

***Dictionary of Music Education***. By Irma H. Collins. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013. 339 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8108-8651-3.

A dictionary is a reference book that one seeks out *according to need*. One does not read it as one would a novel or a newspaper. This is the context in which this review of *Dictionary of Music Education* is written.

The book begins with a list of “Acronyms and Abbreviations,” although there are, in fact, no acronyms in the list, only abbreviations. Organization abbreviations follow and then a chronology of music education sub-titled “Precursors to the Discipline of Music Education.” This chronology is not a documentation of precursors but, rather, a varied and sundry list not altogether linked to music education. One “precursor” noted in the chronology, for example, is: “1921 - The Republic of Ireland is established.” The relevance of this is unclear. The alphabetical list of entries and definitions follows. The book concludes with lists of organizations, publications and examining institutions.

This imprecision in usage—“acronyms” and “precursors”—as well as the potpourri nature of the chronology of music education suggest a lack of thoughtfulness, unity and focus that characterizes the entire dictionary. This may stem from the author’s view of the topic of the dictionary. In her preface Collins writes: “Music education represents two subject fields... One must always be aware of the pervasive aspect of music when defining music education. (For example, without *music*, it would be *education*, and without *education*, it would just be *music*.)” This dichotomy is reflected in the entries themselves: they either have to do with music, or with education. Only rarely does one find an entry dealing with music education. Some entries are superfluous: “child-care centre,” “education week” and “emergency teacher” do not belong here. Someone coming across these terms is unlikely to consult a dictionary of music education for their definition.

Other entries pertain neither to music nor education; “Champlain, Samuel de” is nestled between “chamber ensembles” and “changing voice.” There is nothing in the brief bibliography that links him to music or education. Equally puzzling is the entry on “elastics.” Collins notes that this game is Australian, yet its origins can be traced to Jump Rope, a children’s game of ancient China. In her foreword, Carolyn Lindeman suggests that “this dictionary goes beyond just defining important words in music education. It focuses on *persons, terms, events, and organizations* that have affected and shaped the teaching and learning of music through the years.” Far too many entries fail to do this; their presence is only distracting.

With disturbing frequency, entries seem whimsical and idiosyncratic in their selection. Why are certain people deemed influential in music education and others not? The same is true of

citations of certain songs and musical instruments. There is a heavy bias towards noteworthy Americans associated with music education.

Several entries suggest Collins' research is sketchy. Her entry of "Charter Schools" concludes with the assertion that they "have not been shown to be more effective than regular schools." This is an editorial comment and has no place in a dictionary. Further, it is inaccurate: there is recent evidence to the contrary, particularly in Chicago and New York City. Collins' sweeping statement fails to acknowledge the efficacy of charter schools in vastly differing demographic areas.

Another questionable entry is the "Mozart Effect" which is lifted verbatim from the Wikipedia without attribution. Further, it fails to illuminate the controversy surrounding the term and the perception that many parents and educators have of the relationship between music and cognitive development.

The definition of "Inuit Peoples" is not only erroneous, but suggests a stereotype. Collins incorrectly describes them as "A member of the Eskimo peoples..." The name, "Inuit," has long since replaced the term "Eskimo," which many Inuit find offensive. According to the entry, missionaries of the Moravian church taught music to the Inuit: "They had great capacity to learn music. In 1824 they were able to accompany voices instrumentally. The Inuit were taught not only to sing and play instruments, but also to read music notation. It was observed that by 1899 they were able to sight-sing simple melodies." Moravian music teachers were well-versed in the European classical tradition. Not only does this entry ignore the enormously rich musical tradition of this indigenous people, it also implies a colonization of the Inuit through the teaching of Western music.

The dictionary's focus on citations relating to the US, Australia, the UK and Canada renders it both limited and limiting. A salient feature of current pedagogy in music education is its multicultural and intra-cultural dimension. The dictionary fails to represent this, even in its list of international organizations.

The inability of this dictionary to be a helpful resource lies in the uncertainty of its overall intention. This vagueness of purpose is intimately related to Collins' ambiguity concerning her target audience: is this a dictionary for musicians, for music teachers, or for educators in general? Perhaps in seeking to meet the needs of all of these groups the dictionary fails to meet any of them.

*John J. Picone*  
*Dundas, Ontario*