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# BOOK REVIEWS

**Can We Rescue the Arts for America's Children? Coming to Our Senses—10 Years Later.** By Charles Fowler. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1988. 193 pp. Paperback, \$15 from MENC Publication Sales.

Are the arts any more significant in education today than they were ten years ago? ... The brutal fact is that American education has not yet come to its senses, ... not nearly. In truth, I believe we are farther away from that august agenda today than we were in 1977 when the panel report was published.

Charles Fowler offers this assessment of the current status of arts education in the introduction to his review of the events and changes that have taken place in the eleven years since the publication of *Coming to Our Senses: The Significance of the Arts for American Education* by the Arts, Education and Americans Panel, which was chaired by David Rockefeller, Jr. Fowler's purpose in writing *Can We Rescue the Arts for America's Children?* is to provide an account of arts education during the years between the two publications. The account is a personal one, but it is comprehensive, balanced, and perceptive.

Fowler did not, however, answer the most obvious question: Why was the most massive and best-supported effort in history to construct an unassailable case for arts education almost totally ineffective either in helping arts educators expand their programs or in providing a defense against cutbacks? He suggests one reason when he points out that the panel blundered seriously in attempting to bypass the established educational system in one of its recommendations. Throughout its deliberations, the panel studiously but unwisely avoided contact with K-12 arts edu-

cators, and it consulted educational decision makers only sparingly. Even so, these exclusions, although puzzling, do not explain fully why the report had so little effect. It is true that the education reform movement has not generally been helpful to the arts, but the panel's report had no discernible impact in the six years preceding *A Nation at Risk*. What went wrong?

The monumental paradox of the education reform movement with respect to the arts is that while virtually all of the major reform leaders have emphasized the importance of the arts in education, the position of the arts in many schools has declined. We have been unable to translate abstract support at the leadership level into practical support at the operational level. Again, the reasons are complex. Fowler hints at several of them in his survey not only of the new issues facing arts education but also of the current manifestations of the perennial issues. His text is generously sprinkled with references to the 1977 report, but on some topics he simply echoes the views expressed by the panel.

*Can We Rescue the Arts?* is important and useful to music educators for its straightforward and succinct summary of many of the major problems that demand our attention. Fowler's description of the "changing players" in the game of arts education is timely and apt, although his distinction between the old and new rationales for arts education is not clearly drawn. He supports the concept of cultural diversity but wisely cautions against cultural separation. He recommends moving beyond the narrow confines of performing and creating art to embracing knowledge and appreciation of art, but he sensibly warns against becoming "too academic." He recognizes the

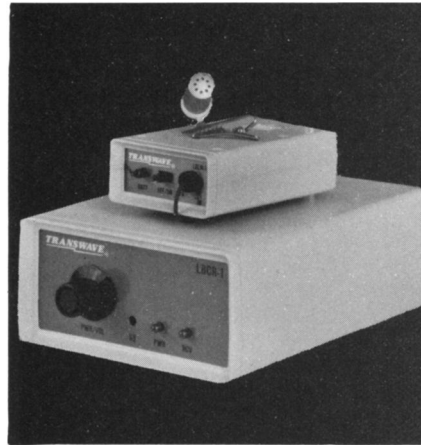
## BOOK REVIEWS

flaws in the College Board's well-intentioned but naive and largely useless publication, *Academic Preparation in the Arts*, and he points out the damage that can be done to district-wide arts programs when arts magnet schools are established.

Like the panel itself in 1977, Fowler urges that arts education be expanded to include not only music and art but also theater, dance, creative writing, media arts, film, poetry, design, and other arts. This expansion should be encouraged but without jeopardizing the positions of music and visual art. Each of the arts must be treated differently in the curriculum, and we must not allow the individual arts to lose their identity by being absorbed into an amorphous mass of non-descript pseudo-content.

Fowler tends to overemphasize the federal role in arts education, but his call for the National Endowment for the Arts to undertake programs in the arts comparable to those undertaken by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the sciences is logical and appealing. Of course, it would require not only a massive increase in funding but also a fundamental transformation in both the structure and the operation of the Endowment. The NSF does not, for example, emphasize bringing professional scientists to schools to perform experiments while children watch, nor does it seek to create new instructional delivery systems because it perceives flaws in existing ones, although the Endowment has supported parallel activities. If the Endowment were to adopt the NSF as its role model, it would have to (1) ensure significant representation of arts educators on the National Council on the Arts, (2) rely primarily on arts educators for advice concerning its arts education programs, and (3) treat arts educators with the deference it accords artists.

Opportunities to learn in the arts are, as Fowler claims, outrageously uneven across the nation. There are strong programs, weak programs, and a wide range between these extremes. If our system for distrib-



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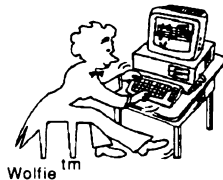
## BOOK REVIEWS

uting food were as inequitable as our system for distributing arts instruction, he observes, the imminent prospect of starvation for many of our citizens would provoke an overwhelming public demand for immediate action to correct the problem. Where is the public demand for greater equity in arts education? Apparently starvation of the mind and the spirit is perfectly acceptable.

*Can We Rescue the Arts?* appeals for an end to the occasional hostility between arts educators and "arts advocates." Fowler correctly identifies this bickering as an impediment to progress, although he seems unduly inclined to blame the educators, who have received much more criticism than they have given to others.

Fowler reprints the policy statement identified as "Concepts for Strengthening Arts Education in Schools," known elsewhere as the Philadelphia Resolution, signed in 1987 by the twenty-nine organizations (including MENC) that constituted the Ad Hoc National Arts Education Working Group. This statement embodies a set of principles that can serve as an agenda for arts education in the United States and to which all who support arts education can subscribe. Fowler ends the book with comments by four educators, including MENC's Vice-President Donald Corbett.

Like innumerable writers before him, Fowler urges arts educators to unite in asserting their goals and priorities and in making their claim for educational time and resources. We have made no measurable progress in this effort during the past decade. In fact, we cannot speak with a united voice even in music. This is a more serious problem than many of our colleagues realize. It will be difficult for us as arts educators to get the attention of politicians and decision makers unless we know exactly what we want and agree on our message. Our success in the coming decade will be related to our ability to organize so we can achieve our public policy goals. Unless we do better than we have in recent years, it is unlikely that we will show significant progress when



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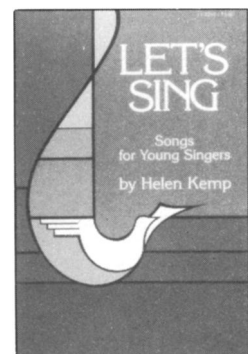
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## BOOK REVIEWS

the next account of arts education is written ten years from now.—  
*Paul R. Lehman, professor and associate dean, University of Michigan School of Music, Ann Arbor, and MENC past president*

## BOOK BROWSING

**Jazz: The Essential Companion.** By Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, and Brian Priestley. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1988. 562 pp. Black-and-white photographs. Hardcover, \$24.95. Three jazz musicians have compiled, in a single, desk-size volume, sixteen hundred entries covering the entire history and spectrum of jazz. Organized in dictionary form, the work includes biographies of major figures and assessments of their lives and music as well as essays on key subjects and explanations of many jazz terms.

**The Time of Music: New Meaning, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies.** By Jonathan D. Kramer. New York: Schirmer Books, 1988. 511 pp. Tables, music examples, glossary, bibliography, index. Hardcover, \$35. Composer and music theorist Jonathan D. Kramer writes about how Western listeners hear and understand music of all eras and places. He offers answers to such questions as how musical compositions are organized in time, how this century's music differs from music of the past, and the importance of technology in the way music is heard, used, and created.

**The Concise Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians.** Edited by Nicolas Slonimsky. New York: Schirmer Books, 1988. 1,418 pp. Hardcover, \$35. One of the most complete one-volume dictionaries of people in the music profession available in English, this work (first

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