
Editorial

Inevitably any new journal must go through a lengthy process of discussions about aims and policy, style, design and production before the initial ideas can become the printed reality of Volume 1 Number 1. The *BjME* was conceived in 1982, since when many people have been working hard to make this first issue possible.

Questions of policy have occupied us a lot. At one point during the long period of preparation, the joint editors unexpectedly found themselves together participating in a week-long seminar at the Jamaica School of Music. Thus distanced from the immediacy of British music education, and stimulated by the enthusiasm and dedication of the Caribbean teachers, experiences there began to resolve themselves into a metaphor of our hopes for the new journal: a symbol of the need for people to share experiences and to plan to move towards a future together.

Many problems in music education are the result of the insularity of our practice. In Britain music teachers are often hesitant about sharing their ideas. Then again, the roots of our teaching methods reach back far into the past, so that we tend to function on the basis of precedent; we do things because they have always been done, and only rarely perhaps do we make the effort to reflect upon what is done. Now, because of economic restraints, we are becoming more aware of the need to justify the place of our subject in the educational curriculum and the need to examine closely the reasoning behind our teaching methods.

In Jamaica they already know they must do that; they know they have to reflect upon what they do and argue it out carefully in order to establish themselves – as Pamela O’Gorman’s article in this issue so clearly illustrates. Such close scrutiny of aims and methods will not become fruitful or make any lasting impression without sustained presentation and development of the most important issues in the field. Therefore we hope that the *BjME* will enable discussion to take place relatively unconstrained by limitations of space, with contributions fully documented and – where appropriate – supported by sound recordings. We are convinced that music education in Britain needs such a forum.

In the thirty years since Britain emerged from post-war austerity we have passed through periods of unprecedented expansion and development in the various fields of education – not least in music education. We have seen a dramatic increase

in the provision for young instrumentalists, with the consequent rise in standard of performance characterised by the near professional excellence of many of our Youth Orchestras. There has been an expansion of the range of musical styles felt to be 'suitable' in schools – a broadening made apparent annually in the amazing display of skills to be heard at the Schools Prom. And innovative classroom activities have been developed to draw upon young people's creative talents. In all these areas work has been stimulating, sometimes confusing, and often the source of controversy. Currently the proposals for music in the new 16+ examination are highlighting other important questions across the whole range of schooling: the desirability of an 'agreed' syllabus, the role of the primary sector in preparing children for music studies in the secondary school, the requirements for those entering training courses for music teaching, curriculum design related to assessment and to elements such as instrumental performance, composition and listening. Clearly, this is a time for taking stock.

The field, as we can see, is wide. Our editorial policy will be to give particular attention to the availability and quality of musical experience for all young people in our schools. Even here, there is an enormous range of concerns; including the relationship of music-making in the wider community to music in schools, and the political and administrative policies that affect us all. There is also scope for attention to other areas of interest. In particular, we notice that there has been very little discussion of music in higher and further education. Yet surely there is as much need for curriculum development here as in schools? Private teachers too may wish to contribute to the *BjME*, as may some people who are not music teachers but who might have important things to say to those of us who are.

Fundamentally we are interested in the musical and personal transaction between teachers and students in whatever setting. The centre of our focus is the practice of music education. But this also implies a degree of reflection upon this practice, and some analysis of what is involved. In other words, there will be important theoretical considerations at every level of discussion in the pages of this journal. For without analysis and abstraction, along with a willingness to clarify our own thinking, there can be no productive interchange of ideas.

In the broadest sense, the *BjME* will provide a professional forum not only for the sharing of experience but also for the dissemination of research. We recognise the validity of a whole range of research methodologies – those strategies for finding out what is happening, or has happened, under certain conditions, and the ways in which we structure our observations.

We also acknowledge the need to improve the way we talk and write to one another, to develop professional discourse, which has nothing at all to do with unnecessary jargon or 'specialist' terminology.

Britain is remarkably rich and diverse in musical and educa-

tional activities. We also have a very active research community, often classroom or studio teachers who want to throw more light on their own work and who may be attached to universities and polytechnics as advanced students.

We ought not to claim too much: a great deal will depend upon the willingness of our contributors to provide material of quality. But as editors we have every confidence in our potential readers and writers, that through the *British Journal of Music Education* they will help us towards a better-informed and possibly more cohesive profession.

And so to this first issue. We have been embarrassed by riches. All the contributions received are of outstanding quality and substance, and since it is a fundamental policy of *BJME* to provide a platform for *extensive* discussion of topics, we are reluctant to ask any of our contributors to make cuts. Therefore it has been necessary to hold over until the second issue important articles by John Stephens, John Hosier, Richard Addison and Kevin Thompson – all of whom have generously agreed to this proposal.

The first issue is heavily weighted towards classroom practitioners: three young teachers write about their first year in teaching, and two very experienced teachers discuss the bases of the music curriculum in listening and in imagination. Furthermore, Pamela O’Gorman’s retrospective look at twenty-one years of the Jamaica School of Music, with its pertinent comments on the British influence, should help us to reflect upon our own training courses and to see our work through other eyes. All the articles deal with fundamental matters and should provide starting points for wider discussion. We hope readers will feel able to write to us or to offer articles which take up and extend those points of view.

Finally, we wish as Editors to draw the attention of readers to the composition of the Editorial Board. All the members are active in one way or another in music education and between them represent a very wide range of involvement and experience. The positive spirit of co-operation already evident in the Board gives us cause to feel optimistic about our future in this venture.

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