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# EDITORIAL

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The range of topics covered by the *BjME* is wide, but over the years since we began publication certain themes seem to have been prominent in the minds of our contributors. High on the list is the school music curriculum: its strengths and weaknesses and the resources it calls for – including the latest technological developments. Allied to this is an interest in ‘comparative music education’: developments in teacher education, teaching methods, and assessment that are taking place, not only in Britain but also in other countries. Fortuitously, the articles in this issue group themselves within three such major areas: curriculum design, instrumental teaching and performance, and teaching method. Thus, Ruth Thomas’s advocacy of closer Secondary/Primary cooperation links with Börje Stålhammar’s description of collaboration between a comprehensive school and a local music school in Sweden. Those two articles reinforce, and are reinforced by, the emphasis on *practical* music-learning in Jane Davidson’s and Jonathan Smith’s study of improvisation/composition ‘workshops’: a valuable appraisal of techniques developed first in school classrooms in the 1960s but here observed – with illuminating comments by the participants – as part of a music conservatoire course. The ‘conservatoire’ focus is evident too in Peter Johnson’s article on criteria and objectivity in the assessment of performance – in part a response to an article in *BjME* vol. 13. This in turn connects, first, with Peter Cope and Hugh Smith on the subject of musical instrument learning and, secondly, with Keith Swanwick’s timely observations on the problems of assessing musical quality in the National Curriculum. Which brings us full-circle because Ruth Thomas is also deeply concerned about misunderstandings and shortcomings in the National Curriculum; in particular, the need to demonstrate *progression* in musical education.

Would it be too fanciful to see the hand of fate in these inter-connections; this chance coming together of particularly important themes and sub-themes in an issue which brings to a close the first fourteen years of the Journal’s existence? For with this, Volume 14, Number 3 – our forty-second production – we leave to make way for new Editors: Dr William (Bill) Salaman (currently the *BjME*’s Review Editor) and Dr Piers Spencer.

In 1982, as the Editors-to-be, we spent some time together at the Jamaica School of Music where, in relaxed conversations between teaching sessions and various expeditions, we were able to think through the possibilities, aims, and character of a new journal for music education which would be scholarly and at the same time have its roots in the experience of music teaching in schools, higher and further education, and instrumental teaching studios. We also wanted to draw in the contributions of others who, while not working within formal music education, might have important things to say to us and our readers.

As we wrote together in our first Editorial in 1984, we hoped that contributors

would focus especially on the musical and personal transaction between teachers and students in whatever setting. Whilst we have had an open policy on the length of articles and on methodology we have tried to maintain high literary quality and to encourage clarity of expression without unnecessary jargon. Relevance to the practice of musical education has been of prime importance. Although it would be invidious to pick out particular contributions, looking back over this substantial body of work we can see a gratifyingly large number of what have become influential articles, some of them reprinted elsewhere and in other languages. The *BJME* is highly regarded internationally as well as in Britain: articles are cited frequently in dissertations, books and papers, and many an academic or professional course on music or musical education would be the poorer were it not for the stimulation, information, and food for thought to be found in library copies of this Journal.

During these fourteen years much has changed. The National Curriculum has been installed, along with guidance on pupil assessment. We have seen on the one hand the fragmentation of instrumental teaching schemes and advisory services, and on the other the beginning of new forms of organisation. We hope and trust that, while future developments in formal education will continue to be reflected in, and informed by, the pages of this Journal, there will also be within its covers alternative views, critical analysis, and inspirational voices.

We are deeply appreciative of the support of members of the Editorial Board, past and present, and of the staff of Cambridge University Press who have encouraged us when we thought sales were low and at times when we worried about a possible shortfall of good material. They have all helped, in many different ways, to shape and promote the Journal.

We look forward to reading the *BJME* next year without the effort of producing it, and our very good wishes go to the new Editors. They will surely find their work engaging as well as demanding, and we are confident that, with the journal in their hands, the best of musical education and its associated research will continue to be represented and supported in this forum.

JOHN PAYNTER   KEITH SWANWICK