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extracts from
The School of Music

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Sergio Trunk

So who's in charge around here?

MEET THE BOSS!

Some people call me The Maestro, others call me Herr Direktor. (It depends what they had for dinner – spaghetti or frankfurters). I have been in charge here for just over 25 years – they threw me a very fine party to mark the occasion.



WHAT DO I DO?

I am the very eminent and grand Head of School – just that little bit more eminent and grand than any of my staff. I am a first-rate conductor of first-rate orchestras, choirs and opera companies, and the artistic director (in some of my not-very-much spare time) of a super-duper highly-regarded music festival. Everything about me is top notch, so I think you'll agree I'm the perfect person for the job!

HAVE I ALWAYS BEEN SO IMPRESSIVE?

Oh no! It hasn't always been chauffeur-driven cars from the airport and Royal Gala concerts. I grew up in modest circumstances, and was raised alone by my mother. Right from the start, she made me appreciate the importance of self-discipline and hard work (and a good night's sleep).

HAS IT BEEN MY TALENT ALONE THAT HAS MADE ME SUCH A SUCCESS?

Through my love of music, the world opened up for me at school and beyond. So although you wouldn't guess from my wonderfully polished and grand exterior that I started out further down the ladder, I've never forgotten where I came from, and I always make sure I work very hard. You can say 'the more you put into something, the more you get out of it' about a lot of things in life – and this is never more true than with music.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THE SIZE OF A CONDUCTOR'S STICK?

Once upon a time, conductors used to use very long sticks (we call them batons) to keep a large orchestra or choir in time. But it isn't necessarily the case that the bigger the orchestra the bigger the stick: in fact, one famous Russian conductor uses a tiny toothpick as his magic wand, and other conductors don't use a baton at all! I like to think that my brilliance as a conductor comes from my natural sense of authority and leadership, the subtle expressivity of my body language, the focus of my rehearsals and – of course – my high level of charisma. Charisma is charm, magnetism and earning potential all rolled into one.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO LEARN CHARISMA?

Unfortunately, my friends, it isn't. It's something you either have or you don't. If you have it, you'll certainly know – things will happen to you that don't happen to other people. Regard it, like I have all my life, as the most precious gift. It will get you far – alongside hard work of course!

IS IT ALL ABOUT ME?

Goodness me no! How could you possibly think that?! There are lots of other talented and lovely people at the School of Music. Turn the pages to meet some of them.



What is jazz?

Mmmm! 'Jazz' is another word that's very hard to define. People recognise jazz when they hear it, but it's a genre of music that has existed for over 100 years and has developed and changed around the world in that time... a lot!

Just like with classical music, if people say they like jazz – or if they say they don't like jazz – it's hard to really know what they mean. It's like someone saying, "I like the countryside". Is that flat or hilly countryside? Are there lots of trees, or lakes and rivers?

No-one knows for sure where the word 'jazz' came from, but it's likely that it was a slang American word in the 19th century meaning energy, spirit and courage. Jazz music (though no-one calls it 'jazz music', it's just 'jazz!') started off in the southern states of the USA, in particular New Orleans in Louisiana. It came together from a mix of musical styles: brass marching band, the blues and spirituals of African-Americans, the Cuban habanera dance and ragtime – music whose rhythms were 'ragged' through going off-beat (also

known as 'syncopation' – see Lesson 20 for more on this).

As a percussionist, I play both classical and jazz, and they are equally challenging in their different ways. In jazz, improvisation is king! Improvisation is the freedom to make music up as you go along, to create something 'in the moment'. It means that no two performances of a jazz piece are the same. Jazz performers are brilliant listeners: they need to listen hard to what is happening around them, and react with split-second timing.

NO TWO PERFORMANCES OF A PIECE OF JAZZ ARE THE SAME



ACTIVITY

Improvisation is king in jazz! And it's not just instrumentalists that improvise. Singers do, too. This is called scat singing. Try it yourself: choose your own melody and make up the words, too. Doo-bop shewop!

Does music sound different around the world?



MANY MUSICAL CULTURES DEVELOPED IN ISOLATION FROM ONE ANOTHER, WHICH IS WHY THEY SOUND SO DIFFERENT

In our Great Basement of Musical Pigeonholes, we have lots of musical styles from around the world. But so far in our discussion of classical, jazz and pop, we haven't strayed very far from music originating in the Western world – yet.

So much wonderful music comes from other cultures and other continents. To 'Western ears' it sounds completely different: the instruments are different, the singing styles are different and the rhythms, melodies and harmonies are different, too! Much less music from non-Western cultures is written down, but it can be highly organised (like Western classical music). In fact, many cultures have centuries-old traditions of their own 'classical music'; just ask an Indian sitar-player or a Malian kora-player.

Many musical cultures developed in isolation from one another, which is why they sound so distinctive. In 1889, a big gathering of global cultures called the World Exhibition was held in Paris. This was one of the first times that Western musicians heard (what to them) were exotic sounds from other parts of the world, such as a Javanese gong orchestra, or gamelan. Composers such as Claude Debussy found this very influential on their style.

In the 20th century, some composers became fascinated by different countries' folk cultures, and they started writing down and recording folk songs. Once again, the boundaries of classical and non-classical traditions become mixed up!

ACTIVITY

Go online and try searching for music from different parts of the world. What does the music make you think of? Draw a picture based on the sounds you can hear.

More recently, different musical cultures from around the world have been brought together under a new label: 'world music'. All of this has opened our ears to a big, wide musical world. It has also led to styles of music from different cultures getting mixed up, which can be a good thing... and sometimes a bad thing! Mixing Italian lasagne with Indian curry might not taste great – it takes a skilled cook to mix the flavours well!

How does a performer know how to play the music?

TEMPO IS THE SPEED AT WHICH A PIECE SHOULD BE PLAYED

ADAGIO
(QUITE SLOW)

ALLEGRO
(QUITE FAST)

LENTO (SLOW)

ANDANTE (WALKING PACE)

PRESTO
(FAST)

PRESTISSIMO
(VERY FAST)

When Niagara or I write a piece of music, we imagine it being played in a certain way. For instance, if I have written a fanfare for an opening ceremony, I want it to be played fast and loud to sound impressive! And if I am writing music for a sad film, I want it to be played sensitively and slowly. But how can I give this information to the performer if I'm not there when they play it?

That's where performance directions come in! These are words or symbols on the page that give the performer this crucial, extra information. It's really useful stuff. And an extra bonus is that, unless you already

speak Italian, you get to learn some words in a different language too, because most performance directions are in... Italian!

Going back several hundred years, so many important composers were Italian – or worked in Italy – that Italian became the main musical language. Many important musical words, such as 'concerto', 'opera', 'aria', 'cadenza', 'sonata' and 'tempo' are all Italian, and so are the words that composers use to give other performance directions. I add a tempo to every piece I write – this sets the speed at which the piece should be played. Each speed has a different word – in Italian of course!

ACTIVITY

Learn a little Italian! Write down each of the tempo directions here on small pieces of paper, and try to remember what they mean. Can you arrange them in order from slowest (lento) to the fastest (prestissimo).

TO OUR PARENTS, FOR THE GIFT OF MUSIC, AND TO ALL
OF YOU WHO PASS ON THIS GIFT - THROUGH TUITION
AND SUPPORT - TO THE NEXT GENERATION.
- M.B. & R.B.



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Many thanks to the following musicians who have specially recorded demonstrations of their instruments and voices.
To hear the recordings, visit [SOUNDCLOUD](https://www.soundcloud.com) or use the QR code.

**LESSON 6:
INSTRUMENTS THAT
YOU PLUCK**

Avi Avital (mandolin)
Catrin Finch (harp)

**LESSON 7:
INSTRUMENTS THAT
YOU BLOW**

Jess Gillam (saxophone)
Christian Lindberg (trombone)
Eddie Parker (flute)
The Tibetan Monks of Tashi Lhunpo
Monastery (long horns)

**LESSON 8:
INSTRUMENTS THAT YOU HIT**

Joby Burgess (percussion)

**LESSON 9:
INSTRUMENTS WITH KEYS**

Benjamin Nicholas (organ)
Eddie Parker (synthesizer)
Ksenija Sidorova (piano accordion)

**LESSON 10:
INSTRUMENTS THAT YOU BOW**

Nicola Benedetti (violin)
Steven Isserlis (cello)

**LESSON 11:
VOICES**

TK (soprano)
Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano)
James Gilchrist (tenor)
TK (bass)

**LESSON 13:
STRING QUARTETS**

Carducci String Quartet



QR CODE

MEURIG AND RACHEL BOWEN live and work in Gloucestershire, England. Rachel teaches singing and
class music, and conducts a number of children's choirs. Meurig is Director of the Cheltenham Music Festival.

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