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New Challenges of Music Education

I shall contemplate here some aspects concerning music education today. What kinds of new challenges are we facing in music education and why?

Sound education

What is the **soundscape** of our times like? (The concept "soundscape" is originally created by Canadian composer and author R. Murray Schafer.) I think there is an increasing amount of

- all kinds of **background music** present everywhere: supermarkets, shops, buses, even on city streets

- **voices and noises** in general, e.g. traffic noise, machine noises, sound signals originating, for example, from mobile phones (especially in Finland!) etc.

What's more, nowadays when **electrically amplified sound** has become more of a rule than exception, the development of the listening sensibility is seriously threatened.

As a result of these factors we need to have **sound education** as a part of music education. Sound education means, in short, observing and becoming aware of the soundscape around us. It also means understanding the effect of noise and the meaning of silence to a human being.

Media education

If we consider the quality of today's soundscape, we may find that sound is more and more connected with the visual. This may be noticed especially in media environment. (For instance, computers were still silent for about a decade ago, but now the sound is essential.) I believe our environment has become more **audiovisual**. This will challenge music educators to include **media education** in their curriculum. In music education it is essential to consider also the role of music and other kinds of sound in audiovisual media. The aim of media education is to create media competent citizens, thus promoting **media literacy**. Audiovisual media is also a part of the **music industry**, which affects our children's everyday life very strongly in the modern market society.

There is one aspect I would like to bring out in discussion on the role of media in children's life, concerning not only music education but education in general. One should be worried about the way families live in Finland nowadays. Many parents are busy and work so hard that they do not have enough time for their own children. Media has in some cases taken over some of the parents' duties. One Finnish psychologist has even spoken of "emotionally orphan children". These children lack the important adult to spend time with them, to take responsibility of their life and education. Media has in a way replaced parents' lap. The media – instead of the parents – teach how to behave, think, feel, believe and fear.

The new learning environments in music education

The modern information-intensive society, the new communication technology, as well as the new concepts of learning will set their challenges to music education. According to the concept of constructivism, knowledge can not be transferred; instead the learners themselves must build the structures that make their thinking develop.

I shall now introduce three different applications of the new learning environments in music education used at the Department of Teacher Education in Rauma.

1. Computer-supported collaborative learning environments

"WorkMates" is a learning platform created by the Educational Technology Unit at the University of Turku. The learning platform consists of particular web sites where students and their teachers visit during a course to exchange information, to read, listen, upload or download files. The files may contain general information on the course, such as course goals and timetables, useful Internet links etc., but in most cases the documents are exercises taken by students.

One advantage in using WorkMates is that it develops cooperative learning. Students have to work together, comment each others' exercises and discuss them. The other important advantage the platform offers in music education is easy distribution of audio files by uploading them on websites, where students share the material they have produced. Cooperation and interactivity are essential in working with WorkMates, just as the name expresses.

2. Educational web sites

While WorkMates is better suited to a course with quite a small group of students to maintain the interactivity, educational web sites work well also

with larger groups. On educational web sites students can learn or practice specific areas of music. Educational web sites differ from WorkMates in that the information on the sites can be read, listened and downloaded but not uploaded by the students.

Naturally, only a part of music classes can be taken in this way. At my department, we have put material on some areas of music theory on our web site to allow individual practise after lessons, e.g. drilling intervals. Besides music theory, the web site offers music examples for the music history course in the form of audio files. A student can listen them online or download and burn them on CD. Consequently, the web sites complement the teaching and serve as an easy channel to deliver material.

3. Computer aided music instruction

Music instruction can be complemented also by employing music software, at first on music technology lessons and later for students' individual use. Music software serves as a tool for e.g. composing, arranging, performing, recording and editing music, and helps students to produce music of their own. As music software we have mainly used sequencers (e.g. Cakewalk) and notation software (e.g. Encore).

When composing e.g. children's songs of their own, students make notations of them on the notation program and then arrange their songs by using a sequencer. Later these exercises are delivered to web sites using WorkMates as mentioned before. On keyboard harmony lessons we sometimes use accompaniment software (e.g. Band-in-a-Box) to produce accompaniment for students' playing, which has in some cases motivated them to practise more.

On one hand, using music technology has many advantages. It can, for example, increase flexibility and independence of studying as well as facilitate material delivery. Listening to examples on the web sites while following notation can reinforce the relationship between seeing and hearing music. In some cases technology motivates those students who feel they have poor musical skills.

On the other hand, however, computer supported learning methods in music instruction can lead to acquiring only superficial skills without deeper understanding of music and its nuances. Knowledge alone will not change people's behavior. To learn one needs information to be able to think, but also experiences to be able to feel, especially when dealing with music!