

## Paul Woodford's Essay: Editorial Context

Wayne Bowman, Editor

*ACT*'s special book review issues feature essays by multiple authors who explore broad issues of relevance to the music education profession—issues that arise as the authors read a designated book. A feature of *ACT* since shortly after its inception, these 'essay reviews' (as we have referred to them) are intended to be of the kind where, in addition to perhaps recounting and reacting to certain major ideas, claims, etc., of the book at hand, authors use their own expertise to expand on certain themes, fill in possible gaps, correct or add to certain points and, in general to create an essay that is of free-standing interest and importance, whether or not the *ACT* reader ever reads the book being reviewed. Using a given book as a springboard, then, authors are invited to explore issues and concerns the book raises in their minds, whether or not they are explicitly addressed in that book. These are not the typical 'academic' reviews that are long on summary, short on analysis, and often crafted with the purpose of recommending (or not) that the book be read by other academics. The focus of *ACT*'s book review issues is, in short, the ideas and concerns advanced by the authors who have contributed essays in response to a designated book.

Guidelines to reviewers include, for example:

- Do not summarize the book's content any more than is essential to provide context for what *you* have to say
- If you would prefer to focus on one section or idea, by all means do so. It is not imperative that you 'cover' the entire book. In fact, a close analysis of a particular area might possibly be of greater use to readers than general coverage of the book in its entirety.
- The point of the review(s) is to initiate *dialogue* on important points and issues germane to our understandings of music, our approaches to curriculum, and, where appropriate, to our approaches to music education. Communicative exchange of ideas is the point. Please feel to advance ideas or to raise questions to which the book's author might respond.
- Please consider this an essay that reveals your own thinking as influenced by the book. It should be a free-standing essay that can be engaged by readers without having read the book in question. Your review should not consist of mere dutiful scholarly assessment of the book's content.

- You may (or may not) wish to draw into your discussion other books or essays that create a kind of counterpoint with the book in question.
- Try to make the review interesting and informative in its own right – whether or not the reader ever consults the book being reviewed. Again, we are primarily interested in your own thinking in relation to themes, issues, arguments raised by the author.

Thus, *ACT*'s "review issues" are intended to feature the ideas in the featured reviews, the author of the book in question having already made her or his extended case in the book. As a courtesy, but also with the intention of furthering dialogue and communication, the editors of *ACT* typically extend the book's author an opportunity to respond specifically to the published essays. Responses have been concise, and have been confined to commenting upon, correcting, or clarifying points raised in the essays. They have not engaged in new arguments or introduced new expository material. *ACT* editorial policy is that the introduction of material to which readers do not have first hand access in the various published reviews is acceptable only if it serves directly to illustrate points or answer questions raised in the essay reviews. It is also intended that responses engage the reviews directly—that they be responsive and that disagreements not be dismissed as mere differences between disciplines, research methods, or the like. Again, the point of publishing such issues is to foster dialogue on important issues.

It appears that Professor Woodford, whose book was designated for discussion in this issue of *ACT*, had a rather different view of the nature of this project and of his role in it—using the opportunity to answer critics not included in this issue and to introduce arguments beyond those advanced in his book. In the interest of promoting debate on issues of potential significance to the profession, we are making a one-time exception to *ACT* book review practices and publishing his essay, unedited and as submitted.

Readers who wish to explore interests or concerns that arise from the review essays published here are invited to develop them in formal essay form and to submit them to *ACT*. Informal comments and responses may be posted directly to the *ACT dialogue forum* (<http://www.maydaygroup.org/app/phpbb/viewforum.php?f=7>).