

EDITORIAL

What's in and what's out of music education?

Is it the job of Maths teachers to make their pupils love Newton's laws of motion? Is it the job of the Geography teacher to make their pupils love ox-bow lakes? Is it the job of the Latin teacher to make their pupils love irregular verbs? It may be the case that this is what individual teachers of these subjects feel that they would like to instil in their learners, yet were this to become a school syllabus requirement with associated standardised testing, we would probably worry. After all, how can you test for how much a pupil loves Newtonian physics? What would the score be, 56%? A++? "Could love better"? And yet we often hear politicians and commentators in the press – certainly in the UK – express opinions that seem to say that it is the job of the school music teacher to make the children love classical music. Classical music, in these instances, is often ill-defined, but seems to be taken as being self-evidently the music of "dead white guys."

Now, it may be the case that for some readers of the *BJME*, this question is hardly worth troubling to look up from one's coffee over. Music as a high-quality high-status subject is what it is, and it is the task of the academy and the conservatoire to foster and promote it. But this is the *British Journal of Music Education*, and a good proportion of the readership is concerned with what is taking place in schools and educational establishments where the clientele is not self-selecting, they are there because they *have* to be, not because they want to be. It is for these pupils that we as a profession need to think carefully about what it is we want for them, and what it is we want them both to know and be able to do. It seems unlikely that telling such pupils that they are going to be forced to "love" Mozart is going to produce a positive learning outcome! Indeed, it is probably quite difficult to force anyone to "love" anything, if they do not like it, and do not want exposure to it week-in, week-out.

So why do politicians and pundits persist with this attitude? There is often a notion of a self-evidencing valuing of certain sorts of music, the "classical," as opposed to other sorts, with the music of urban youth well down the axiological scale. This means that music teachers are at liberty to say they want their pupils to love Mozart, whereas to say that they want their pupils to love, say, the music of Stormzy is likely to give rise to what Lawlor (2021) called a "moral panic." And it is school music teachers who find themselves on the front lines of the culture wars that are being played out in many parts of Western society at the moment. In the last *BJME* editorial (Fautley & Daubney, 2023), we asked the question "what is music education for?," and in many ways, this current editorial is continuing with that theme. Confronted with what they see as societal fragmentation, it is all too easy for commentators to retreat into what they believe are the certainties of a bygone, simpler age.

And yet we need to ask if there ever was such a golden age for music education. In England, at least, we know that more and more children from across the country are involved in many aspects of music learning and music making (Fautley & Whittaker, 2020; Daubney et al., 2019), whereas a few decades ago this would have been mainly children from selective schools and privileged backgrounds who were given the chance for this. Valuing music is something that it seems likely all readers of this journal do, it is what we spend our lives doing after all, but at the same time do we really want to discourage children and young people who love a different sort of music? Back in 1977, Shepherd et al. (1977) asked the question "whose music"? In 2023, we are still asking a similar question, in that we are querying "whose music *matters*"? And maybe we can add "to whom" as a rider to that question?

So why does all this matter? One of the answers to this question may lie in thinking about music itself. Music exists as an activity, it is something which is done; it is an active, creative, and participatory phenomenon. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, and in a variety of modalities. In order to be of maximum value, it is something that needs to be worked at, whatever the style, genre, or type of music. It involves progression and attainment, it takes the creator and the listener on a journey, and it involves knowing and feeling, thinking and doing, making and re-making. Whatever it is, it is a truly educative endeavour.

It is worth noting that Stormzy, the British rap artist centrepiece of Lawlor's moral panic mentioned above, provides scholarships for Black students to study at Cambridge University, (incidentally also the publishing home of the BJME) "since its launch in 2018, the Stormzy Scholarship has provided financial support to 32 UK Black students helping to transform their University experience" (Cambridge University Website, 2023). This, surely is something that the politicians and commentators would value?

So do we really want to tell young people that despite all the effort they have put into something, their music will never be as valuable to society as that of some "dead White guys"? This seems dispiriting, if not downright mean. And after the few years that our young people have had to endure, surely they deserve every encouragement they can be given? Perhaps this is what ought to be "in" in music education, and consequently, intolerance ought to be "out"?

Turning our attention to the eight articles in this current edition of the British Journal of Music Education, the diversity of music education research is once again on display. It opens with two articles related to learning to play a musical instrument. In the first article, David Baker, Susan Hallam and Kevin Rogers use statistical data from eight secondary schools to explore the question "Does learning to play an instrument have an impact on change in attainment from age 11 to 16"? There has long been an interest in whether learning a musical instrument demonstrates transferable benefits and music education is often justified on these grounds, although the authors are quick to point out that there is a wealth of international research relating to the "conditions" of learning. This current study builds on Hallam and Rogers' 2016 study. It explores a series of research questions relating to aspects such as the socio-economic status of students, their prior attainment and whether learning a range of different musical instruments and sustaining learning for a different length of time impacts the degree of change in mathematics and English scores (if any) when compared to those pupils in the same school. In particular, the research highlights inequalities in opportunity in music education across England and signposts the need for future research to further explore this. The second article, by Daniel Mateos-Moreno and Anders Høglert, explores the motivation for the choice of musical instrument, gathering the views and experiences of student teachers enrolled in a programme at a Swedish university. Their article "Why did you (not) choose your main musical instrument? Exploring the motivation behind the choice" also highlights the motives hindering choice, making a series of recommendations for schools in Sweden to consider in future instrumental learning programmes.

Staying with research carried out with trainee teachers (pre-service music educators), Emily Mercado, Erin Bailey and Katie Houston Davies' article "Secondary choral students' and preservice music educators' perceptions of a service-learning experience in the United States: An action research study," reports on learning from a programme of individualised after-school vocal lessons for 14 to 18-year-old students, given by the pre-service teachers. It explores the teachers' perceptions through multiple lenses and highlights the complexities of the inter-relationship between teaching dispositions, teaching skills and pedagogical content knowledge. Teachers' experiences are also central to Chryso Hadjikoou and Andrea Creech's article "The new Cypriot music curriculum: teachers' interpretation and implementation of differentiation." This interesting study explores the differences in understanding and implementation of "differentiation," a key concept in the Cypriot music curriculum, between Cypriot secondary school music

teachers and the way the concept is represented in academic literature. It highlights the need for continued access to professional development and learning opportunities for teachers throughout their careers, something that resonates with many of the articles in this current edition and indeed more widely in the research published in the *British Journal of Music Education* over time.

Kim Burwell's article "Power in the music teaching studio" opens with a sombre reminder of the vulnerabilities in relationships that may develop in music education and the challenges in one-to-one music teaching. It approaches this difficult subject sensitively and from the outset, acknowledges the abuses of power that have unfortunately taken place in teaching situations. The article considers the term "power" from a variety of perspectives and argues for more professional development in developing reflective approaches to music teaching that involve "both students and teachers in such critical work".

Turning our attention to music education in China, Yue Luo and Bo-Wah Leung's article "Proposing and piloting a criterion- and standard-based assessment framework in teaching Cantonese operatic singing in Guangdong, China" discusses the design and outcomes of a study with four teachers and 24 students of Cantonese opera to design and implement an assessment framework for Cantonese operatic singing. This article addresses the thorny issues of assessment through two research questions: (1) Why propose criteria and standard-based assessment framework for Cantonese operatic singing? (2) How well does the proposed assessment framework facilitate the teaching and learning of Cantonese operatic singing? This research draws out the advantages and challenges relating to the introduction of this assessment model, drawing out implications for future applied work and research in this area.

James Nissen's article "Aspirations and limitations: the state of world music education in secondary schools in multicultural Manchester" returns us to the UK, and explores the music curriculum in 27 state-funded schools in Manchester between 2017 and 2021. It juxtaposes the diversity of music included in the lower secondary school, where music is usually compulsory but where teachers have a lot of freedom to create their own curriculum, with the rigid examination specifications that pupils choose to follow in the upper secondary school. The article candidly discusses the multi-cultural communities across the city and their relationship with music, and the disconnect that is seen with the ambiguity of the positioning of world music within recent UK Government policies and guidance. Drawing this edition to a close, "The power of rap in music education: a study of undergraduate students' original rap creations" opens with the tantalising questions: "Should music educators teach hip-hop and rap in undergraduate music classes? If so, why and how? If not, why not?" Jonathan McElroy's article explores "the value of studying rap and its impact upon students' education." It urges educators to think about the knowledge and power their students hold and how this can be capitalised on with positive benefits and outcomes. These final two articles exemplify the themes of our editorial and demonstrate very clearly that there is value and worth in creating music curricula where young people's aspirations, motivations and experiences of music are drawn upon. They also remind us of the importance of providing ongoing professional learning so that teachers recognise the need and the potential, as well as develop the skills and the confidence, to design enriching musical learning that is both inspiring and culturally responsive to each unique community.

As ever, these *BJME* articles show the richness of work both in music education research and in the music education, which they investigate. Whilst it might be too much to hope that the commentators and politicians we referred to earlier in this editorial will read academic journals like this, nonetheless we hope that the impact this global reach is having will continue to stimulate and inspire the next generation of children, young people, and musical learners at all stages and of all ages wherever in the world they may be studying and making music.

MARTIN FAUTLEY AND ALISON DAUBNEY

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