

practitioners, as well as researchers and experts who work with them.

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Understanding the Classical Music Profession:

The Past, the Present and Strategies for the Future by Dawn Bennett. Aldershot:

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Despite the obvious links between the nature and characteristics of musicians' careers and the relevance for professional work of the knowledge and skills gained during initial music training, most studies have examined these topics separately (Mills, 2005; Gembris, 2006; Creech *et al.*, 2008). In *Understanding the Classical Music Profession: The Past, the Present and Strategies for the Future*, Dawn Bennett succeeds in bridging this gap in the literature by asking, 'What are the characteristics of a career in music, and how can classical musicians achieve sustainable professional practice?' The outcome represents a timely investigation into classically trained musicians' skills and attributes required to develop and sustain their careers, the distribution of the variety of roles they actually take on, the environment in which they work, and the relevance of existing education and training (p. 5). The message across all seven chapters is clear: 'Success' should be measured on the basis of 'the achievement of a sustainable career within which intrinsic satisfaction is found and self-identity established' (p. 3), rather than on a 'preconceived hierarchy of roles' (p. 123).

While for the most part the study is situated within the Australian cultural industries and music training institutions, much of it resonates strongly with the international context of professional music

training, and the book is written in an authoritative but approachable style. The opening chapter, 'What Lies Ahead', sets out the rationale behind this mixed methods study, describing the conceptual and methodological frameworks and the research method. Bennett wisely avoids making generalisations from the relatively small sample of participants, aiming rather to focus on musicians' 'experiences' as the 'best source of information' (p. 10). Chapter 2, 'The Cultural Industries', provides a cogent analysis of the cultural environment of musicians' work. Through a thorough review of data on Australian culture and recreation, the point is made that inaccurate national data collection processes and lack of dissemination inhibits policy makers', practitioners' and curriculum designers' understanding of the complex environment of cultural practice – crucial to career planning, development and maintenance (p. 13).

Chapters 3 and 4, 'The Musician' and 'Performance-based Music Education and Training', reflect the changing (and stable) elements of musicians' work and performance-based education and training in past and present times. A number of issues identified here could present interesting opportunities for further research: re-conceptualising the 'musician' identity to encompass a broader range of roles; documenting further the values and practices of the apprenticeship system in relation to preparation for the 'real world'; exploring student experience of community cultural development programmes during initial music training; and disseminating more systematically musicians' conceptions of their teaching and performing practice and the ways in which one informs the other.

Chapters 5 and 6, 'Cultural Practice: Visual and Performing Artists' and 'Out in the Real World: The Case for Change', are particularly well written and the voices of

practitioners from a wide range of performing arts are at their most evident. Both chapters aim to show that, in reality, musicians use a variety of skills (i.e. entrepreneurship and business skills, teaching skills, industry experience and awareness) and personal attributes (i.e. confidence and inner strength, openness and adaptability to change, resilience) to sustain their practice, hence emphasising the need for students to 'acquire foundation skills in teaching and business and for education and training to incorporate career planning and industry experience' (p. 120).

The concluding chapter, 'Dilemmas and Opportunities', needs commending for its theoretically grounded Cultural Practice approach which illustrates the application of the generic and specific attributes of artists beyond more obvious vocations and towards holistic employment throughout the cultural industries. Bennett also highlights the diversity of roles available to cultural practitioners not only as a means to make ends meet, but to build intrinsically satisfying artistic careers (p. 125). The section 'Curricular Reform' merits attention here with two strategies being presented for the management of effective curricular change: the adoption of a learning organisation model and a curricular structure based around the collaborative delivery of skills (p. 143). Part of the framework Bennett proposes for continual collaborative curricular renewal is 'looking outside of the organisation'. I would suggest that alumni, only briefly mentioned in this chapter, are in a unique position to provide invaluable insights of the various dimensions associated with the music profession and industry and with the myriad of smaller enterprises they themselves engage in. Keeping in mind that the small size of many musical enterprises limits the range and possibilities for undergraduate work experience, alumni could act as mediators for enhanced

collaborative activity between such enterprises and higher music education institutions, helping raise student awareness of the many different options available to them after graduation.

In the closing chapter, Bennett touches upon the effectiveness of learning transfer (p. 140). It could be further suggested that student work placements that are an integrated part of music courses could increase the relevance and meaning of acquiring transferable skills in parallel with specialist skills during studies (Dockwray & Moore, 2008). One of the fundamental issues higher music education will be faced with in the near future is not as much the integration of work-related activities in music curricula, but rather the development of students' ability to recognise the significance of transferable skills in building sustainable careers; to learn to apply these in many different contexts; and, as a consequence, to be able to represent their learning achievements to employers.

Understanding the Classical Music Profession is bound to become one of the key reference points that researchers working in this area will keep returning to. It represents a highly original and well-considered endeavour from which multiple benefits can ensue, none more so than the re-conceptualisation of what being a musician entails. In the words of the author: 'if musicians are *cultural practitioners* who undertake multiple roles, it follows that the inclusion of generic skills training in curricula could provide a broader base of 'skills, ideas and industry information for career planning and development in response to the complex nature of the cultural industries' (p. 146).

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