

Editorial

This issue – the first of our 21st anniversary year – has two clear themes: the teaching and learning of world musics, and the assessment of musical performance and understanding. Within these themes, the papers present accounts of research at all levels of music teaching, from nursery to higher education, and range across diverse geographical contexts: Australia, China, the UK, the USA and Zambia. There is evidence here of a wide-ranging research community in music education, which would have been hard to imagine when the *British Journal of Music Education* was founded in 1984.

Over the past 20 years, as our recent Special Issue demonstrated, research in music education and related disciplines has greatly increased understanding of the way in which young people engage with music, both conceptually and sociologically. Dawn Lowther, in her paper on pre-school children's timbral sensitivity, draws on pioneering studies of musical perception to consider the extent to which young children are able to discriminate between different sounds. She includes material from conversations with the children in her analysis, illustrating another shift in research priorities: a welcome growth in the recognition of learners' views of their musical experiences, which can be set alongside the voices of teachers and researchers in contributing to educational debates.

Consulting learners about their experiences lies at the heart of two related papers in this issue: discussions of performance assessment in higher education by Diana Blom and Kim Poole, and by Ryan Daniel. It is unusual for editors to receive two papers on the same topic in quick succession, and we gave careful thought to whether they should be presented separately or together. Our decision was that they complement one another in their rather different approaches to investigating the same educational challenge: how to make students in higher education more responsible and active in the assessment of their instrumental playing. Further insight on this topic is provided by Gordon Atlas, Terry Taggart and Debra Goodell, who address the relationship between tutors' feedback and students' sensitivity to criticism. Assessment is all too often seen as something to be done *to* students, but these three papers taken together illustrate the great potential for assessing *with* students, in order to increase their awareness of appropriate criteria and strategies for further development.

The other theme in this issue occupies the first half of the journal: three papers on the design and implementation of music curricula in particular cultural contexts. Chi Cheung Leung takes a mainly theoretical approach, debating the necessary balance between Chinese popular, traditional and contemporary genres and Western musical styles, and presenting a model that reflects the views of practitioners consulted through an interview and questionnaire study. Joseph Ng'andu and Anri Herbst also look at the potential for closer connections between traditional music-making and institutional teaching, by analysing the conventions of *inshimi*, a musical storytelling practice of the Bemba people in Zambia. Central to Adrian Poole's ethnography of *bhangra* amongst young South Asians living in Britain is the relationship between music in community and school settings. As music educators we can learn much from such description and analysis of the often informal, orally–aurally transmitted and non-prescriptive learning methods employed by *bhangra* musicians.

In this the 21st anniversary year of the journal, we wish to redouble our efforts to promote productive conversations between music educators at all levels from kindergarten

to university and across geographical and cultural frontiers. Our recently inaugurated 'Points for Debate' section encourages such a dialogue, and we hope that some of our readers will contribute their thoughts on the state of music education and its future challenges, so that we can launch *BJME* into its third decade with ideas that move music education forward.

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