

Book Review

Music Education in the United States: Contemporary Issues. Edited by J. Terry Gates. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988. 328 pp. Index. Hardcover, \$29.95.

This book and its companion volume, *Applications of Research in Music Behavior*, edited by Clifford K. Madsen and Carol A. Prickett, are intended to provide the field of music education with "a needed current repository of exemplary theoretical writing and experimental research reporting from the United States." Both volumes emerged from the Alabama Project (subtitled *Music, Society, and Education in America*), a series of residencies and symposia sponsored by the School of Music of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, in 1984-85.

Music Education in the United States: Contemporary Issues consists of a foreword by general editor J. Terry Gates and four main parts written by various experts in the field of music education. Part 1, titled "Sociology of Music Education," contains chapters by Max Kaplan, Albert LeBlanc, Barbara Kaplan, and Peter R. Webster. In Part 2, Abraham A. Schwadron, Michael L. Mark, Charles B. Fowler, Malcolm J. Tait, and Gordon Epperson discuss "Philosophy of Music Education." Part 3, "Professional Methodology," consists of chapters by Merilyn Jones, Charles Leonhard, Gretchen Hieronymus Beall, Richard M. Gra-

ham, Robert Glidden, Craig Kirchoff, William LaRue Jones, and Amanda Penick. A single chapter by several University of Alabama graduate students, titled "The Alabama Project: Its Impact and Its Future," constitutes Part 4 ("Post-script").

The general editor has compared this book to the 1958 publication *Basic Concepts in Music Education* by Nelson B. Henry (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education), and it was obviously inspired by the earlier work. The two books, each representing the thoughts of selected leaders in music education but written some thirty years apart, demonstrate many similar concerns, especially for the types and quality of music taught and for the related issue of music education as aesthetic education. It is disturbing that, after thirty years, conditions in the field remain such that thoughtful writers still feel compelled to grapple with the fundamental purposes of American music education.

Changes have occurred during those years, however, and the contributors to this book point out some of them. As a group, the 1988 authors are considerably more critical of music education than were their counterparts in 1958, probably because, to quote from Michael Mark's excellent chapter: "We have arrived at a time in history when it is necessary to justify, and not just explain, music education in order to maintain support by

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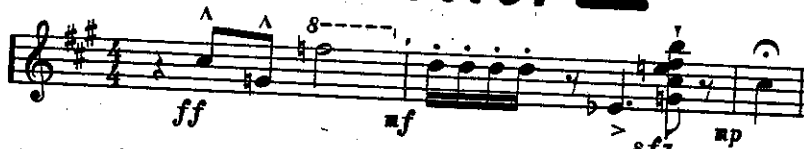
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school administrators and boards of education" (p. 118). Indeed, a concern that public school music education may be in serious jeopardy is both implied and directly stated throughout the book. In sharp contrast, C. A. Burmeister's statement, "No one seriously doubts that music belongs in general education" (p. 219), exemplifies sentiment expressed in *Basic Concepts*.

Similarly, whereas aesthetic education as a basis for music education was a major concern in 1958, much discourse in the current publication deals with the relationship of music education to society, a relationship that includes, but is not limited to, aesthetic education. Are the 1988 authors right to be so concerned about the fundamental purposes and position of music education today, or are they merely exhibiting the field's historic self-doubt over the public's perception of its worth? Whichever is the case, if music education could enrich the cultural life of the nation by providing meaningful musical experiences for individuals of all ages and from all social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic strata, the need for formal declarations of justification might seem less essential. The goal of ministering to society's perceived and actual needs, discussed in various forms by several of the contributing authors, represents an apparent broadening of the philosophy outlined in *Basic Concepts*. It is reminiscent of positions taken by James Mursell in *Music in American Schools* (New York: Silver Burdett, 1943) and in the *Documentary Report of the Tanglewood Symposium*, edited by Robert Choate (Washington, D.C.: MENC, 1968), but the current arguments are more specific and the calls for reform seem more urgent. The book deals with many other important issues. It is gratifying, for example, to see music in higher education well represented, not only by a chapter devoted to it but by numerous references in other chapters as well. One important point the authors make is that uni-

versity schools of music could better serve the needs of society by providing more experiences for general students and more diverse opportunities for music majors.

Also welcome is a recognition of the importance to society of informal music education: musical influences that occur outside school classrooms and private studios. The authors' criticisms of specific, one-size-fits-all learning theories and teaching methodologies provide additional evidence of a maturing profession. Some other recurring themes include the need for more music composition in American music education, concern for the continuing neglect of folk and popular music in the curriculum, and criticisms of the emphasis on technique at the expense of aesthetic enjoyment.

It is puzzling that choral music education is not accorded a chapter in the book, when general music, bands, orchestras, studio piano instruction, and methodology for exceptional children all receive special attention. Some readers might also wish for a separate summarizing chapter on the history of music education and chapters on physiology, psychology, and empirical research as they relate to music education. On the other hand, many of the authors have skillfully woven historical facts and insights into their discussions, and frequent references occur throughout this and the companion book to specific research findings—all of which suggest the importance of both historical and empirical research to thinking in the field today.

No one book can treat every subject in depth. Some parts are bound to be stronger than others, and some positions taken will be disputed by other intellectual leaders in the field. Nevertheless, *Music Education in the United States: Contemporary Issues* is without question an extremely important addition to the professional literature in music education. It contains the best thinking of some of the best people in the field and manages to arrive at a number of important consensual decisions. It should provide leadership and stimulate discourse by thoughtful music educators for many years to come.—*Jere T. Humphreys, associate professor of music, Arizona State University, Tempe*

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