

## Welcome!

### Music & Dyslexia - Definitions, difficulties, strengths and strategies



## Sally Daunt

- Chair of British Dyslexia Association's Music committee since January 2012
- Music teacher (secondary/ FE): 25 yrs
- Piano teacher
- ISM Manchester Committee 1990s
- Orchestral player
- Choral singer (RLPC)



## Dr. Paula Bishop-Liebler

- Additional support tutor and assessor working with Conservatoire students in London for more than 10yrs
- Doctoral research in music and dyslexia
- Studied singing at the Royal Academy of Music
- Singing teacher
- Member of BDA Music



## Relevance

- It's important because 10% of people are dyslexic, 4% severely so
- Good approaches for dyslexic musicians are often good for all!
- It's more about adding to and re-framing what you already do

## Content of the session

1. What is dyslexia?
2. What's it like being dyslexic?
3. How can teachers recognise dyslexic pupils?
4. How does dyslexia relate to music?
5. What can we do to help?
6. Exams – reasonable adjustments
7. Where to go for more information

## Definition

- Dyslexia is a specific 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 the range of intellectual abilities. It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- 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.
- (Rose, 2009, *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties*. p.10).

## BDA definition

In addition to these characteristics, the BDA acknowledges the visual and auditory 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 also have strengths in other areas, such as design, problem solving, creative skills, interactive skills and oral skills.

(BDA, 2014).

## Key features

- Primarily affects language
- Cognitive difference
- Independent of intelligence
- Range of difficulties
- Hereditary
- Developmental



## Dyslexia across the lifespan

- Dyslexia covers the life span
- Many teenagers and adults are well compensated dyslexics
- This is when the person has 'cracked the code' they can read and write but the speed and accuracy of processing is a persistent difficulty.

## So, what's it like being dyslexic? Read this...

- On ceup on atim ether eweret wobe ars
- Once upon a time there were two bears

## Secondary features

- Stress
- Anxiety (→ mental health problems)
- Exhaustion
- Lack of confidence
- Low self-esteem
- Poor motivation



## Dyslexic strengths

- **Dyslexic people often have strengths in**
  - **Creative skills**
  - Design,
  - Problem solving,
  - Interactive skills
  - Oral skills



## Dyslexia is

- One of a number of **Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs)** including
- Dyspraxia (developmental co-ordination disorder)
- Dyscalculia
- Attention deficit (and hyperactivity) disorder
- Autistic spectrum disorder
- **Often** these will overlap. People may be under the SpLD umbrella in different ways



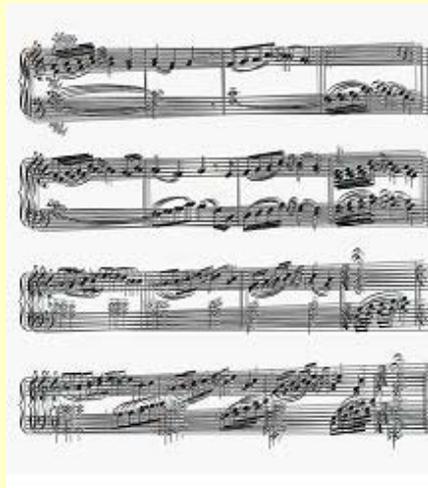
## Other factors: visual stress

Sometimes called Meares-Irlen syndrome

Print (including music) can –

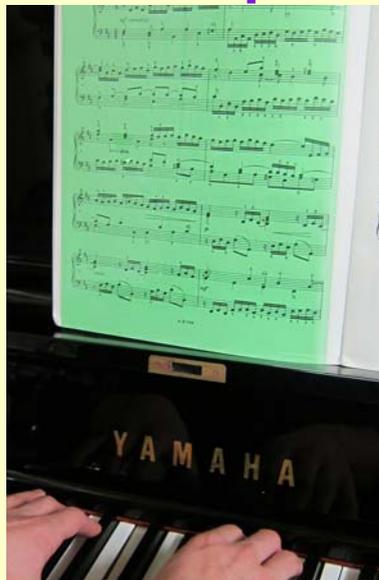
- Distort
- Swirl around
- Jump about
- Pulsate

Especially with black on white



## What can we do to help?

- Use off-white paper
- Off white backgrounds to music, PowerPoints, computers etc
- Pupils should **choose** preferred colour
- Coloured overlays



If a person has particular problems – s/he can be referred to a specialist optometrist for a

### **colorimeter test**

Details from the Institute of Optometry <http://www.ioo.org.uk/dsa-briefing.pdf> and the section 'Eyes and Dyslexia' on the B.D.A. site:

<http://www.BDAdyslexia.org.uk/about-dyslexia/further-information/eyes-and-dyslexia.html>.

Online tests also available.

**Coloured overlay:** available as a pack of 10 filters through the B.D.A. shop at [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk). Try them out.

## Visual format of the score

The visual format of the score can support or hinder dyslexic musicians' processing speed

**Things to consider** include:

- Proportions of the bars
- How visually busy the score is
- Visual layout of rhythmic groupings

## Enlarge and/or adapt

- Photocopy bigger
- Use of modified stave notation
- Different colour background
- Different colour font/music notes



## Modified Stave Notation

Original



Enlarged



**Modified stave notation**

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-home-and-leisure-music-reading-music-accessible-formats/modified-stave-notation>

## Use of technology: ForScore – music reader for iPad or Sight Read Ltd.

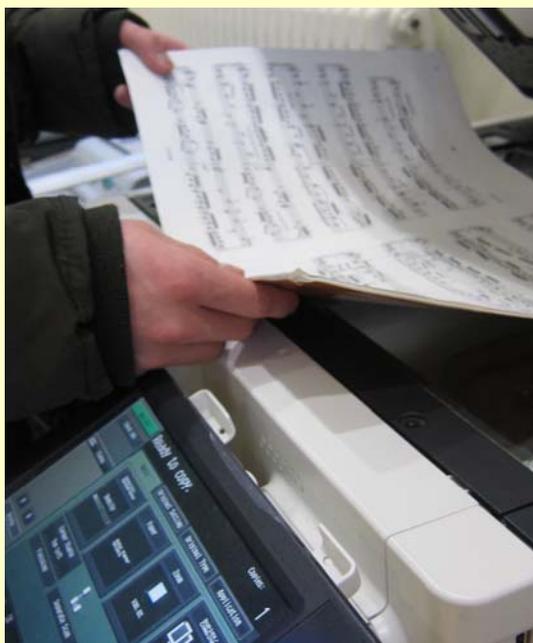


## Re-write notation

For

- Visually difficult bar proportions or
- Rhythmical groupings

Re-writing the section  
of music  
using software such  
as Sibelius  
can make it much  
easier to process



Can we  
photocopy  
music

in order to  
re-format it?

## **Music Publishers' Association – Clause 11. Note re copying music**

“Reading impairments: A person with any kind of cognitive impairment or condition (such as, but not limited to, dyslexia) (whether diagnosed or not) resulting in a diminished or limited ability to read music or text as conventionally printed, may make copies in a format that **enable them more easily to read a publication**

(such as, but not limited to, by enlarging it and/or by using coloured paper), **provided that he/she has already legally acquired his/her own copy of the conventionally printed item.**

See MPA Code of Fair Practice

<http://www.mpaonline.org.uk/content/code-fair-practice>

## If you give written info...

- **Avoid Times New Roman**
- **Tahoma** is good (this doc) – no serifs
- Font size – at least 12 point
- At least 1.5 spacing
- **Avoid *italics*, underlining & CAPITALS**
- **Avoid handwritten material**
- Put 'BDA Dyslexia Style Guide' into a search engine.

## How can we recognise a profile of Specific Learning Difficulties?

- A mis-match between intellectual and actual ability
- Seems to grasp a skills one day, then start again from scratch the next...
- Weak processing speed
- Poor short-term memory
- Emotional impacts
- Difficulties processing visual material

## How can dyslexia affect music?



### Commonly reported difficulties with music

- Reading musical notation (especially sight reading and singing)
- Learning new music quickly
- Rhythmical difficulties especially from notation
- Music theory
- Scanning music/following a conductor
- Mapping from music to instrument (especially fingerings)
- Aural, especially dictation and sequencing
- Sustained concentration

## What can we do to help?

- Work from sound **first**, and written music later
- Think about whether written music is really needed for a particular student
- Consider visual format/coloured overlays/tinted glasses
- Be multi-sensory
- Use over-learning/revision
- Allow more time

## Be patient and involve pupils

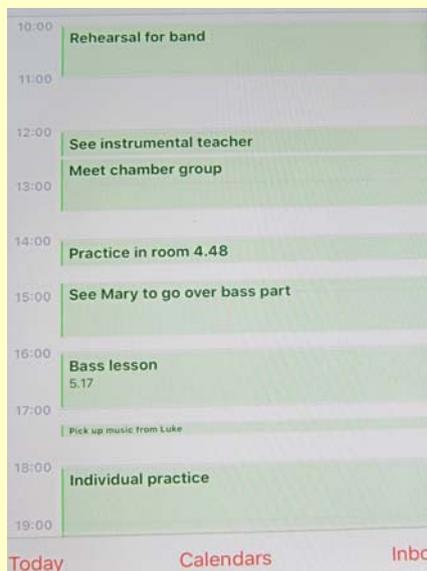
- Tell me – and I'll forget
- Teach me – and I may remember

- **Involve me and I learn**



## Organisation for musicians

- No 2 weeks the same
- Rehearsals
- Practice needs to be organised
- Remembering to take all the right things – music, instrument, equipment etc



## Ways of helping

- To do lists/reminders
- Luggage label on music case?
- **Be imaginative!!**
- **Use technology!**
- **Texts**/emails
- Student: reminders on mobile
- Teacher's own website
- YouTube video on how to practice?

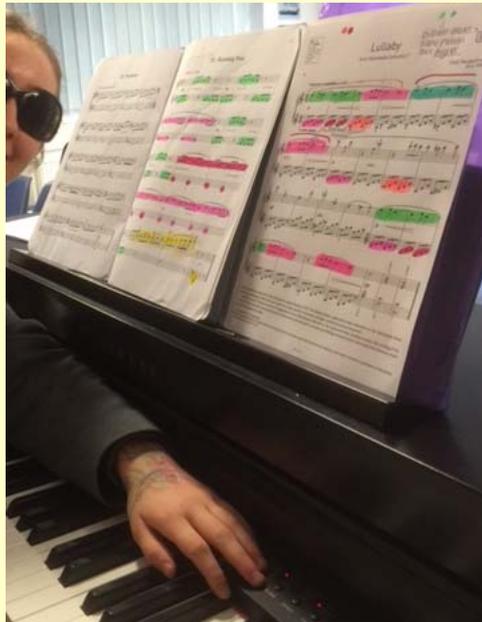


## More strategies

- **Lesson:** outline content; summarise during and at the end.
- Chunk information
- Break down tasks
- Small targets
- Systematic learning (make sure of one point/skill before going on)
- **generally** the use of a study buddy (another pupil?)



**Colour  
code  
notes/  
music –**  
the student  
**chooses**  
his/her  
preferred  
colour



## Strategies to support...

- **Memory for –**
  - Instructions
  - Pitch/rhythm (aural tests)
    - Break the music

up into smaller units

### Word confusion

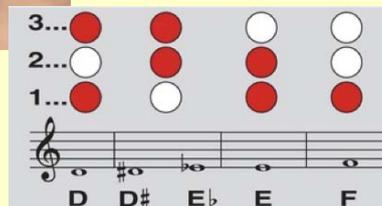
- Get right and left muddled
  - Point, don't say
- Musical terms e.g. – 'high'; 'low'; 'up'; 'down' – demonstrate as well as label



## Multi-sensory approaches

### • Visual

Pictures; diagrams;  
mind maps;  
colour coding;  
demonstrations



### Oral

Explanations; repetition;  
recordings; discussion

### • Kinaesthetic

Hands-on; tactile exploration; writing



## Examples

- **Set works**
- Pupils could play or sing key themes
- **Aural:** recognition of different intervals
- Sing them; make shapes in the air; tunes (of pupil's choice) that use the interval...
- **Recognition of metre**
- Mark a pulse physically – by walking, running etc



## Useful multi-sensory approaches



- Dalcroze approaches (eurythmics)
- See: <http://www.dalcroze.org.uk>
- Kodály approaches
- See: <http://kodaly.org.uk/>

## If you think someone may be dyslexic (or have another SpLD)

- Talk to parents/contact SENCo in school.
- S/he may be able to arrange for an assessment by an Educational Psychologist or specialist teacher with recognised qualifications.
- This test can also be done privately
- <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/educator/screening-and-assessment>

## Exams

The image displays three overlapping website screenshots related to music examinations:

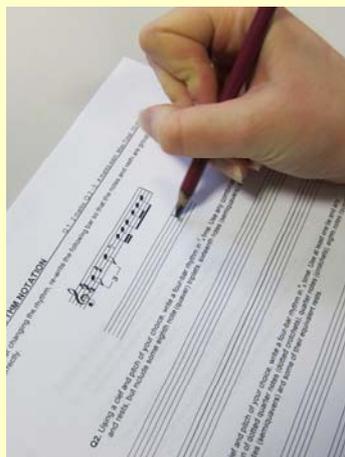
- ABRSM (Association for Musical Examinations):** Shows the ABRSM logo and navigation links for 'About ABRSM' and 'Our Exams'. Below is a banner for 'Our exams' with the tagline 'Motivating students of all levels and ages'.
- University of West London:** Features the university logo and 'LONDON COLLEGE OF MUSIC EXAMINATIONS'. A prominent blue banner reads 'Jazz Grades Syllabus' with sub-points: 'Grades • Recital Grades • Leisure Play • Performance Awards'.
- Trinity College London:** Shows the Trinity logo and 'COLLEGE LONDON'. It identifies itself as 'The international exam board for the performing arts and English language'. A navigation menu includes 'Music', 'Rock & Pop', 'Drama & Speech', 'Dance', and 'DaDA'. A breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Music > Enter for a music exam'. A sidebar menu lists 'Music', 'Music Grade Exams', 'Music Certificate Exams', and 'Theory of Music Exams'. The main content area is titled 'Enter for a music exam' and includes the instruction: 'To enter any Trinity classical or jazz exam, please complete the entry form below, and send it with your fee to your nearest centre.'

## How may dyslexia (and other Specific Learning Difficulties) affect music exams?

- Sight reading
- Impact of visual stress on written material
- **Short term memory** problems affecting aural and
- Remembering instructions (“Please play B harmonic minor, a third apart, staccato”)

## Written exams

- Reading information at speed & correctly
- Interpreting instructions



‘Using crotchets, write one octave ascending of the melodic minor scale that begins on the given note. Do not use a key signature, but write in all the necessary accidentals.’

## What adjustments are often available in music exams?

- Extra time. Practical: sight reading (SR); aural; transposition etc. Written exams – normally 25%.
- Bits of practical exam in any order
- Replays of scales
- May be able to use a scale book
- Use of words/prompt sheet in singing exams
- **Aural:** additional attempts
- Annotation of SR tests (take own pens)
- **Not all options necessarily available for all boards or at all levels**

## Written material in practical (aural, SR etc) and theory exams

### Can be

- Enlarged
- Created in Modified Stave Notation
- Printed on **tinted** paper of the candidate's choice
- Possibly printed with different colours of print reverse black/white etc.
- **Samples and copies of the tint required need to be sent to the Board IN ADVANCE**
- Coloured overlays can be used (take them!)

## Sources of info

- **ABRSM** <http://gb.abrsm.org/pt/exam-booking/specific-needs/>
- **Trinity College London** ('Music Special Needs')  
<http://www.trinitycollege.com/site/?id=2960>
- **London College of Music** ('Equality of Opportunity')  
<http://www.uwl.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Academic-schools/London-College-of-Music/Web/LCM-Exams/equal%20opportunities.pdf>

- **Rockschool** ('Reasonable adjustments')  
<http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/1265281/16608723/1329307038350/Reasonable+Adjustments+and+Special+Considerations+Policy.pdf?token=6MesjFyRdCKvmcryw8PPf8nooko%3D>
- **Registry of Guitar Tutors** – see London College of Music
- **Victoria College** (General Regulations, sections 9 & 20)  
<http://www.vcmexams.co.uk/generalregulations.php>

## But remember...

- You must apply for reasonable adjustments **in very good time** before any exam
- **Proof** of dyslexia (or other disability) is needed
- This can be a report from the candidate's school or (especially for adults) some other form of assessment
- Contact [bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com](mailto:bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com) for more info
- There are a huge variety of alternative syllabuses which are worth looking at

## Alternative syllabuses

**No pass/fail options** include

- **AB** Prep test; Performance Assessment; Jazz Performance Assessment
- **Trinity** Music certificate;

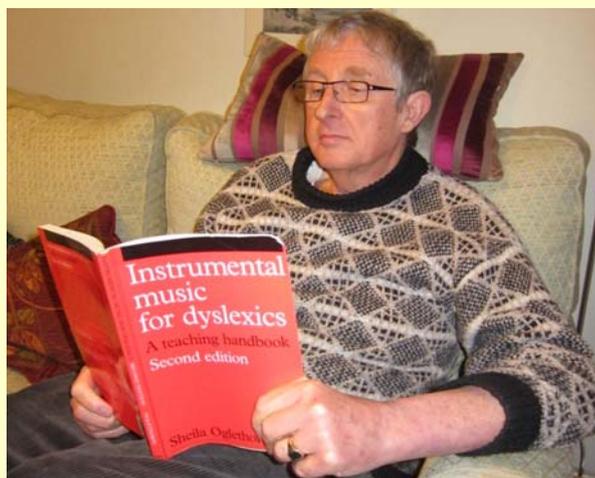
**Alternative areas** include

- **AB** Ensemble (inc choral); Jazz (solo/ensemble); Practical musicianship
- **Trinity** Piano duet; other ensemble; rock and pop

## No sight reading &/or scales &/or aural

- **AB** Performance Assessment; Music medals; Jazz; Ensembles
- **Trinity** Music Certificate; Rock & Pop
- **London** Recital grades; Leisure play; Performance awards; Ensemble etc.
  - **Note** Performance awards are assessed by DVD (not live)

## What more can you do to help yourself understand this subject?

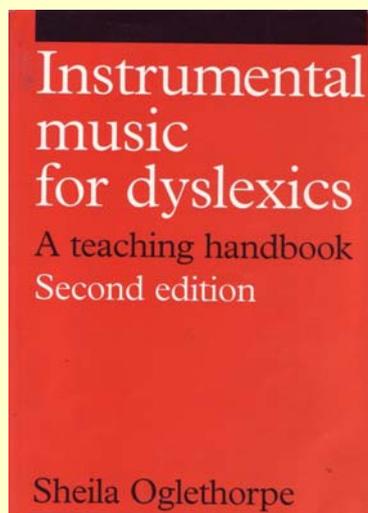
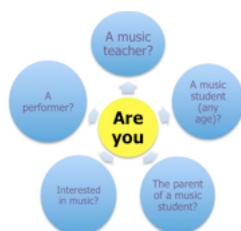


## Info booklet available from [bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com](mailto:bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com)

### Music and inclusive teaching: information from B.D.A. Music.

This booklet will help you to answer questions such as:

1. What is dyslexia? (p.2)
2. How might I recognise that I, my student, relation or friend is dyslexic? (p.3)
3. What are some commonly reported difficulties with music? (p.5)
4. What strategies can be employed to help. (p.6)



### Music, other Performing Arts and Dyslexia

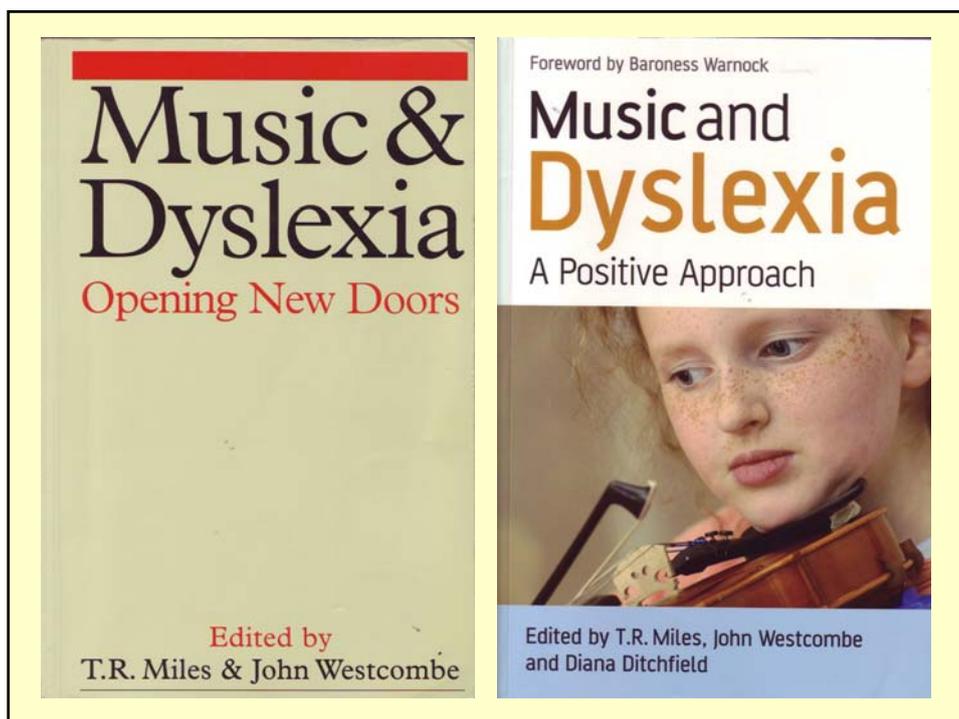
Edited by Sally Daunt

British Dyslexia  
Association



This book is  
available  
from the B.D.A.

<http://www.bdastore.org.uk/books/british-dyslexia-association/music-other-performing-arts-and-dyslexia/>



## Look at examples of dyslexic musicians

- e.g. 'A pianist's story' by Gill Backhouse in *Music and Dyslexia: Opening New Doors*. Also available separately from BDA Music.
- "Lessons with her first teacher became an ordeal"
- "She saw patterns and shapes in music"
- **She** was allowed to take the lead in lessons
- She was encouraged to focus on structure & play with her eyes closed

## Courses and qualifications

- **Practical Solutions for Music Learning and Dyslexia**

3 days – 1<sup>st</sup> is  
e-learning  
2 are music  
specific

6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> April

2016: London. **Contact**

[training@bdadyslexia.org.uk](mailto:training@bdadyslexia.org.uk) / 0333 405 4565



## Good 'dyslexic' strategies are



good strategies for **all** students

## Questions?

Want to be on the BDA Music mailing list? Have a copy of the information booklet?



Contact

[bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com](mailto:bdamusicdyslexia@gmail.com)

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- Jollyimages
- Sally Daunt and students at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
- Andrew Millinchip and the Grange School, Hartford