

Book Reviews

doi:10.1017/S0265051710000100

Masculinities and Music: Engaging Men and Boys in Making Music by Scott Harrison.
Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars
Publishing, 2008. 197 pp., hardback,
£34.99. ISBN: 978 1 4438 0020 4.

Masculinities and Music examines some of the key issues in males' engagements with music. Scott Harrison sets out to unpack the role masculinity and femininity play in males' experiences of music – focusing particularly on boys, though examples of men's music-making are also included. He achieves this by bringing together interviews with male musicians, case studies of music in schools, and historical and current research.

Scott Harrison draws on his experiences as a music educator and performer to generate an engaging account of negotiating positive 'masculine' musical identities. He begins with his own musical journey which establishes his perspective that males involved in traditionally 'feminine' activities, such as music, are marginalised. He goes on to build a convincing picture of boys' common negative engagement with music in Australia, Britain and North America and develops the argument that male non-involvement is attributed to the avoidance of 'femininity'. He states 'the unspoken law is: *I'll get beaten up if I display sensitivity – if I cry, dance or sing*' and asserts that this kind of experience is a form of male oppression that raises complex social justice issues which this book aims to redress (emphasis in original, p. 23).

A major strength of this work is the extensive literature review which brings together research about masculinity and music from within and beyond the music education field. Despite the numerous editorial errors throughout the publication, Harrison's synthesis of the literature

effectively portrays the 'ugly side of bullying and almost compulsory interest or ability in sport' and the effect this has on males' musical interests (p. 13). Previous research on the gendering of musical instruments, including the voice, is presented to reassert that gender stereotypes in music continue to be an immensely challenging contemporary issue for boys and girls. Some of the many issues that prove poignant in these discussions are the media, sport, role models and schooling.

This work is theoretically framed by notions of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity and gender role rigidity. The author brings the concept of 'queer-straight masculinity' (Heasley, 2005) to music education for the first time which represents exciting potential for the field. This theoretical move attempts to develop a language for talking about 'feminine' boys and men, although it is not fully explained how the author's queer-straight perspective influences his analyses.

Another innovative element of the book is George; a fictional character who interjects throughout with stories of his musical childhood. George's character is a composite narrative of the author's and research participants' experiences and aims to represent the views of men about masculinity and music. George's distinctive voice heightens the personal tone with stories that often exemplify the research themes and allows the reader to find their own meaningful connection between the narrative and the research.

Chapter 7 draws on interviews with 11 young men who reflect on their experiences of music at school. Conversations about family, peers and teachers illustrate the joys and sorrows of boys who pursue their passion for music, showing how they have developed coping mechanisms to deal with

harassment for being 'different'. The final two chapters contrast males' non-involvement in music by describing in enlightening detail inspiring 'success stories' of boys and men engaging with music. Importantly, the principles for gender reform in music and music education are outlined to provide 'practical ways in which male participation in music can be enhanced' (p. 138).

This book has wide appeal, not only because it is the first to focus on masculinities in music education, but also because the findings link to international trends in males' participation in music. While the discussion shines the spotlight directly on boys and men, it will interest all readers, whether academics, teachers or aspiring musicians, who are keen to address the issues gender raises for both males and females in music.

Reference

HEASLEY, R. (2005) Queer masculinities of straight men: A typology. *Men and Masculinities*, 7 (3), 310–320.

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doi:10.1017/S0265051710000112

Communicative Musicality: Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship edited by Stephen Malloch & Colwyn Trevarthen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 648 pp., hardback, £55.00. ISBN: 978 0 19 856628 1.

This book provides arguments and evidence for the idea that our innate musical attributes, termed 'communicative musicality', underpin our social lives. Malloch and Trevarthen helpfully provide both an overall introduction to this concept, and an introduction to each section of this substantial book. Communicative musicality,

the authors collectively suggest, is the innate capacity that allows humans to appreciate and produce music. We also use this capacity, they propose, to communicate with one another. Prompted by observations of rhythmic and pitch-based patterns in infant-mother communication, this concept is applied throughout the text to different exemplifications of communicative musicality in real life. The book is divided into five sections, each with a different approach to communicative musicality, and discusses issues ranging from the evolution of musicality to applications of communicative musicality in therapeutic, educational and performance contexts.

The seven chapters of the first section (The origins and psychobiology of musicality) are diverse. Chapters 2 to 5 consider the evolutionary aspects of music. In Chapter 2, Dissanayake considers the origin and adaptive functions of music through a neat structural analogy of the parts of a tree. She suggests that, rather than proto-musical communication being born of sexual attraction, it is primarily born of love, specifically the individual needs of mother and child. Dissanayake also highlights the comfort found by communities through musical interaction, which, she argues, stems from the same source of mother–infant interaction. Brandt (Chapter 3) also considers the communal role of music, and presents arguments to suggest that musical practice preceded the use of signs or symbols by humans. It is the combination of language and musicality, Brandt argues, that allows us to form narratives, and to consider and enjoy non-factual information. Both Dissanayake and Brandt mention the function of music in ceremonies, religious contexts or rituals; Merker (Chapter 4) extends this idea by considering the extent to which seemingly ordinary human actions constitute ritual behaviours. Merker suggests that the origins of language lie in a uniquely human