

Book review

Estelle R. Jorgensen, *In Search of Music Education*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997, xv+126 pp.; Hardcover ISBN 0-252-02307-2, Softcover ISBN 0-2252-06609-X.

Estelle Jorgensen's *In Search of Music Education* consists of a preface and three chapters. In the preface, the author introduces two major principles that set her book apart from other notable music education philosophy books produced in North America. First, she makes a strong case for thinking of music education as considerably more than the teaching and learning of (mainly Western art) music in state-supported schools. Second, unlike Bennett Reimer and David Elliott, who have contributed book-length philosophies of music education, Jorgensen discusses principles for 'doing' music education philosophy instead of presenting a fully developed philosophy. This reviewer agrees wholeheartedly with the author's rejection of the possibility of a 'single universal philosophy or method' (p. 92), a view that seems congruent with the thinking of some British philosophers as well.

In the first chapter, Jorgensen discusses music education in relation to five different concepts of education. She develops the idea that one concept of education, schooling, fails to take into account music learning that occurs outside school walls and school-age years. For Jorgensen, 'the largely unintended, undirected, and indirect consequences of actions that turn out to be profoundly and inherently educational' (p. 21) should be considered by music education philosophers and practitioners. Clearly, music educators have neglected these important ideas for far too long. She also deals with the importance of procedural learning and the role of practice, teacher-centered and student-centered approaches to education, and the enculturation of musicians. Finally, she discusses the social nature of knowledge and learning, including the idea that teachers are not entirely responsible for their students' learning. One of the author's many important points is that the valuing of music as a school subject does not mean equality with other subjects, necessarily.

In the second chapter, Jorgensen discusses the nature of music through what she calls 'spheres of musical validity.' Essentially, the author devotes the first portion of the chapter to discounting various traditional explanations for the nature of music. She notes, correctly, that although music has form and function, scholars have 'largely overlooked social aspects of musical form and function until recently...', and that 'musical structures reflect and exemplify social structures'. She notes further that musicians have tended to view musics of the world through the 'rules undergirding Western classical music' (p. 35). Here, the author summarizes much of the best thinking from the music sociology literature, and she deals with such thorny issues as the selection of music for teaching in multicultural state-supported schools and judging musical greatness using criteria other than people's esteem for the music. She also discusses the difficulties involved in evaluating music across culture.

Next, the author turns to five phenomena that can explain the development of spheres of musical validity. After giving definitions and relatively brief explanations and examples of each - family, religion, politics, the music profession, and commerce - Jorgensen suggests important implications for music education. Next, she again argues convincingly for the necessity of considering music's cultural contexts in addition to its formal characteristics. Curiously, however, after emphasizing the importance of both, she neither gives criteria for selecting musical works based on those works' formal characteristics, nor does she refer readers to those who have done so. Instead, she focuses on the cultural side, perhaps because she assumed that most readers would be more familiar with the mechanics of musical form than with the social contexts of music. Regardless, a brief note to that effect and some references to appropriate sources would have added clarity to this chapter. Also missing from this chapter is a discussion of contextual criteria for selecting musical works for teaching

and learning. At the least, a more thorough discussion about the development of such criteria in the future seems in order. Questions remain about such issues as the appropriateness of specific types of music – like that of Elvis Presley or the Beatles, for example – whose principal value in music education may relate more to their contexts than to their formal characteristics.

These seemingly minor omissions in the second chapter lead to difficulties in the third, where the author begins by treating musical form and music context as an intellectual dialectical pair. She appears to give the two equal weight, which is somewhat confusing after her emphasis on the latter in the second chapter. Regardless, Jorgensen seems to want to stake out the middle of the musical form-social context continuum, and she succeeds once again in presenting a convincing case for the importance of social-cultural context in music education philosophy and practice.

A problem arises when Jorgensen attempts to make a strong philosophical case for teaching Western classical (and related folk) music and against teaching commercial music. After her most welcome and needed treatment of power groups and dominance issues in the first two chapters, she appears to reverse herself here when she argues that, 'mainly,' a particular social class does not propagate classical music. This is a difficult claim to accept without additional historical or sociological evidence.

Similarly, although undoubtedly Jorgensen is correct when she characterizes Marxist interpretations of class consciousness and conflict as 'overdrawn,' these phenomena do exist. Indeed, one could argue that all musics have strong class connotations. To be sure, music does cross class lines, as the author suggests. However, that virtually every 'product' crosses class lines to some extent is well known to marketers and others who study such things. Witness, for example, the opera-watching prostitute in the film *Pretty Woman*, and an advertiser's attempts to 'link' Grey Poupon Mustard to Rolls Royce automobiles. The author's assertions about the wide appeal of Western art music across cultural and class lines simply fail to convince this reviewer.

Jorgensen credits her reading of history for her ideas about weak associations between social class and European art music, but the German middle class's acceptance of art music during a relatively brief period resulted mainly from Martin Luther's powerful influence in that country. Middle class acceptance was much weaker in Calvinist and Catholic countries, and art music has never been the music of choice in the USA. Indeed, one could argue that art music survives today because it receives support from relatively small but powerful groups, or classes, of people.

Furthermore, it is likely that most Western European peasants had little or no exposure to the sophisticated art music of their era. We simply do not know much about the musical practices and tastes of the common-practice-period-era European lower classes, in part because they lacked the requisite political and economic power and literacy to preserve historical records. Today, the situation is different because the lower socio-economic classes hold more power, relatively speaking, than did their earlier counterparts. More importantly for the preservation issue, it is now possible to preserve records of all types of music and musical practices through technology. The problem with relying on secondary-source historical accounts for insights into issues related to social class is that historians tend to filter history through lenses formed from their own experiences and values, both of which can differ markedly between social classes. Traditionally, the upper classes and their music have received a disproportionate share of historians' attention, to say the least. Therefore, despite all evidence to the contrary, the historical aberration of middle class acceptance of art music in Lutheran Germany continues to haunt classically trained musicians to this day.

Jorgensen appears to fall into another trap when she opposes commercial music because of the intentions of its producers. Earlier in the book, she argues convincingly that the intentions of producers should not figure into evaluations of the worth of a given music, but here she cites the intentions of classical musicians and their patrons as a justification for teaching classical music.

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These criticisms notwithstanding, Jorgensen weaves the thoughts of many of the world's greatest thinkers on education, music, and music education into her well-reasoned discussions in the preface and first two chapters. Moreover, she recommends some important new ways of envisioning music education that expand the intellectual parameters of the discipline beyond those set forth in any previous work on the subject. The strong reasoning and broad thinking in the first two chapters seem to falter a bit in the third, where she takes a conservative position about the types of music she deems suitable for teaching and learning. While the reviewer acknowledges that the author's positions on these difficult issues may be entirely correct, acceptance of her positions must await supporting historical data and philosophical reasoning beyond that provided in this book.

David Elliott took bold, important steps away from music education as aesthetic education – a philosophy of Western art music applied to music education – when he proffered a philosophy based on culturally based musical practices. Jorgensen has broadened Elliott's ideas about school-based music education and Reimer's arts-as-products philosophy to include a wide range of music teaching and learning practices. In redefining music education to include far more than has traditional music education research, philosophical and otherwise, Jorgensen has not only broadened music education philosophy, as she modestly suggests in the preface, but deepened it as well.

This is a beautifully written book. It is succinct, with each carefully chosen word lending weight to the author's arguments. The result is elegant writing, but the book is more than that. The intellectual contributions in the first two chapters should stand for some time as exemplars of philosophical thinking and writing. The third chapter should stimulate more thinking and writing on the devilish issues raised there – an equally important contribution in itself. Music educators owe Estelle Jorgensen a debt of gratitude for her outstanding contribution to the field's philosophical literature.

This book deserves a longer, more thorough review that enumerates its many strengths. Since such a review is not possible here, the reviewer recommends the book as a 'must read' for all music educators.

Jere T. Humphreys