



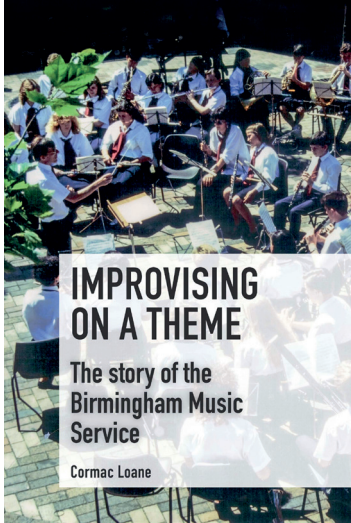
IMPROVISING ON A THEME

The story of the
Birmingham Music
Service

Cormac Loane

Improvising on a Theme

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The Birmingham Music Service has been a beacon for music education through performance for over 50 years. Collaboration between educators and top-flight musicians has nurtured new talent and opened doors for all children to experience the joy and discipline of music. 'They found and sang their songs', says Sir Tim Brighouse in his foreword to the book.

Improvising on a Theme tells the story of the Birmingham Music Service from its embryonic beginnings in the 1930s to the present day. Drawing on interviews with managers, teachers and students, and on the author's experiences within the organization, it describes the huge impact of the service on children's music in Birmingham. Analysis of developing pedagogy reveals how collaborative group work increasingly replaced one-to-one teaching, while more diverse musical styles and wider access arrangements resulted in greater equality of provision. Key leadership figures stride through the book, their styles dictatorial or collegiate, but all of them shaping the service as they went. Concluding with thoughts on how the UK's dramatically changing political landscape is shaping music education across the country, this is a unique case study of the genesis, management, delivery, evolution and future of an English local authority education service.

About the Author

Following his graduation from the University of London Goldsmiths College, Cormac Loane worked as a saxophone player 'on the boats' and at the Empress Ballroom, Blackpool, during the late 1970s. In 1980 he started his career in music education, teaching woodwind instruments for music services in the London area, including the Inner London Education Authority. In 1984 he was appointed Head of Woodwind for the Birmingham Music Service and was later promoted to Deputy Head of Service - a role he continued to occupy until his retirement in 2013. Loane is co-author of the series of music tutor books Team Woodwind.

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