Book Review

Margaret S. Barrett and Heidi M. Westerlund

Music Education, Ecopolitical Professionalism, and Public Pedagogy: Towards Systems Transformation

Springer 2023

Reviewed by:

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In *Music Education, Ecopolitical Professionalism, and Public Pedagogy: Towards Systems Transformation* (2023), authors Margaret S. Barrett and Heidi M. Westerlund interrogate the relationships between musicians and a how a publicly pedagogical engagement with music can occur. Music has the propensity to be ego based, individualised in ways that are not dissimilar to other artistic practices. What might engender a shift from ego or individualised music practices and what forms might these shifts take? This book is an excellent examination of how musicians might become aware that "…every music performance is potentially a form of public pedagogy whether we are aware of the implicit meanings about what music is, who it is for, where it might be enacted, and why" (2023, p.9). Further the authors frame their respective case studies by recognising enactments of music as a form of public pedagogy "…that foster an ecopolitical professionalism in music education and therewith societal transformation" (2023, p.3). The case studies in this book chart this shift.

Tuulikki Laes' work in Finland encapsulates how music and music education can be realised within the public realm. Using Liz Lerman's metaphor "hiking the horizontal" this chapter charts the engagement of music education in a public setting with contributors who are situated outside formal education. Laes is formally trained in music but has moved in her creative expression through exposure to different music genres to eventually study music education. In this case study the reader can see how the relational effects of the teaching of music where the learner is teaching the educator. Laes' sensitivity to these encounters whereby a student may not communicate in conventional ways is a strong example of relational pedagogy. This is critical in her future work where she has co-founded a social enterprise company RockHubs. The mission of this company is to build "accessible music learning communities for everyone regardless of their age and ability…" (2023, p.47).

Riju Tulahar is a musician, educator and festival organiser based in Nepal. The necessity of community practice to sustain Nepali musical traditions became critical after an earthquake, "What had begun as a humanitarian project in the community had become a project in cultural

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sustainability" (2023, p.57) This is a significant insight because here is the recognition that music is an expression of humanities need for culture as a form of connection and the ways in which music carries something of 'us'. This form of connection is pedagogical as it brings to the fore the relational and its situatedness in the public realm exceeds the bounded sites of formal educational institutions. Of course, this 'us' is understood as specific to location. In the case of Riju Tulahar in Nepal the context is one where institutional framing through the Finnish Sibelius Academy provided support for a further pedagogical understanding of teaching. The Sibelius Academy in undertaking this work with the educators at the Napal Music Centre exceeds its own institutional boundaries. This is significant because institutions often remain bounded within the confines of their internal educational remit. Such partnerships that do occur are often for the benefit of the institution. It could be argued that the Sibelius Academy benefited through research that has sat alongside this particular project, but the larger remit of the partnership far exceeds any instrumental reading.

Making the connection between music and a broader ecopolitical professionalism is very much context specific. Ricky Kej based in India is a grammy award winning musician His passion for environmental change fused into activism across multiple platforms. What is interesting in this case study is on one level Ricky Kej's professional success is his musical compositions for commercial purposes. A trajectory that remains open to him. However, his recognition of the compromises he has made moved Kej's toward what he describes as the capacity to focus on his own musical identity inclusive of freedom of expression instead of being coopted into other musical expressions. This shift in his musical expression intwined with a passion to address environmental concerns became further actualised by his meeting with the then Indian Prime Minister Narenda Modi. His work as a public pedagogue is recognised both nationally, within India and internationally.

The strength of this book is the authors ability encapsulate a theoretical understanding of public pedagogy as ecopolitical change and to chart the shift in individuals to exemplify its application in music. This theorisation offers ways to re-imagine not only music education but will also be of interest to arts educators and public pedagogues alike.