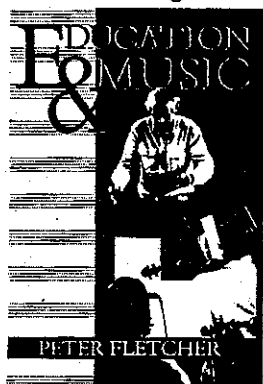


BOOK REVIEWS

Education and Music. By Peter Fletcher. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. 208 pp. Index. Hardcover, \$39.95.

Education and Music by Peter Fletcher, a longtime county music supervisor in England, is an unusual book. Designed for "general edu-



cators, music educators, and general musicians alike," it represents the author's "personal view of education and music and their inter-

relationship." Although it focuses on the British system of music education, much of it applies to the American system as well.

The book consists of a preface, an introduction, and three principal sections. Part one, titled "Aims—The Educational Background," is divided into five chapters, the first four of which are arranged chronologically: "The Greek Legacy," "The Christian Legacy," "The Social Legacy" (in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain), and "Post-War Developments: Art and Aesthetics." In these chapters the author discusses the historical effects of education and music on the development of European culture. In the fifth chapter, "Criteria for Aims," the author draws on historical insights provided in the first four chapters to propose three aims for music education and six criteria on which to

base these aims.

Although a number of the historical facts and interpretations presented are standard, some, especially those related to the British social class system of the nineteenth century, are different from those usually found in writings directed to music educators. Similarly, some of the analyses of the Greco-Roman and Christian influences are unique. Fletcher's views of the history of education and music education, though controversial, are refreshingly insightful.

One of the criteria on which music education aims might be based is particularly controversial: the assertion that, in general, music's "humanizing or civilizing influence... is dependent upon exceptional musical insight which can only result from a high level of skill acquisition and sustained musical experience." Most music educators, however, could agree with his aims for music education: (1) "to create an awareness of the power of music as a resource for the emotions," (2) "to encourage the practice of the art of music," and (3) "to enable children from all backgrounds to be able to discover talent and interest in music and to provide means of enabling them to reach their fullest potential in the subject."

Part two, "Objectives—The Musical Background," consists of four chapters: "The Genius of Western Music," "The Problems of Twentieth-Century Music," "Music in a Multi-Cultural Society," and "Objectives." In the first three chapters Fletcher discusses the nature of music, and in the fourth he proposes musical objectives on which

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his educational aims might be based. Some of his contentions are that (1) the best Western art music is so profound that it defies "universal understanding"; (2) the cultural and political problems of the twentieth century are so overwhelming that modern artists striving to follow the "personalized, self-expressive tradition of Western art," with its "precarious relationship with modern cultural mores," are largely not up to the task; and (3) modern multicultural attempts by composers and music educators to fuse popular and classical musical elements have been largely unsuccessful because the roots of such music "are not of common stock."

His musical objectives, which constitute his "content" of music education, include establishing historical perspectives (to include contributing social and political factors) on musical styles; eliciting personal and emotional responses to music; developing knowledge and understanding of ethnic musics and of the artistic components of all music; and encouraging self-understanding and fulfillment through music's emotional communicative power. As in part one, Fletcher's interpretations are unexpected, as can be seen in his criticism of the music of Brahms and Verdi and in his forthright questions about goals for multicultural music education.

In part three, "Method—The Practical Background," Fletcher advances several proposals for school music in Britain, while candidly acknowledging the compromises inherent in each because of resource limitations. He examines elitism versus egalitarianism, classroom music, instrumental music, ensemble opportunities, vocal music, popular music, ethnic music, listening to music, and priorities and resources for school music.

The main point found throughout this part of the book is that music education should concentrate its limited resources on providing applied instrumental instruction and ensemble performance opportunities at the highest possible level for students who have the desire and ability to succeed as performers. (The voice is counted as an instru-

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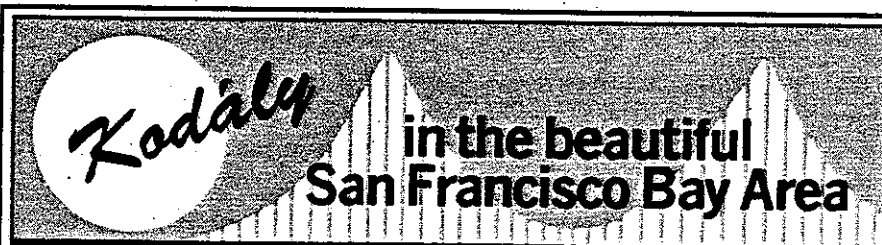
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ment.) Additionally, all students should have an opportunity to discover their level of interest and ability. Fletcher makes numerous proposals for achieving these ends, including directing a portion of the primary (elementary) general music program at developing and selecting talented and motivated students, and de-emphasizing classroom (general) music at the secondary level. Another admittedly radical proposal is to eliminate music from secondary schools altogether (at least after the first year) and to place it instead in music "centres," each of which would serve up to six secondary schools. These conservatory-like centers would offer a more specialized teaching staff, more space and equipment, and a wider variety of activity than is currently found in individual schools. All of these would allow students to be more flexible both in the pursuit of their interests and in determining their degree of commitment to any one musical activity.

Throughout the book Fletcher is openly elitist in his approach to music education, frequently drawing on historical arguments set forth earlier. Although he supports general music instruction to a degree and strongly urges the teaching of ethnic musics, he believes that a misguided commitment to social egalitarianism by educators (including some music educators) is leading to an overemphasis on general music at the expense of musical performance in the British schools. He is concerned that British school music "has become increasingly removed from music outside schools," and he blames this state of affairs on the fact that "the majority of school music takes place in a classroom," rather than in school rehearsal halls. Unlike the class-based elitist educational systems from ancient Greece to nineteenth-century England, which he describes in the early chapters, his proposed elitist system of music education would be based on individual ability and initiative.

To label this book controversial would be an understatement. Few major aspects of music education

or education in general escape the author's criticism, some of which is quite harsh. Among those groups or phenomena deprecated are professional performers, educational researchers, instrumental, vocal, and general music teachers, arts educators in general, selected composers, multicultural education, the British social class system, steel bands, "lovers" of visual art and music, and most music of the romantic period. Furthermore, to attribute the problems of music education largely to conspiratorial applications of fashionable educational theories seems a bit farfetched. On the other hand, it is difficult to disagree with Fletcher's wish to provide the best musical opportunities possible for all students.

Reviews of limited length are a poor substitute for an actual reading of most books, and this is especially true of *Education and Music*. Because of its scope, complexity, and provocativeness, this book must be read carefully to be understood. Those who do so are likely to be outraged by Peter Fletcher's pejorative style, his criticisms, and some of his conclusions, but at the same time they will be challenged and enlightened by his insights. For these reasons, the book is worth the considerable effort needed to read it.—*Jere T. Humphreys, associate professor of music, Arizona State University, Tempe*

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