

---

# Editorial

---

It is thirty-three years since UNESCO convened the meeting in Brussels which effectively marked the birth of the International Society for Music Education. Throughout that time ISME, by its conferences and publications, has made outstanding contributions to the exchange of ideas between music educators worldwide. The now regular section on comparative music-education in the *International Journal of Music Education* is surely evidence of a developed interest, among music educators in many countries, in how things are done elsewhere.

In spite of such obvious progress in international co-operation, many national and regional publications still reveal a marked isolationism; a form of studied parochialism which seems not to want to recognise the existence of comparable work abroad. Surprisingly, in these days of telecommunications and high-speed travel, when New York by air (for some!) is no further distant in time from London than Edinburgh is by train, British music education knows little of American practice and America acknowledges hardly anything of what happens here.

For whatever reason (the interests of international exchange or the pressing professional need to publish), *BJME* has, for some time now, been receiving articles from Canadian and American contributors. In general this writing is characterised by a confidence in local endeavours within North America. Rather than distributing these articles among a number of issues, and thus fragmenting the picture, we have felt it better to collect together a selection representative of the wide range of style and current thinking across the Atlantic.

Our American colleagues are prolific in their output. Inevitably, the various 'tones of voice', ranging as they do from 'chatty' and anecdotal pieces to weighty discourse, may at first be disturbing to British readers. Yet from such a quantity of writing, penetrating and interesting ideas are bound to emerge.

We must also remember that American music education has not taken the same course as music education in Britain. In North American High Schools, opportunity for participation is still principally through bands and choirs, with general music teaching taking a subsidiary place in the curriculum. 'Performance' is the key word and, rather than aiming at Music 'A' level, the American Student aspires to a place in the Concert Band.

---

**Editorial**

It is this performance tradition which forms a background for critical review in a substantial article by Thomas Regelski. He also expresses concern about the analytical tendency which has produced a focus upon 'concepts'; such that many teachers now feel these elements must be *seen* to be taught, as isolated packages of musical information, rather than (as is not uncommon in Britain) accepting them as unseen guidelines for the curriculum.

Regelski's view of the music education systems close to him is a refreshingly objective one. He writes to the Editors: 'If you want something North American I cannot guarantee how typical the thinking and writing may be, but like North America it is expansive and brash!' Be that as it may, we hope this 'transatlantic' issue will interest not only our British readers but also those in other parts of the world, and that it may make a modest contribution to the growing volume of 'comparative' study.