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I believe that music can add an extra dimension to peoples' lives and that my primary function as a music adviser is to encourage and provide appropriate means of entry to allcomers. It ought to be among the basic aims of each school to allow pupils extended opportunities of coming to terms with the expressive power of music. A school without a music department has often been described as a school without a soul.

Music education in England is, typically, a mixture of enterprise and pedantry, of convictions and insights diluted by the bureaucratic process and by inadequate funding. On the one hand, this country's widespread youth orchestra movement produces the best up-and-coming instrumentalists in the world; on the other, a recurring short-sightedness with regard to curriculum provision and planning exacerbates the rift in peoples' minds between what happens in and outside the classroom. The charge of elitism festers over our musical activity. Stemming from an unevenness of opportunity arising from inadequate money and resources, its roots may be traced back to the indigenous and historical hesitancy which lies behind this nation's interpretation of the value of the arts, and also in its persistence in perceiving talent in mythological terms.

Thus, parents seeking outside instrumental help unwittingly generate political and class-conscious overtones. Politicians and even professional educators become confused, wearing one hat when formulating policies and another sitting up front at Youth Orchestra concerts.

Disturbing and seemingly unnecessary as this underlying vision of two conflicting musical cultures is, things aren't all bad. The classroom revolution of the sixties which resulted in the universal adoption of a policy of pupil participation in creative as well as recreative pursuits has meant that more or less all children have gained the opportunity to experience active, thoughtful music-making. More recent moves to integrate instrumental and classroom music-making are helping to close the culture gap and extend the influence of the peripatetic music teacher.

The danger in all this is the widening gulf between what I might best describe as real and educational music - a gulf well sustained by quangos and publishers. Aesthetic evaluation and the pursuit of proper standards are too frequently jettisoned in well-meaning but ill-judged attempts to throw everyone into a musical get-together. What we are after, of course, is the right balance between this kind of practice and what happened in the supposedly 'bad old days', when pupils sat passively in rows being advised about the merits of Beethoven, etc.

So forceful was the initial swing away from teaching of this nature that confusion remains about the place of music of the past in curriculum education. Among the trendies are those who speak deprecatingly in terms of "the received tradition" and react scathingly to the idea of reference to the past. Again, it's a question of achieving the balance, of course, but if I start referring to Bach and Mozart in these jargonised terms I shall know it's time to pack it in and go and run a country post-office or whatever.

In my portrait I am holding a score by Mozart, who is the central inspiration in my life. The other work is John Paynter's 'Sound and Silence', which is generally acknowledged to be the key breakthrough in projecting a creative approach to both initial steps in music-making and also towards academic study.

In reply to a question about the art of composition, Elgar once said, "Music is all around us. What I do is to help myself to what I want." This seems a good lead for us to follow and encourage in others, whether as practical musicians or else as listeners. It would be no mean achievement if we were to end up merely providing discriminating listeners. But those wishing for more active participation could well heed another famous Elgar quote about the art of music involving 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.