

IV.2 Interferences between Musical and Educational Cultures in Classrooms

Christopher Wallbaum & Simon Stich

The Chapter presents cross-cultural aspects of music lessons as a result of an international exploratory study and two music lessons from different countries illustrating some of the cross-cultural aspects. They make double meaning evident and bring up the hypothesis on interferences between musical and educational practices in classrooms.

In this chapter¹ we want to present (1) cross-cultural aspects of music lessons as a result of an international and comparative exploratory study and (2) two music lessons from different countries, which illustrate some of the verbalized aspects from the international exploratory study and lead us to possible different meanings. This brings up a thesis about (3) interferences between musical and educational cultures in classrooms.

The Starting Point: An International and Comparative Exploratory Study Generates Cross-cultural Categories for Comparing Music Lessons

Five different groups of students, each from different countries, had the task to compare music lessons on video with their own experiences from school. The results of their presentations and the plenary discussions were the data to generate international and cross-cultural categories for music lessons.

1 This is an adapted version of *Interferences between Musical and Pedagogical Cultures*, published in: Rakhkochkine, Alexander/Koch-Priewe, Barbara/Hallitzky, Maria/Störtländer, Jan Christoph/Trautmann, M. (eds.) 2016. There are two reasons why we include this article in this book: it refers to two of the lessons-on-dvd published together with this book; after it was published in a more general pedagogical context we now want to put it into a music educational context.

The setting of the study

It was in the year 2011 in Aveiro, a village in Portugal, where a so-called “Intensive Programme” took place. It was supported by the European Union. 30 student music teachers and 5 lecturers from 5 countries worked on topics and issues concerning music education for two weeks. The situation gave us the opportunity to do a little exploratory study. One precondition was the fact that we had videos from three German music lessons from different federal states of Germany in our bag (Wallbaum, 2010). The stills Fig. 1–3 may give a rough idea of them.



Fig. 1: Hamburg-Lesson



Fig. 2: Saxony-Lesson



Fig. 3: Thuringia-Lesson

You can see the teacher of the Hamburg-Lesson² (Fig. 1) sitting in the background and observing a group of self-organized singing students. The teacher of the Saxony-Lesson (Fig. 2) explains music theory to her students, who are sitting in two rows at their tables with keyboards. The teacher of the Thuringia-Lesson (Fig. 3) is sitting at the piano, conducting a group of instrumentalists and a second group of singers and dancers. The videos were produced on DVD with three video tracks each, so that the user could choose between three angles by himself.³

The 5 national groups from Estonia, Germany, Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden were asked

2 The titles Hamburg-, Saxony- and Thuringia-Lesson shall only make transparent the respective institutional context.

3 You can order the DVDs at the German Publishing House Olms Verlag.

1. to select one of the three lessons (based on short cuts of 15 min) which they regarded as the most similar compared to those they knew from school and to give reasons for their decision, then
2. to watch the selected lesson as a whole, to discuss it in a group and to take notes on the similarities or differences, compared to the music lessons they know from their own school experience;
3. to present their results with a poster about three verbalized aspects (theses 1, 2, 3) combined with three stills from the most similar lesson to talk about implicit differences in the culture of music education of their country.

The plenary discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The results of the study

To explain the process of generating cross-cultural categories for comparing music lessons we want to show the results of two groups.⁴ We chose these two group works, because in the next part of this chapter they can be related to new videos of music lessons of their country, which were produced a year later in 2012. All quotations are taken from the posters and the transcribed presentations and plenary discussions in 2011.

Group A (from Estonia) saw the most similarities in the practice of the Saxony-Lesson. The *structure of the lesson* was identified as the key reason for this similarity. The other statements can be concentrated on the categories: *instruments, attitude and posture* and *other aspects* (Fig. 4).

4 You can see the results of all the groups in Wallbaum (2013a) and (2013b).

Aspects of classroom practice in music lessons (group A)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We have the same structure of lesson. We start with this warm-up body percussion stuff, we have this theory part, we have the singing part and we have the playing instruments part. And that’s all in this lesson also.” – “There are also some differences.” 	– Structure of a lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “In Estonia they are always singing and learn a lot about singing.” • “Estonia doesn’t have keyboards (thesis 1), sometimes they have a cittern (6-string), a guitar and recorders for the whole class.” 	– Instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The singing posture is very important in Estonia (thesis 2). “Stand straight, and then it’s good to sing.” – „And it’s only the singing position, but also playing the piano [...], how to play the recorder. You have to have the right posture.” – “You have to hold the Orff-instrumentarium sticks always right, in the right positions.” • “Sitting with your elbows on the table would not be acceptable” (comparing two girls at their keyboard). 	– Attitude and posture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up with singing and body-percussion. • “Never saw the homophony-polyphony-scheme (thesis 3).” 	– Other aspects

Fig 4: Aspects of classroom practice in music lessons (group A)

Group B (from Sweden) chose the Thuringia-Lesson. Here they saw the most similarities to their own experiences in school. The group stated the *seating plan* and the laid-back *attitude* of the teacher as crucial reasons. Some statements verify the categories *instruments* and *attitude and posture*. Others do not fit to the existing concepts, which is why it was necessary to generate new categories like *sound and musical style* and *seating plan*. The structure of the lesson was not reflected in the work of group B (Fig. 5).

We chose the two groups just described, because they can be related to the videos, which were produced a year later in 2012. In total, the analysis of the results of all five groups generated the following list of categories even

if not all categories were reflected in all groups (the category interaction was not found in the data above but from a group C from Germany, see Wallbaum 2013b):

1. Structure of a lesson and seating plan
2. Instruments
3. Sound and musical style
4. Attitude and posture
5. Interaction
6. Other aspects, such as using notation.

Aspects of classroom practice in music lessons (group B)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The seating plan is similar. 	– Seating plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music in Swedish classrooms is based on pop- and rock-instruments in this age of the pupils (thesis 1). • “Very rarely Orff-instrumentarium, if they have any, they are broken.” • “Many guitar and/or keyboard classes (25 instruments); “it depends on the teacher’s instrument.” 	– Instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Try to be more authentic” (thesis 2); Video: “No gospel-vocals”; “the beat doesn’t sound right”; “Gospel with Orff-instruments sounds wrong.” • “Better to check first, which style of music is to be played, and only then select the instruments.” 	– Sound and musical style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laid back attitude of the teacher (like in Sweden). 	– Attitude and posture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Swedish classroom education is often not based on written notes” (thesis 3). • “Many songs are taught and learned by ear.” • “More chord symbols instead of written notes.” – “Many 1-3-5-chords.” • “Often we teach songs, [...] we teach the whole class.” • “Everyone learns everything and then you choose.” 	– Other aspects, such like using notes

Fig 5: Aspects of classroom practice in music lessons (group B)

Comparing Pictures: An Illustration of the Aspects of Music Lessons and the Trace of Different Meanings of Practice

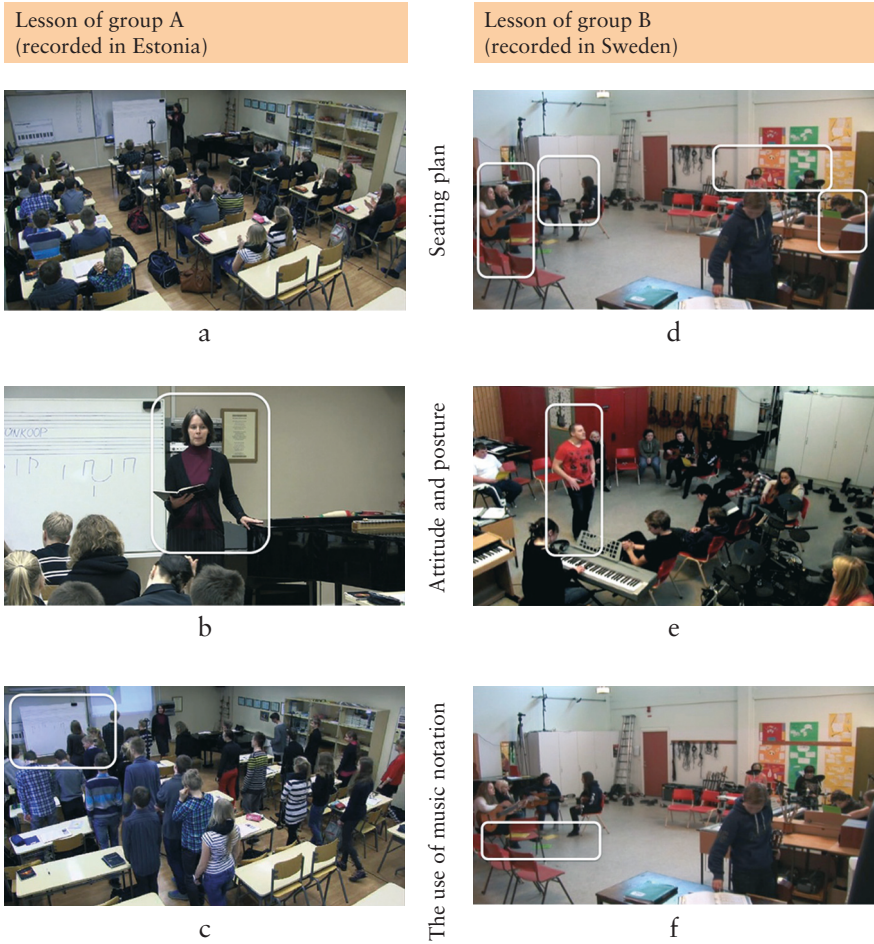
The next “Intensive Programme” happened the year after (2012) in Leipzig. The national groups from the same countries with other students participating in the programme were asked to check the generated categories and to bring an example of a (in the opinion of the group) “typical” and (in the opinion of the teacher) “good” lesson on video from their country.⁵

It can be emphasized that first, the new national groups verified the categories, which were made by the groups of 2011. The categories seem to describe views of the recorded music lessons very appropriately. Here, pictures of the videos can be understood as illustrations of the generated categories. A more detailed investigation and comparison of the perceptions on the traces of the analysed terms led us, secondly, to different meanings regarding contexts of educational or musical cultures.⁶

The *Seating plan* reflects different forms of interaction. While the teacher of the lesson B is there to support pupils in their learning, the students learn mostly individually and/or interact with each other in small groups (d), the teacher of the lesson A instructs and directs all students all the time (a). The *Posture* of the teacher of lesson A does not only show “standing straight”, but also shows the posture of a classical singer of a Lied, with the score in one hand and the other hand resting lightly on the piano (b). The posture and attitude of the teacher of lesson B is different to a singer of a classical Lied. He is not standing straight. He somehow seems to be “laid back” literally. He is moving and clapping his hands on his body in the rhythm of the song (e). Also, the students who are playing and singing seem to have a very laid-back-posture. In lesson B, *scores* are not as important as listening (f) in the process of learning something about music as in lesson A (c). Before we can relate the results to cultural meanings, it is necessary to think about the culture of the subject – music – in general.

5 These criteria were picked up when further lessons were recorded for the symposium. The lessons recorded in Estonia and Sweden are attached to this book.

6 The comparison of different perceptions and evaluations of the same lessons became the catalyst for the hypothesis on interferences. The methodological function of the video-analysis cannot provide conclusive proof of evidence. Finally, the function of the following video-stills is to show some observations and to illustrate some considerations about them.



Seating plan

Attitude and posture

The use of music notation

Fig. 6: Juxtaposition of two lessons regarding three categories

What is music? If two people (or more) start singing in the same pitch together, they are in a relation to each other and they are doing something. Perhaps they are playing just to play together, or they are just exploring the sound of the room, which they are sitting in; it could also be, that they are presenting a situation, which they once experienced together. At the same

time the tones and their line seem to be something for themselves. Some people call only such tones and lines “music”. Others also call natural soundscapes “music”. John Cage, for example, added this attitude to the idea of music, when he said about the creak of a door “if you celebrate it, it’s art” (Riehn 1990, 97).⁷ Together with artists and scientists, we call the whole practice – including attitude, material and sociocultural interaction “music” or “musical practice”.⁸ And if some musical practices become fixed by convention, we call them cultures. These cultures are not fixed forever, they are changing. But not as quick as a single practice without convention. For example, we have a classical music culture, where people learn their instrument from a teacher and also learn sight-reading, and we have a band-culture, where people learn their instrument auto-didactically by ear.⁹ At this point the interpretation of the categories starts.

The Interpretation of the Categories: Different Cultural Meanings of Aspects of Classroom Practice in Music Lessons

Generally, the same or similar actions – as well as any artefacts – can be techniques in different cultures. Cultural techniques, these are actions, which have become conventional, also symbols, tools or machines. For example a *seating plan*, a *posture and attitude* or the *use of written notes* can be called techniques of educational or musical cultures (Fig. 7).¹⁰ The *seating plan* in les-

7 In the philosophical discourse Martin Seel (2005) establishes the connection between sounds, postures, fashions, a room, a work of art, an atmosphere etc. and ways of living. For that he brings out a corresponsive or atmospheric mode of *aesthetic* perception (beside two other modes).

8 One traditional reason for music at schools in Germany is that music includes values and therefore music does educate by itself. But nobody makes clear, in which “piece of music” you can find the values: Are they in the tones and structures of a composition or in the attitude and sociocultural interaction, where meaning is constructed?

9 About this distinction of two kinds of practices, compare e.g. the British music educator Lucy Green (2008). She distinguishes between formal and informal practices. At the end for the issue of the interferences thesis following in the next part of this chapter, the reach or validity/truth of the cultural meaning is not of importance.

10 A quite similar distinction between the culture of pedagogy and the culture of music is common in the international discourse of music education (MacCarthy, 2012). Following this, the study can clearly be located in the Cube for comparative music education: It relates to different musical cultures in society (also takes other categories of this axis into account such

son A has many similarities to a classical orchestra or could be understood as a methodological decision to get the attention of everybody. The seating plan in lesson B could be interpreted as a way of teaching in a student-centered manner or to teach in an informal band practice way. The *posture and gesture* of the teachers may be an embodied indicator for a music culture or possibly show a deeper understanding of educative values in general. Also the use of *musical notation* in lesson B could be a consequence of an experienced band musician or a student-centered way of learning. In lesson A the use of musical notation refers to classical music culture and may be understood as an educational decision.¹¹

Technique of a musical culture	Cultural interferences in the classroom practice of music lessons	Technique of an educational culture
e. g. seating plan	} Meaning of verbal and nonverbal aspects }	e. g. seating plan
e. g. posture and attitude		e. g. posture and attitude
e. g. use of written notes		e. g. use of written notes

Fig. 7: Cultural interferences in the classroom practice of music lessons

Also the *use of written notes* can enable people to experience fulfilled musical practice. That leads to the hypothesis that interferences of educational and musical cultures can help or complicate the tasks of (music-) education. The teacher should be aware of the relation between his/her educational convictions, his/her musical behaviour and the subject he/she teaches. Generally speaking, values of education as well as values of the subject are embodied in the classroom practice and we should not let our lessons become a victim of unnoticed interferences between both, but reflect and combine both value dimensions fruitfully.

different musical cultures in society (also takes other categories of this axis into account such as artefacts) and reflects the culture of pedagogy, both at the classroom-level, which is embedded in the educational culture of a school, country and world region. See Fig. 10 in Chapter I.1 *On Comparing*, 60.

11 In Wallbaum (2013a) and (2013b) cultural meanings were reflected in their societal context, which brings up hypotheses of national cultural aspects in music lessons.

References

- Green, Lucy (2008): *Music, Informal Learning and the School: A New Classroom Pedagogy*. Aldershot, Hampshire (Ashgate).
- Knoblauch, Hubert/Schnettler, Bernt/ Raab, Jürgen/Soeffner, Hans-Georg (eds.) (2009): *Analysis: Methodology and Methods. Qualitative Audiovisual Data Analysis in Sociology*. Frankfurt am Main (Peter Lang).
- MacCarthy, Mary (2012): International Perspectives. In: McPherson, Gary E., Welch, G. F. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*, 40–62. Volume 1. New York (Oxford University Press).
- Reckwitz, Andreas (2005): Kulturelle Differenzen aus praxeologischer Perspektive. Kulturelle Globalisierung jenseits von Modernisierungstheorie und Kulturesentialismus (Cultural Differences in a Praxeological Perspective. Globalization beyond Modernisation Theory and Cultural Essentialism). In: Scrubar, Ilja/Renn/Joachim, Wenzel, Ulrich (eds.): *Kulturen vergleichen. Sozial- und kulturwissenschaftliche Grundlagen und Kontroversen (Comparing Cultures. Basics and Controversies in Social and Cultural Sciences)*. Wiesbaden (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften), 92–111.
- Riehn, Rainer (1990): Noten zu Cage (Remarks on Cage). In: Metzger, Heinz-Klaus/Riehn, Rainer (eds.): *MUSIKKONZEPTE. Sonderband John Cage I*. München (Edition Text und Kritik), 97–106.
- Seel, Martin (2005): *Aesthetics of Appearing (Cultural Memory of the Present)*. Stanford University Press. (First published in 2000: *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*. München, Hanser).
- Wallbaum, Christopher (ed.) (2010): *Perspektiven der Musikdidaktik – drei Schulstunden im Licht der Theorien (Perspectives of Music Didactic – Three School Lessons in the Light of Theories)*. Hildesheim u. a. (Olms).
- Wallbaum, Christopher (2013a): Zur Praxis des Musikunterrichts in Europa. Eine Erhebung mit Videos und drei Reflexionen (About the Praxis of Music Education in Classrooms of Europe. A survey with Videos and Three Reflections). In: *Diskussion Musikpädagogik*, No. 60, Hamburg (Hildegard-Junker-Verlag), 45–54.
- Wallbaum, Christopher (2013b): About Different Cultures in Music Classrooms of Europe. An Exploratory Study. In: Konkol, Gabriela Karin/Kierzkowski, Michael (eds.): *Competences [International Aspects of Music Education Volume 2]*. Gdansk (Academy of Music Publishing House), 102–120.
- Wallbaum, Christopher/Stich, Simon (2016): Interferences between Musical and Educational Cultures in Classrooms. In: Rakhkochkine, Alexander/Koch-Priewe,

Barbara/Hallitzky, Maria/Störtländer, Jan Christoph/Trautmann, M. (eds.): *Vergleichende Didaktik und Curriculumforschung: nationale und internationale Perspektiven* (*Comparative Research on Didactics and Curriculum: National and International Perspectives*). Bad Heilbrunn (Klinkhardt), 191–198.