B. J. Music Ed. 2006 23:1, 117–128
doi:10.1017/S0265051706216863

Book Reviews

Music in America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture by Adelaida Reyes. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. xviii + 123 pp. ISBN 0195146662 (£23.99, hardback), 0195146670 (£10.99, paperback).

Music in America is one of (so far) 17 volumes in the Global Music Series edited by Bonnie C. Wade and Patricia Shehan Campbell. The series is intended to provide teaching material for classes on 'world music', and it differs from other world music textbooks in that its component parts can be purchased separately, enabling tutors to customise the course by selecting only those volumes of greatest interest to themselves or their students. Two framing volumes, *Thinking Musically* by Wade and *Teaching Music Globally* by Campbell, provide a foundation of concepts for students and pedagogical advice for teachers, while each of the other volumes covers a particular geographical area in about 100 small pages of text and photographs with an accompanying compact disc of recorded examples. For a typical world music course, the tutor might assign *Thinking Musically* plus perhaps three or four of the other volumes. Thus, the series lends itself to the currently prevalent approach of going into some depth on a small number of contrasting cultures rather than trying to convey the breadth and diversity of all of the world's music.

To write about 'music in America' in not much more than 100 pages must have been a daunting task. Reyes tackles it by seeking (after historian George M. Frederickson) a 'unifying vision' to make sense of the potentially bewildering diversity and rapid change. In Chapter One, she outlines this vision as a combination of three themes – diversity, identity, and unity – and in the next three chapters, she explores each of these themes in turn. Chapter Two concentrates on the internal and external sources of diversity in American musical life, Chapter Three on music as an expression and construction of American national identity, and Chapter Four (overlapping considerably with Chapter Three) on the unity that Reyes finds behind the apparently chaotic diversity of music in America. Finally, Chapter Five returns to the question of a unifying vision, attempting to characterise 'American musical culture' through such qualities as the transforming impact of technology and the expression of American concepts of freedom and individualism. But instead of trying to construct an exclusive category by asking 'What is American music?' Reyes advocates asking 'What about a given music is American?'

All of this begs the question what is meant by 'American' and why this book is called *Music in America* rather than *Music in the USA*. Reyes addresses these questions from the beginning, arguing in the Preface for a distinction between nation and state and for a definition of America, not as a nation-state, but as 'a people who '*believe* they are related' . . . and whose country of residence is the United States' (p. xi; emphasis in original). From this it would appear to follow that, to be American, one must not only reside in the USA but adhere to certain cultural values. But US residents are unlikely to be in complete agreement as to what these 'American' values are or who has the right to define them. For instance, Reyes tends to personify 'America' as 'a lover of innovation' (p. xii) whose 'impatience with the here-and-now keeps it reaching out for innovation' (p. 5), but such characterisations would alienate the large conservative elements in American society and exclude many people who consider

themselves Americans. To define Americanness other than by belonging to the state (i.e. citizenship) is to adopt the insidious rhetorical strategy known as 'persuasive definition', and the 'unity' that Reyes finds in American musical culture may be largely a product (via circular reasoning) of the way she defines 'America'. She tells us that her exploration of music in America is 'guided by the *assumption* that beneath the surface are unifying forces' (p. 92; emphasis added), but surely the existence of such forces is to be demonstrated and not 'assumed' as part of a definition. On the other hand, trying to account for all the music made and used by US citizens would inevitably tend toward mere listing, which, as Reyes says, would be 'a poor mirror of what makes the items add up to a dynamic, coherent musical life' (p. 13), and even if the 'coherence' is largely a heuristic construct, *Music in America* makes a better textbook than the entry on the USA in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.*

As a textbook, *Music in America* offers ideas and questions for discussion more than it offers factual information for memorising and testing. Throughout the book are suggested activities that include guided listening to the CD examples and other music, mini-fieldwork projects in the student's own community, and questions for short essays and discussions. While many of these assume American students, they could be adapted to other nationalities quite easily. Although the listening assignments call attention to particular features of musical sound, these should be intelligible to students without a background in music theory (especially if they have previously studied *Thinking Musically*) and there is practically no music notation in the book. A great deal of the text is devoted to issues in American culture and history rather than music in particular.

Conversely, when it comes to actual information on music in America, the book is rather thin and will probably have to be supplemented from other sources, particularly for non-American students. Whatever music one regards as quintessentially American, whether it be blues, jazz, country, rock and roll, or hip hop, one will find only selected examples of it discussed here, and the bigger picture will have to be filled in through lectures or other readings. This may be uncomfortable for teachers accustomed to using textbooks for information and creating their own discussion and homework assignments.

Curiously, the music that is best represented in the book is that of the experimental tradition in concert music, many of the examples (such as John Cage's *4'33"*) being the same ones that tend to appear in music appreciation textbooks. This is a music that very few Americans care about, and one would have expected an ethnomusicologist to devote more attention to the musics that most Americans regard as their own. On the penultimate page, Reyes does acknowledge 'the specifically American character of popular music's preeminent place in the nation's culture' (p. 111), but elsewhere, popular music is relatively neglected, certainly in proportion to the size of its audience.

What, after all, is the single most important musical thing that has happened in America? Is it not the coming together of African and European music that generated what is now the worldwide language of popular music? This is discussed only in relation to jazz, which has become the music of a small minority in comparison to the popular music that has developed from the same two sources. American musicians in many spheres, including concert music, minstrelsy, parlor song and musical theatre, have differentiated their music from that of

Europe above all by its African-derived elements, but Reyes treats these mainly as a source of 'diversity' rather than a defining feature of an American musical 'identity'.

Without explicit recognition of these pervasive African elements, the characterisation of 'American musical culture' is left rather vague and unsatisfactory. Much of what is said in the last chapter – for instance, on the impact of technology – could equally be said of other industrialised countries, but the characterisation of America as a distinctive musical culture is unsupported by comparisons with other cultures. Other parts of the chapter – notably the discussion of John Cage – emphasise music that most Americans regard as a lunatic fringe. We are left with the question 'What about this music is American?' but we are not very well equipped to answer it. I would be inclined to turn the question around and ask 'Given that this music is American (since it is made by US citizens), and given its reception by Americans, what does it tell us about America?'

If I have found plenty of bones to pick with this book, that is perhaps a sign that it would succeed in its intention of generating discussion in the classroom. It does offer some salutary lessons, particularly in its insistence on the view that music consists of far more than sound and that 'sound alone does not suffice as a distinctive marker of American music' (p. 3). In its professed aims of exploring where America's music comes from and nurturing a way of hearing that is informed by history (p. xii), it is (with the reservations I have expressed above) partially successful, even if at times it seems to be not so much a book about music in America as it is a book about America that uses musical examples for illustration.

One definite flaw, however, is that the text should have been more carefully proof-read. Any book used in teaching ought to be a model of clarity and correctness in writing; it ought not to contain such basic grammatical errors as 'Americans have often ignored sources of diversity in *its* own backyard' (p. 31; emphasis added). *Music in America* contains at least a dozen such slips, and although many of the ideas are pithily expressed, these errors tend to undermine what is already often an uphill battle to instil care and precision in writing.

ANDREW P. KILLICK
University of Sheffield

What Good Are The Arts? by John Carey. London: Faber, 2005. 286 pp. ISBN: 0571226027 (£12.99, hardback)

Enshrined in current legislation, the stated purpose of the school curriculum in England is to promote 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society'. The received wisdom is that the arts make a significant contribution to this aim. While John Carey might agree that the arts promote cultural, mental and physical development, he has serious problems with their claim to foster spiritual and moral qualities in human beings, whether children at school or adults in society at large. This provocative book argues that while literature *may* contribute to moral and spiritual development, there is no evidence to show that visual art, music, dance or drama have the power to do this. The arts, Carey says, do not make us better people. Received notions about their value may have driven public funding and informed curricular structures for the past century, but they are completely misguided.

Carey asks, 'what is a work of art?' Philosophy, from Plato and Aristotle onwards, has failed to provide a satisfactory answer to this question. In the 18th century,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Immanuel Kant claimed that beauty could not simply lie in the eye of the beholder; it had to be a quality inherent in the object of contemplation. 'For Kant, standards of beauty were, at the deepest level, absolute and universal.' Hegel, Schopenhauer, Dewey and Clive Bell supported this quasi-religious notion that implied that art, at its best, puts us in touch with the transcendental. Carey will have none of this: 'Meanings are not things inherent in objects. They are supplied by those who interpret them.' It follows, therefore, that 'anything can be a work of art. What makes it a work of art is that someone thinks of it as a work of art . . . The idea that by calling something a work of art you are bestowing in it some divine sanction is now as intellectually respectable as a belief in pixies.'

After placing his relativist cards firmly on the table, Carey challenges the belief that 'high' art is superior to other genres. With withering sarcasm, he demolishes the received notion that significant works in the modernist canon (such as *The Waste Land*) are necessarily obscure and require an extra effort on the part of their audiences. One shibboleth to which Carey takes particular exception is the notion of the 'passive audience' for mass culture. Carey sees no evidence that people watching a television soap or listening to popular music are any less reflective than the readers of obscure modern poetry. Besides, history has taught us that the 'low' sometimes endures in unexpected ways. The 17th century literary establishment rated Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* above the vulgar plays of Shakespeare. 'The fact that [Shakespeare's plays] were once popular art, despised by intellectuals, but are now high art, itself suggests that the differences between high and popular art are not intrinsic but culturally constructed.'

Carey draws on psychological research into people's aesthetic responses and, again, finds it wanting. It seems that science neither asks the right questions nor provides helpful answers concerning the processes involved when people engage with the arts. He concludes the first part of the book looking at the quasi-religious implications that lie behind present day notions of the value of the arts. These implications are there, Carey thinks, because they fill a spiritual vacuum that exists in the secular world in which we now live. But, again, the arts do not make us more virtuous: the Nazis, for example, were cultured and knowledgeable people. Hitler's first act on becoming German Chancellor was to commission the building of a huge gallery.

Carey has produced a readable and, it must be said, frequently entertaining book that teachers and students will find invaluable in provoking debate and discussion. However, neither his argument against privileging the arts nor his closing case for the superiority of literature ultimately convince. Despite much wit and insight, Carey sometimes makes observations that, for those of us teaching the arts, seem disappointingly commonplace. For example, he concedes that practical engagement in the arts does have the potential to change people, citing research concerning redemptive experiences with prisoners. This is hardly news to those of us with wide experience engaged in *doing* the arts with people, including those with special needs. It is not just prisons that invite this kind of work. Is Carey unaware of the outreach work done by organisations such as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra or the Tate Gallery at St Ives? Another point that teachers will find somewhat obvious is that 'some African societies have the same word for art and play'. We do not need to study African societies to realise this. It seems almost prosaic to remind Carey that we 'play' musical instruments and watch 'plays'

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the theatre. However we would agree with him that the future aim of research in the arts should be directed to 'finding out not what critics think . . . but how art has affected and changed other people's lives'.

Another weakness is that despite his title, Carey only deals extensively with visual art and literature. Music gets very cursory treatment and dance is hardly mentioned at all. A glance at the index, for example, will show six references to Picasso, but only one to J. S. Bach and not a single mention of a 20th century composer. Carey's engagement with music is superficial to the point of being unfair. Did Carey feel that his case only needed to be made by reference to literature and the visual arts? A more extensive coverage of music would have made the debate more interesting and, perhaps, less crude than the one Carey presents. Early in the book, Carey says of music 'despite the insistence of purists that a proper response should not carry the listener beyond the music itself, empirical studies have repeatedly indicated that a whole spectrum of emotions, associations, ideas and imaginings are actually present'. It is disappointing that Carey does not expand on this point here, citing these 'empirical studies'. One book that deals interestingly and in greater depth with the difference between the ways so-called 'experts' describe musical form and the way music is actually experienced by ordinary listeners is Nicholas Cook's *Music, Imagination and Culture* (1990). Reference to work such as Cook's could have broadened the scope of Carey's argument and made it more comprehensive and embracing of all the arts.

Because he fails to cover the arts equally, I am less persuaded than I might have been by the argument for the moral and spiritual superiority of literature that Carey proposes in the final part of his book. Here, he makes two bold contentions:

(1) Literature alone can promote critical intelligence and engage the reader in thinking about moral issues in ways in which the other arts are powerless to do. Carey points to the life-changing qualities of novels such as Johnson's *Rasselas*, the satires of Swift and the awareness-raising properties of novels such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Lord of the Flies*.

(2) Through the poetic medium of language, literature can work on the imagination in ways not open to the other arts. This is particularly the case where it exploits the property of *indistinctness*.

While broadly accepting Carey's first premise, it seems to me that his second is without foundation. Again, Carey's reluctance to engage with music here is puzzling, given his manifest sensitivity to poetry as an *aural* phenomenon. Carey says: 'I want to argue in this chapter that a vital element in all literature is indistinctness, and this empowers the reader . . . The networks of association we build up will not depend on spotting allusions or echoes, though sometimes we may notice these, but on imaginative connections that may sometimes exist only for us.' Is he implying that this quality is absent from the other arts? As far as I am aware, it was a *visual* artist that used this word to describe what he was doing. In 1830, hearing that a patron had complained that his painting of Fingal's Cave was 'indistinct' in its execution, Turner retorted, 'You should tell him that indistinctness is my forte.' Turner, surely, was a painter whose work above all stimulates 'imaginative connections'.

Countless examples of indistinctness can be found throughout music, too: the bare, shimmering, mysterious opening of Beethoven's 9th symphony, the uncertain journey towards tonal resolution that permeates Chopin's gloomy 2nd Prelude, the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

lazy ambiguity of the unaccompanied flute that ushers in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune* or the dense, cloudy orchestral texture of Ligeti's *Atmosphères*; all have the power to provoke the listener's imagination in a myriad of ways. Listening and responding imaginatively to these pieces over the past 50 years have not made me behave better towards my fellow humans. However, they live on in my mind's ear, and I constantly re-interpret them in the light of new experience. This, surely, has made me a richer and more resourceful person than I might otherwise have become.

'Read and remembered', Carey concludes, 'literature becomes part of your own mind. [Its] indistinctness makes reading creative and gives readers a sense of possession, even of authorship'. This is inspirational stuff, but I cannot for the life of me understand why Carey seems to think that his final paragraph describes attributes that apply only to a single art-form.

PIERS SPENCER
University of Exeter

Musical Excellence: Strategies and Techniques to Enhance Performance, edited by Aaron Williamon. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. £24.95, paperback. ISBN: 0198525354

Musical Excellence is an inspirational collection of articles on achieving excellence in musical performance, based on empirical, cross-disciplinary research within the context of theories of human performance and cognition. It is divided into three parts. Part I sets out to explore some fundamental characteristics of musical excellence based on the literature on expertise and skill learning; offers musicians guidance on how to manage the physical demands of musical performance; and provides useful insights into the process of perceiving and assessing a performance from the audience's point of view. Parts II and III explore the implications of particular strategies and techniques in terms of increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of practice for optimal performance, and bring together pioneering physical, psychological and pharmacological initiatives found to enhance musical performance quality from a number of different fields, such as exercise science, medicine, cognitive science, sports psychology and psychophysiology.

This book comes at a time where a growing number of performing musicians feel freer to express and share concerns on the occasional negative impact on performance quality brought about by the highly demanding physical, mental and psychological requirements of the live performance situation. In addition to technical and expressive demands, performers often have to deal with high levels of anxiety while not losing sight of the need to establish and maintain appropriate communication both with the audience and within the moment-by-moment interaction with co-performers in the case of ensemble playing. *Musical Excellence* addresses an impressive range of pre-performance concerns related to the musician's physical, mental and psychological preparation with the aim of enabling performers to overcome such constraints and achieve their artistic potential while retaining 'the joy of performing'.

As the book rightly suggests, greater mental and physical control complementing adequate musical preparation, will often allow performers to 'surpass expectations of their potential as artists'. A successful performance based on such effective preparation will give pleasure both to the performer(s) and the audience. In addition to the performer's personal satisfaction that

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

emerges from giving a performance of high quality, the work's positive reception by the audience means that it is regarded highly and is positively evaluated by outside observers, while it also enhances the performer's own motivation and feelings of self-efficacy. These, in turn, as Chapter 2 claims, are essential prerequisites for the development of some of the fundamental characteristics of musical excellence, such as concentration, setting clear goals, evaluating progress, making flexible use of strategies and looking for the big picture. This will have a highly motivating effect not only for the accomplished musician, but especially for developing performers who would benefit greatly from extra motivation in order to invest the appropriate amount of effort and drive to their musical training. Under these circumstances, the 'rage to master' – the motivation to undertake the intense effort required to practice effectively – that has been identified in gifted children, will, it is hoped, become second nature to the developing musician as well. Interestingly, chapter 4 on the assessment process in musical performance suggests ways for musicians to enhance their own performance assessment by becoming alert to performance factors lying within their control.

Care is taken throughout to ensure that the suggested strategies are not received as 'quick fixes' offering miraculous solutions to performers' concerns, but will instead open avenues of exploration to select and develop a personal programme for performance enhancement based on a realistic evaluation of one's own personal strengths and weaknesses in skill.

Musical Excellence will serve as a valuable reference source for all those involved in the quest for enhanced performances. It should be very much welcomed by the music profession, including performers, teachers, students and researchers, as it offers a valuable foundation to inform empirically the training of practitioners for the achievement of artistic potential.

DIMITRA KOKOTSAKI
University of Durham

Roots of Musicality – Music Therapy and Personal Development, by Daniel Perret. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2005. 192 pp., £16.95, paperback. ISBN 1843103362.

This book is an interesting and original mixture in which Daniel Perret draws from many sources in shedding light on emergent musicality. He explores aspects of neuroscience and psychobiology and introduces five metaphoric elements – earth, water, fire, air and space – as a means of framing the roots of musicality within a total expression of the self (mind, body and spirit). Practical examples from his work as a music therapist, with autistic children in particular, are used to illustrate his main themes, specifically his overriding interest in energy fields. Daniel Perret is a composer and performer with many albums of mainly Celtic and meditative music to his name. He has taught courses in music and personal development since 1980 and runs, with his wife, the art therapist Marie Perret, training programmes in Art Synthesis, Music and Energy, Therapy and Music at their centre in Sergeac in France. Excerpts from some of her poems are beautifully used as links between sections of the book.

Daniel Perret's personal motivation and key interests are presented in the Introduction. He is interested in a young infant's innate biological musicality and the subtleties of musical communication present from the earliest exchanges with caregivers

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

and documented in the work of, among others, Colwyn Trevarthen (who contributes an excellent and comprehensive foreword to the book) and Stephen Malloch. Perret introduces the importance of cultural musicality before extending his field of inquiry to include 'the *empathic capacity* of our energy field, and more particularly of the thyroid chakra' (p. 18) and a spiritual or universal source. Both the energetic and spiritual are highlighted as further dimensions of musicality; themes, according to Perret, often overlooked in the West. An interest in the spiritual as a root to musicality is to be applauded and is congruent with a growing trend in music therapy research and writing. His overriding interest in music as 'expression of a sense of harmony, of beauty, of balance and respect' (p. 19) takes him into regions far beyond the individual to embrace participation in cultural, natural, global and planetary harmony. Through his grounding in Eastern systems of philosophy he introduces readers to subtle elements of energy awareness and all-inclusive definitions of such terms as harmony, creativity and musician. Fundamental to his vision is an observation of '*bridges between music and life*' (p. 20) as expression of energy and spirit. Perret sees such expression when listening to a person play or sing or when working with children with profound problems in communication.

The text is then divided into four chapters followed by a short conclusion and seven appendices. Spiritual and psycho-energetic dimensions are discussed fully in the first chapter, which elaborates notions of inborn spiritual qualities, makes links between musicality and consciousness (an area in which more research is needed in its own right) and describes the functions of the different energy fields. Some readers will be familiar with such material including descriptions of the various chakras. But readers need to be open to explore these regions and in particular to take on board some highly personal definitions. I expect some might struggle, as I did, with Perret's use of 'the word *emotion* for painful phenomena in the lower astral field' – hatred, anger, fear etc. – and 'the word *feelings* to describe non-painful states in the astral energy field (the emotional part of the aura), often called the upper astral' (p. 27) – love, compassion, joy etc. What helps me to understand such particular use of terms, and the importance Perret gives to a psycho-energetic and spiritual approach in contrast to a purely psychological one, are the case vignettes that punctuate the text. The descriptions of the musical and behavioural transformations of the children attending music therapy are often moving to read. We learn much about how Perret listens to a child's music and adapts a musical intervention to enter into a mutual dialogue. Yet I would have appreciated being given the opportunity to have my own reactions to these vignettes. International music therapy practice has long tended not to include such phrases as 'That is when the "miracle" happened' (p. 29).

Chapter 2 begins with some interesting qualitative speculations on musical phenomena that have always fascinated the author and to which he attributes a right-brain response with the primary link to our emotions and feelings. How are we able to discern subtle shifts in quality when listening to sound patterns where there is often no semblance of melody, harmony or rhythm on which to hold? How can we locate differences between players of singing bowls or didgeridoos? Why are we continually drawn to our favourite recording of a favourite piece? Perret moves into further elaboration of metaphor, image and symbol as doorways to dimensions beyond the normal scope of the intellect. He explores

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

Ancient Greek and Eastern traditions and in particular his metaphorical use of the five elements, earth, water, fire, air and space, not only with his work with people with special needs but also when working as a trainer, composer and musician. He discusses how each element ideally is in balance with the other four. Each evolves towards a more spiritual level and 'exists within us in its emotional aspect' (p. 53). Each element is then described from within these ancient systems, its metaphorical aspects elaborated, connections with everyday uses of language explored and practical working suggestions given. Personally I would have liked more practical suggestions and examples from practice to substantiate the somewhat speculative expositions of the potential of each element. Too often the working suggestions are only included in a few short paragraphs.

The next chapter is a brave attempt to bridge the worlds of neuroscience and developmental psychology with earlier explorations of psycho-energetic fields. Observations of children in lengthy periods of music therapy have made Perret aware of what he describes here as seven neuro-musical thresholds, which he links to the five metaphorical elements. His observations also connect the crossing of a specific threshold with significant changes in behaviour outside of the music therapy room. Music therapists and educators have extensive practical experience of children making such strides in their development and passing across such thresholds. The thresholds detected by Perret are: concentration (earth), experiencing the sound (air), dynamism (fire), rhythm (water) creativity (water and space), spontaneous singing (space) and melodic organisation (air). Reference is made to recent music and brain research and in particular to the work of the Domasios (Iowa) and Trevarthen (Edinburgh) before links are construed between neuroscience and the psycho-energetic and more transpersonal aspects. Biological roots of musicality are set alongside discussion of more pathological disorders and 'evolutionary disharmonies' (p. 103). An autistic child's hypersensitivity to sound is discussed and some tentative hypotheses relating to the possibility of stress-inducing sounds reaching the growing foetus from outside presented. He does not enter into the current debate on an organic basis to autism or other bio-psycho-social links, although he does refer briefly to Francis Tustin's psychogenic approach. It is this lack of rigorous exploration and a more questioning approach that makes it difficult for me to consider these neuro-musical thresholds beyond interesting hunches arising from observations of clinical practice. Many claims are made which, although often arising from moments of musical intuition during music therapy sessions, need more elaboration and substantiation if they are to be of theoretical and practical interest to, among others, the general music therapy community. Other interpretations of the changes in musical and general behaviour could have equal relevance and it would have been interesting if explorations of such alternatives could have been included.

The final chapter is titled: 'Teacher, Musician, Therapist or Shaman?' It explores the different levels of teaching – external, shamanic and inner – provides some basic rules for improvisation and emphasises a common theme of this book, namely to pay more attention to playing music with feeling and for musicians to listen more with the right hemisphere of the brain. There is passing reference to trance and the use of musical instruments in rituals and more shamanic traditions. A reminder of Perret's key interests is included in a brief conclusion. The appendices include:

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

descriptions of a range of musical instruments that Perret uses in his work; reference to some writing on qualitative research by the music therapist Dorit Amir; a music therapy evaluation chart and a summary of improvisation techniques in music therapy (adapted from the music therapist Kenneth Bruscia).

Overall this is a frustrating read. There are some interesting ideas arising from Perret's extensive experience of work as a performer, teacher and therapist. The author is courageous in attempting to bridge theoretical and philosophical constructs from both West and East. But there are too many gaps. There is no extensive reference to psychology of music, to the significant contributions to the understanding of emergent musicality by such researchers as Daniel Stern and to the writings of Ken Wilber, a leading researcher into the realms of transpersonal psychology and a significant bridge-maker between East and West. The clinical vignettes make absorbing reading but they are sometimes marred by an over-interpretative stance. Perret's major thesis of neuro-musical thresholds is an interesting hunch and what is now needed is extensive development and exploration.

LESLIE BUNT
University of the West of England, Bristol

Music in the School, by Janet Mills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. 244 pp., £14.95, paperback. ISBN 0193223031

By the time I got to the last page, I was very much of the opinion that *Music in the School* was not such a good title for this book. I daresay the title has provided an immediate and effective 'hook' into the target audience. But for me, it only half described what this book is about: in reality, Janet Mills has provided us with much more. I found the content of the book to be wide ranging and the many contemporary issues are presented and discussed in a fair and balanced way. The various chapters are very informative, and many topics are reflected upon by the use of pertinent and often innovative questions. The whole book is also extremely readable.

Music in the School contains 14 chapters, each one more or less adhering to the same successful recipe. In response to the title of each chapter the content provides the reader with some historical background clearly describing the events, concepts, ideas and debates which have directed music education to the current place. There is always ample factual information, which also neatly guides the reader through the plethora of government publications. The sound, critical discussion of facts and emerging issues always benefits from the injection of anecdotes and examples of real life situations which, because of the informative context in which they are set, moves well beyond the mere list of 'tips for teachers' which it could easily become.

Further chapters cover such pertinent themes as how – and how not – to teach music musically, with one excellent chapter discussing 'why is music so boring?' The extremely broad content really does make a valiant effort to cover all aspects of 'music in the school'. There are good, introductory discussions on topics including homework, music in and with the community, world music, access and inclusion, as well as working in schools where pupils may be economically disadvantaged, although some of these sections are frustratingly brief. Another particular bonus for me was the wonderfully apt selection of quotes which introduce us to each of the chapters. I found these quotes unusually effective in giving a genuine conceptual link to the chapter content instead of the typically vague link simply on the level of subject matter.

This book does seem to have provided something for everybody. For the student and would-be music teacher it provides a very readable introduction and critical analysis of the literature and the ideas and debates which have shaped music education as it is today. For the music 'specialist' (and I use the term far more cautiously) it provides a substantial and critical review of all those well founded, common sense ideas and concepts which we all know but allow to be subsumed beneath our latest idea or project. These good and often simple ideas need to be periodically restated, re-discussed and reflected upon. In this book they are presented in ways which cannot fail to challenge us to improve our own teaching and re-evaluate our purpose and way forward. I have been amazed at the number of almost 'throw- away' questions and comments which have come back to me over and over again. A particular favourite example is ' . . . why is it (nearly) always western classical music that gets turned into dogma?'

The final chapter of the book considers learning from research. The point of the chapter is to encourage the reader to 'have a go' or to take action. The purpose, I felt was less clear. I can certainly see the virtue of looking at selected research projects and discussing how they may or may not contribute to music education. I can also see the value of providing students with a brief outline of the research process with appropriate, if brief, discussions of various research components. However, both these areas have been done better elsewhere and by this stage in the book, I was expecting the final rallying call. Reading the sleeve notes perhaps provides the clue as the book is described as a 'springboard for consideration, reflection and action', and my assumption is that the research chapter is to launch us into action. However, for me, the chapter belongs elsewhere and I would have valued the extra time and space spent on enhancing some of the shorter, previous sections.

The more general strength of this book is the way in which Janet Mills has set music education in context. By providing constant, clear, historical links and by accurately charting the sometimes difficult developmental course of music education over the past 20 or so years, the book sets music education in time and place. The inclusion of a wealth of personal experiences and anecdotes, frequently illustrating the more academic points, not only makes the book very readable but also very humorous. The humour originates from the fact that you will often be convinced that you know, or have been taught by, the precise teacher being described. Last, by linking music in the school not only to the music in the everyday lives of children but to their journey through life, the book places music education within a strong, clear context. For me this provides one of the strongest recurring messages, namely that of the uniqueness of music as a subject in school.

Amongst the early pages of the book Janet Mills reminds us that that the national curriculum for music has been re-written twice since current new entrants to the teaching profession were 14 years old, and for me this sobering reminder exemplifies the precise need for this timely text. There has for some time been a need for a book like this which takes us back through some of the debates and discussions of the past few years and clearly reminds us of the foundation issues of music education which perhaps have been lost in subsequent debates.

By the end of the book it is easy to feel a number of very mixed emotions, some picked up directly from the author and others from personal reflections which have been stimulated by the text. Janet Mills obviously loves her subject, and the often

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press

personal nature of the text makes it easy to sense and share this enjoyment and to share the pride in what has been achieved. It is also easy to feel a confidence in what is going well and a hope for the future but it is also possible to feel some of the frustration. Frustration with what still needs to be done; frustration about what is still not happening and frustration with how much was said and possibly forgotten and in many ways we have not progressed very far at all. On closing the book I was left with the feeling that perhaps a great deal of time is spent trying to find new approaches to teaching music, new ways of looking and explaining, producing new materials and incorporating the ever-increasing demand to cover a broadening curriculum instead of looking at the rich source of wisdom contained in older texts such as *Sound and Silence* by Paynter and Aston. Perhaps we have not learned those lessons well enough and need to build more efficiently on what we know.

NIGEL MARSHALL
Roehampton University, London

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505170622686X Published online by Cambridge University Press