

Book Reviews

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Musical Creativities in Practice by Pamela Burnard. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 308 pp., paperback. ISBN 978-0-19-958394-2.

Pamela Burnard is an internationally recognised academic whose name has become synonymous with matters of ‘musical creativity’ or, as she argues here, ‘creativities’. Burnard’s writing to date serves as a substantial platform for *Musical Creativities in Practice*, reflecting her longstanding interest and rounded understanding of this subject matter. In the past, she has written both on the creative processes of composition and improvisation (e.g. Burnard, 1999, 2000, 2002; Burnard & Younker, 2002) and musical creativity itself (Burnard, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2011; Burnard & White, 2008). It is no surprise, then, that *Musical Creativities* is a well-crafted book.

Part 1, ‘The field of music’, takes a historical tour of the concept of musical creativity, both looking at conceptions and scrutinising myths. The author debunks the Romantic stereotype of creators as individual geniuses here. She also outlines her perspective on the dilemmas surrounding the study of creativity:

... psychologists follow a reductive logic that polarizes dominant knowledge against absent or silent voices that it excludes; whereas sociologists have shown that locating creativity in the social world does not lead to the abandonment of truth ... It is necessary to find a way of resolving ... (a) the attempt to explain the phenomena; and (b) the cultural contingency ... (p. 17)

In order to frame multiple ‘creativities’, which she does very effectively, Burnard utilises Pierre Bourdieu’s (1930–2002) philosophical tools of ‘habitus’, ‘field’ and ‘capital’ to expose and explain differences between genres. The notion of ‘field’ connotes a ‘separate social universe having its own laws of functioning’ (Bourdieu, 1993) whereas ‘habitus’ is ‘a compilation of collective and individual trajectories (relating to aims and orientations, tastes, and desires)’ (p. 45 of this review book). Habitus produces creative capital (for some musicians, writes Burnard, examples might be the building of a catalogue of widely-distributed albums, the acquisition of status through high-volume record sales, or successful world tours); such capital constitutes advantage and disadvantage in society (p. 273). Burnard argues:

Why is the term ‘creativity’ invariably used in the singular ...? Once again, it is a question of broadening the concept of ‘musical creativity’ to denote more than the work of an individual artist, but rather involving social forms and behavioural modalities that favour associations and assemblages between musicians and instruments, composers and songs, listeners and sound systems. (p. 46)

While there is academic rigour provided by her theoretical underpinnings, the premises upon which the book rests (and Bourdieu’s ideas) may seem rather esoteric to the layperson. I suspect the book will largely be enjoyed by an academic audience or more thoughtful reader.

Part 2, 'Narratives of practice', introduces: original bands and their members (e.g. Australian guitarist Steve MacKay, pianist and vocalist Leah Kardos and Scottish bass player Adam Scott); singer-songwriters (Pippa Andrew and Roshi Nasehi); and DJs (Jazzie B, founder of Soul II Soul, Rob Paterson and the Taiwanese XUAN Liu). It then moves onto composed and improvised music and interactive audio design. This is a detailed exploration of real-world, contemporary music-making illustrating an array of musical creativities. As Burnard explains 'Sometimes their work resists easy classification in any one sector or particular industry' so we must '... pay attention to how [they] ... think, act, and create; to understand what their practices are grounded in; and on what capital the processes and principles of their practices operate' (p. 3). This is rich, fertile ground, complicated to navigate, yet the author traverses it extremely well. No doubt, research students in universities will also be fascinated to read Appendix A, which outlines and reflects upon the research methods employed.

Part 3, 'The field of music education', turns to teaching and learning. Readers might note the high potential to sidestep practical implications for education, the ever-important 'So what?' with a subject matter like this, through sheer theorising and academic voyeurism in relation to industry musicians' narratives. However, Burnard does not fall into that trap at all. She operationalises an expanded concept of musical creativity in relation to, for instance, the internet and e-learning. She also offers practical advice in this part of the book for enabling a spectrum of musical creativities with students (p. 261). How learners might be engaged through discussion and reflection are mentioned here, in tandem with the place of '... industrial experience

in practices of musical creativities in the curriculum areas in which educational change can be vigorously pursued' (p. 261). As she rightly observes, though, there are immense challenges ahead, not least valuing creativities in personally relevant and culturally specific ways, and involving teachers both as subjects and agents in the educational process. This will be an extremely useful book for undergraduate students, or those involved with music education scholarship at higher levels, then, alongside works like *Musical Imaginations: Perspectives on Creativity, Performance and Perception* (Hargreaves *et al.*, 2011), which also considers education, or *Musical Creativity: Multidisciplinary Research in Theory and Practice* (Deliège & Wiggins, 2006).

Creativity is such a powerful ingredient in all music-making: *Musical Creativities in Practice* is a detailed examination written by a seasoned expert in beautiful prose, which draws on compelling narrative material and takes a meticulous theoretical position. It is a well-structured work, too, but does require deep cogitation from the reader. Those wanting to turn directly to creativity and primary teaching (specifically) might first read *Teaching Music Creatively* (Burnard & Murphy, 2013). Nonetheless, depth and expertise must never be criticised and, as such, *Musical Creativities* comes highly recommended as a major contribution to scholarship in this arena.

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- DAVID BAKER
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, UK
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- Strong Experiences with Music: Music is Much More than just Music** by Alf Gabrielsson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 492 pp., hardback. £60, ISBN: 978-0-19-969522-5.

Getting to the heart of 'the experience' of music is not easy and, in an attempt to present the most complete picture, our experimental traditions have increasingly and indeed quite successfully fused with multi-modal measurements. In sharp contrast, Alf Gabrielsson set out to study the 'emergent properties' of music through pure personal narrative, and the simplicity and honesty of his expansive, three-decade project is staggering. Acknowledgement of an underlying concern, perhaps of both researcher and respondent, occurs right away in the Preface; what if we really cannot find the words to get to the core of our musical experiences? Yet in response to a precisely worded yet unrestricted question, 1300 accounts emerge complex and nuanced, deeply personal and able to be identified with at the same time.

The wording of the research question itself is of course fundamental. Respondents were asked in their own words to describe 'the strongest (most intense, most profound) experience with music you have ever had' (p. 7); carefully framed to elicit an experience being 'in the music' in and of itself, as opposed to music simply being present at the time something meaningful happened. The author acknowledges links to past investigations of related concepts – 'flow', 'peak experiences' and 'transcendent