

Book Reviews

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Making Music in the Primary School: Whole Class Instrumental and Vocal Teaching

edited by Nick Beach, Julie Evans and Gary Spruce. Abingdon: Routledge, 2011. 168 pp., paperback, £22.99. ISBN: 978-0-415-56130-3.

In *Making Music in the Primary School*, the editors offer music teachers a practical book full of appropriate questions and teaching strategies designed to improve the learning opportunities which primary school children experience within their formal and informal musical encounters. The core of the book is structured around four major themes which explore the relationships between music and *Integration, Access and Inclusion, Creativity and Collaboration*. The chapters are written by professionals currently working in a broad range of music education settings and their expertise and knowledge provides a solid core to the main content of the book.

Part one of the book explains something of the complex pathways and the numerous initiatives which, in recent years, have played a role in shaping the way in which music education is currently viewed. Chapter two progresses this by describing some of the more recent broader government initiatives and the way in which these have also impacted on music teachers. Part two consists of four chapters, each based on a specific issue relating to music within the context of access and inclusion with chapters on promoting more inclusive music education, creating a global musical heritage and the complex relationship which exists between music and special educational needs. The comparative view of musical development by Lis McCullough and the chapter on including children with special educational needs by Sally

Zimmermann both stood out for me as texts which tackled broad and sometimes complicated areas with ease and clarity.

Part three of the book explores aspects of music and integration with appropriate discussion being given to integrating music in the curriculum, integrating vocal work and exploring the impact of integration on musical learning. Part four introduces us to the final theme of creativity within music lessons. A brief summary of the creative process begins this section which goes on to include advice on developing creativity and instrumental skills and recognising creative development. Finally, a useful chapter by Rita Burt concludes the last part of the book by taking us out and away from the school and into the local community. This chapter focuses on the benefits and potential of positive relationships which can be developed through effective collaboration.

Overall, I found the chapters and themes to be logical and useful. Many of the chapters are full of pertinent questions and the case studies bring the book to life by providing descriptions of real situations with which many of the teachers reading the text will be more than familiar. The 'Activity' boxes included in each chapter are generally used effectively and frequently provide some concrete challenges for the reader to take up in relation to their own practice. I found the brevity of some chapters to be both a benefit and a frustration: whilst I acknowledge the way in which many of the authors managed to compact their thoughts on what are, in many instances quite substantial areas of thinking, this sometimes engendered a frustration in that I wanted, and perhaps expected, the issues to go further and deeper. The four guiding themes are well thought out and provide a structured framework within which the various related issues can be

discussed. I tended to 'skip' over the constantly reoccurring 'Setting the Scene' sections which introduced each part of the book and I felt the overall flow would have been improved if the *whole* scene had been set within a longer and more substantial introduction. Similarly, a short summative section, drawing together the common threads of the various chapters constituting each 'part' of the book, would have created a clearer and more focused conclusion. This, along with a more comprehensive and up-to-date list of references, would have provided a good foundation for readers who wished to take any of the issues further. Finally, the book concludes with a chapter by Chris Philpott on *Assessing, evaluating and reflecting*. Whilst I enjoyed this well-written and useful chapter, it did not actually appear within any of the thematic parts of the book and no mention of it appeared in the introduction. As such, it came as something of a surprise and I found it a little bit out of place. It is a worthy chapter and as its arguments can be easily linked to the main content of the book, it could very easily have been placed within the overall thematic approach of the book or expanded into a more summative chapter providing useful conclusions to the whole text.

Overall I found this to be a very readable book and it will probably be a useful addition to the library of many generalist primary and music educators, although I did feel that more experienced teachers could find a number of the chapters to be somewhat limited. Correspondingly, I feel the biggest advantage for any teacher acting on the comments made within the text rests in the assurance that they are both asking the right questions of themselves and addressing the correct issues in their music teaching.

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Re-Thinking Standards for the Twenty-First Century: New Realities, New Challenges,

New Perspectives edited by Paul Woodford. London, Ontario: University of Western Ontario, 2011. 152 pp., paperback, £25. ISSN 0703-3052.

The contributors to this book take a critical look at standards in music education based on rich international experience. This seems important considering the conservative undertone to the introduction of standards throughout the world, in a framework that goes far beyond the non-core subject music and can be observed in the UK, in the USA (with connecting lines running to and from MENC) or the conservative KAS foundation's move in Germany. So what this book is all about is not the *theory* of standards but rather how they function and what they do *in practice* – with schools and universities, students and teachers. The eight well-known authors have published important papers in their countries and fields, so they raise high expectations for readers.

Taking a linguistic approach, Cathy Benedict focuses on the power of the wording of the 1994 National Standards. She examines how talking about standards has changed and criticises their authors' claim to be the first ones to set up standards by drawing the historical lines and sowing the continuity of behaviouristic descriptions. However, Benedict's critique seems somewhat superficial. She claims to 'use Butler, Foucault and others' (p. 5) to examine the 'point of control and sovereignty of governing organizations such as MENC' (*ibid.*) but falls short of her ambitions. The discourse that has been led in the 1990s is not thoroughly analysed; quotations from 1994 and 2007 are put on the same level although the political and educational context has changed fundamentally since. Therefore this preliminary chapter has