Ch. 08 - Embracing and Navigating Uncertainty: Estelle Jorgensen’s Contribution to International Wisdom

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Estelle Jorgensen’s Contribution to International Wisdom

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Abstract

This chapter will address the multiplicity of models and metaphors set out in Jorgensen’s *Pictures of Music Education* (2011). Boyce-Tillman will examine the concept of wisdom and its necessity for choosing a particular strategy in a particular context. Illustrations will be pulled from the author’s pedagogical experiences in and outside formal institutions like the university, school, and church. Wisdom is a necessary component of Jorgensen’s search for justice, and it builds upon an awareness of the value-systems underpinning how a Subject makes choices, particularly in the search for a common humanity. The aim of the chapter is to illustrate how Jorgensen’s wisdom has nurtured much philosophical scholarship in music education and enabled debates between teachers and policy makers internationally.

Introduction

In an age of systematization, bureaucratization, and state control, wisdom is in short supply. James Tapper in *The Guardian*, UK on May 13, 2018 describes how 40,000 teachers quit the profession in the UK in 2016—9% of the workforce. This has left a 30,000 shortfall of classroom teachers resulting in larger classes and the increased use of supply teachers. A parent describes how her primary school aged child had nine teachers in the space of one year. The problems in the UK teaching profession are identified as recruitment, retention, and workload. Tapper discusses workload and work/life balance; but, with support from the Chief Executive of the Education Support Partnership, he says that teachers have no sense of any agency or autonomy. Teachers describe continual form filling and regular
observations of their work. Chances for anyone to make choices whether informed or ill-informed are restricted by rules, curricula, and codes of practice.

This deprives professionals of exercising judgment—which for me is the essence of Wisdom—judging whether this is the correct path or another one. The danger of this is that the longer this situation persists the more tightly people are enclosed in the institutional boxes and the less likely they are to see outside the myths they live by.¹

I started teaching in the UK in 1966—before we had a National Curriculum (followed in the US by the Standards movement). Teaching, certainly at Primary Level (up to aged 11), was controlled by the teachers themselves, although at Secondary level curricula were more controlled by the examination system at aged 16 and 18 (the Ordinary Level and Advanced Level exams). Certainly, some teachers at this time followed somewhat eccentric and idiosyncratic paths but, in general, it enabled staff to make choices related to the needs of a particular group of children in a particular place at a particular time. Schemes of work were contextual—the nature of wisdom.²

Challenging Assumptions

Among the symptoms of transforming music education, music educators and those interested in their work need to break out of the little boxes of restrictive thought and practice and reach across the real and imagined borders of narrow and rigid concepts, classifications, theories, and paradigms, to embrace a broad and inclusive view of diverse music educational perspectives and practices.³

In the pursuit of this ideal, Estelle set out to critique existing modes of thought, as well as to nurture new ways of thinking by means of philosophical debate around music education. I remember my first visit to the International Society of Music Education Conference. I was already a feminist and concerned with the underlying assumptions of the society. It was fortunate that Estelle had been chosen to chair the session in my first paper—on my doctoral research on children composing and improvising. Meeting her for the first time, I found a kindred spirit who was also critiquing the prevailing views. I remember clearly her pointing out how only one model of womanhood was being represented by the women who held positions of authority in the society. This nurturing of my burgeoning value systems was highly significant for a newcomer upon the international scene. Here was someone who was able to embrace a variety of positions which enabled her to leave teachers free to make appropriate choices for the prevailing circumstances at the time. Hers is a dialectical approach to teaching as journey: “Continuing to be a student, a fellow traveler with our students in a community of learners, can help us keep an open mind.”⁴
The Philosophy of Music Education

From this first encounter I became a regular attender at the Philosophy of Music Education Conferences which challenged the dominant music education in the US and enabled us to challenge those prevailing elsewhere. I remember going to Birmingham (which the Americans pronounce so differently from us in the UK, with a strong emphasis on “ham” which we drop!) led by Anthony Palmer and Frank Heuser (who became a very good friend lasting on into the Spirituality and Music Education Group SAME). Lake Forest in Illinois in 2000 with Mary Reichling and Forest Hansen was a wonderful site, and I felt I was beginning to join a group of like-minded people. Hamburg in 2005 with Charlene Morton, Paul Woodford, Frede Nielsen, and Juergen Vogt saw an even greater range of philosophies being debated from a variety of continents and political positions.

Feminist Debate

In all these conferences there was always a strong strand of feminism. The voice of the feminist scholar had often been systematically excluded from educational debates; women were often seen more as practitioners rather than philosophers. When I met Estelle this process was still alive and well. Women do, men think, was being effectively perpetuated in many of the early education conferences that I attended. This is clearly expressed in John Curwen taking over Sarah Glover’s inventing of sol-fa signs and Carl Orff’s use of Gunild Keetman’s ideas on composing and improvising. Women classroom teachers developing methodologies from practical experience in music education were seduced by the power of the men who held more respected positions in universities and conservatoires. Through the Philosophy of Music Education Review, lost stories of silenced women were rediscovered and current women philosophers were encouraged and enabled to present positions that challenged dominant heteropatriarchies. Feminist geographies of education and feminist theories were brought to bear on diverse practices and theories and explored to develop new theoretical perspectives. European philosophers such as Deleuze and Guatarri and Michel Foucault were brought together with American philosophers and thinkers. Butler and Braidotti informed debates about selfhood including gender and sexuality. Qualitative methodologies and autoethnography found a place on the platform and developed in a variety of forms and rigors. Narratives of institutional power were challenged and prevailing mythologies shredded by the developing raft of qualitative and narrative methodologies. Case studies were presented critically and included the standpoint of the researcher as participant observer. Dominant definitions were challenged by practice-based knowledge and lived experience.
**Village and Community**

In her *Pictures of Music Education*, Jorgensen offers, in her usual lively way, pictures and metaphors that illustrate a variety of educational approaches. Through these, she initiates debates around fundamental philosophies and models of education. I love the pictures of Village and Community with their associated values of co-operation, inclusion and compassion. I have written about the need for these values; but she is correct to identify the gap between these and the competitive exclusivist values of the wider world including that of the professional musician. We have had to counsel students who have succeeded in this protected environment (in our raft of Foundation Music activities at the University of Winchester) about the world they are entering. On the other hand, the rise of community musicking has found a way to pursue these musical values. However, on competitive TV programs like *Britain’s Got Talent* we often see the result of an all embracing/all nurturing environment when a performer has no idea how their singing appears when transported to a public stage.

**Capitalist Education**

Jorgensen’s Boutique and Consumption picture fits well with developments in higher education (HE) at present, as capitalism bites hard into the traditional value systems of UK universities. With increasing student debt, the students are just like supermarket customers: if they choose to spend their debt money at Winchester University, lecturers and professors have jobs; but if they choose to spend it in Southampton we have not. This links our curricular offerings to the world of commerce at its worst. In my opinion, HE should be critiquing the boxes in which we live so that we can choose to live in them or not. Students want to buy a career from us, but in music these careers are rapidly changing; in classical music at least, these are diminishing. She sees the danger for the classical tradition:

If the Western classical tradition is to thrive in the future, we need to create music that is interesting and vital to today’s listeners and we need to emphasize contemporary music in our music programs from elementary through tertiary education. In this area in particular, we need programs enabling portfolio careers. It could be that we are turning out too many straightforward classical performers for the classical music profession today—that we need to widen the scope of classical music education programs and embrace pluralism and diversity.

Jorgensen’s Factory and Production model is one that I have regularly critiqued in relation to the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music graded examinations which formed part of my music education. I entered a well-oiled system that my dance band pianist granddad thought would make me better than him. I was systematically squeezed into a pre-prepared production line with set pieces and examiners. As in a factory, I was shaped and molded, although...
I fortunately had a piano teacher with a somewhat wider vision at times, including a much-loved percussion band. Nonetheless, my entry into piano playing felt like a series of fences that needed jumping. The unfortunate thing is that it concentrates on the ability to read western classical notation; although expressive qualities are encouraged, few candidates went beyond the decoding process. It was well-illustrated for me by a candidate we were auditioning for an award, who started by giving a magnificent performance of a Brahms clarinet sonata from memory. In this, she, the accompanist, the clarinet, and the now embodied Brahms score united in an entrancing performance. She followed it by saying: “I thought I ought to offer you the piano; but I have never really performed on it. I have just done the grades.” The orate traditions show us how to engage fully with musicking. A critic of a concert involving community choirs in Winchester Cathedral wrote that we seldom hear this rich fulsome sound. Most cathedral concerts have copies between the choir and the audience. The classical traditions have a long route to get to this rich embodied sound through the process of decoding classical notation. Both aspire to take people to another way of being. But so often classical musicians get stuck in the decoding process and never reach the other side.

The Factory model also creates rejects. If I tell people I am a musician, they often tell me that they are not, an identity that they support by informing me that they failed Grade Four. At the Institute of Education at London University, we had many students from the London music colleges, wanting a teaching qualification. One of the exercises that I had them do, with the other students acting as a class, was to introduce an instrument to a class of nine-year-olds. One student brought her violin with her. It was a brilliantly planned lesson: she brought in matchboxes and rubber bands for us to tighten and loosen; then she showed us how she tuned her violin. She played a recording of Elgar’s Salut d’amour and asked us to write poems to it. Then she told us to put our hands up when we heard the first tune again. It was a well-judged lesson; we were gently led into all the domains of the musical experience. “Why did you not play your violin?” I asked. “Did you not study it?” “Oh, yes,” she replied. “I studied violin at the Academy; but I know that I do not make a good sound.” I wondered how much money had been spent to create this Factory reject. This story has been replicated in so many people’s lives. But it is so easy to market these production lines across the world, even to places where contextually they might be inappropriate.

The Place of Tradition

The maintenance of tradition is fueled by what Estelle calls the Artist and Apprentice model: this concentrates on preserving a tradition as it has been, excluding new ways of seeing and understanding what Tia de Nora calls music’s affordances. This still is at its most prevalent in some conservatoires, although there are some moves towards...
preparations for a portfolio career.\textsuperscript{21} This needs to include seeing teaching as prestigious as performing.

There is a different approach to tradition in Estelle’s Home and Family picture. This draws on feminist theorists such as Sophie Drinker\textsuperscript{22} but also theorists of informal learning practices such as Lucy Green.\textsuperscript{23} It is the traditional way that many women have learned, taught, and used music. When my children needed consoling, I did not return to the score for a song but carried on improvising until they went to sleep. My entry to music until I was aged 11 was largely through home and family but for the private piano lessons. There were hymns in church and finally a church choir that did include girls which introduced me to the Anglican sacred choral repertoire. A travelling concert party visiting homes for the elderly gave me a platform for singing Victorian/Edwardian bourgeois ballads such as \textit{Bless this House}. I look back with joy of sitting on canvas chairs on holiday listening to orchestras on the bandstand, playing popular tunes and songs from the shows. There were community songs and novelty numbers which included such phenomena as the musical saw.

I have spoken\textsuperscript{24} about the role of places of worship as sources of music education in the UK, as music is deleted from school curricula by the government’s embracing of the Baccalaureate which includes no arts. These faith traditions may be the only way for young people to get free musical tuition. Many professional brass players in the UK learned first with the Salvation Army; many choral conductors were cathedral choristers; many drummers came from Pentecostal traditions; harmonium and tabla players come from Sikh and Hindu temples. All these religious ritual traditions need musicians of a particular kind. This provides free initiation into music for many youngsters. They are often tradition-based teaching with an underpinning of a faith tradition, which controls the musical style and shape of the musicking. In church schools in the UK, these models are sometimes reproduced but what Estelle discusses is how far these informal settings can be replicated in the classroom. Obviously, the place of religion in education is profoundly different in the UK from the US. This is now being debated more widely in the development of the Spirituality and Music Education movement (SAME). Estelle was an important player in this movement initially in the first conference in Birmingham in. Sadly, this is not reflected in the first book coming out if the group.\textsuperscript{25}

The other area where informality is developing within the UK is the growing community choir movement which has developed more informal practices that are inclusive and pluralist.\textsuperscript{26} This strand in community musicking is coming into classrooms,\textsuperscript{27} but it too is developing its traditions.\textsuperscript{28}

In this way it links with the Court and Rule picture with established rules of practice: A practice driven by certain expectations, which are based on a systematic body of knowledge . . . The model’s exponents honor tradition...
and exemplar practice, help to keep alive musical knowledge and wisdom from the past, and emphasize the intellectual character of musical knowing at a time in which sensual and affective elements are often the focus of culture.  
This she links with the Artist and Apprenticeship picture, but all of these three pictures discourage the Transgression and Revolutionary approach.

**Social Justice**

Estelle was heavily influenced by Henry Giroux’s concern about the role of education as a site for interrogating and contesting culture, calling the received wisdom into question, engaging in dialogue about it, and transforming education toward a more humane society. Giroux denounced the classism, racism, sexism, portrayal of violence in Western classical music. He favored transgression based on “ruptures, shifts, flows, and unsettlement.”

I thought back to the early nineteenth century when musicians realized that for the good of the republic, a concerted and national program of music education was needed to inspire youngsters to sing and play the best of music artfully. Musicians and educators of that time realized that if the United States was to meet the mounting and rampant industrialization and inhumanity of that age, and if this country aspired to be a civilized and cultured nation, it needed to sponsor and preserve the arts. To these ends, musicians, educators, and the public at large mounted a grass-roots campaign with national reach to foster publicly supported education for all children, irrespective of their economic or social status, and to extol music as a means of humanizing society and offering artistic expression for all children. If we remain serious about these objectives as musicians, teachers, and policy makers, it is essential to mount another campaign to meet the incivility of our time, and in a differently mediated environment, to press, yet again, and with renewed effort, for a humane and art-filled education for young and old.

Her Transgression and Revolutionary picture critiques neo-liberalism and the commodification of pedagogy with students merely as consumers. Drawing on Freire, she is concerned with “conscientization.” This would enable students to be aware of power and inequality in musicking. Students are to be empowered musically to enable their voices to be heard and no longer silenced. Pluralism is a recurring strand in Estelle’s thought but debated in a variety of ways and from contrasting perspectives. She endeavors to chart a course between radical relativism and radical pluralism—to keep differences and similarities in balance with one another.

The need for social justice has underpinned much of Jorgensen’s life.
Discussing the UNESCO Report she writes: “Towards a Common Good?” addresses the question of whether or how shared values might unite the world’s people and what this good or these goods might be? Among other things, the report stresses the need for reaffirming humanism and humane values. Some will doubtless lament the figure of the human tree on the cover of this report with its evocation of monolithic and arborescent thinking, and long, instead, for the pluralistic and rhizomatic possibilities that might include what Plato would think of, dialectically, as the “one and the many.”

As one involved in the Anglican Church’s Together for the Common Good project in the UK, I find it very difficult to see how far various cultures do share a common good in such areas as gender, sexuality, the nature of childhood and disability. Jorgensen understands this plurality but also sees music as a way of understanding and shaping culture. It is an area of passion that I share with her. She sets out the necessity of including music in debates about cultural and public policy such as fiscal justice, unemployment, mass migration, religious conflict, and terrorism, even though it is often ignored. I remember a young man singing in a rock group in Darwin, Australia “Don’t touch the grog.” In her blog Estelle writes that equal access to music is essential; hidden assumptions need challenging and lived experience narrated. She suggests examining different epistemologies and views on social justice. She sees how oppression has often gone unchallenged. This leads to exploring the notion of a multiplicity of identities being proposed and argued. However, to her Revolutionary and Transgression model she brings a wariness, citing the revolutionary nature of early Nazism. I have warned about following the energy of music without asking where it is leading.

Music can be used to reinforce certain values by its very power . . . One example is Hitler’s use of music to reinforce Nazi Values by means of large-scale multi-disciplinary Events. . . . Hitler was an extremely skilful manipulator of the spiritual experience; this means that all musickers—in whatever role they are—need to look clearly at the underlying Value systems of an event, before they are taken up into the liminal experience.

Estelle’s book as a whole enables people to analyze the values underpinning any developments within education and how they relate to the wider society.

Active Music Making

In her Guide and Pedagogy picture Estelle critiques the practical approaches to musicking in the classroom. In writing about composing in the classroom she looks at the multiple roles for the teacher:

The teacher’s role becomes that of facilitator, coach, troubleshooter, helper, motivator, and referee.

Sometimes groups of students want to
work undisturbed by teacher suggestions or comments. I remember arriving late for a composing session with nine-year-olds who were composing a piece about Palm Sunday. They were all already working and were asking me about decisions they were making or had made. This was an approach that my research helped to establish in the classroom. I chose to teach first in the primary sector, because there I was freer to try out new ideas, particularly in relation to music education, as a general class teacher; there was no National Curriculum. Here I explored children’s capacity to compose/improvise, at a time when this activity was thought to be limited to a few gifted men. It produced busy, active, engaged classes where pupils’ curiosity and interest in music was stimulated to produce a commitment to all music learning. When I left, the headmistress’s reference said that Miss Boyce’s classes were busy, active classes. I never knew whether this was an affirmation or a condemnation; they were not like traditional girls’ grammar school classes. Estelle critiques these activity-based strategies as concentrating on process and ignoring musical products and their social and political significance. In my experience the two can exist simultaneously by engaging pupils’ enthusiasm.

Therapy and Energy

Because of my work on healing in various traditions, I am always attracted to the Healing and Therapist pictures. In the Prelude in my book on experiencing music, I examined the potential role of the psychagogue in leading people out of the underworlds that late capitalism and neoliberalism have invented to keep people trapped in cultures of consumerism, inequality, addiction, and control. Western musickers may be closer to fulfilling their role as psychagogues if we can grasp the totality of music’s potential for these subjugated groups and initiate strategies of resistance that will give them autonomy, identities of integrity, and hope. This blurs the boundaries between music therapy and musicking in general by seeing the musicking process as transformative. It means rethinking music education to include within it the totality of the experience:

Rescuing the healing and transformative dimensions of education should not be regarded as turning education into a therapeutic process. The main goal of integral education is not personal healing or group binding (although these may naturally occur and any genuine integral process should welcome and even foster these possibilities) but multidimensional inquiry and the collaborative construction of knowledge . . . in the context of integral education, transformative healing opens the doors of human multidimensional cognition. (Authors’ italics)

Her picture of Seashore and Energy links with this in seeing music as an energizing force. This was certainly true of the role of music in the school assembly in
This enlivening character of music has also led to a suspicion of music in some contexts\(^5\) because they fear a high energy, high focus situation as potentially disruptive of discipline. Sean Steel looks for a restoration of a Dionysian spirituality within education outside of the curriculum (in an article primarily concerned with American education) through the medium of music. This he relates to “the loss of self-awareness that occurs in the best musical experiences” which might be true of music freed of the controls of a curriculum. Musicians can lead us in joyful choruses.\(^6\) Foundation Music, in the University of Winchester, outside of the curriculum, can be seen as providing a “chorus school” for the university as a whole, which draws freely on its expertise for a multitude of university celebrations. Learning in Foundation Music is often in a community context, not individualized lessons; inexperienced learners are quickly incorporated into ensembles, in a way more common in community practice and informal learning contexts than classical music traditions.

**Digitization**

Jorgensen’s final picture is of the Web and Connectivity where she addresses the issue of technologically mediated music. This is a whole new area which music education has yet fully to address. The traditional listening exercises and their assessment in examinations such as GCSE in the UK may well be deemed irrelevant to the ways in which music is heard by the
students outside our classrooms. Whidden and Shore identify the various environments in which sound has existed—outdoors, in buildings, and electronic. They see these three habitats as a tool with which to deepen our understanding of musicking. The first environment includes sounds from the natural world, while in the second these are excluded by the walls of buildings. Now electronic sounds are transmitted by electricity. They claim that these different habitats change our musical understanding. There is a great deal of work to be done to bring this new third habitat into the classroom. The concentration on the traditional style of classical listening (based on the concert hall) may be ignoring the digital musical environment. School and university courses need to address this issue.\(^50\)

Such a convergence would restore the area of including the students’ values to music pedagogy.\(^51\) The classroom would then become a place of discussing individual preferences and the way in which these reflect social and cultural worlds. It would examine the way in which different sorts of people use music—the common elements in the use of music, even though the sounds of the music may be different. The ethos of the classroom would be one of understanding and respecting different views and cultures and would develop ways of dealing with emotional issues of preferences and choices. It would follow Dewey’s concept of intuition which includes thinking, feeling, perceiving, knowing—emotional intuition\(^52\)—which he saw as encouraged through reflection on action. It would explore notions of music and as wellbeing—both personal and cultural.

Such an approach would mount a challenge to the “cargo” model of music,\(^53\) which borrows foreign educational practices as if they can be made universal—that there is only one right way for music education. It would pursue Jorgensen’s liberating purpose for music education which is to open “other fruitful avenues for understanding the ways in which people come to know music.”\(^54\) The curriculum would be focused more on music and life style\(^55\) through processes of activity in community musicking and reflection.\(^56\) Estelle saw the benefits of teaching music historically backwards (unlike Scholes\(^57\)) from music that is approachable for students to its more remote history. Dewey\(^58\) also suggests starting where students are, critiquing the evolutionary view which privileges white male music.

**Summary**

I owe Estelle a great debt; I would not be who I am without her very early encouragement at that ISME conference. She has helped me refine ideas and develop and trust my own ways of thinking. In this tribute, I have tried to show how her *Pictures of Music Education* have provided me with an analytical frame with which to analyze my own music education and what is going on in music education in the UK today. In an age which would prefer teachers to run on preset rails laid down by particular political and ideological...
principles, she provides us with a significant frame in which to examine the boxes in which they would place and explore new pastures and fields with integrity and understanding. In doing this she enables us to chart a course through an uncertain world and encourages us to practice Wisdom.

Notes

13 Midgley, *Myths We Live By*.


**About the Author**

June Boyce-Tillman is a prominent UK academic specializing in music, spirituality and theology, particularly women's role in church music. She is Professor Emerita of Applied Music at the University of Winchester and Extraordinary Professor at North-West University, South Africa. She was ordained as a deacon of the Church of England in 2006 and as a priest in 2007.

**Project Links**

This chapter comes from a book titled *The Road Goes Ever On: Estelle Jorgensen’s Legacy in Music Education*. The philosophical essays contained within focus on themes that have intrigued Estelle Jorgensen whose forty years of scholarship have strongly influenced music education research and practice: the transformation of music education in public schools; feminist and LGBTQ voices; mentoring; the unfinished search for new ways of seeing, hearing, and doing; multiple and intersecting musical identities; the tension between tradition and change; and activist practice in music education.

The complete book can be found at the following link: [https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/jorgensen/](https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/jorgensen/)