

From the Guardian letters page, 3rd May 2005.

As a classical organisation very involved in the music education in primary schools, we are extremely grateful to Peter Maxwell Davies (How pop and television damage our culture, 25th April 2005) for using his unique position as a famous composer and master of the Queen's Music in drawing media attention to the low priority given to music. Maybe some of his claims are inaccurate, as alleged by your correspondents (Letters 2nd May 2005) but for those of us who actually work with the children, his analysis of the situation is very close to the reality that we find in schools.

We have been going into primary schools with our educational programme, devised and performed by the English String Quartet and funded by charitable grants, for seven years now and see little evidence of progress. Of course there is the occasional school in which music is important (generally thanks to the commitment of one teacher and/or some of the parents); of course, Youth Music is beneficial to some (but it only funds music making activities outside school hours); but overall what we see on the ground is that music education in general and instrumental teaching in particular are very neglected.

And if every time we go to a school we are elated and amazed by the children's enthusiastic reaction to and great interest in the music we play them (from Mozart to Shostakovich), we are also very saddened and frustrated by the realisation of how few children are given this opportunity.

Luciano Iorio

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