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Music in University Learning Environments

Jensen, Julie Borup

Publication date:
2016

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Jensen, J. B. (2016). *Transgressive, but fun! Music in University Learning Environments*. (1 ed.) Aalborg Universitetsforlag. Higher Education Practices Series No. 3

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” Transgressive,
but fun!

Music in University
Learning Environments

Julie Borup Jensen

Higher Education
Practices Series

Transgressive, but fun! Music in University Learning Environments

By Julie Borup Jensen

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2016

1. Edition, open access

Series:
Higher Education Practices Series, No. 3

Series editors:
Lone Krogh, Associate Professor, Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University
Kathrin Otrell-Cass, Associate Professor, Department of Learning and Philosophy, Aalborg University

Layout: akila by Kirsten Bach Larsen

ISBN: 978-87-7112-602-0
ISSN: 2446-1881

Published by:
Aalborg Universitetsforlag
Skjernvej 4A, 2. sal
9220 Aalborg Ø
T 99407140
aauf@forlag.aau.dk
forlag.aau.dk

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” Transgressive, but fun!

Music in University
Learning Environments

Julie Borup Jensen

Series Preface

This publication about Transgressive, but fun! Music in University Learning Environments has been prepared for inclusion in the Higher Education Practices Series developed by the Higher Education Research Unit in the Department for Learning and Philosophy at Aalborg University. It is part our intention with this series, to produce timely syntheses of research on higher

education topics of national and international importance. This publication is based on a synthesis of research evidence on using music in teaching practices.

This synthesis is intended to be a stimulating catalyst for systemic improvement and sustainable development in higher education. It is electronically available at <http://www.learninglab.aau.dk/resources/>. To ensure that this material

is of relevance and use to other University teachers and researchers, each booklet in this series has been reviewed internally by several members of the Higher Education Research Unit at Aalborg University to provide feedback before being sent for external review. The author of this publication is Associate Professor Julie Borup Jensen, whose research has focused on the conceptualization and place for music in higher education. This work presents inspirations for University teaching based on a thorough literature review and personal experiences that is paired with practical suggestions for interested teachers to experiment with and try out.

In this book series we are mindful that suggestions or guidelines for practice need to be responsive to educational settings and contexts. The booklet is therefore presented in a way that readers can consider the suggestions for their own practices and find suggestions for further reading.

Lone Krogh and Kathrin Otrell-Cass,
Series Editors

”

Where
words leave
off, music
begins.

Heinrich Heine

Overture: an Idea of Music

The purpose of this booklet is to show how musical activity can be used as a tool and contribution towards creating a supportive framework and environment for student learning in university classrooms. It is the result of more than five years of experimenting with my own teaching at Aalborg University, using new and creative pedagogical tools in order to engage students in academic work by working with the learning environment.

Research in higher education finds it of great importance that students encounter a supportive learning environment. In my experience, creating such an environment can be a challenging task when facing 100 students or more in the classroom. Over the years, therefore, I have felt a need to try out new methods and activities to make this large number of students feel welcome, taken good care of and safe. One method of doing so is to make use of rhythm. This idea came out of my own background as a professional violinist and violin teacher. While striving to teach children how to develop skills on their instruments, I discovered something else – when the pupils played together in groups and we collaborated on creating music, this had the power to unite, to embrace and to lift spirits in me and in my students. Music, indeed, only “works” if every participant has a chance to contribute and each person is valued for his or her “voice” in the activity. Creating space and room for this

participation is the responsibility of the conductor – or in this case, the teacher - and the reward is a group of happy participants. This was exactly the effect I was aiming at in the university classroom: a group of happy participants. Therefore, I began thinking that some of the social and spirit-raising effects of musical activity ought to be transferable to the university context, if adapted to higher education settings. It should, of course, be seen as a means of building a supportive social environment for learning, not as an end for musical excellence.

Then, when looking at research into the philosophical, anthropological, sociological and psychological aspects of music, I found that the arguments for making music with my students were manifold. All human cultures have a musical practice - a society or community without music seems unthinkable (Nielsen 2010). In this way, music may be seen as playing a significant role for the coherence, bonding and sense of belonging within a society, community or group (Dissanayake 2012). Music relates to existentially important lifeworld experiences (falling in love, being young, building identity etc.) and the emotions involved in these experiences (joy, sorrow, longing etc.) (Boyce-Tillman, 2004). It also relates to collective-cultural and ritual markings of life events (birth, death, marriage etc.). It plays a role in religious practice (Nielsen 2010). Groups, associations, political factions (parties and even structures, e.g. the EU) often develop songs that are

meant to bring people together, create positive emotions and convey their message (DeNora, 2000; DeNora, 2003; Green, 2008).

So much for its societal functions. However, there is more to music than this. Music seems to have the ability of expressing the profound relations between the individual, the social environment and the musical context. This is because music explicates physical presence and experience, which leads to the following activities in the individual:

Listening, that is, using the ears as primary sensory receiver of musical impressions from a performance or recorded music (Cavicchi, 2002).

Use of voice and body movement when enacting and performing musical activity (Boyce-Tillman 2004, Burnard et al. 2008 Vuust et al. 2012).

Building identity by means of active involvement; it creates ways of participating and learning that are different from cognitive, verbal and academic ones; it also draws on and builds bridges to the students' previous musical experiences (DeNora, 2000).

Therefore, at the concrete individual and collective level, music seems to have a unique ability of uniting individual and social activity in a culturally meaningful structure, which is sensed by means of the body and felt and interpreted by means of emotions, experience and social knowledge. All of these research insights support the idea that listening to, creating or performing music may contribute to building environments for human expressions of life, including *learning*.

With this in mind, the booklet aims to focus on those aspects of music that are 1) especially powerful in contributing to building supportive learning environments, 2) accessible to both students and educators as non-musicians, and 3) working towards ends of academic, not musical excellence. For this purpose, I shall review the main theoretical and practical implications of and arguments for working with musical activity in higher education, drawing on relevant learning theories, music psychology and music anthropology research, as well as on higher education pedagogy.

The rhythm: how the booklet is structured

To maintain overview of the material, the booklet is structured in two parts.

The first part is its theoretical perspective and framework. I outline how “supportive learning environments” are understood and conceptualised. I also address relevant research and how music’s role in society and human life may indicate that, as not only a musical, but also a cultural and social activity, it can contribute to building supportive learning environments. In doing so, I explain why the booklet eventually places its musical focus on rhythm as a relevant tool for building supportive learning environments in higher education.

The second part consists of practical exercises, examples and instructions for educators who are interested in trying out the benefits of bringing

a musical activity like rhythm into play in their teaching. The practical examples build on material from my own teaching portfolio and they are presented in two ways:

1. by means of notation and visual illustrations for those who know how to read notes
2. by means of audio-instruction in audio-files for those who do not read notes

Part 1: Keynote: the educational climate

The relevance of looking more closely at supportive learning environments in higher education relates to developments within Western educational systems in the past 15-20 years. Since the turn of the century and especially in the wake of the 2008 financial and economic crisis, universities worldwide have increased their intake of students. This is partly, or perhaps even mainly, because the educational level of the population is seen as a key factor of economic growth, comparison and competition between national states in a globalised world (Arvanitakis, 2014; Caspersen & Hovdhaugen, 2014). In many Western countries, educational policies expect 50% of young people to engage in higher education (e.g. Danish Ministry of Education 2015). This has resulted in large and growing numbers of students entering higher education institutions with highly diverse preconditions for pursuing academic work and for decoding the culture and language of the academic en-

vironment. Although student intake has now stagnated in many countries, the changes are still prevalent and the students still engage in university programmes with very different preconditions for academic work.

Consequently, educators cannot assume that all their students are as socialised into academic learning habits as may have been the case previously - though much university pedagogy and didactics continue to be based on this assumption. Firstly, the number of students *per se* is challenging – how can you, as educator, be sure of reaching the students, without compromising academic quality and complexity of content (Arvanitakis 2014)? Secondly, the students' various preconditions for engaging in academia constitute a pedagogic challenge, since the way in which academic content is often taught may meet the needs of traditional students, but not those of non-traditional ones (Simons & Hicks 2006, Boyce-Tillman 2004, Burnard et al. 2008). Thirdly, recent studies (Jensen 2016, in progress, Chemi and Jensen, 2015) suggest that the various backgrounds of the students lead to many of them engaging in higher education with an initial feeling of insecurity and inferiority due to unfamiliarity with the university environment. This insecurity may impede their courage and motivation to participate in the academic learning culture. In short, the transformation from elitist to mass university poses new challenges concerning student diversity and exclusion/inclusion problems. It is exactly at this point that

the focus on tools and approaches for building supportive learning environments is of supreme relevance, since supportive learning environments seem to be the foundation for students to begin learning the academic content and skills of the study programmes.

Theme: What is a supportive learning environment?

In order to demonstrate the potential of musical activity, I will first briefly outline the concepts of a *supportive learning environment* that make up the framework of the booklet. These concepts have been selected because they elaborate and formulate the characteristics of supportive learning environments. They help us to substantiate the parameters according to which music may contribute to building these environments.

Since the late 1980s it has been widely acknowledged that the contribution made by supportive learning environments to student learning is a necessary research focus, not only for elementary schools, but also in higher education. Some of the earliest findings from research in higher education, by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1989), indicated that supportive learning environments contribute to the development of students' self-confidence and self-esteem within the academic contexts they encounter and engage in. Building on this, later research (Rhodes & Neville 2004) found that student satisfaction and student retention was correlated with a friendly teaching climate. These effects

are important for learning, which is why the building of supportive learning environments seems necessary. As discussed above, this corresponds very well with what is needed for non-traditional students, but it also emphasises that *traditional* students, too, benefit from increased focus on supportive learning environments in higher education (Hodgson et al. 2008).

It is essential, therefore, to identify the supportive characteristics and conditions within the learning environment. Based on previous research, Strange and Banning (2000) suggested the following conditions that characterise a supportive learning environment:

- Inclusion
- Safety
- Involvement
- Community

Taking these four characteristics into account, one of the first steps in building a supportive learning environment is to help students create social and emotional bonds with each other, as this assists them in acting empathically and constructively in the learning context (Strange and Banning 2000). Also research into inclusive teaching and learning environments in elementary schools indicates that it is important for the learning environment to support students in developing a *sense of belonging* (Prince & Hadwin 2013). Working pedagogically on developing the students' sense of belonging seems to go hand in

hand with motivating them to become involved with the community of learners in the classroom, as well as with the educational activities, with the aim of processing the academic content and building academic skills. Consequently, in building this supportive learning culture, the grounds for academic discipline learning are laid (Dillon 2006, Humphreys 2011). The students therefore need tools for bonding in order to create an empathic learning culture (involvement and community), in which they learn how to appreciate diversity in their peers (inclusion) and to work and learn in mutual trust and confidence (safety).

It is in relation to these four conditions of supportive learning environments that music seems to have potential. I should say here that the relevance and potential of musical activity as contributing to the development of a supportive learning environment do not relate to theoretical or analytical perspectives on music as a discipline, but rather to its emotional, social and cultural dimension. This distinction is crucial, as the insights related to musical activity will be discussed below within a broad socio-cultural framework of knowledge and learning, drawing on research from music anthropology, music therapy/psychology and music sociology. The idea is to show the research-based arguments for involving music in the design of conditions for developing a community of learners, within which the students' sense of belonging can be developed and thereby building a supportive learning environment in higher education con-

texts. The following pages aim to be an in-depth presentation of the diverse positions from which music can be perceived as a social activity that is relevant for educational cultures, concerned with creating optimal conditions for learning academic content and skills. From the large range of literature concerning music, I have chosen the more substantial contributions to the understanding of music as a cultural, human endeavour with the purpose of creating and sustaining human relations. My sources, therefore, derive from the following three fields:

1. The anthropological “take” on music
2. The psychological “take” on music
3. The sociological “take” on music

To process the insights from these fields in an educationally relevant way, music will be explored as part of a socio-cultural approach to educational design, so that the reader (the higher education teacher) is introduced to concrete arguments for applying music in the classroom in the endeavour to build supportive learning environments.

Variation 1

Music, Communication and Community: the Anthropological Perspective on Music

The view of music as a socially and emotionally bonding activity derives from the fields of arts and anthropology, where it is seen as a basic

expression of human existence (Boyce-Tillman, 2004; Dissanayake, 2012; Green, 2008). Here, music is seen as an example of a basic, perhaps even pre-linguistic means of communication, a means that is still traceable in spoken language (Dissanayake, 2012; Nielsen, 2010). It is assumed that musical activity, especially singing, was an original form of communication in groups of human beings. This communication was thought to develop a sense of community by means of social and emotional bonding – the very same aim as building a supportive learning environment (Nielsen 2010). The unifying effects of music may be connected with music’s close relationship to language - indeed, neurological research indicates that even in the brains of individuals without musical training, music activates the same areas as does speech and language processing (hearing, processing, understanding, interpreting words and speech) (Holden, 2001).

Some research even traces these effects back to prehistoric times, claiming that the social coherence created by singing and music-making provided small groups of humans with a survival advantage compared to other groups (Nielsen 2010, Malloch & Trevarthen 2009). Anthropologically speaking, music nowadays has been associated with a sensitising effect, where its focus on the senses (in this case, hearing) is considered to be a protection against (visual and auditory) noise pollution and a modernity that corrupts sensory perception (Nielsen

2010). Again, emphasis is placed on music and its correlations to original forms of human life. Along similar lines, other explanations of music’s ability to raise spirits and develop a sense of collective belonging (Boyce-Tillman 2004) focus on the bodily roots of musicality and musical understanding. Transposed into university pedagogical terms, the above effects of music may have strong implications when used as a tool to build supportive learning environments in a class of students. The musical traits of building community, identity, safety and confidence are also seen as a result of the unifying power of music, when students’ preconditions for learning are diverse, or the cultural backgrounds are different within the student group (Fitzpatrick 2012).

Variation 2 Body and Entrainment: the Psychological Perspective

As stated above, a supportive learning environment contributes to students feeling comfortable, confident and safe. This experience has a psychological side that is rooted in a bodily presence and participation in the room. Certain aspects of bodily participation and learning are described in music psychology and therapy research in the context of the *theory of entrainment*. This research reveals interrelations between individual biological responses to rhythm and emotional and social interaction (Bernardi et al. 2009, Berger & Turow 2011, Humphreys 2011, Williams, Fredrickson, &

Atkinson 2011). According to entrainment theory, music functions as a regulating system of, *inter alia*, rhythm and harmonies to which bodily responses can be observed. The best-known effect is the (sometimes unconscious) tapping of feet or nodding of the head when listening to music (Humphreys, 2011). Rhythm and musical pulse often generate measurable biological changes in heart rate, blood pressure, hormones in the blood etc., regardless of whether the person is listening to music or participating in musical activity. These changes induce corresponding emotional/ psychological states of mind (Bonde, 2009). Different musical styles and tempos have different effects on bodily responses. For example, slow pulse and drawn-out harmonies allegedly slow down pulse and heart rate and, vice versa, fast pulse and rapid shifts in harmonies make the body respond with increased heart rate and blood pressure (Bonde, 2009). Music and rhythm are applied in music therapy with the aim of generating an experience of entrainment and associated therapeutic effects such as positive emotions and a sense of belonging to a greater community of human beings, again, both when listening and actively producing music (Boyce-Tillman 2014, Petersson & Nyström 2011, Malloch & Trevarthen 2009). This relates to other psychological research, where music is seen as a cognitive function in the same way as language and communication - in other words, as a human means of relating to other people, in this case other students (Rebuschat 2012).

Music can, however, also evoke negative feelings, either because of the musical expression itself (mainly when listening) or because of previous negative experiences for some reason associated with the specific piece of music (Gabrielsson 2011). Likewise, previous negative experiences of music education in elementary school or music studies may evoke negative feelings (Bamford & Qvortrup 2006, Bamford 2009), as can disharmonic sounds (this may be the case when engaging in musical activity with musically inexperienced students) (Villarreal et al. 2011). Considerations and awareness of students' previous experiences with music are therefore worth keeping in mind, if planning to incorporate musical activity into university teaching.

This being said, when aiming to develop supportive learning environments in higher education, the educator may exploit the entrainment effect of music and rhythm to generate supportive effects by developing the students' sense of belonging in the social environment and educational culture (Bauer 2004, Cavicchi 2002, DeNora 2000, Grape et al. 2002).

Recapitulating, the potential of music in contributing to building supportive learning environments is confirmed by evidence from music which has highlighted that music often has an evoking function, not only on emotions, but also on body physical functions such as pulse, blood pressure, endorphins and the like (DeNora 2003). The desired effect is individual well-being and social, empathic bonding (Malloch & Trevarthen

2009) among groups of people. Pedagogically speaking, therefore, we should consider the impact of students making music together as being very significant, given that it creates social and emotional bonds within a group (Edwards, 2011).

Variation 3

Everyday Musicality: the Sociological Perspective

The sociological view of music reveals a rather undervalued aspect, which may turn out to be very important when engaging with music in the university classroom: that of everyday music and everyday musicality. These terms derive from sociological studies on youth and the more consumerist approach, where music consumption contributes to, for instance, development of identity and group identity in youth cultures. The consumerist perspective on music relates to the fact that the majority of people in the West do not engage in music by actually playing or singing themselves, nor are concerts the main way in which people engage in music (DeNora 2003, Cavicchi 2002, Clayton et al. 2012). Most people buy CDs, download or stream music using electronic devices or Internet. Moreover, we are all exposed - more or less voluntarily - to recorded music in shops, malls, airports etc. (Cavicchi 2002). In many ways, this develops a range of 'indirect' musical competence, which is not related to instrumental skills or conscious, analytical knowledge of music, but rather related to the social function of music as a means of iden-

tity building, pleasure, or as prompting to buy an item (Green 2008, DeNora 2000). However, there is a much more important side effect of this constant exposure to music: it creates a common frame of reference: There is a great deal of cultural coherence in knowing popular music, the latest hits played on the radio, the subcultures associated with specific genres or artists etc. (Clayton et al. 2012, Green & Hale 2011, Green 2009). All in all, this means that both educator and students often have much more musical competence than they are aware of (Lines 2009, Green 2008). This prospect is quite significant, as it embeds huge potential for working with music in the classroom. If the educator acknowledges his or her own everyday musicality and is ready to build on it and also knows how to put students' everyday musicality into play in the classroom, the chances of success are high. Therefore, exercises 1 and 2 below are based on common musical skills that one might expect to have developed based on an average, everyday exposure to music.

Finale: summing up

Given the above anthropological, psychological and sociological perspectives, let us now recapitulate the characteristics of music which are relevant and transferable to a pedagogical context and framework aimed at building supportive learning environments in higher education contexts, such as universities.

The following elements of music seem transferable:

- Musical activity. As we saw above, the socially bonding, empathy-building effects of music seem to result from an activity that directly involves participants in enacting music in interaction with other participants. The effects correspond directly to the characteristics of supportive learning environments: Inclusion, Involvement, Safety and Community.
- Rhythm: This seems to be the most basic musical activity, as it relates directly to the body: entrainment effects are evident with respect to heartbeat etc. This is also in line with the everyday musicality-trait, as students can be assumed to have basic rhythmical competence as an effect of their regular music consumption and music exposure. the same assumption being valid for the educator.
- These transferable characteristics have led to the development of the exercises presented in this booklet (Exercises 1 and 2 below).

Part 2: Practical exercises in the classroom

Educational development and research methodology

The empirical descriptions in this article derive from three sources:

1. The author's teaching portfolio collected within Aalborg University's university educators' professional training programme
2. A qualitative student survey collecting experiential statements on a music activity in the introduction period of *the Graduate Programme in Innovative Learning and Change*
3. A qualitative survey collecting written student testimonials on learning experiences of a music exercise related to a course in qualitative research methods in the second year of *the Graduate Programme in Innovative Learning and Change*

Before I go on to illustrate the actual rhythmical exercises, I will invite the reader into the workspace of research. I do this in order to show how the exercises have been developed and worked out on the basis of combining theory, research, my own teaching practice at Aalborg University and student feedback from qualitative survey material.

The raw material for creating the exercises was my teaching portfolio and its professional learning diary and logbook. Methodologically, diary- and log-keeping is a widely acknowledged tool for professional development. Log-keeping describes and documents activities carried out and methods developed, keeping track of the educator's professional development and learning (Dysthe & Engelsen, 2011; Havnes & Lauvås, 2004). The log itself, however, is not sufficient for research. In order to make the log-keeper's experiences available in a broader academic sense, development of a methodology of rigorous documentation and reflection on practice is necessary. The method for my own professional development is inspired by Donald Schön (1987),

Description (knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action)	Reflection/interpretation (retrospective reflection)	Theoretical concepts (professional development/ learning)
Space for notes and descriptions	Space for notes and descriptions	Space for notes and descriptions

Table 1: Analytical tool for data analysis (based on Schön 1987)

with reference to his categories of knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action and separate, retrospective reflection on the incidents experienced (pp. 22-31). In this way, professional development diaries and logs are processed in exactly the same understanding as any other qualitative data material like interviews, field notes, observations etc. Operationally, it takes the form of an analytical matrix in three columns (Schön, 1987):

The column to the left contains 'raw data', that is, the unedited logs and diaries. The column in the middle is for 1) interpretation of data, 2) condensation of meaning and 3) development of themes and categories. The column to the right relates to the two first columns by suggesting theoretical perspectives and concepts. These theoretical perspectives and concepts assist in understanding and 'translating' data and interpretations into academic knowledge. By means of this analytical tool, observations and descriptions from the diaries and logs are brought into play within a broader theoretical framework, in this case, the socio-cultural learning perspective outlined above.

To explore the effect experienced by the students, I designed an online questionnaire, where

they were asked about the musical activity's impact on their experience with the university environment. The questions were semi-structured and open-ended. All questions had both multiple-choice possibilities and open-comment fields, so that the students had diverse opportunities to reflect on the musical activity. The questions were:

1. How did you experience the music activity in the lesson?
2. What impression of the graduate programme as a whole did the music activity make on you?
3. What did the music activity do to the classroom (if anything)?
4. What did you mainly focus on during the music activity?

The open-comment fields allowed the students to provide meaningful statements about their experience of the musical activity in line with qualitative approaches to inquiry (Brinkmann, 2012; Mason, 2002; Whiting, 2008). The quotes below, taken from these fields, are used as meaningful responses to the activity and are seen in

light of theoretical concepts to modify my understanding of my own teaching.

In this interplay between raw data and theoretical concepts, my own material on the exercises, the students' responses to the exercises in the situation, and the evaluation survey can be seen in light of a broader theoretical perspective, leading to the development and design of the exercises as presented below. In this way, practical and theoretical insights can lead to developing knowledge, in a broader pedagogical sense, on musical activity and its contribution to building supportive learning environments in university settings, in a way that corresponds with Schön's (1987) understanding of professional development.

In addition, the analytical tool can be viewed from a phenomenological (column 1) and hermeneutical (column 2 and 3) perspective of creation of academic knowledge. The tool permits interplay between life-world experiences and descriptions of phenomena (column 1), interpretations, based on researcher's knowledge-and-experience-based reflection (column 2) and theoretical understanding (column 3) (Brinkmann, 2012).

To a broad extent, the use of my own pedagogical considerations, actions and descriptions as data material makes the methodological approach auto-ethnographic, encompassing data sources like introspective self-reflection, literary and even poetic forms of expressing impressions from the field (Collins, 2010; Denshire, 2014). In

this case, however, instead of emphasising the introspective or literary aspects of the experiences described (Collins, 2010), the log aims at communicating beyond the concrete context, by being as descriptive and as free of interpretative formulations as possible. Also, the use of student statements overrides the privileged researcher position in the logs.

Ethical considerations have been involved, due to the fact that students are directly and indirectly described and quoted in the booklet. Reference is made to the American Psychological Association's ethical principles and code of conduct within research (APA 2010).

How to use music in the classroom without being a musician!

As previously mentioned, rhythm is one of the basic musical building blocks, because it is related to our common, bodily experience of being alive: the heart beats in pulse, in a rhythm (Humphreys 2010, Bonde 2009)! Apart from this physical, and thereby bodily and existential dimension, rhythm is pedagogically accessible for educators with no formal musical education, since it is possible to create rhythms using nothing other than your body: clapping hands, clicking fingers, stamping feet, sounds from lips, tongue and voice etc. This activity, using one's body as a musical instrument, is sometimes termed "body-percussion". Other simple "instruments" may be made by interacting with objects in the classroom: hitting

tables (gently) with pencils, pens, books and other objects, rustling paper. The educator may even ask the students to use their imagination and try out objects that produce a sound suitable for making a rhythm together with others. All of these sound-producing activities may be done within the examples of rhythmical patterns suggested in exercises 1 and 2, or the educator may develop and improvise new rhythmical patterns for similar use.

When every single student produces an individual rhythm by means of body sounds, voice or using classroom objects, when the individual rhythm is structured into a collective pulse and combined with other students' rhythms in patterns, the students are creating music together in a very simple way. The musical activity will relate to a basic, human experience of being alive alongside other human beings and being part of interaction in a social context with other individuals, sharing the same experience at the same time, and shaping time and space into a form (Bruner 1997).

In exercise 1, the students are supposed to use their bodies as a 'human drum set', clapping, stomping and clicking fingers (body-percussion). In exercise 2, the students use their voices to create a rhythm together. My experience from my development portfolio is that the use of voice, compared to the human drum set, exposes the students even more, as the voice is our most personal, human expression (Apps, 2012, confirms this).

The student perspective: how is music experienced?

The reader may now be curious to know how students in a university setting respond to the rhythmical exercises. Do they actually experience the supportive effects that are outlined above, or are they too busy studying the academic core disciplines? To answer these questions, and before presenting the actual exercises, I will briefly outline some of the findings in student material from the survey.

Music and social learning

The survey revealed that a positive teambuilding effect of the rhythmical activity was experienced, illustrated by the following observations:

"It was very unexpected, but it made us laugh, and this was very good, because we got something to be together about, as a real team."

"Good shared experience!"

"I also thought: is this the university? Great!"

These comments confirmed to a broad degree my expectations of the musical activity as socially bonding and socially inclusive. To elaborate on that, I observed how the students moved from sitting as individuals in the classroom to building a "stage" where they merged into a

large group during the musical activity. The musical traits of community building, safety and building of confidence are found in the above quotes. In this perspective, rhythm can be seen as an aspect of musical activity that creates an opportunity for social exchange (Fitzpatrick 2012) and, in turn, for creating a supportive learning environment (“we got something to be together about, as a real team”). If the students do not know each other in advance, the rhythm activity gives them the opportunity to see their own efforts at stomping or clapping mirrored by their peers in the room, which seems to create a shortcut to mutual and social empathy (Humphreys 2011, Bonde 2009). In this perspective, the statements from the student survey underscore the fact of rhythm creating a learning environment with diverse opportunities for interaction and participation. This may also explain why the students say they experienced themselves as “a real team” after the activity.

However, other remarks indicated a risk that some students may feel estranged by the musical form, thus impeding the aim of building a supportive learning environment through musical activity:

“I understand that the activity was meant to create a good atmosphere among a group of strangers, but it made no difference for me. Too pedagogical and silly for the university.”

“It was scary.”

“It was completely inconsequential to my experience of the introduction of the programme, and it did not make any difference for me”.

These statements appear negative and may reflect the students’ expectations of academic study as being about knowledge in linguistic form. Or, they may reflect a feeling of own inadequacy, or rather a lack of self-efficacy in relation to musical expression (Bandura 1997). A number of students mentioned feeling estranged and a little scared, which is in line with the above observations. However, often, the negative experience was mostly prevalent at the beginning of the activity, the students going on to say:

“On the one hand, it was refreshing, but on the other it was a little transgressive and unpleasant in the beginning. But it ended up being a fun experience, where your head got cleared.”

And another student:

“Transgressive, but fun!”

These comments may lead to a consideration about resistance to unexpected activities in university pedagogy, for which the university educator must be prepared. The statements, howev-

er, also indicate that this resistance may be worth overcoming, because there seems to be a preponderance of positive responses to the questionnaire regarding the activity. Other researchers using arts in higher education teaching report similar obstacles, but the benefits seem convincing enough to continue experimenting with arts and music in higher education pedagogy (see also Simons & Hicks, 2006, p. 84).

Based on such comments, it seems crucial for the educator to consider how to lead the musical process. Focus should be on how to lead the process in a way that conveys confidence and belief in the students' abilities to carry through the musical tasks, and on how to communicate the cultural sign system involved in order to emphasise 'everyday musicality'. In light of the preponderance of positive student evaluations of the musical activities, the negative statements above must be seen as challenges to be overcome by pedagogical development, in order to continue the creation of supportive learning environments in higher education pedagogies. These perspectives call for further investigation in future research.

Exercise 1: The human drum set

Starting to use music in teaching may feel very far outside one's own skill set. However, with the right planning and preparation, it is not any more difficult than writing on the blackboard, using PowerPoint or even drama in the classroom. It is just a matter of having the initial courage. Below are two concrete suggestions for playing

with your own and your students' existing skills in music.

The example is a rhythmical activity, which is an easy way to get started. No matter how rudimentary the teacher's and students' skills in music, rhythm and pulse are such basic musical structures that every student can participate by means of 'everyday musicality' (Bonde, 2009; Cavicchi, 2002; DeNora, 2000).

First, the students are asked to get up out of their seats – they must be able to move. If there is space, the educator may want to gather the students into one or more circles. The important thing is that the students are able to see the educator in order to follow the instructions. The exercise is done like this:

The students are divided into three groups (1, 2 and 3). Each group is given a certain rhythmical figure, which is demonstrated by the teacher/educator as a responsive activity in the following order:

- 1 Rhythm 1 (see below) is started out by the teacher, until all group 1 students have joined, and pulse is steady. Group 1 keeps rhythm 1 going.
- 2 Rhythm 2 (see below) is added by the teacher, until all group 2 students have joined and pulse is steady. Group 1 and 2 keep their rhythms going.
- 3 Rhythm 3 (see below) is added like the two other groups.
- 4 The whole process ends up as a 'human drum set' (rhythm 4).

This is one example of a rhythm, but the possibilities for variation are infinite and up to the individual teacher/educator.

Below, further instructions are found in video-demonstrations of how to instruct the students, and over the following pages, the rhythms are also found in notes.



Human DrumSet:
https://youtu.be/ofT2yT_m9IU

The human drum set, procedure

Group 1 (repeat until steady):



Rhythm 1: Stomping feet

Group 2 (repeat until steady):



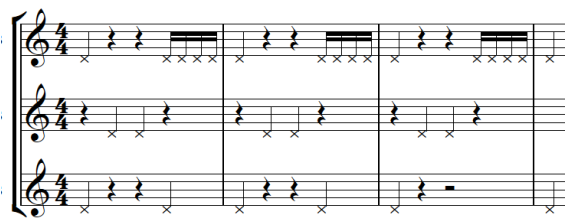
Rhythm 2: Clapping hands

Group 3 (repeat until steady):



Rhythm 3: Clapping with hands on upper legs

The rhythm as a whole looks like this:



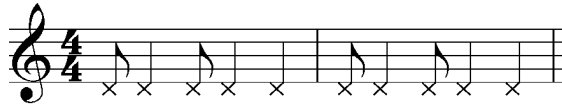
Rhythm 4: The assembled rhythm "human drum set"

The human drum set is repeated until there is a steady pulse.

Then the educator may start to play with dynamics, that is, to ask the students to produce the sounds louder or softer by 'conducting' - raising the arms for a louder sound, lowering the arms for a softer sound.

This round should already have established positive relations and maybe even an atmosphere of fun in the room. Now it is time to make a variation: the educator should teach the students a 'riff', where all 3 groups clap the same rhythmical figure (unison):

Group 1, 2 and 3 (repeat until everybody is confident):



Rhythm 5: Riff

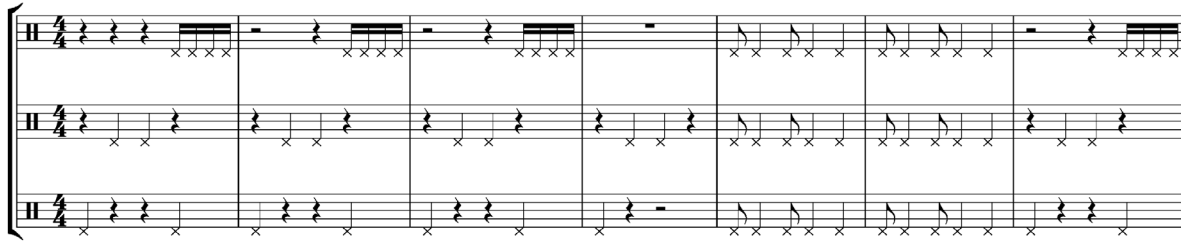
This riff is put into the rhythm as a variation that breaks monotony in the polyphonic rhythm divided into three groups (Rhythm 6, p. 19).

Note: The rhythmical figures in the example may be varied according to the teacher's/educator's imagination and needs of the students in the classroom.

”

To live is to be musical, starting with the blood dancing in your veins. Everything living has a rhythm. Do you feel your music?

Michael Jackson



Rhythm 6: The assembled rhythm including the riff

Exercise: Voice-in with your class!

In the following exercise, the educator uses the matrix for scaffolding the rhythm shown previously on page 5 (box 2). The difference is that the students now use their voices to make the rhythm. The point in using the voice is that students are forced to expose themselves a little bit more than when stomping and clapping. Of course you, as an educator, must judge and sense when the time is right for the students to progress from body-percussion to voice (Gish et al 2011).

Again, the students should stand up and form a circle, or they can remain seated, if space does not allow this.

The procedure is the same as before:

The students are divided into three groups (1, 2 and 3). Each group is given a certain rhythmical figure, which is demonstrated by the teacher/educator as a responsive activity in the following order:

- 1 Rhythm 1 (see below) is started out by the teacher, until all group 1 students have joined, and pulse is steady. Group 1 keeps rhythm 1 going.
- 2 Rhythm 2 (see below) is added by the teacher, until all group 2 students have joined and pulse is steady. Group 1 and 2 keep their rhythms going.
- 3 Rhythm 3 (see below) is added like the two other groups.
- 4 The whole process ends up as a 'human drum set' (rhythm 4).

This is one example of a rhythm, but the possibilities for variation are infinite and up to the individual teacher/educator.

Illustrate the right foot, the red footprints, the left. The arrows indicate the direction of the steps:

1. First bar stepping right: stepping right with the right foot on **one**, feet together on **two**, stepping right with the right foot on **three**, feet together on **four**.

2. Second bar stepping left: stepping left with the left foot on **one**, feet together on **two**, stepping left with the left foot on **three**, feet together on **four**
3. Repeat 1) and 2) continuously until you stop, or until you change to the next 'dance'

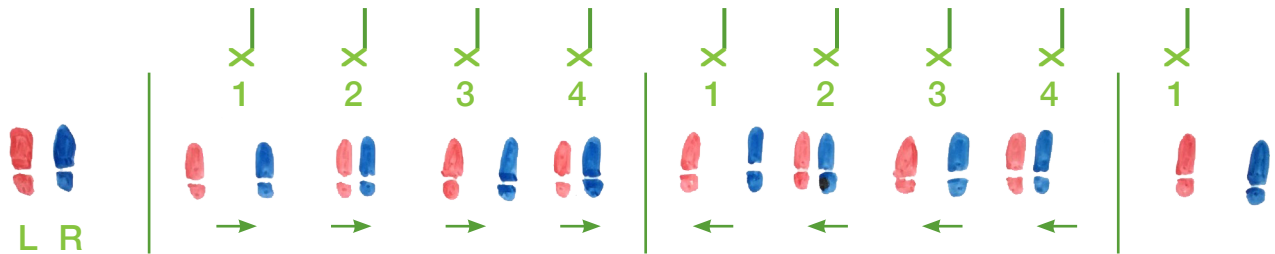


Figure 1: Small dance stepping right and left

And back and forward:

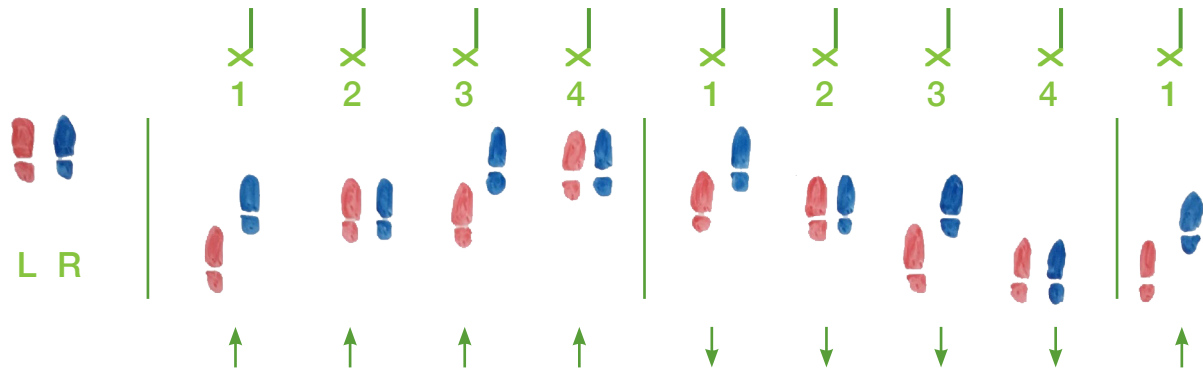


Figure 2: Footsteps forward and back



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