

MUSIC FOR PEOPLE

MUSIC IMPROVISATION WORKSHOPS



AUTHENTIC MUSIC MAKING



TRAINING PROGRAM



MUSICAL MINDFULNESS



COMMUNITY OF MUSIC MAKERS



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...Where All Instruments Come to Jam!

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Music for People Philosophy
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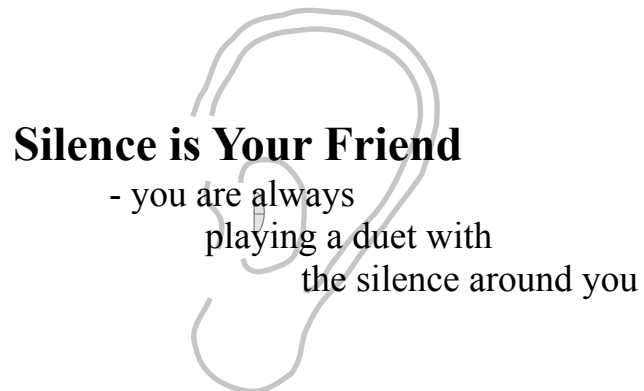
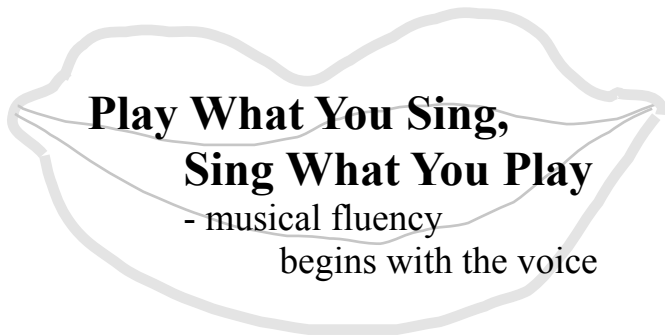
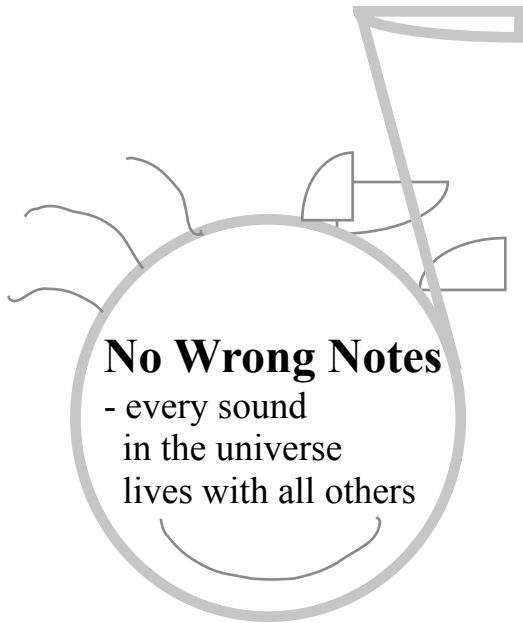
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Music for People Philosophy

Tapping into the genius within you and your students



Music for People Philosophy

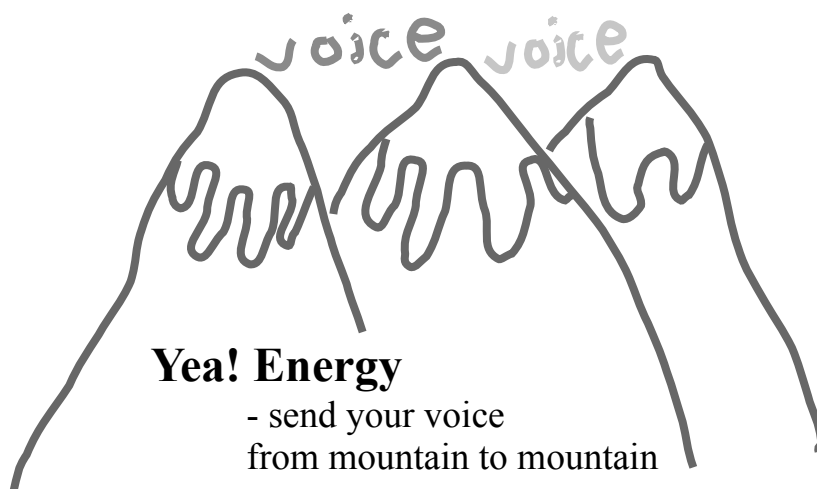
Education: Educate the genius in your students

One Quality Sound

- take your moment
and put it into
one sound

Ooooh Energy

- soft sound to
communicate
gentleness and kindness



*Release Judgments,
Return to Child*

HEARTBEAT RHYTHM

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US:

Steady Beat is the even, underlying constant in music or any sound pattern.

"A child's timing - the ability to feel and express steady beat - is fundamental to a myriad of motor, sports, and musical tasks including motor tasks. Timing is also important for maneuvering through space without bumping into others and objects, for eyes to track across a page, and for brain development. It is positively related to school achievement, self control, and gross motor skills."

- Dr. Susan Snyder, Total Literacy: An Arts Based Guide to Building Early Literacy Skills (2004)

ACTIVITY GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- enhanced focus and concentration
- steady beat
- voice-body-instrument connection
- basic rhythmic skill building

MARY'S VIEWPOINT

In each and every seminar and workshop that I have led, I see participants arrive at the workshop often in a tentative and nervous state; new people, new activities, new territory, even if it is by choice, may tend to feel like a risky venture. This activity is an accessible way to connect people to their own rhythm/pulse, connecting them to the group pulse. It happens in moments, everybody plays a role in the collective creation! It is amazing to see how quickly human beings can find a common group pulse – we long to resonate with one another, it is our quest for community, the desire to belong.

My work over the past three decades has been dedicated to providing an environment where students can discover, explore and express their own musical personalities with others. Each drum circle and music improvisation session begins with the invitation to tap into one's own natural rhythm, the heartbeat. This activity requires students to become silent and still, tune into their bodies and become aware of the underlying constant in their lives, their pulse. Once students discover their own pulse, it is tapped silently in the air and the group now becomes aware of the many other unique *heartbeat* representations in the room. As the group transforms their pulse into sound by tapping the pulse on their legs, a most fascinating thing occurs: people begin to listen to one another with intent and the entire group experiences *entrainment*, the synchronization of organisms to an external rhythm. It is usually produced by other organisms with whom they interact socially. Fireflies flashing in unison, mosquito wings clapping together and humans foot tapping, drumming and chanting collectively are examples of entrainment.

This seemingly simple experience can provide the group with an immediate sense of belonging and safety, both essential in creating an educational environment that is designed for optimal learning.

MATERIALS: body, voice

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

- **FIND YOUR OWN HEARTBEAT**

The leader invites participants to tune into their own heartbeat, (model a few locations where this can be done, including one hand over the heart or under the upper back of the jaw bone).

- **TAP YOUR HEARTBEAT IN AIR**

Participants may keep eyes closed and tap pulse silently with one hand in the air while feeling the pulse with the other hand.

- **BECOMING AWARE OF OTHERS**

Participants open eyes and notice the heartbeat representations around them, all uniquely different.

- **BRINGING HEARTBEAT TO SOUND ON BODY**

Facilitator invites group to bring both hands down to legs and add a sound to the heartbeat pulse (listening to the entire group while doing this).

- **FIND A COMMON COMMUNITY HEARTBEAT**

As participants listen to the entire group they work together to arrive at a community pulse they can all share.

- **STEP TO THE COMMUNITY HEARTBEAT**

Move the group *heartbeat* to the feet, stepping in an easy and balanced step.

BEST PRACTICE FACILITATION TIPS



- **EMPOWER THE COMMUNITY TO CO-CREATE TOGETHER**

As you *facilitate* and guide the group, remember that your goal is to empower your participants to listen to and trust their own creative impulses and to work together in the creative process.

ONE BREATH TO ONE SOUND

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US:

"Music can charge and energize our brain. When music harmonizes with our own rhythms, we feel energized by it."

- Eric Jensen "Brain Compatible Strategies" 1997

ACTIVITY GOALS AND OUTCOMES

- mind-body voice to movement connection
- listening with intention and enhanced receptivity
- spontaneous Composition
- discovering one's own natural voice
- promoting individual self expression

MARY'S VIEWPOINT:

One of the most profound concepts I learned early in my training with David Darling and the Music for People organization is that our own music is as close as our next breath. By simply taking a breath and moving this breath into one sustained pitch (any pitch that is there at the top of each breath), we are tapping into the wellspring of effortless mastery that lives within each of us. What is even more remarkable is the beauty of a group of people taking a breath together and as they share their own unique sound or pitch, a fresh new *chord* of notes is revealed. Every breath, note and chord changes from one moment to the next and we hold the responsibility to remain present, listen carefully and offer ourselves fully in sound.

BREATH TO ONE SOUND

Awareness of breath is essential for supporting the voice.

This activity provides participants with a simple, yet profound way to discover the natural voice. This activity serves as an excellent group warm up, or can be introduced in a drum circle setting.

MATERIALS:

voice, body

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

This activity serves as an excellent group warm up, or it can be easily introduced in the context of a drum circle.

- **TAKE A BREATH-RELEASE A SOUND ON THE OUTBREATH**
The leader invites the group to take a breath (visually lifting arms as the breath is taken in) and to release (lowering arms back down slowly) the breath with a single, sustained pitched note of their choice.

- **ARTICULATE THE RELEASE OF SOUND IN MOVEMENT**

The leader models this activity and releases the sound with a release of the hands directing in front of the body much like a conductor would do in preparing with breath and sweeping arms up and in and signaling the downbeat with a release of the hands moving out in front of the body.

- **ARTICULATE THE RELEASE OF SOUND IN MOVEMENT**

The entire group takes a breath and releases their own unique note at the SAME time, thus creating a *community chord* (created by the combination of participants' notes).

Leader invites groups of four around the room to take a breath together and to create *spontaneous chord* together, holding their note for the entire length of their breath.

- **SUSTAINED GROUP CHORD**

The Leader invites the group to take a breath together and to sing their note through the breath, but in this activity each person continues to breathe at their own pace and add a new note with each breath. The group is now adding new notes in their own timing and the result will be myriad of constantly changing chords.

- **VOLUME DOWN TO PROMOTE ACTIVE LISTENING**

The leader brings the volume down and asks group to listen to one another closely at this very quiet dynamic level. The leader brings the volume back up slowly.

AS A CULMINATING ACTIVITY OR CLOSING:

- **COMMON COMMUNITY PITCH**

The leader brings volume back down to a whisper and invites the group to work together to arrive at a single pitch to end their spontaneous composition of breath tones.

- **ONCE FOUND, COMMUNITY PITCH TO GROUP CLOSING**

The leader brings the volume back up as participants listen closely to one another. In a short period of time players find their way toward singing a single pitch. Once a common pitch is reached by the group, the Leader slowly brings volume down to complete silence.

BEST PRACTICE FACILITATION TIPS

- **THERE ARE NO WRONG NOTES**

This activity provides a great opportunity to remind participants that there are, as Music for People says, *No wrong notes* – some notes live closer together and some further apart (dissonance/consonance).

- **MOVE IN CLOSE TO FULLY EXPERIENCE THE SOUND**

If you are using this activity as a culminating or closing event, it is of great value to have the group stand up and move closer into the center and to one another. Part of what makes this experience so powerful is the vibrational effect of many people singing lone tones at one time and the rise and fall of the ever-changing palette of notes.

Activity 3 ~ Lesson plan - Creating Human Grooves

Activity Goals and Outcomes:

- Create a smooth transition from either or both of the above lesson plans.
- Build upon previous lesson plans
- Combine the core elements of music, pulse and tone, to create spontaneous musical collaborations
- Develop listening skills
- Encourage self-expression

Activity Outline:

- From HEARTBEAT RHYTHM: While the group are stepping and moving to the community pulse they created, the leader arranges the group into a large circle.
- The leader initiates a “call and response” activity and offers simple short and fun hand clap patterns and/or vocal groove calls.
- After about 6 calls, the leader creates a simple call and has the group repeat it over and over creating a groove.
- The leader sculpts one half of the circle and signals them to keep the groove going.
- The leader signals the other half of the circle to stop and while keeping eye contact with them, creates a second groove that locks in with the ongoing groove, and invites them to join.
- The leader may choose to sculpt out one or two more sections of the circle and add new interlocking grooves.
- The leader invites everyone to “make up your own groove”
- The leader asks the group to “continue your groove - can you make it slightly softer? Can you add a little silence so you can hear what is happening around you?”
- The leader can step in the circle and sing a melodic solo or play a body percussion solo over the group groove.
- Tip - Keep the beat in your body and the group will follow you.
- The leader can initiate “a call to song” by asking a question in a chant-like voice ex. “What’s on your mind?” or “What’s goin’ on?” and invite members of the group to respond, while adjusting group volume so speaker can be heard.
- If no one steps forward, the leader initiates by answering the call to song.

OR

- From BREATH TO ONE SOUND move from long held notes to pulsing single notes.
- The leader can play with dynamics, timing and articulation ideas by demonstrating them
- Ask the group “how much can you play with that one note in rhythm, articulation, volume”
- Ask the group “are you checking in with each other? How does your single note groove fit? Can you hear how your sound interacts with other sounds?”
- Ask the group “What would happen if you double your silence?”
- As the groove continues - demonstrate that “there are no wrong notes” by playing or singing a simple chromatic melody over the groove.

3 key points of facilitation

- **IT ALL STARTS WITH YOU! IF YOU LOVE THE MUSIC YOU MAKE, YOU WILL INSPIRE YOUR STUDENTS**

We encourage you to engage in these activities at home -

you will get in touch with your creative-musical instincts

You will find joy in creative play - return to childlike state of discovery

- **MEET YOUR PARTICIPANTS WHERE THEY ARE**

These simple techniques allow your students to begin making music with the abilities they have. As you listen, you will learn about them and be able to make informed lesson plans. Their ideas will inspire your lesson plans!

- **BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE YOU FACILITATE ARE FULL OF MUSIC**

This creates a safe environment where anything is possible

SUCCESS for ALL

To make a free improvisation work for everyone, remember:

- ◇ Give attention to the Quality of what you are offering more than the Quantity
- ◇ Be a powerful soloist when you find yourself in that role
- ◇ Be ready to provide a rhythmic groove for others to solo over

- ◇ Use Solo/Drone and Solo/Ostinato techniques to share the space
- ◇ Listen Actively when someone is soloing – imagine your attention as the ocean keeping the soloist afloat

- ◇ Offer your silence when you don't have a musical idea to give
- ◇ Offer silence when the piece becomes congested, or for the variety of hearing fewer players.
- ◇ Use contrast as a musical contribution (sound / silence; ooh / yea! energy)

- ◇ Close your eyes some of the time (go deep), but not all of the time
- ◇ Make eye contact at key times during the improvisation and smile at your partners (be social and encouraging)

- ◇ Support the weakest member of your ensemble
- ◇ Give the soft instruments or voices in your ensemble room to be heard
- ◇ Get physically close to anyone who has difficulty listening or hearing
- ◇ Give some solo space to any less experienced player

- ◇ Remember that imitation is one of the most powerful tools for a satisfying experience

- ◇ Be responsive to the natural ending point of your improvisation
- ◇ After the improvisation is over, be honest and sensitive in how you talk about it (tell the truth without judgment or blame)

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