

EDITORIAL

Editorial

The broad church of music education continues to be represented in the *British Journal of Music Education*, and this current edition once again exemplifies this. Articles consider mainstream education, music in special schools, curriculum and examination reform in schools and higher education, music education beyond schools and formal education in community work and concert halls.

The first two articles consider different aspects of the impact of curriculum reform in England. Elizabeth Bate's thought-provoking article opens this edition. It gives due consideration to questions of social justice in music education, with particular reference to the introduction of England's current National Curriculum for Music. It argues that 'by decontextualizing the concept of knowledge, the process of learning promoted by the National Curriculum has become far removed from anything relevant to or familiar from a pupil's day-to-day life'. Drawing upon the 'habit concept' of classical philosophical pragmatism, it assesses 'how and why music's educational value should be understood not through its "academic rigour" but through its distinctive, inherently destabilising nature'. As with Bate's article, Adam Whittaker's article draws attention to the changing focus on different types of knowledge promoted through the study of music education. Following a period of time when music education became more inclusive of different traditions and styles, Whittaker's article explores the return to a 'scholastic canon' based on Western music, which has been reintroduced through the reformed A-level music qualifications. Whittaker points out the mismatch between the diversification in the opportunities for studying music in higher education and this more recent constriction in the breadth of study of works within the A-level syllabuses. He concludes that 'the centrality of works by a certain group of composers from eighteenth and nineteenth century to formal musical study in the A-level syllabus suggests that something of the core of the scholastic canon remains strong and almost immovable . . . the conservative canon still looms large over the study of music history and reinforces a set-work study paradigm over engagement at this level'.

Tamara Rumiantsev, Wilfried Admiraal and Roeland van der Rijst explore conservatoire leaders' observations and perceptions on curriculum reform. Their study, based in Belgium and The Netherlands, notes the need for education to help musicians gain a wide range of skills needed in order to 'work both creatively and collaboratively, often in a wider range of artistic, social and cultural contexts'. This interesting study considers three research questions:

1. How do conservatoire leaders observe and perceive the relationship between the curriculum and professional practice in which such competences as problem-solving skills, a reflective attitude cooperative and communicative skills are necessary?
2. How do conservatoire leaders perceive the competences of their teachers?
3. What do conservatoire leaders perceive as necessary to foster problem-solving skills, a reflective attitude and cooperative and communicative skills both in teachers and in students?

This study presents a candid look at the need for curriculum reform within these institutions and the tensions and challenges of taking this forward. They also highlight future possible research required, some of which might beneficially come from examining other disciplines, such as health-care, where curriculum reform has impacted professional practice.

Music for higher education students is also the focus of Gillian Peiser and Grant Stanley's article. This research focusses more widely upon students across a post-1992 university, exploring their engagement with classical music through providing free access to professional concerts as an extra-curricular offer. The scheme aimed to 'extend the student experience far beyond the classroom [and to break] down barriers to attendance and encourage students to try a musical experience they might not have considered previously'. The research explores the Vice-Chancellor's aspirations for their students and the learning they hoped students would get from engagement with the experience of attending the concerts, as well as the lived experiences of students at this university studying a wide range of courses. Alongside philosophical questions of the wider purpose of such schemes, this article urges us to consider facilitating factors, barriers and accessibility of cultural partnerships with universities.

The penultimate article in this edition provides a detailed study of the impact on agency development of one student (Noah) with Asperger's syndrome in a special school in Finland through using Dalcroze-based music-and-movement. This qualitative study by Katja Sutela, Marja-Leena Juntunen and Juha Ojala combines case study research, ethnography, hermeneutic phenomenology and narrative analysis and took place in a whole-class setting over the period of a year. It asks some interesting ethical questions, for example, 'how is it possible to analyse a person's agency through observation?' One of the conclusions of this study certainly resonates across music education, pointing out that 'Music education still (too) often focuses on developing instrumental skills and emphasizes virtuosity over holistic development and different ways of learning music. Therefore, we should ask: To what degree are we as music educators aware of the possibilities of embodied musical interaction to support student development and overall growth?'

Working with 'hard-to-reach' young people in Scotland, the final article in this edition, by Stephen Millar and colleagues, reports on the outcomes of the 'Community Orientated and Opportunity Learning' (COOL) Music programme. COOL Music aimed to increase participants' confidence and self-esteem, as well as improving their social skills. It is interesting to consider the range of musical and other outcomes from this project and how the combination of researchers and practitioners working together provides deeper insights into the programme. It highlights the bottom-up, rather than top-down nature of this work, whilst at the same time considering some of the tensions of non-formal work taking place with formal educational structures. It also brings into focus some of the challenges of short-term funded projects and the 'hidden costs' of such programmes.