



The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music

David C.H. Wright

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The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, better known as ABRSM, has influenced the musical lives and tastes of millions of people since it conducted its first exams in 1890. This ground-breaking history explores how ABRSM became such a formative influence and looks at some of the consequences resulting from its pre-eminent position in British musical life. Particular emphasis is given to how free ABRSM has been to impose its musical view of things and to what extent its exams respond to the circumstances and musical preferences of its customers. The book's exploration of how ABRSM has negotiated music's changing social, educational and cultural landscape casts fresh light on the challenges facing music education today. David Wright's comprehensive history of the Board from its origins in 1889 to the present day represents a significant and original investigation. Not only is it the first extended account of ABRSM, but it sets the institution and its work firmly within its historical and cultural context. ABRSM's exams were exported all across the Empire, and this study shows how both exams and examiners made a telling cultural contribution to the idea of the 'British World'. It relates the exams to changing historical perceptions about musical education as well as to attitudes about the value of music as a social and recreational activity. By demonstrating the impact of the Board's commercial success in dominating the grade exam market, the book shows how this has had significant consequences for the organization of British musical training and for the formation and sustaining of a particular sort of British musical culture. Before his retirement, David Wright was Reader in the Social History of Music at the Royal College of Music, London.

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