

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Comparing international music lessons on video*, edited by Christopher Wallbaum, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms, 2018, 431 pp, €68, ISBN: 978-3-487-15633-0  
doi:[10.1017/S0265051720000042](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051720000042)

This book originated at the symposium “International Comparisons of Music lessons on Video” which took place in Leipzig in 2014. The idea of the book, edited by Christopher Wallbaum, was to compare diverse “good” music lessons from a range of schools in different countries with students aged 13 to 15 years where cross-cultural comparisons could be made. The countries considered include: Bavaria (Germany), Beijing (China), California (USA), Catalonia (Spain), Estonia, Lower Saxony (Germany), Scotland (UK) and Sweden, with musical focus points including the teaching of singing, the use of instruments, music theory, performing, and reflection and cognitive perception of a music piece through listening, analysing and discussing.

The notion of the Analytical Short Film (ASF) is used as a key analytical method applied to short extracts (2–3 min) of video-recorded data, each captured using three-to-five cameras. This multi-angle approach to video-recorded data has particular advantages for educational research; given the complexities of the music classroom, it becomes possible to view the whole space as well as, for example, important communicative gestures and sounds as well as the overall atmosphere between students and/or between a student and their teacher which may otherwise be missed.

The accompanying 10 DVDs present the video-recorded music lessons and suitably support the discussions presented in the book. DVD audio tracks and subtitles in English and German are also available on each DVD.

As an early-career researcher, I found this book useful for gaining further insight into the different international philosophies of music education within the classroom. For example, as shown on page 156, in California (USA), middle school (aged 10–14 years) and high school (aged 14–18 years) students are often given the opportunity to choose between three music courses including, ensemble (wind, string, brass, jazz band and choir), composition/theory, harmonising instruments (guitar, keyboard) and, in many schools, marching band. The option to choose a musical focus is in complete contrast to an English experience of music education; students of the same age range (Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 in England) would undergo a programme of study and assessment in performing, composing *and* listening and appraising. In addition to citing different international philosophies of music educational practice, the ASF approach as a methodological tool for the scientific analysis of the complex classroom is also something other classroom researchers in music education may wish to consider. For example, through using audio-visual data, Prantl and Wallbaum argue that ‘for a music-pedagogical perspective which is often focused on aesthetic processes as well as aesthetic products, the possibility of addressing both in the analysis of video can be seen as a huge benefit’ (p. 72). A particularly good example of this is shown in the Beijing lesson (p. 78: figure 5) where video stills of two teacher and three student gestures are presented with video timings. What is shown is that from still 1 to still 2, the teacher models her posture for singing (raises her chin and inclines her upper body) and approximately a second later, three stills show how a student alters his upper body posture.

As a music teacher, it was an absolute pleasure to be able to watch music lessons from other countries and the inclusion of the DVDs to accompany the book is a particular asset. This supports my role as a music teacher-educator, and I would wholeheartedly recommend the use of the DVDs to probe deep and meaningful discussions with teacher-trainees about international comparisons of music education philosophies as well as effective classroom pedagogy. Potential focus points could include teacher performance/modelling, student demonstration and whole-class

performing (Beijing lesson, DVD 2), whole-class singing exercises, musical theatre and harmonising to songs (Catalonia lesson, DVD 4), activities for checking student learning on music history and teacher questioning (Estonia lesson, DVD 5), learning intentions, success criteria, paired work and oral teacher feedback (Scotland lesson, DVD 8).

Despite these positive elements, this publication is not without criticism. For example, as a secondary school music teacher in England, I was disappointed that there was a lack of examples relating to composing in the music classroom. Whilst I appreciate that different countries may focus less on this in comparison to other musical skills, this would have been a valuable addition and offered balance to the themes considered. The book also advertises that it “provides rich and diverse material for researchers, teachers and teacher educators” (back cover). With over 400 pages of critical analysis and discussion, this book is perhaps not ideal for the busy teacher. However, as a music education researcher, I would recommend this text as a useful insight into understanding international perspectives of music education and using the ASF approach. My final criticism of the book is one of language; there are numerous occasions where the quality of English in some chapters of the publication makes it challenging for the reader to fully comprehend already academically complex sentences. In summary, this is a useful book and set of DVDs and should be considered as a good contribution to the field.

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*Musician-Teacher Collaborations: Altering the Chord* by Catherina Christophersen & Ailbhe Kenny (Eds.), 2018. Milton, UK: Routledge. 276 pp, Pbk, £37.99, ISBN: 978-1138631601  
doi:[10.1017/S0265051720000054](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051720000054)

This comprehensive international volume, edited by Catherina Christophersen and Ailbhe Kenny (2018), is essential reading for musicians, teachers and researchers who are working, or wish to work, collaboratively in educational settings.

Partnership working which connects musicians, teachers and students is on the rise, and the book’s collection of diverse and carefully curated perspectives, from scholars representing 11 countries, attests to this. As Bresler notes in the opening, this is a burgeoning area of research. Indeed, collaborative practice forms the backdrop in several recent BJME articles (*inter alia* Viig, 2019; Rodríguez-Sánchez, Odena, & Cabedo-Mas, 2018; Kenny, 2018; Baker, Bull, & Taylor, 2018). This timely volume is divided into three sections: Critical Insights, Crossing Boundaries and Working Towards Partnership, each with an emphasis on theoretical frameworks, challenges around such initiatives and empirical studies, respectively.

Arguably, the trend towards partnership working in music education has not been met with relative critical evaluation and, as a result, partnership approaches are ‘broadly considered to be innocuous’ (Partington, Chapter 14; also Christophersen, 2015). This was previously noted by Ross (2003) (speaking from an English perspective) who subsequently questions what the role of arts-in-education ought to be in the midst of an already challenging music education landscape:

Fashionable talk of ‘partnership’ and ‘creativity’ often masks the serious difficulties now facing the arts in schools. If there is to be a role for the professional artist in education it is far from clear what such a role might be. (p. 78)

Moreover, such partnership programmes tend to – excuse the pun – make a song and dance about their impact, something that Kenny and Christophersen describe as ‘victory narratives’