

lenses. It achieves the purpose of inspiring discussion and raises questions about why we continue down the same trodden path promoting traditional methods that bear decreasing relation to our contemporary world. The question now is, what do we do next? Some authors, such as Koza and Stauffer, provide helpful anecdotal evidence that may serve to be starting points for implementing these ideas in practice – yet more needs to be done. Goble encourages the reader to ‘engage these important ideals. Grapple with them. Deepen your own ideas, beliefs, and convictions . . . Act on your ideas, and reflect critically on the results’ (p. xxix). Talking about the issues is merely a starting point; action is the essence of praxis and the necessary catalyst for change. It will also ensure that more people experience the process of making and listening to music in changing times.

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Minds on Music: Composition for Creative and Critical Thinking by Michelle Kaschub and Janice Smith. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. Paperback, 281 pp, £12.95. ISBN: 9781607091943.

The teaching and learning of composing in schools is so much ingrained into the English National Curriculum that it takes a book such as this to jolt British readers out of an established mindset, and to consider alternative ways of doing things. There are significant differences between UK and US music education, however, and this book makes no bones about being for a US audience, reminding readers that ‘teachers accustomed to leading performance ensembles may be tempted to place primary focus on the creation of performable

products’ (p. 19). Herein lies the essential difference between the US and UK, but having established their parameters, the authors go on to describe a range of approaches to the teaching of composing that in many cases apply equally well across a range of national and international contexts.

Interests in composing and researching have developed considerably over the past years, and this book serves two audiences: academic researchers investigating the construct of educational composing, and teachers who wish to introduce or develop their classroom practice in this area. As an overview of research in this area, this book is fairly comprehensive; it gives a good overview of thinking and writing on this topic, and then takes this and applies it in real worked examples of how teachers could employ these ideas in the classroom. Thus we have a nice developmental overview of the composing process (p. 36 et seq.), which is well-reasoned in its coverage of issues involved; and then later in the book a series of vignettes which show how hypothetical teachers go about undertaking composing work with their pupils.

Also included is a discussion of the nature and form of group, or conjoint composing. This is a key area of interest in those national contexts where composing is already an established part of the curriculum, and there is helpful discussion of some of the issues. Group composing as a theme emerges in a number of points in the book, as do other topics, and this exploring of different ideas in different contexts means that a sort of spiral curriculum runs through the structure of the book, in that ideas on, say, assessment crop up in a number of areas and are discussed accordingly.

Which link segues in an ungainly fashion into the topic of assessment! It is here that I felt most strongly the tug of different accountability systems. The work of

Black and Wiliam and the Assessment Reform Group *inter alia* (Harlen & James, 1997; Black & Wiliam, 1998a, 1998b; Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Black *et al.*, 2003; 2004) would in the UK merit some discussion of the role of formative assessment in composing pedagogy. The notion of formative assessment was, however, not employed here: I was warned by Richard Colwell (personal communication, 2009) that this was an area that was not yet well understood in the US. However, despite that caveat, some profoundly sensible observations are made regarding assessment: 'in many cases there are no compelling reasons why grades must be given in composition class' (p. 97); 'It is important to focus peer feedback on the piece and not on its performance' (p. 93). Yes indeed, good assessment maxims for composing! And despite the lack of discussion of formative assessment, the notion that 'the more individualized the instructional setting, the less necessary a summative grade is and the more important ongoing assessment and guidance are' (p. 97) captures the essence of such an approach.

Whilst there are no claims to grand theory here, nonetheless a large proportion of the book (pp. 127–258) is given over to a developmentally rooted discussion of teaching and learning composing across age contexts, from early years through to high school. This is a very helpful contribution to current debates, especially as '... it has become very clear that while musical development is a contested concept, it is a vital one for anyone involved in music education to try to pin down' (Lamont, 2009, p. 115). Discussing this with regard to the matter of developmental composing is a significant contribution to the literature.

But this book is not only for academics, there are some very valuable teaching

suggestions too, and with the inclusion of very practical sample lesson plans and teaching scenarios, it is clear that the authors are familiar with the ontology of the classroom.

As has been observed, this book straddles academic and teacher concerns, and I found it a little odd that for either camp an index was not thought necessary, this seems a strange omission on the part, I presume, of the publishers? However, to summarise, there is a lot to think about and to do in this book, and it offers a welcome addition to the literature on classroom composing.

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