

... with Susan Hallam

'Music has so many other benefits'

One youthful experience

I was brought up in Leicestershire at a time when the Director of Education, Stewart Mason, was committed to all children having opportunities to engage with the arts. Aged seven I began to learn the violin and was soon persuaded to join a junior orchestra. From this I progressed to the Leicestershire Senior Schools Orchestra which I led from the age 15. We toured abroad, made recordings, and worked with many famous composers and conductors, including Sir Michael Tippett on a TV programme called *Overture with Beginners*. As leader of the orchestra at the time I was interviewed and my comment that working with Michael Tippett was 'terrific' led to much ribbing at school. These experiences not only had musical benefits but opened my eyes to all kinds of career opportunities. I developed a range of personal and social skills which have supported

me in my academic career and influenced me to research the wider benefits of music.

One favourite film

Farewell My Concubine. This film spans 53 years in China presenting the lives of two men against the historical backdrop of a country in upheaval. It is a dramatic film which had an emotional and intellectual impact the first time I saw it.

One academic influence

My undergraduate studies in psychology were completed through London University's external examination system supported by the National Extension College. There was no formal tuition so I spent a lot of time in libraries doing my own research. On completion of my degree I registered for a part-time MSc in the Psychology of Education at the Institute of Education. My tutor there was Dr Fitz Taylor. I was interested in learning and performance and it was through his teaching that I was introduced to a whole new literature which has continued to be influential in my work. Fitz suggested that I should register for a PhD, something I would never have considered without his support.



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One retreat

I can completely lose myself in a book. I'm particularly partial to a good detective story and at one time thought I might try writing one.

One turning point in my life

On leaving the Royal Academy of Music I became principal second violin in the BBC Midland Orchestra, where my interest in psychology developed. Becoming more committed to psychology, I decided that I should move into education, gained a teaching qualification and began to teach the violin. This culminated in me becoming Head of Strings for Oxfordshire Education Authority. During the 1980s the music service in Oxfordshire came under threat, prompting me to move into teaching psychology, initially and briefly (only two terms), in a college of further education. What changed my life was being appointed to my first higher education lecturing post at the Institute of Education in 1991.

One media experience

In 1996 I was approached by the BBC TV programme *Tomorrow's World* to advise them on creating an experiment to test the 'Mozart effect' (listening to 10 minutes of Mozart will increase your IQ). I advised them that doing an experiment live on TV would be risky, and we agreed that 10- and 11-year-old primary-school children would listen to 10 minutes of either Mozart (on Radio 3), Blur (Radio 1) or me talking about experiments (Radio 5) on the day prior to the programme. The children would then complete two spatial reasoning tests which the teachers would mark. The results would be couriered to me and I would report the findings live on the programme the following day. While participation of about 300 children was planned, extensive media coverage

asking for participants resulted in over 200 schools and 8000 children taking part. Not surprisingly there was no Mozart effect!

One holiday destination

I love walking and The Alps provide the perfect environment – views to die for and fresh unpolluted air.

One conference

In 1998 myself and a colleague, Richard Cowan, presenting findings related to homework at the conference of the BPS Education Section in Exeter. This marked the beginning of extensive and controversial coverage in the media, David Blunkett being



extremely exercised by the findings of the review.

One pressing concern

In the current age of austerity and with schools increasingly focusing on improving their results in terms of government criteria, I am hugely concerned that music education will disappear from the curriculum. Only one in three primary school children now take part in music activities compared with half in 2010 and with the introduction of the EBacc music is under threat in secondary schools. Apart from the value of music in its own right, it also has so many other benefits in terms of children and young people's intellectual, personal and social development – its loss would be catastrophic.

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