

## Editorial

Two themes emerge from the articles in this issue. First and foremost is that of the centrality of the learner and the importance of the development of learner agency in any music education context that seeks to lay claims to inclusivity and diversity. The second is the most effective pedagogical approaches to supporting the development of composing.

The first of these themes is picked up strongly in Karlsen and Westerlund's (Finland) article 'Immigrant student's development of musical agency – exploring democracy in music education'. As part of the emerging debate concerning the potential links and synergy between music education, democracy and social justice, they argue that the ways in which immigrant students have access to a musical curriculum can be intertwined with how democracy, its meaning and practice, is implemented in and through music education.

The importance of 'appropriateness' and 'relevance' of the curriculum in ensuring student's engagement with, and inclusion in, the music curriculum is explored by Mikko Antilla (Finland) in 'Problems with school music in Finland'. Drawing on a large sample, questionnaire-based research model, involving over 800 respondents from the upper levels of schooling through to university level, she explores reasons why, even though music is such an important part in children's lives, they perceive music in school as increasingly irrelevant to them or even actively alienating. In a polemical article, she argues that one of the main factors contributing to this alienation is a too-narrow conception of music and musical learning; a conception which fails to reflect the richness of musical experience in many children's everyday lives. Elements which impacted particularly negatively on children's perceptions of music in school were the inappropriate use of assessment and poor teacher–pupil relationships, sometimes rooted in teachers' lack of confidence in teaching music.

The impact of early musical experiences, including those gained in formal and informal learning contexts, is considered by Susan Coulson (UK) in 'Getting Capital' in the music world: musicians' learning experiences and working lives'. Coulson adopts Bourdieuan ideas of cultural, social and symbolic 'capital' to explore how professional musicians accrue 'musical capital' in the early part of their lives through both formal and informal learning experiences and contexts. She then goes on to consider the impact that this has upon the kind of musicians they become and their potential for sustaining a career in music. Adopting a biographic/narrative approach she interviews 17 musicians from the North East of England engaged in a wide range of musical styles and traditions – including folk, jazz and pop. Her findings show that there are many ways in which early experiences contribute to 'musical capital' and the type of musician someone becomes. However a common feature of professional musicians' early experiences is the opportunity, from an early age, to engage practically with music and thus to gain the skills and confidence needed which typically forms a secure foundation for future development.

Turning now to the second theme of the issue, two articles consider effective pedagogies for supporting the development of composing, albeit in contrasting contexts. Lupton and Bruce (Australia) explore models of the teaching and learning of composing

in higher education institutions in 'Craft, process and art: teaching and learning music composition in higher education'. They begin by addressing the question of whether composing can actually be taught and then explore the extant literature on teaching composing. They suggest that what emerges from this literature is three broad approaches to teaching composing – 'learning from the masters', 'mastery of techniques' and 'exploring ideas' – and a fourth, less fully addressed approach, of 'developing voice' which is assumed will emerge from immersion in the first three. The second part of their paper is a phenomenographic study based on interviews with jazz and music technology students about the composing courses they are following, how they went about composing their music and what they learnt from their composing activities. A strong relationship is identified between the model derived from the empirical study and those obtained from the literature review. Returning however to the first theme of the issue – that of student agency – the authors conclude that composing courses which give students ownership of their development as composers are likely to provide the 'richer and more complex experiences'.

Pedagogical approaches to the development of composing which connect to the development of student agency are also explored by Major and Cotel (UK) in 'Learning and teaching through talk: music composing in the classroom with children aged six to seven years'. The article focuses particular upon the importance and significance of teachers' questioning strategies in enabling children to take ownership of their development as composer, to talk about their composing and, in doing so, to think about their learning, engage in evaluative thinking and make sense of their composing through reflective thought.

In the final article, 'Musical elements and subject knowledge in primary school student teachers: lessons from a five-year longitudinal study', Gary Beauchamp (UK) investigates the extent to which teachers entering teaching education in one institution have sufficient knowledge of the musical elements to enable them to teach music effectively to their pupils. The article also functions as a review of Janet Mills' (1989) hope that as those entering the profession would eventually be those that have experienced the national curriculum, they would only require refreshment of their subject knowledge rather than development of it.

As this issue went to press the death was announced of John Paynter. John was one of the founding editors of the BJME and one of the most influential music educators of the twentieth century. An appreciation of his life and work is included in this issue and we are grateful to Piers Spencer for writing this at very short notice. The first issue of 2011 will be dedicated to John Paynter and take the form of a tribute to his immense contribution to music education.

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### Reference

- MILLS, J. (1989) 'The generalist primary teacher of music: a problem of confidence', *British Journal of Music Education*, **6**, 125–138.