

## Book Review

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**Art, Artists and Pedagogy: Philosophy and the Arts in Education** edited by Christopher Naughton, Gert Biesta and David R. Cole. Oxon: Routledge, 2018. 156pp., paperback. £25.97. ISBN 978-1-138-50060-0

Two philosophies inspire this edited book – Gert Biesta’s ideas about education and pedagogy, and the new materialist concepts of Deleuze and Guattari. At times, these sources can offer either overlapping notions or distinctly different philosophical positions; both have undertones of social justice and the intrinsic value of the arts for life and living. The book is not a ‘how to’ manual for teachers; rather it offers the chance to think about what constitutes quality practice. I find it a useful text for masters students studying early years music as it questions the accepted, and challenges us to think about the underlying and often unspoken aspects of arts education in society today. The 15 chapters explore various art forms, and throughout there is an ongoing discussion of the current global education climate of assessment and measurement against outcomes that can lead to the instrumentalism of the arts to serve other ends.

David Lines’ chapter – ‘Jazz departures; sustaining a pedagogy of improvisation’ – has particular relevance for those engaged in community music, music therapy, and other areas of music education. He uses his experiences of free jazz improvisation to explore Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas about music as an uprooting form that can move us away to another place. He thinks of the search for new improvised melodies as similar to a teacher searching for learning

experiences for their students. Lines calls this the ‘pedagogy of improvisation’ (p. 52) that can ‘unsettle taken-for-granted, normalised and overcoded concepts of education that close down educative possibilities and differences’ (p. 53). Keith Sawyer’s (2011) book, *Structure and Improvisation in Creative Teaching*, includes several chapters on a similar theme.

Lines suggests that we think of musical ideas as living and educative in themselves, with possibilities to depart to any number of other places or spaces. He likens this to a learning / teaching experience where for it to be ‘grown-up’ (citing Biesta, 2017, p. 7) demands openness, alertness and attention, so that in encountering the unexpected, one can move with creativity.

Mary Ann Hunter’s chapter may resonate with music educators who visit different settings: she synthesises Biesta’s philosophical ideas in a case study of an artist-in-residence in a Senior College in Tasmania, examining the ways an artist can interrupt established practices in school by offering ‘the gift of teaching in most unteacherly ways’ (p. 33). She acknowledges Biesta’s assertion that people cannot be made to learn; this only occurs when change is recognised and seen as valuable by the learner. The artist’s ‘presence and material practice (p. 40) [that] bring to light what *should* matter’ and can disrupt and help to reconfigure ‘what might be the good educational task’ (p. 37).

The inclusion of a chapter by Biesta where he ‘walks’ through chapters in which his ideas have been applied by others to their particular arts practice is a helpful one for tutors and students, as it demonstrates that truth, knowledge and facts can take on different forms through different lenses.

Having the theorist comment on these interpretations reveals how careful we must be when negotiating with theoretical ideas (this review is adding another lens through which these abstract theoretical ideas are interpreted, presenting another 'portrait' [Biesta, p. 147]).

On occasions this book can be a challenging read as the abstract ideas of matter, rhizomes, entanglement and assemblages can demand attention and an open mind. The chapters on visual art, dance, movement and film may not be instantly applicable to the music education context. The whole, however, offers a view of arts education that reveals some commonalities in pedagogy.

As Christopher Naughton explains in his chapter, 'The implications of "percepts, affects and concepts" for arts education'; an artist becomes their painting as they interact with their materials – paint, tubes, brushes, canvas, colour and so on. In a similar way, he suggests that the arts educator makes intuitive choices to find the best fit for their students and this is a form of interacting with the materials of teaching. The book calls us to think about our work as music educators

as pedagogical artistry. Combining our understanding of affect, dialogue and attunement with our musical creativity and experience, we can ask what is the purpose of the teaching and learning we are engaged in, other than measurable scores? We can interrupt established processes and question continually, 'the quality of what is being expressed' (Biesta, p. 149).

In conclusion, 'Art, artists and pedagogy' is a valuable book for those working with undergraduate and postgraduate students. It can encourage philosophical discussion and reflection on the role of music education; thereby helping individuals clarify for themselves their role, purpose and identity as music educators.

#### References

- BIESTA, G. (2017). *The Rediscovery of Teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- SAWYER, R. K. (2011). *Structure and Improvisation in Creative Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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