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## **Navigating Music and Sound Education: A Review Essay**

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### **Introduction**

*Navigating Music and Sound Education*, co-edited by Julie Ballantyne and Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, is a very valuable contribution to music education literature. A panel of international experts has blind reviewed the eleven chapters written by twenty one leading music educators specifically for pre-service music teachers being prepared to “respond to the changing realities” of future school contexts (p. xvii). The chapters illuminate real issues confronted by today’s music education practitioners in a variety of contexts from early childhood-adult, formal-informal, urban-remote, and general-vocational education. The perspectives presented are evidence based and informed by research and practice, drawn from the contributors’ personal and diverse experiences in Australia, England, USA, Greece, Cyprus, Holland and

Singapore. One chapter is co-authored by six of the fourteen Australian contributors who bring perspectives from their important work with Australian indigenous communities.

The editors believe that “teachers who are prepared, flexible and adaptable [are those] who will best be able to capture the imagination and creativity of their students and school communities” (p. xvii). They hope that pre-service teachers will gain insight regarding the theories that underpin the diversity of teaching approaches offered in the chapters and be able to relate them to music education “in practice” (p. xix). Readers are encouraged to examine the connections between theory and practice, ask questions, respond to multiple possible contexts and be reflective (pp. xix-xx, 208).

### **Key Issues in Pre-service Music Teacher Education**

#### ***Case Based Learning***

In the opening chapter, the editors advocate that case based learning is “one of the best ways to better prepare pre-service teacher for the multiple teaching experiences they might face” (p. 1). The “praxis shock” and burnout often experienced by early-career music teachers could be addressed by engaging them with “real-life” case situations before entering the profession (Ballantyne, 2007). Three cases are provided with helpful questions for reflection, challenging readers to actively consider the “real” issues and alternative “solutions” to the teaching problems with reference to their own contexts. Indeed teaching has been characterised to be full of uncertain practical challenges (Schön, 1983). This could be very daunting for those not adequately prepared, for no teacher can be certain how well a lesson will go or what a student will learn, and no one can be certain which teaching approach/method will be most effective for a particular class of learners.

#### ***Constructivist Pedagogy***

The importance of “sense-making” and “meaning-making” (p. 19) through social learning experiences which are constructivist and problem-based is highlighted by Deborah Blair and Jackie Wiggins in Chapter 2. Careful music and pedagogical decisions should consider the five key characteristics of a social constructivist, learning environment: musical engagement, opportunity for social interaction, meaningful connections, assessment embedded in the learning context, and student voice. The vignettes emphasise the need to design learning opportunities that foster “musical independence”, “ownership, pride, and ever-deepening engagement” (p. 29).

### ***Arts Integration***

Acknowledging that the integration approach to teaching and learning has become a “trend that has taken root and spread all over the educational world” (p. 31), Smaragda Chrysostomou and Natassa Stavrou discuss the “confusion” created by the maze of different terms, many different forms of integration and the lack of a “universal model” (p. 47). A comprehensive discussion of important issues of integration that pre-service teachers should be aware of is included, and the vignettes illustrate the challenges and possibilities of employing three different integration approaches in two early childhood settings and one secondary school setting. The authors conclude that these vignettes demonstrate successful achievement of “an interdisciplinary approach” and share a “common characteristic”: “focus on music and use it as a central point” (p. 47). Such a conclusion demonstrates the difficulties surrounding the understanding and practice of integration in education, often failing to properly distinguish between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary orientations (see for example Collins, 2009 and Drake & Burns, 2004). This aspect of integration should receive more attention by pre-service teachers and teacher educators.

### ***Creative Learning***

In the fourth chapter, Pamela Burnard addresses the challenge of making educational judgement in an educational environment of “uniformity and accountability”: “documenting moments of significant creativity and creative learning in music, and understanding how these evolve, develop and change among children and young people” (p. 52). She draws insights from four contexts in an English study that shows how the “stances” adopted by teachers – towards learner engagement, creativity and creative learning in music, and teaching for creative learning (including task, structure/freedom, resourcing and time) – influence learners’ progress in musical composition by determining what students (aged four to fourteen) do and the level at which they are able to perform. The chapter provides very thoughtful discussion on “developing creative learning progressively” (p. 69) for all students, including the five “tensions” in practice and their implications for renewal in music education.

### ***Gender and Musical Identity***

The critical issue of gender having a bearing on a person’s development of identity is the focus of the chapter by Scott Harrison. The reader is given a comprehensive overview of the interrelationship between sex, gender and sexuality and warned about the limiting effects of gender stereotyping on musical participation. The perspectives from an individual, a primary school and a non-profit community organisation are offered as “postcards” which contain key messages relevant to music teaching – the importance of role models, scheduling a variety of high quality learning opportunities, repertoire selection, being aware of current trends in philosophy and practice, and careful management of “transition periods” (p. 91).

### ***Popular Music and Informal Music Making***

A challenge facing music education today is to keep young people from dropping out of formal music programmes that are often traditional in nature. Lucy Green's chapter highlights the positive effects of a national project which adapted informal popular music learning practices into a secondary school context. Students were allowed to work with their friends and to have autonomy and trust in the learning process set against a lesson structure that was "relatively free". Observable progression was evident in each of the seven stages and students demonstrated their ability to "differentiate" the tasks given them by selecting parts that "matched their performance abilities". By the end of the project, students' motivation was found to have increased "quite radically" and many students who demonstrated earlier lack of musical ability or interest were transformed to become "willing and cooperative members of the class" (p. 110). She notes that the informal learning approach should not be treated as "alternative" but should be used to "complement" other pedagogic approaches.

### ***Learning Beyond the Music Classroom***

Stephanie Pitt's chapter focuses on community-based learning, offering insights into the nature of learning communities and how they function in terms of formality and accessibility in three learning contexts beyond the traditional music classroom – an extra-curricular performing activity at a secondary school, a temporary community of adult learners participating in a music summer school, and a chamber music 'outreach' series). These illustrate the contexts in which musical communities can thrive and the extent to which they may be transferable to educational settings. Within a school context, such "*communing*" (Andsell 2004) typically sees a fluidity of knowledge, expertise and roles, with individuals participating in various roles led by a teacher who acts as "community maker". The challenge lies essentially in simultaneously creating an environment for new expertise and opportunities while catering for students' needs to discover and nurture their skills. The chapter draws attention to the need for today's teacher education programmes to work closer with schools and the wider community to "move teaching and teacher education outside the walled space of the modernist classroom, asking it to intellectually relocate itself in relation to other civic and community, real and imagined worlds, directing it into a critical engagement with the mass civic pedagogies that regulate these worlds, and making it a motive force in the reconstitution of those worlds" (Luke *et al.*, 2000, p. 9).

### ***Cultural Diversity and Traditions***

Cultural diversity and traditions are the foci of the next two chapters. Chapter 8 by Anja Tait, Edel Musco, Megan Atfield, Leonie Murrungin, Catherine Orton and Tony Gray, offers a range of perspectives on the complex working relationships and partnerships in Australian indigenous education. It provides helpful insights into a practical approach to music education

in urban, rural and remote indigenous communities which proceeds from the viewpoint that music has many faces and purposes in school communities, and based on a conceptual model that articulates the development of effective learning partnerships between adults, students, and adults and students. The latter is built upon mutual trust and respect, where participants “listen to each other, learn from each other and find a way forward that is the sum of two-ways; the exchange of knowledge, values and agreed priorities” (p. 130). The examples provided show the intersection between music, literacy learning, numeracy, language revitalisation, transfer of indigenous cultural knowledge, social cohesion and student well-being, and how the approach impact upon the core elements of music in indigenous education: “context, content and instruction” (Butler 2007).

In the following chapter, Huib Schippers and Melissa Cain cite three recurring themes (breadth versus depth, pedagogical approaches and tradition, authenticity and context) to explain why many practices at school and tertiary level remain stubbornly mono-cultural. Three case studies from Brisbane, Amsterdam and Singapore, each chosen specifically to demonstrate how successful practices “arise not only where the best resources are available, but especially where those shaping the music education experience have the greatest awareness of the variables and make intelligent choices in aligning them” (p. 164). In presenting a unique combination of social and institutional factors, the authors reveal that a school’s philosophical foundation and policies claiming the importance of global connectedness does not always have a direct impact on curricular and assessment processes; it is up to the music teachers to negotiate the inclusion of culturally-diverse musics or approaches appropriate to their particular contexts.

### ***Technology and Music Learning***

Steve Dillon and Kathy Hirche assert that “learning environments for music education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are no longer found just in the classroom” (p. 175) and discuss networked improvisational musical environments. Their chapter illustrates the enormous potential of an innovative Australian generative music programme (*jam2jam*) featuring a “game-like interface” (p. 184) and supports the development of improvisation by encouraging playful activity. They propose a unique approach that “considers the affordances of technologies in relation to context and a meaningful and engaging experiences for students” (p. 190). Access to “collaborative and embodied [learning] experiences with making music and media” (p. 176) is provided without requiring pre-requisite technical and theoretical musical skills for successful participation, thereby provoking music educators to consider creative applications of existing and emerging technologies in transforming pedagogies for more effective and engaging learning experiences in music.

### ***The Reflective Educator***

The final chapter by Peter deVries enunciates the value of reflection *on* action and *in* action (Schön, 1983) through four vignettes of his personal “morphing” as a veteran “reflective” music educator over a twenty-year period. The journey has taken him from the first day of teaching in a rural primary school setting to a “challenging” urban primary school context, teaching piano to his five-year-old son, and “facilitating” music activities at a childcare centre with staff and children. He confesses to having his personal philosophy of music education “shaped” by ongoing reflection and teaching contexts, and considers the “greatest strength of reflection” to be the “opening up to other ways of doing things” (p. 204). By reflecting and drawing from different musical practices, he was able to adapt his teaching “to engage children of different ages and stages of musical development” (p. 205).

### **Comments and Conclusions**

The business of preparing future educators in an ever-changing globalised world poses huge challenges to teacher education. Three recent studies (McKinsey reports, 2007, 2010; Jensen, 2010) have underscored the impact of quality teachers on student learning. Critical educational issues today call for creative approaches that cater to diverse learning needs in different contexts and settings, and effective teachers are those who are able to design and facilitate creative learning opportunities that raise the degree of student motivation, engagement and achievement. In addition to possessing effective techniques and routines, effective teachers need the ability to make perceptive professional judgement in situations where there are no ‘right’ answers. As such, pre-service teachers should be prepared to cope with ‘not knowing for sure’ in an intellectual and practical environment where they construct their disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge and develop themselves to be competent, inclusive and creative educators of the future. The contributors to this very readable book are cognizant of these, and their chapters provide a rich source of perspectives and approaches for readers to consider how they may respond when confronted with unexpected circumstances in their own practice while reflecting on real scenarios and key issues in contemporary music education.

As a whole, the book builds upon the earlier work of authors such as Berlak and Berlak (1981) and Trip (1993), who brought attention to the need for teachers to be prepared for dilemmas of schooling and unexpected critical incidents in teaching. In terms of music education literature, the book complements a string of recent publications which are mainly geared towards North American pre-service music teachers – Erwin *et al.* (2001), Colwell and Wing (2003), Abrahams and Head (2005), Conway and Hodgman (2006) and Shehan-Campbell (2007). Although the book does not specifically address career changers to the teaching profession, it is suitable for their use, for they share similar issues faced by beginning

teachers including role confusion, unfamiliarity with school contexts and the need for support (Koneci *et al.*, 2002). As each chapter is derived from topical research conducted in practice, the book is also useful for those interested in practitioner research.

Given the multiple strengths of the book with a mix of Australian and international flavours, it is a pity that local Asian music learning contexts have not been included in this very fine publication. In an era of globalisation and internationalisation, the key issues addressed in this book are also relevant to the local education systems in former colonial jurisdictions such as Singapore and Hong Kong.

Given that teaching is fraught with uncertainties in a changing world, the book could have included a chapter that deals specifically with this aspect of teacher preparation. Five categories of uncertainties have been identified and elaborated by Floden and Clark (1989) and Floden and Buchmann (1993): 'Uncertain Assessments of Student Understanding', 'Uncertain Effects of Teaching', 'Uncertainties About Instructional Content', 'The Teacher's Uncertain Authority', and 'Uncertainty About Learning to Teach'. Whilst a learning environment with too many uncertainties might create instability and insecurity, too little could result in dogmatism. Practices such as establishing rigid routines and overemphasising subject matter to reduce teaching uncertainties need addressing. Pre-service and novice teachers need help with what they should do about the uncertainties inherent in teaching, especially those related to knowing *what* is required/needed and *how* to do what is required/needed. As a dynamic present in both teaching and learning, the issue of uncertainties is also applicable to learners who should be guided into learning how to teach themselves and coping with the uncertainties of teaching themselves to learn.

All on all, the editors and contributors should be congratulated for producing such an accessible book that should feature in the library of every music educator, music teacher educator and music teacher education institution.

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