

15 | Women and Music Education in Schools: Pedagogues, Curricula, and Role Models

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To Watch, to Nurse, and to Rear: Women in General Education

Compared with other salaried occupations, the teaching profession has a recent history of being relatively open to women. By the second half of the nineteenth century, women represented a majority of those employed as teachers in both the United Kingdom and the United States, whereas on either side of the Atlantic the individual careers of physicians such as Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson were isolated examples in an overwhelmingly male-dominated medical profession. In the same period, Clara Brett Martin and Ethel Benjamin became the first female barristers to succeed in contesting women's professional exclusion from the British Empire's legal structures. The prohibition of the employment of women in the British armed forces continued until 1949, and women continued to be excluded from the ranks of the Anglican clergy until 1992, the latter exclusion maintained to this day in the context of the Roman Catholic Church. While the medical, legal, military, and religious professions represented closed avenues for most women of the early twentieth century, teaching in its various guises was a popular and well-travelled career path for women, and had been so since long before 1900.

The issues explored in this chapter have significance across many areas of education, but it is women's experience and representation in formal, compulsory music education in the classroom that provide the principal focus here. The comparative openness of schools to the employment of women from the early years of general education resulted rather less from a radical commitment to equality on the part of agitators than from the view that for a woman, to teach was to extend her essential nurturing role, and was therefore a 'natural' and good thing. The impediments to female membership of the other professions did not apply. Unlike the surgeon, the teacher does not draw blood or delve into open bodies; unlike the lawyer,

her domain is not that of adversarial argumentation and logic; unlike the soldier, she does not kill; unlike the clergyman, she holds no responsibility for sacramental leadership; rather, her domain is the raising of the young.

As early as 1829 the American advocate of female education Catharine Beecher made explicit this elision between the practices of teaching and child-rearing, and emphasised women's lack of preparation for both these vital roles:

It is to mothers and to teachers that the world is to look for the character which is to be enstamped on each succeeding generation, for it is to them that the great business of education is almost exclusively committed. And will it not appear by examination that neither mothers nor teachers have ever been properly educated for their profession? What is the profession of a Woman? Is it not to form immortal minds, and to watch, to nurse, and to rear the bodily system, so fearfully and wonderfully made, and upon the order and regulation of which, the health and well-being of mind so greatly depends?¹

Beecher's view is echoed and amplified in countless texts from the period. The perceived suitability of the female sex for careers in teaching predominates as a societal belief today, even as the corresponding, paternalistic view that teaching is a uniquely suitable job for middle-class women has been eroded. Notwithstanding the twentieth century's near consensus over the appropriateness of female employment in teaching, it perhaps goes without saying that women's involvement as professionals in the provision of formal education has also been subject to many of the societal restrictions and frustrations that have arisen across a wide range of occupations. These have included, amongst other barriers, limits on the employment of married women, who were discouraged or excluded by regulation in many jurisdictions before 1945; a variety of discriminatory employment practices; and exclusion from roles of responsibility; not to mention difficulties arising from domestic and family responsibilities.

Justified contemporaneously as safeguards of family and community life, it is now hard to view these restrictions as anything other than self-interested checks on women's financial and intellectual independence, devised by and for the benefit of a moneyed male elite. In the UK, the Forster Act of 1870, the Balfour Act of 1902, and the Butler Act of 1944 each brought compulsory free education to significant numbers of new students; while in the United States, legislation was enacted mandating elementary education on a state-by-state basis. As new tranches of children were ushered into the scope of universal free education, more women were brought into the workforce to teach them. Statistical analysis of female

participation in the education sector in the first half of the twentieth century shows demographic factors relating to students as important determinants of women teachers' acceptability. Where the students were young, or from low socio-economic backgrounds, the employment of a female teacher was more likely. Thus, universities and fee-paying schools were staffed mainly by men, whereas women teachers predominated in elementary schools, inviting us again to identify expedience as the primary motivation for this setting aside of society's reluctance to emancipate women through employment.

Late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century society, as it began to educate its masses, had no choice but to deploy its women as educators. Then, as now, women were greatly under-represented in leadership roles. Post-1945, the implementation of universal general education in the developed world, first to the age of fourteen, then sixteen, and in many countries eventually to eighteen and beyond, has required a larger workforce, in which women are increasingly represented, although not always on an equal basis with men. Recent research into the gender pay gap amongst rank-and-file teachers in the UK showed that male teachers' wages were greater by between 2 (for primary school practitioners) and 4 per cent (in secondary education), while amongst school and college leaders men were on average 17 per cent better paid.² These differentials represent both historical improvement and, clearly, unfinished business. In recent decades, qualitative studies into the experiences of women working in education, both as teachers and leaders, have shown the variety of barriers they must overcome to achieve positions of influence as well as the stereotyping they face when exercising power in the workplace.³ Despite the narrative of female suitedness for teaching, despite the profession's ostensibly family-friendly working hours and holidays, and despite the evident success of twentieth-century women in building careers in teaching, it is also true that the scholastic environment has presented – and still presents – many female teachers with significant challenges.

Body and Mind: Women Working in Music Education

The opportunities and challenges that apply to women teachers in general are, by and large, shared by those who choose to work in the field of music education. Although the proportion of music teachers who are women has differed very little from the proportion of women working in the sector as a whole, and although the historical imposition of barriers and limits to

employment as a music educator have been similar to those experienced by other teachers, certain features are specific to our subject. In order to understand the structures that distinguish the experiences of women teaching music in schools from those of their colleagues in other subjects, it is worth considering the musical realm from a theoretical perspective as well as from the perspective of individual practitioners.

Many persuasive theoretical accounts of gender issues in music and education employ a body/mind dualism,⁴ in which various musical activities and roles are apportioned, facilitated, celebrated, or proscribed according to their being understood either as an aspect of (bodily) display or (cerebral) control, with the former delineated as consistent with femininity, the latter with masculinity. Hence social approbation for women singers – whose display of the body as the physical origin of the voice is consistent with normative ideas of femininity – but opprobrium for female composers and conductors – whose minds are conspicuously deployed in the creative management and direction of others (perhaps especially including men), thereby disrupting feminine norms. A succinct summary of the specific ways in which this theory plays out in relation to music composition is offered by Victoria Armstrong, drawing upon the scholarship of Marcia J. Citron and Lucy Green:

[Citron] asserts that ‘the mental, or the mind, has been considered fundamental to creativity’ reinforcing the mind-body dualism that acts as a means of excluding women, creating an ideological separation between the ‘intellectual purity’ of the masculine mind and the messy, uncontrollable female body. Whereas the female singer affirms her femininity through the perceived alliance of her sound with her ‘natural’ body, the female composer, devoid of the need to control or employ external forms of technology, challenges traditional notions of femininity (Green 1997). In order to create music, the composer must have technical knowledge of instruments and harmony . . . ‘Composition requires knowledge and control of technology and technique’, leading Green to suggest that composition becomes a ‘metaphorical display of the mind’; the notion of the mind is delineated as masculine. As a result, this metaphorical display of the mind when applied to a female composer ‘conflicts with her natural submission of the body’ (88). Composition becomes both materially and ideologically associated with masculinity.⁵

The material and ideological positioning of a key component of musical practice as antithetical to femininity has had implications for women teachers and female students, of course, but also for the curriculum itself. In the first half of the twentieth century, problematic delineated associations of composition with masculinity meant that while many women

studied musical performance to a high standard – an accomplishment for the most part in harmony with a socially approved performance of femininity – the opportunities for women to study composition, notable exceptions notwithstanding, were far fewer. When coupled with the preponderance of women working in the profession during this early period, this in turn led to the omission of composition from the school music curriculum.

Problematic ideology (and often inadequate resources) meant that prescribed curricula pre-1970 in the United Kingdom were for the most part limited to – as in many cases even identified as – class singing. The other main focus of the school curriculum was listening and music appreciation, drawing on and simultaneously reinforcing a small canon of music by male composers who worked in the ‘common-practice’ tradition of European art music.⁶ The view expounded by George Upton in 1886 was that while ‘at first glance it would seem that musical composition is a province in which women should excel’, closer examination, evidently, showed women to be ‘receptive rather than creative’ in their engagement with music, having ‘failed to create important and enduring works’.⁷

While women’s compositional output was thus unjustly excluded from the pedagogical canon, women were influential in the development, testing, and publication of pedagogical principles and practices. Sondra Wieland Howe’s recent work has shown how, in the United States, women took the lead in the writing of textbooks and instructional works, with series of texts for schools appearing under the authorship of Eleanor Smith, M. Teresa Armitage, Mabelle Glenn, and Lilla Bell Pitts, while pedagogues such as Angela Diller, Elizabeth Quaile, and Leila Fletcher published popular piano methods.⁸ In Great Britain, meanwhile, the confidence – certainty, even – with which a woman author might address music-pedagogical matters was amply demonstrated in the highly influential and frequently quoted philosophy of Annie Curwen, an Anglo-Irish writer of books for music teachers:

1. Teach the easy before the difficult.
2. Teach the *thing* before the *sign*.
3. Teach one fact at a time, and the commonest fact first.
4. Leave out all exceptions and anomalies until the general rule is understood.
5. In training the mind, teach the concrete before the abstract.
6. In developing physical skill, teach the elemental before the compound, and do one thing at a time.

7. Proceed from the known to the unknown.
8. Let each lesson, as far as possible, rise out of that which goes before, and lead up to that which follows.
9. Call in the understanding to help the skill at every step.
10. Let the first impression be a correct one; leave no room for misunderstanding.
11. Never tell a pupil anything that you can help him to discover for himself.
12. Let the pupil, as soon as possible, derive some pleasure from his knowledge. Interest can only be kept up by a sense of growth in independent power.⁹

Pedagogy was thus understood as a domain in which female authority could be asserted and accepted. Curwen's role in providing a pedagogical interpretation or realisation of theories and practices developed by a man better established in the public sphere – in this case her father-in-law, John Curwen, the pioneer of tonic sol-fa – was not an unusual one. Two of the leading 'methods' popularised in the middle part of the twentieth century, Orff-Schulwerk and Dalcroze Eurhythmics, although ostensibly founded by men, were furnished with pedagogies by female music educators. In the former case, the substantial input of Dorothee Günther, Gunild Keetman, and (especially in the anglophone world) Margaret Murray belies the movement's eponymous title. Working at the progressive Günther-Schule in Munich, Keetman's work 'putting [Orff's] ideas into practice'¹⁰ resulted in the lead authorship of all five volumes of *Musik für Kinder (Music for Children)*, published in German between 1949 and 1954, and in Margaret Murray's English editions in the later 1950s. The influence of these volumes on music-pedagogical practice in the coming decades was great. Meanwhile, the practical development of Dalcroze Eurhythmics on the foundations of Émile Jaques-Dalcroze's ground-breaking concept was also largely in the hands of women such as Suzanne Ferrière and Marguerite Heaton, who founded the first training centre in the United States; Marie Eckhard, the founder of the Dalcroze Society of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Heather Gell, who initiated the lively Dalcroze scene in Australia. The trend for music-pedagogical innovation and refinement to be discharged by women has continued, with significant contributions from writers like Ruth Harris and Elizabeth Hawksley, for example, providing practical elucidations of the ideas normally ascribed to John Paynter, in their highly regarded and much-used text of 1989.¹¹

By the 1950s, individual women teachers were making significant progress, too, in securing positions in higher education institutions. Helen Just, the cellist in the English String Quartet, was in the early generation of women to be appointed to permanent professorial roles at London's Royal College of Music (RCM), following in the footsteps of pioneers such as Marguerite Long, who became professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire in 1920, and the composer Nadia Boulanger, who worked at the American School at Fontainebleau throughout the 1920s. In common with many other pioneers, Just relied on charisma and the force of her personality to gain acceptance in this male-dominated environment, in which she encountered resistance on a regular basis. In the following account of a postgraduate chamber music coaching session, a male violist provides insight into her dialogic teaching style while also demonstrating, probably inadvertently, the readiness of a young male student to challenge the authority of a female professor:

All went much as expected to begin with – we played a movement (or perhaps just an exposition) and then received good advice on tempo or balance, phrasing or tone quality. 'Walk about, walk about!' was a favourite phrase used to engender forward movement when Helen felt we were hanging about to no good purpose. Then occasionally out would come some statement so musically challenging as to be provocative. I found myself opening my mouth and saying, 'I don't know that I agree with that, Miss Just' – which produced tangible silence and looks of frozen horror from my three colleagues. 'Why not?' came the reasonable retort – and I would have to think hard to marshal cogent musical arguments to support a different view of the passage in question. Quite often Helen and I would achieve quite a sustained argument – frequently resolved by trying out both approaches in turn.¹²

Helen Just occupied her position at the Royal College deservedly, as one of the most musically gifted, technically able, and frequently broadcast performing cellists of her generation, yet it is illustrative of her experience – and that of other women performers of her era – that published accounts of her success were quick to assert the patronage of her husband, the cellist Ivor James, an RCM professor of an earlier generation.¹³

Mind the Gap: Role Models and Curricula

In the second half of the twentieth century, a clear gap emerged between the distance travelled by individual women and the general stagnation of

the music education world where issues of gender politics were concerned. Female educators were central to the flourishing of organisations like the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) in the United States, and the National Association of Music Educators (NAME) in the United Kingdom, as well as to the establishment of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) itself. New opportunities afforded by broadcast media and music publishing were seized by women like the flautist and concert animateur Atarah Ben-Tovim, whose relentless advocacy of high-quality universal music education led her to be viewed first as ‘just another crazy woman with a bee in her bonnet’,¹⁴ and eventually as an imaginative pedagogue with a talent for inspiring children’s interest in all kinds of musical material. Ben-Tovim’s work for the BBC resulted in a number of television and radio series, including *Atarah’s Music Box* and *Atarah’s Band*, which aired in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In the United States, similar influence was gained by the conductor and teacher Doreen Rao, whose work encompasses professional performance and pedagogical leadership. Rao’s contribution to choral pedagogy, primarily through the editing of an extensive and popular series of graded repertoire for children and adults, and by regular mediatised appearances, has been significant. Other women have achieved prominence as a result of their ability to match artistry and pedagogical innovation. Lin Marsh’s success as a prodigious composer of outstanding music for children has been unsurpassed since her emergence in the 1990s as a leading British music pedagogue. Practitioners like Mary King, whose work includes television programmes like *Operatunity* (2003) and *Musicality* (2004) for the UK broadcaster Channel 4, have made a similarly powerful and long-lasting impact through their writings and music educational leadership.

The success of these individuals in pursuing careers at the highest level has clearly benefited the wider music education community, but in other ways music educational practice has been unhelpfully constrained by narrow attitudes towards women. As Roberta Lamb, Lori-Ann Dolloff, and Sondra Wieland Howe rightly suggest in their review of gender themes as they relate to this discipline, ‘Music education did not demonstrate concern with issues addressed in second wave educational feminism: uncovering sexism in historical perspectives of music education; justifying equal opportunities and affirmative educational programmes; and creating non-sexist curricula in music.’¹⁵ This inaction in relation to feminism’s second wave – that is, in relation to the idea that discrimination in education was structural, and that women’s personal, cultural, and political inequalities were necessarily bound together – is perhaps

particularly surprising, given that colleagues in other subject disciplines were grappling with how to rebalance – to detoxify, even – curricula that had focused disproportionately on the white European male experience. Thus, while history educators were engaging in a factional struggle for control of their curriculum,¹⁶ and while sexism and racism were being acknowledged and challenged in English literature,¹⁷ music educationalists were failing to address a number of their own historiographical myths. These included the absence of women in the historical narrative of musical development, and a musical version of the historian Thomas Carlyle's theory that decisive, courageous, and influential individuals, rather than communities, technologies, or circumstantial factors, are primarily responsible for the advancement of culture.¹⁸ A tendency to neglect these important issues, casting the musical past and present as apolitical and uncontested, has been all too common. Educationalists have done too little to respond to Jane Bowers and Judith Tick's factual observation that 'The absence of women in the standard music histories is not due to their absence in the musical past.'¹⁹ In the United Kingdom, for example, the first generation 'GCE Advanced-level' examination that functioned as a gateway between secondary and higher education between 1951 and 1986 prescribed the detailed study of a few hundred composers – all of them white, all of them European, none of them women²⁰ – seemingly without a word of criticism at this bias being set down in print.

At the establishment of the UK's first national curriculum, similarly problematic canon-formation was demonstrated in the preeminent textbooks, and, again, went unchallenged: listening examples were offered from myriad historical periods, genres, and cultures for use with students between the ages of eleven and fourteen; yet the only role models for females as composers were a handful of singer-songwriters.²¹ Syllabuses for public examinations have been similarly problematic. In 2016, a campaign led by the seventeen-year-old Jessy McCabe resulted in one of the main providers of post-sixteen music qualifications in the United Kingdom, Pearson Edexcel, abandoning its plan to revalidate its Advanced-level Music specification with an updated list of exclusively male composers. The publisher's response to pressure exercised through an online petition was to issue a revised list of set works, following consultation, which now includes pieces by Clara Schumann, Rachel Portman, Kate Bush, Anoushka Shankar, and Kaija Saariaho.

Despite such successes, and perhaps as a result of the failure to recontextualise the historiography of previous generations as, at best, partial, music educators of both sexes have unwittingly reproduced sexist ideas

within our curricula. These range from ideas about which instruments 'suit' girls and boys respectively – a tedious playing out in the classroom of the wider 'pink is for girls, blue is for boys' trope, which has resulted in the gender imbalance observed in some instrumental areas going unchallenged²² – to arguably yet more unsettling ideas about the nature and distribution of human creativity. Green's research, later replicated in British Columbia by Betty Hanley,²³ showed how inequality in music education was not a simple 'one-dimensional assertion of power by men over women' but rather a complex web of 'tolerance and repression, collusion and resistance, that systematically furthers the ... divisions from which musical patriarchy springs'.²⁴ Green reveals an alarming discourse on the nature of girls' and boys' aptitude for musical composition amongst music educators themselves. Synthesising evidence from open-ended questionnaires and interviews, she showed how teachers of the 1990s ascribed boys' success to 'imagination, exploratory inclinations, inventiveness, creativity, improvisatory ability and natural talent' while achievement by girls was 'characterised as conservative, traditional and reliant on notation'.²⁵ While we can only speculate about the significant power of this discourse to discourage girls from engaging in musical creativity, early evidence has already suggested that music teachers' sexist beliefs of this kind lead to the unfair assessment of musical works that are dependent on the assessors' perception of the composer as female or male.²⁶ Meanwhile, as Armstrong has demonstrated, composition at secondary school level has become increasingly driven by and mediated through digital technologies and the virtual, rather than by social relationships and the physical. As discussed in more detail below, this 'technicisation' of musical creativity, she suggests, risks the further exclusion of girls from what can be characterised, simplistically but influentially, as a uniquely male-friendly domain.²⁷

Women and Pedagogical Debates in the Twenty-First Century

With notable exceptions – the discussions around Pearson Edexcel's curricular decisions being a good example – gender has hardly been at the forefront of recent curricular debates, at least as far as classroom music education at primary and secondary level is concerned. It would be misleading, however, to cast music pedagogy and curricula per se as uncontested territories, and it is worth exploring the ways in which the debates that are currently being waged advance or impinge upon ideas of progress

as far as women working and studying in music education are concerned. Addressing an international conference of music educators in 2009, Magne Espeland set out three ways in which music pedagogy was then perceived to be subject to significant and dichotomous differences of opinion:

I will denote the dichotomies I am referring to as having to do with: (1) technology/digital proponents versus non-technology/analogue proponents; (2) a formal/formalist position versus an informal/informalist position, and, finally; (3) educator/teacher views versus artist/musician views.²⁸

It is worth dwelling on these issues, since they represent the foci of the discursive energies of the music education community. In the first case, as suggested above, the debate is evidently one that can readily be construed as highly gendered. The further integration of technology into music educational practices, as Espeland asserts, can facilitate the realisation of individual potential by releasing the expression of musical ideas from the confines of the individual's instrumental or vocal ability. It also enables practices in the classroom to mirror practices observed in parts of the music industry. On the other hand, an increased focus on technology risks the development of 'machine qualities as opposed to human qualities in music education', the loss of 'practical, aesthetic, and expressive activities involving body and mind', and even 'social delimitation, unhealthy individualisation and body de-focused practices'.²⁹ Espeland cites Wayne Bowman's persuasive account of all human cognition as characterised by 'the inseparability of mind and body ... [and] the indispensability of corporeal experience to all human knowledge'.³⁰ From this vantage, he highlights the potential for delineated meanings around gender – particularly in relation to the body/mind dualism – to intersect in harmful ways with practices that prioritise learning approaches in which individuals work with machines, instead of those in which learning is collective and embodied. In her more elaborated critique of music technological learning in the music classroom, Armstrong shares these fears, adding that 'male teachers and male pupils dominate social interactions that focus around technological talk [and that] the prevalence of an "ad hoc" way of learning about technology largely favours boys' ways of engaging with technology'.³¹

A sociological reading of these music education technologies, therefore, must consider the possibility that unthinking enthusiasm for the practice of addressing musical composition uniquely in a digitally mediated context risks a fresh approach to the practice of limiting female creativity in schools. Clearly, neither Espeland nor Armstrong takes an unenthusiastic position overall in respect of computers; the central question for each of

them is *how* rather than *whether* we should employ technology in music educational contexts, enabling the numbers of women now finding creative and fulfilling roles in this field to be increased further. A key point for the latter writer seems to be that the question of technology should first be understood as a gendered one and that its gendered effects in relation to students and teachers be weighed appropriately as new policies and practices are devised; secondly, as Armstrong sets out below, a crude stereotyping of computers as inherently male business should be firmly resisted:

as Grint and Gill (1995) note, we must not take for granted the idea that technology and masculinity go together. Women's supposed 'alienation' from technology is a product of the historical and cultural construction of technology as masculine. Understanding these gendered processes . . . powerfully demonstrates that it is not technology itself that is the 'problem' for women but the cultural context in which it is used.³²

(For a detailed consideration of women and music technology, see Part III.)

The second of Espeland's contemporary dichotomies, between formal and informal approaches to learning, rests on the degree to which practices observed amongst learners in non-institutional settings – amongst those who learn in a 'garage band', by studying online videos, or orally in the setting of traditional music cultures – should be imported into institutional contexts. Informal pedagogies in music can be understood variously, but many writers have relied on the key principles laid out by Green, drawing upon her research into the learning practices of popular musicians. Informal learning in music, according to Green, is:

1. Learning music that pupils choose, like, and identify with.
2. Learning by listening and copying recordings.
3. Learning with friends.
4. Personal, often haphazard without structured guidance.
5. Integration of listening, performing, improvising, and composing.³³

The Musical Futures pedagogical approach,³⁴ inspired by these five principles and motivated by the perceived stagnation and rejection of traditional ways of teaching music in the classroom, has been enthusiastically received in some quarters and fiercely opposed in others. Many schools in the United Kingdom adopted its brand of self-directed, independent learning, reporting that students who approached musical tasks in this way, while working in friendship groups, showed greater engagement with the subject than those working in a conventional, teacher-directed way. Its introduction has been challenged by critics as signalling a break with the

Deweyan concept of 'democratic' public education, in that by allowing students to learn with friends – effectively to choose the students with whom they will interact musically, consistent with Green's third principle – priority is given 'to egoism and personal priorities as more important in learning situations than altruism and democratic and social values'.³⁵

By relaxing teacher control on the sequencing of activities and the selection of repertoire, students are free to interact with activities and repertoire of their own. This raises two important possibilities where gender is concerned. The first is that individuals can elect to pursue roles within informal working groups that are consistent with their own gender identities and self-concept; playing, singing, composing, or improvising in ways that they choose themselves. Thus, while they might very well still be subject to limitations imposed by society and their own imaginations in their choice-making, they are unlikely to choose roles for which society has adjudged them unsuited. The second is that by allowing students to copy the music of musicians that they themselves select, the number of women musicians and composers brought into the classroom is likely increased; the power of music education professionals to curate 'role models' in the ways that have historically resulted in the near elimination of female musicianship from the scholastic canon, meanwhile, is diminished. What can be said about these discussions is that to date very little empirical evidence relating to gender has been wielded either in support of informal learning approaches or in defence of more traditional methods. While we can speculate about the impact of this debate in relation to women teachers and female students, more research is required before conclusions can fruitfully be drawn.

The third contemporary dichotomy, that between the 'educator/teacher' and the 'artist/musician' is perhaps the one that has evolved most significantly in the decade since Espeland's address, in the sense that it has been brought into the political realm and has been amplified and extended as part of turf wars fought between factions in the political class, perhaps especially in the UK, where the governments in office since 2010 have unambiguously sought to redefine music education as merely the learning of musical instruments and singing. The potential conflict between the privileging of artistry and the privileging of pedagogy is itself one that can be easily revealed as having little substance; revealed, that is, 'as a dichotomy of the past, and not as a real dichotomy with strong opposing . . . views'.³⁶ What has become increasingly challenged in some political quarters, however, is the very notion of a thoroughgoing and comprehensive music education delivered by professional educators and

made available as part of a universal compulsory education; which is to say that, in respect of this third dichotomy, the stakes have been raised considerably. While the gendering of this debate might not be immediately apparent, familiarity with feminist accounts of schooling and learning invite us to read its subtexts critically.

On one side of the current debate are advocates of broad musical learning as articulated, for example, in early versions of England's national curriculum and in the roughly contemporaneous US national standards devised by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) in 1994. In brief, they argue for a universal music education that is creative as well as re-creative, that addresses many styles and genres, and that privileges the sharing of musical experiences of value as the key site of musical learning. On the other side, focus is increasingly directed towards instrumental and vocal expertise, towards individual and re-creative practices rather than social and creative ones, and towards an ever narrower group of acknowledged great works: 'the best in the musical canon',³⁷ to echo the words of the current national curriculum in England. Further, those on this side of the debate conceive of the notion of a universal entitlement rather differently, focusing on the idea of sifting and selecting from the student population in order to find those most suited to intensive musical learning, rather than providing a curriculum for all.

If we are attuned to the gendered subtexts in all the above we might legitimately raise four concerns. First, by emphasising and narrowing the existing canon of works and (male) composers – that is, leaning in the opposite direction to that which grass-roots pressure has obliged Pearson Edexcel to travel – we deny female students helpful role models and risk limiting female creativity in ways that have already been presented in this chapter. While progress in this respect has clearly been made in tertiary and post-compulsory secondary education, for the vast majority of students for whom music is compulsory, change has been regressive. Second, by focusing governmental funding mainly on instrumental and vocal expertise rather than broader forms of musical learning we move our discipline towards the problematic realm of gendered instrument choice.³⁸ Third, by focusing on individual rather than social learning we privilege behaviours and modes of learning that are often societally approved amongst males but discouraged amongst females, increasing rather than diminishing male advantage. Fourth, by increasing selection within our education systems we risk introducing or reintroducing tools that have been found historically to advance male learners and teachers.

Coda

In 2002, Lamb, Dolloff, and Howe called for significant change in the way scholars of music education think about the nature and boundaries of their work. Drawing on the persuasive analysis of Ellen Koskoff, they made reference once again to the idea that our disciplinary domain is attitudinally and philosophically conservative:

If feminism, feminist research, and gender research are to have the kind of impact on music education that they have had on education and on music, then music education scholars will need to challenge disciplinarity in music education. Such a challenge involves looking at these issues with imagination . . . [asking] ‘First, to what degree does a society’s gender ideology and resulting gender-related behaviours affect its musical thought and practice? And second, how does music function in society to reflect or affect inter-gender relations?’³⁹

These questions still provide an excellent starting point for gender-based discussions. Examining ways in which music education cultures prescribe gender as much as they describe it will be fundamental to a mature debate about meaningful improvements.

Notes

1. Catharine E. Beecher, *Suggestions Respecting Improvements in Education, Presented to the Trustees of the Hartford Female Seminary, and Published at Their Request* (Hartford, CT: Packer & Butler, 1829), 7–8.
2. Office for National Statistics, *Gender Pay Gap in the UK: 2018* (London: Office for National Statistics, 2018).
3. See Sharon D. Kruse and Sandra Spickard Prettyman, ‘Women, Leadership, and Power: Revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West’, *Gender and Education*, vol. 20, no. 5 (1994), 451–64.
4. See, for example, Suzanne G. Cusick, ‘Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem’, *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 32, no. 1 (1994), 8–27. The first systematic account of the body/mind dualism in music education is offered in Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
5. Victoria Armstrong, ‘Hard Bargaining on the Hard Drive: Gender Bias in the Music Technology Classroom’, *Gender and Education*, vol. 20, no. 4 (2008), 375–86.
6. See Robert Legg, ‘Bach, Beethoven, Bourdieu: Cultural Capital and the Scholastic Canon in England’s A-level Examinations’, *The Curriculum Journal*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2012), 157–72. See also Adam Whittaker, ‘Investigating the Canon in A-level

- Music: Musical Prescription in A-level Music Syllabuses (for First Examination in 2018)', *British Journal of Music Education*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2018), 17–27.
7. George Unwin, *Women in Music* (Chicago: McClurg, 1886), 18–19.
 8. Sondra Wieland Howe, *Women Music Educators in the United States: A History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2014).
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