



Odena, O., and Cabrera, I. (2006) *Dramatising the score: an action research investigation of the use of Mozart's Magic Flute as performance guide for his clarinet Concerto*. In: 9th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition, 22-26 Aug 2006, University of Bologna, Italy.

Copyright © 2006 The Authors.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/86623/>

Deposited on: 09 October 2013

9th International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition

Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, August 22-26 2006

Dramatising the score

An action research investigation of the use of Mozart's *Magic Flute* as performance guide for his clarinet concert

Oscar Odena

University of Barcelona
Barcelona, Spain
oscarodena@ub.edu

Leticia Cabrera

Trinity College
London, UK

ABSTRACT

With this project we tried to go beyond the score, looking for alternative sources that could help in the performance of a piece. In order to do this we worked with Mozart's clarinet concert with the assistance of five conservatory clarinet students over a period of two months. Adopting the research techniques of an action research project we created a study method that helped to better understand the concert, seeing the music like a large theatre play where the characters interact telling a story, and in doing so, giving a greater meaning to what we try to communicate. In doing this we transformed the concert into a 'Magic Clarinet' Opera. In the conclusions we refer to several psychological theories, suggesting that this method might benefit performance students at all levels.

Keywords

Performance studies, dramatised performance, conservatory music education, study methods, performance anxiety,

In: M. Baroni, A. R. Addressi, R. Caterina, M. Costa (2006) Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Music Perception & Cognition (ICMPC9), Bologna/Italy, August 22-26 2006. ©2006 The Society for Music Perception & Cognition (SMPC) and European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music (ESCOM). Copyright of the content of an individual paper is held by the primary (first-named) author of that paper. All rights reserved. No paper from this proceedings may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the paper's primary author. No other part of this proceedings may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information retrieval system, without permission in writing from SMPC and ESCOM.

creativity

BACKGROUND

Music contests and auditions are stressful situations that can have a negative impact on the performance of young musicians. Strategies to overcome performance anxiety are discussed between teachers and students but it is often left to the students to 'experiment' with the strategies in their own time. In addition, the emphasis on the technicalities of the score during study time and in later performances can disrupt the musical communication between performer and audience [see for example Wilson & Roland, 2002; Altenmüller & Gruhn, 2002; both in Parncutt & McPherson (Eds.) 2002].

AIMS

With this investigation we tried to go beyond the music score, looking for alternative sources that could help in the performance of a piece, improving the students' understanding of the score and the quality of prospective auditions¹.

¹ This paper is a summary of the end of degree Project of the second author at the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya*, Spain. She developed an original idea from her clarinet teacher, Joan Enric Lluna, under the direction of the first author. Elsewhere, we have considered the benefits of collaborative 'intellectual dialogue' between students and academics in all stages of research projects, including dissemination (Odena, 2004: 104). Other examples of this interaction can be seen in Odena, Plummeridge & Welch (2004, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

In order to do this we worked with Mozart's Clarinet Concert in A Major KV622 (from now on 'the concert'), a frequent choice in auditions, with the assistance of five advanced conservatory clarinet students from Barcelona, Spain. With the research techniques of an action research project, as explained by Bell (1999) and Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000), we created a study method that helped to better understand the music score. We talked to three experienced performers who acted as key informants prior to the research design. Over a period of two months the participants studied the concert's first movement, whose musical passages were associated with the different characters of a selection of roles from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute* (i.e. Tamino, Pamina, Queen of the night, Papageno and Sarastro). A total of four individual and group study sessions were video recorded with the students². The researchers continuously assessed the participants' development and the implementation of the method. Students also completed an initial evaluation questionnaire and were interviewed at the end of the project. The initial questionnaire and a sample of the responses from the final interviews are available in Spanish in Cabrera, Lluna & Odena (2006: 121-123).

RESULTS AND PROJECT ASSESMENT

The study method that was developed helped the students to better understand the concert, seeing the music like a large theatre play where the characters interact telling a story, and in doing so, giving a greater meaning to what they try to communicate.

In the first session, participants completed the initial evaluation questionnaire and they were introduced to the objectives, timetable and methodology of the project. In the second session we analysed the plot of *The Magic Flute* and the concert's score, watching extracts of a DVD (Metropolitan Opera / Levine, 1991) and explaining the historical context of Mozart's life (e.g. Robbins, 1988). We were fortunate to have the collaboration of two professional clarinet players who demonstrated the differences between the clarinet and the *di bassetto* clarinet, for which the concert was originally written.

With the aim of revising the structure, phrasing, articulation, sound and the orchestral part, participants took the third session individually.

In the final session all the students played together the concert's first movement accompanied by a pianist. They wore costumes inspired by the characters of *The Magic Flute* and the concert was transformed into a "Magic Clarinet" Opera. Each participant had to play only the musical passages 'given' to his character. As a result, one clarinet was playing at a time apart from the final phrase of the movement,

² A discussion of the use of video recordings in educational research projects is available in Odena (2001a, b, & 2002)

where all played together. Previously they had acted a short theatre scene inspired in the characters of the Opera, and the concert's score had been analysed again taking into account the 'distribution' of the Opera's characters. All sessions but the third were open to the public.

Considering the data from the research diary and the students' initial and final assessments, it is apparent that participants not only improved their performance of the piece but also felt a positive change regarding their implication and attitude towards this otherwise technically difficult piece - hence 'stressful' to approach. Participants said that acting the short play before the final music performance helped them to remember they were 'actors playing on stage' and that they had 'to entice and persuade the spectator'.

This workshop helped these graduate students to 'loose fear of the concert', and to 'see it with renewed eyes'. The activities tried out assisted participants in expressing and communicating emotions and sensations to the full.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Several psychological theories and educational ideas can assist in explaining the improvements felt by participants and observed by the researchers (e.g. Altenmüller & Gruhn, 2002; Gardner, 1983, 1995; Odena, in press; Serafine, 1988). For instance, Gardner (1983; 1995) describes seven different types of capacities that he calls intelligences. He argues intelligences can be developed, especially with activities combining two or more. The following is a brief description of them:

- Musical intelligence: the capacity of perceiving and producing music.
- Logical-mathematical intelligence: the capacity of solving abstract problems with little effort.
- Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence: the capacity of solving problems or elaborating products using the body.
- Interpersonal intelligence: the capacity of perceiving the emotions and intentions of those around us.
- Personal intelligence: the capacity of perceiving our own feelings
- Spatial intelligence: the capacity of imagining and working with a three-dimensional model of space.
- Linguistic intelligence: the capacity of using language³.

Gardner (1995) observes that even though professional musicians use the capacities related with the musical intelligence, they use other intelligences depending on their job: for instance the bodily-kinaesthetic (violinists), interpersonal (conductors), spatial & linguistic (opera conductors).

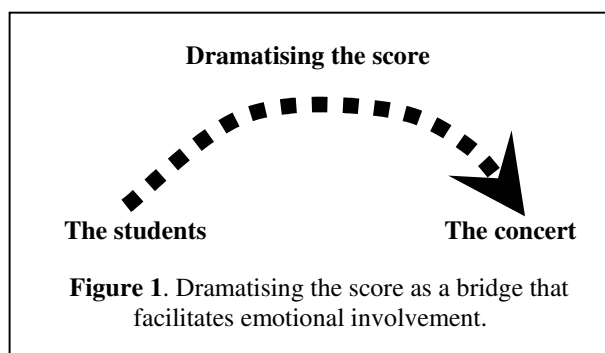
³ He recently added an eighth intelligence, the Naturalistic, related with the capacity of perceiving the characteristics of nature and cataloguing them.

Hence the capacities related to the musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal and personal intelligences would be of great importance in music education in order to play in an ensemble.

In fact, score dramatisation as described in the previous section, aided in linking together visual, aural and sensory-motor representations of the concert. This investigation corroborates the suggestion by Altenmüller & Gruhn (2002: 79) that 'the brain learns best when it is actively involved in exploring and experiencing the physical dimension of musical materials and actions'.

We have observed elsewhere that this method can be adapted to performance students at all levels and has the potential of benefiting them all⁴. Using different capacities decreased the anxiety and aided the self-confidence of participants when playing in the final session.

It would be interesting to investigate the potential of these activities in aiding professional musicians to see and 'feel' the music scores from another perspective. The emotional involvement of performers of all ages when learning a piece could aid in the memorisation and personal significance of the score, improving motivation and facilitating musical development.



In the present study we achieved this emotional involvement by performing the short theatre scene with costumes and by dramatising the score. As shown in Figure 1, these activities were a bridge between the concert and the students, between their musical worlds and the score to be learned.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are deeply grateful to the participants for their willingness to share their time. We would also like to thank the clarinet players Lorenzo Coppola (*di bassetto*), Joan Enric Lluna, Carles Pertegaz, Josep Fuster, Mark Withers and Tim Lissimore (piano) for their support and advise.

⁴ For a further discussion of the educational implications see Cabrera, Lluna, Odena (2006) and Odena (in press).

REFERENCES

- Altenmüller, E., & Gruhn, W. (2002). Brain mechanisms. In R. Parncutt & G. McPherson (Eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning* (pp. 63-81). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bell, J. (2002). *Cómo hacer tu primer trabajo de investigación: Guía para investigadores en educación y ciencias sociales*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- Cabrera, L., Lluna, J. E., & Odena, O. (1996). Teatralizar la partitura para aprender mejor: Un estudio sobre "La Flauta Mágica" como imagen interpretativa del concierto de clarinete de Mozart. *Eufonía: Didáctica de la Música*, 36, 113-123.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th edition). London: Routledge.
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Fontana Press.
- Gardner, H. (1995). *Inteligencias múltiples: La teoría en la práctica*. Barcelona: Paidós.
- Odena, O. (2001a). The construction of creativity: using video to explore secondary school music teachers' views. *Educate-: The London journal of doctoral research in education*, 1(1), 104-122.
- Odena, O. (2001b). How do secondary school music teachers view creativity?: A report on educators' views of teaching composing skills. *Education-line*, free access in www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003133.htm.
- Odena, O. (2002). Using videotaped extracts of lessons during interviews to facilitate the eliciting of teachers' thinking: An example with music schoolteachers' perceptions of creativity. *Education-line*, free access in www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00002206.htm
- Odena, O. (2004). Some considerations on research dissemination with particular reference to the audience and the authorship of papers. *Music education research*, 6(1), 101-110.
- Odena, O. (in press). Reflexiones sobre el significado del término "instrumentos en la educación musical". *Eufonía: Didáctica de la Música*.
- Odena, O., Plummeridge, C., & Welch, G. (2004). Creativity in music education with particular reference to the perceptions of teachers in English secondary schools. In J. Tafuri (Ed.), *Research for music education: Proceedings of the 20th Seminar of the ISME Research Commission* (pp. 190-198). Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain: International Society for Music Education.

- Odena, O., Plummeridge, C., & Welch, G. (2005). Towards an understanding of creativity in music education: A qualitative exploration of data from English secondary schools. *Bulletin of the council for research in music education*, 163, 9-18.
- Parncutt, R., & McPherson, G. (Eds.) (2002). *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Serafine, M. L. (1988). *Music as cognition: The development of thought in sound*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Robbins, L. (1988). *1791, el último año de Mozart*. Madrid: Siruela.
- Metropolitan Opera / Levine, J. (conductor) (1991). *The Magic Flute*, DVD. Deutsche Grammophon.
- Mozart, A. *Concert for clarinet in A Major KV622*. Bärenreiter Urtext.
- Wilson, G., & Roland, D. (2002). Performance anxiety. In R. Parncutt & G. McPherson (Eds.), *The science and psychology of music performance: Creative strategies for teaching and learning* (pp. 47-61). New York: Oxford University Press.