

## EDITORIAL

By

Janet E. Cape, *guest editor*  
Westminster Choir College

I am pleased to introduce the 25<sup>th</sup> issue of *Visions of Research in Music Education*. This volume brings together articles that, in various ways, highlight issues of responsiveness and relevance in music education. It presents the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including secondary and university students and in-service teachers, and—borrowing from Evan Tobias’s article in this issue—amplifies voices that are sometimes “lost in the mix” (p. 5).

The authors of the first two studies examine students’ experiences with popular music through a lens of gender, and raise questions about educators’ responsiveness to the ways that male and female students engage with popular music. Wai-Chung Ho and Wing-Wah Law focus on the popular music preferences and experiences of 1,739 Shanghai adolescents, as well as their perspectives on learning popular music in school. Ho and Law note differences in the listening and learning preferences of female and male participants, and argue that socialization in educational institutions and other settings may play an important role in shaping these preferences.

Evan Tobias, on the other hand, looks specifically at the experiences and perspectives of four female students participating in a high school songwriting and technology course. Through secondary analysis of his dissertation research Tobias highlights issues related to technology, control, and societal norms regarding women’s production and performance of popular music. Like Ho and Law, Tobias questions whether gendered norms may be reinforced within popular music education, and he urges educators to consider the influence of gender performativity on their students’ musicking.

Articles three through six pertain to teacher education, pedagogy, and professional development. Vicky Johnson considers the relevance of skills and concepts taught in collegiate music theory and aural skills courses to in-service music educators. Drawing upon survey results as well as themes present in participants’ open-ended comments, she notes that music educators

perceived foundational skills and concepts, such as an understanding of key signatures and the ability to sight-sing melodies, as most relevant to their work with students. Several participants wished they had received instruction on how to teach these skills and concepts to others, while others regretted what they perceived as inadequate aural skills training. Johnson suggests that the survey results might assist collegiate music theory educators who wish to better respond to the needs of music education students.

H. Christian Bernhard likewise examines teacher education outcomes in his study of instrumental music educators' confidence in teaching improvisation. Drawing from his survey research, Bernhard reports that practicing music educators had "moderate" confidence teaching NAfME Achievement Standards for grades K-4, and "slight" to "moderate" confidence teaching standards of improvisation for grades 5-12. Further, while respondents reported only slight to moderate confidence in their own ability to improvise, they expressed moderate to great interest in learning more about how to teach improvisation. Bernhard's results suggest the need for additional professional development experiences for preservice and in-service teachers, and ask us to reconsider the place of improvisatory experiences in teacher education.

Andrew Goodrich, Jon Kracht, Josh McDonald, and Colin Sapp investigate one such experience in their examination of the informal comentoring that took place in a university jazz ensemble. The authors found that over time comentorship evolved from "top-down" coaching by more senior musicians to an exchange of ideas between players with varying levels of experience. As in Tobias's study, jazz ensemble participants appreciated having a "voice" in their section and ensemble, and the authors suggest that comentoring may help underrepresented populations to feel more comfortable contributing to the direction of the ensemble. Participants who worked and learned together also described a sense of camaraderie with their peers. The authors' findings highlight the potential benefits and limitations of comentorship as a pedagogical strategy.

In another article pertaining to the relevance of teacher education and development, Brandon Haskett explores the impact of the Haystack Steelpan Workshop, a professional development and outreach program designed to support steelpan teachers and performers. The program, which operated from 1982 to 1989, served as an important hub for networking and sharing knowledge among steelpan enthusiasts. Haystack provided access to preeminent steelpan

teachers and builders, and helped to establish and grow the art form in North American schools and universities.

In the final article of this issue, Wilbur Baker Jr. describes his survey of New Jersey public school music teachers regarding supplementary compensation and merit pay. While a majority of respondents favored supplementary pay for extra duties, some participants expressed concern about the negative effects that merit pay might have on collegiality and teaching quality, while others worried about unfair evaluations, nepotism, and the erosion of salaries. Respondents present important perspectives regarding the use of financial compensation as a means of retaining quality teachers and rewarding achievement.