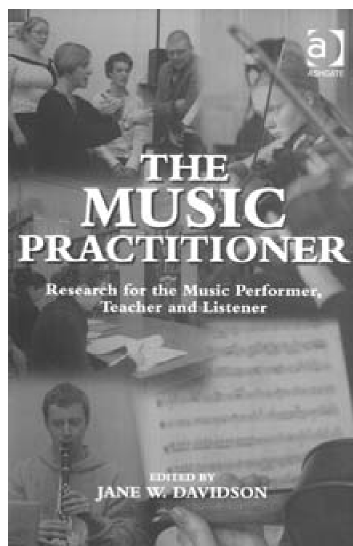
B. J. Music Ed. 2005 22:2, 181–189
doi:10.1017/S026505170521639X Copyright © 2005 Cambridge University Press

Book Reviews

The Music Practitioner: Research for the Music Performer, Teacher and Listener, edited by Jane W. Davidson. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. 386 pp, £57.50, hardback.

This book grew out of a conference held in 2003 on Research Relevant to Music Conservatoires and High Schools at the Lucerne Conservatoire, organised by the book's editor, Jane Davidson, along with Thüring Bräm, Hubert Eiholzer and John Sloboda, and hosted by the European Society for the Cognitive Sciences of Music. It comprises 25 chapters by 29 authors, the majority of chapters being single authored and the majority of contributors working in the UK and Europe. The book is organised into five main parts as follows: The Practitioner and Research; Theory and Experimentation: Understanding pitches, tuning and rhythms; Practitioners Investigating their Daily Work; Researching Musician Identity and Perception; and Adopting Innovative Research Approaches. These larger sections are followed by a final chapter on the pleasures of music listening.

The book is a mixture of theory and review, empirical research, and argument, and is diverse in both scope and approach. Its primary audience is practitioners involved in higher music education, but there is also material of relevance and importance to those involved in other levels of education and to researchers in music psychology from a range of disciplinary backgrounds. Some authors present coherent summaries of the state of play in a given field (e.g. Parncutt on harmony, Lavy on music and emotion), while others focus on presenting primary research findings (e.g. Ginsborg on memorisation strategies, Hanken on student evaluations of instrumental teachers) or research in progress (e.g. Gembris on professional development). Some present their own arguments about a given field (e.g. Rink on performance and Levinson on music and emotion), whilst others have oriented their chapters more towards a methodological perspective (e.g. Stadler Elmer & Elmer on singing assessment, Bannan on action research).



The editor, Jane Davidson, suggests in her introduction three ways of approaching the book, which provide a framework for this review. The first is to treat the research questions as of intrinsic interest. In terms of content, there is a clear and appropriate focus on the music education and training of expert performing musicians. Perspective-taking chapters deal with what might be important (e.g. Miklaszewski), whilst research chapters cover specific skills required by experts (e.g. Ginsborg, Vurma & Ross), managing career development (Pitts, Burland & Davidson, Langner and Gembris) and the structure of higher music education (Kurkela). I suspect many readers will

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

approach the book in this way, yet its organisation does not lend itself to the content perspective. Chapters dealing with similar topics are separated (for example, the four chapters dealing with singing – Vurma & Ross, Salgado, Combra & Davidson, and Stadler Elmer & Elmer – are located in three different sections of the book). Furthermore, because the book is a conference volume its coverage of music psychology as applied to the practitioner, teacher, and especially listener is not comprehensive. Although there are relevant points for those involved in school music education, and some chapters directly focus on school-age participants (e.g. Stadler Elmer & Elmer on singing or Bannan on musicianship education), the emphasis on advanced skills and higher education may leave these readers unsatisfied. Those readers looking for breadth in understanding how listeners respond to music may be the least satisfied, since despite the inclusion of 'the listener' as a topic, much of the book focuses on performing and skills. The two chapters (by Lavy and Levinson) which deal most directly with music listening, although both provocative and interesting, do not sit easily with the rest of the material in the book, and together with Parncutt's on harmony and Bannan's on aural training they do not provide enough material for a balanced overview on how either 'expert musicians' or 'ordinary listeners' respond to music.

Davidson's second suggestion is to approach the book on the basis of its educational or general implications. She claims that all authors highlight implications in their chapters, although some have given this higher priority than others. For the music educator, the implications are not always straightforward or clearly expressed, and for the researcher they are not always coherently argued or entirely based on the research evidence presented. For example, in his engaging chapter 'What and Why Do We Need to Know about Music Psychology Research to Improve Music Instrument Teaching?', Kacper Miklaszewski notes that different individuals prefer to work in different ways. Given such diversity, the implication Miklaszewski then presents is that teachers should introduce a range of practice skills in the hope that some will work. This does not provide clear guidance necessary to address the important issue of diversity between learners, and this broad level of 'implication' belies the complexity and difficulty of 'translating' research findings into educationally applicable implications. Some authors have drawn on both their own and existing work to provide more coherent implications for educators in specific areas (e.g. Ginsborg on memorisation, Pitts on career transitions), but the large number of preliminary findings and tentative implications make this a difficult objective to fulfil overall. The difficulty of addressing practical issues for practitioners is more likely a reflection of the current state of the research field, rather than a criticism of those involved in this book, but it is important to recognise limitations as well as implications.

The final and perhaps most important approach that Davidson suggests is to treat the book as a research primer, whereby the reader 'who wants to undertake research themselves' (whether this be a practitioner, teacher, or researcher) can apply or adapt research methodologies illustrated here. The chapters illustrate a range of methods, although there is an overall emphasis in favour of qualitative approaches. This provides a timely balance to the vast amount of existing experimental music psychology research, although the decision to adopt a quantitative or qualitative approach is typically not presented here as a consequence of the particular research problem (as most research guides would suggest it should be). Furthermore, to address the aims of helping practitioners and

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

teachers engage with research themselves would require more in-depth examples of how to do research, and more concrete suggestions for how to take the research presented forwards. Some chapters provide clear overviews of particular research methods, such as Bannan's overview of action research (which would have been better placed earlier on to contextualise Davidson's earlier chapter using this approach), which may inspire readers to consider exploring different research methods. However, the brevity of most chapters, which are restricted to about 10 pages of text, makes it difficult for authors to do justice to their own research, let alone attempting to introduce and explain their method for non-specialists.

In summary, this is an ambitious collection covering a broad range of topics and methods and providing fascinating glimpses into a variety of research in music psychology, particularly of interest to those involved in higher music education. As John Sloboda notes in his foreword, the book represents an important step towards a 'truly applicable music psychology'. However, I feel the diversity of the book's objectives has diluted its success. Any conference volume is at the mercy of both the quality and the scope of the contributions at the conference. The quality of this volume is not in question, but the material might have been more successfully gathered together to provide a more focused volume. The large number of contributors has come at the expense of allowing authors enough space to fully elaborate their work, whether in terms of providing detailed examples of research methods of use to others, illustrating the detailed analysis inherent in qualitative research, or tracing out educational implications. Nonetheless, perhaps as a consequence of the diversity of approach, the book is likely to contain something to capture the interest of every potential reader. It provides a valuable resource and a further collection in the field of applied music psychology, which can only benefit the growth of the discipline.

ALEXANDRA LAMONT
University of Keele

Groups in Music: Strategies from music therapy by Mercédès Pavlicevic. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003. 256 pp, £16.95, paperback.

Contemporary practice in music education, music therapy and community music – what might collectively be termed applied music practice – is becoming more diverse and fragmented. I notice, for example, that 'community music therapy' is a term emerging to describe some of these diversifying and hybridising sub-fields of practice. As a consequence, areas of overlap are emerging where practitioners, although still in general aligning their work within specific fields are, nevertheless, able to discover commonalities, similarities, clarify differences and share insights into ways of working. The production of knowledge and understanding of applied music practices is no longer arising from central epistemological foci (psychology for example) but from decentralised networks through which theorists, practitioners, professional musicians, group participants, move and meet, sharing, agreeing and contesting interpretations of socio-musical activity. There are no longer 'grand' models derived from theory that are proposed to be applicable to practice in all places and all situations but ways of working that have to be continually rethought and re-formed. So it is that this book about working with groups in music, offering strategies evolved from music therapy, can provide music education with alternative priorities and conceptualisations for understanding the processes of engaging people of all ages in

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

music. The book is presented more as a collection of sensitising ideas than, as Pavlicevic is concerned to point out, 'off-the-peg' ideas or formulae.

I have followed with interest over recent years the theoretical output from the music therapy field. The members of the Nordoff–Robbins Music Therapy Centre, London, where Mercédès Pavlicevic is a visiting and active academic member have antennae alert for contemporary developments and synthesise them into their analyses and propositions for practice in innovative and fruitful ways. Moving beyond the boundaries of the field which is our background and daily fare means encountering a new language for describing things. One of the most interesting early sections in the book on the topic of discourses reminds us that terminology does more than simply open up a set of new strategies and approaches, it can profoundly influence how we 'see' people, 'read' the group activity, 'listen to' what is going on, both musically and interpersonally. Thus discourses play a part in mediating the music and group processes that become possible. So although this book may not, at a first browse, appear highly relevant to educational practice because it is not couched comfortingly in the discourse of education, its potential to lever in alternative thinking is precisely the reason why it should be read widely.

The book is organised into three distinct sections (1) Planning: Thinking ahead, (2) Executing: 'Doing' and (3) Reflecting: Thinking back and forth. Within each section there are several short chapters which are further sub-divided into short sections with catchy titles like 'Split-second musicking' and 'Spotting the flow, creating the groove'. The reader is told that she can leap across sections and the book does not have to be read sequentially – although I think that the initial chapters provide certain lenses through which the following sections will be read with heightened awareness. Some of the topics, such as planning cycles and musical structures, may be 'bread and butter' to educators and other sections which are closest to music therapy practice convey situations of working so distant from practice usually encompassed within education, that readers will want to read selectively.

Key to the book's structure and intention is the provision of 'vignettes', descriptions of day-to-day practice. These are alive – but not heavy – with detail. We glimpse the untidy stuff of daily working: carrying instruments in from the car; people arriving late; children running around the room; a day of trying to work when not feeling well. They are engaging to read and include 'flops' and disasters along with evident successes, grounding them refreshingly and reassuringly in real life and supporting the reader in identifying with them. Importantly the vignettes describe the emotional tenor, both Pavlicevic's own and participants' perceived, integrated into her observations, something which is not generally an explicit part of educational practice. The vignettes are followed by in-depth discussion which analyses 'what happened' and models the rigorous process of monitoring within the event and after the event. Here it can be deceptive just how much insight – personal, interpersonal, musical, theoretical – has been folded into the writing of these. The whole book sits on a bedrock of considerable expertise, both academic and practical. The undercurrent of theory is usefully visible at key points, with some expositions of theory and references to further related reading.

The follow-on discussions from the vignettes contain contextualised detail and the multi-faceted exposition of possible interpretations. The ideas are not ready-packaged, deliberately, and so the reader must abstract and convert the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

information to their own situations. One point to note is that the groups described are relatively small – mostly around 4–9 members – and those teachers and community musicians who work regularly with larger groups will have to 'transpose' processes accordingly. The style is conversational, addressing the reader directly with the aim of accessibility. This style and the desire, correctly in my view, to emphasise the ever-flexible and contingent nature of groupwork does make the text wordy and in places quite dense. It works best where ideas are organised crisply into bulleted lists, so that one can look ahead to grasp the structure of the section and then dwell on the amplification, the rounding of edges, the grounding. What I am also implying is that while agreeing that clear-cut models carry the danger of being artificially reductionist and of being adopted in unthinking ways – the formulae that Pavlicevic is concerned to avoid – they do have the advantage of anchoring the reader in a framework which can be grasped and applied comparatively to their own work.

The book would have benefited considerably from a more visually imaginative and sensitive layout. The conversational style and the occasional diagrams of boxes and arrows produced by computer software sit awkwardly with the academic numbering system used throughout. Improved visuality of the text would, in turn, have assisted its accessibility. An excellent chapter on aims, for example, takes some persistence in negotiating the tables, figures and surrounding text.

I hesitate to describe it as a 'working book' for this might give the wrong impression and detract attention from the rigorous blend of practice and informed analysis it contains. It is certainly a book to revisit – to have at hand when planning a project, to dip into it at points during a period of active practice – but also one to read with time to ponder for the broadly applicable insights it holds.

SUSAN YOUNG
University of Exeter

Improvisation. Methods and Techniques for Music Therapy Clinicians, Educators and Students by Tony Wigram. London: Jessica Kingsley, 2004. 237 pp, £17.95, paperback with CD.

Improvisational music therapy is traditionally linked to the philosophy and practice of the discipline's three pioneering schools, those of Nordoff–Robbins, Juliette Alvin and Mary Priestley. Each school separately theorised a different method of teaching and practising improvisational therapy, resulting in major implications for the training of music therapists which, for nearly 30 years, has been more specialist than generalist in its nature. In this context, Tony Wigram's book is a landmark publication inasmuch as it brings together and articulates a host of musical techniques and therapeutic methods without privileging any one school's approach, thus providing a synthesised model of improvisational music therapy.

The book's prose is clear and always user friendly. Wigram's approach is also profoundly practical, requiring the reader to work on the methods outlined, moving 'backwards as well as forwards' so as to revise, integrate and develop them in ways specific to the needs of particular working contexts. Indeed, the conversational and image-rich character of the book makes reading it on occasions akin to undertaking an actual training session.

The book is written in nine chapters, which are structured into four sections. Each chapter explains and describes a particular therapeutic method, illustrating it with actual

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

examples recorded on an accompanying CD, of which there are 66 examples in all. Ideas for practice and development are recommended throughout.

The first section of the book outlines Wigram's aims, including the importance that he places on improvisation and the value of musical practice, providing also practical suggestions for both teachers and students on how to get started. The second section, which is the book's core, is dedicated to explaining different musical techniques and how these can be applied within a therapeutic framework. Examples are organised according to their degree of progressive difficulty, ranging from 'warming up' to 'mirroring', 'rhythmic grounding', 'containing' and 'holding', to advanced therapeutic methods, such as 'frameworking' and 'transitions'.

Clinical applications of the musical examples are discussed in the light of Wigram's extensive experience as a pianist, music therapist, teacher, and researcher, giving the reader a comprehensive as well as deep appreciation of what is being commended. The book's last two sections are dedicated, first, to an explanation of different group improvisation methods and, second, to a discussion of various methods for analysing and reporting improvisational processes. The latter, while interesting, seem somewhat out of place given the degree of its importance and the small space dedicated to it within the book.

As a wind instrumentalist, I confess to sometimes finding it difficult to benefit from some of the musical examples provided on the CD, given that the majority of them are directed at pianists. Apart from this, the book is both accessible and profoundly practical. Moreover, whilst written for a music therapy audience, it warrants a much wider readership, including musicians that play in hospitals or in hospices who may not necessarily be formally qualified as music therapists.

COSTANZA PRETI
Institute of Education, University of London

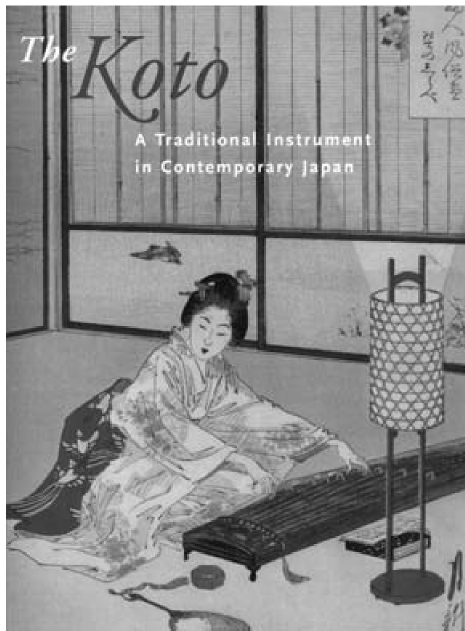
The Koto: A Traditional Instrument in Contemporary Japan by Henry Johnson. Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004, 199 pp, no price given, hardback.

The *koto* is one of the most well-researched traditional Japanese instruments (see for example, Harich-Schneider, 1973; and Malm [1959] 2000). It is a 13 string Japanese zither whose origin is traced back to mainland China. It was established as a Japanese musical instrument by the eighth century and its form has changed little since. The instrument has an important role in Japanese history due to a range of social and cultural associations. Historically, it is connected with imperial households, Buddhism and Shintoism, blind professional male guilds, and more recently it was enjoyed particularly by female amateurs. The instrument is also depicted in numerous instances of art and literature throughout history.

The music of *koto* has been transmitted and preserved under the *iemoto* system. The term '*iemoto*' may refer to both the person who is the head of the household and the household which is the head of the tradition (or family). The system was developed during the seventeenth century, although its history may be traced back centuries earlier. Many traditional arts and music are still taught and learnt according to this system (for example, *ngaku* and *kabuki*). The *iemoto* system has been defined as a society which is based on a hierarchical relationship between master and pupils (Nishiyama, 1982). Under the system, the *iemoto* has absolute power over his pupils and his art which extends to areas such as ownership of pieces and techniques, the award of various qualifications, and the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

regulation of both artistic and administrative rules. The unquestionable authority given to the *iemoto* is sometimes compared with that of the imperial monarchy. Due to the hereditary nature, the position of *iemoto* is based upon one's birth and not artistic talents. The style of teaching common to this system was that all pupils followed one pattern of learning which was determined by the master. The method of learning was through imitation. Zeami (1363?–1443), the founder of *ngaku*, wrote that 'a real master is one who imitates his teacher well, shows discernment, assimilates his art, absorbs his art into his mind and in his body, and so arrives at a level of Perfect Fluency through a mastery of his art' (from *shikad*; Rimer & Yamazaki, 1984: 66). The system is often considered to reflect the traditional Japanese family system and concept. The *koto* continues to hold a unique role in a modern and highly westernised Japan.



In this book, Henry Johnson describes the value of the instrument as 'an object of traditional Japanese culture' and 'a symbol of traditional Japan'. Today, the traditional music is a minority art and overshadowed by western music and culture. However, Johnson points out that the country is in 'an era of cultural nationalism' (p. 27) and the *koto* and its music is often used to strengthen a sense of national identity and nostalgia. The recordings of *koto* music may be heard in, for example, tourist offices and many public places over the period of New Year celebrations as a commercial tool and in order to reinforce an idealised past.

Johnson, a *koto* player himself, sets out to describe in detail, with ample illustrations, the physical structure of the instrument and its method of construction, and to consider the *koto* as a symbol of society and culture. He compares the different performing and teaching traditions (*ryha*) of the *koto* but shows no preference towards one tradition or the other. This is unusual because the social context in which the instrument is transmitted assures that a student pledge his or her loyalty to one teacher and one particular tradition. Consequently, teachers and students of one tradition know very little about other traditions despite their shared origin. In this respect the book is quite unique.

Two of the main traditions are Yamada-*ry* and Ikuta-*ry*. They differ in terms of geographical spread (Yamada-*ry* is more common in the eastern part of Japan whereas Ikuta-*ry* predominates in the western part), the use of different types of notation systems, as well as differences in performance practice. The physical structure of the instrument also differs (for example, the shapes of the sound hole) and they use different types of plectra (*tsume*) to pluck the strings.

Johnson maintains that the way in which the instrument is taught and learnt plays an important role in preservation and continuity

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

of the art. The way in which the art is transmitted is deeply rooted in the social structure and follows a path set by recognised codes of behaviour. These characteristics include hierarchy and lineage within each tradition, 'groupism', *iemoto*'s authority, a close and lifelong bond between teacher and student and the concept of *uchi* and *soto* (us and them) – all of which confirm the theories of *nihonjinron*. The *nihonjinron* refers to the vast array of literature on the uniqueness of Japanese culture, society and the national character, which reached its peak in the late 1970s and 1980s. Frequently cited Japanese characteristics include the quasi-family group, the homogeneity of the Japanese race and the vertical structure of society (Yoshino, 1995).

Johnson is primarily concerned with the system and performance practice that was developed before westernisation in the nineteenth century (although more treatment would have been welcome about the cultural and social differences between amateurs (*shirto*) and professionals (*kurto*)). He does not cover modern ways of teaching and learning the instrument as found in Culture Schools and in self-learning. Since the late 1970s life-long learning has become increasingly popular, and many courses are organised by both the public and the private sectors. Consequently, 'Culture Schools' or 'Culture Centres' have been established across the country. Courses in traditional Japanese music are popular and provide a more accessible alternative to the *iemoto* system. Not only are the fees low in Culture Schools (because lessons are offered in groups), but also there are none of the responsibilities and expectations which exist in the more traditional system. Furthermore, some teachers adopt teaching styles which the public may find more approachable. For example, teachers may use western staff notation or invent their own tablatures called *bunkafu* (Murao, 2000). It is important to note, however, that many teachers who teach traditional Japanese music in Culture Schools also teach under the *iemoto* system. Similarly, there are numerous 'teach-yourself' publications for musical instruments as well as programmes offered by the media and over the internet. This may suggest that the traditional values which underline the *iemoto* system no longer exist in the modern society.

Johnson also refers to the implementation of traditional Japanese music in the school system as a response to 'cultural nationalism'. The Japanese school system is rooted firmly in western pedagogy and western music: such approaches are very different from their traditional Japanese counterparts. This book does not extend the discussion as to whether schools are appropriate places to teach such an instrument as the *koto* and, if so, how it should be taught and by whom (see Yuasa, 2003).

The importance of the book lies in its holistic approach to one instrument through an examination of its physical construction and its history, as well as a comparison of different performance groups and performance practices. This book is an excellent introduction for those who wish to learn not only more about the *koto*, but also about Japanese culture and society.

References

Harich-Schneider, E. (1973) *A History of Japanese Music*. London: Oxford University Press.

Malm, W. ([1959] 2000) *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*. Tokyo: Kodansha International. Originally published as *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*. (1959).

Murao, T. (2000) 'Music Education at "Culture Schools"'. *International Journal of Music Education*, **35**, 15–16.

Nishiyama, M. (1982) *Iemoto no kenky*, Tokyo: Yoshikawa Hirofumi Kan.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Rimer, J. & Yamazaki, M. (Trans.) (1984) *On the Art of the N Drama: The Major Treatises of Zeami*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Yoshino, K. (1995) *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*: *A Sociological Enquiry*. London: Routledge.
Yuasa, A. (2003) 'Teaching and Learning Music in Japan'. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Reading: University of Reading.

AYA YUASA
Pangbourne College

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051705226396 Published online by Cambridge University Press