EDITORIAL

What do we do? Why do we do it? And how do we know it is good? For teachers these have always been the key professional questions; and unless teachers, on the strength of their own training and personal development, can answer those three questions confidently, no amount of extraneous curriculum planning will be effective. Inevitably education fails whenever we embark on a formal curriculum without understanding in depth its practical and professional inferences.

The problem is examined in different, but essentially practical, ways by all the contributors to this issue of *BJME*. The distinguished Canadian composer, R. Murray Schafer, one of the world's most influential figures in music education, goes directly to the heart of the matter, offering teachers a glimpse of 'the primeval threshold before music and speech separated' in order that they may better understand the nature of what music has become. His emphasis here, as elsewhere, is upon the significance of involvement. It may not always take us where we expect to go; it may dissolve into hilarious confusion – and, of course, as Schafer remarks with irony, 'one learns nothing while laughing'! How often does delight and laughter play any part in interpretations of the British National Curriculum?

The RAMP Unit at the University of Huddersfield has made valuable contributions to the development of music in the classroom and to our appreciation of how children learn in music. Now, in a detailed account of their work on teachers' understanding of new curriculum terminology, Patricia Flynn and Professor George Pratt look at the practical implications of 'appraising music'. Nothing could be of greater importance; for, if we're not sure what the curriculum planners mean by the words they use, how can we even begin?

Tackling the problems head-on with students training for generalist primary teaching should be a good way of avoiding misunderstandings. In devising the National Curriculum *Programmes of Study*, the Music Working Group was not so much inventing things to be taught as synthesising ideas that had been around for many years; and that can give impetus to teacher training. Thus, Robert Green shows how students can learn to think about music and to interpret the Curriculum by working, at their own level, on classroom projects many of which were developed as much as thirty years ago but are now re-focused in the light of the compulsory programmes for Key Stages 1 and 2.

Our perception of music itself and the intellectual demands it makes upon us is central to whatever we do at every level of music education. Therefore we must know precisely what it is we are dealing with. The questions posed by Murray Schafer are taken up, in their own ways, by Charles Ford – writing about Improvisation – and Gloria Toplis – on teaching harmony and counterpoint. Both authors appeal for a greater sense of musical realism in the education of musicians, and also for a proper understanding of artistic 'freedom'. Gloria Toplis looks closely at what we might, or

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should, expect of A-level music students and at the effect this could have upon the various 'compositional techniques' courses in the expanded university system; and Charles Ford reflects upon the way in which his course at Thames Valley University has thrown up the need for discipline in 'free' collective improvisation, reminding us of how Schafer's group of Argentinian teachers discovered that constraints are necessary to make musical ideas work. The crucial point is not merely that we accept constraints – or imposed Programmes of Study – but that we *understand* them in an artistic context.

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