

Editorial

The past 20 years have seen ongoing changes to the musical landscape of everyday life and growing evidence of the power of music and its ubiquity in our lives. The music education community, both academic and professional, are becoming increasingly aware of the need to rethink and change practices of teaching and learning that are likely to be beneficial to all. Knowing that across nations and cultures music accompanies the lives of 3.5-year-olds to 85-year-olds for over 80% of the time makes it all the more important that the topics of research that are featured in this final issue for 2011 reflect an international line up of studies originating from Spain, China, New Zealand, Africa, Australia and Britain. Echoing BJME's original aims 'to strengthen connections between research and practice' several articles reflect the rise in prominence of practitioners who undertake research as a means of informing practice and professional development.

The articles in this issue encompass topics that range from children's enculturation into musical cultures and aesthetic decision-making in composition to individual and collective singing; from reflections on new pedagogical approaches to string teaching to students and staff perceptions of teaching methods of music performance in the conservatoire; from choral conducting to the dynamics and dilemmas that challenge school music education, finding and fighting for its place, and reflecting on its history within and across diverse countries and contexts. These articles, taken together, reflect the richness and diversity of contemporary music education research and the range of contexts in which it takes place. How then should music teachers and practitioners respond to the changing tapestry of concerns which underpin the diverse field of contemporary music education?

The article on researching singing as a soloist through the art of improvising verses, by Albert Casals, Merce Vilar and Jasume Ayats, at the University of Barcelona, Spain, focuses on the analysis of solo participation in singing by pupils in five schools in Catalonia. The process of improvising verses to a given traditional melody is elaborated as an educational tool. This article is followed by another school-based study located in a primary school in New Zealand. Authors Linda and Terry Locke in *Sounds of Waitakere* illuminate themes from practitioner research on children's composition by Year 6 recorder players. Findings emphasise the importance of children's aesthetic decision-making and the role of innovative classroom practices in encouraging children 'to reflect on their own and others' creative process'. In similar vein, Murphy, Gill, Grimmett and Rickard from Australia describe an evaluative study of a string-teaching programme run for the last three years in five primary schools. They place the programme in the context of three seminal string-teaching programmes from the USA, UK and Finland and explore the challenges that are inherent in establishing such programmes, including the need for adequate resourcing and, critically, ongoing professional development for teachers.

Picking up on the themes of professional development and training, UK collaborators Wollner and Ginsborg, in a study of Team teaching in the conservatoire, provide evidence of the benefits and challenges of team teaching in higher music education institutions. Findings from a survey of 142 music students and their tutors from a British conservatoire suggest that different approaches to teaching can be 'complementary to individual

lessons'. Also from the UK, Varvarigou and Durrant present a theoretical framework of six interconnecting parameters for the education and development of choral conductors. They argue that the preparation of effective choral conductors needs to involve not just technical skills but also encourage reflective practice and collaborative learning.

Following on from this Kedmon Mapana considers the musical enculturation and early education of Wagogo children in central Tanzania. He demonstrates how for these children music is an essential part of their lives from the earliest years and becomes the foundation for wider learning and their development as fully rounded citizens and human beings. However Austin Emielu, in an article on formal music education in Nigeria, describes how a lack of a coherent vision for music education and inadequate resources can undermine such aims. He concludes that 'while a lot of rhetoric has been expended at national and international conferences and symposia, not much has been achieved in terms of evolving a truly Nigerian music education framework'. Many in other parts of the world might recognise Emielu's analysis as in many ways applicable to their own national contexts. The vexed question of how best to plan a school music curriculum so as to help students achieve more meaningful educational and musical values is also one that occupies Lo and Law in *Music Education in China*. In particular, the authors examine the government's role in educational reform and the renewal of educational experience that might be beneficial to all.

The first issue of 2012 brings a new development for the *British Journal of Music Education* with the introduction of a new section in the journal and an associated area on the journal website aimed at engaging teachers and other practitioners both in and with music education research. In the first of these journal sections three teachers will share critical reflections and experiences of developing informal learning pedagogies. We invite any teacher-practitioners involved either formally or informally in research to submit articles for inclusion in this section. Submissions should be about 2000 words in length and follow the normal submission guidelines to be found on the back cover of the journal. In tandem with this initiative, the website will now include an area where articles from past issues of the journal will be grouped under a particular theme. These will be accompanied by a commentary written by a leading music educationalist which will identify issues and implications for practice from the selected articles. Our hope is that both of these sections will encourage teachers and practitioners to engage with and become part of the music education research community.

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