

Book Reviews

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The Child As Musician: A Handbook of Musical Development (2nd Edn.) edited by Gary McPherson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 704 pp., hardback. £81. ISBN: 0198744447

The second edition of *The Child As Musician: A Handbook of Musical Development* is quickly becoming the seminal publication for those in the field of music education. This book is of great interest to music educators, university students, researchers, and well-informed parents alike with its broad application in the field of childhood musical development. While editor Gary McPherson admits that it would be impossible to cover all of the latest research in this quickly growing field, the inclusion of chapters in this latest volume discussing everything from fetal aural development to changes in adolescent musical taste is impressive. This book presents both cutting-edge research and well-established knowledge from scholars with both quantitative and qualitative backgrounds in a diverse collection of current literature. Its aim is to present ‘a rainbow of ideas and opinions . . . from a range of theoretical perspectives and research traditions’ (p. xxi). Truly, the current edition provides a well-balanced account of technological, psychological, social, biological, historical, and global influences on developing children’s musicianship. Throughout its 35 chapters by 43 authors, this book mainly focuses on children from ages three to 18, with important framing chapters on prenatal development and lifelong, adult learning. Although the five general sections on Development, Engagement, Differences, Skills, and

Contexts remain the same, there have been many new chapters addressing topics like autism, popular music, performance confidence, wellness, transcultural practices, and informal music experiences. A few chapters from the first edition have been omitted from this second volume, and the chapters held over have not simply been ‘cut-and-pasted’. Those chapters addressing the same topics have been critically analyzed and revised to reflect the current state of research. This brief review makes it impossible to critique the entire work, but rather will give a snapshot of certain highlights repeated from the first edition and outline a few of the new additions.

The opening section on Development contains seven chapters with titles covering Prenatal Development, Infants as Musical Connoisseurs, The Child Musician’s Brain, Musicality, Music Cognition in Childhood, Musical Agency, and The Potential Impact of Autism on Musical Development. For example, just as in the first edition, Richard Parncutt focuses on in utero musical perception and prenatal sensory-motor stimulation, but still includes a fascinating section on the ethics and problems of educating a fetus or newborn. A new contribution from Jackie Wiggins discusses children’s sense that they can initiate and carry out their own musical ideas; Adam Ockelford makes interesting points that for some children with autism, *all* sounds might be processed as music. The next section on Engagement contains nine chapters with the titles Music and Non-Musical Abilities, Reading Traditional Clef Notation, Music as Language, Engaging in a Sound Musicianship, Development of Emotion Perception in Music, Felt Experiences of

Popular Musics, Popular Music and Identity, The Child as Music Critic, and How and Why Do Musical Preferences Change in Childhood and Adolescence? For example, as before, Glenn Schellenberg discusses both the fact and fiction around whether music makes children smarter. A particularly interesting addition is Paul Woodford's examination of music appreciation classrooms – which he compares to isolated medieval convents – where much of what is taught ignores music's critical and creative potential for social change.

The third section on Differences includes five chapters: Motivation, Building Gifts into Musical Talents, Inclusive Music Classrooms, Music and Wellbeing During Illness, and Adolescent Music is Not Problematic. Paul Evans discusses topics such as growth or fixed mindsets in relation to motivation, and a particularly interesting updated section on the connection between identity and motivation. New to this edition, Katrina McFerran examines the shift in teenage musical interests – which adults sometimes view as causing additional problems – that can actually afford opportunities to resolve issues and provide feelings of validation. The fourth section on Skills contains six chapters on Playing an Instrument, Building Performance Confidence, Singing and Vocal Development, Musical Play, The Individual and Social Worlds of Children's Musical Creativities, and Computer-Based Technology. Gary McPherson, Jane Davidson, and Paul Evans address the age-old questions of when, how, and why to begin private instrumental study, with a sufficiently large section on practice and parental involvement. In one of the fresh chapters, Margaret Osborne discusses performance confidence – performances can be instinctively perceived by students as threatening – and spends much of the

chapter outlining psychological strategies to manage overcoming performance anxiety.

The final section on Contexts contains eight chapters on Historical Perspectives, Child As Musical Apprentice, Global Practices, Transcultural Childhoods, Non-Formal Music Experiences, Transformative Music Engagement and Musical Flourishing, Transition from Adolescent to Adult Music Learner, and Fostering Lifelong Engagement in Music. In a similar fashion to the first edition, Gordon Cox gives a historical account of Western children's music education through time, and addresses how music has been taught in institutions in accordance with that period's philosophy of what childhood should be about. Added in this edition, Stephanie Pitts aptly argues that musical development does not stop when children leave school, as shown by the large number of adult leisure listeners and amateur performers, whereas the music education curriculum's short-term goals towards giving annual concerts misses the mark of developing long-term lovers of music.

Previous reviews of the first edition criticized its flow from one chapter to the next, and it is valid to say that the collection is rather fragmented, but this is what makes it a practical handbook. For instance, readers can easily focus on the issue of parental involvement without having to sift through a lot of extraneous information. The authors' inclusion of reflective questions and substantial reference lists at the end of each chapter make this an excellent resource for university courses and a 'jumping off point' for students' individual scholarship. For example, Chapter 4, titled Musicality, ends with the question, 'Can musicality be measured? What issues arise from such measurements?' While there are no frothy pictures or links to websites, the rigour and careful scholarship brought to these

discussions is what sets it apart from other resources. The text is small, the graphs are informative, and the information is practical. The foremost, remaining criticism starts before one even opens the book: the word 'musician' in the title goes undefined. The authors imply that children are inherently musical but this comes in sharp contrast to the traditional definition of a musician as someone who earns a living from playing music. Most adults would connect being a musician with a paycheque, but the information presented here suggests that after 28 to 30 weeks' gestation even fetuses can perceive music which alters their heart rates. Does that make them a musician? A discussion surrounding what it means to be a musician, at what point one might consider themselves a musician, and if everyone is considered a musician, would be worthwhile. In summary, this updated version of *The Child as Musician* does not just feature the same prior content with updated cover art. The range of topics by the leading scholars in music education research is impressive. Despite its price, this book is a worthwhile investment for anyone seeking a comprehensive and easily readable collection of the latest research.

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Remixing the Classroom: Toward an Open

Philosophy of Music Education by Randell

E. Allsup. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2016. 181 pp., paperback. £21.99.

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This is a provocative book in many ways as the author presents us with offbeat ways to tackle university music teacher education

and the practice of teaching music. New light is shed on possibilities for teachers and the educational institutions in which we work. Four chapters make up the main body of the text. In the opening chapter a rationale is given for why we should reconsider the ways we attend to established musical forms. In particular, an appeal is made for a move away from the prevailing master-apprentice model. Emphasis is placed, rather, on the make-up of formal learning environments in which students 'act in tandem with their teachers as creators and judges' (p. 9). Allsup argues that music education should be human-specific, not practice-specific. And if all relationships are two-way then the case the author makes for the teacher as co-author or reader is perhaps justified. Throughout the chapter, he makes reference to the closed traditions which have dominated public education. He makes a number of bold claims which highlight the parlous state in which we currently find ourselves. For example, he is not convinced that we have sufficiently examined the problem of musical expertise; he asserts that routine expertise has no general application in a diversity-affirming classroom; he believes we need to depart from the old-fashioned visions of child-centred learning. At any rate, the reader is lurching from their snug position and an appeal is made for more open encounters.

Chapter 2 is mostly concerned with what constitutes quality music teaching. Following a brief enquiry into the purpose of public schooling, the author snakes his way through various themes making some enticing arguments as he goes. He affirms that a good teacher is: 'a kind of catalyst, the flint that sparks new learning, the spark that helps light another generation's course' (pp. 43–44). The common notion that instruction in music is not the same as education in music is reinforced. Any music