

LUCY GREEN, *MUSIC, INFORMAL LEARNING AND THE SCHOOL: A NEW CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2008), ISBN 978-0-7546-6242-6, 226pp, £16.99 (paperback)

Based at the Institute of Education, University of London, Lucy Green has researched sociological issues in music education for more than two decades. She first made a major theoretical contribution to the field with her 1988 book, *Music on Deaf Ears: Musical Meaning, Ideology and Education*.¹ In this, she developed a framework for the interpretation of musical meaning, proposing a dialectical relationship between aspects of musical meaning that are 'inherent' (i.e. arising from the sounds and patterns of music itself) and aspects that are 'delineated' (arising from extra-musical factors, for example, individual experience, nationality and gender).² In *Music, Informal Learning and the School*, Green replaces the term 'inherent' with 'inter-sonic' (87), mainly, it could be surmised, because the former had inadvertently or otherwise given rise to essentialist readings that were at odds with the original intention of the author. For Green, all aspects of musical meaning are socially constructed but this conception, however, does not lead her to dismiss ideas of, and/or aspirations towards, value and autonomy in formal music education.³

Aware of the often apparent incongruence between the aims of institutional music education and the social experience of many young people, Green's work sets out to examine the many problems experienced by alienated or disaffected students and in turn encountered by their music teachers. Characteristically, her research findings do not stop at the interpretive level, as Green is additionally concerned with developing practical strategies and methods for increasing young people's participation in, and broader engagement with music. Subtitles for two of her books clearly underline this motivation, namely, 'A Way Ahead for Music Education'⁴ and 'A New Classroom Pedagogy' for the book presently under review.

Music, Informal Learning and the School takes as its starting point the findings made and educational principles advanced in Green's earlier inquiry that examined informal

¹ Lucy Green, *Music on Deaf Ears: Musical Meaning, Ideology and Education* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988; second edition, Bury St Edmonds, UK: Arima Publishing, 2008).

² See Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³ See Lucy Green, *Meaning, Autonomy and Authenticity in the Music Classroom* (London: Institute of Education, University of London, 2005); and 'Musical meaning and social reproduction: a case for retrieving autonomy', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37/1 (2005), 77–92.

⁴ Lucy Green, *How Popular Musicians Learn: a Way Ahead for Music Education* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

learning practices among self-taught popular musicians.⁵ That research led her to identify five key ‘principles’ of informal music learning (9):

1. Informal learning begins with music chosen by the learners themselves (as opposed to formal education where musical materials are normally pre-selected by teachers).
2. The main method of repertoire- and skill-acquisition involves the copying of recordings by ear.
3. Peer and/or self-directed learning constitute an important part of informal learning processes.
4. Musical skills and knowledge are likely to be assimilated in ‘haphazard, idiosyncratic and holistic ways’ (10).
5. Informal music learning typically involves the integration of listening, performing, improvising and composing processes (rather than formal music education which tends to focus on just one of these activities at a time).

Music, Informal Learning and the School reports on original research in which the above five principles were systematically applied in a project involving 13–14-year-old pupils in post-primary schools in the greater London area from 2001 onwards. It would eventually become part of ‘Musical Futures’, a national music education project funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation between 2002 and 2006, and which culminated in the publication of online classroom resources.⁶ The resources provided online, including video files, provide a rich description of the project’s rationale and its aims, strategies, methods and outcomes.⁷

⁵ As note 4. In the present book under review, Green’s extensive review of literature acknowledges other writers who have explored the pedagogical potential of informal learning methods used by popular musicians, for example, Randall Everett Allsup, ‘Of concert bands and garage bands: creating democracy through popular music’, in Carlos Xavier Rodriguez (ed.), *Bridging the Gap: Popular Music and Education* (Reston VA: National Association for Music Education, 2004), 204–33; Sheri E. Jaffurs, ‘The impact of informal music learning practices in the classroom, or how I learned how to teach from a garage band’, *International Journal of Music Education*, 22/3 (2004), 189–200; and Heidi Westerlund, ‘Garage rock bands: a future model for developing musical expertise?’, *International Journal of Music Education*, 24/2 (2006), 119–25.

⁶ Lucy Green, with Abigail Walmsley, *Classroom Resources for Informal Music Learning* (2006), available for download from <http://www.musicalfutures.org.uk/resource/27235> (accessed 13 April 2010).

⁷ Musical Futures, at <http://www.musicalfutures.org.uk/> (accessed 13 April 2010).

Music, Informal Learning and the School is to be commended for what might be described as its risk-taking bravery in tackling head-on the problems of engaging young teenagers, in particular those described as 'disaffected', with school music. Green's claim to have established a new pedagogy—complementary to, rather than replacing formal approaches (22, 24)—is well-supported throughout the text in three major respects. First, it develops a systematic and original approach to music learning and teaching that is for the most part evidence-based. Second, Green's detailed description of this extensive project presents an open and reflective approach to its various stages and the problems encountered along the way. A third strength of the study is that it draws on and compares the perspectives and experiences of a wide range of pupils and their teachers. Not surprisingly then, much of the analysis is qualitative in nature, offering rich descriptions of, and valuable insights into young people's engagement with music. This focus on qualitative analysis is frequently interpolated with quantitative data from the wider 'Musical Futures' project.

Green's 'new pedagogy', based on the five principles outlined above, begins by 'dropping pupils into the deep end' (25). In this critical first stage pupils work in self-selected friendship groups with little or no support from teachers, choose the popular music recordings that they like, and set about to imitate the same music using their own vocal resources along with a range of 'popular instruments' (guitars, keyboards and drum kit) along with more conventional classroom instruments. In most cases the pupils have no prior experience of playing the available instruments. Predictably enough, a lack of supervision lends itself to initial chaos amongst most of the groups observed—for one thing, the pupils pay little attention to the relative difficulty of the pieces from which they are free to choose, at least at first. However, the study shows that after a number of similar sessions pupils become more focussed on the task, and that their teachers are led to make positive reappraisals in respect of individual contributions, group cooperation and musical outcomes.

The second stage, entitled 'modelling aural learning with popular music' (25), involves a degree of pedagogical intervention, insofar as pupils are now asked to imitate a particular recording. The track in question is 'Word Up' by the band Cameo (1986) and is selected by Green because of its general stylistic familiarity and its accessible riff structure (making it relatively easy to imitate, re-arrange and play). Additionally, pupils at this stage are provided with a CD which breaks down the various textural and structural components of the track. Pupils return to imitating songs of their own choice during the third stage, and begin to compose their own songs during the fourth and fifth stages. As they become more familiar and engaged with musical materials and ideas, Green observes a gradual shift on the part of the pupils from extra-musical to musical considerations. Criteria for song selections are now more likely to be based on 'purposive listening' (71–2) and on pupils' musical

abilities rather than on the popularity of the music alone. Similarly, the perceived musicality and/or leadership qualities of peers come to play a more significant role in the selection of members and associated tasks within the various groups (as opposed to making choices based solely on existing friendships or peer groups). Significantly, many of the pupils begin to learn from their peers and/or to ask their teachers for instructions on specific technical points (though the pedagogy remains firmly pupil-directed), and a considerable proportion of them are eventually motivated to take up formal lessons on instruments of their own choice. Surprisingly perhaps, the final two stages of the project involve a rather different set of challenges insofar as pupils are asked to produce performances of classical music pieces through imitation of recordings.

Green carefully organizes her overall observations into a number of pedagogical themes through which she discusses her research findings with reference to a broad range of literature drawn from the fields of education and music education. These not only include the musical activities of listening, performing and composing, but also extend to issues of learner autonomy, group co-operation and disaffected pupils. While most of the discussion is centred on pupils' statements and observed behaviours, the comments of teachers at various stages of the project are also recorded, and this provides a further set of viewpoints through which the efficacy of the project's 'alternative pedagogy' (22) comes to be appraised. The project's foray into classical music is described separately in the final chapter, and clearly this presents a hurdle for all concerned, not least for the pupils who share some rich insights into what might be considered as widespread perceptions of classical music among contemporary teenagers: 'boring and depressing' (155), 'makes you go to sleep', (155) 'it just goes over and over again' (156), 'it's just a bit pointless' (156). The findings from this phase of the research suggest changes in pupils' attitudes following direct engagement with selections from the canon of Western classical music, with evidence of some pupils displaying a new-found affinity with this general musical style. However, as suggested by the author herself, this aspect of the study is somewhat inconclusive, and, arguably, the application of informal music learning approaches to classical genres merits an inquiry all of its own. That said, Green presents a strong case for including classical music in the latter stages of her research, since this is frequently the music and/or the derivative methodologies that teenagers encounter in school music curricula, and from which so many become alienated.

This book lives up to its claim to present 'a new classroom pedagogy' and provides stimulating reading for music educators in various institutional settings. Most impor-

tantly, perhaps, it offers a representative and optimistic account of young people's potential for engaging with music, and, in turn, of the possible 'musical pathways'⁸ that young people can discover through inspired pedagogy.

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⁸ The term coined by Ruth Finnegan in her extensive ethnography of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes: *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).