

# contact

Contact: A Journal for Contemporary Music (1971-1988)

<http://contactjournal.gold.ac.uk>

## Citation

Bartlett, Ian. 1981. 'Review of *Pop Music In School*, Ed. Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee'. *Contact*, 22. pp. 27. ISSN 0308-5066.

**POP MUSIC IN SCHOOL**, edited by Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee

2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, 1980 (hardback, £8.50; paperback, £4.25; reel-to-reel tape, £8.00 + VAT; cassette tape, £6.50 + VAT)

IAN BARTLETT

The first edition of *Pop Music in School*, which appeared in 1976, was reviewed in some detail in *Contact 18*.<sup>1</sup> This new edition of the book is an updated version of the 1976 publication. The chapters that formed Part I of the first edition – Dave Rogers, 'Varieties of Pop Music: a Guided Tour'; Graham Vulliamy, 'Definitions of Serious Music', and 'Pupil-centred Music Teaching'; Ed Lee, 'A Note on Conventions of Notation in Afro-American Music'; and 'Pop and the Teacher: some Uses and Problems'; Piers Spencer, 'The Blues: a Practical Project for the Classroom', and 'The Creative Possibilities of Pop'; Malcolm Nichols, 'Running an "Open" Music Department'; and Tony Robbins, 'The Presentation of Pop Music' – remain essentially unchanged, though the opportunity has been taken to correct one or two minor errors.

Part II of the book consists mainly of an extensive bibliography and discography. The revised edition takes account of the kaleidoscopic flood of new material which has inevitably appeared during the last four or five years. In a brief 'Postscript' to his contribution to the first edition, Dave Rogers outlined the changes that had taken place in the world of pop music between the writing of his chapter and the going to press of the book in December 1975. In an amplified version of that postscript, 'Pop into the Eighties', he once again deftly guides the reader through the ever-changing scene up to April 1979. He identifies a variety of recent trends, among them the 'new wave', the advent of punk rock, the growth of interest in, and the wider dissemination of, reggae, and the increasing exploitation of electronic sound by groups such as Tangerine Dream.

In common with many other fields, popular music has evidently been enriched (or contaminated?) by the information explosion that has erupted in the contemporary world. The bibliography includes more than 100 books relevant to the subject which have been published since the first edition was prepared. The helpful notes by Ed Lee called 'Using the Bibliography' have been appropriately expanded. As some of the titles listed in the first edition have been omitted in the second (where a policy in favour of new publications was adopted), a student who wishes to explore a particular area as fully as possible would benefit from having access to both editions.

The editors have met convincingly the challenge of organising a daunting mass of material into reasonably

coherent categories. Sufficient references are provided under most headings for even the most committed and voracious researcher. However, in the untypically short list of entries under 'How to write songs' (which includes, strangely one might think, Deryck Cooke's contentious *The Language of Music*,<sup>2</sup> on the grounds that it is concerned with melodic formulae, and quotes (very few, in fact) examples from popular music) omissions may be identified, namely two characteristically constructive articles by Michael Burnett, 'Making up a Pop Song',<sup>3</sup> and 'Music Stand's Patent Pop Song Kit'.<sup>4</sup>

The discography, formerly nine pages long, now extends to twice as many. Stimulated perhaps by enthusiastic pressure groups such as the quaintly designated Vintage Rock'n'Roll Appreciation Society, recent issues have considerably increased the stock of currently available records representing the older styles. A much expanded section on reggae and its offshoots 'dub' and 'toasting', and new categories covering new wave in general and punk rock in particular have also contributed to the *embarras de choix* if not always *de richesses* displayed here.

The most significant developments in British music education from the mid-sixties onwards were often spearheaded by the assertion of rather narrowly based ideologies. The controversies engendered by the sometimes powerfully persuasive forces of change (the 'progressives') and their defensive but frequently vociferous opponents (the 'traditionalists') rarely achieved the status of constructive dialogue. Recently, however, the dust seems to have settled. A quieter national mood has been conducive to a more balanced and rational appraisal of the real issues in music education. The need to think deeply through the problems of music education and to focus the attention of teachers on basic principles has been recognised and acted on, most notably by Keith Swanwick in, for example, his article 'Belief and Action in Music Education' for *Music Education Review*,<sup>5</sup> and his book *A Basis for Music Education*.<sup>6</sup> It is now not only evident but also clear that there is no incompatibility between an imaginative and discriminating use of pop(ular) music within the curriculum and the fundamental aims which should unite all secondary school music teachers.

In this context, *Pop Music in School*, with its lucidly argued, broadly based, impressively demonstrated and committed yet dispassionate approach to the subject, seems as valuable a contribution to our thinking now as it did when it was first published.

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> *Contact 18* (Winter 1977-78), pp. 26-28.

<sup>2</sup> Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

<sup>3</sup> Michael Burnett, 'Making up a Pop Song', *Music Stand*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1974), pp. 21-23.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Burnett, 'Music Stand's Patent Pop Song Kit', *Music Stand*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1976), pp. 33-35.

<sup>5</sup> Keith Swanwick, 'Belief and Action in Music Education', *Music Education Review: A Handbook for Music Teachers*, ed. Michael Burnett, vol. 1 (London: Chappell, 1977), pp. 63-82.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Swanwick, *A Basis for Music Education* (London: National Federation for Educational Research, 1979).