

Gregers Brinch

...on music and teaching

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1. ***Music in relation to the development of the human being***, Human beings are capable of consciously transforming themselves. Music is a tool, which helps us in the process of transformation of the individual and thereby of humanity in general. In general I am very aware of everyone's inability to feel secure in his or her understanding of music. This means that when I come encounter a mistake made by a student, I will approach it in the following way: a mistake will usually be as a result of doing or thinking something because there seem to be a good reason to think or do that which is not "correct". This means that I will welcome and often thank the individual for being courageous enough to expose their mistake, as it will mean that I can question what it was that led them to make that mistake, which in turn broadens the understanding of the subject matter from different sides. This is crucial
2. ***Tones and intervals, rhythm and harmony, timbre and dynamics***, in relation to movement and gesture, time and space, contraction and expansion etc. How to approach music as a living being. The musical elements depend on our good will to provide them with the "substance", through which they can manifest their inherent qualities. It is not the musician who determines the essential quality of a "fifth"; s/he merely provides the body in the same way our bodily nature is provided for us. But the degree to which that "fifth" can manifest itself in that space, through that or those instrument(s), at that particular time, depends on the depth of appreciation of the performer. In return the performer is able to express their individual and intimate relationship to the music. Thus a kind of marriage can take place in which both music and performer can come to fulfilment in full appreciation of the other. How can we gain a deeper understanding of the mystery of basic musical elements, which goes beyond merely finding the inherent order and naming?
3. ***"The mystery and joy of human singing"***. There are a number of various revelations that are to be experienced by simple means through singing, both alone and with others. I seek to address the "I can't sing" and "I don't like my own voice" syndromes. The voice as the carrier par excellence of impulses of body, soul and spirit. As the connector between music and the human being, between spirit and body. I perceive blockages and possibilities through listening to my pupils. This means I don't really know what I will be teaching, as I need to listen to the pupil to hear "where they are at". What I perceive will be a mixture of what state of being the pupil finds her/himself in and how the activity in the lessons is contributing to the present situation. This means that my system of teaching is continuously subject to the changes I pick up from the way the pupil is singing, and how they feel and think about their singing.
4. ***The teaching of music via the piano*** to children and to advanced players of the piano. The piano is introduced primarily as a percussion instrument, with aspects of the harp and the voice as well. The imagination of the musician is challenged by the mechanical tool we call the piano to transform it into a true instrument. The role of gravity and economy of energy in bringing about a musical tone. Overcoming the overemphasis of left-brain activity in learning

the piano. Often the pupil will find a passage difficult to play because the music is strongly dissonant. I consciously train the “soul-ear” to want to hear the dissonances the hands are at times taught to bring perform. Improvisation and “The 5 modes” (Aeolian, Mixolydian, Dorian, Phrygian and Ionian) and the pentatonic scale are used as tools for giving us joy and musical wings to fly on.

5. ***Improvised compositions and composed improvisations.*** Form and content. The role of “free will” in performing music. The possibility of discovering for the first time a piece after playing it for a decade, or to improvise a piece for the first time, sounding like nothing you ever heard and yet seeming achingly familiar. So-called non-musicians improvising with minimum technical requirements on percussion instruments;... a practical exercise in working with human rights!
6. ***On composing, and teaching composition.*** In teaching, I am interested in discovering the path of the student. I believe history shows us that the experience of inspiration has been a primary mover in the breaking of rules, exploring new musical territory and of driving the composer on to developing their compositional technique in order to master the sounds, which the inspiration gave rise to. Today’s great temptation and challenge in the face of the myriad of sounds and musical inventions we have become contemptuously familiar with over the past century or more is indeed to be original and new and groundbreaking. An even greater challenge is how to approach the subject of inspiration if indeed it is to play a part in music making.

An attempt at an outline of didactic methods and approaches by which to achieve this goal, would include:

Finding the exercises and tasks according to the path and individuality of the student rather than imposing the will of the teacher/composer onto the student.

How can the musical elements be taught both as historical, cultural and acoustic phenomena as well as “beings” in their own right, who have a “right to existence” beyond our subjective judgement and control. Meditative attention to the musical elements is essential in coming to a deep appreciation of their qualities.

“Composition as an exacting craft”. Learning to hear the directions dictated by the elements themselves. When is the music I have started to compose, stronger than me and beyond my arbitrary intention? When to lead, and when to follow. How can I learn to wield the music in a state of mutual creativity with the being of the music?

These are some descriptions of the many experiences of teaching and working creatively with music over the past 35 years

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