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Music in Expressive Discourse: New Directions for Arts Education in New Zealand

This review essay examines two publications by New Zealand-born scholars that seek to integrate music with literature and other arts in general education: Stuart Manins' "So-Me" primary school book series and Robin Maconie's tertiary text *The Second Sense: Language, Music, and Hearing*. At first glance it may seem rather unusual to review such disparate publications within the same essay, as one book consists of stories for very young children, while the other is designed for adult students. But as I will demonstrate, there are some important themes unifying these two publications that have significant implications for performing arts education – at all levels – in New Zealand.

Robin Maconie¹ is a contemporary art music specialist and author of several books, including *The Concept of Music* (1990), *The Science of Music* (1997), *The Works of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (1976, rev. 1990), and most recently, *Other Planets: The Music of Karlheinz Stockhausen* (2005). Born in New Zealand, he is a graduate of Victoria University, Wellington. Maconie's most recent teaching post was as professor of performing arts at the Savannah College of Art and Design, in Georgia. Also born in New Zealand, and of the same generation as Maconie, **Stuart Manins**² holds a Master degree from University of Auckland. He worked for many years as Head of Music at Auckland College of Education, where he contributed to development of the National Advanced Studies in Teaching Music and the 1989 NZ Department of Education Music Syllabus. Manins has long been active in the **International Society for Music Education**³, and has presented research on such topics as Orff methods and Maori culture to international music educators.

From their profiles, it should be clear that these two music specialists took rather different career paths. Maconie spent much of his life in Europe and the USA, learning directly from the leading European art music composers of his time (including Messiaen and Stockhausen), and has recently returned to live in New Zealand. Manins, on the other hand, stayed in Aotearoa for his entire career, where he focused on making improvements to the nation's school music curriculum and system of music teacher education, working increasingly in collaboration with Maori elders. While their interests and motivations may appear to be rather different, an important area of intersection between these music scholars lies in the approach to music outlined in their recent educational publications. Namely, both seek to integrate musical learning with other arts in general education through means that enable the integrity of arts disciplines to be maintained. I will demonstrate how this is done by Manins, and then examine similar issues and processes within Maconie's work, concluding with a discussion of some implications for performing arts education in New Zealand and beyond.

Stuart Manins' *So-Me* Books.

According to author Stuart Manins, "It has been my observation that children who sing in tune and move in time have a better ear for reading and writing language" (Manins, 2001, p.9). This premise led Manins to devise a series of twelve sequential musical storybooks that serve as ideal resources for an effective bicultural integrated

arts curriculum in New Zealand primary schools and early childhood education programmes (Manins, n.d.).

When a young child approaches a bookshelf and selects a book from the series *Music Stories for Juniors* she opens its cover to more than “meets the eye”, and much more than merely a musical muse. Author Stuart Manins has a hidden agenda. Not only are his books attractive and fun, but they are filled with musical lessons that are often so subtle that children fail to realize they are learning difficult concepts. Consider the main character: So-me (whose name is sung in solfege) takes the young reader on adventures with La-me (and other friends with sofege names), discovering the significance of musical handsigns and visual motifs used in musical notation. Along the way, readers develop an understanding of basic principles involving the musical staff, solfege, percussion instruments and rhythms, and even develop a number of insights into Maori culture.

For example, consider some of the suggested teaching activities for Book 7:

Make up a chant of your own using s (so) m (me) and l (lah). Use the two following sentences for the words:

‘La-so-me was good at dancing, Kiri did the poi’

‘Hone did a fierce haka, Tai’i beat his drums.’

The simple structure of this activity provides an ideal vehicle for creative expression, while the inclusion of poi and haka clearly demonstrate Manins’ own commitment to encouraging New Zealand children of all cultures to participate in, and develop an appreciation for, indigenous Maori traditions at an early age.

In another location, by using the simple phrase “La-so-me La-some she dances like Salome” Manins is able to form an elegant and workable connection between solfege and the legendary historical character Salome, who is also the inspiring subject of an operatic masterpiece by composer Richard Strauss.

One of the characters in Book 3 is Hone (a Maori name), and in Book 8, readers are introduced to various indigenous birds that all have Maori names, such as Ruru the owl, Piwaiwaka the fantail, and Kotare the kingfisher. In Book 10, readers learn about “the monster Ta, who is a Taniwha” (an evil creature from Maori folklore).

Manins is among the small number of New Zealand arts educators to have made this kind of substantial contribution, with a complete set of original books for use in early childhood and primary education. Recommended for up to age nine, this series is tailored for a period that is most critical in terms of a child’s musical development. Students who are just beginning to read will have so much to gain from reading and re-reading Manins’ *So-Me* books, and the lessons learned will cross over into many other areas of knowledge, and may last for a lifetime.

Robin Maconie’s *The Second Sense*.

Robin Maconie has written many books on music related topics, but *The Second Sense* is his most wide-ranging text for general music appreciation. On the jacket for the hardcover edition of this book, Anthony Storr notes the “many insights and original links between different disciplines and areas of knowledge” that this book

contains. Indeed, its content eschews the traditional (and often dull) introduction to musical elements common to generic “music appreciation” texts, and instead *demonstrates* their function in the context of the acoustical phenomena and auditory and communications processes that enable musical sound to occur.

Maconie enters his discussion by offering a broad definition of music: “For our purposes the definition of music is *any acoustic activity intended to influence the behaviour of others*” (p.3). He then goes on to examine diverse topics that range from the process by which the human ear perceives sounds, to the acoustical properties of various musical instruments, to key developments in the history of European music and sound recording. A summary of the book’s 20 chapters follows:

- 1) Sound and vision. This section discusses the differences between sound and other senses, and natural relationships between certain qualities of sound and emotions, including screams and hums.
- 2) Processing sound. This chapter covers a wide range of material in order to demonstrate processes of sound perception and cognition in layman’s terms. The discussion ranges from analysis of the cognition involved in making sense of a dog’s bark, to alarm signals in an urban soundscape, to an introduction to Handel’s *Water Music*, and eventually to a section entitled “Big Bang” that discusses basic principles of acoustics. The final section entitled “Paradigm Shift” sums up what Maconie perceives as a need to rethink the significance of musical sound: “The real interaction is not so much between performer and listener as between the individual and the acoustic environment” (p.30).
- 3) Instruments. This chapter discusses the physiology of the human ear and acoustical properties of musical instruments.
- 4) Signatures. In this chapter, Maconie introduces musical elements such as scales and modes, tone colour, and stress patterns. This is done in an interdisciplinary way, utilising spoken poetry and visual images to illustrate key musical concepts, all centred around the theme of individual uniqueness.
- 5) Reflections. This chapter explores the importance of chant traditions in various cultures, including Gregorian chant and similar genres in Japan and Central Asia.
- 6) Directions. In this chapter, Maconie introduces various kinds of notation and explores the use of form and melodic shape. Its theme, “Directions,” may be taken to encompass both performance directions (via notation) and the sense of direction and movement within a musical form.
- 7) Space. This chapter explores how music is influenced by the acoustic space in which it is performed, demonstrating the connections between architecture, design, and musical genre.
- 8) Visible sound. This chapter explores a number of masterpieces of European art, demonstrating their musical character and significance.
- 9) In camera. This chapter presents an imaginative discussion regarding chamber music, centred mostly around John Dowland’s lute song “Dear, if you change”
- 10) Team players. This chapter explores the complexities of orchestras as large human organizations, including discussion of their historical development and even their recent adaptation in East Asia.
- 11) Resonance. This chapter begins with discussion of a Japanese piece entitled “Edo Lullaby” and the aesthetic concepts associated with traditional Japanese music (e.g. “nature being a system, a resonating structure like a musical instrument” p.178). It then moves to discussion of the design of European keyboard instruments such as pianos and harpsichords.

- 12) Leadership. This chapter introduces a number of concertos and examines the relationship between soloists and ensembles.
- 13) Time and motion. This chapter introduces dance music, which Maconie writes “[has] symbolic meaning in that uniform actions create a sense of social unity” (p.205). Among the examples discussed are pieces by Mozart, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky.
- 14) Noise. This chapter seeks to define noise and identifies pieces of music that are inspired or influenced by both natural and human noises.
- 15) Mechanical music. This chapter introduces the development of music that is produced without the need for live musicians, such as in music boxes and player pianos.
- 16) Mouth music. Reminiscent of chapter 5, Maconie discusses several examples of spoken poetry as well as the chants of Hildegard von Bingen.
- 17) Relativity. This chapter explores the themes of time and contrast in European music composition and performance practice. Emphasis is placed on the role of negotiation and the absence of pure absolutes in this idiom.
- 18) Inspiration. This chapter explores the development of film music and examines issues involved in matching sound to image in this media.
- 19) Memory. This chapter examines sound recordings and the global effect of new developments in music technology.
- 20) Outer space. This chapter explores science fiction, the development of new musical sounds, and the notion of music having the perceived potential to metaphysically transcend time and space.

Among the many positive features of this book is its merging of scientific, literary, historical, and artistic knowledge. It also makes deliberate use of minimal jargon, remaining accessible to readers with no musical experience. Unlike many authors in the music field, Maconie is willing to directly examine, without hesitation, some of the scientific concepts associated with acoustics. For music learners, such discussion may be supplemented by activities involving the construction of basic musical instruments, or for those in the greater Auckland area, by a visit to the **Acoustics Research Centre**⁴ at University of Auckland.

It is disappointing that the publisher has not provided a companion set of sound recordings for this book, as over 100 musical examples are discussed in the text and some readers will surely not have convenient access to all this material. Perhaps this would have made the book excessively expensive. It may be best for educators who consider using this book to obtain an inventory of recordings in their school library, and then contact Maconie directly (through his website) in order to determine how best to find copies of the necessary recordings. I was fortunate to obtain copies of all the recordings discussed and found these to be essential to fully appreciating the book's contents.

Implications for Performing Arts Educators.

What is the significance of these publications for performing arts educators in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere? First, it is important to recognize that the number of New Zealand-born scholars who have published music textbooks is rather small. This statement is not to imply that New Zealand is relatively insignificant in the music field. Much to the contrary, the nation of New Zealand has made enormous contributions to music. Consider the importance of **John Psathath's**⁵ contemporary compositions, **Alan Broadbent's**⁶ jazz arrangements, and **Kiri Te Kanawa's**⁷ opera singing, for example. And then there are the uniquely creative contributions of Maori

artists such as **Moana Maniapoto**⁸ and **Whirimako Black**⁹ and influential songwriters such as the **Finn Brothers**¹⁰ (originally from rock band Crowded House). Finally, there are a number of internationally-influential Kiwi music scholars: from pre-eminent music philosopher **Stephen Davies**¹¹, to leading ethnomusicologists such as **Mervyn McLean**¹², and music educationists such as **John Drummond**¹³. Indeed, in a nation that is so *very* musical, the question of how best to approach the teaching of music to young people is of great interest. And that is the domain in which the two books reviewed herein make their unique contribution. Manins and Maconie have each demonstrated that an authentically Kiwi approach to music learning is both holistic and interdisciplinary. Both authors have shown that although music is a unique activity all its own, its natural linkages to story-telling, dance and movement, and the world of non-musical sounds, all offer endlessly fruitful areas for exploration in educational contexts. And so we reach an ideal conclusion, as holistic expression is the very essence of traditional New Zealand performing arts.

ENDNOTES [these are to be embedded www links, rather than standard footnotes]

1. Robin Maconie [www.jimstonebraker.com/maconie.html]
2. Stuart Manins [www.smbooks.co.nz]
3. International Society for Music Education [www.isme.org]
4. Acoustics Research Centre, Auckland [<http://www.acoustics.auckland.ac.nz/>]
5. John Psathath [<http://www.johnpsathas.com/>]
6. Alan Broadbent [<http://www.opendoormanagement.com/alanbroadbent/>]
7. Kiri Te Kanawa [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/profiles/kiritekanawa.shtml>]
8. Moana Maniapoto [<http://www.moanz.com/>]
9. Whirimako Black [http://www.maoriart.org.nz/profiles/whirimako_black]
10. Finn Brothers [<http://www.finnbros.com/>]
11. Stephen Davies [http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/phi/staff/stephen_davies.htm]
12. Mervyn McLean [<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/aup/book/to-tatau-waka.cfm>]
13. John Drummond [<http://www.otago.ac.nz/music/staff/johndrummond.html>]

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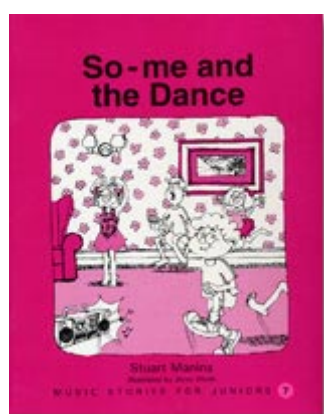
- Maconie, R. (2002). *The Second Sense: Language, Music, and Hearing*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.
- Manins, S. C. (2001). Developing music literacy through original shared book experiences. *Early Childhood Connections*.
- Manins, S. C. (n.d.) Music education in two cultures: Pakeha & Maori. Retrieved September 19, 2005 from <http://www.smbooks.co.nz/twocultures.html>

IMAGES

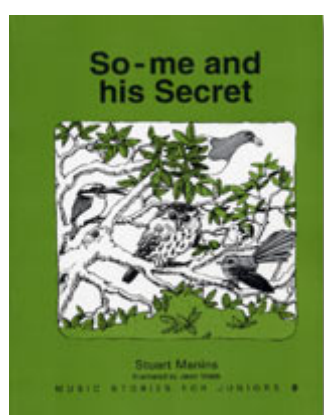
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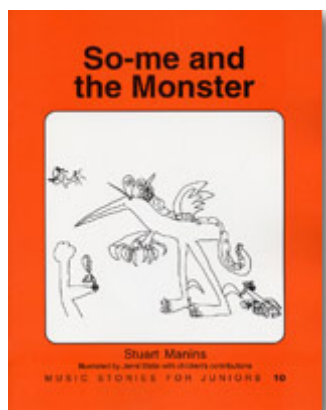
Stuart Manins' *So-me* Series, Book 7:



Stuart Manins' *So-me* Series, Book 8:



Stuart Manins' *So-me* Series, Book 10:



Robin Maconie's *The Second Sense: Language, Music, and Hearing*

