

Recent Research in Applied Studio Instruction

By Kelly A. Parkes

In his 2002 chapter, *Systematic Research in Studio Instruction in Music* Richard Kennell reviews and summarizes major research efforts for the applied studio setting. Over the past decade, a renewed interest in the applied studio has become apparent in a line of investigative inquiry pursued by researchers. The purpose of this paper, part one in a two-part series, is to highlight some of this new work on an international platform, in keeping with the comprehensive framework as laid out by Kennell (2002). The dyadic nature of the applied studio is clearly seen in the 'master-apprentice' model and Kennell (2002) refers to this as the expert-novice apprenticeship model early in the chapter. Kennell (2002) goes on to review research from within several broad categories: the roles of student and teacher, their behaviors, their interactions, and evaluation. Research undertaken most recently can still be grouped loosely into these categories, which for the purposes of this series are clustered as **(1)** characteristics of the applied setting (Burwell, 2006; Colprit, 2000; Duke, 1999/2000; Duke & Simmons, 2006; Fredrickson, 2007; Gaunt, 2008; Kurkul, 2007; Laukka, 2004; Mills & Smith, 2003), **(2)** the use of practice in the applied studio (Jorgensen, 2002; Kostka, 2002; C.K. Madsen, 2004; Maynard, 2006), and **(3)** the use of evaluation in the applied studio (Bergee, 2003; Bergee & Cecconi-Roberts, 2002; Oberlander, 2000; Parkes, 2006, 2008a, 2008b). Additionally, several authors (Bennett

& Stanberg, 2006; Jorgensen, 2000; Parncutt, 2007; Sinsabaugh, 2007) have recently highlighted a more collaborative approach to the current modus operandi of the applied studio and there has been particular interest (Parkes, 2009; Wexler, 2008) in the dual roles that applied teachers undertake as performers and teachers. This notion will be discussed with a view toward future research. The current paper will examine recent research about the characteristics of the applied setting and the forthcoming paper, will address the use of practice and evaluation, and collaborative processes and dual roles of the applied studio teachers.

Characteristics of the Applied Setting

The most well regarded investigation in determining the characteristics of effective applied instruction was carried out over 30 years ago (Abeles, 1975) and since this time, many researchers have supported his findings of characteristics found in the instruction in the applied setting. The majority of the work done since this study has established what occurs on instructional, behavioral, and pedagogical levels. The somewhat secretive nature of the applied studio has long been criticized (Brand, 1992; Clifford K. Madsen, 1965) and recent research redirects this idea with new findings in regard to the complex nature of the closed door setting of the applied studio. Duke (1999/2000) systematically reviewed published experimental and descriptive research involving the applied studio setting This meta-analysis reveals broad categories similar to those of Kennell (2002) with detailed specificity in terms of the type of research

methodologies used and the categorical terminologies. Duke (1999/2000) identified the following variables within the applied studio research: allocation of time; teacher verbalizations, gestures, and activities; effects of multiple components on teaching and student behavior; variables affecting evaluations by observers; and experimental attempts to improve teaching. This investigation is recommended for detailed description of earlier research.

Colprit (2000) also examines characteristics, but in the non-Western setting of the Suzuki applied studio. She categorizes characteristics from videotape lesson material from her sample (n = 12) of applied violin and cello teachers and reports that 45% of time was devoted to teacher talk, 20% to teacher modeling, and 41% to student performance. Verbalizations from the teachers' talk contained a subset of classifications such as directives, information, questions, approvals, and disapprovals. The setting of performance goals, as a pedagogical tool used, is congruent with the later findings of Duke & Simmons (2006), an investigation into the nature of expertise in the Western applied studios of master teachers. Results reveal that certain elements of good teaching appear consistently in the categories of goals and expectations, effecting change, and conveying information. After analyzing 25 hours of videotape material, Duke and Simmons identify 19 characteristics evident in 3 master teachers, some of which overlap with Colprit's (2000). The setting of musical targets or performance goals for students and consistent patterns of observable student / teacher interactions, for example, were characteristics identified by both studies.

Wider, more contextual issues are reported in the work of Gaunt (2008). Her study reports the perceptions of applied

teachers in the UK, and her interview analyses reveal several issues. The first issue was that these teachers (n = 20) were diverse in professional profile; both in the number of years they had been teaching and in the instruments they taught, yet they were similar in the fact that they had not had any teacher training and that teaching had not been an "initial vocational choice" (p. 220). The second salient issue was that the teachers interviewed by Gaunt expressed a range of aims in teaching which were grouped into five categories, including lifelong learning skills, education through engaging in musical heritage, developing a personal artistic voice, general vocational tools, and preparing for a specific career such as opera soloist. It appears that the vocational training was more emphasized by the string teachers and the most diversity in teaching aims was seen in the wind, brass, and percussion teachers' perceptions. A third important finding was that a wide display of teaching strategies and resources were reported, and only five teachers mentioned an interest in teaching with technology. No teacher indicated that they used audio or video recording equipment as part of their teaching practice. The fourth and final finding was that the studio teaching was primarily driven by four categories; musical issues, technique and physical issues, no bias between music and technique, and the processes of learning. Gaunt (2008) explores the intense expectations of the one-to-one relationship around the variable of trust and other difficulties that arise with the boundaries of the one-to-one-relationship. She discusses the related finding that several aspects of teaching such as planning and evaluating, were considered in a much less systematic way by applied teachers and explains the potential effects this might have on students' levels of autonomy and self-

responsibility. Her qualitative investigation supports previously reported teaching characteristics and interpersonal communications in the dyad of the applied studio.

Kurkul (2007) examines only the non-verbal communication characteristic of the applied studio by specifically targeting nonverbal sensitivity, nonverbal behaviors, and lesson effectiveness. This work is built somewhat on the work of Wang (2001) and examines college level applied teachers (n = 120) and some their non-music major students (n = 60). Kurkul (2007) reports that while teachers and students report levels of lesson effectiveness differently, external judges can give reliable evaluations on factors such as rapport, communication, pedagogical skill, instructional organization, flexibility, and general instructional competence. Nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact, smiling, hand gestures, leaning, head nodding, physical distance, touching, silence, and voice quality were not found to significantly correlate with lesson effectiveness scores as given by either teacher, student, or external judge, which is contrary to earlier findings (Levasseur, 1994).

A more general examination of teaching approaches can be seen in the work of Burwell (2006) where instrumental and singing teachers' behaviors are compared. Verbal dialogue was recorded from 67 applied instrumental and vocal lessons from 16 different teachers' studios in a UK music department. After qualitative analysis of the dialogue recordings, Burwell (2006) suggests that singing teachers put more emphasis on technique, and less on interpretation than instrumental teachers. Singing teachers also use more affective language and metaphor. Burwell (2006) suggests that instrumental teachers could use a vocabulary that is more

metaphorical, experiential, and emotional, and that they may better be able to convey imaginative musical ideas to students in the applied instrumental studio.

Expressivity, in particular, has been examined, with relation to the instrumental applied studio in the work of Laukka (2004) which represents applied studios from Sweden and England. Laukka (2004) surveyed instrumental teachers (n = 51) to determine answers to the following research questions: what constitutes expressivity, how might it be taught, and what might be the issues related to using computer-based instruction for teaching expressive skills? The salient finding in regard to studio instruction reports that "modeling and verbal-based instruction that focused on the students' felt emotions were the preferred method for teaching expressive skills" (p.45). The teachers reported the importance of being able to demonstrate playing expressively. The teachers also revealed wanting to spend more time teaching expressive skills in lessons but were unsure about the practicability of using computer-based instruction to do so. Applied teachers' perceptions about what they are teaching and how they are teaching are perhaps not often investigated by researchers due to the 'closed door' nature of the studio that still exists, and these types of inquiries hold only a small place in the body of the literature.

General music teachers' beliefs about instrumental applied teaching have recently been investigated between high school and higher education levels. (Mills & Smith, 2003) surveyed local education authority instrumental teachers (n = 134) in the UK and found that many teachers believe that good teaching is different between schools and higher education. Teachers reported the 'knowledge of the teacher' (meaning the

knowledge set that the teacher has) to be the most important for higher education applied teachers whereas, 'being an enthusiastic teacher' was the most important feature for a high school instrumental studio teacher. The second most important teaching skill higher education applied teachers should have, according to the participants of this survey, was technical focus. For high school teachers, the participants ranked 'knowledge of the teacher' as the second most important feature. Participants ranked the importance of teacher personality, teacher approach, and teaching content as almost equal for higher education applied instrumental teachers, but ranked personality and approach as more important for high school instrumental applied teachers to have or use in the applied setting. The participants perceptions were that that higher education teachers should focus on technique, develop individual voices, and use a wide variety of repertoire. Understanding what other music teacher populations expect from applied teachers at the college level is a new line of inquiry and at this time, has not been undertaken in the United States.

In the USA, however, Fredrickson (2007) has taken a novel approach to understanding the characteristics of applied teaching as perceived by the novice teacher. His study explored the reflections of college music performance majors who were teaching private applied lessons to younger adolescents. The college students' (n=12) reflections revealed that they had low expectations of the lessons, that they were concerned about levels of student motivation and practice, and that they did not appear to connect the best and worst aspects of their teaching with the observed best and worst aspects of student learning. Fredrickson suggests there is further research needed to examine the cause-and-effect relationship that

exists in the dyad of the applied studio. In light of the lack of 'teacher training' applied faculty received, his approach to understanding how novice applied teachers think is particularly revealing. This notion is also perhaps evident in the work, as previously discussed, by Gaunt (2008). The lack of systematic education or 'training' for faculty in the pedagogical aspects of teaching in the applied studio is an area that needs careful consideration. It is tacitly assumed that simply because one has been taught, in the conservatory method, or applied studio, that one can also then teach. If one has only experienced the applied setting from the role of student, one cannot be expected to move to the role of teacher smoothly or expertly. Further discussion in this area will be expounded in the second paper of this series.

The research briefly discussed within this paper illustrates an international interest in how the applied studio operates in the 21st century. Clearly, the concept of goal-setting exists in both Western and non-western applied studios, along with several non-verbal strategies that are found in instrumental as well as vocal studios. Many of these findings support and corroborate the findings of the 20th century. Behaviors of both the student and teacher of the applied studio can perhaps be studied from a behavioral perspective with relative ease. It is of great interest to now examine both student and teacher perceptions and beliefs about practice in the applied studio. Perceptions and beliefs of applied studio teachers are notoriously difficult to capture (Parkes, 2008b) but are a necessary step in fully understanding the dyadic nature of the expert-novice apprenticeship model (Kennell, 2002). New lines of inquiry are now being pursued by researchers in regard to collaborative processes in the applied studio and the dual role required of applied teachers,

or artist-teachers, and these will be examined in detail in the second paper of this series.

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