Editorial

Several of the articles in this issue encourage us to re-think taken for granted attitudes and practice, to jolt us out of complacency. Take 'creativity' for example. The word tends to get bandied around as a catch-all, so that it loses touch with any specific meaning. Jere Humphreys, in his Point for Debate, 'Toward a reconstruction of 'creativity' in music education' takes the long view, and ranges from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to postmodernist ideologies. The basic tension (dualism) he identifies as being between realist and idealist positions, which leads him to conclude that creativity needs to be understood as a social construct. But there are no quick-fixes: to comprehend its significance requires us to consider psychological, cultural, and political/social and economic factors. Likewise, words such as 'tradition', 'authenticity' and 'context' tend to have politically correct connotations in connection with world music. But Huib Schippers, in his paper maintains that almost all music is transmitted out of context, and that the formal education system is a major exercise in recontextualisation. Music educators have to come to terms with what he calls the 'global flow'.

Since the 1970s we have become used to the idea that composition is a central plank in the school music curriculum. But again we have to be alert to changing trends, particularly when we consider the rapid advances of music technology. Fred Seddon's paper focuses upon collaborative computer-based music composition, linking two schools in the UK and Norway. Seddon's concerns are fundamentally musical and pedagogical, comparing the relationship of such work 'in cyberspace' to the experience of those with formal instrumental tuition, and those without. Music technology is one factor in the increasingly blurred division between music in and out of school, and Miikka Salavuo looks at the ways in which online music communities build up shared values and standards amongst their members. In his survey of one such on-line community based in Finland, he found that the majority of participants were self-taught or perhaps community-taught musicians, and that most wrote songs, and half played a traditional instrument actively. He concludes that the mere number of users imply that such online music communities have become mainstream environments of musical practice for musicians in their teens and 20s.

In responding to change in the music classroom, teachers need to be sensitive to their students' cultural contexts and attitudes, a point addressed by Leif Finnas in his investigation of strong experiences to music. His grade nine Fenno-Swedish pupils living in urbanised environments reported that music, amongst all the arts, was the area which most frequently generated significant experiences. Interestingly, TV and video did not generally provide such peak experiences, and the effects of music were reportedly lower for those children living in the countryside. Finnas points out some of the implications of all this for education, cultural work and research. His conclusion is that the results should be gratifying for the music educator, indicating music's importance in young people's lives.

A further investigation of children's responses to music is provided by Naomi Ziv and Maya Goshen's study of the effect of 'sad' and 'happy' background music on the interpretation of a story in 5 to 6-year-old children in an Israeli kindergarten. Like 'creativity'

and 'authenticity', emotional descriptions of musical responses have to be interpreted with caution, and Ziv and Goshen are sensitive to the limitations of describing music as 'happy' or 'sad'. Nonetheless, their research confirms the powerful effect of background music on the emotional interpretation of a story, illustrating that music creates a atmosphere which extends to other surrounding stimuli.

After these diverse illustrations of the power and functions of music in a variety of learning contexts, we turn to the question of how sophisticated musical skills can be acquired and nurtured. In 'The Pathway to Excellence', Aine MacNamara, Patricia Holmes and Dave Collins point out the importance of the transitions between Early Years (from childhood, to entry into full-time education), Middle Years (full-time education) and Later Years (after leaving university or conservatoire). Through interviewing 8 top-level musicians they explore the Psychological Characteristics of Developing Excellence. Besides dedication, planning and commitment, they also isolate the range of non-musical skills necessary to gain positions in top class conservatoires and orchestras including interpersonal skills, realistic performance evaluation, goal setting and confidence.

This issue shows the vast range of ideas with which music educators and researchers must engage if we are to understand the roles of musical learning in contemporary society. As always, we welcome responses to any of the articles included here, and in particular to the 'Point for Debate', to which responses will be considered for publication in a future issue.

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