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Popular Music in Education Special Issue

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Abstract

This *Popular Music in Education* (PME) special issue includes contributions discussing developments in several countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Singapore and the United States. It covers a range of approaches, exploring technology, hermeneutics, theory, guitars, jazz, songwriting, DIY/DIWO, politics and music industry perspectives. As music institutions have increasingly opened their doors to popular music, this has inevitably led to a greater level of interest in how you teach and learn popular music. PME is presenting a louder presence within Popular Music Studies (PMS), as the ground prepared by PMS has made space for a wave of new PME courses and students to sweep through educational contexts. In the wake of such expansion, this special issue intends to promote a further understanding of relevant issues such as

pedagogical best practice. The development of PME is something that is long overdue, and that seems likely to greatly expand and enrich the frame of PMS.

Editorial introduction

Popular music education (PME) has garnered limited attention during the development of popular music studies (PMS). There have been few researchers who have specialised in this field, and only a comparatively small number of books and papers on the subject. It has become a focus to a greater extent as the study of popular music practice has become more common in higher education institutions such as universities and colleges, as well as in schools, further education and community settings. This has meant that an increasing number of popular music courses have appeared. Recently PME has been discussed by IASPM at its international conferences, especially in South Africa in 2011 as thirty years of PMS was assessed. In its next biennial conference in Glasgow 2016, the International Society for Music Education (ISME), the largest music education organisation globally, will for the first time have a strand related to PME running through the whole conference, as well as dedicated sessions.

In a number of countries, developments in PME have increased in speed and quantity, and it seemed to the IASPM Journal editorial board that this was a good time to explore the subject in a special issue. Editorial board member Rupert Till, Reader in Music at the University of Huddersfield (UK), initiated this project. His interests in PME result from over twenty years of teaching on popular music degrees, focusing on composition, performance and technology, as well as musicology. He had been alerted to the increasing level of academic interest in PME when speaking at an event organised at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, by the IASPM UK and Ireland branch, in collaboration with the UK Higher Education Academy. The event was over-subscribed, raised a number of issues, and made it clear that there was enormous interest in the subject. This special issue was one way of encouraging further discussion, with a wider international perspective.

In order to provide expert editorial input, IASPM Journal invited two leading voices in the field to participate as guest editors. Lucy Green is Professor of Music Education at the UCL Institute of Education (UK). Her research has explored informal learning in PME, and her adaptation of popular musicians' learning practices for school and instrumental tuition settings has been particularly influential on current thinking and practice within education for young teenagers, as well as teacher-training courses, in countries across the globe. Professor Don Lebler of Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University (Australia), is a world leader in the field of PME in higher education, and is an important figure in the development of PME in Australia and New Zealand. Courses he has been involved in are groundbreaking examples of the integration of pedagogical theory into practice-led popular music higher education qualifications.

This special issue includes contributions discussing developments in several countries, including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Singapore and the United States. It covers a range of approaches, exploring technology, hermeneutics, theory, guitars, jazz, songwriting, DIY/DIWO, politics and music

industry perspectives. We have tried to cover different perspectives, and are aware that we can only present a selection of topics.

We had to be exceptionally selective, from a large number of submissions, and a number of interesting areas of research that were presented to us have not been included in this publication. We hope to see some of them emerge in other publications in the future. We are keen to present this special issue as part of an ongoing process of the development of PME. It follows on from a special issue of the *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (the journal of IASPM's US branch) in 2009, which focused on popular music pedagogy, aimed in particular at PME in the US. A number of conferences in this subject area are occurring during the year after the publication of this special issue, which we hope will further explore the subjects raised here. Furthermore, we have collaborated with the editors of the forthcoming Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Music Education (edited by Gareth Dylan Smith, Matt Brennan, Phil Kirkman, Zack Moir and Shara Rambarran), and see this somewhat larger volume as something that will be very complimentary to our own.

PMS, somewhat excluded from music departments in Universities, developed with a particular emphasis on contextualised approaches, often focused on for example cultural studies, sociology or media studies. In recent years PMS has expanded to include a greater body of research focused on music itself and music making practices, in addition to discussing the cultures surrounding them. As music institutions have increasingly opened their doors to popular music, this has inevitably led to a greater level of interest in how you teach and learn popular music.

It is our contention that PMS includes research that focuses on popular music practice; its analysis, contexts and cultures; and how these are taught and learned. Although no one has suggested that PME is outside of PMS, neither has the former been included in discussions of the definition of the latter. This clearly now needs to change. PME is a part of PMS, and vice-versa. PMS has much to gain from a greater understanding of pedagogy related to its studies. PME in turn, has much to gain from a perspective that includes cultural and contextual issues (such as reception, mediation and identity); popular music practices (such as composition, performance and production); musicology, theory and analysis; and a thorough interdisciplinarity.

For the moment, PME is presenting a louder presence within PMS, as the ground prepared by PMS has made space for a wave of new PME courses and students to sweep through educational contexts. In the wake of such expansion, a further understanding of pedagogical best practice is very welcome. The development of PME is something that is long overdue, and that seems likely to greatly expand and enrich the frame of PMS.