

Tomorrow's Musicians: Education in Tune [B1]

Per decenni i musicisti britannici hanno dominato la scena mondiale, ma l'educazione musicale nelle scuole del Regno Unito è in declino. Da dove verranno i prossimi talenti?

Ask anyone to name the most famous rock bands or popular singers of the last seventy years and **the chances are** that many of the names you'll hear will be British. Music is a **core** part of the British identity and a major contributor to the UK economy. **And yet**, in recent years, music **tuition** has been disappearing from school curriculums. So where will tomorrow's musicians come from?

MUSIC LESSONS

The UK is the second biggest exporter of music on the planet. Before the pandemic, music production generated £5.8 billion a year for the economy and supported over 200,000 jobs. High-quality music **tuition** used to be free for schoolchildren. During World War Two teams of peripatetic (or itinerant) music teachers travelled between local schools providing free or low-cost instrument lessons in small groups or even one-to-one. After a basic introduction, usually on the recorder, children could choose the instrument they wanted to play. Instruments were available for children **to borrow** and use at home and there was an orchestra and a **choir** in almost every school. In the 1960s the system really flourished, producing a generation of world-class musicians.

CUTS AND REFORMS

During the depression of the 1980s, severe **cutbacks** meant that not all local authorities could maintain this excellent service. Educational policy is **devolved** in the UK, so the situation is slightly different in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but in England music suffered another challenge in 2010 when the school system was reformed and **accountability** measures

were introduced. Under these measures, schools were assessed on students' achievement in English, maths, languages and the humanities. As the arts were not on the list, they were almost immediately squeezed out of the curriculum by institutions anxious to gain a high rating in the subjects deemed more helpful for finding a job. Since then, music has been steadily de-prioritised in classrooms so that parents usually have to pay for any serious tuition, with the result that only richer families can afford it.

TRUE VALUE

A 2011 document published by the Department of Education declared: "Music is an enriching and valuable academic subject. Research evidence shows that a quality music education can improve self-confidence, behaviour and social skills, as well as improve academic attainment in areas such as numeracy, literacy and language." That sounds great, but the underlying message is that music is only worth studying because it helps you to do the more important stuff. There are, however, convincing arguments for studying music for its own sake.

MUSIC TOURISM

UK Music is the umbrella organisation that represents the collective voice of the UK's music industry. It brings together artists, musicians, songwriters, composers, record labels, managers, studios and all other sectors "to collaborate, campaign, and champion music." According to its Chief Executive, Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, apart from the production of music itself, music tourism in the UK generates billions and billions of pounds, whether it's people attending the Royal Opera House, camping out at the Glastonbury Festival or doing a Beatles tour of Liverpool. Every time you see a music show, there's a whole ecosystem of people around that event making it happen. Njoku-Goodwin sees music as a key part of the British economic infrastructure and cultural identity and that is why music education is essential.

EDUCATION HUBS

Nowadays, musical tuition is usually provided by Music Education Hubs. Funded by the Department for Education and organised by local authorities, there are 123 of these hubs across England working with schools and further education institutions. Their aim is to provide all young people with the chance to learn a musical instrument or sing, as well as to join ensembles, bands and choirs. Currently about 84 per cent of schools work with their local hub, but this provision is a shadow of what it used to be when music was a core subject in schools. In those days, it didn't matter who you were or what your background was, you were expected to learn music, just like like maths or English.

MUSICAL VISION

Fortunately, there has been something of a backlash. A recent poll revealed that 54 per cent of parents carefully consider the quality of music tuition when choosing a school for their children. Several organisations and charities have sprung up around the country to fill the gap and provide for those less fortunate. The government seems to be aware of this need, as it introduced a new, up-to-date national plan for music in England last year. This time the plan claims it will "enable all children and young people in England to learn to sing, play an instrument and create music together [and] have the opportunity to progress their musical interests and talents, including professionally."

MUSICAL SUCCESS STORIES

Established in 2019 by superstar violinist Nicola Benedetti, the foundation provides equal access to music participation and appreciation for all. Their team of exceptional educators and performers have worked with over 50,000 participants of all ages from hundreds of schools in 103 countries through in-person and virtual programmes. The foundation believes "in the strength of music, in excellence and inclusivity, tradition and

innovation and in the power of mass inspirational moments to connect communities." This primary school is in a **low-income** area of Bradford, Yorkshire, where almost half the children receive free school meals. When music was firmly established as a central part of the teaching a few years ago, the school completely turned around and results **skyrocketed**. Apart from songs in History lessons and games in maths, every child learns to play an instrument. This gives them a sense of joy and **fulfilment** and develops skills of listening and looking for **patterns** that can be transferred to other subjects. Singing and **choir** lessons by teachers of different ethnic backgrounds have also helped the school **to engage** more profoundly with the local community. This award-winning college embraces young people who have fallen out of mainstream education. Some have suffered abuse, some are on the autism spectrum and others belonged to gangs. The reasons why students **wind up** at Supajam are 2many, but they all come looking for a sense of identity, community and even family. With its original college in Swanley, Kent and two new campuses in Canterbury and Brighton, Supajam offers courses in music and the music business along with **GCSE** English and Maths. This real-life school of rock has made a radical difference to the lives of so many **troubled** young people and produced some incredible young talent. Based in Camden, London, Tomorrow's Warriors is a jazz music education and artist development organisation. Since 1991 it has been **championing** diversity, inclusion and equality across the arts through jazz. In particular, it focuses on "Black musicians, female musicians and those whose circumstances make it difficult for them to follow a career in the music industry." Famous **alumni** include Denys Baptiste, Soweto Kinch, Nubya Garcia and Eska. According to top DJ Gilles Peterson, it's impossible to "overstate the impact that Tomorrow's Warriors has had on the current music scene in London

Glossary

- **achievement** = risultato, successo
- **steadily** = costantemente, regolarmente
- **Hubs** = centri
- **GCSE** = certificato di istruzione secondaria (General Certificate of Secondary Education)
- **cutbacks** = tagli
- **champion** = sostenere, promuovere
- **devolved** = trasferire
- **literacy** = leggere e scrivere
- **aim** = obiettivo
- **low-income** = a basso reddito
- **tuition** = lezioni
- **poll** = sondaggio
- **wind up** = finire
- **for its own sake** = in quanto tale
- **backlash** = reazione negativa
- **fulfilment** = realizzazione
- **to engage** = coinvolgere
- **troubled** = con problemi
- **alumni** = ex-alunni
- **underlying** = sottostante
- **core** = centrale
- **deemed** = considerare
- **skyrocketed** = aumentare rapidamente
- **the chances are** = è probabile che
- **to borrow** = prendere in prestito
- **assessed** = valutare
- **squeezed out** = escludere
- **numeracy** = aritmetica
- **sprung up** = sorgere
- **patterns** = modelli
- **And yet** = eppure
- **accountability** = responsabilità

- **record labels** = case discografiche
- **choir** = coro