

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE CASE FOR MUSIC THAT POINTS OUT THE IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSIC AND THE HUMAN BRAIN / MIND?

Provocation: that music has a special and unique significance to the human brain / mind because it mirrors the nature and structure of human consciousness, not the same as consciousness but a metaphor for it, a type of language for and about human consciousness.

- This is not about not neuroscience although the 'firing up' of the brain in response to music, and thus being physiologically active, is important to my argument;
- It all starts with the body. From the work of Piaget, Bruner, Swanwick we know that all learning and development starts with the body. We start by developing the body (through sensory experience) and end up with the developed brain / mind (expressed through symbolic modes - such as music and language). However, the body is always in the brain / mind and together they underpin human consciousness.
- Importantly consciousness is characterised by movement; it is dynamic and playful, ebbs and flows, has tensions and resolutions, ups and downs - it is never static!
- So what of music then? Music is a metaphor for human consciousness, it shares the shapes and structure of human consciousness and is the symbolic mode par excellence that mirrors the human and social condition.
- How does this body, brain, mind, music link work?

Dalcroze: 'Rhythm, like dynamics, depends entirely on movement, and finds its nearest prototype in our muscular system. All nuances of time....all nuances of energy...can be 'realised' by our bodies, and the acuteness of our musical feeling will depend on the acuteness of our bodily sensations'. Dalcroze went on to unify the physical, the cognitive and the musical in his system of Eurhythmics.

Langer: 'the rhythms of life are the prototypes of musical structure' meaning that like consciousness, music has form e.g. growth and decay, birth and death, ebb and flow, intensity and resolution, excitement and calm, struggle and fulfilment - music as a tonal version of consciousness. She argues further that 'musical structures logically resemble certain dynamic patterns of human experience....'

- Therefore, music has very special relationship with the body and brain. Music constructs it's meaning through movement: it moves, moves us, is moving, moves us to think, feel and have ideas. Music is the paradigm example of all human symbolic modes, being part of and about human consciousness.
- It follows then that music is a way of: creating ideas, receiving ideas, holding ideas, playing with ideas, sharing ideas about human and social consciousness - a type of language about human consciousness.
- Summary: music is a metaphor for a human consciousness that arises from the body and the brain. This is why it is so significant to us - a special and unique significance closely related to our evolution as humans.

PS After the discussion group it was suggested that the unique nature of music might explain its impact on other areas of human and experience. However, after years of data on the celebrated transfer effects of music, we still find ourselves in a 'crisis' and needing to justify music in the curriculum. The primal significance of music trumps the secondary transfer effects and the case for the former needs to be clearly articulated if the importance of music is to be taken seriously and understood by all.

Chris Philpott