PART 1: CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In the 1780s, the English born musician Thomas Attwood took lessons in composition with Mozart. These lessons are known to us today because the manuscripts with Mozart's exercises and Attwood's attempts still exist[2]. These exercises comprise of counterpoint and harmony exercises to which Attwood writes an answer. Mozart annotates the score with helpful advice – 'tis always better if possible to have all of the parts full', 'tis always better to finish with the octave uppermost' – this advice is sometimes more direct in pointing out the errors and is a little less helpful from a pedagogical point of view – 'there are many faults in this example'. There is however one comment that intrigues me more than any other. Without any further explanation Mozart writes: 'this does not sing well'. Here Mozart uses the word 'sing' to convey something that he assumes Attwood will understand; there is a sense that singing is a natural part of a musician's understanding of music and integral to a musician's training. Even when writing exercises on paper the essence of the music is somehow expressed through singing.

Many composers have referred to singing as something that is integral to the experience of music. Schumann, in his *Advice to Young Musicians* (reprint 2010, p.14), suggests that students should 'sing regularly in a choir, especially the inner parts. This will help to make you a real musician', and to 'make efforts, even if your voice is not a good one, to sing at sight without the help of the instrument; in this way the sharpness of your hearing will continually improve'. The Hungarian composer and pedagogue, Zoltán Kodály (1974, p.145) wrote that 'singing, untrammelled by an instrument, is the real and profound schooling of musical abilities', and that 'singing is the core of music-making even when playing on an instrument.' Yet another composer and pedagogue, Carl Orff (2004, p.96), advises that when teaching 'melody should, when possible, also be sung' and he believed that when making music 'movement, singing and playing become a unity'.

The role of singing in the development of the musician is well known in the thinking of musicians and music teachers. Sloboda (2005, p.45-65) makes the point that vocal music has formed the core of the earliest notational practice and that the training of the musician's knowledge of notation and music theory has been based in this very practice. But what role does it have within current practice?

As a music theory teacher at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, I have experienced a change in approach to music theory teaching. Only a few years ago there was a tendency, as in many higher music education institutions, to have separate, specialised subjects. Lessons were taught with the following titles as examples: ear training, solfège, analysis, harmony, counterpoint, history, keyboard harmony, and others depending on the curriculum requirements for any particular year. These separate subjects offered some kind of specialist focus on an aspect of music theory but the underlying problem was that students (and sometimes teachers) would find difficulty in making links between these subjects. In isolation the relevance of each subject may not be clear and students had difficulty in transferring skills

[2] Available for download at http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_toc.php?vsep=223&l=2

from one to the other. In some cases, a weakness in one area might hinder progress in another: for example, lack of ability in ear training might mean that a student will have difficulty in actually hearing music that is studied from the score in an analysis class. Edwin Gordon (2004, p.34) describes this problem when he writes that 'unfortunately, music theory is taught to students who do not audiate.'[3] Students themselves would often comment too – 'the lessons do not seem to relate to each other', 'sometimes there is conflicting information from different teachers', 'I do not see how the lessons can be used in my performance practice', 'I would like time to practice certain skills in one subject [this student refers specifically to ear training] before starting other subjects so that I can use that skill more effectively[4].

Rogers (2004, p.xiii) points out that 'ear-training and sight-singing has been claimed (or assigned) as a sub-discipline of music theory, and thus of music pedagogy for at least the last thirty years'. His reference to 'pedagogy' is interesting in that it suggests that the actual teaching skills needed in this one particular skill can often be treated separately, meaning that the teaching approach to separated subjects can become different in themselves. Crouch (2010, p.80) builds upon this statement in her research on training literate musicians by writing that 'In American academic music training, music theorists typically oversee the sight-singing, ear-training, and musicianship courses. The connection between the three is not self-evident, however. The question of what music theorists do reveals a potentially uncomfortable fit between music theory and literacy.' This is confirmed by my own experience of students entering a class room and asking if it is an aural skills class or a solfège class. On asking what the difference is the response is that aural skills is listening and writing (dictation) and that solfège is reading and singing (sight reading). Students were given a simple exercise whereby a two-part piece was given on separate pieces of paper so that half the group could only see one voice while the other half could only see the other voice. They had to sing their part at the same time as listening to the other and then write it down. This activity involved singing, listening, reading and writing and the students immediately recognised the increased level of skill development and how the two separate subjects could easily be one.

Singing as a skill in its own right is often confined to this single subject of sight-reading. An overview of the literature that is available for the use in lessons shows something of the role that singing seems to have in the training of musicians. Some examples of the type of material on offer are:

> Books that are made up of a large number of composed short exercises. These books might sequence material in terms of perceived difficulty in reading intervals or sequences. Berkowitz, et al., *A New Approach to Sight-Singing*(1997), Edlund, *Modus Vetus* (1994)

[3] Audiation is a concept which was developed by Edwin Gordon. It is described briefly as an understanding of music as opposed to imitation; the ability to assimilate and generalize the structures of music upon hearing. See *Untying Gordian Knots* (2011) for more explination.

[4] Taken from satisfaction questionaires relating to feedback from students on the theory curriculum.

> Books that are again large collections of short exercises but are extracts from melodies written by known composers. Ottman, *Music for Sight-Singing* (2007), Lieberman, *Ear training and Sight Singing* (1959)

These books do nothing more than collect material into a large body of exercises. The material is often out of context of the larger whole of the music (harmonic support might be missing or the larger form disrupted) whether composed for the book or taken from traditional works. As Kathy Thompson (2004, p.82) points out that most aural skills textbooks compile exercises but leave the conceptual framework up to the individual teacher. However, some books do. Jordan, *Ear Training Immersion for Choirs* (2004) is an example of a book that encourages its users to think about the pedagogical approach. It makes reference to Edwin Gordon's theories of music learning and explains exactly how students should move from one exercise to the next. A concept is at the centre of each chapter and a variety of composed exercises and art music is offered to illustrate the point. He also recommends the use of solfège syllables[5]. In contrast to these types of books are the books by László Dobszay (*The World of Tones*, 2011) in which repertoire, analysis and understanding musical style are at the core of the books, however, singing is encouraged throughout. Exercises are created in such a way that students are able to sing melodies or harmonies or to improvise around a concept.

The contrast to this is that in other subjects (analysis, harmony, counterpoint, etc.) there can be an assumption that either the student is already applying the skills learnt from aural training/solfège and so does not need to be covered. Worse still would be the assumption that these skills are not needed for studying a score on paper.

What could the alternative be? As mentioned above, there has been a change to the curriculum at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In light of the issues previously discussed, a decision was made to integrate some of the separate subjects into one subject, now called "aural skills and analysis'. With this opportunity presented, teachers in the theory department began to explore ways in which the subject of music theory could somehow be made more 'relevant'. In Crouch's dissertation (2010, p.15), she makes the statement that 'regardless of the instrument, there should be no schism in students' minds between learning to perform music well on their primary instrument and learning to be good musicians.' This may be a lofty goal but she goes on to write that 'both performing music and theorizing about music are enabled by the gradual and deep internalization of all the nuances of musical language.' I understand this to mean that performing and theorizing are linked by the 'internalization of all the nuances.'

In his article on teaching aural recognition, Dr. Brad Hansen (2005, p.2) gives some insight into the nature of teaching music as an integrated subject. He takes the point of view that a constructivist theory of learning (as developed by Dewey, Piaget and Vigotsky, according to Hansen (p.3) that 'there is no knowledge independent of the meaning attributed to experience, constructed by the learner.' Learning is therefore not only coming from experience but it is the students themselves who make connections between experiences that is the learning. 'Learning is contextual', writes Hansen (p.4), 'we do not learn isolated

[5] For example *do re mi...* but other systems, such as the use of numbers, are suggested too.

facts and theories in some abstract mind space separate from our lives: we learn in relation to what we know and believe.'

David Elliott (1995, p.57) develops the theory of praxial learning in relation to music. He writes that 'to look at or to listen to music and to focus exclusively on its structural or aesthetic qualities, in abstraction from its context of social use and production, is contrary to what music making is about. In the praxial philosophy, music making is central.' Hansen returns to this idea, writing that 'if we accept the constructivist position we must follow a pedagogy that provides learners with the opportunity to interact with sounds and construct their own relationships.'

What then should a music theory lesson look like? Hansen continues with 'physical[6] actions may be necessary for learning, but are not sufficient; we need to provide activities which engage the mind as well as the body.' Could singing be part of this physical, or praxial, experience of the student so the mind and the body are both engaged? In terms of the skills that are being developed, George Pratt (1998, p.107-108) makes a distinction between the skill of reading by using an instrument and by singing: 'one is to see [music's] symbols and react mentally and physically to them straight on an instrument. The other is to convert the symbols into *imagined* sound inside your head.' Gordon (2004, p.13) claims that

> 'it is through singing that we develop a sense of tonality (context) and relate tonal patterns (content) to a variety of tonalities in terms of audiation. The more we audiate, the better we learn to sing, and the more we sing, the better we learn to audiate. Emphasis on the oral (singing) without the aural (audiation) is commonplace in the music education of students who are expected to perform in school programs. Worse, however, is emphasis on the aural without the oral, and that usually takes place in classes where students do an inordinate amount of listening to records and are taught about music rather than music itself.'

He makes it clear in this statement that singing is central to a musician's ability to form an understanding of what is heard or performed. He even claims that the listening without the singing is worse than singing without listening.

In connection with the music education philosophy of Zoltán Kodály, the term 'sound to symbol' is often used. This refers to the principle that a sound should be experienced first before a symbol is associated with it. Crouch (2010) writes about the connection between language learning and music and she laments that many language books teach reading and writing before one is even taught how to correctly pronounce the words. However, the Kodály scholars Houlahan and Tacka, in their book called '*From Sound to Symbol*' (2009, p.xv) formulate an approach in their teaching that would 'build their [the students'] knowledge of music theory as a result of using their kinaesthetic, aural, and visual awareness abilities to develop their perception of sound.' This approach links nicely with Elliott's praxial and also with Howard Gardner, who, in his book *Multiple Intelligences* (2006), makes the case that a multiple approach of learning styles should be taken into account in a teaching situation.

[6] In this context physical is meant in a broad sense, or simply as 'doing'.

Houlahan and Tacka (2008, p.79) also claim that 'singing in combination with movement helps reinforce the concept of beat and, if song material is well known, can help vocal intonation.' This supports Gordon's statement that singing goes hand in hand with learning concepts whereby one will improve the other in a continuous cycle thus developing the skill of the musician at the same time as deepening knowledge of concepts.

Michael Rogers (2004) discusses the two approaches of integration and separation of the various domains within the subject of music theory. For him, an integrated approach mixes ear training and analysis within a single unified course[7]. He argues that rather than an either/or approach to the argument for integration or separation of domains, one can 'redefine "integrated theory" as a teaching method or technique rather than as a way of organizing or scheduling classes. Real integrated theory involves involves using […] analysis to develop a set of principles that can explain […] how a competent listener makes sense out of a piece of music' (p.17). In line with Gordon's views on the role that knowledge and skills support each other, Rogers writes that in this 'kind of cyclical process both the thinking and listening aspects of ear training and analysis can nourish one another: the more that music is studied, the more there is to hear; the more that is heard, the more there is to learn.'

Rogers (2004), challenges to look at our own teaching method if one is to achieve an integrated approach to music theory. This paper will present a model for my own ideas and solution to this challenge.

[7] He also includes composition here. At the Royal Conservatoire this is treated as a separate discipline under a diferent department. However, a simple act of inprovising a melody can be included as part of the music theory lesson.