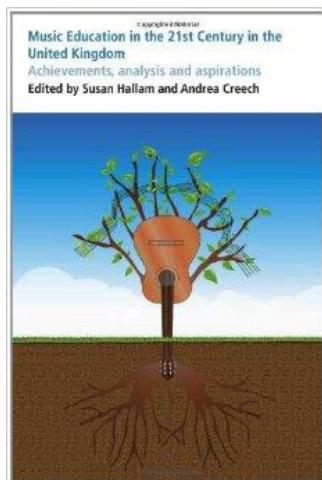


Book Review



Music Education in the 21st Century in the United Kingdom: Achievements, analysis and aspirations

Edited by Susan Hallam and Andrea Creech

Institute of Education (2010).

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Reviewed by **David Barton**

At a time when campaigns to protect the status of music within education gather pace, Hallam and Creech offer an unrivalled insight into music education in the UK in the 21st century. The editors have gathered together 15 leading experts in the field to appraise and analyse a wide variety of aspects of music education, including its place within a wider educational context. Set against the background of an ever-changing educational landscape, this landmark book invites readers, whether they are teachers, students, practitioners or policy-makers, to examine, reaffirm and reappraise the role music plays in education.

Following the introduction, the first part of the book covers a range of issues which are considered 'current' in music education, including special educational needs, listening, singing, instrumental learning, creativity, technology, assessment, performance, and lifelong learning. The second part of the book examines a range of contexts in which the learning and experience of music takes place, including early years, primary schools, secondary schools, further education institutions, universities, conservatoires, music services, the private studio and the community.

One of the great strengths of this book is that it draws on the experience of those who have a special interest in and knowledge of each particular area. For example, Susan Hallam, whose book *Instrumental Teaching* (Hallam, 1998) has become a germinal text for music educators, draws on her research to offer an insight into the context of instrumental teaching and learning within education, including, importantly, analysis of the transferrable skills such learning offers. Similarly, Evangelos Himonides, the University of London's first ever Lecturer in Music Technology, evaluates the role the effective use of technology can play in music education. Helena Gaunt's research has been at the forefront of the exploration into one-to-one music teaching in a conservatoire context, and her chapter, written alongside Ioulia Papageorgi (Institute of Education), examines, in particular, the importance of the transition between being a student and a professional musician.

Most importantly, this book is not merely a summary of the current state of music education in the United Kingdom, but rather it sets the current picture against a wider backdrop of educational change and development. The contributors, without exception, have explored the way in which different aspects of music education may develop in the future. These perceived developments and challenges are always supplemented by a careful analysis of the contexts in which learning takes place, whether that be in schools, in the community, in higher education institutions, or elsewhere.

One of the strengths of this text is that it feels current: it is about issues which many in education are facing now; issues which many of us come across on a daily basis. Each chapter is carefully structured around the subtitle of the book: 'Achievements, analysis and aspirations'. This allows the reader, where appropriate, to reflect on their own practice, and on their own personal and professional development: a form for the self-evaluation of performance (p. 143) is an example of one of the many practical ideas offered. Alongside these, a number of case studies are included covering a range of topics such as, for example, the wider opportunities scheme (p. 97); these offer similar opportunities for self-reflection and exploration. At the end of each chapter, contributors have recommended a wide variety of books and journal articles in which the reader can explore topics further, often alongside a list of relevant websites.

The picture feels it has been painted by people who have spent time out in the real world of music education, and in my view, their writing shows a real concern for those working at grass roots level. It is therefore a book which should appeal to those working throughout the music education spectrum. Those from outside of the United Kingdom will find it offers an insight into a complex educational system. As it gives a broad overview of music education in the United Kingdom, the book will, no doubt, prove useful for those who wish to make comparisons with similar systems in their own countries.

Above all, this book offers a beacon of hope both for those involved in music education, and those who have a concern for the wider status of the arts in society; for, as the authors themselves say, 'Music education in the UK in the twenty-first century is thriving'.

References

Hallam, S. (1998) *Instrumental Teaching: A Practical Guide to Better Teaching and Learning* Oxford: Heinemann