

EDITORIAL

## Collaborative thinking across borders

One of the great pleasures and privileges of academic life is the possibility of attending conferences and meeting people engaged in researching music education in all sorts of different contexts. This is all the more impactful when international conferences are involved. Music education happens in many different ways in different places, and what is normal and everyday in some places can be unusual and very different in others. Earlier this year, both of the co-editors of the *British Journal of Music Education* had the good fortune to be attending the European Association of Music in School (EAS) conference in Dublin. Although the United Kingdom has undergone Brexit, nonetheless academia is still a cross-border multinational endeavour, and so our attendance was both a pleasurable and informative experience.

There was a great deal of fascinating material at the conference, and what has been missed in the forced online nature of some encounters since the worldwide COVID pandemic is the personal one-to-one conversations, the in-passing moments, and the chance to grab a coffee (or, this being Ireland, a Guinness!) and discuss in some depth matters of interest, in ways which the online format just does not permit.

There were a great many parallel sessions, far too many to either attend or discuss here, but the keynotes given at EAS Dublin were worthy of note, and what follows is our – the editors – impressions and thoughts on these. It is important to say that these are just that, our thoughts and impressions, and are not in any way to be seen as an official documentation.

The first of the keynotes was from Huib Schippers. Schippers is one of the world's leading scholars on the crossroads of music education and cultural diversity. His keynote was entitled 'Nurturing musical citizenship: The ongoing process of transforming music education'. Schippers talked about the ways in which music educators meet children and young people every day who have listened to music which is new for them. As he put it in the abstract for the keynote 'The sound environment of children today – the clay from which we sculpt our practices – is rich, diverse, and changing at a mindboggling speed' (Schippers, 2024, EAS abstract). Starting from the point of an imaginary conversation between Orff and Kodaly in a breakfast room in Dublin after a global music festival in 2024, Schippers raised a number of provocations for the audience of music educators. He suggested that we need to listen to music with the ears needed for that music and that Orff and Kodaly were informed by the music, sounds and ideas around them at that time. What, he wondered, would their systems of introducing children and young people to formal music learning look and sound like if they had lived and reflected on music education nowadays.

The second keynote was from Marie McCarthy. McCarthy is Professor of Music Education at the University of Michigan, but who began her career as a public school teacher in Ireland. Her keynote was entitled 'Responding to Social Transformations of Our Time, Retuning Traditions in the Music Classroom'. In her keynote, McCarthy explored what she saw as 'three catalysts for change that have impacted music in the schools and inspired music educators to transform aspects of practice: changing technologies; new knowledge about the effects of musical engagement on learners; and changes in socio-political values' (McCarthy, 2024, EAS abstract). She began by talking about the changes that have taken place in music listening, and how technology has made music ubiquitous in contemporary life. From there, she moved to a discussion of how the revolution in thinking which took place as a result of serious consideration of cognitive science, beginning last century, is continuing to have an impact on the way we teach music nowadays. One

of the issues that music educators are still grappling is the challenge of educating individuals in group settings, and how these days we need to think about well-being and mental health too.

McCarthy's third area involved changes in socio-political ideologies. To what extent, she invited us to consider, does music education serve the agenda of the empowered, and to what extent is music education driven by repertoire, and is that difficult for music educators to let go of? McCarthy also reminded us that Music pedagogy is dynamic, just as music is, and this requires a diversity of staff in post, who are able to look with fresh eyes at curriculum.

The final keynote was from Anna Houmann. Houmann serves as a professor at Malmö Academy of Music in Sweden, where she is the director of PhD programme in music education, coordinator and supervisor of degree projects, and director of educational sciences within the Music Education Programme. Her keynote was on 'Transforming Music Education: Empowering Students through Pedagogies of the Possible'. Houmann talked about expanding what we see as possible in music education and urged us to think globally, but act locally. One of her challenges to music educators was, with shades of Paulo Freire, to think about how to get beyond the banking model of music education, especially with regard to the passing on of knowledge and skills. Another of her challenges was to ask us to think about how to get from what is, to become what could be, and that for this to happen we need a multiplicity of pedagogies available to us.

We feel this very brief overview of the keynotes at EAS Dublin 2024 has been worth describing for the readership of the *BJME* as we are all part of a connected community. The opportunities to discuss, to meet in-person, to share common interests, are important, but it is also vital to be challenged too, to have our preconceptions confronted, our thoughts about 'is' and 'ought' questioned, and to be taken out of our comfort zones and silos. Indeed, this is part of what it should mean to be an academic in the contemporary world.

Having said this, we hope that the *British Journal of Music Education* is able to achieve many of these things, and whilst, sadly, this does not involve drinking coffee – or Guinness – with colleagues, nonetheless, we hope it offers both stimulus and challenge to our readership. Which brings us neatly to this current edition of the *BJME*. In this latest edition, a commonality between many of the articles is the importance of educating teachers and practitioners in order to continually develop and improve music education for all. We open with an article from Rachael Byne, Regina Murphy, Francis Ward and Una McCabe encouraging us to think about conceptualisations and purposes of play across primary education and playful musical learning. The article outlines philosophies and critiques approaches to musical play before drawing out recommendations on ways in which teachers can scaffold and promote musical learning through multiple play-based approaches.

Jihae Shin's article 'Music-making for music teacher identity: perspectives from novice music teachers in South Korea' offers an exploration of 'the meaning of music-making among Korean novice music teachers and its role in constructing music teacher identity'. Views of five novice teachers are detailed within the article and it gives an insight into the relationship, and sometimes the tensions, between music-making in the classroom and school, and outside of this environment. Many themes within this article will no doubt resound with educators and those involved in teacher education in different parts of the world. Moving to Spain, Oscar Casanova, Cecelia Jorquera-Jaramillo and Rosa Serrano's articles provide a literature review on the current state and prospects of teaching-learning processes in music teacher education in Spain. Whilst drawing on some international perspectives, it is interesting to note differences in the Spanish context and practices and, as with Shin's article, offers opportunities to reflect on practices and opportunities within our own geographical and political contexts.

Jennifer Robinson's article 'Five years in: a case study of an Australian early-career secondary school music teacher' offers a fascinating insight into the working life of a teacher at the end of her first five years of music teaching. The teacher on which this case study is based has worked in primary schools in London as well as secondary schools across Sydney. 'Make or break' factors illuminated within this case study give plenty of food for thought for those working with or

supporting teachers as they navigate their first few years in the profession, particularly at a time when there are challenges in both recruiting and retaining school music teachers in certain parts of the world, including England and Australia.

In consideration of the role that higher education music institutions have in educating musicians for varied careers that often involve aspects of teaching, Luan Shaw's article 'Preparing conservatoire students for the music education workforce: conversations with alumni' explores perceptions in relation to two research questions: 1) how can students and alumni be supported to develop their professional networks in music education? and 2) how might conservatoires learn from their alumni? Whilst this study took place in a conservatoire in England, insights given by participants highlight the need for courses in a wide range of higher education settings to give due consideration to important roles they can play in supporting current and past students in their ongoing professional development and to provide 'freedom to celebrate their musician-teacher identities'.

This edition of the *British Journal of Music Education* concludes with Jackie Walduck's article 'Improvisation pedagogy: what can be learned from off-task sounds and the art of the musical heckle?'. It describes musical heckles as 'an example of marginalised utterance that offers a disjunct light onto a principal sound narrative such as an instrumental solo or coherently improvising ensemble'. Whilst the author illuminates multiple practical ways in which improvisation pedagogies can be approached and developed, the author candidly reminds us that '[the approaches] are not a panacea for problems raised by inclusion; any more than improvisation should be a panacea for the challenges surrounding music creation and performance'.

As we move into a new era of government and leadership in the UK, this statement relating to improvisation resonates with many other aspects of music education. It offers a stark reminder of the importance of deeply considering contexts, desired outcomes and processes when considering and implementing changes for evolving music education, whilst recognising the importance of learning from the deep well music education research carried out over many years.

This is last edition of the *BJME* where Karen Burland is the book's editor. Karen has been doing this job for many years, and her calm and steady approach to this task has been welcomed by all. The editorial team wish to express our serious thanks to her and to wish her well for the future.

As face-to-face contact with colleagues' resumes after the global COVID pandemic, we hope that the pages of the *BJME* will continue to provide a form of virtual community, and one where current thinking is shared and celebrated, wherever in the world it is located.

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