of second year only. (A – classical)
- May vary in different departments. (B)

15. If you offer small ensemble performance for credit as part of your postgraduate degree programmes, at what stage is it assessed?

Table 2.15. Assessment at postgraduate level.

	PGCert PGDip	MA/MMus/MPhil	PhD/DMA/DPhil
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 20)	-	7C	2
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	7CP	5	1

*PGCert and PGDip tend to be one-year performance courses in conservatoires only; DMA is a Doctorate in Musical Arts offered at conservatoires, roughly equivalent to PhD and DPhil at universities.

16. Do you have formal assessment guidelines and marking criteria?

Table 2.16. Use of formal assessment guidelines and marking criteria.

	Yes	No
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 19)	16	2
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 7)	5CP	2

17. How are marks awarded (i.e. for performance, rehearsal process or both)?

Table 2.17. How marks are awarded.

	Performance	Rehearsal process	Both
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 19)	8	0	5P
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 7)	2	1C	4PJ

- But all courses include a final written essay on a topic selected by the students from a list (analysis and performance, rehearsal process, etc) and a participation statement (a reflective diary of all the performance activities they attended: singing in the choir, playing in the orchestra, attending a masterclass, etc.). (1)
- As above, marks awarded to students on the perspicacity of their perception of the reasons for an ensemble's success or badness. (2 – classical)
- We give marks on 3 performances on campus and request as part of passing the module that students perform off campus for at least 2 events. We ask for a rehearsal diary, and for the third year version, a report is also requested. (4)
- 80% on basis of performance; 20% on basis of detailed log sheets revealing the research and progress of the individual and ensemble (one set of log sheets for each student). (15)
- First year is both rehearsal process and final performance; subsequent years it is based entirely on the performance. (16)
- Depends again on the course: none are assessed entirely by a single mode. Possibilities include performance, peer assessment and/or self evaluation of rehearsal process, coursework. (18)
- for rehearsal process 20% performance 50% written commentary 30% (A – classical)

18. How are student members of ensembles assessed (i.e. as individuals and/or groups)?

Table 2.18. Assessment as individuals, ensemble and/or both.

	Both	Only as a group	Only as individuals
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 17)	9	2	5
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	5PJ	2	1C

- Situation may vary. If every member of the ensemble is actually registered for the course, then they are assessed as a group. If there is a big gap in performance level among members sometimes it is necessary to split the marks (but this does not happen very frequently). (1)
- None of the above. The students ARE the assessment process, but they do not contribute to their marks. Given the nature of ensembles the assessment is that of ascertaining if the students IN THE AUDIENCE can pick up what is good, bad, indifferent, needs working on, what to work on, how to work on it, what would be needed to be coached, who in the ensemble is weak, out of tune, lacking contribution; who in the ensemble is strong, too strong, why, how, etc etc etc. (2 – classical)
- None of these apply. The assessment is of the members of the audience's perspicaciousness or otherwise of their hearing skills and general ensemble awareness as they listen and watch. The pop students of course do their end of year assessments as groups, and they are marked individually. (2 – pop)
- Currently we give individual marks to each student; though within the feedback I give a group summary outlining how they can improve as an ensemble, noting what is already successful, then I give the largest portion of feedback to individuals. This works due to the combination of different [incomplete]. (4)
- Unless this is a marked discrepancy amongst performers. (9)
- The final chamber music performances are assessed in concert by two examiners, individuals are peer assessed by the other members of the ensemble, and individual learning journals assessed by tutors. (10)
- Of those who offer ensemble performance, some also perform solo; at the final reckoning one mark is given to each individual, along with written comments elucidating how the mark has been arrived at. (12)
- Depends on the course. The approach to assessment is clarified at the outset of each. (18)
- The report will be written to the whole group, although each student receives an individual mark. (E)
- Ideally they are assessed as a group, however if this is extremely unbalanced, then individual contributions and marks count. (G)

19. Does (do) the ensemble's tutor(s) contribute to the assessment process or awarding of marks? How does (do) the ensemble's tutor(s) contribute to the assessment process? (Please describe.) Do the students contribute to the assessment process or the awarding of marks? If the students contribute, is this through self-assessment, peer-assessment or in some other way? (Please describe.)

Table 2.19. Assessment by ensemble tutors and students.

	Tutors	Students
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 17)	14	3
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	6CPJ	2

Tutors' contribution

- The ensemble tutor is actually the main course-coordinator and as such he/she is the first marker. (1)
- The audiences - and therefore the student for whom a mark is being determined - accuracy of perception about any ensemble is matched to what the tutor has discerned as being good or bad about why and how an ensemble is functioning. (2 – classical)
- What I hear and see is set against what the audience of peers hears and sees. The closer to full marks they want, the more complete and full and detailed must their comments and observations on heard ensembles be. Their comments are set against the staff comments and compared e.g. Sometimes of course they see/hear other things the staff have not, but seldom! (2 – pop)

- The ensemble tutor, i.e. myself, marks the performances alongside a second marker, these are filmed and sent to the external examiner. (4)
- By assessing the final recital (as part of a team of 2 assessors). (5)
- As one of a panel of three assessors at the final performance. (6)
- According to the criteria. (8)
- The ensemble receives a mark for the coaching sessions. (9)
- The module tutor and a.n.other assess recitals and journals. (10)
- Most of the tutoring is done by me, along with one other colleague. All examining is carried out by two internal examiners (at first year level - the External Examiner is brought in at second-year level). (12)
- Detailed comments on the students' performance. (13)
- Moderation. (14)
- Tutor is principal marker. 2nd & 3rd year modules are double marked and overseen by external examiner. (16)
- The tutor is normally first examiner and is joined by a second, for all assessment tasks. (18)
- The ensemble tutor is one of the two module examiners. (19)
- All work assessed by tutor (A – classical)
- They attend the performances and issue grades. (A – pop)
- He assesses their performance and written commentary (A – jazz)
- Marks given for rehearsal process (D)
- A tutor report of a lesson is required, detailing the preparation and attitude of the members, rehearsal techniques etc. (G)

Students' contribution

- Though peer assessment is not used within ensemble I do use peer assessment of performance in a music-dance module (4)
- They have to provide a well kept group contract as evidence of the year's activities (G)

20. How do assessors provide detailed feedback to ensembles?

Table 2.20. Nature of feedback.

	Written	Oral	Both
University music departments (<i>n</i> = 14)	1	6C	7P
Conservatoires (<i>n</i> = 8)	3C	-	5JP

- Feedback is part of the learning process; by the time the assessment of audience perception is taken it is effectively an exam. Feedback given if requested along with feedback on solo recital and tutors report. (2 – classical)
- I try to provide as much feedback as possible as often as needed to ensure a continuing development. (4)
- Written report on whatever aspects of the process are considered relevant plus oral feedback at the student's request. (8)
- What I have generally done is to provide one critique of an ensemble performance which is given to all the students involved. It mentions specific individuals where appropriate, but all involved read it. (12)
- All formally assessed work is given written feedback. (18)
- There is no set way for this, but feedback is normally given in written form with supplementary oral feedback available if students ask for it. (19)
- Students obtain constant feedback through tutors and performances in performance platforms scheduled on a weekly basis, and competitions. (C)
- This is in combination with the tutor report and the contract. (G)

21. How would you rate tutor satisfaction with the extent to which they believe small ensemble performance is an activity suitable for assessment ?

Table 2.21. Tutor satisfaction with the extent to which they believe SEP is suitable for assessment.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Dissatisfied
University music departments (n = 17)	10P	6C	1
Conservatoires (n = 8)	3P	4	1C

22. How would you rate student satisfaction with fairness of assessment?

Table 2.22. Student satisfaction with fairness of SEP assessment.

	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Don't know
University music departments (n = 17)	6C	10	1P
Conservatoires (n = 8)	4J	4CP	1

2.3.4 Additional comments

23. Please provide any further comments and reflections, and any ideas that you think might be useful for the researchers to know about the teaching and assessment of small ensemble performance.

- As ever it is under constant review and pressure of time and money mean that there is always a feeling of work left undone. (2 – classical)
- Any one out there want to join my project to run a Pedagogy Of Chamber Music At Universities Conference? (2 – pop)
- I'm currently wondering how I can assess individuals within a group, but equally wondering whether I need to find a balance between group and individual assessment. Considering my students arrange their own music, programme, and perform the works I wonder how far arrangement should be balanced alongside performance. Currently the arranging is not specified in the assessment criteria. I wrote this module newly for this year and have already redrafted an improved version for next year. (4)
- We trialled this for the first time this year in the second year; next year we are rolling it out to the first year as well. Therefore my comments are very provisional! (5)
- I'd be happy to share our module documentation and examples of peer-review documentation if appropriate. (10)
- To put what I have said in overall context: in our four-year degree programme, Performance takes its place as follows: First year: solo or ensemble Performance is compulsory, with ensemble playing encouraged but not required. The mark for this is aggregated with that for Keyboard Skills which is compulsory for all students at this level. Second year: solo performance is compulsory (although this can include piano accompanying, in which case both candidates would get a separate mark). The mark for this is aggregated with that for Keyboard Skills which is compulsory for all students at this level. (I would like to include ensemble playing at second-year level too, but time/resources restrict this.) Third year: no Performance module is compulsory, although many students continue to work with their private instrumental/vocal teachers. Fourth year: no Performance module is compulsory, although many students opt to take the performance option (towards which they would also have been working throughout their third year). This makes up one-third of their total assessment for the year. At this level, almost all candidates offer as soloists; sometimes they present a piece with a small ensemble (e.g. a Bach solo cantata) but in such cases only they are assessed. Occasionally a candidate will offer as an accompanist at this level. If the accompanee is another student in the same

group, both would be assessed separately. Sometimes, however, the accompanee has been brought in for the purpose. I hope all this makes some sort of sense! (12)

- In an effort to make process accessible to assessment, as well as product, we often involve students in the assessment process. Although I think they generally appreciate this opportunity, some students are perhaps disappointed to find that this does not simplify matters - quite the reverse - it asks them to engage with the complexities and difficulties involved with assessment. If their preparatory background consists in receiving marks handed down from above by the Associated Board, they may find this procedure unsettling rather than satisfying, particularly at first. (18)
- Generally speaking both modules work very well (although I have not examined them for some time, feedback from students is consistently good). There is a question regarding the amount of tutored rehearsal - it would be nice if it was more but finances are limited. Criteria for assessment exist but are not hugely detailed. Assessment is as follows: 40% for group performance (the same therefore for all assessed students in the ensemble) 40% in respect of the performance of each student (taking into account the different roles within an ensemble, e.g. violin and viola in a string quartet) 20% group viva of assessed students. (19)
- We have proposals in place to make Ensemble Studies taught and assessed within existing college ensembles, rather than in year groups as at present. From Year 1 semester 2 students would be assessed in both college ensembles and small cross-year chamber groups organised either by staff or the students themselves. We are proposing an element of self and peer assessment and that 70% of the marks should be awarded for attendance, punctuality, musical preparedness and willingness to engage with the rehearsal process. The other 30% for performance. Our aim being to develop a culture of chamber music performance within college, however, we don't yet know if these proposals will be accepted. (A – classical)
- The information on ensemble assessment is taken directly from the tutor. I'd be very interested in the outcome of this research because we are currently trying to get all ensembles formally assessed over the next couple of years. If you need any further information please be in touch and good luck with it all. (A – jazz)
- Aiming towards more regular coaching of groups and ensembles. (B)
- Student String Chamber Ensembles at XXX are not assessed. Their work is 100% voluntary, but they work hard, the drop-out range is exceptionally small, results are impressive and levels of satisfaction are high. I think this is not "in spite of" the fact that we have no assessment, but "because" participation is voluntary. They play chamber music because they love to. This makes our programme within the College unique and very precious. I hope we can keep it this way. (C)
- My comments are based on activities within the brass department only. I am asked to comment on the institution, but can't do that as I don't have enough knowledge of activities in other departments. (D)

2.4 Summary

Teaching

In 90% of the courses surveyed, undergraduate students could take SEP for credit; it was compulsory in 35% of such programmes. In contrast, postgraduate students could take SEP for credit in only 52% of the courses surveyed. In almost all cases, however, SEP constituted less than 25% of credit for performance. Small ensembles consisted of classical chamber music (in 85% of courses surveyed) and vocal groups (73%), jazz bands (62%), instrumental duos (58%), folk (38%) and pop groups (35%).

In 58% of the courses surveyed, the members of ensembles are self-selected; alternatively they are assembled on the basis of convenience by tutors (31%) or selected by audition (27%). Fifty-two per cent of respondents estimated that tutors were "quite

satisfied” and 38% of respondents that they were “very satisfied” with the methods used; similar estimates were made of student satisfaction (42% “very satisfied” and 46% “quite satisfied”). Students are tutored in 89% of courses surveyed, weekly in 30% of cases; in the remainder, they are tutored on request. Twenty-eight per cent of respondents estimated that tutors were “very satisfied” and 44% of respondents that they were “quite satisfied” with the amount of tuition time available; a sizeable minority (24%) were thought to be “dissatisfied”. In contrast, respondents believed 58% of students were “very” and only 35% “quite satisfied” with the appropriateness of the tuition they received.

Learning

81% of respondents reported that repertoire is chosen by negotiation; 38% that students choose repertoire and 27% reported that the tutors choose it. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents reported that tutors specify a particular number of hours’ rehearsal per week; of these half suggested that two to three hours was appropriate, although 30% suggested between six and eight hours.

Assessment

36% of respondents reported that SEP is assessed in all years of the undergraduate degree, although a quarter of respondents from university music departments reported assessing in the second and third year but not in the first. Formal assessment guidelines and marking criteria are used in 81% of courses surveyed. Marks are awarded for performance only in 38% of cases, and for the rehearsal process as well as performance in 35%. In addition, five respondents (19%) reported that students are also assessed on written commentaries, essays on rehearsal or performance, rehearsal diaries and/or logs.

With a number of caveats, 56% of respondents reported that students are assessed as both individuals and as a group. According to 24%, students are assessed only as individuals and according to 16% only the group is assessed as a whole. In 80% of cases the ensemble’s tutor is the sole assessor or contributes, with other members of staff, to assessment; in the remainder of cases the students also contribute to assessment. Feedback is both written and oral in 55% of courses surveyed; oral only in 27% and written only in 18%. Fifty-two percent of respondents believed that tutors were “very satisfied” with the suitability of SEP for assessment, while 40% thought they were only “quite satisfied”. As to estimates of student satisfaction with the fairness with which SEP is assessed 56% of respondents thought students were “quite satisfied” and only 40% “very satisfied”.

2.5 Discussion

We investigated the teaching and assessment of SEP in 19 university music departments and 7 conservatoires. We addressed staff perceptions of student learning but explore students’ perceptions in more detail in Chapter 3. The quantitative data is not very informative and it may not be representative; the qualitative data reflects a wide variety of practices and concerns, some shared, some (such as arranging) mentioned by only one respondent. Nevertheless it forms a springboard for future research.

3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment of Group Music Performance: The student experience

3.1 Focus, effort and enjoyment in practice and rehearsal (RNCM)

3.1.1 Introduction

The second aim of the study was to explore different approaches to the constitution of small groups and ensembles, and how they might affect the teaching and learning process. This was achieved by evaluating the effects of forming student musical ensembles (e.g. folk groups, pop groups, classical small ensembles e.g. string quartets, brass quintets) in different years of study (e.g. first year, final year) and in different ways (e.g. randomly; selecting for comparable levels of musical expertise; selecting for mixed levels of musical expertise). We approached this aim in two ways, via diaries and focus group interviews. In this chapter we report the findings of a study undertaken at the RNCM in 2007-2008 in which participants kept diaries of their individual practice sessions and ensemble rehearsals. In Chapters 4 and 5 we report the findings from follow-up interviews with the same participants (and those who had failed to complete diaries in the earlier phase of the study) at both RNCM and ICMuS.

Strategies for ensemble rehearsal have been explored in the past via studies of duos (e.g. Williamon & Davidson, 2002; Ginsborg & King, 2007); string quartets (e.g. Davidson & Good, 2002) and wind quintets (Ford & Davidson, 2003; Burt-Perkins & Mills, 2008), suggesting the importance of clarity as to ensemble members' roles in order to reduce potential conflicts, and effective verbal and non-verbal communication in relation to social as well as musical issues. Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Römer (1993) and Lehmann (2002) found that positive correlations exist between concentration and effort, and concentration and enjoyment, but negative correlations between effort and enjoyment. These findings formed the basis on which our diary study was designed and the framework within which we evaluated the effectiveness of ensemble rehearsal: performers' ratings of their own and their colleagues' focus, effort and enjoyment.

We had planned to compare two first year and two final year ensembles at both institutions, and two ensembles formed randomly or with mixed levels of expertise ("mixed"), and two selected for comparable levels of expertise ("matched") at both institutions, but this proved impossible: at each institution one of the four ensembles that had been recruited dropped out of the diary study, and while sufficient data were collected at RNCM in 2007-2008, the quantity and consistency of data collected at ICMuS was not eventually considered adequate and thus significant. The three RNCM ensembles experienced varying degrees of success, however, measured in terms of a) winning competitions, b) examination grades and c) staying together (!), so it was possible to make a comparison of focus, effort and enjoyment in groups that could justifiably be deemed "successful" and "failing".

3.1.2 Methods

Participants

Four student ensembles were recruited: one newly-formed (SQ1) and one established string quartet (SQ3), one newly-formed first year wind quintet (WQ1) and one established brass quintet.

SQ1 comprised two male (Todd, Mike) and two female first year students (Becca, Fran) “matched” by members of the RNCM Chamber Music staff on the basis of their performance in college entrance auditions. SQ3 was formed by its members – one female (Sue) and three male 3rd year students (Euan, Hal and Rob) – two years before the present study began. WQ1 comprised a “mixed” group of four first year students and one 2nd year female student (Cathy, Fiona, Isla, Kate, Liz) selected by RNCM staff on the basis of the instruments they played, and the brass quintet was a self-formed group comprising one female and four male 3rd year students. The brass quintet, however, did not complete any diaries, although they were happy to be interviewed at the end of this phase of the study.

Materials

Printed diary templates were devised for ensemble rehearsals (Appendix C) and practice sessions in which music for ensemble rehearsals was prepared (Appendix D). These were adapted from diaries that had been devised for students’ personal use and were available on the RNCM Intranet. The diaries had been constructed, originally, on the basis of the results of research on effective practising and memorizing strategies (Ginsborg, 2003), showing that these are likely to involve setting goals, monitoring progress and evaluating achievement.

The ensemble rehearsal diaries requested information including date, place, time, overall duration and content / duration of each activity within the rehearsal, with reference to up to five activities. Participants were asked to say what they thought their ensemble’s goal was, how they went about achieving it, to what extent their strategy was effective, using a rating scale (1=“useless” to 10=“achieved goal 100%”) and what their goal would be next time they engaged in this activity. They were asked to rate their own and their peers’ focus (1=“very distracted” to 10=“completely focused”), effort (1=“just went through the motions” to 10=“worked really hard”) and enjoyment (1=“not at all” to 10=“had a great time”). Finally, participants were asked to describe any performance they had given that day and nominate “one thing [they] were really happy about” and “one thing [they] would like to do better in [their] next performance”. The practice diaries used similar wording, adapted for individuals, and rating scales, but did not ask about performance.

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete diaries whenever they had undertaken individual practice on material for ensemble rehearsals and, as individuals, after each rehearsal. While they were required to undertake this task only for the first two terms of the academic year, SQ1 continued into the third term.

3.1.3 Results

3.1.3.1 Reports

At the end of the academic year, WQ1 won a major prize. At the time of writing, its members are still performing together: it can be considered a “successful” ensemble. SQ1 agreed to disband after their end-of-year assessment (which nevertheless resulted in a highly respectable upper-second class mark), and can therefore be considered to have “failed”, in comparison with WQ1. SQ3 had been extremely successful for three years in

terms of exposure through competitions and public performances, although ultimately it split up and its members formed new ensembles.

Each of the participants' reports, in the form of diary entries relating to practice session or rehearsal content, goals/strategies/plans for each activity within the practice session or rehearsal, and comments on performance, was numbered. As shown in Table 3.1, SQ3 provided more than twice as many reports as SQ1 and WQ1. They reported preparing five quartets, while SQ1 spent nearly two terms on one quartet, and learned a new work. In comparison WQ1 reported preparing and performing three substantial quintets. SQ3 reported more than twice as much individual practice on quartet repertoire as WQ1, and half as much again as SQ1. SQ3 reported 22 quartet rehearsals, including one coaching session, and four performances. They rehearsed three times as long as SQ1, who reported ten rehearsals, including two coaching sessions, and two performances; by contrast, WQ1 reported 17 rehearsals of which more than half were coaching sessions, and two performances.

Table 3.1. Practice and rehearsal reports.

	SQ1	WQ1	SQ3
Repertoire	Mozart, Project	DanceNielsen, Verdi	Reicha, Schumann, Matthews, Brahms, Mozart, Schubert,
Numbered reports	274	278	587
Hours of practice	9.25	6.5	14+
Hours of rehearsal (number of sessions)	11.3 (10)	23.3 (17)	38 (22)

3.1.3.2 Goals and plans for practice sessions and ensemble rehearsals

The content of practice sessions and ensemble rehearsals varied widely, of course, and so therefore did the musicians' goals, individual and shared. Plans related to the musicians' intentions for the next session, once they had evaluated the effectiveness of the strategy they had just used to achieve the goal they had identified. One pair of individual and ensemble rehearsal goals and plans from early and late in each ensemble's set of diaries (typically the first and last practice and rehearsal sessions recorded) are provided in Table 3.2 as examples; strategies are considered in more detail below.

Table 3.2. Examples of goals and plans.

	Goal	Plan
SQ1		
Early practice	decide upon bow stroke and vibrato + practise it (Mike)	Improve (Mike)
Late practice	look over part for tomorrow's assessment (Todd)	None (Todd S)
Early rehearsal	introduce some interest into work-discussion (Becca)	to consolidate the ideas we discussed although we will probably have changed them as we will have a lesson tomorrow and that will bring new ideas (Becca)
Late rehearsal	perform well and enjoy it (Todd)	there will not be a next time (Todd)
WQ1		
Early practice	practise fast scales (Kate)	Keep practising fast passages (Kate)
Late practice	to sort out the technically challenging sections (Fiona)	to play these passages in the context of the piece (Fiona)

Early rehearsal	Play through 1 st movement of Nielsen (Kate)	To work on it more, get fast sections together (Kate)
Late rehearsal	to perfect the 4th variation of the 3rd mov of Nielsen (Isla)	to do the same but with the last variation (Isla)
SQ3		
Early practice	Secure finale passage work (Euan)	More of the same to secure further (Euan)
Late practice	Building up speed while maintaining intonation and sound quality (Sue)	The same process without a metronome (Sue)
Early rehearsal	Intonation, articulation and flow of 4th movement of Schumann Quartet no.1 and read through of Mozart Quartet (Sue)	The 4th movement should be rehearsed up to speed, focusing on flow, articulation and intonation (Sue)
Late rehearsal	direction of quaver lines that accompany the melody (Euan)	ideas agreed upon-now they need to be maintained (Euan)

3.1.3.3 Practice and rehearsal strategies

Participants were requested to evaluate the strategies they used to achieve their goals by rating them on a scale of 1 (low = least effective) to 10 (high = most effective). Tables 3.3 and 3.4 provide examples of practice and rehearsal strategies that were rated highest and lowest by each participant.

Table 3.3. Examples of practice strategies.

	Highest (rating)	Lowest (rating)
SQ1		
Becca	just thought about the things then played them (9)	practised slowly (7)
Fran	Metronome (9)	Playing sections with different bowing, articulation etc. (6)
Mike	slow practice (8)	attempt and decide (4)
Todd	listened to a few different recordings while reading the score (9)	played through the music finding places which needed a warmer sound (5)
WQ1		
Cathy	Tried different fingerings for E natural to flatten it (9)	Experimented with delaying and exaggerating crescendos (5)
Fiona	Experimented, playing the notes with lots of air and a firmer embouchure (9)	worked out which fingerings I was going to use for the high notes, then played the passages slowly and sped them up gradually until I could play them in tempo (5)
Isla	Dotted rhythms on semis. Practise slow then built up. Listen to recording (10)	Tried to start slowly and speed up (3 – I wasn't focused enough so stopped)
Kate	slow practice, in different rhythms (10)	n/a – lowest rating was 9
Liz	Playing slowly, deciding if it's double tongued or not. Practising the difficult intervals (7)	practised it through several times (3)
SQ3		
Euan	Repetition of passages and reading the score away from the violin (11)	Simulating performance situations and repeating this approach (7)
Rob	Slow practice (8.5)	Playing slowly and with a good sound (7)
Sue	Slow practice of solo passage for intonation (keeping as many fingers	n/a – lowest rating was 8

	down for accuracy); focusing and right arm/wrist/hand for string crossing and building up tempo to play up to speed (9)	
Hal	Work slowly, remembering everything we discussed in rehearsal (10)	n/a – only provided rating for one strategy

Table 3.4. Examples of rehearsal strategies.

	Highest (rating)	Lowest (rating)
SQ1		
Becca	slowly playing through (8)	played through a couple of times. Discussed a few things (4)
Fran	played through slowly and increased speed once it was stable (8)	playing through the movements (4)
Mike	practise away from instruments (9)	little to be gained. Non string player. Difficult to connect (4)
Todd	discussed what vibrato and articulation we wanted (9)	we will not use anything from this lesson in our next rehearsal (3)
WQ1		
Cathy	character and ff dynamics being a lot louder to create atmosphere (10)	We worked through section by section and concentrated on dynamics (7)
Fiona	we were given some great advice on how to characterise the music. It wasn't just about creating a mood, but also it's useful to have a picture or story in our heads. This makes the music come to life (10)	we had all listened to the recording before the rehearsal so we worked on the beginning of the movement (5)
Isla	did it chord by chord adjusting the pitch directed by XXX (staff member) (10)	Filled in the semiquaver rests before the scales (8)
Kate	work through sections that we find difficult to play together (10)	n/a – lowest rating was 9
Liz	Playing through stopping to correct things then playing through without stopping (9)	Playing an extra note in the rest to keep sense of motion, playing them slowly (7)
SQ3		
Euan	discussion and experimentation with and without the melodic line (10)	We are some way off achieving this. Perhaps more detailed work will help but it all seems a bit broken up (4)
Rob	Playing in twos or threes and commenting (10)	Talking about slur markings etc (6)
Sue	We first discussed what Matthews had said. Then we took each place apart, making sure the main voice was heard. It was mainly to do with balance (9)	Discussion and slow work on the movement (7)
Hal	Making sure the important voice was heard at all times (10)	discussion and bringing arguments to back up our ideas and suggestions (5)

Numbers of and mean ratings for practice and rehearsal strategies are shown in Table 3.5. ANOVA revealed a main effect of ensemble on practice strategy rating ($F_{[2,79]}=4.78$, $p=.011$); post-hoc tests showed significant differences between SQ1 and WQ3. There was also a main effect of ensemble on rehearsal strategy rating ($F_{[2,237]}=31.42$, $p<.0001$); post-hoc tests showed significant differences between all ensembles.

Table 3.5. Practice and rehearsal strategies.

	SQ1	WQ1	SQ3
Practice strategies rated (reported)	26 (26)	26 (26)	30 (30)
Practice strategy mean ratings (SD)	7.54 (1.2)	7.12 (2)	8.25 (.81)
Rehearsal strategies rated (reported)	49 (50)	44 (50)	147 (150)
Rehearsal strategy mean ratings (SD)	6.6 (1.52)	8.57 (1.28)	7.98 (1.17)

3.1.3.4 Focus, effort and enjoyment

Participants were asked to rate their own focus, effort and enjoyment in their own individual practice sessions, and their own and their colleagues' focus effort and enjoyment in ensemble rehearsals. Once again, they were asked to use a rating scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high). Mean ratings for focus, effort and enjoyment are shown in Table 3.6. The correlation between participants' ratings of focus and effort in individual practice ($r[42]=.622$, $p<.0001$) was stronger than that between focus and enjoyment ($r[42]=.392$, $p=.01$). There was no correlation between effort and enjoyment.

Table 3.6. Mean ratings (and standard deviations) of focus, effort and enjoyment.

			WQ1	SQ1	SQ3
Practice	Self	Focus	7.07 (1.86)	7.86 (1.1)	8.78 (.7)
		Effort	6.64 (2.21)	7.64 (1.22)	8.43 (.85)
		Enjoyment	5.64 (1.95)	5.86 (2.14)	7.64 (.93)
Ensemble	Self	Focus	8.77 (1.33)	6.92 (1.52)	8.12 (.9)
		Effort	8.71 (1.38)	7.05 (1.76)	8.43 (.96)
		Enjoyment	9.31 (.9)	6.26 (2.37)	7.5 (1.04)
Ensemble	Other	Focus	8.54 (1.72)	6.76 (1.76)	8.02 (1)
		Effort	8.8 (1.32)	6.96 (1.56)	8.24 (.95)
		Enjoyment	9.17 (.92)	6.76 (2.26)	7.79 (1.03)

The correlations between ratings of participants' own and others' focus, effort and enjoyment in ensemble rehearsal are shown in Tables 3.7 and 3.8. There were also significant correlations between participants' ratings of their own and their colleagues' focus ($r[134]=.672$), effort ($r[134]=.697$) and enjoyment ($r[133]=.738$), all significant at $p < .0001$.

Table 3.7. Ratings of own focus, effort and enjoyment in ensemble rehearsals.

N = 135	Focus	Effort
Effort	.827	
Enjoyment	.566	.546

Table 3.8. Ratings of others' focus, effort and enjoyment in ensemble rehearsals.

N = 135	Focus	Effort
Effort	.830	
Enjoyment	.413	.457

There were main effects of ensemble on focus ($F[2,39]=6.001$, $p=.005$), effort ($F[2,39]=4.76$, $p=.014$) and enjoyment in individual practice ($F[2,39]=5.48$, $p=.008$) such that the ratings of SQ3 were the highest; post-hoc tests showed significant differences between SQ3 and WQ1 on all three dimensions, and between all three ensembles on

enjoyment. The main effects of ensemble on self-ratings were all significant at $p < .0001$: focus ($F[2,131]=22.1$); effort ($F[2,131] = 17.04$) and enjoyment ($F [2,131]=37.44$), as were their ratings of their colleagues: focus ($F[2,132]=15.02$); effort ($F 2,132]=21.61$) and enjoyment ($F[2,132]=24.76$). There were significant differences between all ensembles' self-ratings on all three dimensions, *except* SQ3 and WQ1 on effort, and on ratings of others between WQ1 and SQ1 on focus, SQ3 and SQ1 on effort, and all three ensembles on enjoyment.

3.1.3.5 Performance summaries

At the end of the ensemble rehearsal diaries participants were asked to summarise a performance undertaken since the last diary was completed, if appropriate. Table 3.9 provides an example from each of the participants who commented on the same performance.

Table 3.9. Examples of performance summaries.

	“One thing I was happy about in today’s performance was...”	“One thing I would like us to do better was...”
SQ1		
Becca	relaxed, happy feel to performance	prepare in more detail
Fran	tempi and dynamics	coordination
Mike	improved intonation	smile more
Todd	we established the correct tempos	listen more to each other
WQ1		
Isla	we got told we communicated very well and knew the music very well	a few silly mistakes but nothing drastic – we won!
Kate	we won	a few slips
SQ3		
Rob	Good feeling overall and we performed very well	Be more comfortable from the beginning

3.1.4 Discussion

There were striking differences between the three ensembles in terms of the number of reports they produced, their hours of practice and the hours of rehearsal they undertook: the more experienced string quartet (SQ3) was the most conscientious. The “successful” first year wind quintet (WQ1) rehearsed twice as much as the “failed” first year string quartet (SQ1), but the string players undertook considerably more individual practice. This may relate to the relative difficulty of string vs wind parts, but given the findings in relation to focus, effort and enjoyment, it is more likely that the wind quintet positively enjoyed working together while the string quartet found ensemble rehearsals less rewarding.

It is not possible, in this context, to discuss goals and plans in detail. Nevertheless there are both similarities and differences, in the examples provided, between the goals and plans of members of the more and less experienced ensembles. For example, the experienced string player’s early practice goal “*secure finale passage work*”, with its attendant plan “*more of the same to secure further*” is no more sophisticated than the wind player’s goal to “*practise fast scales*” and plan to “*keep practising fast passages*”. On the other hand, the less experienced string player’s goal for the quartet’s final performance “*perform well and enjoy it*” (followed, poignantly, by “*there will not be a next time*”) contrasts with the more experienced string player at the same stage: “*direction of quaver*

lines that accompany the melody” / “ideas agreed upon – now they need to be maintained”.

The perceived effectiveness of different practice and rehearsal strategies was explored via a rating scale from 1 to 10. Rating scales are, of course, highly subjective and this is illustrated by the choice of one participant to rate one strategy 11, while the lowest rating provided (by a different participant) was 3. Some participants reported that all their strategies were effective, insofar as they rated no strategy lower than 8. Once again, it is possible to see in the examples provided both similarities and differences attributable to context and experience, which confirm the findings of the previous research on which the diary study was originally based (Ginsborg, 2003): thus “*practised it through several times*” (WQ1, rated 3) was perceived to be comparatively ineffective while thoughtful practice, e.g. “*...remembering everything we discussed in rehearsal*” (SQ3, rated 10) or even mental practice, “*...reading the score away from the violin*” (SQ3, rated 11) was perceived as highly effective.

Lehmann’s (2002) findings were confirmed for individual practice by positive correlations between focus and effort, and focus and enjoyment. No negative correlation was found, however, between effort and enjoyment, and all three dimensions were correlated for rehearsals; there were also positive correlations between participants’ rating of their own and their colleagues’ focus, effort and enjoyment. While it is not surprising that SQ3 both practised and rehearsed considerably more than their younger colleagues, given that they had much more repertoire to perform, they also enjoyed their individual practice more than did the other groups, and more than their ensemble rehearsals, although they attributed higher levels of enjoyment to their colleagues. And although the members of WQ1 carried out the fewest individual practice hours – and indeed both WQ1 and SQ1 reported least enjoyment from practising – they had a great deal of coaching from a range of tutors and this, together with their ratings of their rehearsal strategies as even higher than SQ3 and the “failed” SQ1 may in part account for their success; SQ1 took part in just two rather unsuccessful coaching sessions early in the first term. Furthermore, WQ1 reported the highest levels of focus, effort and enjoyment in rehearsal both for themselves and their colleagues. It may thus be possible for student musicians to do less individual practice if they have plenty of, and enjoy ensemble rehearsal, although this is, of course, dependent on their role within the group. A final contrast is between SQ1, who rated focus, effort and enjoyment for individual practice higher than WQ1 but provided the lowest ratings on all three dimensions for ensemble rehearsal – it was perhaps inevitable that they would “fail” as a group.

Finally, only a few performances were reported as requested. We cannot know how the other members of SQ3 felt about the performance reported by one participant in rather general terms (“*good feeling overall*”). The delight of the two wind players when they won a major competition is palpable. It is striking, however, that the four members SQ1, about to disband, all chose to focus on different aspects of their performance.

To summarise, while further and more detailed analyses remain to be carried out the findings of the present study nevertheless have implications for theories of motivation in relation to practice vs rehearsal, as well as practical applications for those engaged in the teaching and coaching of chamber musicians.

3.2 Students' perceptions of group formation and coaching/tutoring (RNCM and ICMus)

3.2.1 Introduction

We addressed the second aim of the study – to consider different approaches to the constitution of small groups and ensembles, and how they might affect the teaching and learning process – in two ways. The first was the diary study reported in Chapter 3.1. The second was a qualitative study based on data from focus group interviews undertaken with the students from both institutions, RNCM and ICMuS, who had taken part in the diary study, and those who been recruited but had not actually completed the diaries as requested. The data are extremely rich, and further analyses could well be undertaken, but we have confined ourselves, so far, to exploring 1) the students' thoughts and feelings in relation to the ways in which their groups were formed, and 2) the impact of teaching – coaching or tutoring – on their learning of small group performance.

3.2.2 Methods

Participants

As described in Chapter 3, we aimed to recruit two “beginner” (first year) and two “advanced” (third year) ensembles or bands in each institution, eight in all. At both institutions, we were told, tutors allocate students to groups towards the end of the first term, when they have had some experience of playing together in different ensembles, and we asked them to recommend groups that had been selected in one of two ways: mixed (the primary criterion being that the students played appropriate instruments) or or matched (they were all of a similar standard). This was easier to achieve with the beginners than the advanced students. Both advanced ensembles at RNCM had formed themselves and the advanced folk band at ICMuS (the advanced pop band “imploded” and did not take part in the study) had been matched so successfully by tutors the previous year that the members had decided to continue as a band not only while they remained at university but also once they graduate.

Table 1 shows information relating to the seven groups who took part in the study. All the members of the wind quintet were interviewed, as were all the members of the two folk bands. Four of the five members of the pop band were interviewed, as were three of the brass quintet, two of the beginner string quartet and one member of the advanced string quartet.

Table 3.10. Participants.

	Conservatoire	FG participants	University	FG participants
Beginner	String quartet (matched: two members knew each other already) SQ1 - disbanded	Todd Becca	Folk band (matched: two members knew each other already) FB1 - disbanded	Donna Ellie One other female Vic Simon
	Wind quintet (mixed) WQ1 - continuing	Isla Kate Fiona Cathy	Pop band (mixed) PB1 - continuing	Tom Naomi Fergus Will

		Liz		
Advanced	String quartet (established: self- formed) SQ3 - disbanded	Euan	Folk band (established: matched the previous year) FB3 - continuing	Joe Two other males
	Brass quintet (established: self- formed) BQ3 - continuing	Emma Ben Charlie		

Materials

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised for the purpose of obtaining data that could be used for “triangulation” purposes. A total of 17 questions was asked: two regarding participants’ expectations of the module/option; three relating to group formation; four concerning rehearsals and coaching; three about individual practice and its relation to group rehearsal; five on assessment and the remainder focusing on the experience of undertaking the research. Follow-up questions were inserted as appropriate, and participants were invited to add further information at the end of each interview.

Procedure

Seven interviews were conducted, one each with the representatives of each group. Both researchers were present at all the interviews, which were recorded. Richard Wistreich interviewed the RNCM students while Jane Ginsborg took notes; she subsequently transcribed the recordings. Jane Ginsborg interviewed the ICMuS students while Richard Wistreich took notes; the recordings were transcribed professionally.

Analysis was undertaken by Jane Ginsborg using the framework analysis method recommended by Krueger and Casey (2000) adapted by Rabiee (2004). The transcripts were ordered by interview question, so that responses from each of the seven groups appeared under each question. The quotations were then read and re-read before being re-ordered by topic. Each quotation was then considered in terms of the words used and their context (usually the question being asked), the frequency and extensiveness of the ideas expressed, their specificity (e.g. reference to actual events), the intensity with which they were expressed and finally the “bigger picture”: the themes that emerged from the participants’ utterances.

3.2.3 Results and discussion

3.2.3.1 Themes relating to group formation

Responses to questions relating to their expectations of the module or option in which they would undertake small group music-making and their thoughts on the way their groups had been formed produced three themes relating to 1) tutor selection and “knowing” people / working with existing friends / developing friendships through the group; 2) the tension between “getting on” and “working well”; 3) group aspirations at university/college and beyond.

2.3.1.1 Tutor selection and “knowing people”

So for example, being put in a group with people you don't know was described by one of the RNCM beginner ensembles as “scary”:

Fiona: we were put in a wind quintet

Kate: I didn't know any of them at all

Cathy: ... it was a bit scary at first because we didn't know each other (WQ1, continuing)

Two members of the one of the beginner bands at ICMuS were in the same situation:

What were your expectations at the start of this module?

Vic: We never knew each other before...so it's like working with completely new musicians and getting to know each other. (FB1, now disbanded)

Working with existing friends

But two members of the same band had known each other before university:

Kevin: me and Vic have known each other before Uni and we've been in a band before that and then when we got put in the same band we knew exactly how each other works. (FB1 now disbanded)

The two advanced ensembles at RNCM had formed their own groups:

Euan: we happened to be two sets of friends who happened to meet in our kitchen on the first day and realized we were a quartet and decided to sight-read something, and it worked and we were both ...both sets of friends were very excited so we decided to stick together. (SQ3 stayed together for three years, now disbanded)

Ben: because four of us met on a music course and we'd sort of – I mean we'd known each other for about two years beforehand, and we'd known Charlie for about the last year of the course (BQ3 still working together into fourth year)

“Knowing” people doesn't necessarily mean that the group will actually succeed, as a group.

Todd: and I think we were supposed to be one of the best groups with the best players and I knew [the viola player] before, so we assumed we had a kind of natural ability to work together which was very wrong... yeah, so I was expecting it to go very well actually (SQ1, now disbanded)

Kate: Some people form them from like friendship groups already...

Cathy: And that often causes problems because if they're already friends and then they start like bitching at each other [everyone laughs] (WQ1, continuing)

Naomi: you have to kind of draw the line between friendship and professionalism, which is quite...unless you've got a solid friendship you can lose a lot of friends through it. So it's probably better to not be in a band with people who are close to you because it can turn out quite wrong. (PB1, continuing)

Nevertheless, hope springs eternal:

Todd: With my piano trio I was just lucky... it just happens that it's worked out, but not so the quartet I guess, OK, but I've just found people... for this year, I'm playing with two people I played with before, before I came to the RNCM, so it's tried and tested (SQ1, disbanded)

Ben: I think it's usually done, you kind of ask your friends to do it because you know you'll get along with people (BQ3, continuing)

Developing friendships through the group

And there's always the possibility that friendships will emerge from the experience of working together:

Cathy: but after that [first] two weeks it was absolutely fine, and it was quite nice to form friendships through the group we didn't have any like preconceptions so we could be, we could say can you play that bit louder and it's not a problem (WQ1)

What is it about this group that makes you want to stay together?

Charlie: When we go out and do concerts together it's great fun, going for tea first, it's just good fun (BQ3)

3.2.3.1.2 The tension between “getting on” and “working well”

Some participants felt that being able to work well together is a matter of luck:

Isla: we were really lucky this year, that we just happened to be put together and it just really worked straight away [...]

Kate: We were just put randomly together and it really worked (WQ1)

Becca: I think it's luck a lot of the time you know to be really successful

Todd: With my piano trio I was just lucky... it just happens that it's worked out (SQ1)

And/or trial and error:

Would you have liked to have formed your ensemble in some different way and if so, how?

Becca: I guess you can never really know who you're going to work well with but you have to get together somehow, but then I think a lot of groups can break up and reform, it's good experience (...)

Todd: It's like last year when we thought about just very politely saying to Hannah do you want to give it up and stop worrying about it and get another [player] in [...] but I think, yeah, it's true, to find the right people you just have to experiment (SQ1)

The trial and error, in the case of the ICMuS ensembles, was arranged by tutors:

How do you feel about the way that your ensemble was formed?

Ellie: the tutors, they originally put us into...they tried out different combinations of people from the whole year and you would be in a band with some people for a couple of hours and have to try and work out something. And they did that a few times and then eventually they just kind of chose what kind of groups they thought might work well together (...)

Simon: it seemed to work quite well because we've all quite similar tastes in music. (FB1)

While one of the students in the beginner folk band also referred to “luck”, notice that this relates to musical genre as well as personality:

Ellie: we were pretty lucky in that there's a nice mix of instruments and mix of people and stuff. It might have been fairly difficult to try and choose our own [group]; I don't know how we would have done it. (FB1)

Working together well (“gelling”) was attributed to the music by the beginner pop group, too:

William: Well, I think that we all ... there's no real arguments within the band. We just seemed to go towards the music that we play now. There's never anyone that said, 'No, I don't want to do this, I don't want to do that'. We just all seemed to gel really well. (...)

When you come to form another ensemble, how will you do it?

Fergus: A couple of them I've been asked to join. And in some cases it's been a full set up but sometimes they'll also bring other musicians in as well. It's usually like-minded people, people who've got the same wavelength as well. So obviously you've got the same sort of behaviour in the band; people who want to play the same sort of music as you. (PB1)

Joe: I think a lot of the time it's trying stuff for one gig and then it happens to work. But the other thing is if I really want to try a particular type of music or I really like a particular instrument or I like a particular player of that instrument, then it's just a case of asking them and saying, 'Do you want to try playing some stuff?' and if it works, it works and if it doesn't it doesn't. (FB3)

For some participants – all at ICMuS – working well together is just what you have to do, and requires organisation:

Would you have liked to have formed your ensemble in some different way and if so, how?

Ellie: it's all part of the whole ensemble thing where you're just kind of thrown in together and you have to work with what you've got. I think it's a good experience, really, because it makes you get on with what you have to do. (...) (FB1)

Naomi: We came out with quite a good little set, I think. I feel we were quite organised. I had quite a bit of time off due to recurring laryngitis, which was very frustrating but I think we got it together in the end. We gelled pretty good throughout, didn't we, really? (...)

For one ensemble at RNCM, though, which had disbanded by the end of the year, there was a real tension between “getting on” and “working well”:

To what extent were your expectations fulfilled

Todd: We didn't work well together, I think we all got on too well, it seems like a strange thing to say but we didn't have a good working relationship, we just had a giggle

Generally how did what you learned in the coaching sessions feed into a) your own practice? Group practice?

Becca: I think the problem was like just lack of focus in rehearsals as well, like we'd kind of start off good and then it would just start to deteriorate into jokes [laughter] I mean I really enjoyed it, it was good fun

Todd: It was good fun but it was just frustrating because we wouldn't get anything done

Is there anything else you would like to add now?

Todd: I found it a very strange experience getting on so well with four people and yet not being able to work... that was one of the strangest things

Becca: You'd think it would work well

Todd: Because every other group I've ever been in it's always been such a clear cut thing, that we could work together, but with us it just didn't – it was just, my God, we couldn't work together (SQ1)

3.2.3.1.3 Group aspirations at university/college and beyond

The final theme that emerged from these questions related to the group's aspirations either while the participants were still studying:

What were your expectations at the start of this module?

Euan: The start of our group... we hoped that it was going to be a successful ensemble which would help us to have great coaching and do a lot of performing and we envisaged that we'd stick together throughout the four years at the RNCM and basically that all of us would take it very seriously ...which I think has happened. (SQ3, disbanded)

...both at college and perhaps beyond, though this looks increasingly difficult:

What were your expectations at the start of this module?

Charlie: I think at the beginning of first year we hoped it would last for the whole time of being at college and hope to go on after that (BQ3)

BUT

Charlie: but as we've gone through college we've seen it's not so easy to carry on after college making money as a brass quintet (BQ3, continuing)

... and, in comparison, with the express intention of developing a professional career within the group:

Carl: We were put together as a group in the second half of the second year (...) We chose to continue with the same group into third year.

Joe: We've also become more of a working ensemble as well because we would have material from the year before so we could also use that and go out and play gigs and stuff.

Carl: It was a case of not only improving what we do but just becoming a more professional outfit, I guess, and also not only get performance opportunities but we could work on our stage presence and our actual show as well as the music itself ... I think we said from the start that we didn't just want to be a module. We wanted to be a real band that went out and gigged, primarily, and assess the module as an afterthought really. There didn't seem in any point in we could just take an exam in it.

Joe: Yeah. It wasn't a case of just doing it for university. We wanted to stretch outside of that as well. (FB3, continuing)

3.2.3.2 Themes relating to coaching / tutoring

Small group music making was taught differently in the two institutions. At RNCM, ensembles arranged their own rehearsals and would sign up to see members of staff for coaching sessions, when they felt ready. At ICMuS, bands had timetabled rehearsal slots during which time the tutor or pair of tutors to whom they had been allocated might call in

to see how they were getting on and offer guidance; they could also ask for additional help at other times, subject to tutor availability. Responses to questions concerning *when* coaching/tutoring was requested, *who* was approached and *how* coaching/tutoring fed into both individual practice and group rehearsals produced the following contrasts: 1) product vs process vs opportunity; 2) specificity vs variety vs availability; 3) group vs musical concerns.

3.2.3.2.1 Product vs process vs opportunity

When groups were working towards a performance they would sign up for coaching or ask for input from tutor(s):

Todd: We got off to quite an intensive start as soon as we found out about the festival (SQ1)

Kate: and also when we were working towards the chamber competition we had loads... we got lots of tutors who had opinions on it (WQ1)

Donna: If we've got stuff [going on?], we might ask them to come and give us a hand. (FB1)

Joe: And maybe another factor was if we had a gig coming up that we needed to do a specific set of...like if we did a gig where we were billed as a blue grass band, we'd try and get some more blue grass up (FB3)

They would also ask for help at an earlier stage:

Fiona: after we'd learned a piece

Cathy: Yeah when we could do all the notes but needed help on the musical side because it's not – you don't really go and have coaching and waste time doing like semiquavers... so when we'd got all the notes there we needed help on just you how to perform it

Isla: ... more direction (WQ1)

Charlie: As soon as we think we can get through a piece without looking silly, when there's something someone can help with (BQ3)

Simon: I suppose when we think we'd finalised our set. Or maybe if it's still work in progress [basically?], maybe just about good enough to perform, we want to say, 'Have a look at this. Is there anything you can to help us finalise this and make it better?' (FB1)

But it might simply be a case of taking the opportunity when it arose:

Euan: It was more a case of getting the coaching or tuition when we could rather than thinking now we're ready we'll go and get one. It's usually a scramble getting to the sign up sheets or to contacting the Head of Chamber Music so... so really if we could get a lesson then we made sure that we had enough... we'd scheduled enough rehearsals beforehand to get it up to a high enough standard. Even after a couple of rehearsals I suppose tuition can be beneficial. (SQ3)

3.2.3.2.2 Specificity vs variety vs availability

At ICMuS, bands worked with specific tutors, usually at specific times:

Vic: ...mostly we were left to ourselves just to ... put our arrangements together and like within the four hours of practice [we] were having on Monday, [our] tutors [...] would come in for just a short amount of time, just to see how it's going and make sure we [were] kind of doing the right thing.

Ellie: Yeah. They would pop in and out and give help if they thought we needed it [...] they usually didn't ever tell us that we had to do anything in particular, they just gave suggestions so we might work with the ideas they gave us. (FB1)

Carl: I think it was partly decided for us by [tutor]'s coming in next week and she wanted to hear two new sets. Or in the first semester she said, 'You've got...' 40 minutes we had to play at the end of semester and she wanted us to do all original material because we'd been doing mostly trad blue grass. So she wanted us to write the whole set.

Joe: Well, we'd done like two, maybe...sorry, one or two of our own songs, songs and she really liked that direction. I think she thought that was much more individual. So that's why she sort of wanted us to write a lot more of our own stuff. Which we did, I think, last year.

INT: So the coaching was really determined by the tutor's schedule and by your preparedness to do what she asked?

Carl: Maybe slight fear of what she asked. I think it was a bit of both, really. Yeah, her schedule obviously played a part in what she wanted but I think at the same time painting her as being a bit scary, she's not at all. It wasn't really like that. She was up for listening to what we thought as well; she just maybe wouldn't agree. (FB3)

The RNCM ensembles could, and did choose tutors with specific expertise, too:

Emma: I mean, yeah, back in the first year I think we used everyone but [...] we'd go and see [tutor] every now and again, I mean especially if there was a piece we were struggling with (BQ3)

Another strategy was to go for variety, particularly for the beginner ensembles:

Becca: They all had different approaches

Todd: One time we signed up not knowing that we'd signed up for a lesson with the Head of Brass

Becca: We also had the Head of Piano as well, and another piano teacher

Todd: That was very interesting because they put a very different slant on what we were doing

Becca: One made us chuck an imaginary balloon – and that was really good for teamwork

Todd: It's so interesting, when you go to those people who don't specialize in string instruments, they didn't – I think very much because it's Mozart, they just really avoided giving too much advice on the actual music itself, they just talked about ensemble playing. They were very different, but helpful [...]

Becca: The most useful one was with [tutor], she worked in real detail. If we'd have carried on with that level of detail we'd have got pretty good (SQ1)

Cathy: ...we tried to vary who we'd go and see so we didn't have just one person's opinion

Fiona: ...sometimes they'd tell us completely conflicting things about a particular ...

Isla: ...so then [...] we got to decide our own... (WQ1)

Isla: Just what suited us best, try out different ways and find out we liked as a quintet (WQ1)

One way of achieving variety was to approach the members' individual teachers:

Cathy: Sometimes we'd go to our teachers as well, like [...] just obviously because they were interested in helping us out (WQ1)

In the last resort, ensembles might simply sign up with whoever was available:

Becca: Just whoever was free

Todd: We didn't know them yet – now we're more clued in about the rest of the staff so we can pick (SQ1)

Euan: We also had a few lessons from [tutor], and we're all really quite good friends so it's sometimes easier to get lessons with her rather than through the sign up sheets which as I say can be difficult – really with whoever was available. (SQ3)

3.2.3.2.3 Group concerns vs musical concerns

Three of the ensembles at RNCM highlighted the contrast between advice specific to the music itself and the teaching of generic skills relating to group performance:

Becca: We didn't really incorporate anything – well maybe some

Todd: After [tutor]'s lesson we did

Becca: Yeah, because that was very specific to the phrasing and bowing but the others' ideas weren't so specific so it was hard to just... just kind of general things about how you should play well together (SQ1)

And later:

Becca: I think it would be helpful if they gave us more help with like rehearsal techniques as a group

Todd: As soon as you arrive here they should be sitting you down and maybe giving you a couple of lectures on just actually how to rehearse, the way to go about it and not to let someone dominate the group

Becca: Especially at the start because everybody is unsure of how to rehearse properly (SQ1)

Fiona: I think it was more beneficial for the group because... as in it wasn't how we played the notes or anything like that, it was how we'd learned it as a group and

Kate: They often said stuff about like... just general dynamics, you know there were certain things that every person we had would say to us so that we knew that in our rehearsals that's what we had to work on (WQ1)

Charlie: I think it teaches you a lot about playing in a quintet so if you get to play with another quintet and do a gig with someone else, I mean just going in on the day. I think just general skills like just leading

Emma: ...communication

Charlie: communication...

Emma: ...confidence as well

Charlie: I don't think it had much effect on personal practice

Ben: ...although I think if we'd been told something we'd generally remember it for the next few rehearsals or say "remember, so and so said this" so we'd try and do it in here then hopefully I think you'd just start doing it subconsciously

Emma: ...without being told

Charlie: ...unless we don't agree

Ben: Yeah, unless we don't agree

Emma: ...which is a good sign [laughter] (BQ3)

One ensemble referred only to musical concerns:

Charlie: Well, first of all after we'd had a lesson we'd usually then go downstairs and have a coffee or something and discuss what we feel we'd learned, what we liked – because obviously of course in the lesson you listen to the teacher and some people will say things but they tend to hide their opinions so we'd try to get them all out in the open so that when by the time we come to the next rehearsal we know, we know where we're all at... and of course when we get to the first rehearsal we usually take the specific corners that we'd been working on in the lesson and discuss them further with the instruments... (SQ3)

And two of ICMuS bands commented on the effects of teaching, in relation to group concerns. The beginner pop band talked about 'bandness':

Can you teach it? And can you learn it? Can you learn that kind of bandness?

Tom: Of course you can, yeah. I don't think it's a knack just certain people possess. I don't think it's anything like that.

Naomi: I think it's half and half.

William: With all kinds of arts you can't really teach creativity because ...

Tom: I think everyone has it in a certain way. It's just unlocking it, kind of thing. (...) It's different. People are different. Different people express [it] in [a] different way. (...)

William: I think it's just having appreciation for everyone else in the band and listening to them. (PB1)

They were planning to expand their membership, however, and were aware of the potential consequences:

Naomi: Might all change when we get the drummer.

Tom: Yeah. Could totally change it.

Naomi: I know this is just my own personal experience, I've never met a drummer who's sane in my life. It will be interesting and challenging, possibly, to bring someone else into the band when we've been working together as a unit. It will be interesting. (PB1)

In contrast, the advanced folk band commented on the relationship of group concerns to individual practice:

Carl: Mostly [tutor]'s direction was to do with group dynamics and so individual practice...you can't really practise your stage presence within a group on your own. And if you can you're probably mental, let's face it. (FB3)

3.2.4 Conclusion

As Rabiee (2004, p. 657) says, "The process of qualitative analysis aims to bring meaning to a situation rather than the search for truth focused on by quantitative research." In this chapter we have explored the ways in which the participants' experiences are meaningful to them. To answer the questions "What are the *best* ways of constituting student groups?" and "How do these affect teaching and learning?" we would need to gather a great deal more data from many more ensembles reflecting measurable outcomes such as hours rehearsed – as in Chapter 3 – and marks for performance obtained, but we can see nevertheless from the data presented in this chapter that the students themselves feel that what matters, and is meaningful to them, is what they actually do when they rehearse once

their bands or ensembles have been formed, how they feel about each other, the music that they are playing, and the ways in which they are helped to learn by the guidance – rather than coaching or tutoring – of staff.

3.3 Studying to be a Band: Learning Collective Performance at Newcastle University

3.3.1 Introduction

As already noted, ensembles were recruited at ICMuS in two academic years, 2007-8 and 2008-9, for the purposes of conducting studies of **Focus, effort and enjoyment in practice and rehearsal** complementary to the study at the RNCM in 2007-8 reported in Chapter 3.1. In 2007-8 there were four ensembles at ICMuS: a first year folk ensemble; a third year (pre-finalist) folk ensemble; a third year (first honours year) pop band; and a fourth year (finalist) pop band. Quite early on in the year the latter ensemble ‘imploded’ and failed to report any data, although subsequently, one of the members of the band did contribute a valuable diary covering its short lifetime. The other three ensembles submitted diary reports in a somewhat haphazard manner, but including periods of intensive reporting by the two folk ensembles. However, once all the reports had been processed, it was clear that they did not constitute a sufficiently consistent body of evidence to produce data for significant analysis.

In 2008-9, five ensembles were recruited initially: two first year folk ensembles; one third year folk ensemble, one third year pop band and one final year folk band. Again, despite changing the method of collecting data from a paper-based diary one to an on-line system using SurveyMonkey, backed up by weekly email reminders, none of the ensembles returned significant numbers of reports. Although the reasons for these consistent problems were not pursued in a systematic study, anecdotal reporting by many participants suggests that the time burden and also more fundamental factors linked to the whole ethos of folk and pop band culture and practice were important. The data that were collected and subject to preliminary analysis, especially for the two bands which managed some periods of potentially significant reporting in 2007-8, has been collated and could, in principle, be used for future study.

Notwithstanding this somewhat disappointing outcome to the diary exercises, the intensive structured interviews with the three ‘surviving’ bands from the 2007-8 year, conducted in October 2008 and similar interviews conducted with one of the first year folk bands, the third year folk band and the final year pop band from the 2008-9 study, conducted in June 2009, provide rich rewards for future qualitative analysis. Some of the material from 2007-8 was included in the study reported in 3.2.

3.3.2 Methods

All of the Newcastle interviews were conducted using using the same principles, structured questions and methodology reported in 3.2 above. The one difference was that the interviews conducted at Newcastle in June 2009 had no note-taker present (the interviewer in all cases was Dr Wistreich). The interviews took place in a quiet office with the participants seated around a table with the interviewer and were recorded using a digital recording machine placed in the middle of the table. The interviews were subsequently transcribed professionally and then calibrated and analysed. Answers to the same questions were grouped together and read carefully, and on the basis of subsequent

discussion, a number of particular themes were selected for further investigation. One of the factors that influenced the choice of subject areas was simply where it was thought that particularly interesting or significant matters appeared to recur in different interviews. Another was a decision to focus on topics complementary to those that had been covered in the study of the 2007-8 interviews, reported in 3.2.

3.3.3 Report

Instead of reporting the outcomes of these readings in the form of a qualitative research report as in the previous chapter, we simply reprint here the transcript of a paper presented by Dr Wistreich at the International Council for Traditional Music, Ireland, Annual Conference, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick on 27 February 2010. The intention is to provide an example of one way in which a relatively small sample of the plethora of data collected in the course of the qualitative study can be presented to potential beneficiaries (in this case, an audience of approximately 50 higher education teachers and researchers working in the area of traditional and world music performance and ethnomusicology). Rather than try to draw even simple conclusions from the data, the aim was to provide a context in which the voices of the students themselves are allowed to speak (their words were both read aloud by the presenter and projected as text in a power point presentation), in the context of a descriptive report of the interviews. In the introduction to the ordered quotations by the participating students and in the framing of them in terms of the selected question fields, there was an opportunity for the participants' words to be foregrounded. This, in turn provided an important additional (and unplanned) dimension to the whole research project, but opening up, in a very modest way, the chance for a modicum of direct participation in the research by the students under investigation.

3.3 Studying to be a Band: Learning Collective Performance at Newcastle University

Can 'band-ness' be taught? And even if it can, how on earth do you separate out for assessment, evaluation and validation the achievements of individuals (which is an almost universal 'given' of Western higher education) who make their music in the phenomenally complex cooperative and thickly integrated workings of a band? And if band-ness *can* be taught and learned in a structured way, should the premise of its pedagogy be to mimic the 'real life' messiness and chance that actually drives nearly all the processes of folk and pop band culture – everything from how musicians come together, decide what to play and how they create and experiment, to the ways that participants interact both musically and socially, and the ways that they construct their playing lives, all of which often appear at first sight to be so different to the equivalent drivers of, say, string quartets or chamber choirs? And even if band-ness can be taught, can it be done within the constraints of a University degree structure, even where this is so specially oriented towards collective musics as in the two year honours BMus in Popular and Contemporary Music and the renowned four-year BMus in Folk and Traditional Music at Newcastle University (unique in the UK)?

The principle underlying pretty well all conventional educational curricula is the concept of additive or teleological processes – working outwards by measured steps from simple skills towards increasingly complex ones, five-finger exercises to hands together, reading off signs or imitating, to structured expressivity and perhaps spontaneity; or in the case of, say, 'chamber music', from individuals reading their own notes and getting them

right, towards coordination, cooperation and precision, with demarcated progressive stages of private practice, communal rehearsals and hopefully eventual unity of creative intention in the endgame of performance.

And yet folk and pop bands often *start* by creating their musical materials, either composing them from scratch or collectively arranging tunes, passing ideas around and developing them, often haphazardly, and in a state of constant flux, where the border between preparation and completion is highly fluid and every moment of musicking is potentially a full performance.

Well, to cut a long story to what has to be not only short, but positively fragmentary in the time available this morning, it was questions like these that persuaded me and my colleague, Jane Ginsborg, to initiate a modest comparative research project across our then two different kinds of higher education institutions – a University and a Conservatory – to try to get some idea not so much of the methods devised by the course designers for teaching collective performance, but rather to focus on the experiences and insights of students, both ‘first years’ and ‘finalists’, all of whom were in various ways constrained by modular curricula to structure their band-ness to the pedagogical model of ‘be taught, learn, study, present and be evaluated’. We approached this with a mixture of methods, including asking band members to keep individual and collective diaries over the course of the year, and, in what turned out to be the most rewarding part, in structured group interviews at the end of their courses.

In the first two years of the BMus in Folk and Traditional Music, all the students take a compulsory ensemble module alongside one-to-one tuition in two different instruments. Ensemble has a four-hour, tutored session every week and a further two hour timetabled band rehearsal. At the start of the year, the tutors – at that time, Desi Wilkinson and the English fiddler, Stewart Hardy – began by chucking the students virtually at random into a series of ‘instant bands’, giving them perhaps a tune and half an hour to prepare an arrangement, present it to the class, have a lot of feedback from both peers and tutors, before it’s all change and on to the next combination. After some weeks, as the various musical personalities, strengths and weaknesses become more evident, the tutors eventually assemble permanent bands that seem, at least from the outside, to have the best chance of working out and these stay together for the rest for the year and eventually present themselves and their material for assessment in May.

By the third year, ensemble has become an option and is chosen by a group of students who have decided to form a band themselves and agree to stay together, come what may, throughout the year. They work far more independently now, presenting work in progress about once a month to the tutor for intensive coaching before performing their sets to the public in assessment week. The Popular and Contemporary degree is not dissimilar, but because it is only a two year course, in the first year, ensemble is compulsory and the bands are formed by the tutors almost immediately and then tutored fortnightly as they work; and in the final year performance is an option for self-selecting bands, as for Folk. In all cases, unlike with classical chamber ensembles, the band is expected to create its own material and to work its way through the challenges and crises – dis-bandment is strongly discouraged!

That’s the basic information you need about the courses. In the rest of this presentation, I will largely turn the floor over to the voices – or at least the transcribed voices – of the Newcastle folk and pop degree students themselves, as they responded to our somewhat mundane prompts. Let’s listen to what the students had to say about their experiences:

We began with

1 Forming the band (or having someone else form it)

How was your band put together?

First year Folk band: We never knew each other before

First year Folk band: you would be in a band with some people for a couple of hours and have to try and work out something. And they did that a few times and then eventually they just kind of chose what kind of groups they thought might work well together.

Third year Folk band (looking back to the previous year): Basically they put all the fretted people in one band - we were all guitarists and we were put in the same band – I think purely with the intention of seeing who worked with other people in other bands. But then we liked it so much we sort of said, 'Could we carry on with that?' And that's basically how it happened.

.... So it was essentially formed by accident, I guess.

How did that work out?

First year Pop band: I think the thing when you come to Uni is ... you're going in with your eyes closed anyway because you're not sure what other people's tastes are or what they're like. You have to really just get in a room and play to see if it's going to work or not

Third year Folk band: I just thought if you're going to have to sign a contract there's no clause, I mean I think maybe at January there should be an option saying do you get on, do you want to carry it on, if you don't do you want to do something else? Because to sign a contract for a year is a long thing to do...

Final year Pop band: I mean I don't think it was really important how that happened. It was much more important what came out of it.

How does that compare with the outside world?

First year Folk band: I think it's all part of the whole ensemble thing where you're just kind of thrown in together and you have to work with what you've got. I think it's a good experience, really, because it makes you get on with what you have to do.

First year Folk band: Yeah, I mean kind of quite a lot of bands are put together for just one gig, kind of thing, so because we know quite a few fiddle players or whatever, you kind of make the outfit for what you need and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't but if it does work then it carries on.

2 Expectations

Nearly all our interviewees were pretty clear about this, reflecting their principal motivation for coming on the course in the first place.

Thinking ahead:

Third year Folk band: I think I started sort of thinking about doing the ensemble module because that's what I want to do when I finish, that's what I want to make a career of.

Final year Pop band: I think we said from the start that we didn't just want to be a module. We wanted to be a real band that went out and gigged, primarily, and assess the module as an afterthought really. There didn't seem in any point in we could just take an exam in it.

3 Working together

So, your band is formed one way or another, and you are all in a room ready to musick. How do you go about getting started?

First year Pop band: You have to really just get in a room and play to see if it's going to work or not.

Third year Folk band: There's always a specific aim, like we might say right, we need to address this set, let's run it through and find out where the sticking points are because we know there's lots.

Third year Folk band:...sometimes like we all had moments where we turned up and it was just such a chore to be there that you just sort of right let's play through that and you ended up just playing through your little bit and not really concentrating

Unlike classical musicians, who are inured to well-established, structured and almost routine ways of getting on with practising and rehearsing music already composed, how does a band actually organise their preparation time – given that they are usually creating the music themselves as well?

How does the band rehearse?

Final year Pop band: No man, I reckon if it was a rigid routine then it would just have become dull and dulcet and we wouldn't have got the flow you know and we needed that...and we need that freedom to just you know take a bit of time, talk, talk about what we're going to achieve as we go and all that.

Third year Folk band: But other times it was really constructive and everybody would sort of get involved and we'd play through a piece and there'd be like little, yeah, that bit, that bit, that bit. And it was like, it did vary a lot as to who was outlining...

Composing with the band

Final year Pop band: So I mean it is split you know because someone has an idea of what that tune and what they want to do with it and the whole kind of thing behind it. And then other times it's more we're composing together. But then at the same time all three of us are composing over everything and I think that's the main thing.

Jane Ginsborg and I were interested in how 'private practice' might feed into 'collective practice':

4 Practising by yourself

First year Folk band: I think if we'd just started arranging a set, then I think we probably put more of our private playing time into the tunes or working with arrangements. But once we were more comfortable and knew the set we wouldn't need to spend so much time practising it. That's how I kind of did it, really.

First year Pop band: I wanted to work on specific things like control of the voice box where you do slight flips for tonality and stuff. And I spent a lot of time practising that at home because it was something that I had to control what I was doing.

First year Folk band:

1) it started off like we were doing the big ones [*i.e.*, *full band rehearsals*] but then towards the end of the year we kind of did more individual study and cut the hours down that we spent together

2) But if you look at what we actually got done within that time...

First year Pop band: it doesn't really matter how well you play by yourself. Once you're in a band situation you need to be tight ...

5 Tuition: useful or not?

This is an educational establishment; world-famous professional musicians are on hand to teach. But does the band welcome or need outside interventions – and do their needs change with time?

For:

Third year Folk band: I would have preferred to have them in more because it's very different to first and second year ... I mean I realise it's self directed this year but the last two years they were always there, they were always there to give you tips and advice and to listen ...

Against:

Third year Folk band: Well some of the time it was sort of "you need to change the arrangements" and you know we've been playing them for the past four months some of them and it's very hard then to sort of undo all of that and start afresh on it because you just think well, you know, it's sort of getting up to assessment time you don't want to be changing stuff that much, so...

Third year Folk band: Well we did still have a module director who kind of came in every, I suppose on average once a month, something like that, and came to look and tell us why it was really bad [laughter] and why don't we change it. So that was the main direction we had but now that it's...well, it's not even a Uni thing now that it's just ourselves.

So, back to our opening question: can 'band' be taught?

First year Pop band: It has to be intuitive or else it's just going to sound like what everybody else has done for the past x amount of years.

Can you be taught how to be intuitive?

First year Pop band: Of course you can, yeah. I don't think it's a knack just certain people possess. I don't think it's anything like that.

Can creativity be taught?

First year Pop band:

- 1) With all kinds of arts you can't really teach creativity because ...
- 2) ... I think everyone has it in a certain way. It's just unlocking it, kind of thing.

6 Being assessed

The whole question of the assessment of collective music was a major aspect of our research project that I will not talk about here. But needless to say, we were interested in what the students had to say when they reflected on it after the event:

Is it fair?

Third year Folk band: I think it would be nigh on impossible to find a system you could deem fair to assess musicians, it doesn't really quite work.

First year Pop band: I think it's pretty fair because at the end of the performance they'll be able to tell by assessing if you're tight or if you need better stage performance and presence. When you're doing popular performance it's not just about the music, it's about the whole shebang, really, isn't it.

Is it fair to mark just the final performance?

First year Pop band: in a performance you can't tell what works have gone on behind the scene. Like, for instance, the guitarist might just be sitting there playing chords except he's done a lot of the work working out chords and all that kind of thing that might not come across.

First year Pop band: Like someone playing a solo might look really good, but you don't...I think it's probably fair that everyone's gets the same [mark] because in a performance you couldn't tell who's actually done the work.

Is it fair to mark at all?

First year Pop band: Yeah, see it's so subjective anyway music in general. Where one person might like something, that's the bit I don't really understand with the marking of the playing of it is how it's impossible not to be biased in some way. It's just human nature.

7 University v. The Real World

So, what, if anything, does studying to be a band in a University have to do with being a band in the real world?

Third year Folk band: But in a way though, but in a way I think the fact that you do sign yourself up for a year is quite representative of the outside world because if you're with a

band and you get quite well-to-do in the music scene then you're going to be getting bookings that are that far ahead and you need to be able to commit yourself. So...

The Assessment versus a 'real' gig

Third year Folk band: I think if you're performing a professional gig outside anyway, they're not going to look at you and think, "oh they've worked hard all year, haven't they". They're going to think, that's a great performance or it's not so great.

Final year Pop band:

1) Well for us it definitely was hard work playing for something that we felt like was an interview almost...

2) I don't know, it was really just tight and oh god and then you know you make a mistake, no one might have heard it, but then you start oh god, and the cogs start turning and oh that's me skunked now like. And then that completely subtracts ...

3) ... whereas in a live performance outside of the university you'd be like right, just stay...it's gone in a second...

Third year Folk band: Yeah, that's true enough. It's just a bit scary when your degree's involved.

SO..... What did they learn?

8 Group dynamics

First year Pop band: I think the only difficult thing is, I've done this in previous bands myself and I've been in a band with friends who I know are fantastic musicians, but then when their lack of punctuality or lack of time keeping or not turning up for practices gets frustrating, you have to kind of draw the line between friendship and professionalism, which is quite...unless you've got a solid friendship you can lose a lot of friends through it...

First year Pop band: So it's probably better to not be in a band with people who are close to you because it can turn out quite wrong.

First year Pop band: I think we just kind of got on with it, really. We didn't say, "Oh, we're doing this for this reason". It was just, "I'm trying out this sound. Do you think this works?" and asking each other if it worked rather than...it's better to have a constructive opinion rather than just saying, "Oh yeah, it's fine". So we were very open about what we thought was good and what we didn't. But there was never any arguments or childishness about this.

Final year Pop band: Definitely. I mean sitting and listening and following is also part of being a musician, a part of performance, a part of composition and it's like sort of if one of us is you know sort of taking the lead and showing the bits and bobs then the rest are obviously fulfilling their role in following and getting the gist.

Perhaps the biggest lesson our finalists felt they had learned was about themselves and that being a successful band is mostly a matter of:

Getting on with the job

Third year Pop band: I think even if you're not getting on, once you're on stage it's a case of you've got to do your...you've got to perform. Like if you've got personal and bad things going on and you're crying backstage, but you go on with a smile; it's the whole performance thing really, isn't it?

Taking control

Final year Pop band: 'Yeah, I think this idea of freedom and like the responsibility being sort of firmly on our own shoulders was something that appealed to us

Final year Pop band: Well, I think that we all ... there's no real arguments within the band. We just seemed to go towards the music that we play now.

Conclusion

The kinds of questions we were asking – about such things as band formation, collective versus private practice and attitudes to being assessed – were not necessarily the kinds of subjects that these musicians were expecting to be asked about, although they were, by and large, quite happy to turn their attention to such things once prompted. 'Bigger' questions about such things as 'how' a band creates music; how group dynamics operate in the ambiance of intensive collaborative culture; 'University versus the Real World'; 'bandness' itself, were the topics which excited some of the liveliest responses. A future study might start with the student voice, and be designed in response to the kinds of This short paper gives only a tiny fraction of the full quantity of source material, and the dialogue fragments here illustrate only a small proportion, quite subjectively-chosen, of the many topics covered in the course of the interviews. The full transcribed interview data remains and could easily be mined in different ways in order to pursue other lines of enquiry.

The students in these various bands, at different stages of their University careers, had plenty to say, not only in direct answer to our questions, but also in further developments – indeed, just sitting together in a semi-formal situation to discuss their experiences in hindsight seemed to have been a unique opportunity for reflection that all of them relished. All of the interviews were animated and the way that each band's members interacted in conversation with each other and in response to the interviewer's questions gave, in itself, fascinating insights into the group dynamics of collections of individuals who had spent so much time together in highly creative proximity over many months, who had experienced the thrills and stresses of performing together, the frustrations and pleasure of extended rehearsing and the ebb and flow of intense personal relations. All of the bands exhibited various kinds of highly-developed 'banter': humorous, self-deprecating, ironic and occasionally joshing of one another; these are 'survival' mechanisms familiar to anyone with familiarity with small group collective activity; perhaps, though, the nature of folk and pop music culture heightens the need for such interactions in comparison with other musical communities – something that future researchers might want to explore. Not surprisingly, then, perhaps the prime general conclusion is that asking bands to talk about their processes and practices and then listening attentively to the ways that they talk about them together, offers huge potential for gathering data for qualitative research into collective musical experience.

NOTE: The structured interviews that formed the basis for both of the studies reported above were recorded and transcribed (as described in the respective papers). These recordings and transcriptions have been retained by the researchers and could, in principle, be available for further studies in the future.

4 Assessment Methods and Criteria for Small Group Performance – new proposals

Background

As reported in Chapter 2, small ensemble performance is offered for credit in the vast majority of institutions we surveyed, although it is compulsory in just over a third. Assessment – how it is carried out and the criteria by which students are judged both as individual performers and in the context of groups - was clearly an issue for most respondents. In this chapter, we look briefly first at the experience of RNCM, where the discussions that took place in advance of the ICMuS Performance Tutors' Symposium detailed in the Introduction informed changes to assessment procedures. We then look in more detail at the ways in which assessment is carried out at ICMuS on a wide variety of different kinds of collective performance.

RNCM

“Small-group music making” and “chamber music” are synonymous, at RNCM: the former is compulsory for first- and second-year undergraduate students, while the latter is optional for third- and fourth-year undergraduates and postgraduate students. The majority of ensembles are traditional ‘classical’ ensembles such as string quartets, piano trios, wind and brass quintets, etc., although there are also less conventional groups such as percussion ensembles and saxophone quartets. Chamber music and small-group music making are both part of what used to be called the Supporting Professional Studies strand, and which is now simply known as Professional Studies.

The implication of this for the assessment of small-group music making and chamber music is that until recently – when assessment methods changed as a result of the RNCM’s participation in the research project reported here – generic marking guidelines and criteria were used. These were applicable to all assessments in the form of portfolios, self-evaluations, practical examinations, written assignments and projects, seminar presentations, coursework and tutor reports, or viva voce examinations. Consequently, tutors had to be imaginative in their use of these criteria when providing tutor reports and marking performance (Appendix 4A).

Both process and product were and are still assessed at RNCM in relation to small-group music making in Years 1 and 2, via practical examination and tutor report, with a 50:50 weighting. In Years 3 and 4 chamber music is assessed by practical examination or live performance only. Tutors are expected to assess individual preparation for performance, in Years 1 and 2, rather than group preparation (see Appendix 4B), and specific marking guidelines are provided for performance. These are used to assess technique; musicianship, musicality and style; and presentation and communication (Appendix 4C).

ICMuS

The International Centre for Music Studies at Newcastle University (ICMuS) is unusual and even, possibly, unique among UK HEIs for the sheer variety of musical genres encompassed by its undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. At undergraduate level there are four honours degree programmes. A 3-year BA and 4-year

BMus with the third year spent at an institution abroad (BMusYA) are probably the most similar to music degree programmes offered in other Universities. Nevertheless, the underlying philosophy of ICMuS that emphasises the equal validity of all musics and the resulting eclecticism of genres embraced by the Centre are reflected in the diversity of musics practised by students attracted to Newcastle to study, even on these two non-specialist degree programmes. Modules are offered in the full range of 'conventional classical' music, but 'equal billing' is given to popular and world musics. Performance tuition is offered in one-to-one and group formats embracing the full range of orchestral & brass band instruments, piano, organ, 'classical' guitar, and voice; jazz and popular music (six-string and bass electric guitars, keyboards, drums, saxophone, live electronics, turntabling, etc.) and also various non-Western options, including North Indian music (tabla and voice). In addition, ICMuS also offers a two-year BMus in Popular and Contemporary Musics (BMusP&C) – students come with a Foundation Degree or BTEC in popular music or equivalent – and a 4-year BMus in Folk and Traditional Music (BMusF&T), that is strongly performance-oriented, and very similar in structure to a typical conservatoire undergraduate programme, and includes specialist tuition in the whole gamut of appropriate instruments, and voice. In the BMusF&T degree, ensemble performance is compulsory at the first two Stages and optional thereafter; the BMusP&C has a compulsory module which includes band performance at its first Stage. Finally, all of these different musical genres can be studied at postgraduate level, and although there are no PGT modules specifically in group performance at Newcastle, students are encouraged to present their work as part of an ensemble, where appropriate.¹

Criteria for assessing performance of diverse musics

One of the challenges of assessing practice across such a wide range of genres and their particular performance styles so very different from one another in so many ways – not only in terms of skill-base and content, but also in broader terms of culture – is to try to devise a simple system of assessment criteria which guarantees a reasonable measure of comparability and unanimity of approach with sufficient flexibility. These comparisons have to be comprehensible between successive Stages (years) of a degree programme and also, in some cases (such as final year performance options, where all students, irrespective of degree programme, are assessed within one module, 'Specialist Studies in Performance'), among students offering very different kinds of performances for assessment at the same Stage. To give just one more obvious example of the kind of dilemma faced by examiners, they might be required to assign value to the merits of four singers being assessed for the same module and performing, respectively, a Bach aria, a grunge metal song, a broadside ballad or a vocal rag: naturally a whole range of parameters of quality and success will be appropriate to one and wholly inappropriate to another. Likewise, within a broadly homogenous genre area – for example 'folk music' – an assessment panel could well be faced with having to assign value to the merits of a fiddle player, a clog dancer, a guitarist and an accordianist, all being assessed at the same 'Stage'. These two versions of the 'comparison dilemma' could be described respectively as 'horizontal' (one 'instrument' – here, voice – across a set of almost un-comparable style cultures), and 'vertical' (a more-or-less unitary genre, but with very different skill sets

¹Detailed descriptions of the performance modules in ICMuS (as they were in Autumn 2008) can be found in the article by Richard Wistreich, 'Teaching and Assessing Collective Performance Skills in a University Music Department: Newcastle University, International Centre for Music Studies', <http://www.cetl4musicne.ac.uk/assessing%20collective%20performance%20skills.doc>.

and 'micro-styles' within it). Finally, in different kinds of ensemble performance teaching and learning, the balance between 'process' and 'end product' also differ. For example, early Stage modules (pre-honours) which are focussed on generic skills, including collaborative composition, ensemble etiquette and systems of cooperative working; thus evaluating process over a period of time is far more important than what finally emerges in performance. At a more advanced level, where the aim is to reflect the realities of professional practice, then 'the concert is all' – as many of our more advanced informants so clearly expressed it in the interviews reported above.

As in all institutions where assessment of performance to produce marks is a necessity and evaluation of individuals is the primary premise of all assessment, a great deal of the nuance of such assessment rests not on highly detailed criteria that try to anticipate every possible permutation of musical performance (an almost impossible task even where all the performers ostensibly play the 'same piece' – for example in a classical music competition where there is a 'test piece'), but rather on the professional judgement and acumen of an individual or a panel of assessors to make valid comparisons between individuals, even when the nature of what they offer for assessment varies enormously from student to student and group to group. In response to this challenge, and also the requirements of institutional audit to produce assessment criteria specific to performance (hitherto, performance assessment had had to rely on generic criteria primarily conceived for written work), ICMuS embarked in late 2004 on producing a simple, yet robust, set of assessment criteria for solo performance that would command the confidence of students and staff representing the very different musical cultures which the department by then embraced. Criteria would need to be sufficiently 'open' to allow for major genre and culture differences to be accommodated, but also framed with sufficient rigour that they would not come out as hopelessly bland as a result of the need to be all-embracing. The process of discussion, negotiation and drafting drew in practitioners from across all the different genres and, following some thought-provoking discussion and the evaluation of best practice from more than a dozen UK HEIs, produced a set of criteria (see Appendix 4D).

While acknowledging the great variety of musical genres offered for assessment in ICMuS, the preamble concludes that 'Any performance will be judged by its audience according to a number of different criteria the balance of which relate to the norms and expectations of particular genres', the criteria 'differently weighted according to musical genre' (see Appendix 4D). Despite the obvious risks of such a unified system – prime among them, that in trying to be universal they would end up satisfying the needs of nobody – the criteria have proved themselves to be remarkably workable and robust for more than five years. Interestingly, these criteria, intended to apply to solo performance, were also found by staff and students to be remarkably useful for the assessment of ensembles as well. Where such assessment was focussed solely on the performance itself, the criteria could be applied not only to assigning marks to entire ensembles but also in the somewhat complex process of 'tweaking' the collective mark for each individual member of the ensemble, where that specific module's assessment criteria specified such a process.

Reflecting on group performance assessment

Meanwhile, in 2005, ICMuS was awarded special status as the lead partner in a consortium of North-East Universities, under the title 'Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning for Music and Inclusivity'. Within the CETL (which concludes in July 2010), one component project has focused broadly on the teaching and learning of what we have termed 'Collective Performance'. Among the innovations made possible through the CETL,

was the introduction of a new cross-genre module in **Collective Performance**; the introduction of an element of collective performance activity into the compulsory **Stage 1 Performance Studies** module of the BA and BMusYA and the development of a new module in **Contemporary Music Practice** in the BMusC&T, which integrates the composition and performance aspects of collective pop music practice. Although this is not the place to discuss in detail the motivation for these innovations or the specifics of their respective curriculum design, it is fair to say that all were made in response to particular needs, opportunities and developments arising out of a general institutional investment in the concept of 'collective' performance as a reflection of the 'realities' of musical practices in the outside world, where, it is probably no exaggeration to say, the overwhelming majority of performance of music (and thus, what graduating students do and will continue to experience) is done in groups, rather than by soloists; consequently, it was argued, teaching and learning ought to reflect this better.

One important aspect of the process of innovation was the identification of the need to revisit again the question of assessment, and another was a perception that performance tutors who had hitherto been more or less confident teaching within their own genre areas, were now being challenged by the need to consider the implications of the institution's increasing commitment to 'collective performance' and to its increasingly central place in the performance studies curriculum. A further additional consideration was the progression towards more 'cross-genre' collective performance projects that would throw together students with very different skills, expectations, experiences and notions of what constitutes ensemble practice, ranging from 'classical', pop and jazz to folk and world musics. Two of the new modules (**Performance Studies 1** and **Collective Performance**) deliberately confront students with challenging and fundamental questions about aspects of music-making which are normally assigned very different values in their respective areas or experience. These include collective composition and arrangement; peer-directed learning through improvisation or oral dictation; styles of presentation; rehearsal techniques; leadership and collaboration, and so on. What might this mean for assessment? Can the 'final performance' do justice to the hugely varied inputs of the different members of a 'collective' which is producing an entire show from scratch, in a medium or genre that might be more or less new to all of them? What do such challenges suggest about the way that more genre-specific ensemble modules might be assessed? Meanwhile, the new **Contemporary Music Practice** module (which will be introduced in 2010/11) directly reflects and builds on insights gained by the close examination of popular music band culture and processes in the course of this research project and the innovations in pop band teaching that have been developed in parallel with it over the past three years.

What are the mechanisms for translating new insights into curriculum change, and doing so in a process that engages not only those with direct responsibility for curriculum design (i.e., senior academic staff) but also tutors 'on the ground' and students themselves?

Questioning established practice and responding to change

As described in the Foreword to this report, ICMuS held its second Performance Tutors' Symposium on 20 September 2006, organised as a 'Group Assessment Workshop'. Following presentations by staff responsible for assessing performance in different genres, including a presentation about practice at the RNCM given by Jane Ginsborg, course participants undertook an exercise in ensemble assessment. Mixed 'assessment panels' of tutors and academic staff representing the different genres were assigned to 'assess' three

different ensembles: a pop band, a folk band and a classical trio. The ensuing panel discussions and plenary sessions (which included students and staff) raised a whole variety of fundamental questions, which, it is fair to say, were crucial to the eventual formulation of the questions in the present study, and led directly to the joint application by the RNCM and ICMuS to Palatine for funding. Discussion topics included:

- 'Process and/or Product': to what extent should assessment be made only of the performance itself, rather than also taking into account the process of reaching it?
- Individual or group? Should the mark be awarded to the group alone, to individuals alone, or in a combination of these? If the latter, how should they be apportioned?
- Additional submissions. Should the group submit evidence of their creative inputs? If the repertoire performed is likely to be composed from scratch by the band or at least arranged (as in the case of folk and popular music), should this be separately evaluated? How might this be balanced with the work of an ensemble performing from pre-existing notation?
- What, if any, might the students contribute to the assessment? Self-assessment? peer assessment?

Conclusions

It would be impossible to summarise briefly the content or the outcomes of these discussions, which have in fact continued in various ways ever since, including in regular meetings of performance tutors, Boards of Studies meetings and other periodic reviews of modules as well as on the teaching floor and in the intense discussion which always develop during assessment time, when these issues come to the fore as a result of experience rather than theoretical discussions. Although it had been the hope of the organisers of the 2006 symposium that the day would result in the production of a draft set of specific criteria for assessing ensemble performance, it soon became clear that such an outcome would be both hopelessly ambitious and in any case, premature. In practice, the ongoing processes of evaluation of existing ensemble performance modules and the introduction of new modules in collective performance in the period between September 2006 and June 2010 has been constantly influenced by a number of factors, not least of which has been the direct and indirect influence of the Palatine-funded research project; one of the most hotly-debated topics has consistently been the whole question of appropriate assessment. This has been an unanticipated and yet a highly satisfying manifestation of the prolonged and wide-ranging programme of student self-observation and structured interviews with students that this research project has entailed.

The principal investigator at ICMuS, Richard Wistreich, was throughout the period of the project Head of Performance at ICMuS and, from September 2008 until January 2010 (when he moved to the RNCM as Dean of Research and Enterprise) he was also Head of Undergraduate Studies and Chair of the Undergraduate Board of Studies in Music at ICMuS, and thus well placed to integrate findings, reflections and discussions into the formulation of module outlines and teaching, learning and assessment criteria for the two new modules described above. Details of the assessment requirements for different modules are given below, but it is probably important to note here the very fact of this eclecticism: rather than this study resulting in a 'one-size-fits-all'. This outcome is in line, perhaps, with the varied responses of both students and staff to questions and their reflection about the assessment of group performance, and in practice, different modules have adopted different assessment styles depending on their different learning aims and methods.

Assessment of performance modules at ICMuS

The only adequate way to convey the range of developments in assessment methods in performance modules at ICMuS is to refer to the specific regulations governing each module. There are currently 15 different performance modules offered at undergraduate level of which five have compulsory ensemble elements to them and a further three allow for optional ensemble presentation; please see below for web-links to the relevant documentation for honours level module (unfortunately, documentation for pre-honours (compulsory) modules is not available on open web access). Meanwhile, there are certain generic attributes of the assessment system which are common to all performance modules:

The basic style of assessment of **solo performance** is more or less uniform across all Stages and musical genres and based on a majority mark(s) awarded for the performance itself, which can be nuanced up or down by evaluation of the additional materials submitted by the candidate. These consist of:

- a Performance Diary, that must be kept throughout the year to record reflections on lessons, private practice, extra-curricular musical experience including performances attended, and ensemble activities;
- a Self-Assessment Report in the form of a questionnaire that asks students to reflect on, and self-evaluate a range of aspects of their work including identifying goals and aspirations; progress in achieving these; experiences of tuition, practising, ensemble activity; reflections on experiences in one significant performance event as a listener and as a participant, respectively.
- Instrumental or Vocal Tutor's Report (interim report at the half-year and full report at the end of the year);
- Attendance Record at specified concerts and tuition;

Assessment of **ensemble performance** varies considerably from module to module (see detailed documentation below), depending on the way the module is taught and its learning aims. The variety of methods can be summarized as follows;

- Normally, students are evaluated as a group in one or more performances
- There may or may not be consideration of 'process' as well as 'product'
- The group mark may be the only mark awarded to all members of an ensemble
- The mark may be nuanced according to the panel's evaluation of individual strengths and weaknesses of each individual within the group
- or the assessment may have two component marks, a group mark and an individual mark. In Performance Studies 1 (BA and BMusYA Stage 1), for example, 30% of the final mark is awarded on the basis of participation in an ensemble project taught in the first semester of the course, and this is purely an individual mark decided by the ensemble tutor, based on input, progress, final performance and contribution to a final reflective seminar; in Contemporary Music Practice 1 (BMusP&T) there are two component marks, one for the group (which includes their compositions) and the other for individual performance; assessment of the honours module for Folk and Traditional musicians, Ensemble 3, meanwhile, is done solely on the outcome of the final performance (which is open to the public) together with a mastered CD recording: this module a an option for bands aiming for professional practice.
- All ensemble modules also include the submission of a Self-Assessment Report (as above); Individual Performance Diary and a record of satisfactory attendance at specified performances.

Pre-honours modules including ensemble assessment:

Title	Method of Assessment
Performance Studies 1 (BA; BMusYA)	Ensemble 30% (individual) Solo 70%
Additional Practical Studies 1 (BMusF&T)	Vocal Ensemble 30% (group) Solo 70%
Ensemble 1 (BMusF&T)	Ensemble 100% (group)
Ensemble 2 (BMusF&T)	Ensemble 100% (group)

Honours level modules in ensemble performance:

Title	Method of Assessment
Indian Music in Practice 1	Bhaitak performances (60%) Log (40%)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/module/module/2010/MUS2045>

Contemporary Music Practice 1 (BMusP&T)	Ensemble 80% (50% group; 30% individual; recital only); Solo 20%
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<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/module/module/2010/MUS2059>

Collective Performance	Ensemble 70% (individual; overall contribution); Reflective Essay 30%
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<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/module/module/2010/MUS2064>

Ensemble 3 (BMusF&T)	Ensemble 100% (performance - individual 70% recording - group 30%)
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<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/module/module/2010/MUS2092>

Specialist Study (performance)	Recital 100% (individual) Performances can be solo or ensemble
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<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/studyabroad/module/module/2010/MUS3014>

Appendix 4A: RNCM Supporting Professional Studies generic marking guidelines

Class	% mark	Descriptor
I (high)	86-100	Exceptional. An exceptional standard of achievement in Principal Study-related specialist activity; a rare and exceptional level of individuality and depth and breadth of learning experience at this level; highly impressive and perceptive self-evaluative skills; exceptional co-operative & team-working abilities demonstrated; extraordinary maturity of thought; exceptional quality of presentation of promotional/self-evaluative materials.
I (mid)	76-85	Outstanding. An outstanding standard of achievement in Principal Study-related specialist activity; an impressive range of learning experiences, clearly undertaken at a very high standard within this level; especially perceptive self-evaluation; high level co-operative & team-working abilities demonstrated; a mature, balanced reflection on learning experiences and areas needing refinement; outstanding quality of presentation of promotional/self-evaluative materials.
I (low)	70-75	Excellent. An excellent standard of achievement in Principal Study-related specialist activity; a diverse range of learning experiences is evident, with both aptitude and flair have been demonstrated; very perceptive and mature self-evaluation which clearly demonstrates ability to reflect on personal development needs; excellent co-operative & team-working abilities demonstrated; a high quality of presentation of promotional/self-evaluative materials.
II i	60-69	Very good. A very good standard of achievement in Principal Study-related specialist activity; a very good range of experiences is demonstrated, with a commensurate standard of accomplishment being evident; imaginative and thoughtful self-evaluation materials; very good co-operation & team-working abilities demonstrated; thoughtful, balanced and carefully-conceived reflection; a very good standard of promotional materials.
II ii	50-59	Good. A good standard is achieved in Principal Study-related specialist activity; a broad range of experiences within this level is demonstrated; consistent and thoughtful self-evaluation materials; the ability to work effectively as a team member is demonstrated; thoughtful, honest, if not mature reflection; a good standard of promotional materials.
III	40-49	Adequate. Although displaying some weaknesses, an acceptable level is achieved in Principal Study-related specialist activity; a reasonable, if unremarkable range of learning experiences within this level; basic but acceptable self-evaluative skills, within ability to highlight strengths and weaknesses; the ability to work as a team member is demonstrated; acceptable, if somewhat naïve reflection; acceptable, if inconsistently presented promotional materials.
Fail	30-39	Some merit. Although displaying some merits, Principal Study-related specialist activity is of a patchy standard ; a limited range of learning experiences within this level; rather weak self-evaluative skills; little evidence of effective co-operative and team-working skills; very naïve reflection; poorly presented promotional materials.
Fail (low)	20-29	Few merits. Principal Study-related specialist activity is of a very low standard displaying significant technical and musical weakness; a limited range of experiences within this level; very weak self-evaluative skills; very little evidence of effective co-operative and team-working skills; very weak reflection; presentation of promotional materials of consistently poor quality.
Fail (lowest)	0-19	Severely limited. The standards displayed in Principal Study-related specialist activity are always very poor; little evidence of the benefits derived from earning experiences; no real evidence of an ability to criticise and self-evaluate experience in this area; consistently lacking evidence of effective co-operation; immature reflection throughout; shoddy presentation of promotional materials.

Appendix 4B: RNCM Professional Studies Practical: Ensemble Preparation

Criteria

- Technical and musical development throughout the process
- Listening and communication skills
- Team working
- Initiative
- Focus, commitment, reliability
- Time management, efficiency

Class	% mark	Descriptor	
I (high)	86-100	Exceptional	The performer's contribution to the ensemble is inspirational, with charismatic and exceptional musical leadership skills, matched by a mature and penetrating musical personality and ensemble sensitivity. Faultless pre-rehearsal preparation. The model team player who has abundant aural ability manifest in exemplary performer awareness and responsiveness.
I (mid)	76-85	Outstanding	An authoritative and dynamic ensemble performer, who shows outstanding resourcefulness in rehearsals, helping to find solutions to challenging musical problems. A keenly intellectual and intuitive musician, who displays outstanding technical and musical attributes that charge and enrich the ensemble. Highly efficient and productive in rehearsal situation.
I (low)	70-75	Excellent	Excellent and animated team player. Rehearsal contributions underpinned by thorough knowledge of individual part and keen awareness of the player's ensemble role and function. Spontaneous and musically responsive to colleagues in whatever performance context. Technically assured.
II i	60-69	Very good	Imaginative playing in rehearsal; committed and focused; entirely reliable and well prepared; responsive and willing; flexible and able to adapt the performing within context of ensemble; technically very sound; able to respond well to new ideas.
II ii	50-59	Good	Very reliable performing in rehearsal; keen to work hard and efficiently to secure good results from the ensemble; receptive to ideas; at times able to put forward creative solutions to performance challenges; some imagination; generally well focused in rehearsal.
III	40-49	Adequate	A competent, if somewhat uninspiring contribution to the ensemble's preparations. The performer is generally reliable but there is rarely any dynamism and energy. An adequate focus on the job to hand and some sense of working efficiently. A reasonably consistent role is played, though there may be little in the way of intellectual or musical stimulation to the ensemble.
Fail	30-39	Some merits	May be something of a hindrance to the ensemble through poor technical competence and/or preparation. Something of a passenger, who at times seems disembodied from the ensemble, lacking commitment and musical awareness. Rather inflexible.
Fail (low)	20-29	Few merits	A major hindrance to the ensemble. Weak technical ability and poor preparation. Unreliable. Lacking sensitivity and aural awareness. Very inflexible. Lacking focus.
Fail (lowest)	0-19	Severely limited	The performer is little engaged with the activity of the ensemble either musically or organisationally. Very poor musical contributions in rehearsals may be matched with patchy and tardy attendance. Uncommunicative. Totally devoid of focus.

Appendix 4C: RNCM Professional Studies Practical: Ensemble Performance

Criteria

- Technical facility: tonal control and production; diction; posture; fingerwork; agility; reliability
- Musicianship, Musicality, Style: repertoire chosen; phrasing; understanding structure; role play (solo, ensemble, accompaniment); working within section
- Presentation: ensemble personality and character; body language; interactivity; projection; rapport

Class	% mark	Descriptor	Technique	Musicianship, Musicality, Style	Presentation & Communication
I (high)	86-100	Exceptional	Virtuosic; complete technical control	Exceptional maturity of conception; sensitive and intellectually charged playing; always intuitive and insightful; revelatory, thought-provoking	Exceptional commitment and intensity conveyed; with total authority; compelling, exciting and consummate professional presentation
I (mid)	76-85	Outstanding	Outstanding technical command; technique always in service of interpretation	Interpretative individuality; abundant intellectual depth; intuitive; outstanding flair and panache; performances that are provocative and challenging; risk taking; on the edge	Entirely focused and controlled; authoritative performances
I (low)	70-75	Excellent	Always fluent, with a quality of technical control that adds an exciting element to the performance	Imaginative, stylish and individual performing; willingness to take risks; creative, thoughtful; with flair	Entirely convincing; committed; excellent presentation and audience rapport
II i	60-69	Very good	Very good technical control; rare infelicities in intonation, passagework, diction etc. do not detract	Highly effective interpretations which demonstrate an awareness of structure, form and appropriate stylistic conventions; coherent and balanced ensemble playing	Committed playing; the listener is aware of real ensemble performer commitment; very well projected performances
II ii	50-59	Good	Sound technique displayed, which can comfortably cope with the demands of the repertoire	Consistent, if not always stylish playing; generally well shaped	Good presentational skills with a sense of involvement in the music-making; generally well projected

III	40-49	Adequate	An essentially secure technique in spite of some aberrations, able to match demands of repertoire chosen, though not without some technical infelicities	Acceptable understanding of style pertinent to the repertory if at times lacking sensitivity; cogent if somewhat immature readings; embryonic, raw musicality; may be somewhat unrefined	A satisfactory audience rapport, presentation; some evidence of commitment and projection of individual/ensemble character
Fail	30-39	Some merits	Certain technical merits but the performance reveals some technical deficiencies	Awkward, uncomfortable presentation and limited projection	Patchy interpretations with little understanding of appropriate style
Fail (low)	20-29	Few merits	Significant deficiencies in technique lead to faltering and uncomfortable performances	Mechanical and inconsistent interpretations; poor individual and collective musicality; lacking any subtlety and stylistic awareness	Little understanding of, or ability to project, appropriate presentational skills.
Fail (lowest)	0-19	Severely limited	Major technical deficiencies result in tentative and hesitant performances	No consistent sense of style is conveyed; totally lacking in musical and stylistic sensitivity	An inability to understand and communicate the most elementary presentational skills pertinent to the discipline

Appendix 4D: Performance Assessment Criteria, International Centre for Music Studies, Newcastle University

ICMuS embraces a broad range of musical genres and this is reflected in the great variety of performances which are offered for assessment by Performance Studies students. Any performance will be judged by its audience according to a number of different criteria, the balance of which relates to the norms and expectations of particular genres, therefore each criterion (listed below) will play a different part in the overall balance of consideration. Assessment will be by a panel of experienced and informed examiners who will arrive at an agreed mark through discussion of the merits of the performance. The examiners will not necessarily be instrument or genre specialists: they will recognise the quality of a performance for its expressive and technical musical values. A written self-assessment by the candidate and the tutor's report will be available to the panel and will help inform their discussion as they decide on the mark to award. A written report summarising this discussion will be made available to the candidate and her/his tutor.

The performance will be judged under the following broad terms of reference, differently weighted according to musical genre:

- Interpretation and creativity
- Stylistic awareness: contextual knowledge and musical understanding
- Technical fluency and control
- Presentation, communication and use of the performing space: awareness of the relationship between performer and audience
- Appropriateness of programme content

Marking guideline:

80-100	Outstanding in all respects; a professional standard of performance
70-79	Excellent in all respects; ideas and execution were highly developed, and any flaws did not impinge on the effectiveness of a very successful performance
60-69	A good performance, largely secure; there was ample evidence of well developed ideas and skills and any flaws had a very minor effect on the overall success of the performance
50-59	A performance demonstrating overall competence; some shortcomings were apparent, but did not seriously prejudice the success of the performance
40-49	A basic level of success; flaws affected parts of, and detracted from, the performance
35-39	Some skills and ideas were apparent, but they did not sufficiently mitigate a seriously deficient performance
0-34	An inadequate performance

5. Summary of outputs and other dissemination of research (to date)

The researchers have already presented aspects of the ongoing research at various national and international events, either in the form of papers delivered to conferences or in the context of workshops. Further dissemination of the research through publication in journals and other media is planned. In addition, it is both encouraging and gratifying that the debates which the research has set off, whether as a result of formal discussion within teaching and learning committees or more informal exchanges between teaching colleagues, students and interested parties in other higher education institutions, have already shown fruit in developments and changes to curricula and assessment procedures at both institutions.

5.1 Published conference proceedings

Wistreich, R. (2007). Teaching and Assessing Collective Performance Skills in a University Music Department: Newcastle University, International Centre For Music Studies, published at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/files/palatineevents/1345.pdf> and <http://www.cetl4musicne.ac.uk/assessing%20collective%20performance%20skills.doc>

Ginsborg, J. (2009). Focus, effort and enjoyment in chamber music: Rehearsal strategies of successful and “failed” student ensembles. In symposium organised by J. Ginsborg, Playing together: Student musicians’ motivation, self-efficacy and enjoyment. *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Performance Science 2009*, edited by Aaron Williamon, Sharman Pretty, and Ralph Buck, published by the European Association of Conservatoires (AEC), Utrecht, The Netherlands. ISBN 978-94-90306-01-4.

5.2 Conference presentations

Jane Ginsborg [speaker] and Richard Wistreich. Promoting excellence: the teaching, learning and assessment of small group music performance. Reflective Conservatoire 2, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, February, 2009.

Jane Ginsborg [speaker] and Richard Wistreich. Teaching and assessment of small ensemble performance in universities and conservatoires. Research in Music Education Conference, University of Exeter, 14-18 April, 2009.

Jane Ginsborg. Promoting excellence: the teaching, learning and assessment of small-group performance. Lessons into Practice: Teaching and Learning Collective Performance in Small Ensembles at Higher Educational Level, ICMuS, Newcastle University, 17 September 2009.

Richard Wistreich. Learning through collective performance – ideals and realities. Lessons into Practice: Teaching and Learning Collective Performance in Small Ensembles at Higher Educational Level, ICMuS, Newcastle University, 17 September 2009.

Richard Wistreich. Studying to be a Band: Learning Collective Performance at Newcastle University. International Council for Traditional Music, Ireland Conference, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, 27 February 2010.

Jane Ginsborg. The effects of performance on practice and rehearsal. Paper presented at Empirical Musicology II: Approaches to Performance, University of Leeds, 25-26 March, 2010.

5.3 Meetings and events

18 June 2008 Half day Meeting of Ensemble Tutors from the RNCM and ICMuS Royal Northern College of Music.

- Presentations by ensemble tutors from both institutions (ICMuS: 4, RNCM: 5) highlighting their various experiences of assessing ensemble performances at different levels and in a variety of genres
- Group and plenary discussions and sharing of best practice

17 September 2009 One-day Symposium for Tutors, Students and Researchers: *Lessons into Practice: Teaching and Learning Collective Performance in Small Ensembles at Higher Educational Level*, ICMuS, Newcastle University

- Attended by c. 35 delegates
- Papers presented by Jane Ginsborg, Richard Wistreich, Stewart Hardy (Folk music tuotr, ICMuS); John Ferguson (Pop music tutor, ICMuS); Dr Linda Merrick (Director of CETL, RNCM) and Anthony Shorrocks (Head of Performance, Liverpool University)
- Group and plenary discussions and sharing of best practice

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