



HIGHER EDUCATION IN MUSIC IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Edited by
Björn Heile, Eva Moreda Rodríguez and
Jane Stanley



Higher Education in Music in the Twenty-First Century

In this book, the contributors reconsider the fundamentals of Music as a university discipline by engaging with the questions: What should university study of music consist of? Are there any aspects, repertoires, pieces, composers and musicians that we want all students to know about? Are there any skills that we expect them to be able to master? How can we guarantee the relevance, rigour and cohesiveness of our curriculum? What is specific to higher education in music and what does it mean now and for the future? The book addresses many of the challenges students and teachers face in current higher education; indeed, the majority of today's music students undoubtedly encounter a greater diversity of musical traditions and critical approaches to their study as well as a wider set of skills than their forebears. Welcome as these developments may be, they pose some risks too: more material cannot be added to the curriculum without either sacrificing depth for breadth or making much of it optional. The former provides students with a superficial and deceptive familiarity with a wide range of subject matter, but without the analytical skills and intellectual discipline required to truly master any of it. The latter easily results in a fragmentation of knowledge and skills, without a realistic opportunity for students to draw meaningful connections and arrive at a synthesis.

The authors, Music academics from the University of Glasgow, provide case studies from their own extensive experience, which are complemented by an Afterword from Nicholas Cook, 1684 Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge. Together, they examine what students can and should learn about and from music and what skills and knowledge music graduates could or should possess in order to operate successfully in professional and public life. Coupled with these considerations are reflections on music's social function and universities' role in public life, concluding with the conviction that a university education in music is more than a personal investment in one's future; it contributes to the public good.

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Contents

<i>List of figures and examples</i>	vii
<i>List of contributors</i>	viii
Introduction	1
BJÖRN HEILE, WITH EVA MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ	
1 Should there be a twenty-first century ‘Complete Kapellmeister’?: the skills, content and purposes of a university music degree	11
JOHN BUTT	
2 The learning community, a quodlibet	30
MARTIN PARKER-DIXON	
3 Integrative music history: rethinking music since 1900	55
BJÖRN HEILE	
4 The many voices of ‘art song’	77
DAVID J. CODE	
5 The music industries: theory, practice and vocations – a polemical intervention	112
MARTIN CLOONAN AND JOHN WILLIAMSON	
6 Writing about music in the 21st century	126
EVA MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ	
7 Assessing making and doing	138
NICK FELLS	

8 The teaching of creative practice within higher music education: Guerrilla Learning Outcomes (GLOs) and the importance of negotiation	155
LOUISE HARRIS AND DAVID McGUINNESS	
9 On teaching composition: why it can be taught and why that matters	170
BILL SWEENEY	
10 A reflective dialogue on teaching composition	179
DREW HAMMOND AND JANE STANLEY	
Afterword	195
NICHOLAS COOK	
<i>Index</i>	211

Figures and examples

Figures

4.1	The basic types of poetic discourse (as adapted by Renaissance and Romantic theorists from the Greeks)	86
4.2	'Der Erlkönig' as a structure of poetic discourse	87
4.3	Options for strophic setting	88
4.4	Strophic intricacies in Müller, 'Gute Nacht'	89
4.5	'Gute Nacht', Schubert's formal alteration to strophes 1 and 2	94
4.6	'Gute Nacht', Schubert's alteration to the final strophe	96
4.7	'Der Leiermann', with implications for strophic setting	97

Music examples

4.1	Schubert, 'Wandrer's Nachtlid', op. 96 no. 3, D 768	84
4.2	Schubert, 'Gute Nacht', song 1 from <i>Die Winterreise</i> , D 911	90
4.3	Schubert, 'Der Leiermann', song 24 from <i>Die Winterreise</i>	98

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Jane Stanley is an Australian-born composer and Senior Lecturer in Music at the University of Glasgow. She specialises in composition for acoustic media. Her music has been performed and broadcast throughout the world, having featured at festivals and conferences including ISCM World Music Days, Gaudeamus Music Week, Asian Composers League, Wellesley Composers Conference, and June in Buffalo. From 2004–2005, she was a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University. Her teachers include Anne Boyd, Peter Sculthorpe, Ross Edwards, Ian Shanahan and Bernard Rands. She has been a composition fellow at Tanglewood Music Center and Aspen Music Festival and School. Her music has been recorded for release by artists in Australia and the UK, and she has received commissions from Tanglewood, Musica Viva, Ensemble Offspring, Bernadette Harvey, Continuum Sax and Halcyon. Her participation in Scottish Crucible in 2011 led to the development of a number of arts–science collaborations. She is a founding member of the Young Academy of Scotland and is a represented composer at the Australian Music Centre. [www.janestanley.com]

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the influences on his own music have been as wide-ranging as his musical activities. The result is a style that seems to manage to have it both ways, preserving the expressive possibilities and archetypes of the Scottish folk tradition within an idiom that can call on techniques and technology from the whole modernist tradition since 1945.

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Introduction

Björn Heile, with Eva Moreda Rodríguez¹

Music studies have changed almost beyond recognition in recent years. Not so long ago, the study of Music at a UK university or conservatoire was largely restricted to the western classical tradition, usually with a focus on canonic repertoire, viewed primarily through the lens of style and compositional technique. More recently, a large proportion of applicants to courses in music study some combination of music technology and popular music. Non-western music (under the auspices of ethnomusicology), jazz and traditional music(s) have likewise found their places in the curriculum. This widening of repertoire has been accompanied by a commensurate broadening of critical perspectives: the ideology of aesthetic autonomy that, implicitly or explicitly, underpinned most traditional approaches to music history has given way to critical approaches to cultural and social contexts, including ideologically fraught issues such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and class. Likewise, the almost exclusive concern with compositions ('works') as the embodiment of music history has been or is being complemented by a renewed interest in performance and consumption, bringing with it methodological approaches from such fields as psychology, sociology, anthropology or cultural studies. This diversification of music study has left its traces in official documents. For example, the draft version of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Music by the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) lists 44 programme codes under W300 '(Music)' from 'W310 (Musicianship/performance studies)' to 'W388 (Popular music composition)', not to mention 'W390 (Music not elsewhere classified)', and 24 alphabetically enumerated areas from 'Acoustics' to 'Song writing' to which a degree programme in music may make reference – a list described as 'indicative rather than prescriptive ... [and] not exhaustive' (QAA 2016, 4–7).

These developments are mirrored in most sub-fields. Take, for example, music analysis. When it entered the curriculum in Britain as a fully-formed sub-discipline with a rigorous methodology, two methods ruled more or less supreme: Schenkerian analysis for tonal music and pitch-class set analysis (or set-theoretical analysis) for post-tonal music, the only forms of music that were widely believed to be worthy or in need of analysis. The two most influential textbooks (in Britain), Nicholas Cook's *A Guide to Musical Analysis*

and Jonathan Dunsby and Arnold Whittall's *Music Analysis in Theory and Practice* appeared within a year of each other (in 1987 and 1988 respectively) and gave pride of place to these two methods, among a small number of other analytical traditions. It is revealing that they have never been updated or replaced (although, for various reasons, proper textbooks tend to be a minor feature in UK music higher education in general).² The sheer number of variously competing or complementary analytical methods or traditions and the difficulty in discriminating between them would arguably make such an undertaking impossible. It goes without saying that the problem is replicated in teaching: whereas the subject matter of the textbooks by Cook and by Dunsby and Whittall could be covered reasonably well in an introductory course in music analysis, this is no longer an option. Any similar course now would have to make a narrow, and potentially contentious or arbitrary, selection of methodological approaches and repertoires or study the subject from a different perspective altogether. This could include, for instance, focusing entirely on the rationale, objectives and step-by-step analytical procedure of analysis (e.g. by presenting students with a piece and working out what questions one may have of it and how they could be answered). Yet such an approach would jeopardise the link between research and teaching and could effectively confine much of the existing analytical literature, notably that employing formalist techniques, to the dustbin of history.

The same proliferation of subject matter and approach can be observed on the practical side. The traditional focus on instrumental (or vocal) training, composition (pastiche and 'contemporary'), musical techniques (typically harmony and counterpoint) and, in some institutions, conducting, in western classical music has broadened to include equivalent practices in other traditions, such as popular music, jazz, traditional and non-Western performance as well as song writing and arranging (although, as John Butt points out in this volume, in some institutions, such as the University of York, many of these aspects were included from the 1970s). In many if not most institutions, this has also led to the addition of a range of skills to the curriculum that have little or no traditional counterpart, such as improvisation, electronic and digital composition, recording, editing, mixing, production and other studio-based techniques. Finally, the current emphasis on employability and career prospects has led many institutions to offer tuition and/or work placements in the music industries.

Needless to say, this increasing diversity of subject matter and approach reflects the growth and change in student populations. As data published by UCAS (the British University and College Admission Service) shows, undergraduate acceptances in Music almost doubled between 2007 and 2015 from 4,985 to 9,370 (with a seemingly inexplicable jump by almost 50 per cent between 2012 and 2013 not replicated in any other subject), far outstripping overall growth in student numbers (from 413,430 to 532,265 in the same period) (UCAS 2015).³ All the data suggest that the student body has

also become more diverse, with disproportionate increases of international, BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) and disabled students. The figures do not allow clear insight into the class background of applicants, although the percentage of students from independent and grammar schools has declined sharply (the largest intakes are from ‘other’, ‘further education’, ‘academy’ and ‘sixth-form college’ backgrounds, which does not indicate any particular class but does not suggest conspicuous privilege). What hasn’t changed much during this period (although it may have during earlier ones) is the gender balance, with the proportion of women oscillating between 35 and 40 per cent. This continuing male dominance is unusual among arts subjects, and it is difficult to decide whether it is primarily due to the legacy of traditional approaches and attitudes or more recent developments, such as the increasing importance of science and technology, notably in programmes such as music technology and music production.

In other words, the changing nature of music study in UK Higher Education has to be seen at least in part as a response, however imperfect, to the changing demographics of students and, indeed, lecturers. Although much of the resulting diversity of the field may be expressed more in ‘vertical’ than in ‘horizontal’ terms – that is to say in increased specialisation of providers, including new providers (Cloonan and Hulstedt 2012), rather than in greater diversity *within* existing programmes and courses – it is probably safe to say that no institution has remained entirely untouched by profound transformations.

Another such transformation is the revolution in information and learning technologies which has profoundly affected both formal and informal education. From Wikipedia through MOOCs, iTunes U and ebooks to instrumental lessons on YouTube, more and more information and learning resources appear to make traditional teaching methods based on the communication of factual knowledge obsolete (although, by the same argument, libraries could have replaced university education at any time). Although the online learning craze appears to have waned and few people now predict that MOOCs will completely replace universities in the foreseeable future, there can be little doubt that elearning has both changed learning and teaching *within* universities and the interactions between formal higher education and informal methods over students’ entire learning trajectory (Bothwell and Havergal 2016).

Despite some resistance to these developments, it is astonishing how quickly and smoothly they have taken hold. As a result, most of today’s music students undoubtedly encounter a greater diversity of musical traditions and critical approaches to their study as well as a wider set of skills than most of their forebears, and they are being taught and assessed through a greater variety of methods and approaches, using more diverse resources and media. Welcome as these developments are, they come at a price. The overall length of study hasn’t increased (at least not in the UK, but in most other countries it is also more likely to have gone down than up), nor has students’

capacity for focused learning – indeed, given how many are forced to work to support themselves, the reverse is more likely the case. In addition, today's university entrants tend to be noticeably less well-equipped than their predecessors in the traditional skills of musical literacy and musicianship, to say nothing of music history, theory or organology. Without wanting to indulge in doom and gloom rhetoric, it is not always clear whether what has been gained in breadth consistently balances what has been lost in depth. In other words, something has to give: if it is to be at an intellectual and artistic level appropriate for higher education, we cannot add more material to the curriculum without either sacrificing depth for breadth or making much of it optional. The dangers of either approach are evident: the former is tantamount to dumbing-down, providing students with a superficial and deceptive familiarity with a wide range of subject matter, but without the analytical skills, intellectual discipline and technical facility required to truly master any of it. The latter can easily result in a fragmentation of knowledge and skills, without a realistic opportunity for students to draw meaningful connections between disparate areas and arrive at some sort of synthesis.

What, then, should university study of music include? Are there any aspects, repertoires, pieces, composers and musicians that we want all students to know about; any skills that we expect them to be able to master? In the absence of such prescriptiveness, how else can we guarantee the relevance, rigour and cohesiveness of our curriculum and our learning, teaching and assessment methods, and how can we ensure that our graduates are equipped for future careers in music or other fields and have matured into fully rounded human beings able and willing to make positive contributions to culture and society? Is the current focus on 'graduate attributes' among universities in the UK and elsewhere a step forward in emphasising the *qualities* that students develop over a narrowly conceived (and often rapidly superseded) body of knowledge that they are expected to learn, or does this run the risk of devaluing the actual content and subject matter of academic study? If, after all, studying music is little more than a means to gain 'transferable skills' – connected as they commonly are to the notion of 'employability' that has limited applicability to a field with high levels of self-employment – that can just as well be gained in any other subject, why study it at all? What is specific to higher education in music and what does it mean now and for the future?

These are some of the questions this book addresses. Inspired by a collective publication by the Politics Department of the University of York (Leftwich 2015 [2004]) and, closer to home, a more recent one by the Music Department at Royal Holloway, University of London (Harper-Scott and Samson 2009), the contributors are or were until recently all members of the Music subject unit of the University of Glasgow, which imparts a certain unifying perspective. At the same time, however, they represent six nationalities (seven if one distinguishes between Britain and its constituent nations)

and a number of disciplinary and sub-disciplinary backgrounds, and this diversity has similarly left its traces. In addition, the Afterword by Nicholas Cook (University of Cambridge) places the discussion into a wider context. Although we make no claim to universality, the questions we raise and the ideas we entertain are of more general significance. What sets the book apart from previous work is its *integration* of perspectives that typically remain separate, crossing divides, for example, between theory and practice, ‘high art’ and popular culture, or between teaching and research, as well as those between differing historical periods or theoretical and methodological approaches. Rather than treating them as distinct strands, we regard practical skills, such as performance, composition and sonic arts, and scholarly approaches, such as musicology and critical reflection, as interlinked and we seek to engage in a constant dialogue across these domains.⁴ In all cases, the objective is to help students to develop into thinking musicians and/or musical thinkers. Furthermore, as will be clear from a number of contributions, we have long sought to overcome the master-apprentice model of the relationship of lecturers to students, in favour of the model of a learning community built most fundamentally on interactive dialogue. It goes without saying that this model runs counter to the current marketization of higher education with its view of students as consumers, embodied in a reified notion of ‘student experience’ – whatever lip service is paid to ‘innovative’ teaching methods such as the ‘flipped classroom’. It is thus arguably facilitated by the absence of student fees for Scottish and EU students in Scotland, although that should not undermine its relevance elsewhere.

The breadth of subject matter discussed is matched here by a diversity of approaches in terms of style and genre, ranging from scholarly articles through critical essays, short provocative position statements to dialogues. What this approach highlights is the range of fruitful intellectual and practical engagements with music: what connects (say) historically informed performance practice to the study of the popular music industries or contemporary composition, what they can learn from one another and what a student can gain by engaging with all three. As will become apparent, there are a surprising number of ideas shared between seemingly disparate areas, such as the emphasis on collaboration mentioned in various writings on scholarship, performance and composition alike. We hope that what emerges here is a coherent and value-based vision of music education, beyond compartmentalised and narrow specialisations. Similarly, while we never lose sight of the necessity to prepare our students for a variety of careers within music and beyond, we believe that our responsibility does not end there but extends towards a wider civic role, encapsulated in George Davie’s (1961) notion of ‘The Democratic Intellect’. In this context, the current (re-)emergence of ‘post-truth politics’, populism and demagoguery throughout much of the western world may well be partly related to the recent burgeoning emphasis on purely instrumentalist conceptions of education. The authors share the conviction that there can be no enlightened

public and political discourse without an enlightened education system, and any attempt to reduce the value of education to individual earning potential therefore runs counter to the interests of a free, democratic society. Music in higher education cannot solve society's problems, but it can and arguably has to contribute to making a more enlightened society possible.

The perspective adopted throughout this book is that of research-led or research-informed teaching. In other words, one characteristic all authors share is that their teaching is closely related to their own research, allowing students to share in their discoveries, insights and experiences and guiding them in making their own explorations. This is a two-way process, however, requiring lecturers to respond to the needs and interests of students. As the contributions demonstrate, the authors do not simply follow their own idiosyncratic interests or changing disciplinary fashions in their research and recycle the results for teaching purposes, in the vague hope that students will find them interesting and useful. Rather, they pursue a dialogue between teaching needs and research interests, adopting the perspective of students and questioning the wider relevance of their enquiries. For these reasons, this book is not only about narrowly conceived issues of teaching and curriculum but engages the discipline in its totality: teaching, research and the interaction between the two.

The aim of the book, then, is to rethink some of the fundamentals of the discipline. In so doing, we are not aiming for comprehensive coverage of the entire field, but rather to provide some examples, however provisional, of possible responses to the changing intellectual and social climate. Instead of a practical 'How to...' guide setting out the most efficient ways of communicating an unquestioned body of knowledge, we seek to interrogate what students *can* and *should* learn about and from music.

Despite a recent surge in relevant publications, traditionally there has been surprisingly little public reflection on the state of music studies in higher education. Although there are some similarities between our approach and that taken by the authors of *Rethinking Music* (Cook and Everist 1999), we are more concerned with music as an academic discipline, involving teaching and research and practice-based as well as scholarly approaches. Similarly, there is an undeniable overlap with the aforementioned *Introduction to Music Studies* (Harper-Scott and Samson 2009). However, whereas the latter addresses present and future potential undergraduate students, our book is primarily targeted at fellow academics and postgraduate students. Furthermore, the *Introduction* takes traditional sub-disciplines for granted, providing pithy and interesting snapshots on 'Music History', 'Theory and Analysis', 'Sociology of Music', 'Early Music', 'Jazz', 'Popular Music', 'Performance', 'Composition' etc. By contrast, we take a more critical approach to the way disciplinary knowledge and skills have historically been constituted, while seeking both to illuminate the intersections between sub-disciplines and approaches and to probe the continuing relevance of the divisions between them. Another group of existing publications largely

concentrates on more practical advice about teaching and assessment methods, ranging from ‘How to...’ guides for aspiring university teachers (e.g. Conway and Hodgman 2009; Davis 2012) – which, by their nature, rarely question established approaches and a relatively stable, seemingly authoritative curriculum – to others that strive to renew pedagogic practices and approaches. Among the latter, one of the most interesting is Haddon and Burnard (2016), which only appeared when the present book approached its completion. Indeed, we share many of the assumptions and goals with the authors represented in this latest contribution – which also includes a chapter by our own Louise Harris. One key difference, however, is that whereas that book is primarily concerned with the nitty-gritty of teaching and assessment techniques, ours is more about the wider questions of what to teach and why. In other words, Haddon and Burnard (2016) fits within education as a discipline (it is indeed shelved under ‘education’ in the University of Glasgow Library) in ways the present book does not.

John Butt opens the volume by outlining the history of higher education in Music in the UK, pointing out that this history is much shorter than is generally thought. As he explains, the curriculum was based on a

“Kapellmeister” style of education, training all undergraduates in progressively demanding skills of harmony, counterpoint and associated stylistic composition, together with challenging aural tests and keyboard skills ... [enabling students] to practise the role of a generally competent musical organizer, director or teacher, able to undertake a whole range of expected (and indeed unexpected) leadership roles.

Given that the careers the ‘Kapellmeister’ education was geared towards are not a realistic or even attractive option for the majority of students, Butt asks what function this tradition can still serve in the modern academy, arguing that

the retention of at least some aspects of the “Kapellmeister” tradition has the potential to give us insight into the workings of a music that remains contemporary – through its fragile ubiquity – while also embodying something of our cultural roots and values.

A concern for the history and tradition of the university in general and music teaching in particular is also critical for Martin Parker-Dixon, who envisages lecturers and students forming a ‘learning community’ and engaging in ‘rigorous argumentation ... about the art of music ... as an object of serious intellectual enquiry’. Significantly, for Parker-Dixon, practice-based work, such as composition and performance, should be subject to the same criteria and standards as scholarly work, so there should be no categorical distinctions between theory and practice or, for that matter, between lecturers and students. In his contribution, Björn Heile tackles another historical division, that between popular and classical music, arguing that the two

can and should be discussed in relation to one another under the auspices of an 'integrative music history'. As examples, he provides the contrasting consequences of the introduction of recording to the performance practice of jazz and classical music in the interwar period, and the more comparable responses to the student rebellions of 1968 in the fields of classical contemporary composition, jazz and rock.

A broadly similar approach pervades David Code's chapter, which approaches the Romantic *Lied* from a post- or para-canonic perspective that begins by finding value in the linguistic and musical strangeness it might now carry for most modern-day students (as opposed to the presumed familiarity with which it would once have entered a traditional 'classical' music education), and proceeds to view it through the prism of select performances and compositional appropriations whose various voices can be heard to invite similarly creative responses from us twenty-first century listeners. The focus on the curriculum (broadly speaking) is continued by Martin Cloonan and John Williamson, who argue for the inclusion of a critical perspective of the music industries. According to them, this is necessary not solely for the benefit of students' employability and career prospects or to meet employers' demands, but by providing insight into the music industries' working practices, without which the music produced cannot be properly understood. It is this critical dimension that empowers students to act as active participants in musical culture (whatever their career).

Eva Moreda Rodríguez opens a thematic focus on skills with a reflection on writing and a proposal to complement traditional academic genres, such as essays, with genres that were made possible by web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs and wikis. Such an approach, she argues, would help students to see the connections between academic study and real life and teach them skills that are undoubtedly useful in contemporary workplaces. Over and above this, however, technological innovations such as hypertext provide useful ways of connecting different aspects of music and musical experience (such as scores, sketches, audio or audiovisual recordings) as well as an innovative and creative mode of explanatory or critical commentary that is impossible to achieve in traditional paper-based writing. As so often, our communication technologies reflect aspects of their wider social and cultural contexts. Next, Nick Fells introduces the idea of 'generative practice', which emphasises 'the synthesis of practice from multifarious other sources: materials, sounds, works, personal histories, motivations, and repeated or repeatable processes and operations' – as opposed to the idea of creation out of nothing suggested by the more widely used term 'creative practice'. Generative practice, then, covers both composition and performance, but isn't contained by either of these terms; nor is it particularly concerned with their separation in traditional teaching practices. Moreover, in sympathy with Parker-Dixon's approach, Fells argues that generative practice crucially relies on critical thought, and that its assessment is therefore based on similar if not the same criteria as (other) academic work.

Like Fells, Louise Harris and David McGuinness are concerned with the teaching and, crucially, assessment of creative practice. Like Parker-Dixon, they develop their ideas in a dialogue, albeit an actual dialogue, not a Socratic one, in the process coining such concepts as ‘Guerrilla Learning Outcomes (GLOs)’ and ‘unassessables’. While these may be partly tongue-in-cheek, the ‘six principles for effective learning in creative practice’ on which they close are anything but. In actual fact, as touched on throughout this book, there is little here that is limited to creative practice: arguably, these principles are valuable for all learning and teaching in higher education. Note too the importance Harris and McGuinness place on a collaborative learning community, uniting lecturers and students, reinforcing the point made by Parker-Dixon about scholarship. The discussion of creative practice is continued by Bill Sweeney, who argues for a stronger consideration of the *process of creating*, including exploration and experimentation, as opposed to the *product*, which, inevitably, is the focus of assessment. As a consequence, he expresses scepticism about the importance of compositional style. The discussion of the learning and teaching of composition is concluded by a conversation between Drew Hammond and Jane Stanley who reflect on the wider role of composition in music study and higher education as a whole, considering that only a small minority of students are likely to continue with composition after their undergraduate studies. This inevitably raises questions about the value of composition for other activities – in music and beyond – and about the ideals, models and repertoires composition teaching is, directly or indirectly, based on.

The book is brought to a close by Nicholas Cook’s Afterword, in which he usefully contextualises the volume as a response to the encroachment of neo-liberalism in the academy, epitomised by the Browne Report (Browne 2010). While he appears to be broadly sympathetic with this agenda, he sounds noticeably more sceptical about the high modernist values that he identifies (again, not without justification) as the common ground shared by most if not all the authors. Instead, he goes further than most of the other contributors in his embrace of diversity, arguing that the traditional skills training that Butt characterises as the ‘Kapellmeister model’ is ‘undeliverable’ and that ‘the idea of a core applicable across all music degree programmes is wrong-headed’. But, then, as Cook also writes, ‘[t]he point of this book is not to prescribe solutions but to offer an example of what happens when you think in a sustained manner about the problems’.

Notes

- 1 The editors and contributors wish to thank two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the proposal for and draft version of this book.
- 2 It is noteworthy, for instance, that even a theoretical approach as influential as neo-Riemannian analysis still awaits a pedagogical adaptation. Students have to be referred to the original formulations of the theory, which are anything but straightforward and reader-friendly.

- 3 However, a more detailed look shows that this increase is concentrated in London, the South of England and Wales and that growth was more modest in the North of England, Northern Ireland and, particularly, Scotland (from 455 in 2007 to 515 in 2015). Furthermore, it is conceivable that part of the growth is associated with relatively new private providers, such as the Institute of Contemporary Music Performance (ICMP), the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) or the Brighton Institute of Modern Music (BIMM).
- 4 In this text, as is common practice, 'scholarly' is used as the antonym to 'practice-based' or 'practice-led' research or 'practice-as-research'. Needless to say, this is not to suggest that these latter approaches may not involve scholarly methods.

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