

JOHN O' FLYNN AND PATRICIA FLYNN (EDS.), *MUSIC EDUCATION FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: LEGACIES, CONVERSATIONS, ASPIRATIONS*, Studies in Irish Music Education, 1 (Cork: Cork University Press, 2023), ISBN: 9781782055792, 280pp, €49 (hardcover)

In 1999 Marie McCarthy expounded on the state of music education within Ireland, advocating innovative practices amongst music educators at all levels 'to create new pathways that connect students and teachers within the primary-secondary continuum in imaginative ways, to link music in schools with music in communities and nurturing continuity in the child's own experience of music in the world'.¹ Much has happened since then with the creation of the Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) in 2010 and its later alignment with the International Society for Music Education (ISME), highlighting that music is now positioning itself as a key and well-established area of learning in Ireland.

This first volume of *Studies in Irish Music Education* is therefore a timely work, discussing the past, present and future position of Irish music education, the aim being to collect and collate a series of texts to provide informed discourse on a wide variety of relevant topics pertaining to the development of music pedagogy in Ireland. Published in 2023 and edited by John O'Flynn and Patricia Flynn, the book is in good hands. As prominent researchers in musical development, O'Flynn's expertise in exploring Irish music, and its links to national identity is evident, alongside Flynn's wealth of experience through her work in music education and the significance of music of national cultural importance.

This review aims to inform the reader of the aims and content of the publication and provide relevant guidance to assist in determining the book's suitability for their interests. The layout is evenly divided into three parts: Legacies, Conversations and Aspirations. Part 1 (Legacies) posits thoughts on music education initiatives in Ireland in the late twentieth century presented in three chapters. In Chapter 1, Gwen Moore highlights findings from the Music Education National Debate (MEND) conference report (1994-96) with much critical discourse. It is interesting to note the gender and presentation bias towards males and academics, with no representation from government officials, resulting in a non-accessible situation for everyday music teachers. Despite the evident limitations of the process, MEND is seen to pave the way for future conversations on curriculum development and accessibility of music education. Chapter 2, carefully crafted by Helen Phelan, focusses on the establishment

¹ Marie McCarthy, 'The Establishment of a Primary-Secondary Continuum in Irish Music Education', *The Irish Journal of Education*, 30 (1999), 38-53 (51)

of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance through the words of inspirational leader Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, whose legacy opened up a world of academic study previously unobtainable in the Irish performing arts scene. Harry White concludes Part 1 with Chapter 3 critiquing the 1996 Leaving Certificate Music Syllabus as an outdated system with no logical rationale or alignment with current state and educational changes.

The focus of the three chapters in Part 2 (Conversations) is rooted in ongoing dialogue based on philosophical perspectives that synthesise past and present policies. Chapter 4, by the influential proponent of music education Keith Swanwick, serves as a competent meta-analysis of literature in this field. This collection of texts is experience based and provides an insight into desired music education teaching and practice through the lens of equal opportunities and rich musical environments. This chapter is followed by John O'Flynn's auto-ethnographic account (Chapter 5) of his involvement in music in higher education and challenges faced during his professional journey. O'Flynn calls for a music manifesto in Irish higher education based on sound philosophical explorations. Chapter 6 diverts from the layout of previous chapters and presents the reader with an interview by John O'Flynn with David Elliott, author of the renowned work *Music Matters*.² This highly personal conversation covers Elliott's reflections on the future of music education, collaborations, and his perspectives on music teaching and learning in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic.

Part 3 (Aspirations) considers Ireland's response to changing social, cultural and economic situations and looks to future ambitions for music education in practice and research. As highlighted by Conaghan, Ireland does not have 'a developed specialist Instrumental Music Education (IME) policy and provision'.³ In Chapter 7, Mary Lennon addresses this through the legacy and initiatives of MEND, considering in detail the role of performance as a central component of Irish music education and the position of instrumental and vocal music education. Patricia Flynn (Chapter 8) examines the background to Ireland's national music education programme, Music Generation, and its innovative intentions to offer a performance music education that caters for all. One particularly radical aspect is its funding set-up which is evenly split between national and local funding offering a sense of community and ownership by local communities. It is viewed as a progressive model which facilitates new ways of thinking and the opportunity to acknowledge developments in music pedagogy of the future. As Flynn

² David J. Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

³ Dorothy Conaghan, 'Instrumental music education in Ireland: how subsidiarity and choice can perpetuate structural inequalities', *Irish Educational Studies*, 43.3 (2022), 533-549 (534)

states, 'Music Generation retains the flexibility to respond dynamically to whatever may arise for new generations of performance music education' (166).

Chapters 9 and 10 explore future educational pathways through two unique perspectives. Firstly, Randall Everett Allsup reflects on his own experiences as a university music educator in an international setting during the Covid pandemic in 2020 (Chapter 9). Being propelled into the world of remote teaching and learning, Allsup highlights the advantages and pitfalls, with the acknowledgement that 'remote learning has enlarged our teaching toolkit, as well as our empathy' (179). His honest appraisal of an enforced situation is perceptive and encouraging to the future course of music pedagogy. Marie McCarthy's closing chapter leads us to examine multiple ways of researching music education on meso and macro levels to gain a greater understanding of music in human evolution. She suggests the 'timeliness of developing a scholarly journal for Irish researchers' (196) potentially modelled on *The Finnish Journal of Music Education*. Music culture in Ireland is distinctive, and to this end McCarthy states it must be nurtured through a fostering of research pathways that address its particular approaches to music education in schools and the community.

This book engages the reader through a competent narrative flow and excellent range of issues. One small limitation is the slightly overlong introduction which, although providing an excellent road map, proffers too much of the actual chapter content at times. Conversely a key strength is the utilisation of experiences by those who have a particular interest in and knowledge base of each particular area of Irish music education. All the authors offer their own unique insights through scholarly and insightful discussions, informing and challenging the reader through carefully considered analysis of the development of music education in the 1990s and early years of twenty-first century Ireland. The smooth transition from one chapter to another suggests considerable discussion among the editors in the initial planning stages and ongoing development of the book. Overall, this is an authoritative read and germane publication for those keen to know more about Irish music education.

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