



Music Manifesto Case Study no 4 – Gwen, 10

- Gwen lives in Okehampton, Devon
- Her grandmothers play organ, piano and mandolin
- She's been learning clarinet for 2½ years and has just started piano
- She plays in the school orchestra and sings in the Okehampton Youth Choir
- When she comes to secondary school, her ambition is to play in the big band
- 'Sometimes I hate giving up time to practice'

'My funniest moment in music was when my music stand fell down when I was playing a duet on my clarinet at a school concert. I didn't know whether to laugh or try to carry on playing, so I carried on playing while I giggled down my clarinet'. And perhaps discovered a new sound for clarinet into the bargain...

Ten year-old Gwen relates several performing experiences, in spite of her relatively beginner status on clarinet and recorder (2 years) and piano (6 months). For example, singing in a youth chorus for a large audience at a Tsunami relief concert and being part of a music group performing at a headmasters' conference. (She doesn't say whether it influenced any of their resolutions).

'Pop makes me feel like dancing,' says Gwen, 'but my clarinet exams made me feel very nervous'. On the whole though, positive experiences balance out the negative: 'It's very frustrating when I can't play [a piece of music] but it's good to have something a bit hard to stretch me'.

Gwen doesn't reveal any specific moment of musical awareness or inspiration: 'I can't remember. Music is a part of everyday life in our house. Daddy plays the violin [when he's not being a clinical scientist], Nana is a pianist and organist and Gran used to play the mandolin. Everybody sings at home'. And Gwen herself fits in a school orchestra and local youth chorus around her clarinet, piano and recorder lessons and four hours' practising a week – plus 'occasional jamming with daddy on the violin'.

The tapestry of Gwen's musical life must in many ways be ideal: organised school activities, private and school-based lessons, family music making and out of school projects. So it's not surprising that she wants 'to share it by playing to people'. Then there's listening: 'I like putting on a CD in the morning because it makes you want to start the day happily'. But she's also aware that life is not always plain sailing. '[Music] takes your mind off things. I couldn't live without it'.

Gwen seems to be able to distinguish between drifting – being passively caught up in a whirl of musical activity – and exploring – deliberately looking for new musical experiences. This might be due in part to not having to categorise her music. Apart from a brief reference to 'pop' and dancing, she talks about playing and listening to 'all types of music'. Where does your musical inspiration come from? 'All over the



place. Live music, old and new music, the radio – and the secondary school’s big band’.

Aha... This is not just a random encounter. Indeed, she views moving up to secondary school as an opportunity to play in the big band. ‘In a few years I hope to be playing in the college big band’. So Gwen’s musical tapestry exists in time as well as space – she can look ahead and anticipate future musical enjoyment as a natural progression to her present activities. Lucky her.