

Products



You can teach Primary Music

Patrick Gazard

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Even with the advent of modern foreign languages at KS2, and the relentless advance of ICT, music is perhaps unsurpassed as the subject which most fills the typical primary teacher with dread. How do you teach something which is as technical as maths and as abstract as art; which demands the same levels of coordination and teamwork as PE; and which requires the communication skills of a foreign language?

Patrick Gazard's *You can teach Primary Music* seeks to address these issues, to offer practical advice, to demystify the customs and practice of music, and to suggest ways in which music can be developed both in terms of the curriculum and strategically in school.

Throughout the book, Gazard inserts questions, concerns and interjections from the imagined primary teacher who is confronted with having to teach music. Often written from the negative or sceptical perspective, these are well researched and (in my own experience) faithfully reflect some of the trepidation and bewilderment of many primary non-specialists.

'But I'm not musical...' begins chapter 1, probably the most significant barrier for the

most apprehensive teacher. Gazard goes a long way to allay such fundamental worries, and continues this supportive tone throughout the book, dispelling the myths surrounding the teaching of music.

The next few chapters explore classroom management and offer some interesting perspectives for even the most seasoned teacher. Efficient handling of space, noise and resources, observes Gazard, is essential if teachers hope to provide a quality experience for children.

The importance of good administrative practice is also explained clearly in short, snappy chapters on recording and assessment. Recording of children's composition work and performances may happen as a matter of course in secondary music, but there are reasons why this may not be the case in the primary setting. As well as justifying the place of recording, Gazard also imparts the basics of how to go about it, in an accessible way. Similarly, the function of assessment in music is clearly expressed. Primary colleagues are just as familiar with assessment *per se* as those in secondary, but assessing something which is so intangible may prove elusive to some. The section on assessment is typical of so much of the book, brief pedagogy being illustrated with practical suggestions and handy tips.

In the meatiest section of the book, Gazard unpicks the 'big four' (performing, listening, appraising and composing), demonstrating how each is linked to the others. Again, some of this goes without saying for the expert, but there is some excellent reference material for the non-specialist. For example: when listening, what should children be listening *for*; how to improve singing by paying attention to specific aspects such as articulation and breathing; using percussion to keep time, create rhythm and add colour; how to go about composing; and the place of improvisation.

The most exciting part of the book for some colleagues, in particular coordinators, will perhaps be towards the end, in which more high-profile and strategic aspects of school music are dealt with: concerts, festivals, peripatetic music teachers, curriculum design and raising the profile of music. Those who have the motivation but don't know where to begin will find that these big issues are simplified and broken down into smaller chunks with practical, easy-to-follow guidance.

Readable and down to earth, this book is

well written for the primary teacher. As stated in the opening pages, the author does not intend the reader to start at page 1 and finish at page 159: it has been designed as a resource that can be dipped into, and the structure of the book lends itself to this. Although user-friendly, it does not shy away from trickier aspects such as the use of ICT and the basic principles of conducting, and there are times when a non-specialist might feel overwhelmed by some of the content. The reader should feel reassured, however, that no one would expect any teacher to overhaul every aspect of music provision overnight, and that there is good reason for including some of the more advanced concepts. The chapter on reading staff notation, for example, is controversial and perhaps rather daunting to the non-specialist, but its inclusion is entirely justified since many published primary music schemes make use of it.

Although conceived as a resource for primary class teachers and music coordinators, many a secondary teacher could learn a thing or two from this book, and it would be a particularly good investment for those tasked with the job of KS2/3 transition or working with colleagues in feeder primaries, as well as for any non-specialist colleague teaching music in secondary. It would also be a valuable addition to the shelves of both primary and secondary music teaching course providers, as well as to the briefcase of NQTs. Well researched and well written, *You can teach Primary Music* clearly communicates the author's passion for improving the primary school musical experience and needs to find its way into all primary staffrooms now.

Overall: ★★★★★

Readability: very clear, comprehensible and non-patronising: a book for the briefcase, not the library.

Most relevant for: primary class teachers and music co-ordinators; secondary teachers responsible for KS2/3 transition; student teachers and NQTs in primary and secondary music.

Best feature: the pithy questions from the imaginary teacher which express some of the real concerns of primary staff. These are answered succinctly and unambiguously.

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