

## Editorial

In her contribution to our Special Issue in 2003, Estelle Jorgensen called for ongoing conversations between university lecturers and school teachers, to avoid the danger of music educators, historians and theorists being 'like ships sailing past each other in the night'. We believe that one of the functions of *BJME* is to develop such collegial relationships and thus help to establish a strong music education community at all levels, both nationally and internationally. Certainly this present issue reflects a range of contexts from nursery schools to universities, with papers from researchers in Australia, England, France, Italy and Scotland.

First, Clare Hall writes as a practitioner-researcher on the difficulties of tackling young boys' negative attitudes towards singing, describing the imaginative ways in which she introduced peer models to her classroom in order to explore and question their gendered perceptions of the activity. From an Australian private boys' school we move to an Italian nursery, where Anna Rita Addressi and François Pachet have conducted experiments with a 'musical machine', designed to interact with young children as they improvise, and so to demonstrate the strategies and expectations of these composers in the making. Both of these papers offer an insight on classroom practice through their close observation, analysis and questioning of the learning encountered there.

The other three papers in this issue focus on higher education, examining the experiences of university students and the functions served by various aspects of higher education curricula. Fred Seddon presents his observations of a jazz ensemble and offers both a theoretical framework for their modes of communication during improvisation and a critique of the traditional process of evaluation. Janet Mills then addresses the problem of the recruitment of secondary school music teachers in the UK by investigating the views of students from a leading music conservatoire. Disappointingly they were ill disposed to such a career: they did not think of it as 'doing music'. It is heartening that they partially overcame these reservations through visits to schools and contact with enthusiastic practitioners. Finally, Martin Cloonan asks 'What is Popular Music Studies?', tracing the evolution of a relatively new dimension of music in higher education and illustrating the promise it holds for widening participation. At the same time he notes the problems of media scepticism and suspicion from more traditionally focused courses: nevertheless he believes that Popular Music Studies has fundamentally changed the scope and prospects of musical teaching and learning in higher education.

The papers in this issue reflect the mixed state of music education at present, demonstrated in Britain through conflicting signals of optimistic development and more disheartening decline. On the one hand, we have seen the launch of the Music Manifesto in July 2004, backed by government money, which includes the intention that every primary school child should have opportunities for sustained and progressive instrumental tuition offered free of charge or at a reduced rate. On the other, recent closures of university music departments have done little for morale and the status of the discipline across the higher education community. In a recent television documentary on music in schools, Howard

Goodall suggested that we are witnessing 'a long overdue renaissance'. The efforts of researchers and practitioners – and the promise of greater communication between those working in different educational sectors – have an important role to play in ensuring the continuation of that new musical age.

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