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EDITORIAL

The *British Journal of Music Education* first appeared in March 1994. Music educators around Great Britain were delighted to find that the new arrival was edited by John Paynter and Keith Swanwick, easily the two most influential and inspiring British voices in the profession. They were (and still are) voices singing compelling but contrasting melodies. That they should agree to perform a *quodlibet* was a bonus nobody expected. For 14 years, they have presided over the development of a journal which has won national and international respect for its innovation, authority, broad-mindedness and clarity. The readership of the journal and the profession at large owes them a great debt of gratitude, now that both have decided to retire from the editorship. Dr Piers Spencer of Exeter University and I have been offered the privilege of continuing their work, a task which we have accepted with both humility and excitement.

From time to time, we propose to devote entire issues to a single focus, continuing a tradition already established. The first of these will appear in July this year (Volume 15,2), in which all the articles will discuss aspects of musical education in Africa. The issue you are reading now (which includes some articles submitted before we became co-editors) may appear to be something of a mixed bag, but several individual articles pursue a common theme with at least one other, and an over-arching challenge unites nearly all of them. More on that later.

To open this issue with an article on piano technique and fingering in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may at first seem perverse, but Martin Gellrich and Richard Parncutt do more than provide fascinating insights into the changing methods and attitudes of instrumental teachers. They raise questions that are as relevant in modern classrooms as they were in the studios of the great piano teachers of the past. These questions explore the rival claims of technical accuracy and musical expression, not that they are incompatible. The debate still resonates, and this article places a modern dilemma in a historical context most elegantly. Stephanie Pitts explores a similar theme, but in the music classrooms of today, after examining the writings of Yorke Trotter, an early twentieth century visionary who valued children's musical creativity, and believed passionately that children should be involved in making music as much as possible. Like Gellrich and Parncutt, she questions whether prescriptive approaches can nurture musical sensitivity and imagination. Sarah Maidlow and Betty Hanley tackle questions of gender within musical education. Both conducted their research among young instrumentalists but in different countries: Britain and Canada. Like most of the other contributors to this issue, they set out to test assumptions, but they reach contrasting conclusions: Maidlow finds that differences between male and female students' attitudes to music turn out not to be stereotypical, whereas Hanley's work among school teachers reveals that those teachers' views about boys and girls (and their choices of instrument in particular) do accord with some

unquestioned assumptions at times. Finding the reasons for this difference provides an obvious springboard for further research. Ruth Wright describes an attempt at reconciling the curricular and extra-curricular work in a comprehensive school situated in a socially disadvantaged area, and argues that a 'holistic' approach to the question brings benefits to both aspects of music, in her school at least. But she also raises the question of standards: of whether the public display of more elementary music-making compromises standards overall. Göran Folkestad, David Hargreaves and Berner Lindström offer a close analysis of pupils' thinking when composing with computers. Their intriguing observations and conclusions apply to adults as well as pupils, to traditional media for composition as well as the electronic. Graham Welch and John Cooksey also delve deeply into the way pupils work, or rather, the way their voices work, and arrive at some stimulating and disturbing conclusions.

They ask directly a question that is posed by others, sometimes indirectly. They demonstrate that the statutory orders for the UK National Curriculum are barely relevant to the reality in schools, when the question of changing voices is considered. The implications of their work are profound because readers cannot avoid the conclusion that teachers of music (in secondary schools in particular) are required to undertake vocal work which is ill-suited to pupils' stages of maturation. Looking at some of the other articles again, we find similar doubts emerging. For example, prescriptive approaches to keyboard fingering or to the component parts of the music curriculum are questioned. As one author puts it, 'Sadly, the document with which every teacher must now be familiar, *Music in the National Curriculum* (DfE, 1995), offers little in the way of educational or musical stimulus for those seeking to challenge the assumptions of their own teaching'. Is the headlong quest for measurable results leading us into avenues where the 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of pupils' work becomes more important than pupils' joy and involvement in musical experience? We encounter a further implied challenge to the founding principles of the National Curriculum in the article on computers. The 'composer' and the 'performer' are one and the same person, and with the 'performance' often being conducted outside 'real time', in bits and pieces, as it were, the performing leg of the three-legged National Curriculum stool looks rather shaky. The orders for the National Curriculum come up for review again at the turn of the century. Now is the time for us to reconsider the basis for music in schools, to prepare for music (with other subjects) being nudged to the margins by literacy and numeracy in primary schools, to find ways of ensuring that music lessons are always musical, and to intensify the debate that has characterized these pages for the last 14 years.

We would be delighted to receive from readers any suggestions for the journal's improvement, and any criticisms of the journal arising from our stewardship, though we shall make every effort to uphold the high standards set by our predecessors. As always, readers are invited to submit articles, but please study the 'Notes for Contributors' which appear on the final page first. All articles received will pass through our rigorous process of review before any decision about publication can be made. As an innovation, readers are invited to offer themselves as book reviewers, though it should be stressed that there is no payment for this. Any person interested should submit to the review editor a short *curriculum vitae*, which includes an outline of his/her main areas of experience and expertise in research, musical education and/or musical journalism.

WILLIAM SALAMAN