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Editorial

Joseph Abramo
University of Connecticut

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EDITORIAL

By

Joseph Abramo

University of Connecticut

Storrs, Connecticut

The articles in this, the 29th volume of *Visions*, encompass the range of music education, from the selection of instruments in beginning band, to a collaborative Ph.D. course, to an intergenerational community choir. From language acquisition to assessment and feedback, these articles deal with the variety of considerations practitioners and researchers in music education continually address.

Music education begins from the outset; humans have the capacity to perceive, learn, and connect to music even before birth. Similarly, children begin the enculturation and psychological assimilation of language from an early age. Because of this, the cliché that “music is the universal language” can be insightful. While music is not a language—it never, or rarely, communicates with the specificity required of language—there are interesting parallels in how humans acquire both language and music. In her article in this volume, Jill Reese explores those connections in a literature review that synthesizes and compares the research on language and music acquisition. From this review, she recommends a research agenda to study music acquisition. The study of language acquisition, she suggests, “can serve as a map to deeper understanding of the sensitivities that contribute to the musical chain of responsivity.” Such understanding holds potential for developing strategies to help music students learn to listen to and perform music.

In addition to the social-psychological phenomenon of language acquisition, there also exist the sociological and psychological factors that contribute to people’s understanding of music. As children enter school, they potentially have the opportunity to

join an instrumental ensemble and select an instrument. Extant research suggests that factors including the psychological and physical development, musical aptitude, and gender stereotypes are some of acknowledged and unacknowledged factors that influence the selection or suitability of instruments for children. Matthew Rotjan reports on a survey completed by his third-grade students, with help from parents. His findings suggest, that a “child’s preference for sound was the strongest factor selecting an instrument for study.” Understanding students’ and families’ rationale for instrument selection can help teachers increase the likelihood of success in instrumental tutelage.

While beginning “on the right foot” is important, maintaining students’ interests in ensembles as they enter adolescence can be a challenge for music educators. Andrew Sutherland studied four teenage boys who participate in an intergenerational chorus in London, “to investigate factors that impact students involved in collaborating with an adult choir.” The boys enjoyed performing “great works,” connecting with members of other generations, the sense of community it afforded, the challenge of performance, and the opportunities it provide them for future goals. Sutherland’s study suggests to us the value of forming intergenerational community ensembles.

The joy of music making—from the sound to the social process of collaborating with others—and the rewards of teaching motivate some to pursue further studies and advanced degrees. Cecilia Ferm Almqvist, Anna-Karin Gullberg, Linn Hentschel, Annette Mars, Johan Nyberg, and Thomas von Wachenfeldt describe collaborative learning in a Ph.D. course. Using theories of the twentieth-century philosopher Hannah Arendt, they articulate both the challenges and rewards of eschewing the traditional hierarchies in doctoral studies to create meaningful and truly collaborate dialogue.

Finally, regardless of the setting, educators must assess their efforts and students' learning to understand the teachers' impact. Jeff Cranmore and Ronald Wilhelm study the assessment conceptions and practices of music educators. The study reveals the varied practices and sophisticated frameworks music educators call upon to assess learning and provide feedback.

The articles that follow cover the diverse and ever-expanding scope of music education practice and research. Whether it be music acquisition in children and adults or the elderly and young sharing in a choir, through research and practice music educators have the opportunity—and perhaps the imperative—to study music education throughout the life-span. The articles in volume contribute to this broad agenda for music education.