

Book Reviews

The Art of Teaching Music by Estelle R. Jorgensen. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008. 368 pp., \$24.95, paperback. ISBN: 9780253219633.

At an early stage in our editorship of *BJME*, Stephanie Pitts and I organised a special issue in which we asked leading scholars from a variety of disciplines to share insights on how their research might contribute to a greater understanding of the learning and teaching of music. When it came to choosing a philosopher it was self-evident that it had to be Estelle Jorgensen from Indiana University. She had established the journal *Philosophy of Music Education Review* and had authored two seminal books, *In Search of Music Education* (1997) and *Transforming Music Education* (2003a). In her *BJME* article, 'What philosophy can bring to music education', Jorgensen (2003b) identified three crucial contributions: clarifying ideas, interrogating commonplaces, and suggesting applications to practice. These permeate her most recent book, *The Art of Teaching Music*.

Straightaway in the preface Jorgensen tells us that she designed the volume as an informal group of talks, rather in the manner of William James' *Talks to Teachers* (p. xii). Her underlying idea is that there are significant similarities between music and teaching, so that we may think musically about teaching, and pedagogically about music. The 14 chapters are divided into three sections which pose the following four questions: What is really important in teaching? Who ought the teacher to be? What's the nature of musicality at the heart of teaching? How should music instruction be conducted?

The first section on teaching and teachers makes for compelling reading. For Jorgensen, teaching is a way of being, in which one discovers how to be true to

oneself in order to help students find their own ways. This means that as music educators we have to expand our knowledge, accept our limitations, keep an open mind, and develop our art-craft.

Jorgensen shares her own aspirations and ideals as a teacher with the reader. She constructs a quartet of values: a common humanity; reverence; the good, the true and the beautiful; and balance. A commitment to a common humanity means that as music educators we are motivated to break down cultural barriers, bridge differences, and rise to the challenges of musical diversity. Through cultivating reverence we can recapture a sense of the sacred, of wholeness and wonder, and become aware that music can transform lives. We may become uncomfortable in talking about goodness and truth, but we need to distinguish between pluralism (through which we can learn to adjudicate differences) and radical relativism (which assumes that differences are incommensurable). But ultimately for Jorgensen, musical truth is not propositional: music means itself, consequently there is no substitute for actually doing music. As for achieving balance, this implies espousing complexity, and resolving the tensions between such polarities as diversity/common threads, orality/literacy, instrumental/vocal, great/little traditions, transmission/transformation. Jorgensen writes persuasively about teachers needing to act in particular ways in their personal and professional lives, and to acquire such dispositions as compassion, patience, enthusiasm and integrity.

Jorgensen focuses in her second section on the teacher as musician, listener, performer and composer. For her, 'being a musician is a vocation, or a deeply spiritual calling' (p. 103). Music grounds us with a spiritual sense of wholeness, and invests life

with meaning. It needs a commitment, and the musician-teacher, in bringing together both craft and art, provides an exemplar of a way of life within which music is fully integrated. With listening there are undoubted difficulties. Music seems to be out of step in our predominantly visual culture: sounds are essentially fragile and ephemeral. But Jorgensen outlines methodically eight ways in which music can be 'construed sonically' and argues that as teachers we need to combine approaches including the intellectual, sensual, experiential, performative, contextual, technical, peripheral and repetitive.

Her discussion on the importance of performance contains some helpful historical parallels in the development of a rationale for music in the curriculum. She is not afraid to draw upon the historical hinterland of music education throughout the book, ranging from such diverse authorities as Plato, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Percy Scholes, and the American music educators William C. Woodbridge and Lowell Mason. But as far as justifications are concerned, Jorgensen points out that although musical performance should be seen on its own merits – 'performing is its own best rationale' p. 160) – the problems arise when music teaching is carried out in institutions controlled by those who are not necessarily musicians. It then has to be defended, and so consequently in the USA the MENC National Standards draw upon a variety of religious, experiential, physiological, social and cultural reasons to buttress music's claims as a curriculum subject.

Jorgensen pays tribute to UK music educators in democratising composing in the classroom, however she sees a general need 'to articulate a development from the initial romantic and intuitive understandings of composition to the more generalized and sophisticated understandings exemplified by professional musicians' (p. 174). This leads

her to insist that as soon as students start to compose they need to become more literate. If this connection between professional composers and others is lacking, we end up with 'a two-tracked compositional pedagogy – one for professional composers and another for the rest' (p. 174).

The third part of the book focuses on music instruction, and Jorgensen discusses organisation, design, instruction, imagination and reality. Here we come down to earth, and inevitably perhaps the discussion becomes more mundane and predictable. Nevertheless Jorgensen presents us with her honest opinions which can be most contentious and thought provoking, as in the following case:

Rationalizing musical content in systematic standards of music instruction represents the last gasp of a faltering industrial world view [...] Rather than the whole person, we are now presented with an array of atomistic elements [...] As with the factory model [...] we can mass-produce musician-teachers and musicians, one element at a time. In the post-industrial world, these old notions of standardization need not apply (p. 201).

In her final chapter Jorgensen asks 'What is music teaching really like?'. She observes that the status of music teachers in the USA is comparatively low, the work is heavy, stressful and time consuming. Moreover career paths often take music teachers into administration because they are good at it. For Jorgensen, who has also experienced teaching in a variety of contexts, some of them less than ideal, a balance needs to be made by individuals in their professional lives between teaching, service and creative activity.

A caveat needs to be inserted here. Readers will no doubt become aware of

Jorgensen's preference for teaching those students who want to learn:

Where teachers and students do not choose each other and are forced together without escape, it is more likely that neutrality, a lack of commitment that can breed boredom and ennui [...] may result in unhappy situations. (p. 59)

This raises all sorts of questions about the pros and cons of the compulsory nature of much school music education throughout the world, which perhaps could have warranted more discussion. However this should not detract from Jorgensen's achievement in writing a book that encourages music educators to think deeply about what they do. Underpinning it is the notion that through engaging with imagination we can transcend the ordinary, and can ultimately integrate and unify aspects of our lives:

We know the joy that comes when we are surprised by hope and rewarded by courage [...] I know of no better, happier and [more] rewarding way to live. (p. 284)

The Art of Teaching Music is a meditation on a lifetime of experience in teaching. What makes it special for music educators is its resonance with idealism and experience. The attempt to bring together musical thinking about teaching, and pedagogical thinking about music, enhances the image we can develop of ourselves as music educators, strengthens self-belief, and helps combat those moments in our professional lives when we feel somewhat downhearted or cynical about what we do. The book makes a significant contribution to the field of music education, as unusually it has the power to enlighten music educators at every stage of their professional journeys, whether as novices or as veterans.

References

- JORGENSEN, E. R. (1997) *In Search of Music Education*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- JORGENSEN, E. R. (2003a) *Transforming Music Education*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- JORGENSEN, E. R. (2003b) 'What philosophy can bring to music education: musicianship as a case in point', *British Journal of Music Education*, **20**, 197–214.

GORDON COX
UNIVERSITY OF READING

Thinking and Making: Selections from the Writings of John Paynter on Music in Education by John Paynter & Janet Mills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 214 pp., £15.95, paperback. ISBN: 9780193355910.

Words come and go
And pain is poetry as well as passion.
But in the large flights of imagination
I see for one cramped second, order so
Explicit that I need no more persuasion.
(Elizabeth Jennings, 1986)

In the 1966 March/April volume of the journal *Music in Education*, and in amongst articles on 'Music and secondary school boys', 'The teaching of music in 16th century England' and an analysis of Benjamin Britten's War Requiem, Roger Eames writes an account of 'A man and his music at York'. In three short paragraphs Eames tells of Wilfred Mellers, 'musician, musicologist and lecturer', now head of the Music Faculty at the University of York. In particular there is news of the Faculty's undergraduate syllabus and the three courses offered. One includes composition; another combines music with English and a third brings together music with education. On this course students go into schools engaging in 'Creative