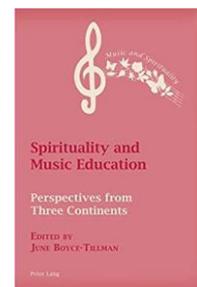


BOOK REVIEW

Spirituality and music education: Perspectives from three continents (Boyce-Tillman, Ed.)

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This compilation is the fruit of over a decade of collaboration between a group of committed practitioners and researchers. They have presented at international conferences and formed a working group named 'Spirituality and Music Education' to explore the complex and multifaceted issues that surround integrating and researching the position of spirituality within music education. The education settings extend beyond the school classroom and musical activities with children and young people to wider social, community-based and cultural contexts. These include the responses of adults to music listening and making that resonate with aspects of spirituality. Diverse cultural and political perspectives are never far from the surface of these discussions. The perspectives connect to musical activities presented by authors spanning three continents: Africa, Europe and North America. The final chapter (14) by Diana Harris explores 'Music in its Cultural Context' (p. 279) with a focus on work in the UK; but that additionally includes the results of some interviews with participants who have spiritual roots and traditions within another continent, that of Asia.

As editor, June Boyce-Tillman brings her years of experience in this field of study to create a well-balanced text. Following her introductory chapter, the next six chapters focus on theoretical perspectives of the central topic of the book. In their previously published 2015 review of the literature in presenting a 'conceptual model', Liesl van der Merwe and John Habron (Chapter 1) "identified two core phenomena [...]: music as a holistic experience and music as drawing on body, space, time and relationships to offer an experience of the sacred" (p. 29). In Chapter 2, Marie McCarthy develops the 'holistic', 'multisensory' and 'non-linear' nature of a child's emergent relationship with the spiritual, alongside the 'transcendent' and 'ineffable' aspects within music. At the beginning of her chapter there

is a not-so-positive example of an adult memory of a childhood musical experience, stressing the underpinning of time, place and cultural context. Matthew Sansom (Chapter 3) draws on his extensive experiences as a performer, teacher in higher education, and researcher in formulating connections between improvisation, spirituality and the metaphysics pertaining to 'Perennialist philosophy.' Anchen Froneman's research focuses on 'Embodiment as Locus of Aesthetic and Spiritual Musical Experience' (Chapter 7) within the performance practice of four chamber musicians.

Following on from this more theoretical first section, although not without reference to the practical, the fundamental focus of the second part of the book is on practice. References to song and song texts, solo and group singing, and early vocal interactions feature to some extent in all of these further seven chapters. Some interesting connections can be drawn. For example, we find Eurika Jansen Van Vuuren's exploration of how a spiritual dimension can continue to be nurtured during the musical demands of singing competitions in South Africa (Chapter 11). A tentative connection might be made to a quantitative study by Arvydas Girdzijauskas (Chapter 13) that indicates that students in Lithuania "from choral singing schools have shown the traits of spirituality a little more maturely than the other students" (p. 276). Adults also feature in this second section. Examples include: Grant Nthala's chapter (10) of how music connects with spirituality, explorations of individual/'group identity' and 'hope' at a support centre for people living with HIV/AIDS in Malawi, and from South Africa there is a metaphorical analysis by Hetta Potgieter (Chapter 9) of Coenie de Villiers' "Afrikaans song... *Katedraal* (Cathedral)" (p.167), following interviews with four people from the Dutch Reformed Church.

The authors are mindful to differentiate overarching spiritual themes from those relating to specific religious or faith traditions. This is not straightforward, as exemplified in Chapters 5 and 6 by Susan Quindag and Frank Heuser respectively, where there is reference to the ontological and ethical complexities within the US, with educators not being permitted to teach any particular religion. It is difficult to separate reference to aspects of the spiritual, particularly with the addition of text and given the contemporary and ubiquitous availability of music, from so many diverse cultural traditions.

As a music therapist, I found many resonances, gained insights and was inspired by new questions from studying the chapters in this text. How can we begin to describe the numinous moments that can occur in individual or group music therapy? Such moments seem embodied physically but also to transcend earthly boundaries, reaching to places where words seem inadequate. How can such moments relate to any therapeutic aims and the required rigours of professional, local, national and international policy documents and regulations?

In her review chapter (8) on 'Spirituality in Parent-Infant Musical Communication', Gerda Pretorius integrates familiar perspectives for music therapists into "A Systems-Based Approach to the Construction of Primary Consciousness" (p. 146). It is informative to place discussions of the early intersubjective music-focused encounters between parent and child, as elaborated in writings by such scholars as Stern (2010), Malloch and Trevarthen (2009), alongside research on *flow* states by Csikszentmihalyi (2008) and colleagues. The young infant appears to initiate, enjoy and want more of these special moments, described by Pretorius as "a holistic encounter" with "increased levels of complexity" (p. 150). And she concludes that such moments can be "a natural condition for the spontaneous occurrence of spirituality" (p. 161).

Phiwe Ndodana Makaula's chapter (12) exploring the 'Philosophy of *Ubuntu* on Bhaca Music and Social Structure' (p. 237) poses some thought-provoking questions for music therapists accustomed

to group cohesion being felt through a sense of shared pulse and rhythmic entrainment. The *Ubuntu* philosophy teaches that “a person is a person through others” (p. 238) which means, for a satisfying musical encounter, that “the one person’s drumming must be different from that of another, filling in spaces (cross rhythms) of the other pattern; this gives it a musical sense and direction” (p. 241).

June Boyce-Tillman’s introductory chapter provides background to the book and situates themes elaborated in the text within a series of ‘strands.’ I would have found it helpful to have read some kind of closing epilogue to balance this useful introduction, as bookended markers for the text.

I imagine colleagues from the fields of music therapy, music education, community music and all interested in the use of music in health and wellbeing, healing and the connections to spirituality, will be drawn to certain chapters in this compilation and find much on which to reflect and relate to their own practices. The contributors originate not only from a range of different cultures but also from different areas of practice, including secondary and higher education, with research projects exploring various spiritual traditions. As a music therapist it is my understanding that ‘Music and Spirituality’ was introduced for the first time at a World Congress in Music Therapy as one of the three main overarching themes at the 10th Congress held in Oxford in 2002, when the keynote address by Michael Mayne was entitled *Music, Spirituality, Healing: This Intimate Stranger* (Mayne, 2002). More recently, the 2017 conference *Exploring the Spiritual in Music* was held at the Nordoff Robbins Music Therapy Centre in London, co-chaired by the chief editor of this journal, Giorgos Tsiris (2017, 2018), whose own doctoral study presented the results of an international survey of music therapists’ perceptions of spirituality as well as an ethnographic exploration of how spirituality is performed in everyday music therapy contexts. The door now seems wide open to further journeys of discovery.

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