



Highlights from A Music and Dyslexia Day Conference  
 October 2018  
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## Sir Jim Rose's Description cont.

- **Co-occurring difficulties** may be seen in aspects of language, motor co-ordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, **but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.**
- **A good indication of the severity** and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds, or has responded, to **well founded intervention.**

## What is Dyslexia?

Rose Review (2009)

Report on Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in **accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.**
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in **phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.**
- Dyslexia occurs across a range of intellectual abilities. It is **best thought of as a continuum**, not a distinct category, and **there are no clear cut-off points.**

## British Dyslexia Association

In 2012 the BDA adopted the Rose Report definition but with the addition of the following:

"In addition to these characteristics, the BDA acknowledges the **visual processing difficulties** that some individuals with dyslexia can experience and points out that dyslexic readers can show a combination of abilities and difficulties that affect the learning process. **Some have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.**"

[BDA, 2012, p.14]

## Key Features of Dyslexia

Difficulty with:

- Mastery and use of reading and written language
- Phonological awareness
- Verbal memory and short term memory
- Verbal processing speed
- Co-occurring difficulties:
  - Speed of processing visual information
  - Visual difficulties/discomfort
  - Motor coordination difficulties
  - Left/right confusions

## How may these affect musical activities?

- Reading of music, especially at sight
- Work with rhythm
- Remembering aspects of theory e.g. numbers of sharps & flats
- Aural work
- Working out interval names
- Recognising cadences
- The sustained concentration needed for an exam or performance
- Learning sequences and adapting to change
- Spatial and directional awareness

## And the ability to...

- Formulate verbal responses
- Name or label notes, intervals or chords
- Process quickly written text on a musical score
- Retain spoken instructions
- Keep track of where an individual is in a musical sequence (e.g. scales & arpeggios)

## Coping Strategies

*from a pupil's perspective*

Thoughts of opera singer Anna Devin:

- Visual stimulus – pictures, storyboards, mindmaps
- Kinaesthetic stimulus – map the music by moving around the room
- Systematically break the music into very small chunks
- Change the colour of the highlighter
- Use a pen instead of a pencil (or vice versa)

## Coping Strategies

### *A Practical Toolkit*

Thoughts of experienced teacher Karen Marshall:

- **Systematic** – from the known to the unknown
- **Re-enforced** – the same concept learnt in lots of different contexts. Make it memorable (personal association)
- **Multi-sensory** – what do you feel/hear/see?
- **Teaching to strengths** e.g. use of pattern

## A Practical Toolkit – Music Bag Resources

- Coloured over-lays / tinted glasses
- Envelope window
- Erasable highlighter pens
- Grab and go folder (everything in one place)
- Illustrations e.g. keyboard / fingering / fret board charts or pictures
- Flash card rhythms – sequenced
- Large roll up stave
- Post-its – lots of different kinds, including see through ones
- Coloured pencils

**Do You Teach Music?**

Do all your pupils read rhythms with confidence?

Do you have any students with learning difficulties?

Do you need an easy 'fun' method to sort out notation problems?

Teaching simple time is just that – Simple

Communicating 'pulse' is a doddle.

Compound times are easily explained

**Beat-blox**

The block lengths are proportional to note lengths, giving a clear visual impression of note values.

Pupils can experiment and learn with an easy checking system enhanced further with tactile symbols which indicate pulse.

A boxed set of wooden blocks of varying lengths, printed with note values, **Beat-blox** build into all commonly used musical rhythm patterns.

A practical tool for all ages and stages

And it's fun too!

**Beat-blox**

Do your students have problems reading Rhythms?

**Beat-blox** could help

**Beat-blox** can help to iron out the problems of teaching pulse, rhythm and note value recognition, making them fun to learn while building confidence.

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## Scales

- Walking and singing scales
- Use of a keyboard chart, even for other instrumentalists/singers
- The Scale Generator (Faber Music) – finding a workable process to learn a scale

## Grade 5 Theory

- Theory Prompt Sheet (Collins Music, Teaching Instrumental and Singing Lessons 100 Ideas)
- Getting information into the long term memory to then provide scaffolding in the exam setting

## Reasonable Adjustments in Practical Exams

Possibility of:

- Additional time (especially for sight reading), normally around 25%
- Coloured overlays may be taken into the exam
- Replays of scales may be allowed without penalty (on 1<sup>st</sup> occasion)
- Additional attempts at aural may be allowed without penalty (on 1<sup>st</sup> occasion)
- RH/LH instructions (for keyboard scales) can include pointing
- Examiners should be prepared to point to the place in sight reading if a candidate gets lost.
- Changes in the score in aural tests can be shown by raising the hand at the time.

## Reasonable Adjustments in Written Exams

Possibility of:

- No marks lost in written exams for incorrect SPaG
- Candidates should be able to ignore the need to copy out in written exams
- Use of a reader
- Use of an amanuensis/scribe
- Separate room
- Use of a reading ruler or pen and/or modified papers

## Reasonable Adjustments in Music Exams cont.

Possibility of:

- Practical exam components can be taken in any order.
- Instructions (scales, aural, viva etc.) can be written down by the candidate and/or repeated by both the examiner and the candidate.
- Use of a scale book or lyrics for singers **as a prompt** may be allowed.
- It may be possible to split up aural memory tests into shorter sections and higher grades.
- Report form may be typed if a handwritten copy is difficult to read.
- Supporting person/practical assistant in the exam room.
- Performance from modified copies/electronic devices. N.B. it is legal to photocopy music to make it easier to read for a dyslexic individual (for example) but the original music must be in your possession.

## Modified Stave Notation (MSN)

Almost all printed music breaks the rules that exist for printed literature.

- Larger print
- More consistent scores
- Alters proportions

[www.musescore.com](http://www.musescore.com)

## Talking Scores

- Spoken representation of the stave notation
- Best way to describe music may vary depending on the features and complexity of the passage, and the preferences of each musician.
- Time consuming
- Useful for those with print impairments, those learning to read stave notations, and those analysing and memorising scores.

[www.ukaaf.org/music](http://www.ukaaf.org/music)

## Technology

- Record whole lessons or performances within lessons
- Voiceover recordings
- Can be immediately sent to parents via email/file sharing
- Consider carefully the implications for Safeguarding and GDPR
  - explicit consent will be required from parents
  - be up front with the school - they may not be happy, or they may offer use of their iPad for this instead

[www.appleallday.co.uk/bda-music-conference.html](http://www.appleallday.co.uk/bda-music-conference.html)

## The greatest tool you have is...

**YOU!**

Check out the links given in this presentation, plus:  
[bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/music-and-dyslexia](http://bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/music-and-dyslexia)  
[paulharristeaching.co.uk](http://paulharristeaching.co.uk)

Contact me if you need any clarification: [luke@lukepickettmusic.co.uk](mailto:luke@lukepickettmusic.co.uk)