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Editorial: Special Issue for Selected Papers from the 12th Biennial International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education

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Senior Editor

Editorial: Special Issue for Selected Papers from the 12th Biennial International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education

Articles in Volume 41 of *Visions* are from the 12th Biennial International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education held June 21-24, 2021. The conference was hosted online by the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. The articles in this volume are selected papers from that conference.

The first two articles address utopias in music education. In the first article, Tine Grieg Viig, Silje Valde Onsrud, Judy Lewis, Catharina Christophersen, and Øystein Røsseland Kvinge collaboratively write about utopian realism. The authors examine their views of utopia and how they align and differ with those of their students whom the authors are preparing to become music teachers.

While the previous article writes more positively about utopias, Alexandra Kertz-Welzel places a critical examination on the recent trends within music education towards utopian thinking. Whether it be praxial music education, artistic citizenship activist teaching, or “social justice” in general, music educators have seen music education as a way towards change. However, as Kertz-Welzel notes, from a sociological perspective, it is unclear if this role is useful and appropriate. Kertz-Welzel provides a historical look at this question. The first two articles thus present the potentials and pitfalls of utopian thinking and its impact on music education.

Kyle Zavitz applies a body of ideas known as “social realism” to explore jazz education in North America. As Zavitz notes, those who adopt social realist perspectives “explore how the transmission of certain ‘powerful’ knowledges can be considered to have more potential for social justice, with particular emphasis on their potential for further access and opportunity.” After also reviewing some critiques of social realism, Zavitz ultimately concludes that social realist “discourses which advocate to foreground powerful musical knowledges within our higher music education spaces

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may be offering ‘access’ and ‘opportunity’ to certain students, and only in certain forms, which function instead to maintain an institutional status quo.”

Paul Louth takes a decidedly sociological look at music education by using Richard Sennet’s theories on industrial capitalism’s triggering of the gradual elimination of shared cultural symbolism. Using these ideas, Louth concludes that the preponderance of psychological frameworks, and the individualistic focus on “creativity” and “expression” that it encourages, can foreclose opportunities to engage in new and “different” experiences in music education.

The final two articles in this volume address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on music education. Quarantine and safety precautions isolated many musicians and educators; it took away a social activity of central focus—performing and learning music with others in the same physical space. Terry Sefton and Danielle Sirek write about their experiences. They present a duoethnography that traces their paths as they moved through stages of distance and loss and stages of simulacra and performativity during the time of pandemic. Kari K. Veblen and Janice L. Waldron studied how formal and informal online music communities continued to learn and make music through the pandemic. In line with the volume’s focus on sociology, they contend that the most important and significant aspect of these communities is not the technology, but rather the sociological perspective—the interactions and discourse that people have with one another through these digital enablers that render music learning, making, and teaching possible.

Finally, we dedicate this volume to Janice L. Waldron, who passed in November 2022. Her co-authored article will be one of her final publications in a prolific career. Janice was an intellectual force in the field of music education. Her work on online music communities and other topics have been influential on music educators’ conceptions of new ways of learning music that are not technophobic or reliant upon untenable binaries of “real/mediated” and “old/new.” She also served as an adept editor. I am proud to have contributed to volumes that she edited. Just as importantly, Janice was kind and supportive. I first met Janice at a conference when Randall Allsup introduced her to me; interestingly, the three of us began our higher education careers in the music education position at Hartwick College in New York State. My fondest memory of Janice is from 2013 at the Eighth International Research in Music Education Conference at the University of Exeter in England. Exeter’s campus is notorious for its steep hills. As we departed from a day of presentations, Janice and I apprehensively descended one of these hills, made even more precarious for her because of Janice’s signature platform shoes. We carefully walked arm-in-arm to support one another, laughing about the day’s events and our times at Hartwick. For me, this fond memory captures Janice’s influence on others—courageously moving forward, with others, and making it fun along the way. We dedicate this volume with much respect and affection to her.