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Community Music Practice: Intervention Through Facilitation

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ABSTRACT

A community musician facilitator's toolkit of skills enables them to engage deeply with musicians on both an interpersonal and musical level. This distinctive approach to practice has developed in response to cultural environments in which the ever-increasing commercialization and commodification of music practices has resulted in people's widespread disengagement from active music making. The purpose of this chapter is to explore community music practice as an "intervention" under the guidance of a music facilitator. Four case studies are used to illustrate the central notions of this approach. Underpinning these four case studies is also the concept of *musical excellence* in community music interventions. This notion of *excellence* refers to the quality of the social experience – the bonds formed, meaning and enjoyment derived, and sense of agency that emerges for individuals and the group – considered alongside the musical outcomes created through the music making experience. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the ways in which community music opens up new pathways for reflecting on, enacting, and developing approaches to facilitation that respond to a wide range of social, cultural, health, economic, and political contexts.

KEY WORDS

Intervention, facilitator, leisure, music, community, participation

Introduction: Contexts for Community Music Activities

In many ways, community music and “music making in leisure-time” may seem somewhat synonymous, given that both refer to music participation activities that may be considered distanced from music making as a professional endeavor, and music learning within the more formal structures and constraints of educational institutions. Both labels also imply an active rather than passive approach to music participation; community music projects are rarely concerned with music appreciation, for example (Veblen 2008). The prefix of “community” also suggests that these are music making experiences that are undertaken with others, and that they have a communal intention.

Drawing distinctions between community music and music making for leisure is a more contentious matter. While this volume will establish the breadth and depth of music making undertaken as leisure, “community music” as a set of common activities gathered under a single label continues to enjoy (or be “haunted” by) a degree of “definitional uncertainty” (Brown, Higham, and Rimmer 2014, 13). Participants, non-participants, musicians, sponsors and supporters, community leaders, governments, schools, policy documents, and funding bodies may all have subtly different understandings of what comprises community music activity.

From a global perspective, the label “community music” may be applied to a wide range of music making practices, reflecting the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment, and how music and its social and aesthetic purpose are understood within that culture. Consider, for example, music making practices that identify or distinguish a particular ethno-cultural society, including contemporary practices that remain informed by ancestral understandings of music, as well as music making that forms an integral part of community life, maintains connection with ancestral spirits, and that plays a part in remaining in balance with the natural world. These activities may look and sound very different to community music practices in societies where

music making has been professionalized and commodified, so that “community music” comes to refer to amateur, rather than professional music making, to organized approaches to music-making that encourage community participation in one-off, short-term celebratory events, or to the use of music making to enhance community cohesion and shared identity in the face of increased individualism.

This short list represents the mere tip of the iceberg of what constitutes community music activity, and demonstrates the way that understandings of what community music is and does are culturally informed and constructed. In other words, determinations of which activities belong to the community music “bundle” can differ widely between cultural groups and across the globe. Furthermore, across this diversity some activities are strongly identified with leisure, while others have a more functional, productive, or developmental intention.

Understood with this breadth and as a global phenomenon, the definitional uncertainty of community music is no great surprise, and indeed suggests this is not a sign of weakness or lack of focus, but rather a strength and a reflection of the vibrancy and ubiquity of making and sharing music (Schippers and Bartleet 2013). Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity it is helpful to find some way of distinguishing between all of this activity. Higgins (2012) offers a conceptual framework with three broad groupings of community music activity: as the *music of a particular (cultural, ethnic) community*, emphasizing the musical content and the relationship between the music makers and the music; as *communal music making* (where the emphasis is on people and place, and the shared music making experience); and *community music as an active intervention* with a group of participants led by a skilled facilitator. This framework can be usefully applied across numerous cultural settings, although the prevalence and construction of each of these three groupings will greatly differ depending on where you are in the world.

It is to Higgins's third strand of community music activity that our attention now turns. While we acknowledge the concept of an "intervention" is highly complex, and sometimes contested, it does encapsulate an enduring approach to facilitation, which is useful to consider in the context of this volume. The interventionist approach is also very well established in the U.K., where a professional class of "community musician" enjoys a certain status and visibility, exemplified through: (1) the existence of Sound Sense, a professional representative association for community music leaders that advocates for community music practices and offers support and development to community music practitioners; (2) the availability of specialized, accredited training with industry relevance; and (3) a political and socio-cultural environment in which paid opportunities for music leaders exist and are generated through arts and social organizations' responses to government cultural policy. The interventionist approach can also be seen in other parts of the world, though perhaps without the same degree of cultural recognition of the practitioner's role as seen in the United Kingdom.

The purpose of this chapter is to drill down into those particular examples of community music activity where the music making takes place as an intervention under the guidance of a music facilitator, and to focus in particular on the role of the facilitators. That role is a distinctive one, requiring practitioners to engage deeply on both interpersonal and musical levels, and to work in a wide range of challenging settings, well beyond the confines of concert halls or education spaces.

This very distinctive "music leading" role has developed in response to cultural environments in which the ever-increasing commercialization and commodification of music practices has resulted in people's widespread disengagement from music making itself, where professionalization of musical skills is embedded within and supported by an eco-system of training institutions, qualifications and accredited attainment, and commercial and professional

opportunities, all of which lead to a situation where society is often divided into “performers” and “audiences” (Small, 1998). It is to the evolution of this cultural environment and eco-system that our attention now turns.

Community Music as a Vehicle for Social Benefit and Change

In the United Kingdom, the interventionist approach to community music is linked to the community arts scene that flourished during the counter-culture era of the 1960s and 1970s. As a sub-strand of that movement, community music shared goals of activism, challenging repressive and hierarchical social norms, and commitment to personal growth and empowerment. There was a desire to address issues of access and inclusion in both social and musical-cultural contexts by asking questions such as: Who in society has access to music? Who makes and plays music? Who decides what is music and what is not? With community arts coming of age in an era of considerable social upheaval in the form of anti-government and anti-establishment protest, social issues became the subject of art-making, and the experiences of everyday people received greater prominence (Higgins 2008, 2012).

Community music activity also grew in response to shifts in government policy in relation to education curriculum, changes in expectations and delivery requirements of publicly-funded arts organizations (Doeser 2014, Brown, Higham, and Rimmer 2014), and in response to the needs and agendas of formal service providers (government agencies and NGOs) in areas of health, education, and social services (Brown, Higham, and Rimmer 2014). It is this latter set of relationships in particular that inform the contemporary activities of community musicians in the U.K. and elsewhere in the world (e.g. Australia; see Bartleet et al. 2009).

Some of this instrumentalization of music’s potential to transform lives for the better can be traced back to several key historical antecedents. The Industrial Revolution saw not only the

advent of large-scale changes to employment and emphasis on small family units but the introduction of industry-sponsored workers choirs and musical groups –precursors to many of today’s community choirs and brass bands. These were understood as providing productive, pleasurable, and self-improving past-times for workers (who might otherwise seek their pleasure in local ale houses and potentially get caught up in revolutionary action), and encouraging discipline and unity (ensuring a “docile” and “pliable” workforce). Furthermore, music was believed to improve the morals of both singers and listeners (McGuire 2009). This idea also informed the work of many religious missionaries, travelling into new territories as part of colonial expansion and using shared music making as a way to facilitate union with God, inspire feelings of unity and community cohesion, and as a mechanism through which the colonized or proselytized could be “improved” and “civilized” (Beckles Willson 2011).

The contention that music making experiences have the potential to influence or bring about positive and beneficial change for participants on both individual and collective terms has its roots in antiquity. It is today widely supported by scholars working across multiple disciplines, including music therapy, music psychology, music education, medical ethnomusicology – each concerned with health and well-being outcomes, or the enhancement of individual capacities – in addition to fields of scholarly interest such as community development, international development, applied ethnomusicology, peace-building and conflict resolution (where interest in music is focused on social change outcomes, and the relationship between a positive social environment and the maintenance of traditional cultures), to name some of the more prominent of these often inter-disciplinary explorations (MacDonald, Kreutz, and Mitchell 2012, Bergh 2010, DeQuadros and Dorstewitz 2011). This array of intentions and goals can also be observed in music programs initiated in places of the most extreme human needs, such as communities at

war, or in recovery from violent conflict (Howell 2015), and in the range of ways that many of the world's cultures employ music as a tool for healing (Gouk 2000).

Similarly, there are notable historical antecedents for the use of shared music making to create a sense of empowered communal spirit, social bonds, and cohesion. These include the employment of music as a vehicle for mobilizing large numbers of people to a common political cause or ideal. Turino (2008) cites the role of massed singing in the youth rallies of Nazi Germany and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as two examples of music used for mobilization of the masses. While the ideologies underpinning those two particular movements were strongly contrasting, both effectively utilized the sense of shared unity, purpose, and courage that massed singing could generate (Stige 2012) toward their respective political aims.

Thus, this somewhat complex and contested instrumental understanding of music's role as a potential vehicle for social change and "improvement" is not new, and has contributed to community music's increasing visibility and prominence as part of a suite of responses to pressing social concerns and needs. Indeed, the ubiquity of music to the human experience has seen many community music projects in contemporary times initiated through government-funded agencies to address an expanded range of areas of social need and exclusion, with a corresponding tendency from community music organizations and practitioners to adjust their missions and purposes to match that of these agencies (Brown, Higham, and Rimmer 2014). This trend represents something of a shift away from the grass-roots social organization and community empowerment of community music's post-World War Two roots towards the intervention model.

We can see, therefore, that contemporary community music practices are strongly informed by a history of social action, as well as by a set of beliefs and a growing evidence base about the potential of shared music making to bring about positive and beneficial individual and

collective change. This history then collides with the contemporary needs of social service provision met by government and non-government bodies, and a project model of facilitator-led interventions has evolved.

The growth of the intervention model has driven the subsequent rise in importance and professionalization of the role of the community musician, or music facilitator. Furthermore, the multiplicity of sites where this work frequently takes place has necessitated a complex raft of musical and leadership skills, in order to enable musical and reflexive responses to the social or health needs of a particular target group, and through this musical action to cultivate some kind of change or transformation. Therefore, it is to the emerging and central role of the community music facilitator that we now turn, highlighting the wide variety of sites in which community music facilitators ply their craft, and the unique “tool kit” of skills, values, and methods that they employ.

The Sites, Skills, and Attributes of the Community Music Facilitator

We contend that the critical contribution in realizing a wide array of extra-musical goals is not only the music itself, but the ways in which it is employed in the hands of a skilled community musician or facilitator. It is the role of the facilitator that most clearly distinguishes an interventionist community music event from more general music-as-leisure. We use the term “community musician” to apply specifically to the skilled facilitator in the kinds of community music projects and activities that have a clear interventionist structure and intention.

Skilled facilitators who work in the “interventionist” mode consciously engage with people to find pathways through which music making opportunities might allow them to personally flourish with full and engaged participation. From this perspective, interventionist community musicians work strategically in order to generate music making environments that are

accessible and inviting for those who wish to participate. In order to generate such opportunities, community musicians have relied on approaches to practice that are flexible and responsive rather than on a singular prescriptive methodology. There are, however, some well-used approaches that are useful to consider within the context of this chapter.

For example, community musicians usually consider their environments as “workshops” – learning settings that become sites for experimentation, creativity, and group work. As a space for interaction, the workshop becomes a means of achieving a more democratic space favorable to creative music making. The structure of the workshop is contingent and enables an open environment to foster active and collaborative conversation, dialogue, and music making. Through the reflexive, accepting, and un-forced interactions between the facilitator and participants, the workshop can become a touchstone through which diversity, freedom, and tolerance might flow. The following examples illustrate something of this diversity of setting and approach in action, and highlight the specific characteristics of the context in which the community music making takes place as well as the musical communicative and leadership tools that the facilitator in each setting chose to employ. The examples demonstrate that to be successful in the role, community music facilitators must attend to multiple layers of relationships and interactions between themselves and participants, between the participants, and between each person and the musical material as it evolves.

Case 1: Story-sharing Through Music in an English Language Learning Classroom

In the education system of the state of Victoria in Australia, a network of specialist English language schools exist to support newly-arrived refugee and migrant young people to learn English and adapt to Australian school culture before making the transition to a mainstream school. The learning environment in these intensive English language schools is diverse in terms

of its ethno-cultural mix and linguistic backgrounds, but also as a result of the varied prior schooling experiences of the students. Some arrive in Australia with age-consistent schooling experiences, while others, particular those from refugee backgrounds, have had severely interrupted prior schooling. Howell (2009, 2011) describes the way that a long-running music workshop program in one of these schools contributed to the students' educational goals (language acquisition and school culture adaptation) and well-being through composition projects that focused on their stories of journey and transition, and the musical knowledge and materials they brought with them from their country of origin.

Such a diverse cohort demonstrated different needs and responses in the music workshop program. Some students thrived, enjoying the opportunity to use skills and musical knowledge they had acquired in their countries of origin or through life in refugee camps, and the chance to assume leadership. Others, still dealing with culture shock and the stress of trying to learn a new language, intense insecurity and self-doubt, or even the debilitating symptoms of post-traumatic stress, needed to navigate their way more cautiously. These self-directed navigations confirm Osborne's (2009) observation that, when facilitated with skill and sensitivity to group and individual responses, music can be a "very secure and self-regulating" activity for vulnerable young people (Osborne 2009, 334), in the sense that participatory music activities can offer an individual a range of ways of participating, thus enabling them to regulate the intensity of their experience, to suit their own sense of safety and comfort. In the creative music-making activities that Howell (2009, 2011) describes, the participation options range from very passive responding (where a child simply observes and follows activities without necessarily contributing), to gradually more active roles, such as mouthing words, then singing them, helping to distribute instruments, and then later playing and joining in, and so on. Thus, the facilitator needs to be attentive to the importance of these smaller, self-regulated interactions with the music activities,

ensuring there are always opportunities to engage more deeply, or to retreat from active participation when desired.

In these workshops, improvisation processes promoted gentle and playful exploration of musical and narrative ideas, and song- and story-based projects built around names, languages and countries of origin, personal attributes of courage, resilience, acknowledgement, exploration of emotions and responses, and celebration of their self-identities (Howell 2009, 2011). While the workshops took place in a formal school environment, the music facilitation processes were not bound by a pre-determined pedagogical approach or curriculum, but followed an open-ended, responsive process more akin to the community music leadership approaches and values described by Higgins and Campbell (2010), Leak (2003), and Moser and McKay (2005), among others. While the musical goals were the focus of all activities, the facilitator remained acutely aware of the diverse needs – educational, social, emotional, psychological – within the group, and worked to address these indirectly through the constantly evolving musical content, her communicative style, and the emotional safety of the music space.

Case 2: Music Creation Towards High-status Performance Platforms with the Amplified Elephants

In the example of the Amplified Elephants, (Hullick 2013) – a sonic art ensemble for people with intellectual disabilities based in Melbourne, Australia – what began as a recreational program for participants in a broad-based arts learning program for people with intellectual disabilities has evolved to become a sonic arts ensemble with a growing professional profile and invitations to perform internationally. Mentored by established professional sound artist and composer James Hullick, the group has honed its craft and creative voice through processes of intense and critical listening, deliberate imposition of limitations and constraints on the music

materials explored, experimentation with a variety of media, including “found” objects and different approaches to embodied sound, alongside constant recording and facilitated reflection on these recordings and regular performances.

The Amplified Elephants occupy an unusual position as a community music group, given their increasing profile as professional performers. Hullick describes the group’s regular engagement with contemporary composers, conductors, and other music professionals as an “incredible opportunity for their career development” (230). The consideration of their careers points towards a critical shift in the way that the group positions itself in the musical landscape and on a career-focused, quasi-professional trajectory, even while they still work within a larger community music/social service provider structure. It is also a political stance, acknowledging that people with intellectual disabilities are often seen for what they *cannot* do, rather than what they can, and this in turn often constrains opportunities to imagine or develop a career path.

It is notable that Hullick describes himself as a mentor rather than a facilitator. This choice of language positions the members of the group in the foreground and as the group’s primary creative agents. In assuming a role of mentor rather than facilitator, Hullick asserts a more distanced stance that highlights the unique contributions the members of the group make to its creations and their right to be acknowledged as the owners and creators of the work. Nevertheless, Hullick’s input is woven throughout the narrative, and it is indeed *his* expertise in sonic art that has shaped the musical focus and outputs of the group, given that “artists can only mentor the art that they know” (223). He is constantly adjusting the level of input, which might range from taking full compositional responsibility, to mentoring and facilitating a group-devised composition through improvisation and repetition, to being an active member of the group when they work in collaboration with outside artists. Hullick is also highly attuned to the needs of

individuals, in terms of their musical and ensemble strengths and limitations, preferred ways of working and creating, and aptitudes for different instruments and media.

Case 3: Health Promotion, Community Music, and Cultural Forms of Leadership

From Sierra Leone, comes an example of community music activity that affirms and celebrates local music traditions yet also works as a community health intervention, initiated and supported by an international non-government development organisation working in the area of public health, that seeks to promote public health messages and encourage changes in people's behaviour (Bingley 2011). Bingley writes vividly about a gifted communicator and musician named Bambeh in rural Sierra Leone, who uses her intimate knowledge of local music traditions and abilities as a facilitator and inspiring leader to draw groups, mainly of women, together. While the sessions are ostensibly for the purpose of health care and promotion (for example, post-natal care for mothers and infants, baby growth monitoring, nutrition advice), music is employed in overt and subtle ways to first attract the group, to create a sense of safety and trust (by using local processes and rituals of reciprocal sharing through music), to educate, to generate health-related knowledge (through targeted song lyrics, composed to deliver a key message), and to affirm and celebrate the community's achievements and development.

Bingley argues that Bambeh herself is central to the success of this model. She is a charismatic and dynamic leader, respected as an educated and literate woman and employee of an international N.G.O., but also as a role model and trusted outsider, with the interpersonal skills to build trust and authority beyond the immediate participant group, and therefore widen the reach of her health-focused intervention. The example of Bambeh shows again that, while the musical material (in this case local traditional music) is important and can be employed in powerful ways

to connect with and inspire participants, it is the unique skill set of the facilitator that is the critical element in the success of an intervention.

Case 4: Music in Residential Homes for Those Living with Dementia

Community music in residential homes for the elderly often takes the form of communal singing of familiar songs from the past. Smilde, Page, and Alheit (2014), however, describe a U.K.-based community music project, “Music for Life,” that moves beyond reminiscence to directly connect the self within the person that the dementia has hidden. The project, which involves freelance musicians (often trained as orchestral players), sees participatory music as a powerful and essential element in building shared and individual identity. The goal of “Music for Life” is one of enhancing relationships between the residents, and between residents and their care-givers.

Over the course of eight weeks, the musicians work closely with a small group of residents and care staff, “using musical improvisation as a catalyst to bring about communication in the widest sense at various levels” (Smilde, Page, and Alheit (2014). These are challenging workshops for the musicians, who must be highly alert to the smallest “verbal and non-verbal signals” (Smilde, Page, and Alheit 2014, p. 3) from the residents that suggest a desire to connect, influence, or lead. Everyone in the group is in an environment that is somewhat unpredictable, in which they are trying something new. It is the responsibility of the musicians to continue to inspire confidence among the group. At the end of each session they debrief with the care staff, strengthening those relationships as well, and facilitate the emergence of issues and insights. Everyone is engaged in learning and opening possibilities of change in themselves and others.

The Facilitator's Toolkit: Skills, Attributes, and Commitment to Values

These four examples demonstrate something of the wide range of settings, skills, and attributes that characterize the work of community music facilitators within the interventionist model, and the variety of goals and intentions that can underpin the work. Across these four, we see that settings for workshops can encompass formal institutions (e.g., schools), community-based drop-in spaces, residential homes for the very frail and elderly, and fairly open, rural environments. This list is not exhaustive, but offered merely to demonstrate the considerable breadth of sites and settings where such projects can and do take place.

The case studies demonstrate that the skill set of the music facilitator or community musician includes a diverse combination of tools. Derivative from the French *faciliter* (to render easy) and the Latin *facilis* (easy), *facilitation* is concerned with encouraging open dialogue among different individuals with differing perspectives. Certainly there are music creation skills in improvising, composing, and arranging. There are also aural skills, for the ability to pick up musical materials by ear frequently plays a central part in facilitation, especially when participants are not familiar with music notation. The ability to read music and work with written notation is a further useful skill, but given that this knowledge may not be shared by members of the group, aural skills frequently come to the fore. Community music facilitators with notation and reading skills often use these to create their own documentation or written archive of musical materials to ensure they can be recalled and used at a later date, but unless this particular skill is already common knowledge across the group, it is less likely to occupy a central position in the workshop process.

Beyond musicianship, music facilitators also possess a raft of leadership, processual, and social skills in order to guide the group on a musical journey together. For example, the facilitator will constantly call upon her or his ability to “read” the responses of individuals and the group as

a whole, constantly monitoring the nuances of interactions. The facilitator will need to be articulate, skilled in providing clear instruction and information to whatever extent the group requires it. The facilitator may at times need to challenge and provoke, and alternately reassure and encourage, responding to their knowledge of each individual. The facilitator also needs to be organized and plan their approach well, aware of imposed timeframes and restraints, and the intended musical goals that must fit within these. Facilitators need to be creative, able to improvise and think “on their feet,” and ensure variety and appropriate pacing so that the group is carried along by their own momentum, energy, and sense of flow. Most critically, if each of these skills is understood as a kind of “tool,” it is not the range of tools available but the facilitators’ choice of the most appropriate tools for the task at hand that most distinguishes their work. As Higgins and Campbell (2010) argue, facilitation “is an art” (9), whether or not it takes place in an arts-based context.

The personal attributes of the music facilitator also play a role – for effective leadership benefits from a certain amount of charisma and likeability, the ability to remain positive and calm in less predictable environments, and a willingness to be open to one’s own learning taking place alongside that of the participants. Finally, underpinning this range of skills and attributes is an understanding of musical excellence that is defined both through the quality of musical outcomes and the quality of the social bonds that are created through the process (Baker 2014, as cited in Turino, 2008); in other words, facilitators understand that the personal and social growth of participants is as important as their musical growth (Higgins 2012).

Alongside skills and attributes, music facilitators working in interventionist ways around the world frequently share a number of characteristic traits in terms of values, beliefs, ethical commitments, and skill-set. The values and beliefs held are concerned with rights, capacities, and capabilities. These include the idea that all people have a right to make, participate in, and enjoy

their own music, and that they possess an innate capacity and lifelong potential for music participation and creativity. Music facilitators also share commitments to cultivate positive learning environments in which individuals of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome, included, and valued. They may challenge discriminatory social norms working to overcome barriers that block access to participation for some people. Frequently we see a commitment to flexible approaches to teaching and learning, including the idea that a workshop will include expertise among participants, and that learning will take place in all directions (from leader to participants, from participants to leader, and between participants). Participation in shared learning has the potential to work towards emancipation and empowerment; open-ended community music making places ownership of the resultant musical outcomes in the hands of participants, at the same time as encouraging their continued musical growth. These ethical commitments imply a hospitable welcome that is central to the music workshop experience (Higgins 2012).

A Complex Role with Multiple Goals

As our discussion so far has described, interventionist community music projects may have multiple objectives that are focused upon beneficial outcomes for the participant group, and therefore will require a diverse set of facilitator skills, attributes and values that extend well beyond mere musicianship. Community music project sites may have multiple project goals, both competing and complementing, and when these are considered alongside the multi-layered social constructions of what music is, what it is for, who can participate in it and to what extent, then community music facilitation becomes a very demanding undertaking, with many inherent challenges.

Community music's values and intentions can certainly work in complementary ways, however, they may also exist within a hierarchy of priorities, explicit or otherwise. To consider

just one example: around the world music is a highly gendered activity in the majority of social contexts, with gendered meanings between humans and instruments, gendered divisions of the “labor” of music (including who should participate and how), and the ways in which different (public and private) spaces may become gendered (Doubleday 2008). These norms can be challenging to override, even in a project with a strong and explicit commitment to the inclusion of both males and females.

Research into community-based music activities for young people in Australia, U.K., U.S.A., and Germany noted that boys dominated all of the “mixed-gender” music activities on offer (predominantly focused on hip-hop, breakdancing, and DJing), despite some efforts from organizers to address the gender disparity in different ways (Baker and Cohen 2008). Pruitt (2013) found similar results in a community music project in Australia that targeted young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, and provided opportunities for creating and performing their own hip-hop music and dance, with former participants encouraged to become leaders and facilitators of the workshops. Community choirs in post-industrial societies often find the opposite problem, with women comprising the majority of most mixed-voice choirs (Clift 2012, citing Clift et al 2010b, Masso and Broad 2013).

Such gender divisions are not necessarily always exclusionary, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the question of gender in community music in any greater detail. We raise it here to highlight some of the complexity of an undertaking with such a mix of social, musical, ethical, and political goals. Gender divisions also suggest something of the paradox of inclusion – that when a particular group is targeted for participation, another group may be subsequently (and often implicitly) excluded. If a community music activity is “open” to all comers, a dominant group may evolve that “appropriates” the space. It demands a commitment to acts of hospitality and acceptance of what Higgins, after Derrida, calls *the impossible*, where the

community within is bonded and yet must simultaneously remain open to newcomers. Thus the “community” never settles (Higgins 2007).

These examples also illustrate the competing priorities and interests that can arise in any community-based, collaborative project, and the fact that the facilitator can guide the group and the process, but not control every outcome. Tensions and divisions that exist within the community can be replicated or reinforced within the intervention (be it musical or otherwise). Music facilitators are thus often charged with the task of developing the desired musical outcomes (noting that these ambitions may differ among participants, and between participants and sponsors or organizers), while at the same time remaining committed to the utmost social care for each individual and responding to complex cultural dynamics that pervade the context in which they are working. Rather than aiming to “strike a balance” between these goals, or to find a place of consensus that satisfies the needs of the majority, facilitation involves a constantly reflexive and responsive act, and a willingness to weight and counter-weight contrasting and sometimes conflicting needs of a group in musical and social terms.

The skill-set of a community music facilitator therefore often includes both musicianship and community development skills. Here, the community musician is a self-reflexive musician who puts an emphasis on the musical process working alongside participants in order to help them achieve their goals. Such musicians need to be able to support the group to realize their musical goals and potential, but they also need to work within an agreed framework of ethical values (such as inclusivity) and with a finely-tuned radar to subtleties of communication that may inadvertently transmit messages that could contradict those values. Facilitation is a role that requires a combination of the attributes of a musician (able to perform, arrange, compose, improvise – to name but a few), a teacher (able to communicate information and support the development of new skills, with a highly flexible pedagogy), a community development worker

(skilled in reading group dynamics and cultivating collective emancipatory action), a social or youth worker (sensitive to the practical and structural obstacles that members of the group may face, and factors that could reinforce marginalization), a health worker (attentive to the diverse physical and mental health needs of participants), and a leader (a personable individual with certain qualities of charisma and persuasiveness).

Facilitation as Improvisation

Improvisation as experience is often at the heart of community music practices. Thought of in this way, improvisation is not only a musical skill, but also a way of negotiating the world. Improvisation is born out of creative environments where opportunities are provided for people to release their musical imaginations in ways that are free and expansive, playful, personal, and interpersonal. Illustrated through the interplay of skills and open-ended processes and acceptances outlined above, there is a strong quality of improvisation inherent within community music facilitation.

In short, community music facilitators create a context that validates the experiments and explorations of all people—children, youth, and adults—who are potential makers of all styles of music (Higgins and Mantie 2013). To apply Small's (1998)(1998) term, improvisation evokes the human *musicking* potential, and the capacity to participate in the socially interactive process of making music. When thought of in this way, music making is embraced as “a trail of no mistakes,” and a celebration of the many and varied musical pathways that musicians and facilitators can take (Higgins and Campbell 2010, 1). Furthermore, community music making that is improvisatory and collaborative echoes the organic and often complex natures of communities. The desire is not to bind or contain within pre-determined rules or organizational

boundaries – as is seen in organized sports, for example – but to allow the group’s unique, time- and participant-specific response to emerge.

Potential Tensions and Dilemmas

The fact that such a comprehensive and diverse tool kit of skills is essential to the concurrent realization of musical, educational, and social goals points to the range of tensions and dilemmas that may exist within the community music context. Firstly, we can see the existence of a tension between the historical antecedents of community music practice as an act of defiance, disruption, or challenge to mainstream or commercial cultural controls, and a current reality that is more blurred. This sometimes begs the question: to what extent is the community music workshop an act of activism? Different stakeholders (participants, practitioners, sponsors, and organizers) may hold divergent views on this, even while the project content may be intended to render more visible and audible a marginalized social group. Where the impetus for the work has come from an external funding source (such as a government agency), activism in the form of civil disobedience or strong agitation for change is less likely. However, the same kind of project model (for example, a songwriting workshop addressing social exclusion or injustice) could be driven from the grassroots and have an explicit activist agenda, intending to provoke community awareness, official response, and policy change (Mullen 2008).

With the historical roots of community music lying in grassroots activism and a “reclaiming” of musical space by everyday people, it can be challenging for some community musicians to strike the desired balance between what Higgins and Campbell (2010) describe as the willingness to assume responsibility for the musical leadership and the desire to relinquish the control (7). Mullen (2008) observed reluctance among some community musicians to assume

clear leadership roles, finding that they were so concerned with avoiding building hierarchies of authority that they preferred instead to engender more “laissez-faire” and fairly unstructured approaches. These facilitators’ concerns were well-intentioned and informed by valid ethical choices, but inevitably resulted in what could be described as unfocused and unconvincing workshop environments (250). Issues concerning power, choice, and leadership can also arise in cross-cultural community music projects, particularly when the facilitator enters as an outsider to that community and must grapple with culturally different processes for assigning roles and making decisions (Howell 2012b, a). Higgins and Campbell (2010) suggest that, rather than seeking to find a point of balance between these two outcomes, the critical ingredients are the facilitator’s readiness to “move in and out of roles as the group dictates” (7) and being open to unpredictable and unexpected shifts in the musical journey’s direction. In particular, outcomes and destinations are not pre-determined, but emerge through the facilitation process and the group’s shared experience.

The above discussion of skills and tools that the facilitator uses also touched on the question of goals of musical excellence, which is worth teasing out further as a potential tension for community music facilitators, given their equal concern for social care. Music learning is a discipline, one that has long histories in certain cultures of demanding obedience to rigid expectations of execution, submission to higher “expert” authority (e.g., in the Western tradition, a conductor or the “great works”), comparison and competition among participants, and suppression of individual expression in favor of the collective. Where “musical excellence” is defined in terms of an uncompromising set of performance norms, and when this is presented as the most important outcome, care for the needs and vulnerabilities of the individual will naturally become a lesser priority. In response, an interventionist approach to community music can be seen to adopt a more encompassing definition of musical excellence, one that Turino (2008)

argues has more in common with non-Western musical traditions, where music making is understood as social and relational practice, and where its meaning lies within these relationships (Small 1998). As we have already noted, “musical excellence” in community music interventions can, therefore, refer to the quality of the social experience – the bonds formed, meaning and enjoyment derived, sense of agency that emerges for individuals and the group – considered alongside the musical outcomes created through the music making experience.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we have explored community music practice as an *intervention* under the guidance of a community musician operating as a music facilitator. Four examples were used to illustrate the central notions of the practice, revealing the types of sites, skills, and attributes displayed by those engaged in the work. We asserted that musical excellence manifests itself within community music interventions through the quality of the social experience – the bonds formed, meaning and enjoyment derived, and sense of agency that emerges for individuals and the group. Social impacts such as those listed are to be considered alongside the musical outcomes created through the participatory music-making experience. Importantly, this chapter has attempted to articulate skill sets required by musicians who intentionally bring people together through music participation. It is this, the ability to recognize and name distinctive attributes associated with running, organizing, and evaluating community music activity that sets the “intervention” model apart from a more general music-making experience. Clarifying pedagogic approaches is important for the future of community music if the field wishes to have an impact within the boarder domains of music education and music as leisure. The four examples presented in this chapter – music in an English language learning classroom, the Amplified Elephants, music and health promotion, and music in residential homes for those

living with dementia – all serve to support our belief that community music opens up new pathways for reflecting on, enacting, and developing approaches to facilitation that respond to a wide range of social, cultural, health, economic, and political contexts. Community music practice as an intervention through facilitation will, we hope, resonate strongly with those in other areas of music making in leisure time, as musicians continually search for new ways to activate and respond to the ever-increasing changes in musical environments across the world.

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