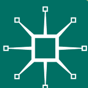

Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation

Facilitating Creative Musical Development in Later-Life

Edited by
Andrea Creech · Colin Enright

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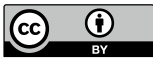

ISBN 978-3-031-87135-1 ISBN 978-3-031-87136-8 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8

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Foreword

This distinctive volume '*Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation—Facilitating Creative Musical Development in Later-Life*' edited by Andrea Creech and Colin Enright aims to consider how older adult learners' musical experiences can be shaped by the multitude of different contexts where learning takes place; the strategies, tools, and objectives of the facilitators; and a range of other environmental factors. The case studies described in depth and analysed in relation to a range of theoretical perspectives in each chapter indeed satisfy that aim.

Eight of the ten chapters present case studies that illustrate how adult learners can engage with music in online communities, residential care, retirement communities, lifelong learning groups, and non-formal community groups. The tools chosen to enable older adults to engage with music in the case studies include: a range of different instruments electronic, digital, and acoustic; singing and body percussion; and online and offline resources. Each case study considers processes, challenges, strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes. The views of participants and facilitators regarding the activities are presented in such a way as to enable readers to vicariously share the participants' and facilitators' experiences.

In addition to presenting insights into musical engagement in these differing contexts, each case study emphasises a different aspect. Consideration is variously given to pedagogy; building a sense of community; online improvisation; and improvisational pedagogy for those in long-term residential care using digital instruments. Musical development and creative expression receive particular attention in some chapters. One case study explores intergenerational singing in a choir made up of dementia sufferers, their caregivers, and teenage volunteers with a particular focus on inclusivity, creativity, and sense of community. Another explores the implications for identity and the values underpinning pedagogy and practice and how later-life learners perceived these. A particularly interesting chapter considers how members of a band were able to adjust to making music in an online environment and what supported them in persisting in that environment. The case studies were carried out in locations across Canada, some during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact that music facilitators have on learning experiences has long been acknowledged. The case studies clearly illustrate the wide range of contexts within which facilitators work and the hugely differing characteristics of those whose musical activities they facilitate. Older learners are not a homogenous group. High quality facilitation of musical experiences for older people is complex. Facilitators need to have a wide range of musical and interpersonal skills.

The breadth and depth of insights into the facilitation of musical activities with a range of older learners in different contexts adopting different approaches in this volume is remarkable and will be a major resource for those aspiring to work in the field and indeed those already working in the field. Each chapter also considers how the findings from the case study are related to theoretical rationales for later-life learning. These findings are brought together in the final chapter which provides a thorough, in depth, critical analysis of the range of theoretical perspectives which have been proposed for considering musical learning in later-life. This chapter also sets out considerations for future research.

The model in the final chapter (the 'Shared Lifeboat'), which is presented as being 'for reflection on facilitating later-life music learning and participation' using a ship as a framework, is remarkable. The chapter authors and the editors are to be congratulated on their creativity in developing this model. Derived from the contributions of the various chapters in the volume it depicts how facilitation of learning in later-life contexts, while firmly anchored in values, beliefs, and experience, can take communities of learners in many different directions. When activities are proceeding successfully facilitators experience the learning environment as a container, rather like a ship full of possibilities where unexpected directions can lead to high level creative and expressive musical moments. The ship's anchor represents the values, beliefs, and experience that underpin pedagogical practices. These values include relationality, community, critical reflection, and curiosity. Foundational beliefs include those relating to the potential for lifelong creativity and musical development; the way that identities can be changed through musical engagement; and a commitment to critical reflection which supports further development and learning. These values and beliefs reflect, at least to some extent, the musical and life experiences of the facilitators. From these values and belief systems facilitators decide how to structure the 'pedagogical container' that frames learning environments for learning in later-life.

The pedagogical frameworks illustrated in the case studies are conceptualised in the model as the structure of the ship's hull. They not only vary between contexts but may also vary between sessions within the same context or even within sessions. They range from scaffolded activities to those which are exploratory and include experiential, collaborative, improvisational, and intergenerational activities. The frameworks together provide a structure that may support empowered and creative learning in later-life. The hull of the chip contains many portholes. These represent critical reflections including openness to new ideas and outward looking perspectives.

The sails of the ship represent aspects of the content of musical activities and the interpersonal elements of musical learning: new ideas, flexibility, and familiarity within an environment based on respect, empathy, connection, dialogue, differentiation, and positive reinforcement. The sails also represent the choices that facilitators make which in turn can lead to different learner experiences. Facilitators are depicted at the helm of the ship as responsive leaders.

This imaginative portrayal of the facilitation of lifelong musical learning is nothing short of genius. The model could be used for discussion in a range of teaching and professional development contexts. Two elements of the model stood out for me: the conceptualisation of the facilitator (or perhaps the teacher) as being a responsive leader making decisions taking account of a range of complex interacting factors; and the way that all decisions are conceptualised as anchored by values and beliefs. Overall, I found the volume an enjoyable, inspirational, and informative read. I trust that this will also be your experience.

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Acknowledgements

This open-access volume and the projects discussed herein were made possible by the generous support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (project number 890-2017-0021: Creative Later-Life in a Digital Age) and the Canada Foundation for Innovation (project number 35303: Mobile Laboratory for Research in Music in Community). We are extremely grateful for this support for research concerned with the possibilities for creativity and musical development across the lifecourse—a topic that we believe has significance for our ageing population in Canada and elsewhere.

We would like to thank all of the participants in the case study projects that formed part of the 'Creative Later-Life' partnership. Members of later-life communities in the provinces of Québec, Ontario, and British Columbia, Canada generously contributed their time and feedback. To protect the anonymity of research participants, we will not name the community partners who facilitated the case study projects discussed in this book. However, we do want to emphasise our gratitude for their support. Without the collaboration of community partners and the support of individual participants, the research upon which this book is founded would not have been possible.

We would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to the academic partners who contributed to the Creative Later-Life partnership: Université Laval (Professor Aaron Liu-Rosenbaum); McGill University (Professors Isabelle Cossette and Lisa Lorenzino); Université de Québec à Montréal

(Professor Audrey-Kristel Barbeau); Wilfrid Laurier University (Professor Lee Willingham); and Simon Fraser University (Professor Susan O'Neill). We would, additionally, like to express particular thanks to the Room 217 Foundation, whose mission is to promote music in care, for providing a platform for our work.

A large team of research assistants has contributed to the case studies highlighted in this volume. We extend gratitude and thanks to this extraordinary group of early career musicians, researchers, and occupational and music therapists whose work contributed to the success of these projects: Richard Barham, Sébastien Boucher, David Fortier, Sasha Judelson, Kevin Larouche, Aimée Gaudette-Leblanc, Jennifer Yong-Mi Lee, Graylen Howard, Angelina Lynne, Malinalli Peral Garcia, Michel Poirier, Christiane Ruggiero, and Emmanuel Zweig.

Thank you too to Logan Richardson, who helped to create the model presented in Chapter 10, our 'Shared Lifeboat'.

Finally, as lead editor of this volume I would particularly like to highlight the enormous contribution and generosity of two researchers, Mariane Generale (Creative Later-Life project coordinator) and Colin Enright (co-editor of this volume). Mariane provided invaluable organisational support for the case studies discussed in this book, as well as making a major contribution to the research. Colin, too, provided meticulous research skills and insight, and has provided stellar support in editing this volume.

Montreal, Canada

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CHAPTER 1

Pedagogies for Music Learning and Participation in Later-Life: Setting the Scene

Andrea Creech

A Rationale for Creative Music Learning and Participation in Later-Life

Alarm bells have long been sounded concerning the need for attention and resources to be directed towards lifelong learning and participation in the arts for adults beyond the labour-market age (Schuller & Watson, 2009). These calls to action have arisen amid a recognition of the pervasive and unprecedented twenty-first-century 'longevity revolution' (United Nations, 2013, 2015, 2019), whereby our global ageing population has been celebrated as a triumph of public health policy while simultaneously presenting significant challenges regarding sustained quality of life. Risks of depression and loneliness—exacerbated during the global COVID-19 pandemic (De Pue et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2023)—chronic disease, cognitive impairments, and sensory declines including

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_1

hearing (Chang-Quan et al., 2010; WHO, 2015) have been of particular concern.

In response, a consistent and growing body of evidence has demonstrated numerous and significant social and emotional benefits of music-making among senior citizens (Creech et al., 2013, 2014a; Fung & Lehmberg, 2016; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023). For example, Hallam & Creech (2016) reported that older adults who participated in community music-making over a period of nine months scored higher on quality of life measures, in comparison with others who participated in alternative leisure activities. The music participants reported a renewed sense of challenge and achievement, improved concentration and memory, increased vitality and feelings of rejuvenation, as well as generally positive feelings attributed to a sense of purpose and opportunities for creativity. These findings reflect earlier reports from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing ($n \approx 6000$), which pointed to music participation as a predictor of positive changes in wellbeing (Jenkins, 2011). The processes by which mental health may be supported through participatory music engagement were further explored by Perkins et al. (2020), whose metasynthesis of 48 studies (albeit not focused solely on older adults) revealed four overarching pathways: music to manage and express emotions, music as a space for self-development, music as a form of respite, and music as a context for facilitating connections with others. Some studies have examined the implications of music training in relation to cognitive function among older adult novice musicians. For example, following piano instruction and practice for as little as 10 weeks, improvements to some facets of executive function have been reported, including processing speed, attention, working memory, verbal fluency, and visuo-motor skills (Bugos, 2010; Bugos & Kochar, 2017; Bugos et al., 2007; MacRitchie et al., 2020). Overall, associations between music listening and singing and positive improvements in general wellbeing have been reported widely (Daykin et al., 2018). Similarly, perceptions of enhanced health related quality-of-life have been found to be associated with music interventions (McCrary et al., 2022).

The policy implications of this body of research were foreshadowed at a seminal moment in 2010, when goals for accessible, high-quality, and sustainable lifelong arts education were enshrined in UNESCO's Seoul Agenda. Of particular relevance to those individuals and groups with a commitment to later-life creative music learning and participation were the pledges made in the Seoul Agenda to "arts education as

the foundation for balanced creative, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and social development of [...] life-long learners" (Point 1a), and to establishing "systems of lifelong and intergenerational learning, in, about and through arts education" (Point 1c—UNESCO, 2010, pp. 3–4). Since the publication of the Seoul Agenda, interest in the relationship between positive ageing, music, and wellbeing has continued to support the view that music-making may function as a vehicle for social connectedness, self-fulfilment—including cognitive enhancement and emotional satisfaction—and overarching wellbeing or quality of life (Laes & Creech, 2023; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023). More limited attention has been paid to *how* later-life music learning or development in and through music may best be facilitated.

The question of how access to music as a leisure activity can be most effectively mediated, and how music learning and development can most effectively be supported, became urgent with the advent of COVID-19, designated in March 2020 as a global pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). There is some evidence that many turned to and even increased their participation in creative activities during the pandemic, and that these creative pursuits (including active musical engagement) continued to function as a predictor of positive psychological wellbeing (Morse et al., 2021). However, these positive benefits may not have extended fully to older adults. For example, those residing in long-term care may have been disproportionately negatively affected by restricted access to facilitated musical activities (Lehmberg & Fung, 2023), and some evidence indicates that isolated and vulnerable community-dwelling older adults were more conservative in their musical practice, with less favourable impressions of the positive value of music in their lives (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021).

Therefore, as we emerge from the global pandemic, now is a timely moment to refocus our attention on the ways in which creative music learning and participation can best be supported, across a range of contexts for later-life. This includes a consideration of issues relating to access, inclusion, and the nature of pedagogies that can nurture meaningful and creative musical experience, across the full spectrum of the adult lifecourse.

The Implications for Pedagogy Within Contexts for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation

As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, there is abundant evidence to link music, health, and positive ageing. Yet, as a community of researchers and practitioners interested in music and ageing, we have seemed to shy away from a focus on learning for learning's sake, seeking to rationalise the value of later-life music-making on the grounds of its associated wider social, emotional, and cognitive benefits. Creative musical learning and development that reaches across the adult lifecourse is rarely considered as separate from this "wider benefits" discourse. This may be because of deep-seated myths that perpetuate the idea that older adults cannot learn new skills or are not interested in learning new things (Stuart-Hamilton, 2006)—myths that have been shown to lack substance. Indeed, given appropriate opportunities, support, and creative strategies that make use of tools that can support rather than constrain musical learning and participation, adults may continue to learn and develop in music, even in very old age (Creech & Hallam, 2015).

Notwithstanding the tendency to conceptualise later-life music learning as being in service of wellbeing, the developmental possibilities for older adult music learners have been discussed, and a sub-theme has focused on the pedagogical implications associated with facilitation of creative musical experience in later-life contexts. In this vein, authors have referred to age-related physical, cognitive, or attitudinal constraints that may require differentiated facilitation strategies and peer support, as well as drawing attention to the life experience, competencies, and intersectional identities that older adults bring to their learning (e.g., Creech & Hallam, 2015; Laes & Creech, 2023; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023; Sinsch, 2023).

Generally, researchers have agreed that a responsive and mutually respectful pedagogical relationship that connects to the diversity within a group—including "social, cultural and historical contexts" (Lum, 2011, p. 194)—is key to empowering older adults in their learning and participation. Responsive pedagogy recognises the multifaceted functions of music learning; therefore, priorities may fluctuate between fun, enjoyment, social connection (Giebelhausen & Kruse, 2018; Lee et al., 2016), memory and reminiscence (Lum, 2011) or performance outcomes (Bonshor, 2017; Harrington, 2018). Some have argued that the facilitator-learner orientation may be more or less "democratic" but have emphasised that the key pedagogical focus should be on developing

a sense of community among learners and facilitating learning environments that are flexible, fun, and creative, while respecting and reflecting the autonomy, self-expression, and goals of the learners themselves (Giebelhausen & Kruse, 2018; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023).

Frameworks for Later-Life Music Learning and Teaching

As general interest in adult and lifelong learning has developed and grown, we have seen the emergence of frameworks that represent the characteristic needs or facets of learning (more broadly) across the adult lifecourse, including in later life (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Andragogy, an early concept that focused on the characteristics of adult learning, dates back to 1833 and the work of Alexander Kapp (Coffman, 2018). However, the idea of andragogy as a specific theory of adult learning became widely known through the work of Knowles (1980), who highlighted self-directed learning, experiential knowledge, intrinsic motivation, and practical problem-solving on a need-to-know basis, supported through learner-focused and participatory facilitation. While andragogy did, arguably, capture many characteristics of adult learning contexts, its categorisation as a theory, and the idea that principles such as self-direction and experiential learning are unique to adults, have been critiqued (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Andragogical principles were extended to the facilitation of learning among *older* adults, expressed as "geragogy" and acknowledging age-specific needs such as accommodating cognitive changes, providing supportive learning environments, and (particularly) leveraging the life experiences of older learners (Battersby, 1987; Findsen & Formosa, 2011). Both andragogy and geragogy have been further critiqued in relation to their limited attention to the broader relational and societal contexts that shape learners' experiences (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Furthermore, geragogy, in particular, risked positioning older adults as a homogenous group and potentially reinforcing a dependency-based, deficit view of older people (Findsen & Formosa, 2011; Formosa, 2011, 2012).

Critical geragogy emerged as a critique of these limitations, and as a framework for later-life teaching and learning that may be said to

represent an intersection of critical pedagogy (Hess, 2017) and educational gerontology concerned with education for older people (Glendenning, 2018). Critical geragogy seeks to unsettle the predominant deficit paradigm of old age and instead facilitate agency, purpose, creativity, and collective action, and advocates for the empowering potential of older adult learning to challenge the oppressive and discriminatory conditions of old age (Formosa, 2013). While andragogy and geragogy draw attention to the ways in which older adult learners' needs may be differentiated from younger cohorts, critical geragogy encourages us to reflect and critique our values and assumptions about older learners and the purposes, processes, and challenges associated with learning in older age.

From a critical geragogy perspective, later-life *music* pedagogies would include space for self-directed learning and collaborative, creative activities that aim to foster musical competencies integrated with personal and social development (Creech & Hallam, 2015). Creativity may be particularly important, as music may serve as a creative space within which older adults may resist narratives of decline and instead explore new identities in music (Creech et al., 2014a; Formosa, 2013). As such, later-life contexts for creative music learning may be experienced as empowering and even transformative (Creech & Hallam, 2015).

However, the application of critical geragogy in practice remains challenging. For example, empowerment (a key tenet shared by critical pedagogy and critical geragogy) relies on self-efficacy related to participating in making music. Issues concerned with self-efficacy have been noted repeatedly in research concerned with adult music learners (Creech et al., 2014a). Encompassing the extent to which learners have expectations of success, their self-judgements of their own ability, and their confidence in their skills, self-efficacy may be fragile among older adults who bring with them a lifetime of acquired perceptions and beliefs relating to their identities in music, and indeed their identities as older people. This, according to Bonshor (2017), necessitates particular attention to feedback, which should be honest, credible, specific, constructive, and communicated in respectful and supportive ways that acknowledge the life experience of adult learners. Coutts (2018) went further, suggesting that self-efficacy could most effectively be supported within a collaborative pedagogical relationship, where learners (including peers) and teachers together established *what* to learn, as well as *how* that learning would be achieved. Such a pedagogy could be challenging, in the sense that both teachers and

learners needed to relinquish their attachment to hierarchical teacher–student orientations, in favour of a flexible, relational approach where the learner "is involved in all choices relating to their learning" (Coutts, 2018, p. 295).

Questions concerning how best to foster self-efficacious beliefs among adult learners lead to wider issues of identity. Much has been written about "identities in music" (i.e., musical roles in one's life) or conversely "music in identity" (i.e., the influence of music in shaping one's global identity), although the research in this area has tended to be youth-focused, with just a few exceptions (Lamont, 2017). Older adults in particular bring a lifetime of reinforced beliefs concerning their positionality in music, and their capacity to embrace musical identities. This can pose specific pedagogical challenges, requiring sensitive and carefully scaffolded approaches that support the development or reawakening of musical possible selves (Creech et al., 2013) within empathetic peer communities. While there has been much discussion about the later-life benefits to be derived from engagement with music, thus far there has been limited attention paid to the pedagogical beliefs, values, or practices that can scaffold robust musical self-concepts and a strong sense of identities in music, among older adults.

Further questions and gaps in research remain concerning the ways in which musical experiences can be framed and facilitated according to the ideals of critical geragogy. One such significant gap concerns the pedagogical applications of technology within later-life contexts, including the pedagogical implications of online later-life music learning and participation. Although music technology with younger people is now well-established within special education (Farrimond et al., 2011), music education (Ruthmann & Hebert, 2012), and within music therapy contexts (Stensaeth & Magee, 2016), there has been limited research concerned with the use of music technology as an intervention to enrich learning within offline later-life contexts, and little research concerned with the online environment as a context for later-life music participation. Yet, according to Himonides and Purves (2010), music technology can "enhance our lives through experiencing music in new ways; facilitate the communication of *our musics* […]; provide wider access to other people's musics […]; and provide access to music for people with special needs and requirements" (pp 123–124). Therefore, it may be argued that in accordance with principles of critical geragogy, digital music technologies, including online learning platforms, as well as electrical or digital tools to

create, manipulate, analyse, or record musical sounds, offer strong potential to mediate access to music learning and participation (Lehmberg & Fung, 2023) and creativity (Formosa, 2013).

In accordance with a critical geragogy perspective, a small handful of studies have suggested that technological challenges (e.g., accessibility issues related to tremors, arthritis, or limited vision; or cognitive challenges such as difficulty in understanding menu structures) may be reconceptualised as limits of the technology rather than deficits in the users. There is some evidence that older people are capable of learning to use technology, despite being constrained by the so-called generational digital divide (Gates & Wilson-Menzfeld, 2022) and ambivalence that may be related to "an industry-wide focus on youth which has led to a systematic disregard for the needs, preferences and capabilities of older adults" (Damant & Knapp, 2015, p. 18). Nevertheless, Creech (2019) identified eight studies that had explored the use of technology to support participatory music-making or music and movement among older adults, providing evidence that older people—including those living with complex physical or psychological needs—were capable of using technology to access or create music. More recently, studies have reinforced the message that important yet under-utilised opportunities exist to further the potential offered by technology to mitigate some barriers to meaningful later-life musical participation (Lehmberg & Fung, 2023; MacRitchie et al., 2022).

A second significant gap in our knowledge related to the application of critical geragogy concerns the facilitation of creativity in later-life music contexts. The salience of creativity in later life has been linked with personal growth, happiness, self-expression, social connection, and social affirmation experienced when drawing upon life experiences in creative activities (Creech et al., 2020; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023). Older learners may "commence creativity" through music, exploring their creative potential in ways that have previously been unfamiliar. Alternatively, they may "continue or change" their relationship with creativity, building upon creative practices that have been established earlier in life (Cohen, 2005). In either paradigm, they may use music as a creative outlet for exploring loss, for personal healing, or for reflection on life stories.

The creativity that may be fostered through critical geragogy has been described as "mini-c" creativity, encompassing "novel and personally meaningful" moments of learning (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, p. 3). In

this sense, mini-c creative opportunities may contribute to the capacity for older adults to "navigate major transitions, search for meaningfulness and continuing relevance, engage with life review, and experience generativity (the desire to leave a legacy and "give back" to future generations)" (Creech et al., 2020, n.p.). As Lehmberg & Fung (2023) advocated, "creative musical activities would allow participants to use their wisdoms and rich life experiences that can be transformed into communicative pieces of music to be shared with anyone and to give to the community" (p. 156).

A systematic review focused on research at the nexus of creativity, music, and quality of later-life (Creech et al., 2020) revealed some key pointers to the pedagogical frameworks that may have been implicated in mini-c creativity. These included reference to playful and imaginative activities, a learning environment where participants felt able to take risks and to reveal their vulnerabilities, and a responsive, inclusive leadership approach that facilitated a sense of ownership, belonging, and collaboration. However, the authors point out that "more clarity is needed with regard to the characteristics of a creative musical process or product within later-life contexts … and the specific ways in which creative musical expression can be facilitated" (n.p.).

Finally, a third gap in the research focused on the experience of critical geragogy in later-life music learning contexts concerns the relationship between self-determined learning and the social or collaborative context. The advent of Web 2.0 technology has reignited interest in self-directed learning, framed by ideas such as heutagogy which emphasises self-determination and autonomy among adult learners (Blaschke, 2012). In accordance with some of the tenets of critical geragogy, a heutagogy paradigm positions adult learners (either alone or in peer groups) as owners of all aspects of their learning, while teachers (if they are present) take on a supportive or a collaborative role (Bucura, 2020). While some researchers (including in this volume—see Chapter 9 in particular) have explored self-determined music learning within online spaces, the specific ways in which heutagogy and critical geragogy may frame impactful learning and participation among older adults remain under-explored.

Contexts for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation

Just as at any other life stage, the contexts where music learning and participation take place are diverse, and the learners heterogeneous. These contexts can be informal (e.g., impromptu sessions, or unstructured singing groups in participants' homes) or formal (e.g., music instruction offered under the auspices of further education or other formal education institutions). Many opportunities for older adults might be classified as non-formal, referring to organised leisure activities, often learner-led, with a designated facilitator or leader, and possibly framed by some learning objectives (e.g., organised leisure activities such as community orchestras, choirs, bands, or song-writing groups). For adult learners, non-formal contexts provide a structured framework within which facilitators and co-learners may act as role models that "serve to reinforce identities" and create the conditions for adult learners to explore and construct alternative or additional possible selves as musicians (Dabback & Smith, 2012, p. 235).

Some have argued that the distinction between informal, non-formal, and formal contexts is fluid and that contextual characteristics should be conceptualised on a continuum rather than as discrete categories (e.g., Folkestad, 2006). At any point on that continuum, contexts intersect with learner characteristics, identities, and intentions, facilitator strategies, cultural norms, and a host of other factors as highlighted by Lehmberg & Fung (2023, Sect. 1.2):

> Older adults' musical activity occurs in a wide variety of venues, which may be characterized as formal or informal, private, or public, government or nongovernment, for-profit or nonprofit, religious or secular, and small or large. These are neither clear-cut nor exclusive categories … (n.p.)

It has been demonstrated that irrespective of context, facilitators exert a significant influence (often perceived by learners as the most important influence) in shaping the experience of older adult music learners (Hallam et al., 2011). Older learners have reportedly valued facilitators who reject a deficit model of older age and who offer credible, encouraging, and clear support (Creech et al., 2014b). Yet, given the multiplicity of contexts partnered with the diversity one can expect to find among older people themselves, it would seem that facilitation of empowering,

meaningful, and inclusive later-life music learning and participation is necessarily complex and multifaceted.

Introducing this Book

Our overarching aim is to explore and represent multiple ways that older adults may be empowered in creative music learning and participation. One may legitimately ask whether a distinctive pedagogy is needed for older adults. Indeed, a focus on older adults as a discrete group of learners runs the risk of perpetuating the homogeneity myth that reduces the identity of older adults to a chronological age. However, this risk is exactly why an interrogation of context may be helpful, drawing attention away from "sameness" and instead celebrating the diversity of musical spaces and ways of learning that can be accessible for our older fellow citizens. Borrowing the critical geragogy framework advocated by Creech & Hallam (2015—discussed earlier in this chapter), we will explore the ways in which older adult learners' musical experiences and creative musical achievements can be shaped by contexts, tools, strategies, objectives, and other environmental factors.

This book presents a series of case studies representing several diverse contexts for later-life music learning and participation. These case studies were developed through a research partnership focused on music as a vehicle for "Creative Later-life", funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The Creative Later-life research partnership adopted an understanding of "later-life" that was in accordance with Findsen & Formosa (2016), who defined older adults as "people, whatever their chronological age, who are no longer involved in an occupational career or with the major responsibilities for raising a family" (p. 6). United by a participatory, action research approach involving older adults, the case studies were organised in accordance with the ideals of critical geragogy, whereby music workshop facilitators and older adult participants together explored the challenges (including those relating to incorporating technology into their pedagogical strategies), support mechanisms, and affordances relating to meaningful, responsive, and enriching later-life music-making. Many of the case studies began prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, continuing through lockdowns by pivoting to online spaces for learning and participation. The collection thus offers insights into how facilitators and older adults alike grappled with multiple unprecedented challenges as well as opportunities.

Within this volume we will introduce you to older adult music learners in online spaces, residential care, retirement communities, life-long learning groups, and non-formal community groups. Chapter 2 sets out a relational pedagogy framework, illustrating this with examples from a music group located in a retirement community in the city of Montreal, Canada, where residents lived independently while still having access when needed to various levels of support. Chapter 3 explores later-life music learning as a vehicle for building a sense of community within an online space, articulated through the philosophy of "Music for People", who offered online music improvisation workshops for older adults during the global COVID-19 pandemic. In Chapter 4, we turn to the context of long-term residential care, exploring the improvisational pedagogies and use of digital instruments (the Soundbeam) that characterised music learning and participation in "Cedar" and "Maple" residential settings, one located in British Columbia, Canada, and the other located in Quebec City, Canada. One of those long-term care settings ("Maple") appears again in Chapter 5, alongside a further case study group of independently living older adults (the so-called "community music-makers") who met weekly in their local community centre in the city of Quebec, Canada. The focus in Chapter 5 is on the potential for musical development and creative musical expression among older adults. Chapter 6 moves to an intergenerational choir located in the province of Ontario, Canada, where choir members include older adults living with dementia, their partner caregivers, and teenaged volunteer participants. This chapter explores themes of inclusivity, creativity, and sense of community, and the salience of the intergenerational context. We move back to the province of Quebec, Canada, for Chapters 7 and 8, which are concerned again with the "community music makers" as well as a further group of independently living older adults, the so-called "life-long learners". While Chapter 7 explores issues of identity experienced in and through music, Chapter 8 interrogates the pedagogical values and practices that framed the music workshops, and the learner perceptions of those practices. Chapter 9 takes us back to Montreal, where we are introduced to members of the Montreal New Horizons Band, and learn about how they adapted to an online environment, and the factors that helped them to persist with learning in that environment. Finally, Chapter 10 revisits some of the theoretical rationales for later-life learning, considering the key findings from each chapter in light of those ideas. Chapter 10 draws together the key messages from across this

volume and offers a model for pedagogies of later-life music learning and participation, intended as a point of departure for critical reflection. In that spirit, the chapter (and book) concludes with some critical reflections concerning the limitations of the research discussed within these 10 chapters, the questions left unanswered, and areas for future research.

Within these various contexts represented across the chapters in this volume, older adults' access to music was mediated by a range of tools that included electronic, digital, or acoustic instruments, singing and body percussion, as well as online and offline resources. Each case study highlights specific challenges, strengths, processes, and outcomes, and captures the perspectives of participants and facilitators. Within each, different questions are addressed that add to our understanding of—and reflections on—the pedagogies that can frame deeply engaged and creative music learning and participation in later-life contexts. We agree with Fecho (2000) who cautioned (when discussing critical pedagogy) that "no one can really show you how; they can only point in directions. The learning is in the doing" (p. 196). Nevertheless, we believe that case studies, described in rich detail, offer the potential for readers to experience vicariously the many and varied ways of facilitating music learning within diverse later-life contexts.

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CHAPTER 2

Relational Pedagogies for Later-Life Learning *as* Participation

Isabelle Cossette, Andrea Creech, Sébastien Boucher, Aimée Gaudette-Leblanc, Mariane Generale, Jennifer Yong-Mi Lee, and Colin Enright

Introduction

As suggested in Chapter 1, the relationship between facilitators and older adult learners plays a key role in shaping learning experiences (Rogers, 2001). Some research concerned with later-life *music* contexts has provided support for this idea, illustrating that positive learning and participation involves social connection and a sense of belonging in a community of learners, alongside opportunities to experience a

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_2

sense of ownership, agency, and validation within spaces that encourage collaborative, creative, and imaginative learning (Creech et al., 2014). Yet, while these relational conditions that may support positive later-life learning experiences have been highlighted, there continues to be limited attention focused on pedagogy in older adult education and learning, generally (Findsen & Formosa, 2016) or in the specific context of music. As discussed in chapter one, some perspectives such as educational gerontology and critical geragogy have provided philosophical and theoretical frameworks for understanding the later-life pedagogical context. However, in the context of music there is still much to learn concerning the potentially relational nature of these frameworks and the implications of relational pedagogies for task-oriented dimensions of learning (i.e., structuring and planning, and making learning meaningful), or for the interpersonal dimensions such as feeling (responding to individual feelings as well as the emotional group dynamic), valuing one another, and confronting resistance to learning (Creech et al., 2020; Heron, 1999).

Furthermore, while many have highlighted the facilitator–learner relationship, within later-life music contexts there has been little discussion of the significant role played by "relationality" in *peer* learning, or indeed the relationality among participants and the learning spaces they inhabit. Therefore, guided by research that has consistently underscored the significance of responsive and inclusive music leadership, peer interactions, and learning environments, we turn to the overarching idea of relational pedagogy and its potential applications and relevance in later-life music contexts, some of which are discussed in forthcoming chapters in this volume. In this chapter, we set out the key underlying principles of relational pedagogies and provide a rationale as to why relational pedagogies may have heightened relevance for the task dimensions (i.e., the characteristics of the activities themselves) as well as the interpersonal dimensions of later-life music learning. We draw attention to the idea of learning *as*

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participation within communicative, intersubjective spaces, and furthermore explore the implications for relational pedagogy within online or offline spaces that rely on digital technologies.

Throughout this chapter, we illustrate key points with short vignettes from a series of participatory music workshops, operated on a "drop-in" basis, held within a community recreational space within a retirement community in Montreal, Canada, comprising older adult residents of varying levels of independence. Autonomous individuals over 61 years old, with little to no musical background participated in group workshops facilitated by two music educators.

Three taster workshops involving 32 participants and ten 2-hour workshops with eight to twelve participants were carried out in the year prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, at which time they pivoted to an online format for eight sessions, with between 3 and 5 participants. Many examples in this chapter are drawn from the pre-pandemic offline, in-person workshops, although we include some online examples towards the end of the chapter, to illustrate some of the challenges that were encountered in the move to online workshops.

The overarching aim within the workshops (offline or online) was to be participant-led and to facilitate access to music-making through exploration of a range of digital, acoustic, and electronic instruments. Specific research goals (relevant to this chapter) were to (a) evaluate the implications of incorporating digital instruments into musical activities with a population of senior individuals without musical training, and (b) reflect on the implications of a participant-led approach for autonomy, competency, and relatedness among the participants. Changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the anticipated length of the project and resulted in not having enough time to reach anticipated levels of autonomy, therefore, the "participant-led" aspirations were more collaborative in practice, with decisions taken by facilitators in a responsive manner that accounted for participant feedback and expressed wishes.

Two facilitators led the workshops, one with a combined music therapy and music education background, and the other a music educator with a professional background as a popular musician. The vignettes are drawn from interviews or focus groups with participating older adults, and from the facilitators' reflective notes and discussions following each session.

Relational Pedagogy: Key Principles

Relational pedagogy is founded upon the idea of learning *as* participation within an intersubjective space (Biesta, 2004; Hinsdale & Ljungblad, 2023). Moving away from a focus solely on characteristics of the learner(s) or the teacher (understood here to encompass any roles as facilitators of learning), relational pedagogy instead is concerned with the fundamental significance of the intersection of teacher and learners, and the positionality of teacher–learner and learner–learner encounters within spaces for learning. Relational pedagogy challenges us to understand that positive learner–teacher and peer learning relationships do more than *support* learning—rather, relationships among teachers, learners, and learning environments, *are* the intersubjective spaces within which meaningful learning and participation may emerge. In short, "relationships are vital to the learning process" (Quinlan, 2016, p. 102).

A relational pedagogy requires an ethic of care, whereby teachers take responsibility for recognising the challenges as well as the possibilities within the intersubjective space, or so-called "gap" (Biesta, 2004) within which communicative participation occurs. In so doing, facilitators of learning (i.e., teachers, instructors, leaders, tutors) see and respond to the needs of learners, acknowledging asymmetrical power dynamics and practising an openness to "the educational histories of exclusion and marginalization of certain groups [that may] trouble our ability to nurture relations" (Hinsdale & Ljungblad, 2023, p. 2). From this perspective, teachers are also learners, willing to be critically self-reflective, paying particular attention to the many prominent discourses concerned with the specificity of any group's needs; for example, in later-life contexts this may require attention to deficit models of ageing or myths about older learners (see Withnall, 2004).

Rogers (2001) reminds us that "communities of learners" (p. 26) characterised by curiosity and openness to exploration are founded upon the ways in which interpersonal interactions are experienced. Rogers (pp. 29–32) hints at the facilitation qualities that may shape those relational interactions, highlighting attitudes such as authenticity (the facilitator must be critically reflective so as to be "close to one's feelings, capable of being aware of them"), acceptance and trust in each learner as having worth in their own right (Rogers refers to this as "prizing"); and empathic understanding, whereby the facilitator intentionally

takes the learner's perspective. According to Rogers, these three attitudes—authenticity, trust, and empathy—underpin "growth-promoting, facilitative relationships" (p. 39) where learning may flourish.

Further interrogating the conditions that could activate relational exchanges in learning and teaching, Hickey and Riddle (2022) highlight informality as a "modality" (p. 789) for the close bonds that are characteristic of relational exchanges. From this perspective, close bonds experienced within an informal, relational learning space could be activated through participatory activities, negotiated curriculum, opportunities for valuing the knowledge and contributions of each learner, and generally an "ethic of conviviality" (p. 787) and affinity among learners, their peers, and facilitators. As Hickey and Riddle (2022, p. 796) highlight, the "ritualised performances" of formal learning contexts can be transformed within informal or non-formal sites for learning. In this vein, informality may be expressed through interactions that encourage dialogue, and through flexibility in choosing activities, materials, and tools that meet collective needs.

Relational pedagogy has clear synergy and relevance for those dimensions of pedagogy that are concerned with interpersonal dynamics and indeed refocuses our attention on the reciprocal nature of learning and teaching, and the interplay between learners and those who facilitate learning. For example, three relational facets of a facilitator's pedagogical role are outlined by Heron (1999) and contextualised further in music by Creech et al. (2020) with reference to music learning and participation. The first of these dimensions, labelled as *confronting,* refers to the ways in which facilitators can respond to resistance to learning. For example, as (typically) an expression of fear of failure or uncertainty about the learning task, resistance to learning nevertheless "contains very strong learning potential" when countered with appropriate scaffolding (Illeris, 2003, p. 404). The second interpersonal dimension, labelled *feeling,* focuses on the emotional group dynamic as well as individual feelings, and the various relationships among group members. For example, a facilitator may propose, elicit contributions to, and provide space for collaboration in an expressive activity, as a means to symbolise or celebrate the group's state of being or emotional climate. *Valuing*, the third of these interpersonal dimensions of pedagogy, refers to how pedagogical practices can be used intentionally to value and honour the contribution of each group member. For example, through pedagogical strategies and activities, facilitators demonstrate a personal recognition of the value of each

group member, while at the same time supporting the development of an inclusive community characterised by mutual respect.

A further three dimensions of pedagogy, according to Heron's model (1999), encompass three closely intersecting task-oriented facets of facilitating learning. Labelled as *planing, structuring*, and *meaning*, these dimensions are concerned with establishing what will be learnt, how it will be learnt, and how learners will derive meaning from the pedagogical activity (as distinct from the idea of accumulating knowledge). Here, although the focus is on the "task" or activity, a relational lens may nonetheless support positive learner experiences. For example, planning can be initiated by facilitators but developed in consultation with learners and can be flexible and responsive to the specific preferences or needs that emerge from a group. Similarly, the ways in which learning is structured—that is, the ways in which elements of learning that may include practical skills, theoretical concepts, or imagination, may be woven together—can be adapted to the demands of the interpersonal climate. Decisions about both planning and structuring have implications for the ways in which learners make sense of, and find personal or collective meaning in, the learning experience. Facilitators may intentionally use metaphor, illustrative examples, or alternatively may elicit associations, memories, or imaginative responses from group members, with a view to supporting meaning-making.

Overall, on any one of these six dimensions of pedagogy (confronting, feeling, valuing, planning, structuring, and meaning), facilitators may take decisions that are more or less collaborative, for example in some instances providing scaffolding such as modelling or feedback, in others interacting in mutual exploration of musical material, or where needed and requested, offering direct instruction or guidance. From the perspective of relationality, it may be expected that these various orientations—encompassing instances where (a) the facilitator takes some decisions alone; (b) the facilitator(s) and learners take some decisions together; and (c) learners take some decisions alone—would emerge from context-specific relational encounters. Such encounters include "deliberate negotiation…and provoke the enactment of …ways of learning that recognise the contextual dynamics of the encounter" (Hickey et al., 2022, p. 202). However, while these pedagogical encounters might therefore differ somewhat in the relative power dynamics and leadership emphases, the underlying values of relational pedagogy would remain constant—that is,

negotiation, an ethic of care, mutual respect, responsiveness, critical self-reflection, and empathy.

Vignette 1 introduces the retirement community project, illustrating responsive and collaborative approaches to task-oriented dimensions of learning such as structuring and planning, and the ways in which learning was made meaningful through the interpersonal dimensions such as feeling, valuing one another, and confronting resistance to learning.

Vignette 1: Structuring and Planning in a Responsive and Collaborative Manner

A first series of five Taster workshops was held to introduce 32 participants to different musical activities and instruments. Through a survey, participants were invited to express their preferences concerning the activities and instruments used, evaluate the support from the facilitators, and express other feedback (such as the length of sessions, learning challenges). This allowed the facilitation team to plan the learning activities in a way that was responsive to the participants' values, feelings and preferences, with the goal of decreasing resistance to learning and making it more meaningful. For example, some participants highlighted that not all technologies were amplified similarly, making collective and cohesive playing challenging. To address this, it was proposed that participants play iPads (using the ThumbJam application) with similar instrumental sounds simultaneously (e.g., strings, winds) instead of using varied ones (piano, strings, drum). This also had the benefit of allowing individuals to familiarise themselves with the sound specificities of each instrument

Participants shared their impressions of the pros and cons of digital versus 'traditional' instruments. For example, the preset scales on digital instruments were thought to provide an accessible introduction to group music-making for beginners. Participants indicated that they believed playing more traditional instruments such as guitars, drums, keyboards, or tuned percussion demanded more cognitive and motor effort. This, depending on the individual, was considered an advantage, stimulating more interest and motivation, or a drawback, being felt as too challenging. The participants

also commented on how they valued both activities of interpretation (i.e., learning well-known pre-composed songs) and creation (i.e., improvising or composing) of music but stated that interpretation was felt as more accessible and an efficient first step leading to subsequent creative activities

In addition to survey feedback, facilitators engaged with ongoing dialogue with their participants. As adults with life-long experiences of learning in all sorts of domains, participants contributed significantly to the richness of these exchanges at all steps of the project: e.g., they suggested strategies, solutions, or activities that would support their learning, and they reinforced that they themselves were aware of their own best ways of learning. When these participants felt they did not have sufficient musical skills to be autonomous, they were able to express their needs clearly and to engage in reflection with the facilitators as equals. This contributed to building trust among the members of the community, an essential building block for relational pedagogy.

Facilitators responded to participant feedback through weekly planning and structuring sessions, developing multiple suggested activities that could be meaningful to the participants. Following each session, the selected activities and participant responses would again be discussed and assessed with the group. At times, some proposed activities (e.g., drum circle with djembe) were not retained but the rationale was presented to participants so as not to create resistance, deception or a decrease of engagement (e.g., difficulty of implementation, lack of accessibility of instruments and/or specific skills, discomfort associated to possible cultural appropriation).

Challenges in Relational Pedagogical Practices

As can be inferred from the previous section, arguments in favour of relational pedagogy are compelling, and it is perhaps somewhat "peculiar that something so self-evident is indeed not talked about anywhere near as much as it should be" (Riddle & Hickey, 2025, p. 2). Yet, relational pedagogy is challenging.

First, relationships are complex, attaining multiple layers of complexity when one considers a group dynamic (Jaques, 2000). Navigation of these complexities requires facilitators and learners alike to be open to departing from well-practised prescribed scripts and strategies, while also being comfortable with uncertainty or feelings of vulnerability, and openness to developing the conditions for trust and mutuality. As Riddle and Hickey (2025, p. 28) summarise, "genuine relational work is not easy. It takes time to develop the responsiveness and response—ability [sic] (Barad, 2007) of a relational pedagogy". Papatheodorou and Moyles (2009, p. 14) further highlight that both teachers and learners may be "reluctant and uncertain in engaging in relational approaches to learning. …it takes confidence from both tutors and students to engage with and sustain relational approaches to learning".

Second, the idea of relationality is often subsumed by the priority given to learning outcomes, performance, or "curriculum content, which is tightly bound and scripted in its development and delivery" (Riddle & Hickey, 2025, p. 3). This may be less of an issue in lifelong learning contexts, which lend themselves well to the idea of building community within an empathic, flexible, and mutually respectful pedagogical framework. However, the prominent use of the word "delivery" in discourse concerned with non-formal teaching and learning does not align well with a relational perspective, with the idea of "delivery" strongly suggesting a uni-directional and prescriptive approach. For example, Hallam and colleagues (2016) reported that facilitators found it to be problematic when their authority regarding musical matters was questioned and reported that they felt challenged when needing to respond to so-called "difficult or unexpected" behaviour, or resistance to trying new things. That said, the facilitator participants in this study also indicated that the key to negotiating any of those issues was to first attend to building positive relationships among group members (inclusive of participants and the facilitators).

The case study retirement community project, from which descriptive examples are drawn in this chapter, illustrates that there was some resistance to delivery leading to performative outcomes, in favour of a focus on "in-the-moment" collaborative musical experience (Vignette 2).

Vignette 2: Resistance to Performative Outcomes, in Favour of Collaborative Processes

Once trust and common understanding are built within relational pedagogy contexts, challenges sometimes become learning opportunities on multiple fronts. Among the retirement community participants, the initial 'traditional' public performance proposed by the facilitators (who were trained musicians) as a celebration to conclude the workshop series was rejected by participants. Through negotiation, the facilitators learned that the participants were much more interested in what they could experience together, as compared with performative outcomes. This was an important shift in the project helping the facilitation team to adapt to and respond with activities that were valued and meaningful to the participants. The series of workshops happily concluded with an additional session, including a longer break to celebrate the shared moments.

To summarise, relational pedagogy is not simply a cosy concept, but rather an approach that brings with it challenges that demand critical reflection on the part of facilitators of learning, in order to "translate into meaningful and theoretically informed enactments in the living and breathing spaces of …education environments" (Hickey & Riddle, 2025, p. 22).

Implications of Relational Pedagogy for Older Adult Learners

While later-life learning, generally, has been found to offer a range of wider benefits (Chen et al., 2015), relational pedagogies may have particular significance. Jarvis (2012) reinforces the view that humans have the capacity to learn and develop, across the lifespan. He highlights that learning is "the process through which we are, and by which we will continue to become, unique human beings at whatever age" (p. 45). He furthermore suggests that this sense of "personhood" achieved through learning can be enriched through pedagogical attention to six core values that become increasingly salient for older adults: a sense of identity, achievement, intimacy, creativity and play, meaningfulness, compassion

and contribution (Jarvis, 2012). In addressing these values through pedagogical approaches, it is also important to recognise that later-life—which brings with it increasing experience of loss—is often accompanied by a shrinking social circle and the risk of social isolation and loneliness (Sheftel et al., 2024). Accordingly, relationality in learning has been reported as key in fostering a sense of purpose, belonging, and camaraderie among peers (Narushima et al., 2018). In this vein, older adult learners have described "good" instructors as those who "could create a safe, stimulating, and mutually respectful learning environment" (Narushima et al., 2018, p. 4), while making space for creativity, autonomy, and peer-to-peer support.

In particular, relational pedagogies have significance in mediating the affective, or emotional, dimension of learning. There is now strong support for the idea that emotions, at any time of our lives, are strongly associated with the capacity to learn, with implications for cognitive strategies, attentional resources, and motivational processes (Fried, 2011). In contexts where the learners are older adults, the links between relationality, emotion, and learning may be particularly salient, as it has been suggested that older adults seek environments that optimise positive emotional functioning and meaning (Labouvie-Vief, 2005). Thus, positive learning experiences may be fostered through allocation of time to opportunities for emotion regulation (Urry & Gross, 2010), referring to "the ability to control the experience and expression of emotions" (Gross, 2002, p. 3). Recent literature has highlighted the relational, as opposed to personal, nature of emotion, proposing that emotions "exist and arise through relationships" (Quinlan, 2016, p. 102). Thus, a key message for relational pedagogy in later-life contexts is that positive emotion regulation may be supported through collaborative opportunities to be expressive, to make valued contributions, or to feel a sense of belonging or affiliation fostered through shared learning tasks, as well as through shared enthusiasm and recognition of the meaningfulness that can be derived from the group activities.

Relational Pedagogies in Later-Life Music Contexts

In the specific discipline of music, relational pedagogies have been shown to be extremely important. As a collaborative art form, positive experiences in music learning and participation—irrespective of the age of the

learners—require pedagogies that are underpinned by interpersonal trust, empathy, and connection (Creech et al., 2022; de Bruin, 2021; Evans et al., 2013; Gaunt & Westerlund, 2016). Pedagogies founded upon relational understandings achieved through "constantly ongoing, open-ended and ever-changing (dynamic) interactions" (O'Neill, 2014, p. 173) have been described as transformative (Carey & Grant, 2016; O'Neill, 2014).

Creech et al., (2014), who carried out extensive research focused on the social, emotional, and cognitive benefits of music participation among older adults, proposed a "model of basic needs satisfaction through music" to represent the processes by which music learning and participation could function as a context that supported positive wellbeing and active ageing (p. 11). While not directly claiming to represent relational pedagogy, their model had several implications for understanding the power of relational pedagogy in later-life music contexts. Derived from the Basic Psychological Needs Scales (Ryan & Deci, 2000), encompassing the underlying dimensions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, as well as a measure of quality of later-life that comprised scales for control, autonomy, self-realisation, and pleasure (CASP-12, see Higgs et al., 2003), Creech et al.'s research (using these two measures and based on responses from 398 older adults involved in later-life music-making) revealed three factors that framed their participants' experiences in music. The first of these was a "sense of purpose" (i.e., looking forward to each day, feeling that life had meaning), while the second was "control & autonomy" (i.e., the extent to which individuals felt they had agency in their learning). The third, clearly aligned with relational pedagogy, was "social affirmation", concerned with friendship, belonging, feeling cared for, and feeling recognised as a valuable member of a group or community. Key messages concerning the pedagogical implications of this model (see Creech et al., 2014, Chapter 6) offered strong support for the principles of a relational pedagogy. For example, a prominent message was that interdependent peer learning served an "important motivational function and [was] strongly associated with continued interest and involvement in music" (p. 94). The researchers also highlighted the importance of support for autonomy, achieved when participants were creative and innovative in their music-making, and when they contributed to setting goals (i.e., structuring the learning) and planning the activities. In accordance with current thinking about relational pedagogy (Hickey et al., 2022), Creech and colleagues also emphasised the significance of negotiation, with regard to structuring, planning, or illuminating meaningfulness in

the learning through connecting with life stories, reminiscence, and prior experiences. Social affirmation emerged within contexts where there were opportunities for collaboration and group review, for example in risk-free improvisation, composition, or performing together, and where group members trusted that their musical goals were recognised, and that their musical role in the group was valued and respected.

Vignette 3 illustrates some of the ways in which facilitators in the retirement community project collaborated with participants in implementing strategies that promoted positive interpersonal and emotional climate for learning.

Vignette 3: Responsive Strategies to Promote a Positive Emotional Climate for Learning

During a second series of five 2-hour in-person workshops, eight to twelve participants engaged in music-making using their preferred instruments (RockHub, Merlin Guitars, GarageBand on iPads and/or singing). Participants and facilitators spent more than half of the time learning and performing repertoire that was chosen for its simplicity and significance to participants. The remaining time was spent improvising and composing. As in the previous series, the sessions were intertwined with informal feedback and focus groups from which comments were collected to apply changes that could more deeply facilitate learning. Some examples of changes that responded to the participants' expressed challenges and promoted a positive emotional climate for learning were as follows:

1. **Logistical changes:** Visual support for learning was provided through creation of individual scores; use of a large screen; and stickers on the guitar and bass neck. Responsiveness to the age and physical limitations of participants was expressed through a regular weekly schedule to fit in participants' calendars; limitation on the number of participants to 12, to assure best support for all; music stands for guitarists and for those playing iPads.
2. **Motivational and affective components**: Introductory icebreakers were fun activities related to learning needs

(rhythm, motor skills), which prepared participants for the following activities. During the 'interpretation' segment of the workshops, facilitators focused on repertoire that was familiar and preferred by participants. Familiar repertoire was counter-balanced with more creative activities such as the creation of sounds for a film or free (moderated) improvisation activities. A coffee break was organised, for community building.

3. **Participant-based recommendations for the following series of activities:** Based on participant feedback, facilitators recommended that participants have access to the instruments and iPads between sessions, as this type of self-directed practising would support self-regulated learning. They also recommended increasing the number of sessions and the session length, as well as involving a participant in the formal coordination and planning of the activities, to foster autonomy and competence, and to support better communication with the residence administration to avoid scheduling conflicts between musical activities.

Implications of the Digital Turn, for Relational Pedagogies in Later-Life Music Contexts

Alongside increasing recognition of the significance of relational music pedagogies, digital technology has established a presence across multiple music contexts (Kim, 2023; King et al., 2017; Liu-Rosenbaum & Creech, 2021). This "digital turn" was accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic (Camlin & Lisboa, 2021, p. 129), and more recently has, arguably, become even more pronounced and complex with the advent of wide access to artificial intelligence (AI) (Li & Wang, 2024). Against this backdrop, digital technologies have been incorporated into some music pedagogy (e.g., Askoy, 2023; Chen & O'Neill, 2020; Schiavio et al., 2021) including within later-life contexts (Creech, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of online digital platforms as contexts for later-life music participation (see Chapters 3 and 9 in this volume), highlighting several challenges as well as affordances.

Vignettes 1 and 2 illustrate the challenges as well as at least one unexpected positive outcome associated with attempts to recreate the offline, in-person musical experience within an online context.

Vignette 4: Moving Online, and the Perceived Importance of In-person Relational Support

Due to the 2020 pandemic, the retirement community music project moved online. At that juncture, some of the participants left, stating that the online format was a barrier to participation. However, a small group of four continued and explored a variety of activities (such as musical appreciation activities) and strategies. By that time, the facilitators and those members had spent over 20 hours together. Trust had been well established and together the participants and facilitators explored various strategies to continue within the online environment. As everywhere else, there were very severe restrictions on meeting in person. Activities were modified again to adapt to the new conditions while maintaining accessible and individual support material: e.g., an initial written document was created on how to use the tablet which was followed by a video tutorial to make the learning more engaging.

The final discussion among members highlighted strengths and challenges of the series of online activities: despite all the adaptations (exploration of different activities, creation of didactical material), the willingness of all participants and facilitators, the major perceived challenge was the fact that the community could not meet in person. For most participants, playing music had to be done in person, where they would live the experience together, sharing the difficulties, helping each other, as well as celebrating the successes and enjoying the musical output of their collaborative music-making.

Nevertheless, an unintended positive outcome of the pandemic restrictions was that the group of online participants, all of whom were neighbours in the retirement community, started meeting by themselves (this was permitted in their residence, where up to four individuals were permitted to gather). While this self-directed experience was a significant step toward taking charge of their own

learning as well as creating an opportunity for musical exploration, the participants still felt they needed a facilitator to guide them and ultimately these self-directed sessions broke down. Although it was proposed that facilitators might support these practice sessions using an online format, participants expressed the view that the relational benefits of music-making such as feeling of belonging to a community and sense of purpose for example, could not be sufficiently supported or fulfilled within an online context.

Within offline contexts for later-life music learning and participation, just a few studies have focused on the ways in which digital tools or musical instruments may shape, shift, or transform the relational pedagogical experience. For example, in a series of group songwriting workshops for older adult day centre attendees, Weisberger (2013) used technology to enhance the sense of group identity and relationality. Here, GarageBand served as an accessible tool for exploring compositional elements, while the pedagogical approach "prioritized mutual support and reciprocal recognition of individual expressions of feelings or experience" (Creech, 2019, p. 4). This study revealed that the technology could mitigate barriers to participation posed by traditional acoustic instruments, and furthermore the creative interweaving of "individual expressive ideas, using multiple tracks, loops, and layering" resulted in a unified and collaborative creative product that reflected the relational nature of the group, achieving "a sense of the whole being…greater than the sum of its parts" (Creech, 2019, p. 4).

Vignette 5 illustrates the positive experiences associated with using digital musical technologies within the offline, in-person workshops that formed the first part of the retirement community music project.

Vignette 5: Using Digital Musical Technologies Within Offline Spaces

Survey responses, informal feedback, and formal focus group responses* revealed positive attitudes towards digital and electronic musical technologies and tools such as GarageBand, Thumbjam, electronic rock band instruments, and tabletop Beamz

(digital instruments using motion sensor technology). These tools were used enthusiastically. Many commented that the technologies created opportunities to make music together more quickly and successfully than they had imagined could be possible.

"For me, it was kind of magic to do that. Within half an hour non-musicians were able to accompany their singing with an orchestra. That was terrific!"

"From the first time! I remember we were singing Félix Leclerc's song, so jling, jling (imitates the sound of chords), everyone on the chords. It's wonderful!"

"What impressed me the most was …we had to make music with the film, the themes we were going to look for, sad or cheerful or…That impressed me, to shape that we could do it with our knowledge."

(*quotes were translated from the original transcribed focus group text in French)

Overall, there is some evidence to support the view that older adults, including those living with physical or cognitive challenges, are capable of engaging with digital technologies as a "way in" to making music, and a small number of studies have lent support to the idea that some digital technologies can support creative musical activities founded upon (for example) reflection, and reminiscence (Creech, 2019). However, our retirement community project suggested that while digital instruments or tools enriched the participants' offline musical experiences, online contexts posed challenges related to interpersonal connection. These challenges ultimately functioned as barriers to participation for some.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have set out the principles of relational pedagogy, highlighting an ethic of care, authenticity, trust, and empathy, as key characteristics of a relational learning environment. Relationality, we argue, is critical within later-life music learning and participation, where participants often prioritise interpersonal connection and community. This point was illustrated by our retirement community participants, who embraced digital tools and instruments in their musical journeys yet found the

online context to be lacking in opportunities for connection. Of course, it must be noted that this group was thrust into the online experience with little time for planning; others have demonstrated creative and collaborative ways in which a sense of community may be nurtured within online spaces (see Chapter 3, for example). Age, too, may have been a factor; the retirement community online music project participants were all aged over 75, and the sudden technological demands presented through online learning may have been more significant than for retirees in other contexts, in their sixties or early seventies.

We have discussed the ways in which relationality may be expressed through pedagogical activities that are task-focused (with attention to planning, structuring, and making learning meaningful, or alternatively focused on interpersonal dynamics (with attention to acknowledging the feelings of participants, valuing each person's contributions, and confronting resistance to learning). Key tools that facilitators draw upon, as relational pedagogues, include critical reflection, negotiation, dialogue, collaboration, active listening, and responsiveness to participant contributions.

The implications of digital technologies for relational pedagogy have been discussed briefly. Subsequent chapters in this volume explore further some of the challenges and affordances concerning a relational pedagogy, including the pedagogical considerations posed by digital technologies (whether these are digital instruments or online contexts). While the foundational principles of a relational pedagogy remain constant, relational pedagogy perhaps acquires even more significance when the later-life music learning potentially takes participants outside of their comfort zones and requires adaptation to unfamiliar tools. Therefore, we close this section with a reminder that notwithstanding the enormous contribution to accessibility and inclusion that digital technologies offer, there remains much to be learnt about how the relational facets of pedagogy (which we have argued are crucial to positive later-life music learning) may be compromised or alternatively enriched through the use of digital technology.

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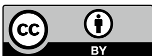

CHAPTER 3

Building Community Within Online Later-Life Creative Community Music

Colin Enright, Andrea Creech, Lisa Lorenzino, and Mariane Generale

Introduction

Partially guiding the rationale and impetus of the research carried out under the Creative Later-Life project (see Chapter 1) was the question of how music engagement in later-life could potentially help to address the current global loneliness epidemic (Hong et al., 2024). The issue has certainly (and contrary to widespread belief) spread across individuals of all age groups; however, the impacts of loneliness on health and

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_3

quality of life are of keen concern for older adults (Polack, 2018; Victor & Yang, 2012). For example, a meta-analysis of 19 longitudinal studies carried out by Lara and colleagues (2019) found loneliness was associated with increased risk of dementia; another meta-analysis from Valtorta and colleagues (2016) found the risk of heart disease and stroke was markedly increased (by 29% and 32%, respectively) for those who were socially isolated or lonely. Perhaps most striking in underscoring the adverse effects of loneliness is the finding from Holt-Lunstad and colleagues (2010) that the increased mortality rate (50%) associated with loneliness is comparable with smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity. Loneliness, as noted by Hong and colleagues (2024), may in fact influence health outcomes through psychological, physiological, and behavioural pathways and thus can have pervasive, widespread, varied, and difficult-to-manage impacts that manifest in unpredictable ways. To that end (and in the context of the unprecedented longevity revolution—see Chapter 1), there is undeniable need for a wide array of diverse and accessible resources addressing the numerous impacts of loneliness.

Although the early stages of the present research were focused on how sense of community and belonging can be established through general music engagement, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic presented our team with a unique opportunity to investigate a more precise question that is perhaps even more relevant to our modern digital age: how could older adults experience community and a sense of belonging through *online* music engagement? While the question was acutely germane to the circumstances of COVID-19, it has further implications for anyone living with physical impairments, severe health conditions, disabilities, those living in remote or rural areas, or anyone who experiences barriers to access with more traditional music groups. In other words, we were presented with an opportunity to investigate a potential resource for individuals whose voices are often *missing* in the space of in-person musical communities.

A host of studies have examined the social aspects of musical engagement, including social support, sense of belonging, and interpersonal connection (Coulton et al., 2015; Lonsdale & Day, 2021; Moss et al., 2018; Perkins et al., 2020). Community and social networks formed through creative group activities have been linked to enhanced general wellbeing (Creech et al., 2013). Crawford and colleagues (2013) for example found that group music activities like choir have led to increases

in social behaviours, "springboard[ing] into other collective or 'community oriented' activities" (p. 8). In the context of later-life music-making, these social benefits have important implications for supporting wellbeing and for combatting illness and disorders related to loneliness and isolation that many older adults face (Dozois, 2021).

However, interpreting these research results from community music and music education contexts, and understanding how they relate specifically to an experienced sense of community, can be a somewhat challenging task. The complexity and variety in the research are no doubt connected to the multiple interdisciplinary stakeholders in this work: learners, community members, educators, policy makers, musicians, music therapists, and health care professionals—to name a few. Directly linked to this complexity is a degree of inconsistency across many studies concerning methodological features such as measures and duration (Daykin et al., 2017), which is further compounded by the fact that 'community' itself is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with many pieces to observe and examine.

Notwithstanding these challenges, in this chapter we explore the experience of a sense of community, within an online community music context, addressing the following questions:

1. Did participants experience a sense of community within the online context, and if so, how was that described?
2. What were the experienced enablers and/or barriers to a sense of community being established?
3. What were the elements that facilitated interpersonal connection, and/or counteracted isolation, within the online creative community music workshops for senior adults?

The questions raised in this chapter are particularly salient in relation to lifelong music learning and participation among older adults, for whom a continued sense of belonging and social affirmation have been found to be key to sustained quality of life and continuing engagement and persistence in learning (Creech et al., 2014).

Sense of Community

Thought to be a cornerstone of positive wellbeing (Stewart & Townley, 2020), a *sense of community* has long been understood as the feeling of belonging and mutual commitment that individuals experience within groups (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Early models distinguished between territorial and relational communities, and furthermore differentiated a *collective sense of community* from *psychological sense of community*, the latter referring to an individual's feeling of inclusion within a supportive and available relational network (Sarason, 1974).

Building on these ideas, researchers have also highlighted the idea of sense of community as a wellbeing resource as well as a responsibility (Nowell & Boyd, 2010)—in other words, community members derive benefits from membership, while the health of the community depends upon the contributions of its members. This perspective aligns with an enduring model first proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), whereby a sense of community was conceptualised as comprising: (1) membership (i.e., personal investment and identification within a boundaried group); (2) reciprocity (i.e., the idea that group members exert influence and are equally influenced by the group); (3) integration and fulfilment of needs (i.e., governed by shared values, group members meet their own and others' needs); and (4) shared emotional connection, often strengthened through spiritual connection or interpersonal connections forged when community members share high-valence crises or other emotionally intense experiences.

Previous research in music contexts has illustrated the four dimensions of McMillan and Chavis's (1986) model. First, membership—closely related to a boundaried sense of *belonging* and *togetherness*—may often be derived from experiences that are collective or shared among members (Batt-Rawden & Andersen, 2020; Perkins et al., 2020). Feelings of belonging or togetherness may be further reinforced by a sense of connection, even where there exist some perceived differences. For example, Ascenso and colleagues (2018) noted that the normalising atmosphere of drumming programmes "led to a greater sense of social acceptance" with one participant explaining that they felt "more confident dealing with other people because [they have] more of a sense that everyone is lovely in their own way" (Ascenso et al., 2018, p. 9).

Secondly, the idea of reciprocity has been illustrated where participants contribute and benefit or develop through musical participation.

Reciprocal influence may be expressed through intimate musical interactions among members, including improvisation and song creation (Lage-Gómez & Cremades-Andreu, 2019), while on a wider community level reciprocal influence has been associated with activities such as concerts and fundraising activities (Perkins et al., 2020).

The fulfilment of needs (the third dimension of the McMillan and Chavis model) may occur as a form of social support (i.e., instances where members feel cared for), which in some cases "is explicitly linked with reducing feelings of loneliness and/or isolation" (Perkins et al., 2020, p. 1933). However, it is important to note that individual group members choose to participate in music for multiple reasons. The specificity and multiplicity of diverse motivations and intentions have implications for the ways in which a musical community serves and fulfils needs (Perkins et al., 2020). These changing circumstances and needs, in turn, influence how the community serves and fulfils needs.

Finally, emotional connection (the fourth dimension of the model) may be fostered through intense, shared, musical experiences. Through music participation, older adults may "create trust, networks and relationships" as well as cultural connections such as "shared understanding, experiences and ideas—or learning" (Crawford et al., 2013, p. 8). These emotional connections can produce feelings of euphoria and wellness and can also serve as a coping mechanism for negative emotions related to grief or illness. Emotional connections through music can hold even further significance when they relate to culture, heritage, and previous identities (Perkins et al., 2020).

In sum, group music activities contribute in several ways to a sense of community, as understood by McMillan and Chavis (1986). Furthermore, the relationship between sense of community and wellbeing has continued as a persistent focus of research across a number of settings, with findings suggesting that among adult populations there exists a strong and reciprocal relationship between psychological and social wellbeing and a sense of community (Stewart & Townley, 2020). From this perspective, a sense of community experienced through music participation may be particularly meaningful for older adults who often experience loss of social networks and social support during later-life (Madey & VonDras, 2021).

Sense of Community Within Online Contexts

The significance of sense of community in shaping successful learning within online and offline learning communities has been highlighted in previous studies (e.g., Cacciamani et al., 2019; Harris, 2006; Nisbet et al., 2013). In non-formal learning contexts, such as adult community education and leisure pursuits, a robust sense of community has been found to be underpinned by social connections that provide emotional or practical support, opportunities for collaboration alongside the space for individual agency and critical thinking, as well as empathic, inclusive, shared experiences (Creech et al., 2014; Legg et al., 2017; Nash & Kallenbach, 2009).

Within online contexts specifically, a sense of community has been associated with positive student communication and interpersonal interactions (Chatterjee & Correia, 2020; Rovai, 2002). Blanchard (2007) developed a tool for measuring sense of virtual community, acknowledging some overlap with sense of community in offline contexts, yet suggesting that key differences distinguished a sense of virtual community—namely that online participants “may have less pronounced feelings of influence” (p. 187) and stronger perceptions of personal knowledge of others, as compared with their offline counterparts. Others have highlighted particular challenges within online learning communities, related to limited or mediated interpersonal interactions and unfamiliar communication cues (Lowenthal & Dennen, 2017). These differences and challenges may have been attributable to pedagogical principles or facilitation approaches; for example, Chatterjee and Correia (2020) reported a positive correlation between collaborative learning activities and a sense of community within online higher education learning.

Much of the research concerned with sense of community and interpersonal connection within online learning communities has been carried out within higher education contexts (e.g., Chatterjee & Correia, 2020). Where studies have turned their attention to older adults, the predominant focus has been on links between sense of community, social connection, and later-life mental health and wellbeing (see Michalski et al., 2020) or successful ageing (e.g., Teater & Chonody, 2019), while these phenomena within older adult *learning* contexts have been under-researched.

Within the specific context of later-life *music* learning and participation, little research has been carried out with online communities. This is

notwithstanding considerable evidence, gathered within offline contexts, demonstrating links between wellbeing and social connections forged through shared musical experience (Laes & Creech, 2023). Despite the proliferation of online learning in the first decades of the twenty-first century, coupled with strong support for the idea that music, health, and wellbeing are strongly linked in later life (Creech et al., 2014), little attention has been paid to the specific ways in which an online sense of community and meaningful connection could be nurtured and experienced.

Therefore, this chapter draws upon a case study example to interrogate the ways in which online musicking could be facilitated and experienced as a space for social connection and sense of community. The case study was positioned within the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, where attention had turned to whether and how the sense of connection and community—previously well-documented as a potential benefit of offline later-life musicking (Creech et al., 2013; Laes & Creech, 2023)—could be translated to online environments.

Context for our Case Study Research: Music for People

Music for People (MfP), founded in 1986 by cellist David Darling and flautist Bonnie Insull, is a non-profit organisation whose mission is focused on facilitating music-making and improvisation as a means of self-expression (Oshinsky, 2015). The organisation hosts workshops on musical improvisation (including drum and flute circles), performances, as well as training programmes for music facilitation. A main goal of MfP is to "empower people to take part in arts rather than be passive observers," and to make its workshops and resources available to people "of all ages and levels of experience to music-making in a safe, joyful and nonjudgemental atmosphere" (Oshinsky, 2015, p. 3).

In the context of lifelong learning among older adults, MfP presents a distinct and compelling space for exploration of community building and sense of belonging. While the organisation publicly and actively aims to include individuals of all ages and levels of musicianship, it also structures its activities, training, workshops, curricula materials, and resources around a core set of principles which themselves are closely related to key elements of community building and wellbeing identified within the literature. Foundational to its philosophy, MfP is guided by *A Bill of Musical*

Rights, comprising 11 articles that address the issues of inclusion, diversity, the human right to self-expression through music, and the embodied nature of musical communication (Oshinsky, 2015, p. vii). Three specific articles (2, 5, and 9) are particularly relevant to the idea of building community through musical communication, each one aligning clearly and intimately with McMillan and Chavis' (1986) framework for sense of community: (Article 2) Musical self-expression is a joyful and healthy means of communication available to absolutely everyone; (Article 5) Sincerely expressed emotion is at the root of meaningful musical expression; and (Article 9) There are no "unmusical" people, only those with no musical experience (Oshinsky, 2015, p. vii).

Article 2 of MfP's *Bill of Musical Rights* explicitly defines music as a method of communication and thus a method of connection beyond conventional means. In this vein, research has indicated that participatory music engagement is often perceived as a form of non-verbal communication, fostering a sense of connection between both individuals and the larger group (Bailey & Davidson, 2002; Carolan et al., 2012; Perkins et al., 2020). Parallel to this aspect of non-verbal communication, Article 5 of the Bill positions honest emotional expression as being inherently tied to the music-making experience. Findings from Von Lob and colleagues (2010) as well as Batt-Rawden and colleagues (2020) highlight that music participation not only opens the door for group members to express their emotions, but, as Perkins et al. (2020) put it, to connect with "deep-seated or even nonconscious emotions that may be otherwise difficult to access, negative, or linked with challenging circumstances" (p. 1928). It is clear that, for MfP, Articles 2 and 5, as a collective unit of emotionally sincere communication, are at the root of meaningful musical expression. Arguably, this element of communication may function as a fulfilment of needs or emotional connection for group members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Regarding need fulfilment, it is again important to note that a community may fill any number of explicit (codified as a mission or purpose) or undefined needs. In any case, and quite crucially, "individual values are the source of these needs" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 13).

Article 9 rejects the idea that membership of a musical community and access to musical identities (see Chapter 7 for a discussion of the importance of identities in older adulthood) should be restrictive or exclusive (Hallam & Prince, 2003; Woody et al., 2019). As Woody and colleagues (2019) note, musical identity—and, ostensibly, membership of musical communities—is often linked to one's personal beliefs regarding ability.

Dweck (2006) emphasises that beliefs in one's abilities can be characterised as a *fixed mindset* (i.e., unchanging and innate) or a *growth mindset* (i.e., possibility for improvement through learning). Article 9 affirms the inclusive view that each individual is inherently musical, and likewise implicitly encourages a growth mindset by connecting musicality to experience rather than an inborn quality or talent.

In the context of the present volume and the rationales underpinning the research projects undertaken herein (e.g., sustained quality of life in older adulthood), this last point (concerning a growth mindset in music) may be of particular significance. While a growth mindset can be beneficial for changing self-perceptions related to ability and identity, Woody and colleagues (2019) note that it likewise facilitates the development of resilience, which has been associated with positive self-concept and sense of personal autonomy (Good & Dweck, 2006; O'Neill, 2011). Although a range of definitions exists for resilience, a contemporary view suggests that resilience is a dynamic process (as opposed to an innate trait) of harnessing resources to maintain positive outcomes related to health and wellbeing in the face of change and adversity (Lee & Cranford, 2008; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). As Ungar (2008) notes, this process of navigating resources also includes "opportunities to experience feelings of well-being" as well as the "condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways" (p. 255). The internal and external affirmation connected to growth and development (i.e., learning) in a musical community may serve as critical reward mechanisms that reinforce community and sense of community. McMillan and Chavis (1986) note that such rewards come not only in the form of membership status, but also in the "competence or capabilities of other members" (p. 13). Thus, Article 9 of the MfP Bill is noteworthy for its dual aspects of an open invitation for membership to a musical community and identity, as well as its potential to encourage a growth mindset and the development of resilience.

In the following sections we set out the details of the research we undertook in collaboration with MfP, exploring the themes that contributed to our understandings of how a sense of community could be supported within an online music context and what this means for older adult participants.

Methods

Participants

In the winter of 2021, members of MfP looking to address the issue of quarantine measures—imposed during the widespread lockdown period of COVID-19—created a series of online participatory, creative music-making programmes that focused on advancing the potential positive impact of virtual music-making for seniors in relation to social, emotional, cognitive, and physical health. The purpose of the two series (entitled *Alive with Music* and *Music4Wellness*) was twofold: (1) to create and provide space for creative music-making online when in-person activities were otherwise impossible; (2) to provide instructional guidance to teachers and community practitioners on how to facilitate their own online music-making groups. As such, a unique opportunity was presented wherein a variety of perspectives from facilitators (those running the workshops), trainees (those looking for instruction to facilitate their own groups), and regular members (those who were present for music-making and personal learning purposes only) could be gathered and examined. From these programmes, 15 participants ages 55 and older were recruited: 3 facilitators, 9 trainees, and 3 regular members. Musical experience varied widely between all participants, from complete beginners to professional musicians.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection took place between March and April of 2022. Participants were invited to complete a 30–45-minute recorded interview via Zoom, during which they were asked a series of open-ended questions about their experiences in the online programmes. The interviews broached an array of topics including but not limited to musical background, reasons for participating in the online programmes, experiences with previous online music groups, perceptions and values related to the use of technology for online creative music-making, the experience of a sense of community within that context, challenges to creating a sense of community online, and the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The McGill Research and Ethics Board approved this project. All participant names used herein are pseudonyms.

Approach to Analysis

Analysis of qualitative interview data ($n = 15$) was conducted in Dedoose (a qualitative data analysis tool; see Dedoose Webinars, 2024), following an inductive method of descriptive thematic analysis, described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a 'codebook' approach. Two transcripts were selected by the interviewers (CE & MG) on the basis of clarity and were analysed by all four authors (CE, MG, LL, AC) to collaboratively identify salient codes. Following this, the agreed coding scheme was applied to another four transcripts (one per each author) with codes grouped into themes and sub-themes. These four transcripts were exchanged among the authors whereupon the groupings and coding were cross-checked, with some reassignment of codes and addition of new themes and sub-themes. The codebook's themes and subthemes were then reorganised, and this revised coding scheme was then applied to the remaining data, again with transcripts being exchanged and cross-checked among the authors.

What We Found

We identified eight overarching themes, two of which related directly to the research questions addressed in this chapter: community and connection. Notwithstanding the preceding discussion of *sense of community*, distinguishing between these two themes on a conceptual level can be a difficult task not only because the terms are often used interchangeably, but because the two are deeply interconnected with community inherently necessitating some degree of connection. Atkinson and colleagues (2020) citing Sirgy (2011, 2018), conceptualise community as "an entity that is more than the sum of its parts and, as a social grouping, captures aspects of life as they are lived and experienced together" (Atkinson et al., 2020, p. 1905). In this sense, and for the purposes of our discussion in this chapter, community can be understood as a space of belonging that enables relationships to grow, while connection refers to the many and varied links that occur within a group and help to build these spaces of belonging. Acknowledging that the concepts and experiences discussed here are nuanced and complex, the following section sets out our interpretation of the interviews, supported by interview excerpts.

Did the Online Music Participants Experience a Sense of Community?

Community: All 15 participants indicated that a sense of community was established within the online workshop programmes, and described a space characterised by a shared sense of membership and purpose. For some of the participants, the guiding philosophy of MfP served as an identifiable boundary that created the sense of membership:

> *The thing in common that we had was that we love music, and we love improvising. I feel like I was a part of that Music for People community, looking through a small window of our community into the larger community.*—Adele, regular member

For others, being able to come together with a shared purpose (creating and sharing music) was foundational to their common sense of membership:

> *Was there anything else that you think could have contributed to that sense of community within the workshops?*—MG, research team
> *I think having a common goal and showing up—that's already huge.*—Colleen, facilitator

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this membership was a vital resource for some members, in some cases acquiring more prominence than local offline communities.

> *During the pandemic, I felt closer to people online than to musicians in my country.*—Marco, trainee

What Were the Experienced Enablers and/or Barriers to a Sense of Community and Connection Being Established?

Three subthemes of 'community' illustrated *how* and *why* the workshop participants felt a sense of community: barriers to building community, enablers to building community, and perceived values attached to online communities.

Barriers to building community: The major challenges that the facilitators and participants cited were size of the groups (the smaller the better

for more personalised interactions) and issues related to participant's home environments.

Groups sizes: Multiple participants noted that while there was an overall sense of community within the main groups (having up to 30 individuals present at one time in some cases), meaningful interactions primarily occurred in breakout rooms. As Zoom (even with professional musician sound settings enabled) mostly only allows for one speaker at a time, engagement was limited to very specific activities or moments. Breakout rooms, where members could talk and engage musically more freely with one another, aided with this issue:

> *There was a lot of connection in that smaller group. I just need to have more interactions with different people, so I get a sense of who they are. Otherwise, most of the people I didn't know. I didn't know what they played, I didn't know where they were coming from or what they were coming for, and we couldn't nonverbally explore that, and I wanted to do more of that.*—Penelope, trainee

Noteworthy is Penelope's assertion that while interactions with a variety of members were important, an established connection with every member was not necessary. Penelope's response also makes quite clear that the need to establish and understand purpose (and by extension, whether that purpose was common) was an explicit need for her in establishing a sense of community.

Another member, Adele, echoed Penelope's statement noting that the connections that were required for establishing community and a sense of membership were difficult to forge in the larger group settings. However, Adele also indicated that were was a pronounced level of ease in making those connections once the right conditions were met:

> *…but if it's a small group, people start relating to each other so quickly. People are really open and very easily accessible in terms of 'I have no sort of reservations about sharing myself with perfect strangers' given the right context.*—Adele, regular member

As Adele explains, the intimacy of the smaller groups not only allowed for individual connections to occur, but for those connections to have greater emotional and personal honesty.

Home environments: This particular challenge was identified primarily by the three facilitators running the programme's workshops. While some

of the issues were spoken about explicitly, others were based upon the intuition of the facilitators, as Maggie explains:

> *…the challenges were people that lived with people; people who had to play quietly or had to be in a bathroom or had to come to the meeting in some weird place because they had a bunch of people around them. They felt more on the spot than ever and very hesitant to play. That was always a challenge: how do we time this to be able to open it to a global community?*—Maggie, facilitator

All three facilitators noted a perceived hesitancy on the part of trainees or regular members that they believed had to do with proximity to family members/neighbours or time of day. While the first challenge could be met with a practical solution and thus recommendation for future similar groups (i.e., schedule and programme frequent breakout groups where members can interact more intimately), the second challenge seemed to be an inherent and necessary weakness associated with establishing and opening the programmes to a global community. While doing so reflected a shared value, it also meant that participants in some cases may have been inhibited or constrained in engaging with the sincere and honest expression that is fundamental to music-making, according to the philosophy of MfP.

Community enablers: The second sub-theme identified under community was concerned with the collective elements and practices that helped to enable a sense of community. Enablers included music as a shared language, shared musical experiences, technology, and the facilitators who reportedly helped to create a sense of empathy between strangers.

Music as a shared language: In line with the previously mentioned findings from Perkins and colleagues (2020), participants reported the music offered a method of connection and communication beyond speaking to one another:

> *…and music is an international language—we're not limited. If you've got an imagination and creativity and an instrument* […] *it definitely transcends language and a lot of other things. I find that really inspiring and very positive.*—Kalani, regular member

Notably, this idea of music as a shared language changed some members' ideas about what is possible in online global communities:

> [*Taking part in the workshops*], *it's just broken-down barriers and it's opened up ways of communication that never would have entered my consciousness before.*—Mariah, trainee

Shared musical experiences: In addition to serving as a shared language within the community, music also acted as a facilitator of connection through shared creative experiences:

> *Also discovering sounds, discovering instruments, discovering patterns* [...] *there was a community in that aspect, you know?*—Margot, trainee

This element of discovery and creation between individuals was also very likely influenced by the types of activities that were introduced, like improvisation (see below).

Technology opening borders: While meeting online through Zoom came with its own challenges, a majority of participants expressed some degree of surprise at their ability to engage with the technology and the doors that it then opened:

> *This is our life now and it's not a negative, it's a positive. It's connecting people all over the world, and like-minded people even people that are not into technology will find that that it's not that difficult and it's such a benefit, and especially for seniors but also for kids.*—Louise, trainee

Louise and other participants like her identified the new possibilities for international friendships and connections that learning about and using this technology brought, but others like Kalani spoke specifically of the musical possibilities that it brought:

> *Music is a part of my language that I had lost touch with during my working life and have now regained in my retirement. It's expanded enormously from just a choir and private lessons - which have very strong boundaries around them both. This broke down a lot of boundaries and really opened things up.*—Kalani, regular member

Facilitators, trainees, and regular members alike also noted that one benefit of using Zoom and similar software in these programmes was that they were able to then teach their own friends and family members how to use it as well. Further, although the online programmes discussed herein had ended by the time of these interviews, Kalani and others reported

that they had sought out other similar online groups for creative music-making.

Facilitators creating community: Many of the participants attributed the existence and strength of their sense of community to the facilitators and their active involvement in creating connections between people. In particular, Maggie—the founder and principal facilitator of the programmes—was cited as a major influence on the sense of community:

> *That was definitely a sense of community for me. And I think [Maggie, facilitator] is really good at facilitating that too, because she'll draw people into the discussion because she knows something about them.*—Sara, trainee

When interviewed, Maggie explained that for her, creating community was an explicit responsibility as a facilitator. For Maggie, dialogue, connection, and familiarity were integral cornerstones to any of the activities that took place.

Trainees and regular members both pointed toward the facilitators and their ability to instill empathy as a key enabler of a sense of community:

> *[Izzy, facilitator] and [Maggie, facilitator], I think their personalities are very strong and I think they attract a lot of people to do things. And the way they involve people and how they're very caring and very indulgent with all kinds of people and their difficulties— that makes a big difference. The people in charge are excellent. We get motivated by their sense of gathering and their sense of community. They are passionate about what they are doing so they communicate their passion to everybody.*—Luanne, regular member

This excerpt helps to identify and highlight a number of key qualities for the facilitators that were noted by many participants: (1) a sense of care, which helped to create a safe and inviting atmosphere; (2) flexibility and understanding for the differing levels of experience, expertise, and circumstances each individual came with; (3) excellence in knowledge and musical ability, which instilled confidence in the participants. These qualities are also apparent in Izzy's description of how to approach online creative music-making:

> *You have to be inviting and be willing to be the clown. If people look uncomfortable it's okay: give people a rich enough experience so they don't feel like they've been embarrassed or left out or totally confused. Balancing how to*

> *teach, how to communicate, how to set up large group activities and breakout activities is a part of that planning.*—Izzy, facilitator

Online vs. in-person music-making: The third sub-theme found under community was the perceived value that people attached to the online and in-person communities they were a part of. As may be expected, many members were quick to note that the online experience was inferior to in-person music-making activities. For Sara, this was connected to the physical elements of playing music:

> *For me, it's really somatic. My body really feels the vibrations of the of the music, what the musicians are expressing and putting out, and there's an exchange. I felt that was really limited by the virtual platform.*—Sara, trainee

Others, however, felt that the limitations of online music were outweighed by the benefits of accessibility:

> *Frankly, people like this type of thing because you don't have to drive, don't have to park, you're not losing a lot of time. If you go somewhere [for music-making] sometimes it's between an hour and more back and forth. It's very convenient to just open your screen and, "Ahh! There you are!" It's practical.*—Luanne, regular member

For members like Adele, the issue of accessibility was one that had impacts beyond the pandemic:

> *I wasn't doing any other music online until the pandemic started and that opened all the doors for me. Being in a remote area and not being able to travel because I have physical issues, it was an opportunity for me. The whole pandemic thing was actually a silver lining in that way.*—Adele, regular member

The responses in our interviews around the topic of in-person music activities compared to online ones were generally concordant in that the experience of online music is not the same and the two should not be considered as the same or as a replacement for the other. Concurrently however, was the same nearly universal feeling that online creative music-making was its own creature with its own unique and valuable possibilities that most had never considered.

What Were the Elements that Facilitated Interpersonal Connection?

Connection with others: This second over-arching theme encompassed several sub-themes, set out below. Overall, the interview responses suggested that facilitation of connection was meaningful, in the context of complete strangers interacting in an unfamiliar online environment. For some participants, connection with others was more personally significant than the musical skills or experiences being developed—a sentiment that has been echoed in other research conducted during the pandemic (Joseph & Lennox, 2021).

Reciprocal recognition: Participants reported feeling connected to the people they met online in these workshops because they felt recognised and heard through small or large group activities where each individual was given an opportunity to share, respond to, or reciprocate musical ideas:

> *I appreciated being in the larger group because they would give each person a time to play something and share ourselves. That felt like being a part of the community; you're here I am giving my sounds, offering my sounds to the group. That gave me a sense of belonging*.—Adele, regular member

As Adele indicates here, it is not only the space to share that enables a sense of connection between individuals, but the answer that comes in response from active listeners.

Improvisation: While the facilitators pointed to any number of activities, trainees and regular members were much more likely to identify improvisational exercises specifically as creating a sense of connection:

> *It's also sharing, it's expansion of the musical repertoire. There is one [activity] that I really adore. It's [an improvised] trio: A plays a solo, then B comes in where A took off, C comes in and so on and back to A—it's continual. You're always in connection; you're always in music.*—Margot, trainee

While such improvisational activities did take place during larger groups sessions, improvisation between duos and trios were cited more often as meaningful or enriching experiences:

> [...] *the duets really worked for me and, the dialoguing back and forth. I love that because it's like a conversation it's like you're talking to somebody on a*

very deep level without using words and that to me is very, very satisfying.—Adele, regular member

Adele's account here relates more overtly to the idea of communication through music, but both speak to a degree of shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Meaningful Listening and Silence: As previously noted, for some of the participants the limits of the online spaces (e.g., latency and asynchronicity, sound compression, etc.) resulted in a devaluation of online music-making. What was not predicted, however, was the unseen benefit of those limits that other member of the community felt led to a deepening of their relationships. Here, we note how facilitators, trainees, and regular members alike found that the intense listening and readiness that was necessitated by Zoom prompted an enhanced level of engagement:

I think one of the benefits was that we all learned how to listen more deeply, and so there was opportunity for a deeper connection. Whether you were playing alone, playing on mute along with something going on, you were forced to pay close attention. As we went on, I felt freer and I was really listening to what I myself was playing in an in a different way.—Maggie, facilitator

A Shared Lifeboat: As the MfP programmes took place during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, its influence was tightly intertwined in many of the interviews that were given. During session introductions, breaks, activities, and signoffs people were able to share their experiences, both verbally and musically, relating to the emotional burden, loss, and isolation they were experiencing. The camaraderie found in their 'shared lifeboat' reportedly brought participants closer together through instances of empathetic connections. For Luanne, having peers of the same age in similar, relatable situations was key:

We had to share a lot of things: a disease for some, loss of work for others. It was good to see and share all these difficulties between people of the same age. Being a woman at home and being retired—it was good to share and have the ear of a person who would understand the way you feel, the way life was and is.—Luanne, regular member

Luanne's account helps to demonstrate that one of the explicit needs being met by the group during this time was to have the shared trauma of

the moment shared and carried together. Indeed, outside of the context of the pandemic, it is clear that having a group of peers (i.e., of her age and gender) to relate to, empathise, and share with was impactful. Kairo's statement suggests that there was a need at the time for members to feel like they were not alone, and that the musical nature of the community helped meet this need:

> *At one point people were even afraid to go for a walk in the park. Music, art, dance, movement, theatre—they all kind of stimulate that aspect of us as individuals to come together as a community. It made everybody realise, hey, it's not me alone. That we are all in this.*—Kairo, trainee

Kalani describes relating to other members and their grief and how the Zoom chat box allowed for moments of connection that either may not have occurred or would have looked different in an in-person environment:

> *Often people were moved by the exercises and would cry, and everybody felt a sense of compassion. Sometimes I would write a private message to people in the chat bar, if they were quietly grieving, saying, "I've been there, I get what you're going through." It still happens, even now, after the lockdowns.*—Kalani, regular member

In these excerpts, one can identify multiple elements that lend to and build on a sense of community, namely sincere emotional connections and the integration and fulfilment of needs (MacMillan & Chavis, 1986). As will be discussed further, this sub-theme of a shared lifeboat was specific to COVID-19, yet may have a wider significance for multiple musical communities in post-pandemic times, particularly among older adults.

Conclusion

In summary, our interviewees indicated that a sense of community had been experienced within the online context characterised by inclusive, collaborative, and joyful musical communication (notwithstanding some limitations of the online platform). The thematic analysis further revealed that this experience of community aligned with McMillan and Chavis's (1986) theory of sense of community comprising (1) membership, (2) a mutual influence between the group and its members, (3) a fulfilment of

needs based on shared values, and (4) shared emotional connection. The overarching theme of 'community' encompassed sub-themes that illustrated barriers (group sizes and home environments) and enablers (music as a shared language, shared musical experiences, opening of borders through technology, facilitators) to building a sense of community in the online workshops, while also revealing values participants attached to online and in-person music-making. Lastly, the second overarching theme of connection with others and its sub-themes indicated there were four primary avenues of connection identified by participants: (1) reciprocal recognition between group members, (2) improvisation as a method of communication, (3) meaningful listening and silence between members, and (4) co-existing in a shared lifeboat.

Before further exploring the implications of this research, some key limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, while *Alive with Music* and *Music4Wellness* involved participation on a global scale with members joining from all over the world, sessions were entirely in English; those who agreed to be interviewed were based in either North America or Europe, and thus the experiences described herein are from a predominantly white, English-speaking Western perspective. Secondly, while the results fail to capture a diversity of experiences in terms of wide number of demographic characteristics, there also exists a deep issue of accessibility to technology. In order to become a member of this community (and in turn a participant in the present research project), one required access to an internet connection strong and stable enough for voice- and audio-conferencing software as well as a device (e.g., computer, phone, tablet, etc.) that could support Zoom itself. Facilitators recounted during their interviews that there were several members present in either the first or second sessions but then withdrew because their connection or device simply would not allow for interaction. Access to these groups and online communities requires financial resources for the device and utility service, knowledge of how to use the device, and knowledge of how to install and use the software. Facilitators developed a guide in their programmes that provided potential members with instructions on how to join and devoted the first sessions to using and becoming comfortable with Zoom and its features, but there is no way to know how many individuals were unable to join because they could not afford the digital requirements or did not have the experience to understand the initial instructions (or family/friends to help). Notwithstanding internet access (acknowledged

as key to realising the UN Sustainable Development Goals) reaching two-thirds of the global population by the end of 2022, this access extends to only one-third of those living in developing nations (Broom, 2023; United Nations, n.d.). As such, we do not suggest our results are generalisable—particularly given that older adults do not represent a monolithic group and cannot be reduced to a single group based solely on age. Further work and research are required across many varied populations to better understand creating a sense of community in online creative music-making groups. We would, however, like to suggest some implications of the present work and directions future work could possibly take.

Looking first to the values held concerning online or in-person music-making, there was a distinction between those participants who had a high degree of musical experience (professional) as compared with those with less experience. For many in the wider music education world, the move to online music-making during the pandemic was stressful and frustrating, and in some cases led to feelings of guilt on the part of classroom teachers who felt like the quality of their teaching and music-making had suffered (Hash, 2021; Joseph & Lennox, 2021). Indeed, this sentiment held true for members of the research team (CE & MG). In our findings, however, regular members with limited musical experiences placed great focus on positive aspects of technology, while the negative aspects were highlighted by a select few professional musicians among the trainees. With such a limited sample group it is difficult to draw strict conclusions, but exploring the dimension of musical experience in future investigations could help to clarify how communities and programmes such as these could be structured and organised to identify and serve the needs of members.

Secondly, we stress the importance of considering the wider significance of finding community in online spaces and the idea of the shared lifeboat. While the theme attached to this finding has historical and contextual relevance to COVID-19, we again posit that there are significant implications beyond the limited scope of the pandemic. Worldwide, there exist a plethora of interventions, ensembles, projects, and community music groups that serve specific populations, from those living with dementia (see Chapter 6) to cancer patients (Bradt et al., 2016) to women who are childless not by choice (Curtis, 2023); the human life course presents us with many lifeboats wherein we find our people, huddle together, and weather the storm. Investigating the mechanisms of how

lifeboat situations/environments affect both community and community member values is required to better understand needs as well as the fluid integration and fulfilment of needs within those communities (MacMillan & Chavis, 1986). As noted by Perkins and colleagues (2020) the pathways by which music may support wellbeing "encompasses distinct and yet overlapping processes" with neither the processes nor the pathways being mutually exclusive and "the specificity and multiplicity of the processes" being "determined by the individual needs and circumstances of participants" (p. 1934). Similarly, it may be that the many varied pathways and processes for building sense of community are likewise determined by needs and circumstances of community members. A further key point is that within specific contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic or any other number of proverbial storms, there are still many varied pathways and processes influencing individual and group needs as well as the access to resources community members have that can respond to those needs. Thus, as Spours and colleagues (2022) suggest "we are all in the same storm but not in the same boat" (p. 782).

Finally, while online communities and their inherent need for technology and the requisite knowledge to use it present issues of accessibility for many populations, attention must be given to the doors that are opened for other populations. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the number of voices that have been silenced and remain unheard in the space of community music due to limitations of accessibility is unknowable. Although she was the only participant to specifically discuss it, Adele noted that, as a person living in a remote location and with physical limitations that restrict travel, the move to online music during COVID-19 was an eye-opening and welcome opportunity that had never existed in her imagination. Other participants did indeed speak of the benefit of online music being so accessible in the sense of general convenience, but Adele's experience helps turn attention to others who simply cannot participate in in-person music communities because of illness, disability, location, or any number of other reasons. Online creative music communities such as this one present an important possibility for individuals of all ages, but especially so perhaps for older adults who lose social support and become more isolated as they age (Madey & VonDras, 2021).

The overarching findings reported in this chapter speak to the importance of community leaders in online spaces remaining inclusive in their practices. The patience and empathy of the community's facilitators (as

attested to by the trainees and regular members) that enabled a space for connection and creativity in a historically trying time demonstrates their ability to remain responsive to their community members and their needs. Our final recommendation here, then, is to embrace the flexibility they embodied in these groups during unprecedented circumstances. Understandably, what works best in an online community of learners—as is the case in so many other spaces—is a person-centred approach grounded in compassion and respect for the individual learner.

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CHAPTER 4

Embracing the Unexpected: Improvisational Pedagogy for Collaborative Music-Making in a Care Home Setting

Richard Barham, Aaron Liu-Rosenbaum, Graylen Howard, and Andrea Creech

The Context and Rationale for Improvisational Pedagogy

A prominent preoccupation of education is how to prepare learners for a world that is undergoing unprecedented change (The Brookings Institute, 2017), where essential skills are thought to include "creativity and improvisation, flexibility in thought and action, critical thinking and analysis," among others (p. 63). Within this context, there have been calls for

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_4

a new model of pedagogy (Craft, 2000; Heble & Laver, 2016; Sarath et al., 2014; Watts & Blessinger, 2017) that stands in contrast to a teaching-as-performance model, where the relationship between teacher and student is likened to a solo performer acting in front of a passive audience (Pineau, 1994; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). In traditional views of teaching as performance, the teacher acts as a "repository of knowledge to be 'downloaded' or 'delivered' to passive students" (Costa & Creech, 2019, p. 147). In music pedagogy, concomitant with the view of teacher as performer has been a conception of music as an *object*, a thing that could be imparted from teacher to student or from composer to audience. Music has since come to be understood rather as a human *activity* that involves *doers* (makers and listeners), particular *kinds of doing* (music-making and listening), *something done* (musical works of some kind), and "the complete context in which doers do what they do" (Elliott, 1995, pp. 39–40). As illustrated elsewhere in this book, this holistic and participatory conceptualisation of music is particularly apt when thinking about facilitation of later-life music learning and participation.

The idea of music as an activity rather than an object was initially espoused by Alperson (1991), and later by Elliott (1995) and Small (1998), leading to a perspective on music-making that highlights its "situated-ness" in a collaborative social context. New pedagogical models that subsequently emerged moved away from imitation and repetition and sought to create room for students to develop their own creative ideas (Costa & Creech, 2019). Fundamentally, this entailed embracing a praxial pedagogy (Costa & Creech, 2019), that is, an approach derived from Aristotle's conception of praxis as "action that is embedded in and responsive to a specific context of effort" (Elliott, n.d.)—the keyword, for present purposes, being "responsive".

Costa and Creech (2019) further distinguish the praxial approach by the idea that music "is understood to be related directly not with motor and technical skills, but rather with musical and expressive skills" (p. 148).

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This helps to underscore music as a socially and culturally situated practice, as it is always expressing *something* to *someone*, while at the same time, it relieves some of the barriers to access (e.g., physical barriers to technical skills, or mental barriers related to self-efficacy) by refocusing our attention on musicianship and expressiveness. This praxial approach is a cornerstone of inclusive facilitation of music-making among groups of older adults—particularly those who may live with physical or cognitive challenges and thus may be at a disadvantage in terms of technical or motor skills.

A praxial pedagogical approach thus moves the facilitation practice closer to improvisational pedagogy. Holdhus (2020) describes pedagogical improvisation as a relatively new field, though one that has perhaps existed tacitly. For this reason, it is not well defined in pedagogy literature. Sawyer (2004) argues in favour of "creative teaching" as an "improvisational performance" where "the flow of the class is unpredictable" and "collectively determined by all participants" (pp. 12–13). Here, rather than liken the teacher to a performer, Sawyer considers the pedagogical activity as a collective performance, and it is worth noting the parallel with the above-mentioned emphasis on music as a social activity, rather than as an object. The need for teachers to be able to improvise while teaching has also been recognised by Grob-Zakhary and Hjarrand (2017). From this perspective, effective teachers engage in "improvisational responses" that shift "between scripts, scaffolds, and activity formats as the material and the students seem to require" (Sawyer, 2004, p. 17).

Pedagogical improvisation, like musical improvisation, thus requires some form of guidance. For Holdhus, it is closely related to Craft's (2010) idea of creative teaching in that it is "open-scripted, dialogic and responsive," yet also "disciplined" (2020, p. 197). Holdhus further notes that, while improvisation cannot be detailed or fixed, so as to allow for in-the-moment adaptation to a given situation, it often benefits from what she calls "frames," "structures," or "guiding formats" that are prepared in advance and help to assure the objectives are met (pp. 7, 11). These can take the form of clearly defined ends, yet open-ended means; preset time-frames or sequences; or even "feedback-loops (Fischer-Lichte, 2008), which means that an utterance is followed by a reaction from and between others, which in turn, causes other reactions. All of this influence[s] what can happen next" (Holdhus, 2020, p. 200). Taking the teaching-improvisation analogy one step further, Sawyer (2004) writes that "creative teaching *is* [emphasis added] disciplined improvisation" and

that in order to have effective teaching, one must balance levels of structured planning and free improvisation (p. 13). Below, we will address the strategies and forms these improvisational practices may take in a teaching and learning context.

Improvisational Pedagogy in Practice

In this chapter we explore the relevance and practice of improvisational pedagogy, within two long-term care settings ("Cedar" and "Maple"—fictionalised names), where we facilitated music workshops with groups of older adult residents. Our workshops (referred to as "sessions" elsewhere in this chapter) were structured around the use of the Soundbeam, an accessible digital music-making system based on touch and motion sensor technology (The Soundbeam Project Ltd., 2024) in collaborative and improvisational musical activities. Our discussion is therefore further guided by two interpretations of improvisation. The first is concerned with practical and technical matters, whereby the technology must be altered and/or adapted to work optimally in such a setting. Something must be built, tweaked, or modified to achieve a certain goal, and facilitators must be prepared to think on their feet and alter their strategies in order to meet the needs of participants. The second interpretation involves creative and communicative aspects of improvisation: one's own actions are modified in real time to adapt to a situation.

The improvisational ground rules discussed here have relevance for facilitation of music-making with seniors in residential care, due to the complex and unpredictable nature of dementia that inevitably requires flexibility, adaptation, and experimentation in strategies as well as in expectations. As such, residents of long-term care may present compound challenges for improvisational pedagogy, as significant physical and cognitive barriers to traditional ways of making music must be integrated into workshop planning. This implies that inspiration and, by extension, improvisation, are best served through previous preparation—a further theme touched upon earlier that we will discuss below.

To explore how improvisational pedagogy may be applied and experienced within later-life music-making, we therefore address the following research questions:

- What are the principles and practices of an improvisational pedagogy for creative music-making with long-term care residents?

- Is it possible to plan for the unexpected in later-life music-making workshops?

Methodology

Participants

Participation in our music workshops was voluntary; potential participants were invited to take part by care home personnel, who ultimately brought together a diverse group of residents living with varying levels of cognitive and physical challenges.

The Workshops

In each setting (Cedar and Maple) we facilitated a series of eight weekly workshops, each one approximately 45 minutes in length. The workshops took place within Cedar's and Maple's recreational community spaces.

Pedagogically, our initial goal was to create collaborative groups of facilitators and participants as equal players, involving active participation and scaffolding on the part of facilitators. This scaffolding took form as we played side-by-side with our participants, following rather than leading, whenever possible. Before every session, participants were arranged in a semi-circle to facilitate eye contact and interaction, an arrangement that typically encourages a sense of equality and inclusivity among group members. Additionally, the semi-circle setup can promote openness and connection, enabling group members to see each other's facial expressions and body language more easily. This can help foster a supportive and collaborative environment, which has been found to be conducive to effective workshop sessions where the facilitator can observe and engage with all participants, ensuring that everyone can contribute and feel heard (Howard et al., 2019). In our sessions, other than when facilitators moved from one participant to another, they endeavoured to remain kneeling or seated in order to avoid imbalanced social dynamics and to encourage interaction and collaboration (Nguyen & Larson, 2015). All sessions were planned and structured to frame opportunities for musical improvisation, yet were also flexible enough to allow for spontaneity and in-the-moment revisions of plans.

At Cedar, Graylen (research team member) used simple "soundscapes[1]" to first explore participants' musical preferences and abilities, then advanced to popular songs scaffolded by him on guitar/voice, while participants improvised on Soundbeams tuned to the same key. Eight weeks of sessions were divided into phases—progressive blocks of weeks 1–3, 4–6, and 7–8, respectively. Phase 1 involved soundscapes and Soundbeam instruction, particularly "cause and effect" (underlining the relationship between hand movement and sound), while phase 2 concentrated on reinforcing these skills while gradually integrating emotionally resonant songs into sessions. Phase 3 combined these skills and experiences; Soundbeam-generated soundscapes (based on participants' vocalised lived experiences) forged connections to past selves through autobiographical memories and reminiscence (Howard et al., 2019). This helped to foster exploration of participants' histories, deep emotional connections, and environments, while enhancing and personalising the overall experience.

At Maple, in order to acclimate participants to the Soundbeam system, a structured theatrical approach involving pre-assigned roles (according to our perception of residents' abilities) was first explored. Dramatic characters were created and illustrated with sound effects sampled into the Soundbeam console; these effects were later performed by participants activating the Soundbeam switches. The script was projected onto a large screen while Rick (from our research team) narrated and gave verbal and visual cues to the participants, who were encouraged to follow along and anticipate their roles by playing their sounds/instruments independently. The musical dramas concluded with a sing-along of familiar recordings that echoed the central theme. Overall, the theatrical framework was a carefully planned, pen-and-paper approach that would (we thought) involve minimal guesswork or improvisation. However, varying participant attendance, preferences, mood, or cognitive dispositions required on-the-spot reassignment of roles and readjustment of instruments and settings, as well as the incorporation of improvised musical moments such as duos or solos, when these emerged spontaneously.

Once the Maple participants had become comfortable with the technology through repeated practice and hands-on encouragement, the sessions transitioned from the structured musical drama framework to

[1] Soundscape is a complex concept, but for our purposes, we can think of it as a real or virtual sonic environment.

semi-conducted musical sessions that resembled a small classical or jazz ensemble. These sessions began with warm-ups and then continued to solos, duos, call-and-response quartets, and full “jam sessions” with backing tracks derived from blues and jazz standards, led by Rick. In addition to Soundbeams, some participants improvised solos or duets on iPads running the Thumbjam application, used as virtual piano and organ keyboards. As with the theatrical sessions, fellow facilitators assisted and scaffolded residents in order to sustain confidence and collaboration. This included embracing and supporting unplanned musical moments. For example, in an unscripted, yet welcome moment, one participant, a former pianist, upon becoming frustrated with the limitations of the virtual piano keyboard, arose mid-song, walked over to a real piano that happened to be in the room, and played an excerpt for the group before taking their place back in the group amid a round of applause. Such events are impossible to predict, but when they happen, managing such “interruptions” gracefully and supportively in the context of a group interaction is an important skill, especially with cognitively diverse participants.

Documentation

To help facilitators reflect on their practices, we captured video recordings of the music workshops, using a minimally intrusive setup with two iPhones set to 4K video resolution, placed on thin tripods set far back enough to film the entire group. Participants provided informed consent to the video recording, and the presence of the iPhones did not appear to disturb their performances or interactions. To further document the workshops, strategy meetings at the university and post-workshop debriefings at the long-term care residence were recorded. This chapter focuses primarily on facilitator reflections on those videos and debriefings, as mentioned above, emphasising the perspective of the practitioner.

Technical Considerations and Challenges

The *Soundbeam* system had seldom been applied in older adult settings of this kind, with groups of up to ten participants, presenting with a range of physical and cognitive challenges. More often used one-on-one (i.e., facilitator-participant), the full *Soundbeam* system nevertheless allows up to twelve participants via its four motion sensor beams and eight touch-sensitive switches. Though many in our groups used wheelchairs

and walking aids, most of our participants possessed enough upper body mobility to be able to control the beams through vertical hand gestures. For those with more limited arm movement, particularly in the shoulder area, the beam length was reduced while still allowing a full scale of playable notes. In other words, even with diminished physical capacities, their musical contributions remained on par with the other participants. The *Soundbeam 6* console has a touchscreen interface that is feature-laden and (in our experience) is potentially confusing to the average user, and thus, while it offered enormous flexibility as a musical instrument, scaffolded technical support was essential.

Reflections

For this second part of our chapter, in order to offer a more candid and unmediated reflection on the workshops, we present our reflections in the form of an interview with the two facilitators, Richard (Rick) Barham and music therapist, Graylen Howard, conducted by Aaron Liu-Rosenbaum. Responses were edited for concision, clarity, and flow, while preserving the essential content.

Q: What were you trying to achieve in these groups?

Graylen: In terms of approach, it was adopting a very music-centered, organic approach that [was] participant-led, and allowing, or trying to foster, an environment where creative freedom in that collaborative music-making process could develop and nurture. So not too many strict, strict rules. It is really trying to keep that open act of music-making [as a] collaborative process and foster that environment where residents can really explore and reflect and engage in self-expression. The overall goals, objectives would have been using music [as a] means for creative expression [and] lifelong learning, and building and fostering that sense of community, and providing opportunity for them to have both experiences and meaningful interactions later in life.

Rick: The underlying philosophy is those simple words: quality of life. I just want to enhance their lives in the care home. And what I discovered through our group sessions—because I volunteered extensively in the care home for all activities as well—is that music-making through the means of assistive digital technology seems to be one of the few activities where you can really get people collaborating creatively. I have noticed that our music-making sessions seem to be one of the rare activities that

actively encourage socialisation and collaboration. I'm also motivated by the future of digital assistive technology to see how well it can be used in collaborative music-making, what can be achieved, what can be modified or improved, and how much it can enhance the lives of older adults in supervised care.

Q: Do you think it is more important to be flexible with objectives, or flexible with how you approach your objectives, with these groups?

Graylen: Especially with this population, working with dementia, you have to be open and flexible. If you stick to a set structure and it's just not working, you could see increased agitation, responsive behaviours, so you really have to be able to be flexible and adaptable on the fly and constantly adapting what you're doing to meet the diverse needs of the individual you're working with. I think, in short, it's great to have a framework to work out of, and those goals and objectives in mind, but also just being able to adapt and change in a very high-paced environment that can be, quite frankly, unpredictable a lot of the time.

Rick: The primary objective, at least for me, is always quality of life, which I am constantly learning and revising through trial and error and, above all, parking my ego and expectations. This means I need to be flexible with more specific objectives and how I approach them, because once I have an idea or concept I'd like to try out, I need to be ready to revise it on the fly to accommodate what is really happening on the ground. And when you have so many varying cognitive levels within a particular group and physical limitations, you have to adapt the music to every person's ability. So, then you've got to come up with something where whatever they can do—it may be using a shaker instead of a digital instrument—you've got to be able to integrate all this into something that feels like music-making and even sounds like music-making and achieves a level of satisfaction within the group. The entire process involves ongoing improvisation, but you cannot improvise on top of nothing, you need some sort of objective or game plan to start with.

Q: Can you talk about the balance of structure and improvisation in your approach to facilitating these groups?

Graylen: I think always starting with something that's structured and familiar [is] key for that sense of familiarity and security: providing them with something safe and familiar that they can openly engage with and

connect with and understand; [something] they can sort of connect with in terms of their sense of self and sense of identity, and to minimise, as much as possible, that confusion that presents itself with these varying cognitive levels. So, we would always start with some familiar songs that they were able to resonate with, to get them to work and get them more alert, getting them more active, getting them more oriented towards their environment, right? Once we are able to achieve that, then providing them with [the] opportunity to explore things that are less familiar. Just interacting with the Soundbeam, learning how to build that skill set. And then maybe, once we spent 15–20 minutes on that, we revert back to a familiar song or two, just to keep them oriented and re-orient them a little bit. From there, getting more into the improvisational stuff, right. So, think about an ABA structure, right? You have your A, your main theme, which is going to be familiar. Then you have B, which is going to be your developmental section, and that is going to be more introducing new stuff for them to try, or improvisational methods. And then returning to that theme, that sort of familiarity again, and then maybe we go somewhere else that's unchartered territory as well. But we are always starting and ending with A and A.

Rick: We had a lot of discussions about this. The words "structure" and "improvisation" came up constantly during planning sessions and debriefings. Our highly structured theatrical sessions were good icebreakers and great for getting people used to the technology. However, there was a lot of prepping beforehand and the process of reading a script could be distracting, perhaps a bit too didactic, and complex for some participants. We also wondered if the stories and the sound sets we were using were a bit too simple, possibly infantilising. It was right around this time that "improvisation" came up more assertively in our discussions … It was a big leap for all of us, not least the participants. As a base structure, we used simplified backing tracks for popular blues and jazz numbers. These would be played on a separate laptop and speakers to better separate the sound, then participants were encouraged to improvise on top with their beams, switches, and iPads, which we tuned to the same key as the backing tracks. Participants doing solos would play whatever they liked, and we encouraged pairs to collaborate with each other and to try some call and response. We also conducted parts of the session. As lead facilitator, I would move my arms up and down to the musical patterns, for instance a classic twelve bar blues structure, and the participants on

beams would follow my lead, while those on iPads and switches improvised underneath, a kind of reversal of previous improvisations that had been layered on top. For the most part, this worked out really well and we had some genuinely musical and creative results. The balance between structure and improvisation is an ever-evolving process … you are always revising and trying out new things, rather than falling into a repetitive routine. But it's equally important to remember that persons with dementia often need some form of assurance through familiarity, possibly even repetition, so it's a good idea to devise and maintain enough structure in order to provide a sense of security and confidence to allow improvisation to come out naturally and spontaneously.

Q: It sounds like this kind of balance between structure and improvisation is in the actual activities. Was there any way that structured improvisation affected your approach to the activities?

Graylen: I would just say time: just limiting in time in terms of, you know, let's say, we were working with a group of adults that were fully cognitive, essentially, you know, there might have been some other places that we might have been able to explore, perhaps the group process would have shifted somewhere else. I would say that the percentage of the session is sort of 50% on having that structure, maybe even a little more.

Rick: It is difficult to put it into percentages, but I mean, both are definitely necessary. But it really depends, too, on what kind of group you have. … if you have a group that that involves people who need a lot of support, then you have to somehow—this might sound funny—but you would have to improvise your structure.

Q: Could you talk a little more about improvising structure?

Rick: Well, you can come up with a structure which you think, "this seems to work" and then you realise it's just not working: some participants are either confused or don't feel like participating or whatever it may be. Or, you know, you layer on a bit of yummy improvisation too quickly, and people are confused that way. So, you need to know your group. First off, you are going to have to do a few exploratory sessions where you see where they are. And you also have to remember that if you're dealing with dementia, some people are going to have to be sort of reintegrated; it's like starting over every session, because if you do a session a week, by the next week, they've already forgotten what you

showed them. And you have to show it to them again. At that point, you have to start improvising and revising your so-called structure. So, what was previously structure becomes improvisation. And on the other hand, you might have a point where you are improvising, things are working out well, and then you realise it's getting a little bit out of hand and people are getting confused, then you've got to rein everything in and structure it.

Q: Were you thinking about structure and improvisation when you were choosing sounds or when you were choosing which parts of the Soundbeam to use during your sessions?

Graylen: There are certain sound sets that are higher quality aesthetic than others. And furthermore, certain sound sets that are even more upbeat and engaging than others, and/or more calm and relaxing than others, so I based choices off of that. Like Rick said, every session is a new session—it is like we are starting over, so that is why we take that 15–20 minutes and relearn how to do certain things.
Rick: I'd just like to add that one thing I like to do is to get participants helping each other, because that really validates the session for them: they don't only feel like they're a part of it, they feel a sense of responsibility and creativity.

Q: Can you talk about examples of unexpected things that happened in the sessions?

Rick: Technically speaking, changing and adjusting instruments and sound sets 'on the fly'. Logistically, unexpected participants might appear and need to be quickly integrated into the group. Finding out by pure chance that someone is nearly deaf and quickly adjusting all volumes and settings to accommodate. During one of our conducted sessions, a participant who was always present and engaged suddenly up and left, as if she was truly annoyed with it all. At the same time, we had been warned by caregivers that another participant was in a difficult state and to alert them at once if anything came up during the session. Yet, both the participants in question performed some beautiful improvisations and another participant, entirely on his own initiative, started playing two beams simultaneously: his and the one next to him that had been abandoned. More recently, a participant who had been incapable of speech

for nearly twenty years, actually responded with real words and comprehension to something I had praised about his performance during the session!

Graylen: Sometimes, you know, operating the technology [the Soundbeam] presented some challenges. It was not anything that we could not work around, but that sort of takes away from you being in the present moment with the participants. So, if you are trying to navigate something that is giving you difficulties on the machine [Soundbeam], that is taking away from your time face-to-face with the participants. I mean, you do your best to sort of balance both simultaneously, but that could be challenging. Technical challenges for sure, while balancing individuals who, quite frankly, have high needs. Just plan for the unexpected, because no matter how prepared you are, and how much you have everything structured or ready to go, it is never going to go as planned. So that is why that balance of structure and being open, adaptable, and flexible is key. That is not limited to working with the Soundbeam or assistive digital technology; that is really honestly across the board when working with this population.

Q: How did you respond when unexpected things happened?

Graylen: It is essential to take some time before the session starts to ensure the equipment works optimally. We should also check the beams' angles to ensure they are not picking up environmental signals to trigger sounds. Therefore, when participants enter the room, especially individuals with various forms of dementia and cognitive impairments, you are focused on keeping them focused, alert, and engaged, and don't create any extra confusion, which may contribute to increased fear and agitation. When facing technological challenges during the sessions, I remained present in the moment, staying calm and relaxed. I also engaged the participants in verbal discussions to keep them engaged while maneuvering through the technical difficulties. Sometimes, I even sang a familiar song to lighten the mood and keep everyone involved while I tended to the equipment. These strategies helped us navigate the challenges and ensure the sessions were still valuable and enjoyable for the participants.

Rick: Go with the flow. Acknowledge. Keep a good eye on everyone. Take breaks. Always explain in straightforward terms what you are doing and why. And let participants themselves make suggestions and help each

other whenever they can. They really feel validated when you ask them to show someone else how to play a beam, for instance.

Q: Can you talk about moments that struck you as being examples of creativity, in your sessions?

Graylen: I thoroughly enjoyed witnessing moments of profound creativity during our sessions. The participants engaged in various music therapy techniques, such as recreative MT, singing along to pre-composed songs while improvising with the Soundbeam, and creative and compositional music therapy techniques integrated with the Soundbeam. Throughout eight sessions, these interactions organically evolved into distinct creative phases. During Phase 1, which comprised Sessions 1 to 3, the focus was on learning to interact with the ultrasonic sensor beams and tactile switches, while exploring pre-existing sound sets through improvisational music-centered approach techniques. In Phase 2, spanning sessions 4–6, we continued to adopt a music-centered approach by incorporating familiar songs that the individuals resonated with and exploring autobiographical memories evoked by their preferred music. The participants frequently shared experiences of spending time in nature and meaningful memories from their past. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and their current life situations, these conversations served as a wellspring of inspiration for the participants' creative projects. They delved into composing, improvising, and experimenting with musical elements and sounds, drawing from their meaningful memories and reminiscences. These seeds of ideas based on meaningful memories and reminiscence among participants formed the foundation to utilise Soundbeam soundscapes in phase 3. One lady, she was very profound in how she expressed herself, and her movements; it was almost like she was a ballerina. The journey was incredibly inspiring and showcased the power of creativity in our sessions.
Rick: There are too many to mention them all. We had the gentleman who played two beams simultaneously on his own, He did this spontaneously; we had not shown him how to do it, he just took to it, in perfect timing to the backing track. We had beautifully improvised piano riffs from someone on an iPad, again timed perfectly to the backing track. Another participant, despite having short-term memory loss and requiring a brief explanation of the Soundbeam system before every session, always took to the beam in an instant and performed remarkable improvisations

by sculpting the beam path with both her hands. She was also highly collaborative and great at explaining the beam to others. I am currently working with two participants with advanced multiple sclerosis who do great call-and-response improvisations. Another very reclusive resident has experimented with singing on top of a blues track, which not only pleased her, it elicited completely spontaneous smiling and clapping from the rest of the group.

Q: How do you facilitate a very diverse group of participants?

Graylen: Everything I did was rooted in my experiences and training as a music therapist, to bluntly answer that question. So, the whole, you know, from initial stages of conducting and facilitating assessment, to sort of treatment planning, to program facilitation, as well as evaluation of the treatment program. The whole scope of how you would approach therapy is how I approach this as well. Just basically learning how to be there and interact and work and navigate the complexities and diversities of different populations, vulnerable populations.
Rick: I always arrange the participants in a semi-circle to facilitate coordination and collaboration. It is important that everyone can see each other. People with similar abilities and challenges are often paired to encourage each other, while still having an eye on the rest of the group. Participants' abilities and their respective instruments are arranged in a sort of musical order, a bit like an orchestra. For instance, a percussion section with shakers and Soundbeam switches for those with pronounced physical and cognitive challenges, then a mid-range section of, say, beams set to harp and viola at average volume for those less challenged, and then higher-scale instruments like flute and harpsichord layered on top for participants with some physical challenges but otherwise highly cognitive. Usually, a group of six to eight people works best. And everyone is allowed a chance for a solo while the others play either a lower-level backing layer, or simply take a break and listen. It can be quite tough getting persons with dementia out of their own little world and interacting with others, but I try my best to get everyone listening to and appreciating each other. You bring people in, and they are essentially in their own little world, right? And you want to bring them out of that world and have them communicate with people, because it is really good for them. And it is just good for the group. When it works—and through music it very often does—it is truly wonderful to be a part of.

Q: Can you talk about the biggest challenges you have encountered, and how you responded?

Graylen: Each individual presented unique challenges within group processes and comprehension around modern technology. One participant had low mood/affect concerns, which significantly impacted her ability to participate and engage. However, as a music therapist trained in working with diverse populations, I was equipped with valuable skills, which allowed me to support the one individual with affect concerns. It was also essential to approach each situation with cultural humility. What I mean by humility within the context of this population is the ongoing process of learning from each individual while honouring their memories and creativity through music. Maintaining a flexible and adaptive approach allowed me to tailor the sessions to each participant's specific needs and preferences, ultimately leading to more meaningful and effective outcomes.

Rick: Being a facilitator. Putting myself out there. Keeping a group attentive and cohesive, and making sure everyone is having fun and has a chance for creativity and personal validation. Participants passing away is also really difficult. Someone you have been working with for quite a while, a lovely human being who worked so well in the group, is simply gone one day and you have to revise your creative strategy and group dynamics around that. It feels like some sort of intense improvisation suddenly proclaimed from above!

Discussion

As previously discussed, we were not aware of any documented evidence of the Soundbeam system having previously been used in a care home setting, grouping multiple seniors with diverse challenges into musical ensembles. To our knowledge, it had only sparsely been implemented in care homes, and a more recent study than our own, MacRitchie et al. (2022) concluded that the system is not "tactile" enough for use with older adults in supervised care (p. 6). Nor were we able to find cases in the literature of the Soundbeam being paired with iPads and conventional instruments simultaneously in a collaborative group setting. We were therefore exploring unknown terrain that required a dynamic combination of structure and improvisation, both technically and creatively.

One of our biggest concerns was how to balance a highly diverse group of seniors, some of whom faced profound cognitive and physical challenges, while others retained higher levels of cognition and/or physical flexibility. This idea of how to pedagogically manage unequal capabilities is not an uncommon theme in educational contexts, but it may be far more pronounced in a care home setting. Inclusion was, and remains, highly important to our research and practice, no less than socialisation and collaboration. Through our own experience and detailed video documentation, we regularly witnessed these goals. Participants with dementia (nearly all in our group) who commonly remained reserved before our sessions commenced, became surprisingly social and interactive, with laughter and verbal exchanges accenting musical collaboration. These valuable moments needed to be given the space to flourish, without losing track of the group activity, especially as they often involved a smaller subgroup of participants and the collective had to be kept in mind, as well. Maintaining this balance was one important improvisatory consideration that we became aware of through these workshops.

It may often be preferred (and perceived as easier to plan and manage) for facilitators to pair like-with-like when forming collaborative musical groups, particularly in a care home. However, we found diversity, while undoubtedly challenging, to be wonderfully engaging and informative. In accordance with the improvisatory and flexible nature of the pedagogy, we practised openness to the unexpected—for example, numerous instances where music functioned as a modality for creative and collaborative socialisation where speech no longer succeeded. Had our sessions been more planned and predictable, perhaps paired like-with-like, we may not have had the opportunity to experience many spontaneous moments of creativity and cooperation. We can therefore attest to the value of diversity in pedagogical improvisation.

Finally, we suggest that it is indeed possible to plan for the unexpected, by developing a repertoire of flexible pedagogical strategies. To conclude, we share some proposed principles that may underpin an improvisational pedagogy for later-life musicking, followed by more detailed practical advice for those interested in using the Soundbeam in later-life contexts.

Principles of an Improvisational Pedagogy in Later-Life Music Contexts

- Be prepared to instantly restructure a session due to absences, unexpected attendees, changing moods, attention swings, specific preferences of participants, or unexpected moments of creativity that take the group in different musical directions. In short, be adaptable and flexible.
- Combine structure and familiarity with opportunities for exploration, surprise, and learning new things. Consider the A-B-A structure (i.e., familiarity–exploration–familiarity), even extending this to a "rondo" form (A-B-A-C-A-D-A), always returning to the familiar.
- Recognise and honour individual personalities and contributions. When dealing with dementia, allow these new personalities to express themselves, even when they may be very different from what they once were.
- Scaffold opportunities for participants to interact in small groups such as duos or trios, as well as opportunities for exploring as solo improvisers.
- Find the tools that provide an access point for each participant, rather than expecting participants to adapt to the tools. For some, this may be a digital instrument, for others a handheld percussion instrument, or for others it may be using body percussion or singing. The tool should serve the participant, not the other way around.
- While having fun and improving quality of life are paramount, do not be surprised when participants express themselves through music in sophisticated and creative ways.

Using the Soundbeam

- Position the beams to ensure physical comfort and an easy reach, regularly adjusting them according to each participant's unique needs. Note, as well, that the beams can be sensitive to external influences such as direct overhead lighting, reflections, or bright windows, which may require further adjustments.
- Use separate speakers for backing tracks, to provide a sense of space between the backing tracks and the sounds from beams or switches. We found that playing backing tracks through the Soundbeam console tended to muddy the separation of the instruments

(beams and switches). We therefore played backing tracks from a laptop, while using the console's software-controlled mixer to adjust separate beam and switch volumes.

- Use switches for sound effects or percussive sounds, rather than for longer musical phrases. Be aware, however, that wireless latency (delayed sound arrival) along with the switches' sometimes inconsistent response to touch can render them confusing—frustrating, even—to participants and facilitators alike.
- Consider using iPads running music-making apps tuned to the same key as the Soundbeam—in our sessions this brought about interesting and rewarding results.
- Our final improvisation was actually the least technical of all: bean shakers and bell bracelets—distinctly old-fashioned hand instruments which integrated nicely into the otherwise fully digital scheme of things. Be technologically prepared to mix the old with the new, as needs or inspiration dictate.

Notwithstanding technological advances that promise easier access to music-making, technology is not the primary factor in an improvisational pedagogy for later-life contexts. Rather, our key message is that improvisational pedagogy requires, above all, a mindset along with the skills for working effectively and safely with this vulnerable population. In other words, digital assistive music-making tools, when facilitated in a flexible, sensitive, and responsive manner, may mediate the profound benefits of creative music-making among groups who may not be able to access music participation in more traditional ways. Our aim continues to be to use improvisational pedagogies, partnered with appropriate tools, in such a way as to bring music into the lives of as many long-term care residents as possible, so that age and physical or mental challenges will no longer serve as barriers to the joy and growth that collaborative music-making can offer. Digital assistive music-making is wonderfully flexible and creative, but is most effective in the hands of trained facilitators adept at these technologies and dedicated to this approach.

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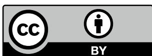

CHAPTER 5

Later-Life Creative Musical Experience: Pedagogies for Creativity in Lifelong Music Learning and Participation

Andrea Creech, Aaron Liu-Rosenbaum, and David Fortier

Introduction

A significant body of research in the field of music, health, and ageing has identified social, cognitive, physical, and emotional benefits of later-life music-making (Creech et al., 2013, 2014; Laes & Creech, 2023). However, the primary focus has been on "participation", with less credence given to the idea of musical development among older adults. Within a music education landscape that is persistently youth-centred

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© The Author(s) 2025
A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_5

(Laes & Creech, 2023), just a few studies have explored possibilities for, and characteristics of, musical development among older adult novice musicians (e.g., Favilla & Pedell, 2013; Taylor, 2011).

Similarly, limited attention has been paid to the potential for music to function as a vehicle for later-life creative experience. This is notwithstanding mounting evidence of the significance of *being creative* during older adulthood, and research that has pointed to the potential importance of creativity in fostering positive experiences of music participation (Creech, 2019; Creech et al., 2014; Laes, 2015). To date, little research has focused on characteristics of creativity expressed among older adult novice musicians, or which pedagogical approaches could most effectively frame creative musical experience. Therefore, this chapter addresses the following research questions and objectives.

- What are the potential indicators of musical development and creative musical experience among older adult novice musicians and their facilitators in community and long-term care contexts?
- How might these developmental and creative musical behaviours evolve over time?
- What are the facilitation strategies or activities that can be associated with creative musical development among older adult novice musicians in community contexts?

We begin by setting out some arguments in favour of the view that musical development can be a lifelong phenomenon, illustrating how later-life musical development may be understood and observed. Here, we summarise the Sounds of Intent (Ockelford, 2006; Welch et al., 2009) framework, which served as a lens through which we interpreted the practices that we observed and participated in, within two different later-life contexts. We then turn to creativity, discussing perspectives that have moved us towards thinking about creativity as a collaborative experience (framing this as co-creativity), rather than solely as the product of creative individuals. We conclude the first part of the chapter with a discussion of the significance of creativity in later-life, highlighting some evidence as to how co-creativity may be experienced within later-life music contexts. The second part of the chapter is devoted to a description of two later-life music-making contexts, our analysis of the musical behaviours and

co-creative experiences that were observed within those contexts, and a discussion of the implications.

The Potential for Later-Life Musical Development

Achieved through singing, playing instruments, composing, improvising, and listening, musical development comprises a range of skills relating to awareness of pitch, tone, rhythm, meter, form, structure, and style (Lamont, 2016). Processes associated with each of these elements have been researched extensively with youth but rarely in later-life contexts (Laes & Creech, 2023; Myers, 1995).

Notwithstanding this gap, studies in the field of music and ageing have provided evidence that musical competencies do not decrease with age. For example, Gibbons (1982) studied the ability to notice differences in musical phrases, among 119 independent adults aged 65 and over. Gibbons found little evidence of differences between participants aged 65 to 70 ($n = 38$) and their peers aged 71 to 75 ($n = 43$), in their discrimination between musical examples that differed in tonal imagery, rhythmic imagery, and musical sensitivity. In a similar vein, Reifinger (2016) reviewed the literature on age-related changes in cognitive or psychomotor ability that may have an influence on music learning in mid to late adulthood, reporting that the ability to maintain a regular pulse did not decrease with age. However, Krampe et al. (2010) highlighted some potential age effects, reporting that while the ability to maintain a regular pulse did not decrease with age, accuracy suffered when demands for attention and working memory increased. This finding may be related to age-related decreases in inhibitory auditory processes, which make it increasingly difficult to filter out distractions from irrelevant stimuli (Reifinger, 2016). Reifinger (2016) also reported that motor response time (i.e., playing a sequence of notes in response to reading the notation) becomes slower in older adults, and the development of motor memory (i.e., as required when learning a fine motor sequence on a musical instrument) may require more repetition.

In contrast to those studies that have investigated potential *decreases* in musical abilities, other studies have focused on the capacity for musical *development*. While limited, a few studies have provided evidence to support the view that musical development is possible across the lifecourse. For example, a case study of an Australian adult amateur rock band demonstrated considerable achievement and progression with

regard to collaboration, learning, and musical performance (O'Shea, 2012). Likewise, a marked improvement in musicality and collaborative learning was found among a group of 35 older piano learners (aged 65 to 95) who participated in a MIDI piano ensemble (Pike, 2011).

Among older people living with profound health challenges, there is similarly some evidence supporting the view that musical development is possible. For example, Vella-Burrows (2012) reported that people with dementia had, with support, written and performed their own song-cycles. Likewise, Morrison and Clift (2012) reported moments of significant musical progression among members of a singing group for older people with mental health issues. In a similar vein, older people in residential care have demonstrated their developmental capacity through creating, sharing, and being challenged within music-oriented reminiscence activities (Allison, 2012).

Brain plasticity may account for some of the capacity for musical development in later-life, as making music has been shown to stimulate various cognitive functions (James et al., 2020; Reybrouk et al., 2018; Zatorre, 2005). Accordingly, Taylor (2011) has argued that "older adults can continue to develop musically," stating that this is "evidenced by continued brain plasticity and receptivity to learning instrumental music that can offset their reduced effectiveness of memory, motor skills, vision, and hearing" (p. 346).

Some research has indicated that older adults themselves do want to progress and develop as musicians, and furthermore that they believe musical development is possible. For example, Creech and colleagues (2014) reported that seniors expressed a need and desire for progression pathways that would support their musical development. Similarly, a belief in their capacity for musical progression was found among 711 adult (average age 51) piano learners, who expressed a strong interest in improving technique, musicianship, and theoretical knowledge (Jutras, 2006).

The processes that may support musical development among older adults have been studied by Gembris (2008), whose research focused on 308 amateur orchestral musicians with an average age of 71 years. Approximately 52% of participants in Gembris's study were experiencing age-related challenges such as a compromised cardiovascular system, reduced mobility, mouth problems, generalised pain, or loss of strength. The older learners used selection, optimisation, and compensation (Baltes & Carstensen, 2003) to "work around" some of these

challenges. For example, they were selective about the pieces they played, were focused and strategic in the optimised use of practice time and had developed a range of mental and physical compensatory strategies to cope with the demands of the music. The majority of participants considered their level of performance to be close to or equal to their personal best, and nearly 20% believed they had achieved their lifetime best musical performance between the ages of 60 and 69 years, indicating that they perceived that musical development had been possible notwithstanding age-related challenges.

These findings were corroborated by Reifinger (2016), who similarly found that older people used strategies related to selection, optimisation, and compensation to mitigate potential constraints relating to music reading, practice, motor memory, and hearing. Creech and colleagues (2014) likewise reported that older music learners used a range of compensatory strategies to maximise participation and learning, finding new ways of working around technical requirements.

How Can Musical Development Be Understood?

Models of musical development have been heavily influenced by the idea that development, more generally, occurs in sequential stages that correspond with cognitive development (Hargreaves & Lamont, 2017). For example, Swanwick and Tillman's (1986) enormously influential spiral model of musical development represented aspects of musical experience at each of four hierarchical developmental stages—namely material (mastery), expression (imitation), form (imaginative play), and value (metacognition)—with an overarching progression trajectory ranging from sensory through to systematic musical engagement and expression.

A further theoretical model premised upon the idea of staged development, yet not linked to biological or chronological age, is the Sounds of Intent (SOI) framework (Ockelford, 2006). An underpinning principle of SOI is the premise that most musical structures are founded upon repetition with variation, whereby musical elements are repeated in similar but not identical ways (Ockelford, 2006, 2013). This idea underpinned the development of a model of the musical interactions and mutual influence observed in teacher–learner pairs, music therapist–client interactions, and other real-life musical activities.

Originating in Ockelford's work with autistic children and those with severe learning disabilities (Ockelford, 2013), SOI has since that time

been applied in research with young children in early years settings (Voyajulu & Ockelford, 2016). Although not previously used as a framework for research with older novice musicians, SOI can potentially frame our understandings of how older adults, some of whom may live with barriers to musical learning, can progress in the so-called "reactive", "proactive", and "interactive" facets of creative musical learning. Furthermore, SOI is particularly appropriate for interpreting musical development within a group environment, being founded upon the observations of musical behaviours that emerged within reciprocal, interdependent interactions.

According to SOI, within each of three domains of musical development (reactive, proactive, and interactive), six increasingly sophisticated and complex developmental levels are represented. Hundreds of video observations of children with learning disabilities engaged in musical activity were analysed and refined to develop descriptions of each level (Ockelford, 2017); "these observations suggested that musical development was a multidimensional process" whereby children were found to exhibit multiple engagement-related behaviours per level and across domains (p. 94). The idea of creativity is embedded within the descriptions of developmental musical behaviours, for example with direct references to creating "musical motifs," "distinctive groups of musical sounds," "short and simple pieces of music," and multi-modal meaning" (Sounds of Intent, 2024).

Creativity in Musical Development

As implied by Sounds of Intent (2024), musical development acts as a powerful vehicle for creativity in several ways. First, musical practices provide an outlet for creative self-expression (Lassig, 2020), allowing individuals or groups to explore and convey their own feelings and those of others, fostering empathy and insight and leading to rich creative expressions. Engaging with different instruments, styles, and genres encourages exploration and experimentation, fostering a mindset that is open to new ideas—an essential element of creative thinking (Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2020). Musical development furthermore involves grappling with complex structures and concepts. Such cognitive flexibility can improve problem-solving skills and encourage innovative boundary-pushing (Lassig, 2020). Improvisation is another critical aspect, encouraging spontaneity and risk-taking that are essential for creative growth (Creech et al., 2022). Learning to trust one's instincts and reflect in

action is a valuable creative skill cultivated through improvisational practice. In all these ways, musical development nurtures a rich environment for creativity to thrive.

Sounds of Intent (2024) illustrates strong creative potential within its proposed developmental domains of musical practices. The juxtaposition of the interactive, reactive, and proactive domains is synergistic with sociocultural theories of creativity that emphasise the reciprocal interdependence among individuals, their actions, and the environment (e.g., Glăveanu, 2013). From such perspectives, creative processes must be understood in relation to the wider sociocultural environment; thus, creative action and artefacts are founded upon interactions within a social and material world (Schiavio & Benedek, 2020).

How Can Creative Experience Be Understood?

Creativity as a Process

Prior to reconceptualisations of creativity through a sociocultural lens (Glăveanu, 2013), prominent definitions of creativity (Runco & Jaeger, 2012) had focused on the characteristics of creative products (i.e., novel; efficient). Expanding and building upon product-focused frameworks, creativity researchers have turned their attention towards process (e.g., Cohen, 2005; Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2020). In this vein, Cohen (2005) contrasted "little-c" creative processes found in diverse everyday acts and achievements with "big-c" creative products such as renowned achievements of artists, scientists, and inventors. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) added a further nuance with the term "mini-c creativity," referring to the creative processes that can be found in learning and that focus on "the novel and personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions, and events" (p. 3).

Accordingly, creativity may be re-framed as creative *experience*, comprising "dynamic encounters" among "people, ideas, objects, projects, situations, uncertainties and actions of everyday life" (Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2020, p. 76). From this view, creativity resides in "principled engagement with the unfamiliar, and a willingness to approach the familiar in unfamiliar ways" (p. 75). Markers of such person-world creative encounters, according to Glăveanu and Beghetto, include open-endedness, nonlinearity, pluri-perspectives, and future-orientation.

The first, "open-endedness" can be described as a dialogic orientation towards participation in the creative experience, evidenced through a willingness to explore, to engage with unexpected micro-ruptures in planned activities and thus unsettle habitual behaviours or responses, to depart from pursuit of defined outcomes, and to interact with difference and unfamiliar ideas. Secondly, non-linearity refers to properties of the creative process. While not refuting the idea of stages in a creative process, Glăveanu and Beghetto highlight that creative experience rarely resembles a neat A to B trajectory, more likely being unpredictable and discontinuous, characterised by leaps, plateaus, and movement back and forth between different phases. The third marker of creative experience, according to this model, is pluri-perspectivism—multiple (and sometimes unexpected) perspectives, including different vantage points and time-frames that open a space for critical reflection and possibility. Participants in the creative encounter are free from singular ways of experiencing creativity and instead are invited to find new meanings or value in what they produce. A fourth marker of creative experience is its future-oriented nature. In support of this idea, we are reminded that a fundamental feature of creativity is the connection of past knowledge with imagined ways of doing or being; as such, creative experience involves future-oriented possibility-thinking and engagement with uncertainty (Glăveanu & Beghetto, 2020).

Collaborative Creativity

Alongside the shift towards thinking about creative processes and experience (versus creative products), theories of creativity have moved beyond a sole focus on *individual* creativity, exploring a view of creativity as being collaborative and situated in a social context (Glăveanu, 2014). From this perspective, creativity is seen as social, communicative, and/or distributed (Barrett, 2014; Glăveanu, 2014); creative experience is a joint endeavour comprised of "persons, processes, practices, places and ecologies that support collaborative creative thought and practice" (Barrett, 2014, p. 3). Thus, a collaborative version of creativity may necessarily involve shared thought communities, the partnering of complementary knowledge, expertise, responsibilities, or roles in the service of shared goals, as well as companionship, a sense of belonging, and mutuality (John-Steiner, 2000).

Specifically, "co-creativity" (Franklin, 2021) brings an intentionally relational lens to understandings of creative experience. Central to this view is an understanding that collaboration, when paired with creative experience, fosters "alternative understandings of why and how things are and how they could be" (Franklin, 2021, p. 3). Recall the markers of creative experience—open-endedness, nonlinearity, pluri-perspectives, and future-orientation—which here may be understood as cornerstones of co-creativity.

The Significance of Creativity in Later-Life

Later-life has been described as a time of deep creativity (Hickson & Housley, 1997), when creative experience becomes particularly salient as a means to pause, reflect, and problem-solve in the face of "physical, psychological, and psychosocial changes that occur during old age" (Flood & Phillips, 2007, p. 300). Indeed, creativity may have particularly profound significance for older adults (Aula & Masoodian, 2023; Simonton, 1990), when small-c (or mini-c) creative expression and acts may bring a sense of coherence and meaning to the individual's inner (psychological and emotional) and outer (accumulated life experience) worlds (Creech et al., 2020).

Several studies have furthermore highlighted positive health and well-being benefits associated with creative activities. For example, arts activities such as music, dance, painting, poetry, or storytelling may stimulate neural pathways, potentially compensating for age-related neurological decline (Flood & Phillips, 2007; Price & Tinker, 2014), while a range of creative arts activities have been linked with improved mood, reduced symptoms of depression, and increased happiness and wellbeing (Flood & Phillips, 2007; Schmid, 2005). Collaboration in creative experiences has reportedly nurtured social connection and a sense of purpose, in turn combatting loneliness and isolation and contributing to improved self-esteem and life satisfaction (Cohen et al., 2006; Creech et al., 2014). Music, specifically, has been experienced as an imaginative and culturally meaningful leisure activity that renews and encourages spirituality, self-expression, good health, and well-being (Iwasaki et al., 2010).

Researchers have attempted to identify the mechanisms that may underpin and explain the relationships between creativity and these multiple health and wellness benefits. Accordingly, Cohen (2005) proposed that the power of creativity in later-life was founded upon

opportunities for individuals to discover their creative potential (Cohen called this "commencing creativity"), opportunities for individuals to access new outlets for creative expression (Cohen called this "continuing or changing creativity"), or the exploration of creative responses and coping skills in the face of loss (Cohen call this "creativity connected with loss"). The relationship between creativity and wellbeing has been further explained by Sabeti (2015), who suggested four additional factors that may intersect with Cohen's framework in multiple ways. These were (1) "sense of control" in mastering a new activity (2) "mind over body influence" and its effects on the immune system; (3) "social engagement" in groups; and (4) "brain plasticity" with new synapses formed through the cognitive challenges offered by creativity (Sabeti, 2015). Each one of Sabeti's mechanisms may have significant implications for any one of Cohen's three categories of creative purpose (commencing creativity, continuing creativity, or creativity connected with loss), with these intersections likely being highly context dependent.

In summary, creative experience may be particularly significant in the latter stages of our lives. Through little-c or mini-c creative experience embedded in moments of learning, older adults can be empowered to continue their process of growth in meaningful and enriching ways.

Later-Life Musical Development as a Context for Co-creativity

The idea of co-creativity, as interpreted and applied within lifelong learning music contexts, is closely associated with key relational principles (see Chapter 2 of this volume). Dialogue, as a marker of co-creativity, comprises four underpinning principles of listening, respecting, suspending certainties, and honest and judgement-free exchanges (O'Neill & Peluso, 2013). For example, a dialogic approach to improvisation (Lage-Gómez & Cremades-Andreu, 2019) has been found to be crucial for a liberating and level playing field where "in the moment" musical interactions may occur among older adults (Zeilig et al., 2018). As implied within the dialogic principles, co-creativity involves embracing new ideas and taking risks with those ideas. In this vein, co-creative later-life musicking has been described as being characterised by the generation of something new that surfaces through openness and receptivity within imaginative spaces (Zeilig et al., 2018). Such openness requires a failure-free environment that removes normative and artificial structures that

could constrain creative expression. As the dialogic principles imply, participation in musical groups can reinforce and affirm the experience of creativity through interactions that include positive reinforcement of creative and musical participant self-concepts (Dabback & Smith, 2012; Hallam, 2006).

While it is certain that ritual and consistency may be important in supporting music learning and participation (Watson-Jones et al., 2021), it has also been noted that a flexible structure, responsive to needs of participants, allows for free and creative play (Matarasso, 2017), bringing a sense of improvisation into the pedagogical practice itself. Flexible structures may allow for shared leadership, described as an "inherently democratic and non-hierarchical version of creativity in which the diverse abilities of all involved were woven into a coherent creative process" (Zeilig et al., 2018, p. 141). As an example, Allison (2012) used a shared, or distributed, leadership approach in facilitating group songwriting with residents of long-term care, with the group drawing upon their collective and personal experiences in the creation of new songs (for more examples of group songwriting, see Chapters 6 and 8 of this volume).

Finally, co-creativity within music involves a degree of connection that can be experienced as personal and almost intimate (Dons, 2019). Inherent to the idea of "connection" in music-making is the experience of a "moment of togetherness" where "group flow" may be evident—a collective experience of purpose and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The sense of connection in creative musical activities has furthermore been linked to empathy (Livingstone & Thompson, 2009; Ockelford, 2017), experienced in relation to either affective or cognitive dimensions of the music.

Aligned with these eight principles (i.e., dialogue; taking risks with new ideas; positive reinforcement; flexible structure; shared leadership; connection; moments of togetherness; and empathy), Dons (2019) carried out an ethnographic study of four examples of co-creative musical experiences in contexts involving older adults, setting out to identify dimensions of co-creation that could emerge in musicking with older adults, and to describe the characteristics of co-creative relationships between music leaders and group participants. The first example focused on a "learning orchestra" (p. 64)—workshops for older adults identified as being socially excluded, facilitated by a professional Dutch orchestra (Dons, 2019). Here, although the workshops were prepared and practised, the approach was framed with flexible musical "playgrounds" that

allowed for participant-led musicking. In the second example, interactive music sessions were provided by an arts charity throughout several community homes in a rural UK county, where prepared musical setlists were inspired by specific participants. In the third example a professional band performed new music and lyrics that had been created in collaboration with residents at a home for those living with dementia and their partners, while the fourth focused on a trio of musicians who performed for a week in a hospital ward, where decisions about what to play were made "in the moment", through interactions with specific people. Overall, the musicians fostered musical connection through person-centred approaches, dialogic strategies, and a general orientation towards the other (Dons, 2019). The musical approaches included a range of musical techniques such as interpreting pre-existing repertoire, developing original material, and engaging in musical improvisation (Dons, 2019).

Across the four co-creative contexts discussed by Dons (2019), interpersonal relationships emerged to form "a central nexus within the co-creative work" (p. 123). Characteristics of those relationships included negotiated practices and shared responsibility, where group participants were afforded a level of responsibility for decision-making or choices, for example, using their personal stories to inspire repertoire choice or musicking approaches, or for contributing more directly to the creation of musical artefacts. Negotiated practices were both implicit and explicit—that is, musicians countered power imbalances (e.g., due to frailty) with embedded creative opportunities for inclusion on multiple levels, from conception through to performance. Dons (2019) summarised that co-creativity required "flexibility, improvisation, and tailor-madedness [sic] throughout the entire (fluid) process" (p. 160). In particular, she highlighted the need for music leaders to prepare structured activities, while still embracing uncertainty (Creech et al., 2022)—being receptive to the unpredictable, and reflecting-in-action, in the moment of encounter. She furthermore drew attention to the need for musicians to reflect on ethical implications related to "a risk of overlooking or overpowering the other's intentionality" (Dons, 2019, p. 156), particularly when facilitating co-creativity among those experiencing frailty.

To summarise, older adults, including those living with the "gritty realities" (Formosa, 2011, p. 327) associated with physical, cognitive, and social challenges of ageing, have demonstrated the capacity and potential for musical development. Drawing on the Sounds of Intent model,

contexts for later-life musical development can be framed as co-creative musical experience, comprising opportunities for reactive, proactive, and interactive musical expression. Co-creative later-life musicking requires an ethically guided facilitation orientation that is grounded in humanistic interactions. Such interactions are characterised by dialogue, where new ideas and risk-taking are welcomed and positively reinforced. Co-creativity is further characterised by a flexible structure that is open to shared leadership, and that promotes a sense of connection, empathy, and creativity experienced in moments of togetherness.

In the remainder of this chapter, we turn to two case studies of later-life music learning and participation, highlighting the potential for creative musical experience within those contexts, and presenting some evidence of both musical development and co-creativity that we observed over time.

Case Studies of Later-Life Creative Musical Development

Description of the Cases

We explored creative musical development with two groups: the first a community group of independently living older adults, and the second, a group of long-term care residents. The community music-makers (CMM), meeting in a local recreational centre, included a core group of eight participants (three males, five females) aged over 50, while the long-term care (LTC) residents comprised a core group of seven (four males, three females) who met in their residential communal meeting space. Although both groups welcomed further participants who dropped in on an ad hoc basis from week to week, our discussion here is based on data collected from these core group members over the course of eight weekly workshops, where participants were facilitated in improvisation, songwriting, and learning well-known songs.

Description of the Workshops

During 90-minute workshops, the community music-makers performed rhythmic call-and-response, canons, improvisation, and songwriting using Thumbjam, an iPad application that allows the use of multiple music scales and exploration of a variety of musical instruments; and rock band

activities, where the group learned to read Figurenotes scores, a colour-coded music notation system that facilitates access to reading music. Participants also explored a range of instruments (e.g., keyboards, electric guitars, and bass guitars, electric drumsets, vibraphones, and Merlin guitars (simple, four-string guitars, tuned in 5ths), and iPads with the Thumbjam Application). The LTC residents participated in 45-minute workshops, where the emphasis was on improvisation and musical storytelling, using digital musical instruments that included the Soundbeam (a music technology that uses motion sensors and "switches"—free-standing boxes that, when pressed, trigger pre-programmed sounds—to translate bodily gestures into sound samples) and iPads, as well as some hand-held percussion.

Data Collection and Analysis

Below, we discuss our analysis of video recordings of the weekly workshops. To capture the CMM workshops, three Panasonic Lumix cameras were set up to maximise coverage of workshop activities in the room, supervised by one of the facilitators. To record the LTC group, we used one Lumix camera and sometimes an extra iPhone to cover an additional angle.

Analysis of the video data, as mentioned above, was framed by a deductive event-sampling approach, using the Sounds of Intent framework (reactive, proactive, and interactive domains, each one including six levels of development) as a priori codes. Initially, we identified key video extracts (a total of 48 per group) that were considered to be salient and representative of the SOI domains and levels of development, and qualitative descriptions of each example were generated. Subsequently, we re-examined these video extracts, this time guided by the eight principles, or indicators, for co-creativity that had been identified through a literature review (i.e., dialogue; taking risks with new ideas; positive reinforcement; flexible structure; shared leadership; connection; moments of togetherness; and empathy). Each video extract was thus further coded, again accompanied by rich qualitative descriptions that here focused on facilitation approaches. All of the SOI and co-creativity codes were translated to variables in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), to aid our analysis.

What we Found

The Capacity for Musical Development

Our first key finding was that both groups demonstrated the capacity for complex musical behaviours. Overall, our observations supported the idea that, just as in earlier phases of the lifecourse, older adults have the capacity for learning and development in relation to controlling musical sounds, imitating rhythmic and melodic sequences, engaging in imaginative musical play, recognising musical styles, and expressing themselves through music. Table 5.1 shows descriptions of musical behaviours, mapped to the SOI levels, observed across both groups.

Within both groups, observed musical practices aligned with a wide range of levels of musical development (represented by the SOI levels), in relation to each one of the reactive, proactive, and interactive SOI domains. Figure 5.1 shows an overview of the numbers of observations within each of the three SOI domains and their corresponding levels of musical development, within the community group, and within the residential long-term care group.

Within the community group, it can be seen that proactive and interactive musical behaviours corresponding with a fairly high level of development (level 5) were the most prominent domains observed in the community group. For example, community group participants were observed playing rock band instruments as an ensemble, varying rhythmic sequences and exploring in a playful and collaborative manner. Similarly, in the residential care group, proactive and interactive musical behaviours were also observed frequently, although these were found to be, for the most part, at a lower level of complexity (level 3). For example, participants in this group used sounds in a programmatic way, representing elements of musical stories. Notwithstanding Level 3 being the most predominant in this group, complex proactive and reactive musical behaviours (at Levels 5 and 6) were also observed in both groups. For example, in both groups, participants recognised and responded to musical motifs, sometimes through imitation or call-and-response activities, and often showing affective responses, indicating their musical preferences, and recognising prominent features such as sections, chord changes, and tempo changes.

Table 5.1 SOI descriptors and observed examples

Domain:	*Interactive*	*Proactive*	*Reactive*
Levels	*SoI descriptor* and observed example		
1	*Relates unwittingly through sound* The participant sings a song alone with a melody, prompting unintended responses from others	*Makes sounds unknowingly* No examples were identified	*Encounters sound* The facilitator explains how to press the switch to produce a sound. Participants were hesitant. Facilitators visually demonstrated the switches. Participants responded with smiles or surprise
2	*Interacts with others using sound* Participants, in pairs or trios, practise the Soundbeam with the assistance of a facilitator at their side who helps them visualise the location of the beam. The participants and facilitator confer and indicate their preferences, as they explore the sound possibilities	*Makes or controls sound intentionally* The group practises finishing together. Led by a facilitator counting the beat, and one group member as drummer, participants play short patterns that start and stop together. The facilitator uses a gesture or word to signify the end moment. For fun, as they went along, participants intentionally add complexity to the patterns	*Shows an emerging awareness of sound* Participants learn about certain sound qualities. The facilitator demonstrates bass options. A participant experiments with some sounds on various parts of the electric bass. The participant follows the facilitator's gestures directing them the sound possibilities
3	*Interacts through imitating others' sounds or through recognising self being imitated* Participants create rhythmic patterns with body percussion, supported by the regular pulse kept by the facilitator. After, each participant establishes a rhythmic call-and-response pattern, taking turns as leader	*Makes simple patterns in sound intentionally, through repetition or regularity* In the extract, participants tapped on a drum pad a sequence of regular and repeated patterns. The time signature was given by the facilitator. Participants tapped on various beats within each metric	*Responds to simple patterns in sound (made through repetition or regularity). Sounds may symbolise other specific things, in a consistent and direct manner* The participant recognises a new idea with triplet patterns. They imitate the rhythm, and the other participants then follow, imitating this rhythmic sequence

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Domain:	*Interactive*	*Proactive*	*Reactive*
4	*Engages in dialogues using distinctive groups of musical sounds ("motifs")* The activity focuses on associating symbols with sound (body percussion). The group follows a notated pattern in four time, playing together and using call and response. The interactions form coherent patterns of musical motifs	*(Re)creates distinctive groups of musical sounds ("motifs") and links them coherently* The group accompanies a song with repeated chord sequences, one bar per chord. This pattern repetition is scaffolded with signals communicated between the facilitator and the participants. Signals include counting aloud and coloured cards representing specific chords. Through the repertoire, participants became more and more familiar with the structure of popular styles	*Recognises and responds to distinctive groups of musical sounds ("motifs") and the relationships between them (e.g., in "call and response")* The facilitator proposes a rhythmic activity using elements of traditional notation, with rhythm cards as a prompt. Participants recognise and respond to distinct groups of rhythmic motifs and the relationships between them: Facilitators clap each motif, and participants imitate
5	*Performs and/or improvises music of growing length and complexity with others, using increasingly developed ensemble skills* Participants collaborate in a drum accompaniment, performing an accent on the first beat of each bar, while singing a familiar song. They progress to adding different parts and performing the piece together in ensemble	*(Re)creates short and simple pieces of music; potentially of growing length and complexity; increasingly "in time" and (where relevant) "in tune"* The group performs the song Guantanamera with the collaboration of two participants who sing the theme song. Participants recreate a version of the Latin song, extending it and increasing its complexity The general characteristics of the improvised extension resembled Latin sonority	*Attends to whole pieces: recognises prominent structural features (e.g., choruses); responds to general characteristics (e.g., tempo); develops preferences* The facilitator demonstrates the characteristics of tempo and rhythm. This provides participants with the tools for more rhythmic independence in pieces that seem a bit more complex. Afterwards, the whole group strings together chunks of the piece, where they recognise prominent features, respond, and discuss preferences

(continued)

Table 5.1 (continued)

Domain:	*Interactive*	*Proactive*	*Reactive*
6	*Makes music expressively with others, with a widening repertoire, in a range of different styles and genres* Participants perform an entire song, with some scaffolded prompts. The performance includes rhythmic and melodic variation, as well as a variety of dynamics and musical colours	*Seeks to communicate through expressive performance, with increasing technical competence; creates pieces that are intended to convey particular effects* Participants improvise on the Beams while exploring new patterns or instrumental sounds, and styles during their improvisations, to convey desired effects	*Engages with pieces as abstract "narratives in sound" in which patterns of notes are repeated or varied over time to create meaning; differentiates between styles and performances* The band performs "*Pour un instant*" scaffolded by the facilitator with singing, counting time, or colour-coded notation. The group demonstrates advanced skills in communicating musically, performing a piece that is complex in terms of its length, harmonic structure, and its culturally situated content and structure

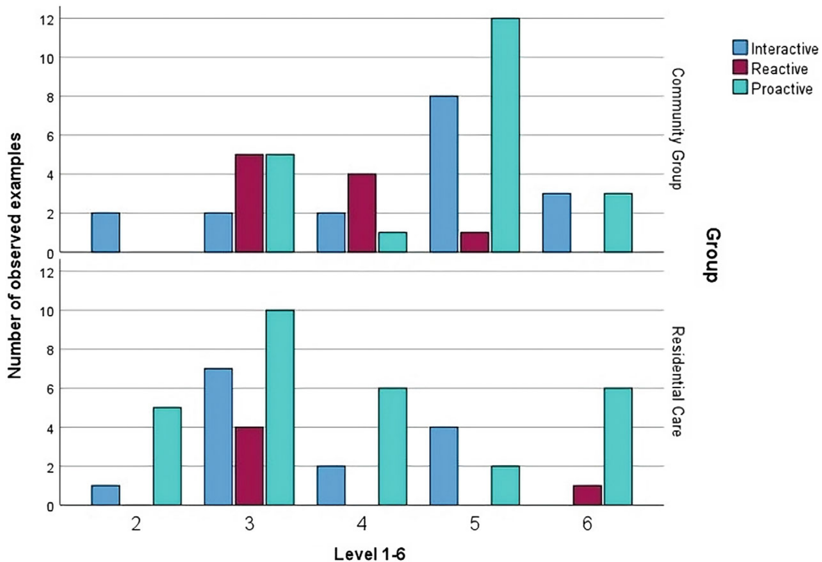

Fig. 5.1 Domains and levels of musical development observed in the extracts

Change over Time

Mean scores were calculated, representing the average level of observed musical behaviour for each of the SOI domains, and for each one of the eight workshops. Figure 5.2 illustrates that (notwithstanding some variability) progression over time was possible among independently living older adults as well as among long term care residents, and further suggests that the three domains of reactive, proactive, and interactive musical development were intricately related to each other.

The CMM workshops began with little evidence of interactive, as compared with proactive and reactive, behaviours. This may be explained by the generally hierarchical structure of the early workshops, where participants relied on the facilitator to lead and to take decisions, and by some individually oriented activities during workshop one. Over time, the interactive domain became more prominent, possibly explained by increasing familiarity, and by the introduction of activities such as collaborative exploration of a variety of musical instruments, as well as interactive

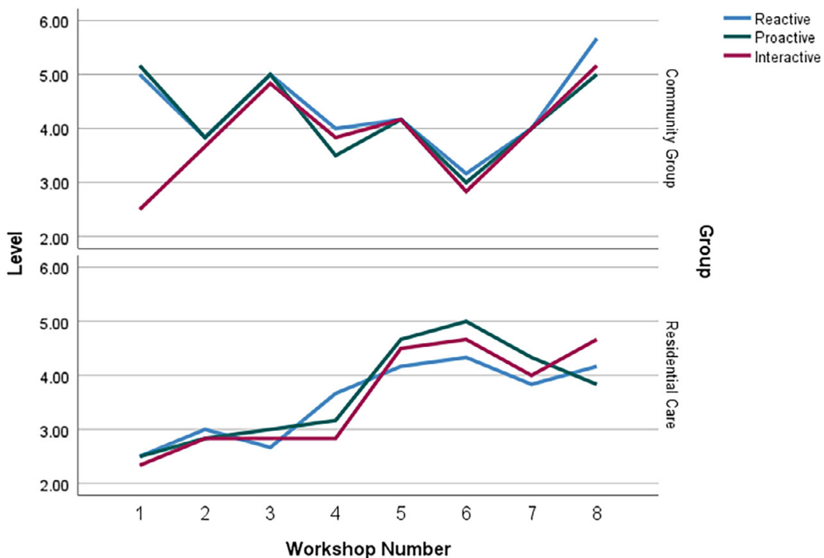

Fig. 5.2 Mean level of development within each of the three sounds of intent domains over the progression of the eight workshops, for each group

call-and-response activities and activities intended to develop ensemble skills such as sustaining a regular pulse and listening and responding to one another.

It is notable, however, that mid-cycle, between workshops 4 and 6, the developmental level of the observed musical activities seemed to decrease, in the community group. At workshop 3, the group was playing in a rock band formation, expressing individual preferences for instruments and deciding collaboratively on repertoire. The group also improvised, with solo improvisers on iPads, accompanied by others who played chordal ostinato, using a range of rock band and other acoustic instruments. As the workshops progressed through weeks 4, 5, and 6, there was variation in these activities, with more evidence of imitation facilitated in a hierarchical manner (intended to build musical skills) as well as guided learning of well-known songs. Although the group continued to collaborate in musical activities where individuals both initiated and responded to one another, musical expressiveness may have been constrained by the directive and atomised nature of some of the activities (i.e., musical concepts and skills deconstructed into sequential steps). From the sixth to the eighth workshop, participants had gained sufficient musical skill to play together as an ensemble, engaging in more complexity in performances of known songs as well as in improvisations. A key finding therefore was that progression was observed overall (particularly in the reactive and interactive domains), and that this overarching development in musical behaviours seemed to require time devoted to collaboration and exploration alongside careful scaffolding and sequential, graduated musical activities that both consolidated and built upon skills. A second key finding was that the interactive, proactive, and reactive domains developed, for the most part, in tandem, with each type of activity making an important contribution to the overall developmental trajectory. Finally, the observed developmental level seemed to have a reciprocal relationship with the facilitation approaches (which, in the community group, were very much responsive to the expressed learning goals of the participants themselves), and as such, while the notion of “interactive”, “proactive”, and “reactive” domains in the SoI model represents the musical development of participants, equally, these domains may be interpreted as being representative of facilitation approaches.

Overall, the trajectory of the LTC group showed some progression in musical behaviours, as illustrated in Fig. 5.2. Like the community group, the three SOI domains as observed in the LTC group seemed to be

interdependent, and closely aligned. A key finding was the importance of time and space for participants to be proactive in their musical explorations, with scaffolding provided by facilitators. In this vein, the proactive domain became increasingly prominent up until the final workshop. This may be explained by the nature of the instruments used, namely iPads, small percussion, and Soundbeams, with one person per device, beam or switch, which for the most part mitigated barriers to participation that may have been imposed by traditional instruments like those used in the community group. As participants became more skilled in manipulating these instruments, they increasingly took turns in solos or duets. While time was spent developing skills, this was embedded within opportunities for proactive improvisational exploration (in contrast to many of the more directed musical skill-building activities that were conducted in the community group). Furthermore, the residential care group workshops, in the earlier workshops, were focused on musical stories, using instruments in a programmatic way, directed by the facilitator.

During the later workshops, the focus moved to improvisation, where participants could apply the skills and ideas they had encountered over the course of the musical storytelling. Here, there was more latitude for engaging in musical dialogue and musical exploration. This may also contribute to an explanation of why, over time, the observed sophistication of musical behaviour seemed to deepen. That said, there was a notable drop in level at workshop number seven. This could be explained by a general "low" mood among participants on that day, prompting the facilitator to become more directive. Furthermore, in anticipation of workshop eight, which was planned to be an "open session" with family members invited, there was some stress among the facilitators, in ensuring that the group was prepared. This, too, contributed to an increase in directiveness and fewer opportunities for exploratory behaviours. When the eighth workshop took place, it included an expressive performance of the "band", with the LTC participants and facilitators performing expressively and collaboratively, and with many opportunities for participants to improvise in the moment.

Across both groups, musical behaviours were multifaceted, involving simultaneous listening and responding to sound, creating, and manipulating sound, and collaborating in musical moments. Crucially, the tools used to make music-making accessible, and the facilitation approaches employed to mediate the progression varied from one context to the

other, in accordance with the needs of participants. For all participants, but particularly for those living with age-related issues such as cognitive decline or restricted mobility, the appropriate tools and facilitation approaches supported learning and enabled access to music-making. Facilitation required flexibility and responsiveness, involving the capacity to provide strongly directive instruction alongside gentle guidance or exploratory collaboration (this point is also illustrated in Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 8 of this volume).

The Capacity for Co-creative Musical Experience

As a reminder, Table 5.2 shows the co-creativity principles discussed in part one of this chapter, used as indicators that guided our observational analysis of co-creativity.

A global score for co-creativity was created, representing the total number of co-creativity indicators observed in each video extract, with a possible range from 0–8: zero suggested that no co-creativity indicators had been observed, and eight suggested that all eight of the indicators had been observed. Figure 5.3 shows this overall mean score for co-creativity over the eight workshops in the two groups.

Figure 5.3 illustrates that in both groups, but especially the CMM group, co-creativity was found to become increasingly evident between workshops 2 and 4 perhaps explained by activities that included experimentation with unfamiliar musical ideas and resources, as well as turn-taking in leading musical activities, for example, demonstrating and leading call-and-response patterns, conducting, or playing a solo. Notwithstanding an evident decrease in co-creativity at workshop 5, at that point the group seemed more focused on interacting musically as a group, with moments of togetherness noted, during which participants experimented with rhythmic patterns. At workshop 6, facilitators and participants discussed the roles of different instruments within their rock band and connected through joint problem-solving in relation to difficulties in using the instruments and challenges in reading Figurenotes scores. Although co-creativity was found to decline slightly over the last two workshops, the average co-creative trajectory, across the eight workshops, showed progression.

The increase over time in co-creativity may have been explained at least partly by an increasing focus, on the part of the facilitators, on strategies that enabled participants to take risks in their use of unfamiliar musical

Table 5.2 Co-creativity indicators

Co-creativity indicator	*Definition*
Dialogical	A musical dialogue between group members that involves an exchange of ideas. For example, this can be observed when group members exchange musical ideas by collaborating in improvisations in a conversational manner
Turn-taking in a leadership role	Group members take turns leading musical activities, for example demonstrating, leading call and response patterns, conducting or playing a solo
Flexible structure	The activity is structured, but also flexible enough to allow group members to spontaneously change direction or add unplanned elements
A moment of togetherness	The group members are equal collaborators on a “level playing field”, a sense of unity is established while playing together
Empathic	One group member takes the perspective of another, for example trying something in a way suggested by a peer or expressing an understanding of the challenges that another might be experiencing
Positive reinforcement	Group members are supported in trying new things, experimenting or taking risks, with reassurance that all contributions are welcome
Encountering new ideas	Group members encounter new ways of making music, musical materials, musical experiences or musical understandings, including (for example) unfamiliar instruments, musical sounds or forms of musical interaction
Connection	A moment of connection through spoken dialogue, interacting and developing ideas together

instruments or tools for making music, to play together and to take leadership roles, and to shine individually in solos. Facilitators furthermore used questioning and dialogue to explore musical preferences and encouraged participants to develop and express their ideas through the music.

For the long-term care residents, although co-creativity seemed to diminish between workshops one and two, this was followed by an increase, with workshop activities including opportunities for participants to encounter new musical ideas and instruments, and to explore the Soundbeam technology through structured musical storytelling. While

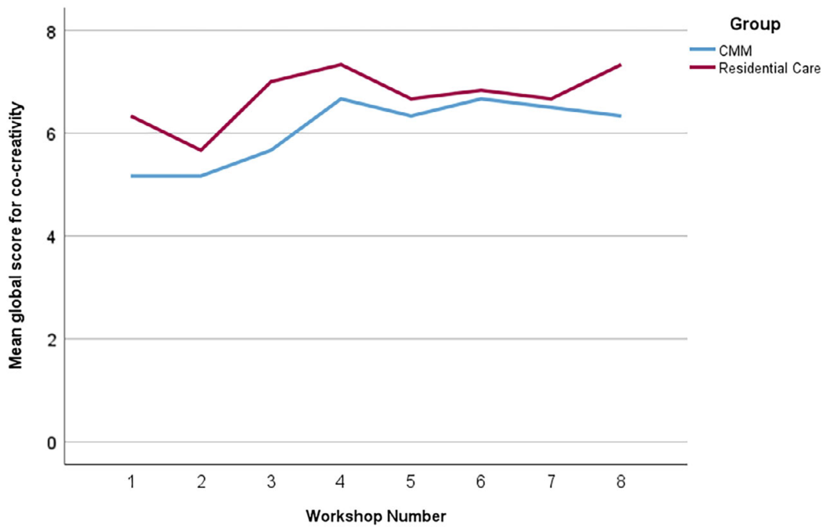

Fig. 5.3 Mean co-creativity score over time

the storytelling did have a structured framework, the approach was flexible enough to be responsive to participant preferences and allowed participants maximum contact with their new-found instruments and musical partners. Participants were given extensive positive reinforcement, while facilitators reflected in the moment, finding creative solutions to promote interaction during many shared musical moments. These solutions included shared leadership during the musical storytelling, as well as dialogue in constructing the musical stories. Furthermore, facilitators made extensive use of improvisational activities using familiar jazz or popular music backing tracks and initiated discussions with the participants in order to understand their preferences. Another feature was that participants were supported in forging strong musical alliances in duos or trios, essentially acting as one another's musical buddies. These smaller groups communicated primarily through their music-making, clearly establishing a close sense of connection, and experiencing the musical mini-c moments of creativity through their musical relationships. Finally, facilitators of co-creative practice emphasised the interdependent

contributions of each individual in the creative process, where the experience of a moment of musical togetherness involved allowing oneself to be vulnerable and open to ambiguity.

Overall, empathy, connection, and moments of togetherness were found to be closely related, and experienced often during creative activities, particularly in the long-term care group. This finding supports the view that mini-c moments of co-creativity are collaborative social acts (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009). Empathy was notable on the part of the facilitators, who adapted their ideas in response to ideas as well as challenges posed by group participants. Peer participants also were empathic, adapting to one another's needs in sensitive ways. These moments, in particular, conveyed a sense of connection and togetherness, with the group united by their creative activity.

Dialogic examples such as musical conversations were not prominent and seemed to be dependent upon pedagogical strategies that supported such interactions. It may be that facilitators, while focused on activities that encouraged inclusive participation, did not fully develop the dialogic potential in such spaces. Nevertheless, while not prominent in frequency overall, examples of dialogic co-creation were observed. For example, in the residential care group spontaneous and sophisticated duet improvisations were observed, with partners interacting musically with iPads and the Soundbeam. These observed dialogues took place within a space where there was non-judgemental involvement in the art of listening together, demonstrating the capacity to welcome one another's perspectives.

Conclusion

Our case studies provide evidence of the capacity for later-life creative musical development over time, notwithstanding age-related cognitive or physical challenges. This is significant because, as Creech and colleagues (2014) have pointed out, one of the most profound implications of creativity for older adults is that it provides a space for countering narratives of decline and age-related limitations. In accordance with earlier studies (e.g., Dons, 2019; Zeilig et al., 2018), we found that creativity emerged within relational spaces, and that facilitation was central in shaping both musical development and creativity.

Our evidence provided strong support for the idea that facilitation approaches really do matter, in that the capacity for musical development

and creative expression existed in a reciprocal relationship with the facilitation approaches that supported later-life music learning and participation. While no single facilitation approach stood out as being directly linked to progression in creative musical development, what did appear to be important was flexibility, whereby facilitators were skilled in combining guidance and directive instruction with collaborative, exploratory activities. Our findings corroborate earlier work by Creech and colleagues (2020), who have emphasised the importance of a flexible and responsive orientations to facilitation of learners at any age, encompassing hierarchical, cooperative, and autonomous approaches in relation to task-specific as well as interpersonal dimensions of facilitation. Wherever the facilitation approach was positioned on the continuum from hierarchical to autonomous, empathy was critical. This relates to the emphasis that Dons (2019) placed on the ethics of facilitation in later-life contexts (particularly so where participants are frail), which require responsiveness to group needs, and intentional strategies that support meaningful contributions on the part of each participant.

To conclude this chapter, we remind readers that extraordinary moments of mini-c co-creativity were found in moments of musical learning and collaboration, such as when participants interacted using the Soundbeams, helped each other to play unfamiliar instruments, or generally shared in the joy of improvising and developing new songs. While we should not be surprised, in light of the significant body of evidence discussed in part one of this chapter, to have observed creative musical development among older adults, it was certainly both touching and heartening to add to that body of evidence, illustrating that irrespective of health and wellbeing challenges, progression in creative musical experience is possible across our lives.

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CHAPTER 6

The Circle of Music Choir for Those Living with Dementia, Their Partner Caregivers, and Teen Volunteers: Incorporating Technology as Necessity

Sasha Judelson and Lee Willingham

Introduction

We're just much happier for the rest of the day. Joy, senior participant
It's helped guide me as to who I want to be as an adult. John, student participant
He was saying how much he looks forward to choir. Mary, senior participant
(Names are pseudonyms to respect privacy)

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_6

Much has been researched and published about the value of group singing in ageing populations (Beynon & Lang, 2018; Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Osman et al., 2016). The Circle of Music, a community choir for those living with dementia, seeks to provide a setting where members, along with their partners and teenage volunteers, can experience their musical possible selves (Creech et al., 2020) and to some degree reclaim what has been lost due to the disease. As one participant stated, "it feels like how life was before [socially]".

Our work with the Circle of Music Intergenerational Choir (CMIC) has illuminated the notion that perceptions of differences in age tend to disappear during participatory music engagement (Beynon et al., 2013). At the same time, findings from the choir and its activities have suggested that these intergenerational group members are able to actively add meaning and value to their lives through leisure, health, and self-directed learning, and that the wellbeing of caregivers is enhanced through singing with their partners and teen volunteers.

In this chapter, we outline the foundational principles and practices that have sustained CMIC for seven years and helped to build effective pedagogical strategies for working with older adults with dementia. We also discuss the forced move to online platforms and the implications for future research in this area of music and later-life, concerned with how music-making can be accessible and inclusive toward those living with dementia.

Context

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1948) states that everyone has the right to enjoy cultural life; by implication this includes participation in music. However, notwithstanding some evidence that intergenerational music-making may be particularly rewarding through bringing generations together in joyful cultural activity (e.g., Highman et al., 2023), Beynon and colleagues (2013) indicate that the prevalence of intergenerational singing programmes is relatively low. As examples of this practice, the Intergenerational Choir Project, led by Carol Beynon and based in London, Ontario, is a community- and school-based project undertaken in collaboration with the Alzheimer's Society of London and Middlesex (Ontario) where members socialise and rehearse in the Sisters of St. Joseph convent (Higgins & Willingham, 2017). Voices in Motion (Victoria, British

Columbia) operates with the goal of improving participants' musicianship, while the Intergenerational Dementia Friendly Choir in Sheffield, UK brings people together to sing and perform. Drawing on the work of Carol Beynon in a long-term care setting choir, CMIC is similar, yet distinctive in its focus on community building through discovering new and joyful ways of making connections across generational divides and creating a learning environment where each participant feels supported and is able to informally mentor co-participants. The choir also works to create opportunities for participants to show appreciation for the experiences and lives of others, and to recognise that age and ability are not necessarily defining characteristics of its members.

Aligning with one of the recommendations to come out of the 2012 World Alzheimer's report, fostering community connections was a key ethical consideration for the foundation of CMIC (Batsch & Mittelman, 2012). The social stigma, isolation, and lack of community connection for those living with dementia are widely known (Bamford et al., 2014; Fogg & Talmage, 2011; Nilsson & Herrman, 2016; WHO, 2023; Zhong et al., 2017), as is the difficulty for adolescents in feeling enabled to connect with older adults (Burke & DiCindio, 2019; Harris & Caporella, 2014). Consciously fostering connections and community becomes indispensable with the loss of friendships and diminishing facility in communication, which all too commonly follow a diagnosis of dementia (Basting, 2020; Harris & Caporella, 2014). Hence, our choir aimed to provide a structure that might mitigate some of these challenges, through support for connection and a sense of community.

The decision to join and come each week to CMIC is intentional and therefore aligns with the category of "active aging" (Joseph, 2022, p. 41). While it is therefore likely that CMIC is perceived to contribute to the older adult's sense of wellbeing, conversations, and interviews with older adults provided us with data about how our participants felt in connection with their participation, the music we sang, how they felt before and after sessions and if the positive emotions generated through the sessions were sustained beyond their time in the sessions. Moreover, the data provided the facilitator with grounding to see how and if the principles were impacting participants. Sharing circles with the students served to enrich the facilitator's reflections and interpretations of the data from the older adults.

To date, much of the literature concerning the impact of musical activity has focused on wellbeing (often associated with feeling connected,

engaged, and able to interact socially), deriving from the musical activity and improved quality of life (Creech et al., 2013a; Dare et al., 2018; Daykin et al., 2017; Hallam et al., 2014; Unwin et al., 2002) and on feelings of satisfaction related to musical development (Lamont et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2022). Participatory music-based activities have been shown to have a positive impact on older adults and communities (Forbes & Bartlett, 2020; Hallam et al., 2014; Hays & Minichiello, 2005; Higgins, 2007; Joseph, 2022), including intergenerational contexts (Beynon, 2013; Jarrott, 2011; Smith et al., 2022). The benefits of singing with others can include an improved sense of wellbeing and quality of life (Barbeau & Mantie, 2019; Creech et al., 2013a, 2013b; Daykin et al., 2017; Elliot & Gardener, 2016; Hays, 2005; Hays & Minichiello, 2005), a decreased perception of loneliness and isolation (Lamont et al., 2018), and a change in perception of one's contribution to a community (Pretorius & van der Merwe, 2019). Beard (2011), and Sixsmith and Gibson (2007) all write of the extent to which music-making supports creating and maintaining relationships. Research undertaken by Hays and Minichiello (2005) and Gembris (2008) also reveals that participation in musical activities contributes to a feeling of community and connectedness.

While this body of literature has focused on links between music, health, wellbeing, and ageing, less has been written about the pedagogical approaches that may foster feelings of connection related to wellbeing, within intergenerational, community-based, informal, non-performance-centred participatory music settings. Therefore, in the remaining sections of this chapter we explain the foundational principles that underpin our pedagogical practices in CMIC, where we bring together older adults living with dementia, their partners, and young people, in the joyful experience of singing together.

Foundational Principles: Community, Inclusivity, Creativity, and Wellbeing

Critical foundational principles of CMIC are a commitment to building community through inclusive and creative practices, and, in so doing, fostering wellbeing and enhanced quality of life. Although there is flexibility around how each may be articulated in our practices, our decisions and ethical considerations are guided by these principles. For example, the principles serve as a framework for addressing questions concerning

whether or not to perform, how to lead the choir, what expectations to place on participants, what inclusivity means in the context of those living with dementia, what space to use for the sessions, and how to select songs. As noted by Beynon et al. (2013), the importance of such decisions in intergenerational programmes is significant, as these programmes, "…if not properly structured can have negative effects," such as lack of engagement and purpose (p. 179).

Community

The mission for CMIC is to purposefully use music-making as a vehicle to connect generations and build community, promoting beneficial interaction between participants (Sixsmith & Gibson, 2007). The idea of community can refer to a space where people feel able to connect with others, as illustrated through numerous examples of community being built through music (Higgins, 2012a; Veblen et al., 2013; Vaillancourt et al., 2018). The importance of a sense of community has been highlighted (see Chapter 3 of this volume), as awareness has increased concerning the effects of loneliness and isolation on older adults, adolescents, and everyone in between (Twenge et al., 2021; Perissinotto et al., 2019; Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). Moreover, being alone and loneliness are not the same (De Jong Gierveld et al., 2016; Perissinotto et al., 2019), as such, being with others does not mean one is necessarily immune to feeling lonely (Patulny & Bower, 2022; Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018). In CMIC, the key to building community is providing multiple possibilities for people to connect, allowing them to access interpersonal connections in ways that they feel ready for, on that day, whether it be through resonating with a fellow participant's story, empathising with a student, or finding joy in the energy and enthusiasm of the social time. As one caregiver commented during their interview, "[being here] makes one feel less lonely."

In CMIC, participation from all is prioritised, including those living with dementia who may not respond as quickly or as expected. The facilitation practices that support full, meaningful inclusion are judgement-free—a refreshing change for the caregivers who can shed concerns they may have regarding the status of their dementia partner as a group member, or the value of that partner's contributions to the group.

In this vein, the choice of venue, songs, time, and pace each contribute to the ability of participants to connect with one another and to feel part

of CMIC. The informal nature of the programme is deliberate, purposefully and intentionally created by the leader to allow participants to feel unpressured and unjudged by musical and social expectations. This informality provides space for relationships to develop through the music and socialising (see Chapter 2 of this volume, for further discussion of informal learning as a context for relational pedagogy). Building connections starts as soon as people enter the room, whether it is through a gentle inquiry into how they are doing or a more probing question that follows up on an issue which has come up previously. This ethic of caring and framework of participation is also seen during social time and in conversations focused on the music itself.

Prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, socialisation occurred as members arrived, as teen volunteers greeted the older adults they were coupled with, and between pieces, as people found the page for the next song. Socialisation continued once the singing had concluded, at which point we shared tea, coffee, snacks, and stories about the events of the last week. As CMIC, along with the rest of the world, moved online, this socialising was lost and a sense of alienation grew between participants, accelerated by the challenges of online video conferencing technology and the slight delay in online delivery. The lag resulted in people effectively singing to themselves, as they were muted on Zoom so as to avoid a cacophony of sound (with the exception of when it was someone's birthday—everyone sang together on those occasions). Noting the decreased sense of connection, the choir leader began creating open-ended questions related to the song lyrics of material being rehearsed. For instance, the lyric "Oh that towering feeling" from *On the Street Where You Live* prompted the question, "Is there a high tower you've been up that you can tell us about?" "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" lead to discussions about creating words to explain how one may be feeling. "Whistle while you work" might prompt a question about singing or not singing in the workplace and why or why not. Thus, the musical content became a vehicle for creating and maintaining community, through creativity and storytelling.

Inclusivity

The CMIC model uses inclusivity as a path to building connections between participants. Inclusivity in our context is impacted by factors such as the community, funding (i.e., cost is a potential barrier [Beynon,

2017; Eldirdiry et al., 2014]; CMIC has thus far been fortunate to have received funding that has allowed us to reach those who might have been deterred by that barrier), and the environment of the sessions. While some intergenerational choirs for people living with dementia are held in long-term care facilities, specific attention was paid to placing CMIC within the community so that participants come out of their most frequent locale to be a part of the choir. A central accessible location with parking was chosen to increase the ease of joining the group. The start time was chosen to give the high school students time to leave school at the end of the day while also playing close attention to the time of sunset—often a challenging time for people living with dementia (Bachman & Rabins, 2006; Khachiyants et al., 2011)—and ensuring that people are home before sunset. Thus, what can be a difficult time for people living with dementia is possibly slightly eased that day, resulting from the joy of singing with other people (Lee et al., 2018; Rio, 2009; Särkamö et al., 2014).

CMIC welcomes everyone, without expectation of musical skills or abilities. Being encouraged to participate can provide "empowerment and give [participants some] control over their own lives" (Sixsmith & Gibson, 2007, p. 136) and assists in negating the devastating loss of confidence that frequently accompanies a diagnosis of dementia (Dawudi et al., 2023; Fogg & Talmage, 2011; WHO, 2023). This inclusive approach also involves reciprocal, mutual learning and respect, whereby older adults mentor and support the students, while the students provide the same for the older adults, thus reducing the number of barriers between generations and the stigma of ageism so often associated with older adults (Bamford et al., 2014; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Nemiroff, 2022; Sneed & Whitbourne, 2005) and those living with dementia (Harris & Caporella, 2014; Werner, 2014). These reciprocal practices also contribute towards the reduction of harmful stereotypes associated with the high school students who are too often associated with lacking commitment and empathy (Burke & DeCindio, 2019).

Of course, creating a non-judgemental and inclusive environment is complex. In addition to attention to structural details such as accessible spaces and resources, inclusive facilitation requires a high level of critical self-reflection on the part of the facilitator (i.e., being aware of what they are doing and why), and openness to going with the flow (e.g., not focusing on a musical error, being open to a song request, while maintaining the arc of easy-not so easy-easy-not-so-easy-easy songs,

[further discussion on the musical arc for each session is found within the Consistency and Song Choices sections below], conducting with clear indications and lots of joy, losing inhibitions and encouraging others to lose their own). Overall, inclusive facilitation means leading the sessions with purpose and outward ease to ensure participants reap the benefits.

Creativity

As suggested by Moosad and Vaughan (2020), creativity is connected to care and wellbeing through ways of perceiving involvement in a project. Creativity that emerges in the moment, in an improvisational context and as part of the process of communication, can be distinguished as separate from constructed and pre-determined means of creativity or making something new (Sabeti, 2015), and may be conceptualised as a "mini-c" moment of creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009) that is novel in a personally meaningful sense, and experienced in everyday encounters (see Chapter 5 for a discussion). While a definitive notion of creativity is elusive (Milbrandt & Milbrandt, 2011), promoting inventiveness and imagination may result in heightened creative contributions from participants (Walia, 2019). For CMIC, creativity is a collaborative, intersubjective act that emerges through attachments and bridges which are built between participants when they realise that the group is judgement-free in relation to their musical skills, their conversations, their imagination, or ideas when responding to the lyric-inspired questions. Frequently a participant or participants will comment how they feel free to be creative in their musicality and conversation because they know they are accepted just as they are. There is creativity around our unusual circular seating plan and lack of distinction between typical choir voices (further discussion on the seating plan is found within the Use of Space section below). Mini-c creativity may also be found in the practice of facilitating dialogue around the musical pieces, which provides opportunities for improvisatory storytelling that connects participants with each other, and with the music itself.

Wellbeing

In CMIC, we focus on the relational and emotional dimensions of wellbeing and quality of life. While frequently thought about together, wellbeing and quality of life are not quite the same. "Well-being is more

than just happiness; it is a sense of feeling fulfilled and satisfied" (Joseph, 2022, p. 42). In comparison, an understanding of what contributes to a quality of life includes access to social and leisure activities, relationships with family and others, the health of self and close others, independence, emotional and psychological health, religion and spirituality, the standard of living (Grewal et al., 2006) and "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns" (WHO, 2012). Both wellbeing and quality of life are identified throughout the literature as by-products of music-making. In the establishment of CMIC, contributing to all participants' wellbeing and quality of life underpins all other principles and practices that guide the choir.

Meeting Multiple Needs

As Higgins (2012a) describes, a cornerstone of community music is that it is a context that embraces the unexpected; to do this successfully in CMIC demands a flexible facilitation approach, while maintaining the purpose concerning connections, community, inclusivity, and wellbeing. Frequently, assumptions are made that CMIC's purpose is focused solely on the person living with dementia. However, for CMIC, the purpose is that *every* participant gets out of the choir what they need to, on that day. For a caregiver the choir may offer respite—their person is looked after and understood, while they are surrounded by others with a shared commitment to the choir. For example, for one participating older adult it was clear that as the dementia progressed they had lost the ability to communicate. However, the caregiver and partner continued to participate in the choir because *the caregiver* loved singing, being with other people, and the youthful energy of the students. Further, the caregiver found comfort and ease in knowing that this community understood those living with dementia may behave or say things that seem unusual. The caregivers note that they have a purpose and sense of satisfaction by entering in this safe context.

For caregivers, easing into a space where they do not have to be the primary caregiver can feel uncomfortable. It takes time to be able to trust that another can look after the person who one normally spends so much time caring for. It is not necessary for the caregiver to feel that their responsibilities have been taken from them, rather, as it becomes apparent

that CMIC is a space of acceptance and inclusion, the leader, teacher–mentor, and students can, through their actions and interactions, illustrate that the caregiver can use the space as respite from their regular caregiving responsibilities and use it for whatever they need that day, whether it be connecting with other caregivers or simply enjoying the practice of singing and hearing music.

Pedagogical Considerations in the Circle of Music

Supporting Interpersonal Connections

Interpersonal connections that emerge through participation in CMIC are founded upon a number of factors. For example, the consistency of the trio of two older adults partnered with a student volunteer is one of the ways a sense of personal connection is invited, framed, and stabilised. Facilitators play a significant role in strengthening these interpersonal connections, for example by embedding opportunities for dialogue within the musical activities, complemented with time for socialising (Levula et al., 2016). An example of the former (opportunities for dialogue within the activities) is the occasional 'quick-fire' round after a song. The 'quick-fire' round asks everyone to respond with a one-word answer to a question connected to the song. For instance, after *Climb Every Mountain*, do you prefer climbing or kayaking; or after *I Could Have Danced All Night*, could you dance all night, yes or no? As participants find ease in the sessions and feel unjudged so too do they feel able to share more than a one-word answer, e.g., "back in the day I would have danced all night, and it would have been the foxtrot" or "I like the climb because of the view, I'd take the view without the climb if I could". A further example is when facilitators join the 'sub-groups' (e.g., the trios, see the Use of Space section for further discussion on the seating), using open questions to build on the previous week's conversation, or sharing a student achievement that illuminated or extended previous conversations.

Following every session with a social time allows participants to deepen their connections with one another; perhaps a caregiver asks another caregiver for advice or feedback on a dementia strategy they had been considering, perhaps a person living with dementia asks a student how they reached CMIC session that day, how their day went or simply reassures them that things will work out and the student uses their training

from the Alzheimer's Society to follow that opening question with a reply that invites the person living with dementia to share how they reached CMIC. Perhaps the teacher–mentor connects with an older adult over a shared hobby or perhaps the pianist chats with the students over their decisions on next steps after high school.

Socialising also offers a context where potential stigma associated with ageing and people living with dementia may be diminished. For example, during the group's social conversations, the students come to see the lives that older adults have lived and continue to live outside of the choir, learning about the older choir members' activities such as travelling, joining a group to play games, or spending time in an adult care location. The young people also gain insight through the older people's reminiscences, as in the example of one participant who reminisced about working on a nearby street when it looked different and had a market on it. These are all opportunities for the intergenerational peers to recognise the breadth of a person's life experience and therefore to recognise the value of each person's life experiences. This facilitation of connections is an ongoing process. The leader must continually attend to and support this process.

Use of Space

Although CMIC is a space for singing together, some participants are self-conscious about their voice. One approach to diluting the effect of this is to move away from the idea of *rehearsing*, and instead modify the approach to focus on the joy of making music with one another. As the pianist recently revealed "it takes some getting used to not being called out for a wrong note". Making space for this joy creates space for connections between participants; the priority of connection provides for a new evaluation of how we relate to one another (Sabeti, 2015). This move away from a traditional concept of 'rehearsal' is reinforced through the use of space, whereby instead of the traditional choral seating plan, couples are seated either side of their partnered student, and the whole group sits in a circle. This allows for eye contact and is a physical representation of the group as a community (Vaillancourt et al., 2018), characterised by respect and communion with one another.

Consistency

In CMIC, consistency is manifest through the structure of the trios (two older adults plus the student), the constancy among the group of participants who attend, repetition of familiar songs, a stable structure for the sessions (including songs that provide musical signals for the beginning and conclusion), and a familiar seating plan. Consistency is further strengthened on the part of the students, who are required to make a commitment to weekly attendance, thus mitigating absences which can weaken connections (Beynon & Lang, 2018; De Jong Gierveld et al., 2016). Each one of these facets contributes to a consistent, familiar context where interpersonal connections are forged during sessions of CMIC.

In this vein, knowing what to expect on arrival is a reliable anchor for participants (Beynon, 2017; DeStige, 2010; Perissinotto et al., 2019). For instance, sessions are structured in a 'musical arc', beginning with familiar songs, followed by a song in parts or sung as a round, then a couple of familiar songs, followed by a less familiar or challenging song before returning and ending with two to three familiar songs. This musical arc is bookended by the Hello and Farewell songs. During our welcome, everyone is acknowledged by name to increase the likelihood that they will feel their presence is valued, and where the relationships come through the music (Higgins, 2008) and underscore what Higgins (2012a) highlights as the crucial act of hospitality, a defining parameter of Community Music: "The making of time for another and the invitation to participate" (p. 108). Contrastingly, the Farewell is sung collectively to the entirety of the choir.

Song Choices

Song choices for CMIC include songs from movies and musicals, folk songs, ballads, and the occasional TV show. Lyric binders are provided in large type for all participants. Lyrics need to be positive in nature to support the positive emotions that come from singing (Eldirdiry et al., 2014; Killick & Craig, 2012) and to allow participants to carry that positivity back to their home setting.

The songs in the repertoire are taken primarily from an era that the older adults, particularly those living with dementia, are more likely to remember. Although their age is not asked, the facilitator can bring it to

light by asking subtle questions which reveal the answer. Questions such as "were you here when ____ high school opened", "do you remember being around when the Queen visited", "how did you spend your time after high school". These are open-ended questions to invite information to come out.

As noted earlier, the arc of the session is intentionally created to reflect peaks and valleys of energy. To draw this arc, it would start at the baseline for the Welcome song, build to a peak over the next three songs, come to a groove for the fifth song which would be a round or a song with parts, build again to a small peak for two songs, returning to a groove by using call-and-response or by introducing a new song to the group, then again building to a peak for two further songs and a small groove for the Farewell song. Establishing routines allows participants to feel welcome, connected, and comfortable in the environment and activity before singing anything more challenging. Being present and feeling free from judgment allows participants to feel able to attempt more challenging music (Chong et al., 2013; Green, 2008) and to know that mistakes are part of the context in which we make music.

New songs are carefully introduced, not purely for where they are placed in the arc of the session, but to add to joy, challenge, interest, and connections within the choir. Participants are encouraged to suggest songs they would like to sing to affirm that this is their choir and their input is essential. The leader and pianist may work out possible adaptations to more difficult music, breaking down particularly difficult or complex songs to enable a greater degree of accessibility for all participants.

Redefining Excellence as Participation

While not quite turning on its head the usual expectations of singing the right notes in the right place at the right time, and in sync with all other participants (Beynon & Lang, 2018; Small, 1998), CMIC does not search for or expect musical perfection. The excellence within this setting is defined as full participation in this informal music-making environment and the establishment of a community where one is accepted. As Higgins and Willingham (2017) state, "'community musicians' emphasis on participation, people and places puts an onus on engaging with others, and interactions of this nature can, by default, generate excellent spaces

through which health and well-being can be promoted" (p. 108). Moreover, an environment where the stigma of ageism and ability is challenged and not present, becomes a place where people are accepted and included as they are, where students are encouraged to see how they can be socially conscious and be contributors to the common good. Further, the organisers (leader, teacher-mentor, pianist, and any participants who feel able) are encouraged to spread the word about this different way of approaching excellence as one of thriving through intergenerational connections and the benefits of music-making with others (Beynon, 2017; Beynon & Lang, 2018; Higgins, 2012b; Mantie, 2017).

Online

The configuration for CMIC does not naturally lend itself to being conducted in a virtual digital environment, particularly when one reflects on the common reluctance of some older adults to persevere with full engagement with digital technologies (Gitlow, 2014; Knowles et al., 2019). Familiarity and simplicity of platform play a dominant role in overcoming that hesitation (Mariano et al., 2022). An additional difficulty is that seniors are not always aware of the help technology can be to them, principally due to preconceived ideas. Further, they are more likely to use technology for household appliances than in a social communication/interaction context (Peek et al., 2016). Older adults lean towards using technology for specific purposes rather than within a social context, holding preconceived ideas on its usefulness (Mitzner et al., 2010). However, Peek and colleagues (2016) suggest that seeing friends and family or others within their social network using technology helps seniors to want to use it too. A separate study by Chopik (2016) suggests that the social interactions made possible through technology may decrease loneliness in older adults.

The frustrations of technology can make seniors feel older (Gitlow, 2014; Peek et al., 2016). However, frequency of use can increase the comfort level. Considering the potential for pre-existing assumptions and frustrations, an additional difficulty for participants in CMIC was the delay over Zoom or any other online platform. Initially, privacy over Zoom was a slight concern but the lag was more disruptive. The solution was to record the accompaniments, have the students record themselves, have the leader video themselves conducting, and create a compilation of these recordings to sing along with.

It became evident that without the in-person social time participants did not easily connect, the conversation consistently turned to how difficult Zoom was, and what else people were unable to do. Additionally, being muted to avoid lag led to an unintended feeling of isolation. And so, the questions which were derived from the song lyrics were devised to deepen the interaction and relationships and divert their focus from the frustrations of being online.

It was necessary to be open-ended with the questions so that all contributions could be welcomed and included, and to carefully pick the order in which participants were called upon. Responses such as "I don't know" shut down other contributions, and some struggled to trust that there would be no judgement in their answers. Ultimately the questions emerged as the adhesive that brought and kept the group together. Keeping these questions when we returned to in-person meetings seemed an obvious choice to continue to build cohesion within the group and rebuild our connections in-person, post-pandemic.

Conclusion: Accomplishments and New Opportunities

It is suggested that the stimulation and pleasure of the music-making reminds older adult participants of previous joyful experiences (Sixsmith & Gibson, 2007), which may impact their mood in a positive way. Flexible while purposeful approaches towards community, creativity, inclusivity, and wellbeing (as described in this chapter) are at the heart of the sustainability and longevity of CMIC.

The purpose and aspirations for CMIC, when it was established in 2016 may have been met: older adults are engaged, as are the students who often unexpectedly find the connections they build with the older adults provide guidance and reassurance, older adult participants feel valued and included. Looking forward, there is further need for investigation of the effectiveness of such programmes and how ongoing music-making can be made sustainable.

This chapter may serve as a framework to build more such intergenerational choirs, so that there is one in every community. We continue our work to uncover how we use informal music-making settings to develop socially conscious inclusive societies, with a particular focus on the inclusion of women living with dementia who to date have been a minority in our group.

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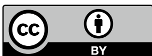

CHAPTER 7

Popular Music as a Resource for Exploring Later-Life Identities in Music

Aaron Liu-Rosenbaum and Andrea Creech

Introduction: Popular Music—From Youth Culture to Later-Life

Popular music has most often been associated with youth and youth culture, whether in the media or in the academic literature—or as Forman (2012) puts it, "While age has long been a fundamental concern in the study of popular music…the emphasis is not on age per se, but on *youth* specifically" (p. 245). Outside the field of music, a sizable body of literature has been generated on the study of youth culture, typically examined through the lens of the socio-economic and technological developments from the post-World War II period (Bennett,

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_7

2000)—notably, a period that has also seen foundational changes in music production and consumption, as well as in music education.

Within this body of literature, there arose a focus on youth subculture as a kind of marginalised group that was able not only to foretell the direction in which society was heading, but also to shed light on the current culture "as a cipher for wider issues and questions" (Osgerby, 2014, p. 5). This focus on youth subculture was understood by some as "reversing an implicit hierarchy that sees adults as more socially significant than the young" (Warne, 2014, p. 51)—a reversal that, ironically, would eventually give way to a situation in which older adults would find themselves marginalised in discussions involving popular music, despite the fact that popular music has much to offer (and to gain) from older adult participation. Another result of this marginalisation is that the benefits of music for younger people have been comparatively better documented than those for the older population (Creech et al., 2013). A similar bias in favour of youth has been observed in the field of music pedagogy as well (Hallam et al., 2015).

To its credit, at a time when popular musicology was still relatively new to the academy, it, too, was able to identify a bias in the field "to privilege the category of 'youth'…[which] leads to neglect of older age groups who may use different musics and use them differently" (Middleton, 1990, pp. 5–6). We will return shortly to this idea of older age groups using music "differently". Even earlier, educators were calling for access to music education for the aged "on the same level or in the same way as [with]…younger students" (Tanner & O'Briant, 1980, p. 30). With deeper understandings of the ageing process, music educators will be better equipped to more thoroughly address older people's needs, especially concerning their relationship to music, within the scholarly discourse (Laes, 2014).

While beyond the scope of this chapter, we should mention that popular music has indeed played a growing and well-documented role in music education, with a general impetus starting in the late 1960s and early 1970s in North America (Powell et al., 2019), followed by a similar push to integrate popular music into European curricula, particularly over the last 30 years (Coppes & Berkers, 2023). These efforts, however, have historically tended to focus predominantly on questions surrounding repertoire (what constitutes popular music, forming a canon), curriculum (course creation, programme structure, etc.), and more recently on music production/popular music performance, rather than on the questions we

are examining here. Tobias (2019) describes this historically evolving relationship as "moving from *should we address* popular music to *how do we address* popular music, then from how do we address popular music from a technical perspective to how to enact practices that *account for sociocultural issues* such as equity or cultural appropriation" (p. 64).

There is also an expanding literature on popular music education, including edited volumes by Routledge (Smith et al., 2017) and Bloomsbury (Moir et al., 2019), as well as journals such as the Journal of Popular Music Education, launched in 2017, and even a popular music education special interest group within the International Society for Music Education, all of whom are actively expanding the field of popular music studies.

Outside of academia, community programmes have offered rich music experiences specifically geared toward later-life learners, such as Sage Gateshead's The Silver Programme in the UK (Our Gateshead, n.d.), which began offering a variety of collaborative musical experiences for people over 50 in 2005, or the Music Share for Seniors programme (Music Share for Seniors, n.d.) in Canada, which has brought music to seniors in assisted living facilities in the form of customised playlists since 2017. These programmes, which have included some popular music, indicate that there may be a growing interest among older adults in discovering or rediscovering their musical identities through popular music.

Some points of proximity with our subject may be found in Cremata (2017), who discusses facilitation in popular music education, albeit in an academic, rather than community context, as in our case, and his aim is to encourage a pedagogical shift from teaching toward facilitating. The collection *Places and Purposes of Popular Music Education: Perspectives from the Field* (Powell & Dylan Smith, 2022) devotes one section to popular music and identity, yet despite the impressive variety of perspectives, that of later-life has been limited, save, perhaps, some elements of Frankel's (2022) discussion of his experiences as a Deadhead ("Deadhead" being a fan of the rock group The Grateful Dead) music educator, or wider discussions of age, identity, and music education (e.g., Laes, 2014, 2023).

As a significant expression of youth culture, popular music's capacity to contribute to a sense of identity among youth emerged as a prominent theme in the literature (Bennett, 2000; Bennett & Hodkinson, 2020; Dolby & Rizvi, 2007; Kruse, 1993; Ntarangwi, 2009; Odendaal &

Hodges, 2021). In some cases, the musical style became so intertwined with the cultural identity, it became a stand-in for the culture itself, such as with rock 'n' roll (Roberts, 2012). Other musical styles, too, have served as loci of identity for the youth who participate in them. Thornton (1995), in her analysis of rave culture, adapted Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" to youth culture to come up with the idea of "*sub*cultural capital" in reference to rave music as a "powerful source of meaning and self-identity" for participants (in Osgerby, 2014, p. 16). One can think of additional examples of popular musical styles that attained the status of de facto cultural identities, e.g., punk, goth, etc.

One of music's most unique characteristics is its ability to form identities across linguistic and demographic divides. We read of the hip hop scene in Quebec, Canada, "Language mixing is linked in subtle ways to claims of territorial and cross-territorial belonging.... territorial claims by Quebec rappers have a strongly hybrid, transnational character. A given individual will often claim multiple residences and origins" (Sarkar & Allen, 2008, p. 125). In this context, hip hop serves as a good example of how music can create a sense of common identity through shared tastes and practices, since it incorporates DJ-ing/turntabling, rapping, breakdancing, and graffiti painting or "tagging", all of which are inextricably bound together over time and across national boundaries (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). Building from Anderson's (1991) somewhat rhetorical idea of nations as "imagined" "cultural artefacts", Morgan and Bennett write that members of the hip-hop nation not only see hip-hop as an identity, but also as an "imagined community of imagination.... [whose] artistic practices are not merely part of its culture; rather, they are the central, driving force that defines and sustains it" (p. 177). In other words, the shared creative practices are fundamental to the shared musical identity. This perspective underpins our project and is an idea to which we will return below.

Given the rich body of research that has already accrued on the importance of popular music in the cultural identity of youth and considering the growing proportion of older adults in the global population (World Health Organization, 2024), it is vital to examine popular music's role in forming later-life identities and how it can potentially empower this significant and rapidly growing, yet often marginalised older part of the population. The effort to examine music's role in the lives of older adults,

of which this chapter is part, is a reflection of a larger changing perspective on the function of education in North America during the past few decades, as it shifts from one of preparing youth for adult life in society to one in which "systematic learning" is seen as a "lifelong endeavor" (Myers, 1992), where old age should not "deny individuals the right to be supported in developing new skills, in aspiring to high standards in their music-making, or in being recognised as capable of creative practice" (Creech & Hallam, 2015, p. 54). Just as with youth, older adult "subculture" raises wider and important questions for society as a whole—questions about inclusivity, societal values, human rights, and purpose in life (Findsen & Formosa, 2011).

With regard to the subcategory of music we call popular music, researchers have examined its particular role(s) in the lives of older adults from a variety of perspectives, including their musical preferences (Gibbons, 1977), its use as a physical and social therapeutic (Tanner & O'Briant, 1980), comparing their musical repertoires to those of younger musicians (Prickett & Bridges, 2000), its impact on their subjective wellbeing (Creech et al., 2014a); and how participating in it affords them access to creativity (Laes, 2014), to name but a few. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and one finds overlapping themes in the literature.

In this chapter, we focus on what Bennett (2013, p. 4) describes as a "reflexive understanding and use of popular music as a cultural resource in everyday life" for older people. While music, in general, is associated with improved wellbeing among older adults (Ma & Ma, 2023), we were interested in the ways in which popular music, in particular, offered opportunities for connection and the development of musical identities. Our project was therefore situated within the larger theoretical nexus of relations between popular music, identity and later-life.

Rethinking Age and Identity

In the wake of the "cultural turn" (Chaney, 1994) in the latter half of the twentieth century, which saw a re-situating of discourse and inquiry through the lens of culture, many concepts in popular culture and the social sciences underwent redefinition or were reconsidered. The concept of youth itself—while recognising the "fundamental biological process and the physical transformations associated with puberty"—has been called into question as a social construct with non-discrete, culturally specific boundaries (Osgerby, 2020, p. 5). Additionally, from within age

studies, the fields of cultural gerontology and critical geragogy (Hallam & Creech, 2017) sought to address older people not just through the formerly dominant paradigms of social welfare and public policy, but to expand discussions of old age (read: "later-life") "to encompass unproblematic old age" (Twigg & Martin, 2015, p. 354) in both the social and educational spheres.

This new orientation turned the focus from chronological or medical notions of age and ageing toward a conception of ageing that is more fluid and culturally constructed (Twigg & Martin, 2015), or as Laes (2014) puts it, "Despite being a biological process, ageing is also subject to the social constructions by which each society and culture makes sense of old age" (p. 52). Moreover, with supporting evidence from a growing body of research, a more pronounced boundary may be drawn between chronological (biological) age and "age identity", or self-perceived age. As it turns out, the difference is not merely semantic and can have real repercussions in the lives of older people (Findsen & Formosa, 2011).

According to Yu and Wang (2023), "old age identity" is the "self-perception of when old age begins" (p. 2). The authors write that "the aging society in the traditional sense may not be 'aging'. Therefore, redefining old age is crucial" (p. 1). Unsurprisingly, not all older adults identify with their biological age; for various reasons, they may identify as younger or older, as the case may be—and since age identity is understood as a central element of one's social identity (Yu & Wang, 2023, p. 2), it can be determinative in one's social participation, which, itself, positively impacts wellbeing (Zhang et al., 2024). According to Sternad (2021), our social experience of ageing is even more fundamental than our personal one: "it is first and foremost my contact with others and the world, through which I come to a reflection on myself and my age" (p. 318).

Apparently borrowing from Judith Butler's theory of gender (1990), in which she equates gender to a kind of "performance", Bennett and Taylor (2012) conceive of ageing as a "performance" of one's "ageing identity" (p. 233). Reminiscent of Feminism's long-held critical interest in language, they describe ageing as a product of cultural discourse, leading to the notion of "the [cultural] production of ageing" (p. 232). This, against a backdrop in which "once clearly demarcated youth cultures and music scenes…[are becoming] increasingly multi-generational" (p. 232).

But age identity is not only important in the social sphere; it is also linked to older adults' physical and mental health measures, showing

"amazing predictive powers" with regard to loneliness, morbidity, and even mortality (Yu & Wang, 2023, p. 3). Old age identity is thus a potentially better predictor of cognitive ageing patterns than chronological age.

For these reasons, researchers are paying greater attention to factors that may influence age identity. Among some of the perhaps more obvious factors that have been identified, such as health status and demographics, "leisure-time activities" may also influence age identity (Yu & Wang, 2023, p. 3), and a sense of "higher personal accomplishment" turns out to be not only a predictor for "perceived subjective younger age" (Yu & Wang, 2023, p. 3), but also an underlying factor that contributes to a sense of wellbeing among older people (Creech et al., 2013).

Since musical participation by older adults has already been shown to promote a sense of accomplishment (Creech, 2013), and as the latter may be an indicator for a younger age identity, which, in turn, may be associated with cognitive ageing patterns, a link may thus be established between musical participation for older adults and concrete health outcomes. Examining this link, Hallam and Creech (2017) cite specific cognitive benefits to musical participation among older adults, including long-term memory retrieval, improvement in attention and concentration, and reducing the risk of dementia. These connections—but one view of the connections between musical participation and wellbeing for older adults—are illustrated in Fig. 7.1. Our study aimed, among other things, to explore and articulate the benefits of musical participation for older adults regarding identity and wellbeing.

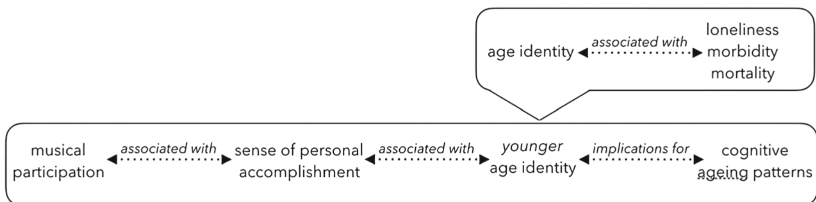

Fig. 7.1 Benefits of musical participation for older adults

Music and Identity

As a much-discussed subset of music whose boundaries are contentious (to say the least), popular music is understood here in a broad sense to encompass a wide variety of music that is commodified, appreciated by, and distributed to a large audience, generally in contemporary industrialised societies (Middleton, 1990; Tagg, 1982). The relationship between *popular* music and identity is complex and intriguingly multidimensional. In addition to the concepts of youth and age, the cultural turn also affected how we think about identity, reshaping it not as a fixed phenomenon, but rather as something in constant flux, based on our relations to others and to our environment. Identity was now described "not as a boundary to be maintained, but as a nexus of relations and transactions actively engaging a subject" (Clifford, 1988, p. 72). In other words, identity is "relational and conjunctural. A sense of distinctiveness and authenticity is constructed vis-a-vis others" (Cohen, 1993, p. 132).

This relationality of identity, that is, its formation in constant relation to others, becomes especially significant with regard to older adults who risk suffering greater levels of loneliness and isolation, due to their losing connections over time with the popular culture around them—a process that has been called "identity stripping" (Gullette, 2004, p. 30). Although perhaps obvious, it bears mentioning that our identity changes over the course of our lives. We inhabit "multiple realities" regularly, "worlds that we share with others, the ones we dream of, the ones we believe in, and the ones we only share in private", (Sternad, 2021, p. 312). This is further complicated by the more recent addition of digital worlds that are being promoted in and outside academia.

We also inhabit multiple temporalities, projecting ourselves forward or backward in time as we recall "the worlds we once inhabited and the ones we may find ourselves in someday" (Sternad, 2021, p. 312). What becomes apparent through such reflections is that identity and ageing are inextricably intertwined, so much so, that "the discourse on personal identity is in fact also, maybe without even realising it, a discourse on the problem of aging" (Sternad, 2021, p. 317).

One way of understanding identity-formation among older adults that has been explored in the literature is through the psychological construct of possible selves, that is, ideas about what one "might become," "would like to become," or even is "afraid of becoming" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Possible selves "serve to organize and energize one's

actions" (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989, p. 212) and are linked to both temporary and long-term self-change (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p.965). The concept of possible selves can also help to dispel myths about older people, such as that they are change-averse or learning-averse. Smith and Freund (2002) found that even among people aged 70–103, "the future-oriented motivational system associated with possible selves" continued to be active, demonstrating that older people can and do look forward to their own future possibilities, rather than disengaging into a decline narrative, as is too often portrayed (p. 498). Possible selves, then, may "provide insight into how goals can shape the process of ageing" (Creech et al., 2014b, p. 35), and future-oriented activities, such as music-making can be a powerful tool in constructing possible selves and a positive self-image.

Referring explicitly to the "cultural turn" in social theory, Bennett and Taylor (2012) advocate for the idea of identity as a reflexive and creative "project of the self", a construct that draws upon, among other things, music (p. 231) in its continual (re)formation. Many attribute to music a distinctive role in the construction of identity. In this vein, music has been referred to as a "fundamental building block in identity" (Mundy, 2000, p. 1), with the power to influence how individuals perceive themselves (MacDonald et al., 2009). Sociomusicologist Simon Frith (2011) writes that "our experience of music–of music making and music listening–is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process*" (p. 109). He goes on to describe identity as "not a thing but a process–an experiential process which is most vividly grasped *as music*" (p. 110).

These ideas are positioned within an extensive literature concerned with culturally available identities in music (e.g., composer, performer, violinist, and so on), and the ways in which music is used to shape or "perform" other facets of identity (e.g., nationality, age, generation, personality). This literature also encompasses, for example, ethnomusicological research focusing on the role of music in cross-cultural contexts (Gregory, 1997), as well as investigations concerned with the development of musical identities (Burland et al., 2022; Creech et al., 2020; Davidson et al., 1997; Lamont, 2002).

Music doesn't just unite across geography, but also across generations, that is, across time. As Bennett (2013, p. 1) points out, one would be hard-pressed to name a living generation in the Westernised world for whom popular music has not played a "pivotal" cultural role, with examples of musical styles from each decade serving as a kind of generational

identity marker, from 1950s rock 'n' roll, through the psychedelic generation of the '60s and the punk '70s, to the disco/dance generation of the '80s. To these musical identities, we may append the hip-hop/indie generation of the '90s and the techno/EDM 2000s generation. While such historical style-mappings are, of course, too tidy to be fully accurate and too scant to be truly comprehensive of the countless overlappings and subsumed styles they purport to represent, what is clear is that popular music offers a rich forum for identity formation.

Popular Music and Later-Life

Recognising that there are cultural influences that shape how we think of age, youth and identity can be helpful in shedding preconceptions about what our relationship to music should resemble in later-life. Frith (2011) critiques "the assumption that the sounds must somehow 'reflect' or 'represent' the people" (p. 108)—something that he explains may be more complicated than it at first appears, particularly in an era of appropriation and amalgamation of musical styles: "The issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience - a musical experience, an aesthetic experience - that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity" (p. 109).

The rapport between music and identity works not only in a group dynamic, but also on an individual level. Jazz, for example, with its centring of improvisation, "is an art of individual assertion within and against the group…each solo flight, or improvisation, represents…a definition of his identity; as individual, as member of the collectivity and as a link in the chain of tradition" (Ralph Ellison, cited in Hall & Gay, 2011, p. 118). The above quote by Ellison suggests musical improvisation offers a unique opportunity to "define" one's identity—a theme present in our rock band workshops that will be discussed shortly.

There are, however, real barriers to older adult musical participation, whether physical, psychological, or societal. Bennett and Taylor (2012) cite several studies indicating how older people's musical tastes "narrow" and how their investment in popular music activities "lessens" (p. 232) as they age. Rock music, along with several other genres commonly associated with youth such as rap and techno are among those that are said to become "least favoured" (p. 232) in later-life. One possible explanation offered by Harrison and Ryan (2010) and echoed by Bennett and

Taylor (2012) is that there may be a societal stigma attached to "age-appropriate" behaviour that discourages older people from keeping their attachments to these musics. Thus, older adults who maintain an interest in such music may be said to be part of a sub-culture within the greater sub-culture of old age.

There are also external barriers, such as ageism. Bennett and Taylor (2012) call out as ageist those descriptions of older people's continued investment in some popular music activities as a kind of "resistance towards social ageing" (p. 233) for being "grounded in a relatively essentialist notion of ageing," and they highlight the importance of a "form of address that engages with popular music's aesthetic value in a post-youth context" (p. 233).

While such critiques are important, it is also worth questioning whether the aesthetic value of popular music actually does differ between younger and older people. Studies involving musical participation among both age groups indicate that both younger and older people may derive similar senses of accomplishment, individual agency, and meaning (Hallam & Creech, 2017, p. 240; Mieder, 2016, p. 182). It seems at least plausible that the psychological and emotional mechanisms by which older people derive a sense of identity and/or meaning from popular music may in fact be more similar to those for younger people than some suppose. In other words, in those same criticisms of essentialism lies the potential for unintentionally allowing or furthering that essentialism.

To summarise, identity, as currently theorised, whether we are speaking about older or younger people, is a reflexive social construct that is based upon several factors, among which we can reliably count musicking—that is, any activity involving music (Small, 1998). With regard to older people's identity, musical participation has been shown to offer older adults a sense of group identity, belonging, "and access to new social roles and relationships" (Hallam & Creech, 2017, p. 240). Music not only plays a role in identity formation, but also can promote general wellbeing, again, across the life-course, which makes it a potentially useful resource for wellbeing in older adults. As older adults face certain challenges that are particular to ageing, such as physical and cognitive limitations, music has proven to be a useful palliative. At the same time, we must be careful to avoid undue or essentialist narratives of decline that diminish music's potential for mitigating the real challenges that older people face.

In addition, it may be the case that musical tastes of older people, formerly thought to be the result of their own agency, may actually be at

least partially dictated by their own age-identities and internalised "age-appropriate" expectations. As such, addressing these counterproductive tendencies can be a liberating and even therapeutic experience for older people who find joy in, for example, musical styles typically associated with youth and youthfulness. We are, again, reminded of the risks of succumbing to cultural pressures to conform to stereotypical age identities in our musical tastes. Moreover, because older people's self-perceived age-identity has been demonstrated to correlate with cognitive function—it appears, to a greater degree than physiological age, as mentioned above–older people's participation in such music may be a potent source of real youthfulness and wellbeing. It is in the intriguing light of the above that we conducted our workshops with a group of older adults using rock hubs technology.

Our research questions were as follows:

1. How can popular music be used as a resource in exploring later-life identities?
2. What are some of the possible affordances associated with participation in a later-life rock band that can contribute to a healthy and creative later-life identity?

Methodology

This chapter draws upon an analysis of data gathered through semi-structured interviews with participants in a participatory action research project, where we explored the experience of music-making in weekly "rock hub" workshops for older adults, during which participants had the opportunity to compose, perform, and improvise popular music using standard rock band instruments (electric guitar, bass guitar, keyboard, and drums) and repertoire that were adapted to be more accessible across a wider range of age and ability. Two eight-week cycles of weekly 75-minute workshops took place, during which older adult novice musicians learnt well-known popular songs chosen by themselves (learning chord patterns and melodies), engaged in rhythmic and melodic improvisation, and composed their own songs. A range of instruments was available, including electric guitars, bass, keyboards, and drumsets, as well as acoustic drums and four-string Merlin "guitars"—described as simple

"strummable dulcimers" with non-chromatic tuning (Acoustic Guitar, 2014)—that could be amplified with pick-up leads.

Interviews were carried out before the workshop cycles began and then again at the conclusion. The participants were 25 adults aged 50–84, drawn from two community music groups in an urban Canadian context. The first group was an English-speaking group who belonged to a lifelong learning association, while the second group was a French speaking group of adult members of a community centre. Table 7.1 shows the number of participants from each group who contributed interviews before and at the conclusion of the music workshop cycles. Seventeen of the original 25 interviewees were interviewed a second time, at the conclusion of the second workshop cycle. In total, 42 interviews were carried out, taking place in the venues where the workshops were held (Table 7.1).

With the participants' consent, the interviews, lasting between 30 and 40 minutes each, were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The interviews included questions relating to musical background, musical preferences, and musical practices (e.g., where and when, and in what way, participants engaged with music). In addition, the following two interview questions were intended to prompt responses concerning the musical identities: (1) Do you have specific goals that you would like to achieve in connection with your musical development? (2) How does your participation in music influence your perceptions of yourself in general and in relation to music?

The recorded interviews were translated (in the case of those carried out in French) and transcribed by the researchers. Identifiable data were removed from the dataset. The project was approved by the Research Ethics Boards of two Canadian universities.

Table 7.1 Total number of participants and interviews

	Community Group (interviews took place in a community centre workshop space)	*Lifelong Learners Group (interviews took place on a university campus, in a workshop space)*	*Total partici-pants*
Interview 1	11	14	25
Interview 2	6	11	17
Total interviews	17	25	42 interviews

Approach to Analysis

A thematic analysis of the qualitative data was carried out, following guidelines from Braun and Clarke (2022). We adopted an inductive approach, with the aim of identifying patterns across the dataset that could inform understandings linked to our research questions.

Our first step was to work individually with two interview transcripts, reading the text repeatedly and annotating the transcripts. Secondly, we worked as a team, comparing and discussing our annotated transcripts, until we had reached consensus on an initial set of themes which served as a starting point for the subsequent analyses. Drawing upon ideas from a critical discursive psychological approach, "subject positions" were identified, referring to the participants' constructions of their "ways of being: - possibilities, beliefs, or actions" in relation to the themes (Budds et al., 2014, p. 11).

The third step was to transfer these themes and subject positions to a qualitative data analysis tool (Dedoose), which allowed us to work collaboratively within an online space. We continued to analyse the remaining transcripts, checking and verifying each other's analyses, and periodically discussing our evolving thematic framework. Transcripts were read repeatedly until a stable framework was established, whereby no further themes or subject positions seemed to be evident.

Popular Music as a Resource for Exploring Later-Life Identities

The music workshops were perceived by many as a space for articulating a sense of coherence in their musical identities, often involving the rediscovery of forgotten or dormant connections with music. For example, one participant noted that:

> *I used to do a lot more of music when I was younger and once I started studying and working … I kind of felt very disconnected … we forget sometimes the joys that were in our lives when we were younger and they get kind of lost to us so, if we can recapture that like in groups like this and they bring up memories, happy memories from our past, that's priceless.*

The opportunity to build upon prior musical skills or knowledge was significant, in repositioning music's role in identity, and identity in music.

One participant indicated a sense of surprise at having been able to reawaken and develop her identity as a music-maker. "I realised, my God it's not that hard to remember. And the more it goes, I'll end up really knowing it by heart, it's getting better and better, it's really going …". Others who came to the groups with very limited prior knowledge made statements that had implications for the role of facilitation and scaffolding the activities, in relation to making the experience psychologically accessible. For example, one participant stated:

> *Show me that I can do it - and you really did that last week. I don't need to know exactly how to read music or… - Just follow a beat and follow some rules and… and Oh! I can do something!*

Emergent Identities in Music: Subject Positions

A number of "identities in music" were expressed through subject positions—representations of "ways of being" in music. The first of these was *a listener*, whereby participants expressed a relationship with music characterised by passive listening (e.g., exposed to background music) or active, intentional listening (e.g., choosing what, when, and where to listen to music). For one participant (see Table 7.2) there was a subtle change between the first interview, where she emphasised that being a listener was not "making music", and the second where she implied that listening was related to musical goals and "creating".

A second subject position was "a learner" in music. Here again, subtle changes were detected in the ways being "a learner" was expressed, when comparing the first and second interviews with the same participant. For example, as shown in Table 7.2, one participant initially described themself as a self-directed learner, where learning chords was "for pleasure". At the time of the second interview, this participant had formulated goals to take their learning further, expressing a sense of excitement associated with the act of learning. Another participant recounted initially that their goal was "to be able to reproduce what we learn". By the time of the second interview, this participant described their success in learning, while still making a distinction between "learning" and "being a musician": "I'm able to follow the workshop, I say to myself that's not so bad. But I don't see myself as a musician, not at all, but I say to myself,

Table 7.2 Subject positions—identities in music

Identity in music	*Description of subject position*	*Example: Interview 1 (numbers refer to the total number of coded extracts)*	*Example: Interview 2 (numbers refer to the total number of coded extracts)*
A listener	Participant expresses their relationship with music as being a passive or active listener—listening to music in the background, or engaging in active, intentional listening (to music)	7 We had a ton of CDs at home, and apart from that, we do go to the odd concert. … Putting a CD into the machine, having chosen what I wanted to listen … I don't make music. I hum from time to time	4 With this music group I've had more music on or YouTube on … that's my main goal—I want to continue … more music. Have it on around me and also creating it
A learner	Participant expresses an identity as a learner. For example, participant may talk about encountering new instruments; identifying the scaffolding strategies that helped them learn, wanting to practise, or generally perceiving themselves as a learner	5 I told myself "I would like to do music when I will be retired"…I bought a bongo six years ago, after that, an electronic drums and a couple years ago, an electric guitar. I never had a lesson - just me watching YouTube. I am trying to do chords only for my pleasure"	6 But now, I feel like going a little bit further, yes. … I'm trying to find a small piano … I can't wait to get settled and learn
A music lover	Participant makes statements about their love of music, and describes themselves as someone whose relationship with music is personally meaningful and enriching	5 Its simple. I love music	1 I really love music in general, and these are instruments that I like to hear

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued)

Identity in music	*Description of subject position*	*Example: Interview 1 (numbers refer to the total number of coded extracts)*	*Example: Interview 2 (numbers refer to the total number of coded extracts)*
A musician	Participant describes a direct relationship with music-making, sometimes adding positive evaluations of one's musical achievement. Participant makes comparisons between oneself and others. As an insider, Participant expresses the idea that they belong in the group, or that they can be considered a member of a music group, with legitimate claim to an identity in music	7 I think I could possibly create something but I've never really explored that side. I've been more of an interpreter	23 We all played the song together as a band and we practised, that was really great. Everyone I could see was having so much fun and they were so happy and I think most of us were surprised that it sounded good, it really sounded like the Beatles
An outsider	Participant expresses the idea that they do not belong in a music group, they are not musical, this is not for them. Participant describes musical opportunities that they were excluded from. Active music-making is perceived as an exclusive activity, for those with high levels of expertise and training. Some see themselves as not a complete outsider, but not quite an insider—being a musician is still possible (but not 'yet')	5 I'd put myself at beginner all the way through for making music	10 I think that it showed me that I'm not going to be part of a band (laughs)

well, I'm able to follow, I'm still pretty good, my comprehension isn't so bad. But I don't see myself as a musician at the moment, that's for sure".

The third subject position was as "music lover". As shown in Table 7.2, this could be expressed as a concise statement ("I love music") or re-articulated with somewhat more detail, as in the example where the participant, at interview 2, adds that they would like to learn "specific instruments". Generally, the "music lovers" expressed the view that they found a "great deal of both stimulation and comfort in music".

A fourth subject position was "a musician". For some, there was a sense of ambivalence associated with their descriptions of themselves as musicians, often with this ambivalence being associated with age. For example, one participant recounted that "I play the piano. In my youth I was advanced, as an adult I am, with my arthritic fingers I don't know what I am". Similarly, another reflected that "I don't know … All I can say is people enjoyed listening to me sing in those days". Others who positioned themselves as musicians used language to convey their sense of themselves as "insiders" in the music group. For example, one participant described her sense of achievement in contributing to the band. "With the band, and the technologies, well, I was able to do things as a team". Table 7.2 sets out a further example, where a participant positioned herself as an "insider" in the band, doing what bands do ("together as a band, we practised") and using an expert comparison (the Beatles) to add to the credibility of this positioning.

Finally, one further subject position as "**an outsider**" was identified. For some, as in the example in Table 7.2, being an outsider in music was an identity that persisted. Positioning oneself this way was linked to the expression of a strong negative musical self-concept that seemed to compete with a desire to take part in music. In such cases, a positive musical identity seemed to be perceived as being extremely difficult to achieve, or just out of reach. For example, one participant explained that:

> *I try at home to sing with the guitar at the same time. It's impossible for me. I would like to go further, to be able to sing at the same time I am doing chords you know. I'm not able. I'm not a musician.*

Another participant implied that the solitary experience of playing the piano had left permanent feelings of being on the outside of the "fun" that others had when playing together.

It's pretty solitary, the piano, it's this great honking thing, and you don't carry them out and play it with other people. So, I think, I realised how much fun it is to play with other people. But you don't have that when you play the piano, really.

Still others alluded to childhood experiences of being excluded from musical opportunities, which had had far-reaching implications.

It would have been fun to play with other people you know, I would have enjoyed that, had I, you know, life had been a little bit different. That's, that's really the perception of myself.

Barriers to Emergent Identities in Music

Through the interviews, many participants expressed barriers or tensions, relating to their identities in music. For example, a recurrent theme was "I want to be part of this music group, but …" - following up with any one of a very wide range of barriers. In this sense, participants seemed to desire and strive for more fully developed identities in music yet used language to diminish the credibility of such identities (Table 7.3).

Age-related self-perceptions were expressed as barriers to desired identities in music. The idea that they were "too old" seemed to be in tension with what was perceived to be required of a participant in music. For example, one participant, speculating about why others had not joined the group, said "they thought that they are too old to learn music. That could be a challenge because at our age you know … my brain doesn't work as fast as yours".

Participants also spoke of barriers related to their perceived ability to succeed in the musical activities. Several described mobility issues or problems with coordination, such as one participant who stated that "my eye-hand I guess is not coordinated". Another described her "shaky hands", emphasising that this was "not going to improve". A peer group member added that "I'm not a spring chicken and I am getting arthritis in my hands so, I'd love to learn the string instruments but it's just not possible".

A second music-specific barrier was concerned with perceptions of one's ability to sing. The very idea of singing evoked a strong reaction among some participants, with one emphasising that he was prepared to try "anything except singing. Singing for me is very very difficult. I know

Table 7.3 Barriers to emergent identities in music

	Interview 1 Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme	*Interview 2 Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme*
Barriers related to general self-concept		
I am too old	4 I realise that as I get older it's harder to learn	4 I'm learning anyway, everything you're showing me … but it's certain that with age we're a little less alert … it's harder to learn, it's more difficult … [but] I wanted, I really wanted
Barriers related to perceptions of one's ability to succeed in the musical activities		
I have mobility or coordination issues	10 I have limited amounts of energy and muscle. I have my rheumatoid arthritis it's a health concern	18 I love to drum, but to have to continually drum through a song, I found like, I'm getting too old. My fingers were sore or my, you know, my leg was getting sore so things like that were challenges,
I do not have a singing voice	7 No, no, no. No singing, I am not good singing, I'm not a good singer	1 Singing—I have my limits
I have limited musical ability or prior musical knowledge	13 My brother was singing very well and my sister also and when I tried to join I was told to well, 'shut up'. I have no talent and I agree with that	14 Everything we did was new to me, you know, even if I had stuff in the past, still the techniques and everything were new
It is too hard	10 If it's too hard, I don't know, maybe I will discover. Maybe it will be too hard for me	4 I can count, and I can clap rhythms like there is no tomorrow but … I tried the guitar—it bothered my fingers, they're not meant for that, but that's ok. But it was the opportunity to learn something new and I would encourage anybody to go through that
Barriers related to fears of unknown consequences		

(continued)

Table 7.3 (continued)

	Interview 1 *Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme*	*Interview 2* *Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme*
I might fail	13 I am afraid I'm not going to be able to understand or be able to use the instruments	0
It might damage my hearing or cause pain	6 I have tinnitus now and every time I play a note [mimics high pitch sound]. I should wear [ear] plugs	0
Other people might make fun of me	11 I'm afraid of looking like a fool, you know, just looking stupid, we don't want to look stupid	0

that I don't sing well and it's very… I'd like to, but it doesn't work so, it's just a source of stress".

A self-concept as "non-talented", or limited in ability or skills in music, was a further barrier to the construction of a musical identity. In some cases, this perception had been long established and reinforced. One participant stated that "I love music, but my talent is so limited that I stayed away from it. As a general request by other people". Others spoke about prior musical experience but indicated that the ways of making music in the rock hub were new and unfamiliar. This was linked to the final task-related barrier to nurturing a musical identity within the rock hub, which was the perception that participation in the band was "too hard". Prior to the workshops beginning, participants expressed a general sense that this may be too difficult, whereas after the workshops had concluded they were more likely to compare the difficulty level of activities or instruments, or to express the view that "it was harder than I had anticipated". As one participant said, "I really like the sound of the keyboard … I think that making a sound with a finger is simple, it's easy, at least if you play easy ballads. You press the note, and the sound comes out … unlike playing guitar … it requires more manual dexterity to pluck the strings".

A further set of expressed barriers related to fears of unknown consequences. For example, participants were afraid of failing to understand, play the instruments, or to generally do what was being asked of them in the group. Secondly, participants were afraid of looking foolish, leading to being "made fun of". As one participant stated, "in the band, when I was experimenting with a new instrument, I didn't want to sound crazy". Another noted that she "would really like to be able to play to my heart's content and not feel like people are going to be really critical". Another added that "even when I try and play at home, it's really discouraged". Finally, there was some fear expressed related to unknown physical injury, such as harm to hearing.

The Experience—Affordances Associated with a Healthy and Creative Later-Life Identity

Notwithstanding the barriers that were expressed, participants had voluntarily become members of the rock hub, suggesting that the affordances associated with this activity mitigated the stated obstacles and fears. Participants rationalised the barriers by highlighting the expected and unexpected ways that their identity as rock hub participants had highlighted the wider benefits of music in identity (Table 7.4).

As shown in Table 7.4, rock hub was experienced as a vehicle for personal learning and development—a space where participants were provided with the tools to access musical skills (e.g., "At the end of today I can play C D F and G chord and rhythm") and thus be equipped to experiment with their potential identities in music:

> *You play because you like it, you feel good when you play, and you feel good when you are with others who play with you. … it's a growth experience. A personal growth experience.*

This exploration of identities in music was achieved through participation in a collective form of musical expression that had previously been accessed vicariously, and which evoked strong images. As one participant joked, "[I will] go as far as I can … Replacing in Pink Floyd!". Another added that "I would like to be, you know, in a band or imagine myself as a drummer".

In addition to moments of significant personal learning and growth, participation in rock hub provided pleasure and relaxation. In this vein,

Table 7.4 The wider benefits of music in identity

Affordance—Rock Hub as a vehicle for:	*Interview 1* *Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme*	*Interview 2* *Numbers indicate the number of times text was coded at this theme*
Personal learning and development	12 I think most of us are here to try to better themselves by learning music and that's why I am here for, to try to improve myself	12 In terms of creativity, my perception has changed because I have never, I have always perceived myself as a person with very little creativity and I realised by practising with you that I could develop that. So that's a very important change of perception
Pleasure	18 If I imagine myself playing music I imagine that it's going well and that I'm having fun. That's how I see it	54 I'm in another world when I'm making music, like it's like I, it's me, I'm the one playing, it just like, I love it, I just love it
Relaxation	4 To learn to play something that I can relax with and because I am a really nervous person and all but I read about being nervous like this, one of the best remedies you can have is music	2 I loved the musical exercises we did as a group, I thought they were, you know, really fun and help people relax
Social bonding	8 And it's a band, it's in a band, it's fun. And I wanted to see what I could do in music at this time	22 The way to do musical activities as a group, that like. And to create songs and to play together … that I find interesting … a real band. I realised how much fun it is to play with other people

participants described "just laughing and enjoying the interactions". It was furthermore highlighted by participants that personal growth, pleasure, and relaxation took place within the social network that rock hub represented. Within the band, participants experienced a group musical identity:

> *Being with other people … who are all doing the same thing, on the same level..., it's like everybody dives in at the same time, and some people can swim more or less but they still go. It's like a feeling of 'I'm part of the group'.*

Discussion

In this chapter, we explored popular music as a resource for older adults in forming later-life identities in music through a project that enabled older adult novice musicians to compose, perform, and improvise music using the rock hubs method. Our data, which was based on interviews after the weekly music workshops, demonstrated the value of this type of musical activity notwithstanding some persistent physical and psychological barriers.

We began by arguing for the relevance of popular music in the lives of older adults, as opposed to its more common association with youth and youth culture. Despite an initial bias toward youth in popular music studies, a growing number of researchers are contributing to a collective realisation that older adults, too, derive much benefit from participating in popular music, whether as performers or listeners. It remains to be determined if the benefits of popular music for older adults are truly different in nature from those of younger people, or if it is more a question of their simply being mitigated by one's age, according to one's attitudes, beliefs, and physical abilities.

Because popular music is context- and period-dependent, e.g., what was considered popular for one generation may not be considered as such for another, this underscores the importance when working with older adults of getting to know their person's personal musical culture in order to better meet their creative and aesthetic needs.

Because, like popular music, our concepts of age and identity are also fluid and multi-faceted, the reality is that we must pay special attention to distinguish well between physiological and psychological barriers if we are to arrive at a truly effective means of improving quality of life through

music. Impressing this fact upon older adults is no less important than doing so for the facilitators who work with them, since the physical limitations of ageing have already been quite successfully culturally engrained in us by the time we find ourselves in the category of old age, as can be seen by some of the persistent barriers to emergent identities in music we observed in our data. Without denying the physiological reality of ageing, it is crucial to recognise that there is another reality associated with our *experience* of ageing that mitigates the former. This is where the subjective experience of music-making takes hold and can make a significant difference—and not just a spiritual or emotional one, but a physical one as well—in the lives of older adults.

Identity, too, is formed via a complex nexus of relations between our selves and the world around us and is intricately tied to ageing such that it is difficult to conceive of identity-formation that is not somehow dependent on our awareness of the ageing process. Because one's taste in and expression through music have been shown to be such strong constituents of identity, and considering some of the convincing responses we received affirming this for older people as well, this question merits, at the very least, further examination. And while popular music has typically been considered the voice of youth, this view omits the fact that older adults passed through similar stages of identity-formation with popular music of their own era, which gives pause to essentialist views that suggest they somehow have a fundamentally different experience of musicking.

Moreover, when one ceases viewing old age as the end of life, and rather looks at it as another stage in a continuum of being, music in general, and popular music in particular, suddenly offer forward-looking possibilities for positive identity-formation among older adults as it does for youth, such as hope for improvement in performance, awareness of having developed new skills, recognising one's musical creativity, forming connections with co-creators and looking forward to new musical collaborations, such as were indicated in some of our data.

One additional, specific affordance of later-life popular musicking is that there is the possibility of reconnecting with former musical selves and reviving past identities—an affordance that diminishes with youth. All these things can contribute to a positive self-image and an enhanced identity for older people that do not conform to the portraits of inability and futility so commonly hung on the doorsteps of the ageing community.

Our interviews bore out the above observations: Older adults were able to take up several different subject positions in relation to popular music,

from listener to performer. For the *learner* subject position, changes were observed during which a participant would develop enthusiasm in the desire to develop musically.

Barriers were also observed in the *outsider* subject position, where a participant's negative memory of being unable to participate in music or where their internal dialogue of being "incapable" of playing or of playing well enough hindered their formation of a positive musical identity. Additional "outsider" barriers related to the ageing body, and the perception of a lack of time necessary to develop into a musician (whatever one considers a musician to be) or even into someone who could benefit from participating in music. These dialogues are especially pernicious to developing a positive musical identity among older adults and require additional efforts to overcome.

Lastly, our interviews showed that the rock hub workshops offered concrete affordances to older adults' identity formation, most directly as a vehicle for personal creative development, but also as a means of relaxation and pleasure. Participating in the rock hubs enabled participants to build social bonds, which, as mentioned above, is a critical dimension in forming a sense of self-identity. Participating in the workshops was thus a rich resource to older adults and merits further exploration in the efforts to create a happier and healthier older population.

Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogical orientations, intentions, tools, and strategies are (or arguably should be) guided by the learners' aims and expectations. Here, it is clear that participants turned to the rock hub as a context where they could explore the role of music in their identities, and in so doing, experienced self-development, social bonding, pleasure, and relaxation. These four overarching outcomes may not always easily co-exist (i.e., relaxation may not always accord with activities that promote deep learning and musical development), yet they can serve as a framework for planning and structuring meaningful later-life music learning in community.

The subject positions as well as barriers to musical identities noted in this chapter reveal further clues as to the pedagogical choices that could support later-life music learning. For example, pedagogies that value and recognise prior learning, and that are founded upon relational practices that privilege mutual respect, empathy, and trust (see Chapter 2 in this volume) can support the development of "insider" identities in music,

whether as learner, listener, or ultimately as musician. Importantly, such pedagogies offer great potential for mitigating the harmful implications of age-related and other psychological barriers to the development of musical identities, as illustrated in this chapter.

Finally, it is also vital that facilitators consider age-related constraints and accordingly select tools and approaches that provide accessible entry points to participation. In the rock hub, for example, participants were able to select from a range of instruments, each with its own specific physical demands. Where the demands of an instrument function as a barrier to musical identity, it is incumbent upon a facilitator to find an alternative tool, whether that is a digital instrument, the voice, percussion, or something else. In other words, the tools that we use should serve the development of musical identity, derived from particular musics (as illustrated in this chapter, popular music may be particularly important) experienced and facilitated through supportive and affirming relational practices.

Limitations

Our workshops were limited to 25 people, and not all of them participated in the second interview, which leaves open the possibility that we might have had different results had we had responses from everyone. The age range of our participants was fairly broad, representing a 34-year spread and potentially one to two generations. We did not analyse our responses according to age, but it is possible certain attitudes or affordances were particular to only a subset of our participants. Our workshops also comprised two different language groups, English and French, and it is possible that certain nuances of meaning were lost in the translation into English that could have impacted our coding.

While the rock hubs proved to be a valuable resource for older adults, a differently designed study would be required to ascertain whether or not popular music offers distinct benefits as compared to other musical genres. Without such studies, one may only speculate about the accessibility of popular music compared to, say, classical music for novice musicians. In principle, the rock hubs method of improving accessibility to instruments and repertoire could be applied to other musical styles, but this was beyond the scope of our study.

What is clear is that the societal attitude that popular music—especially rock music—is somehow incongruent with old age needs to be

reconsidered and that this music can indeed serve as a valuable resource in developing positive later-life identities. It is our hope that other researchers, care, and community workers will appreciate the wealth of possibilities popular music can offer in improving the lives of older adults and will contribute toward determining the best path(s) forward for our ageing population.

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CHAPTER 8

Facilitating Later-Life Community Music Learning in Offline and Online Contexts

Angelina Lynne, Malinalli Peral Garcia, and Andrea Creech

Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss our work in facilitating two later-life community music groups. While this chapter has some overlap (in terms of context) with Chapter 7, it is differentiated by our primary focus on the facilitator perspective and the approaches that we took to supporting creative musical experience within offline (in-person) and subsequently within online environments, with a secondary focus on the lessons learnt from participants. By exploring the following questions, we aimed to

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© The Author(s) 2025
A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_8

identify the musical tools and pedagogies that may support creative expression and musical development for older adults:

1. What are the facilitation approaches that may support creative music-making with older adult novice musicians within in-person and online environments?
2. What are the learner perceptions associated with using different instruments, including mobile technologies (iPads), in the context of later-life creative music participation?

Context

Who We Are—The Facilitators

As facilitators, we (Angelina and Malinalli) bring years of teaching experience across multiple capacities, contexts, and all ages, from one-to-one studio teaching (on instruments such as guitar, ukulele, bass guitar, piano, and voice) to music in schools and university, church, and community contexts. We both received certification as RockHubs mentors (RockHubs, 2020), where we learned various ways to facilitate later-life 'rock band' workshops, encouraging participants to play instruments and be involved in music creation. Between the two of us we speak three languages, Spanish, English, and French, which proved helpful when communicating with participants in a multi-lingual environment. Angelina, with a background in voice, piano, and choral direction, has previously worked with older adults in healthcare settings such as hospices and care homes for residents living with various stages of dementia, organising music-making events, and performances, and directing a women's choir of singers aged 70 and over. For Malinalli, working with older adults in a group setting was a new experience.

As Varvarigou and Creech (2021) suggest, "the term 'facilitator' refers to a leadership role that involves creating the conditions for awakening or reawakening the capacity to learn and change" (p. 181). Our goal was to create a welcoming learning environment that encouraged curiosity, creativity, and self-expression, where participants would not only gain our trust—an important factor in presenting challenging material—but also feel comfortable getting to know each other and creating music together (Creech et al., 2014a). By valuing each participant and their

diverse knowledge, skillsets, and challenges, acknowledging their potential, and being committed to their learning, we aimed to help participants become familiar with various musical elements, such as rhythms and chord-making, so they could eventually feel comfortable improvising and composing a song together using the knowledge gained and tools provided for them. The qualities of facilitation that guided our pedagogical practice included a personalised approach, enthusiasm, patience, respect, warmth, and care (see Chapter 2 of this volume for a discussion of relational pedagogy, which framed our practice), which we believed would support our participants in taking ownership of their learning, recognising their musical potential and growth, and being confident to experiment, create, and collaborate.

Our Groups

Our research involved the participation of two community groups, one predominantly anglophone and the other francophone, comprising older adults aged 50 and above. Our participants came to the workshops with varying degrees of mobility and health concerns. For example, some lived with reduced mobility and used a cane or rollator walker. Some participants also experienced pain while holding and playing certain instruments, while others lived with vision or hearing loss and shared openly about the related challenges they experienced while making music with the group. While many of our participants lived within the vicinity of the workshops and arrived using their own vehicles, others relied on public transportation, which sometimes made it difficult for them to attend.

Structure of the Workshops

The weekly 90-minute music workshops were grouped into three eight-week cycles, with the final cycle held online, synchronously. During the offline, in-person workshop cycles, both groups met weekly in person to create and play music together. We structured our workshops to include icebreakers and warm-up activities that comprised learning and practising rhythms and singing, chord making, improvisation, playing together, and songwriting. Using the RockHubs as the framework and FigureNotes (Kivijärvi, 2019) as a pedagogical tool that aided learning pre-composed songs and notating each group's own creations, we encouraged participants to explore rock band instruments and technological devices such

as the electric bass and guitars, keyboards, drum kit, and iPads. We also added some acoustic instruments like the Merlin guitar, a fretted four-stringed instrument, and the Orff resonator bells.

In March 2020, following the restriction of in-person gatherings caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the workshops were reorganised and moved online. As joint facilitators of the workshops, we had become accustomed to specific ways of communicating with each other and complementing each other's roles—often relying on non-verbal cues. The online environment required a major adjustment, due to the loss of those usual means of in-person communication cues, coupled with limitations in the extent to which we could see and hear our participants play together. Therefore, we decided to work with smaller groups, dividing the overall time (90 minutes) between two groups, who now attended for 45 minutes each. We continued with a similar structure in that we provided icebreakers and warm-up activities online and we found ways to create rhythms and to improvise using the iPads, a keyboard, and occasionally household items. Both the offline and online workshops will be discussed in greater detail in the sections on facilitation approaches.

Data Collection and Analysis

We carried out semi-structured interviews with the participants prior to the start of the workshops and again at the end of the three workshop cycles (refer to Chapter 7 in this volume for further detail), as well as video recordings of our 16 offline, in-person workshops. We completed a thematic analysis of the interviews and furthermore conducted a time-sampling analysis (i.e., the videos were stopped for 5 seconds at regular one-minute intervals and coded according to the observed activities and behaviours) of video recordings of each in-person workshop (Oldfield, 2001). The online workshops were not recorded at the request of the participants. Our facilitator field notes, which aided reflections and deepened our analyses, included audio-recorded post-workshop debriefing and planning meetings.

Older Adults and Creative Music-Making

As life expectancy has increased considerably in the West and as more adults above the age of 65 are experiencing good health, the interest in creative musical activities among this age group has grown significantly

(Gruhn, 2021). As discussed in Chapter 5 of this volume, creativity is a characteristic of every individual, and creative opportunities in the latter parts of our lives provide opportunities for reflecting upon past experiences. Music learning and participation have been explored as contexts that offer rich potential to foster creativity alongside a host of wider benefits. For example, a rationale for musical opportunities in later-life includes evidence of enhancements in mood, quality of life, inhibition (Bugos et al., 2020), healthy ageing both physically and psychologically (Varvarigou et al., 2013), and personal development (Odendaal & Hodges, 2021). Fung and Lehmberg (2016) note that older adults who participated in music-making activities noticed an improvement in enjoyment and expression. The aesthetic benefits of music learning experiences can furthermore motivate older adults to continue participating in music throughout their lives (Bugos et al., 2020).

Older adults bring to their learning diverse age-related assets as well as potential needs (Hayley et al., 2020). For example, assets include prior knowledge and experience, wisdom, and resilience, while needs may be related to age-related cognitive or physical challenges, social support, or functional needs such as transportation. Facilitation practices, therefore, must "leverage assets and address unmet needs" (Hayley et al., 2020, p. 119) to foster meaningful learning experiences. To provide a straightforward example of needs, some older adults struggle with loss of hearing or vision, requiring that facilitators speak slowly and articulate well and provide large print versions of the scores (Matthews, 2021). Equally, assets can be recognised and celebrated through activities that connect with participants' own life experiences (Creech et al., 2014a). In seeking tools that respond to age-related assets and needs, facilitators in later-life music contexts can explore the affordances of traditional acoustic instruments alongside digital technologies. Mobile technology, which, of course, is increasingly a feature of everyday life for all ages, can provide alternative access points to music-making (Creech, 2019), as well as opportunities to "unite people in real and virtual worlds" (Zaheer et al., 2018, p. 189). Digital applications (apps), smartphones, and tablets can be excellent resources in the classroom and Zaheer and colleagues (2018) suggest that the learning that is achieved through using them can be innovative, dynamic, interactive, and collaborative.

Facilitation Values and Practices

Being a facilitator of lifelong learning involves creating an environment where learners feel empowered to venture into unknown territory, ask questions, and connect with one another through activities that forge meaningful links between their experiences and new knowledge (Brookfield, 1986). Accordingly, facilitators play a key role in fostering an environment where curiosity thrives, and learners feel supported in exploring and pursuing their interests. Importantly, facilitation of lifelong learning is not unidirectional in terms of potential affordances or indeed challenges, but rather is a dynamic and at times complex role that provides opportunities for growth for both the facilitator and the participants (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). In this sense, critical questions that facilitators in later-life music contexts may grapple with concern how the group and its activities may be structured in order to foster fairness, equal access, and mutual compassion, while promoting and encouraging expressions of creativity (Brookfield, 2005). In this section we explore some of the facets of facilitation that we experienced in our practice.

Cultivating a flourishing community of learners is a key responsibility of a facilitator (see Chapters 3 and 6 in this volume for further discussions of a sense of community achieved through later-life music participation). In this sense, the facilitation role with regard to the interpersonal dimensions (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of relational facet of pedagogy) of the group is vital: for example, responsibility rests with facilitators to navigate group processes that involve personal and collective emotions, tensions, and even resistance (see Creech & Hallam, 2017), while also establishing a shared sense of meaningfulness and ownership in the group activities.

In cultivating community, facilitators must be committed to inclusivity, and responsive to the diversity that is frequently a feature of lifelong learner groups (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). These values of inclusion and responsiveness go hand in hand and may be articulated through pedagogical practices that raise awareness of—and mitigate—power dynamics (Brookfield, 2005) and prioritise the value of each person's presence in the group. Specific practices may therefore include activities that acknowledge the perspective and contribution that each participant brings, or collaborative activities that celebrate shared experience and collaborative efforts. Facilitators may also structure activities that emphasise learning from mistakes, perhaps modeling the vulnerability that is inherent in risk-taking and personal development (Findsen & Formosa, 2011). A

sense of inclusion can furthermore be promoted through a participant-led approach to decisions about what to learn, or how they want to learn it (Findsen & Formosa, 2011).

Decisions relating to any one of these pedagogical strategies (and a multitude of others) require that facilitators reflect in-and-on their practices and make intentional choices in response to learner needs and group dynamics. Such choices will be framed by overarching considerations of when to take a directive role (for example, demonstrating skills, setting the parameters for activities), or alternatively when to act as a guide (for example, supporting group members in making sense of the learning and navigating resources, and setting their own goals). Facilitators may also adopt a very collaborative role, as a "fellow traveller" (Jones, 2005) in the learning and as a co-creator in the activities.

The continuum of orientations to facilitation have been represented in models such as those proposed by Heron (1999), encompassing hierarchical, cooperative, or autonomous approaches, or Jones (2005), who highlighted the so-called *gatekeeper* (the facilitator makes decisions about curricular material), *midwife* (the facilitator guides learners in the process of discovering knowledge and building skills), or *fellow traveller* (the facilitator collaborates with learners in a process of exploration). Each of these models concerns themselves with the position of the facilitator in relation to knowledge and skills, or to learners. On the one hand, a 'gatekeeper' is closely aligned with the object of the learning, and makes hierarchical decisions *for* the learners, with regard to what to learn and how the learning should proceed. The 'midwife', on the other hand, still has a clear goal in mind, but takes a different tack in guiding learners towards the goal and is furthermore open to adapting or changing the goal, taking decisions *with* the learners, that are responsive to the learners' preferences, needs, or aims. Accordingly, a 'midwife' facilitator may draw upon a range of cooperative strategies that provide scope for learners to build their own meaningful connections with the learning, and to develop skills in learner-led ways. In contrast, the 'fellow traveller' collaborates with learners, and provides the space for learners to take autonomous decisions about their own learning.

Such decisions may be influenced by where the group is in its 'life-cycle' (Creech & Hallam, 2017); for example, a later-life group who is in its early stages of embarking on a programme of unfamiliar activities (such as in the case of novice adult music learners) may include older adults who bring with them "feelings of nervousness and trepidation…unsure of what they are doing" (Findsen & Formosa, 2011, p. 107). Here, facilitators may focus on scaffolding a sense of security and self-direction among the group members, through a combination of guidance, direction when needed (for example, in relation to specific skills that can be built step-by-step), alongside opportunities for exploration and meaning making. Later, when trust has been established, the group dynamic may be such that the facilitator could encourage more participant-led activities, offering guidance only when needed. The relative balance of these different orientations to facilitation will almost certainly shift, or fluctuate, as the group coalesces and progresses (Creech & Hallam, 2017), and there is no definitive 'approach' that will be effective for all learners in all later-life contexts. The key point is that at any point the decisions regarding what is learnt and how it is learnt are made in a critically self-reflective and responsive manner that is guided by values such as inclusivity, community, collaboration, and personal development.

The Anatomy of Our Workshops

In this section, we describe the structure of our in-person, offline workshops, beginning with an overview of our facilitation approaches and specific scaffolding strategies. We follow this overview with a discussion of the pedagogical activities in each one of the major segments of the workshops, which were divided into icebreakers, rhythm, notation, learning well-known songs, and improvising or songwriting. We conclude the discussion of the in-person workshops with an account of the orientations to facilitation that were observed. Following this, we move on to a discussion of the 'anatomy' of the third cycle of workshops, which was held online.

Facilitation Approaches Within the In-person Environment

Our weekly in-person workshops were divided into segments that included icebreakers, warm-ups, and activities such as imitation, call and response, creating patterns, improvisation with others, composition, music reading, choosing the songs, and developing ensemble skills. Figure 8.1 shows an overview of the workshop activities, as observed in our analyses of the video recordings of each workshop. As can be seen, notwithstanding some shared aims, the two groups differed in some significant ways. For example, Angelina's Group 1 (the anglophone group) spent nearly half of their time engaged with music reading activities (using FigureNotes and learning to read rhythm in traditional Western classical notation), while Malinalli's Group 2 (the francophones) spent more time playing together as a group, in improvisatory or call and response activities. These differences demonstrate variety in facilitator and learner choices but also illustrate the variability that can be found among groups of older learners, who come to their learning with diverse experiences, preferences, personal goals, and expectations.

We used a range of scaffolding approaches (Creech et al., 2014b) to support each one of the musical activities, and to build upon the musical skills the participants had learned in the previous workshop, such as playing rhythms and chords, exploring tempi, singing, improvisation, and practising the songs in our RockHubs songbook. Figure 8.2 shows an overview of the scaffolding approaches that were observed in our analysis of video recordings of the two cycles of in-person, offline workshops, with each bar of the graph representing the percentage of observations that were observed in each scaffolding category. Differences between the two groups can be seen. As illustrated, in Angelina's group (Group 1) we made most use of clapping and playing along with participants, although the instances of those kinds of scaffolding decreased during cycle 2, when singing along became more prominent. In Group 2, led by Malinalli, clapping along and offering physical help (e.g., help with the physical demands of specific instruments) became more prominent in workshop cycle 2, while modelling and playing or singing along decreased.

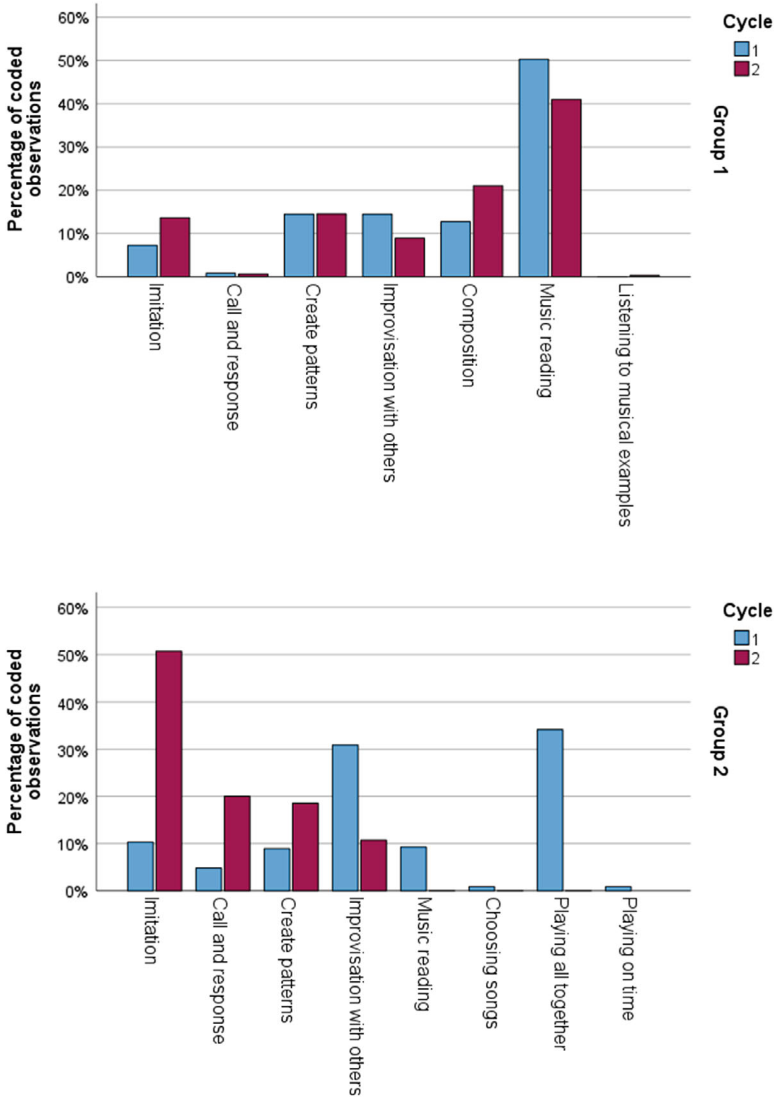

Fig. 8.1 Overview of workshop activities

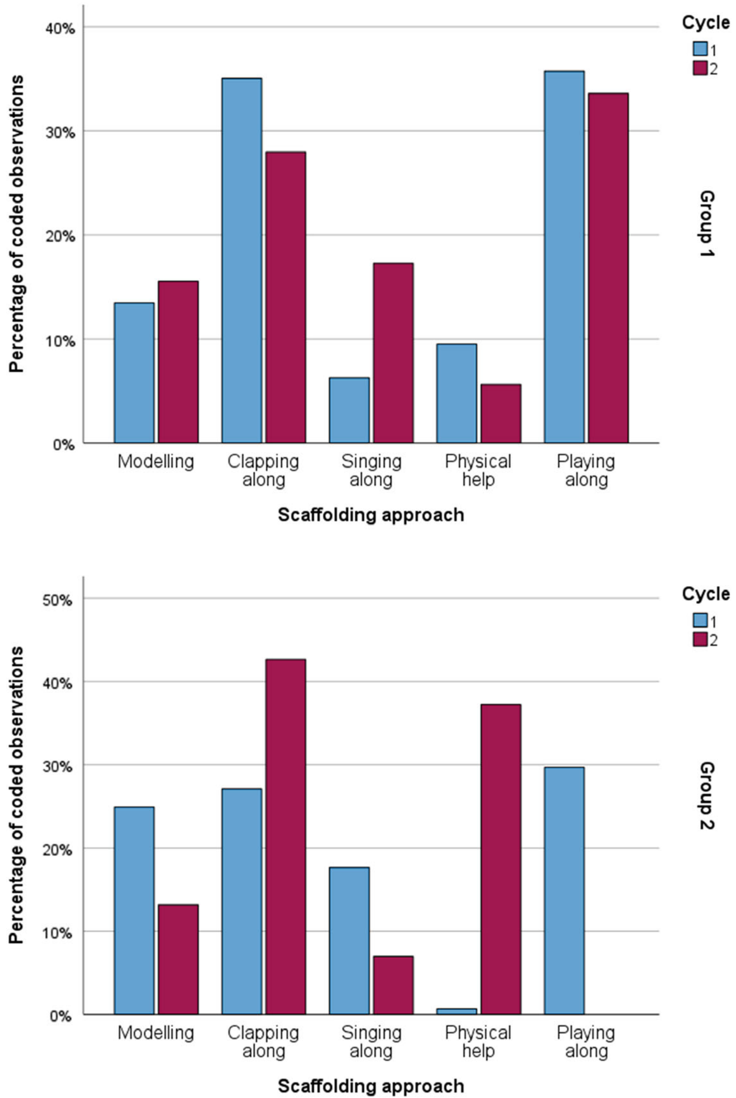

Fig. 8.2 Scaffolding strategies observed in in-person workshops

Icebreakers and Warm-ups

Upon arrival, participants were greeted by facilitators and encouraged to partake in various icebreakers and warm-up activities prepared ahead of time. The icebreakers and warm-ups were structured with imitation, creating patterns, or call and response, and our facilitation was framed with humour, positive reinforcement, and encouragement. These activities were held in a circle format, to promote interaction and a sense of group membership (Jaques, 2000). The icebreakers included getting to know and introducing one another, name games such as singing and speaking names rhythmically to help participants become acquainted with each other, rhythmic and melodic exercises with gestures and movement to audio clips, drumming on djembes and practice drum pads, and vocal warm-ups. Our aim was to use the icebreakers to support a sense of group identity while also building skills in rhythm, chord-making, improvisation, playing or singing, and songwriting. In some instances, facilitators and participants took turns being the leader, creating rhythms using body percussion and movement. At other times, we went around the circle with each person proposing a rhythmic pattern. We also used recordings of familiar songs, accompanying these with movement, rhythm, or vocal sounds on the beats, at times also using visual prompts. Once these activities had been done in unison, we split the group into two and eventually into three as we tried the warm-ups in rounds (canon).

Rhythm

To support the participants' musical knowledge and skills, we introduced musical concepts such as tempo, beats, and rhythm. We introduced Western rhythmic notation using laminated cardstock showing note values (e.g., eighth, quarter, half, dotted half, and whole notes), reviewed them one by one, and scaffolded the learning by gradually raising the complexity of the rhythms. The participants worked in pairs using drumsticks to tap the rhythms on drumming practice pads or djembes; when participants became familiar with a pattern, we altered the rhythmic patterns and encouraged them to practise and explore the possibilities of creating new rhythms with their partners. We also used rhythm backing tracks to practise stability with tempo. Some participants used iPads with the Thumbjam application to experiment with rhythms by choosing percussion instruments from the choices offered in the application. The

facilitators were proactive in scaffolding experiences of success in each of the activities. For example, we created step-by-step activities, increasing complexity very gradually and ensuring that participants were successful at each step.

Use of Notation

Our participants were excited about experimenting with the instruments that were available and using these instruments while learning their favourite songs. To support them in this goal, we used FigureNotes, a simplified notation system developed by music therapist Kaarlo Uusitalo and music educator Markku Kaikkonen, where each musical note is represented by a coloured symbol and matched with an identical sticker on the instrument (Kivijärvi, 2019). Except for the drum kit, these stickers were placed on all the instruments we used in our workshops. We were also able to change the interface on the Thumbjam application to reflect the FigureNotes colours and symbols so that those playing iPads could also follow the notation and create their own notated music.

Learning Well-Loved Songs

Our participants had access to rock band instruments such as the electronic keyboard and drum kit, electric and bass guitars, as well as iPads and midi keyboards that could be amplified with portable speakers, Merlin guitars, and Orff resonator bells. In collaboration with RockHubs (2020) we created songbooks (compilations of songs chosen by participants and transcribed to FigureNotes). With these visual prompts, participants played simple chordal accompaniments to whole songs within a very short time (Laes, 2015), followed by the addition of melody lines. In learning the songs, we focused on keeping a steady beat and playing together in an ensemble, while connecting the coloured Figure Notes symbols with specific notes that corresponded with the root of each chord in a sequence. The chord-making process with the participants was straightforward. Once participants had mastered a chord sequence playing the root notes, they added "friends"—the third of the chord. For all the instruments, participants found physical ways to play that they felt most comfortable with.

Like Creech and colleagues (2014a), who found that older adults preferred to engage with music that was familiar to them, we also

found that participants enjoyed playing familiar songs such as selections from The Beatles, Johnny Cash, and Elvis Presley, and for the francophone group, well-loved classics such as *Non je ne regrette rien* and *Pour un instant*. Participants discussed which songs they would like to see added to their repertoire. Following these conversations, we created FigureNotes versions for each song the participants had suggested, including *Jingle Bells*, *Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree*, *Jingle Bell Rock*, *Autumn Leaves*, and *Bella Ciao* to name a few.

Improvisation and Songwriting

To encourage individual creativity and expression, we invited participants to experiment with the instruments and to change instruments whenever they wished to do so. We experimented with various ways of improvising; for example, sitting as a whole group in a circular formation or working in duos or trios, participants used the Thumbjam Application to explore instrumental sounds and took turns creating melodies and rhythms in various keys and modes—in some cases composing chunks of music that were eventually woven into group songs.

In Group 1, approximately one-third of each session was devoted to songwriting. We began with brainstorming themes, and then lyrics. To gain inspiration, we experimented with singing the suggested lyrics to melodies of songs our participants were familiar with, such as *Yellow Submarine* for the chorus and *We Will Rock You* for the verses. Each week, our 'signature' song began to take shape and eventually it was given the title *Picnic on the Beach*. Seated in a circle, the group repeated each phrase in spoken rhythm, exploring their preferred rhythmic patterns, which were then practised on djembes and drumming pads. Eventually, we divided the large group into two groups to work in teams and then smaller groups so that they could work on different portions of the song, creating their own melodies. At the end of each workshop, all the groups came together and took turns teaching the others the portion of the song their group had worked on. Rhythms and melodies were notated and translated to FigureNotes. At our facilitator debriefings for Group 1, we noted that participants appeared to be most happy when they collaborated in this way, evidenced by much laughter and smiling faces. However, Group 2 was less interested in songwriting during the in-person workshops, preferring to play and sing familiar songs while swapping instruments from one workshop to the next. Nonetheless, they

too composed a song during the online workshops, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

Orientations to Facilitation in the Offline Environment

In the analysis of video recordings of our in-person, offline workshops, we observed that different orientations to facilitation aligned with specific types of activity. In Group 1, within the music reading activities, the greatest percentage of the coded observations were of a directive nature while the smallest percentage were coded as autonomous facilitation. Within the composition or improvisation activities, the reverse was apparent; autonomous facilitation was most predominant, with directive facilitation being less frequently observed (Fig. 8.3).

In Group 2, a directive approach was observed to be prominent when participants played together (in these cases, the facilitator conducted rather than playing along) and during imitation activities, while the cooperative and autonomous orientations to facilitation were more apparent during improvisation activities (Fig. 8.4).

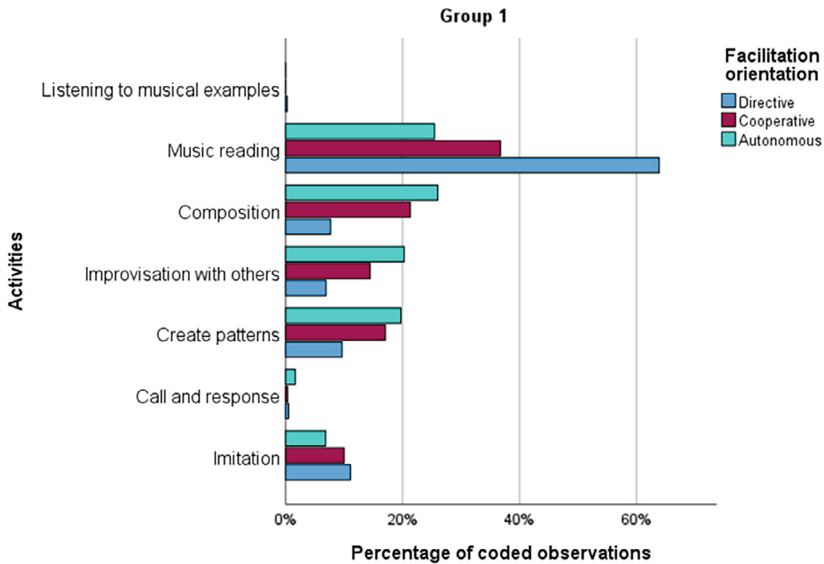

Fig. 8.3 Group 1 facilitation approaches

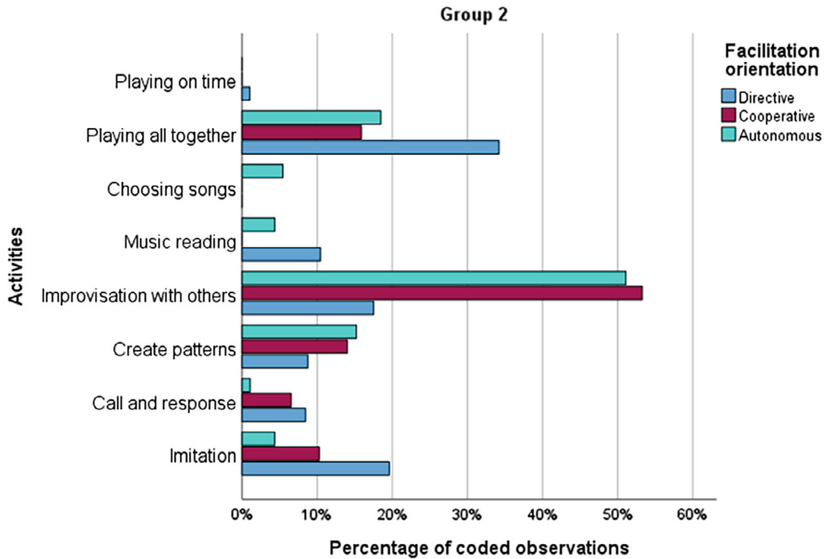

Fig. 8.4 Group 2 facilitation approaches

We explored whether our orientations to facilitation may have corresponded with the interpersonal climate of the groups. Figure 8.5 illustrates that in Group 1 when the facilitator was directive, there were fewer instances of 'seeking help'; this makes intuitive sense, as in a directive approach participants are less likely to take responsibility for problem solving. It can also be seen that socialising and laughter were both features of the group, overall, but socialising was most prominent when the facilitation encouraged autonomous learning. Finally, discussion on task was apparent, irrespective of facilitation style, but less so in the directive context.

In contrast, Fig. 8.6 illustrates that during Group 2 activities coded as directive, participants sought help, alongside laughter, discussion on task, and socialising. This may reflect the fact that Group 2 spent significant time playing together, conducted by the facilitator (coded as 'directive'). In fact, in Group 2, irrespective of the observed facilitation style, the interpersonal climate was characterised by a mixture of laughter, discussion, and socialising on task, alongside seeking help.

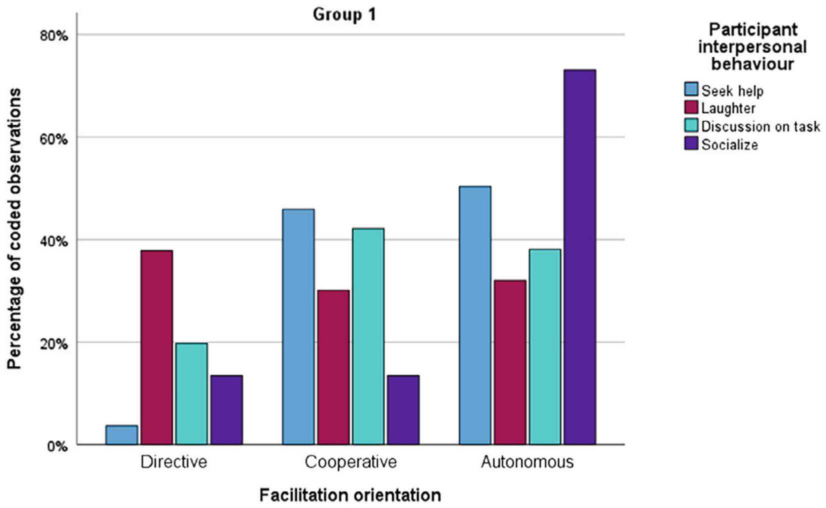

Fig. 8.5 Facilitator orientations and the interpersonal climate: Group 1

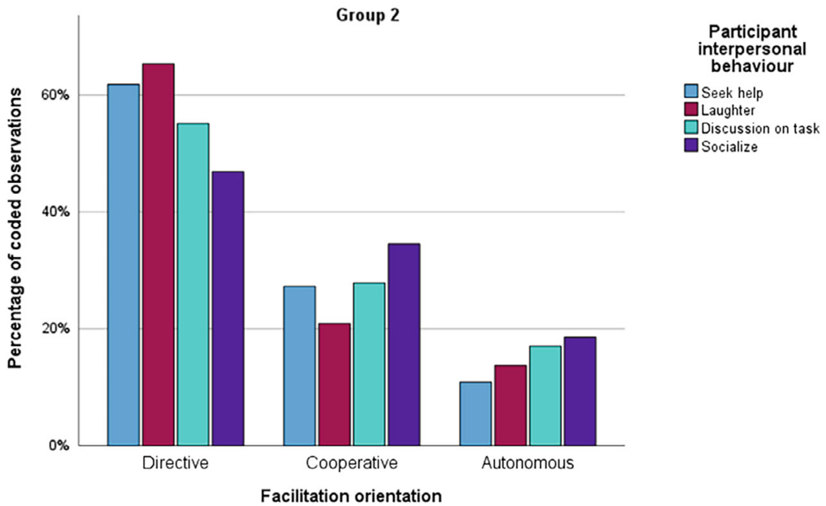

Fig. 8.6 Facilitator orientations and the interpersonal climate: Group 2

Online Workshops

As online teaching (distance education) had been shown to be an effective way to facilitate learning in the past (Keengwe & Kidd, 2010), we considered how to best utilise asynchronous and synchronous online learning, in ways that would meet the needs of our groups, mindful that we were all navigating the experience of isolation brought on by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The asynchronous context allows for learning to take place anywhere and at any time as it is not constrained by time (Malik et al., 2017). Conversely, the synchronous context is time-bound and often requires face-to-face participation (Nieuwoudt, 2020). The possibilities for collaborative musical learning using technology such as computers, tablets, applications, and the internet, for example, are extensive and have been shown to potentially enrich later-life (Creech, 2019; Liu-Rosenbaum & Creech, 2021). This next section will discuss how we employed these approaches to facilitate our music-making activities.

Zoom: A Practical Solution

With its capacity to include multiple people in a meeting, screen sharing, and audio functions specific to musicians, we used the platform Zoom with both of our groups to connect and create with our participants synchronously. As the facilitators began using Zoom daily for courses, meetings, and activities during the pandemic, we quickly became acquainted with the platform and it was therefore a practical solution for facilitating our workshops.

Technical Support Assistant

Being generally unprepared for online learning, many participants struggled to participate, constrained by the limitations of a wide range of devices; the devices used to access the online environment included computers, laptops, tablets, cell phones, and a land-line telephone, few of which could have been described as 'up to date'. This, coupled with the unfamiliarity of the Zoom platform and the complicated and overwhelming nature of hosting the workshops online, led quickly to the realisation that a technical support role was necessary. This role would also alleviate the onus on facilitators to answer technology-related questions

during the workshops, allowing them to focus solely on the facilitation of musical activities. Throughout the remaining weeks online, the technical support assistant answered many questions and assisted participants with diverse technological tasks that ranged from turning on their devices to navigating the many challenges related to Zoom (muting and unmuting the microphone). Eventually, some of the participants became quite comfortable with the technology we were using and were able to offer help to other participants.

Synchronous Creative Activities

To streamline our creative activities, we were fortunate, eventually, to be able to deliver an iPad to each participant at their residence, to be used for the duration of the workshops. Most participants created music using these iPads; however, in Group 1, one participant chose to use their own electronic keyboard, and eventually, another participant was set up with the electric bass guitar. In Group 2, one participant purchased a portable 'roll-out' keyboard. This created a sort of 'snowball effect' as two others did the same. The first continued to learn piano independently, alongside the project's workshops, using a mobile application.

During the online workshops, we used the iPads in many ways. Participants investigated all the possibilities that were literally at their fingertips, including the various keys, scales, and instruments that could be played within Thumbjam, the volume control, and control over the span of notes available, as well as the looping and recording features. At the beginning of some workshops, we showed photographs of various scenes, such as waterfalls, a path through the forest, or a sunset sky and other times photographs of a single object like a tractor, a snowflake, or a rainbow. To encourage creativity and improvisation, we asked the participants to mute their microphones and explore the sounds in the Thumbjam application that they felt represented the scene or the object in the photo on-screen. One at a time the participants shared their creative and imaginative sounds with the group. Other times, we played short clips of silent videos and gave participants time to improvise brief musical scores that could accompany the video. Apart from the iPads, we occasionally used household items to create rhythms. As we explored improvisation together online, we began to see moments of extraordinary creativity.

The workshops improved when we took the time in our planning and debriefing meetings to define more specifically the role of each facilitator.

For example, while one facilitator led the discussion around creating song lyrics and used the screen-sharing option to display the progress, the other scanned the screen checking to see if anyone might look lost or confused and solicited responses from participants. We encouraged our groups to express in song lyrics how the pandemic-related lockdown was impacting their lives. Group 1 was then supported in developing melodies to add to their lyrics, with facilitators taking turns in recording and transcribing the melodies being created. In Group 2, the participants chose a well-known Québecois song as a backing track. Proposing lyrics together, final decisions about the lyrics were achieved through negotiation and discussion about what would best fit with the chosen melody.

Opportunities for Asynchronous Creativity and Continued Learning

As we could not model in person how to manoeuvre certain tasks on the iPad, Thumbjam, and in singing, we created instructional videos and uploaded these to a private YouTube channel. These videos were always accessible, and participants could refer to them as often as they wished. To achieve this quickly, each facilitator used their strengths and knowledge to create short videos in English or French, with the resulting eclectic series of videos including topics such as technical elements of the iPad, navigating Thumbjam, vocal and physical warm-ups, chord-making, and improvisation to well-known backing tracks. We also made videos of the songs found in our RockHubs books. Since we could no longer practice and play these songs together, it was essential for participants to have something they could play along with to practise their rhythm, tempo, and chord-changing skills. Eventually, after participants had composed their own songs, we uploaded recordings of these too. We also created click tracks of their compositions so that participants could audio/video record themselves playing, with these recordings eventually being compiled by our technical support assistant. The final compiled recording was given to the group in celebration of their creative work.

Orientations to Facilitation in the Online Environment

Our facilitator field notes and reflections on the online experience revealed some discomfort on our parts, initially. The participants were not alone in becoming accustomed to Zoom—facilitation online was new to us.

We found ourselves stripped of multiple resources that had been available in the offline context, and often felt worried that the participants were unhappy, bored, or frustrated. It was difficult, especially at the outset, to gauge how people were feeling or the group dynamic, without any of the interpersonal in-person cues that we become accustomed to. Initially, we found ourselves reverting to predominantly directive pedagogical approaches.

However, we all gained confidence and we developed a repertoire of strategies. We learnt that it was essential to give our participants time to reflect and to engage with dialogue. We felt the gaps of silence were awkward at first, but we realised that there were many things to consider such as time lag, difficulty in hearing, shyness, courteousness (participants not knowing who should start first), and possibly fear. We learned to be very specific in who we were speaking to, calling out the person's name. Most importantly, we became better listeners, allowing these moments of silence and resisting temptations to fill the silences ourselves.

Songwriting, in particular, was a shared activity that helped participants and facilitators alike to explore and express some of the fears and anxiety about the pandemic. Work on lyrics and melodies was interspersed with skills-based activities such as a scaffolded session on building chords and then creating chord sequences. At times we used our acoustic instruments at home, such as the piano or the guitar, to play back melodies that participants had created, or to provide something resembling a live 'backing track' for the online participants to accompany.

In short, over time we developed strategies that allowed the learning to be participant-led, or collaborative, alongside guided and facilitated activities. However, it took time and patience on the part of the whole group.

Lessons from the Learners

In this section, to deepen our understanding of the facilitator roles and responsibilities in later-life music contexts, we discuss our participants' beliefs about learning as well as their perceived barriers to learning, as captured through in-depth individual interviews at the conclusion of the three workshop cycles. We carried out a thematic analysis of the interviews (please see Chapter 7 of this volume for more detail concerning our approach to analysis).

Beliefs about Learning

Participants spoke about their beliefs about learning, before and after the workshop cycles. Table 8.1 shows the themes and the number of coded references within each theme, found during the interviews with participants carried out at the start of the workshop series and again at the conclusion. As can be seen, participants talked about learning in greater depth, after they had experienced the workshops. Their comments indicate that they believed that non-judgemental support from facilitators and peers alike was a key factor in their learning, and that for the most part they were focused on the process rather than performative outcomes. Their comments also revealed that within a supportive environment they had come to feel comfortable in asking for help, had formulated learning goals, and had experienced rewarding feelings of achievement.

As facilitators, these key themes reinforce our responsibility to provide safe and trusting learning environments, where participation is facilitated by setting goals, by stepping outside of their comfort zone, and embracing challenges or exploring new ideas or approaches in music. The participants' beliefs about learning also highlight the importance of peer groups in supporting and learning from one another, within a framework where the focus is primarily on encouraging and accommodating processes of music learning and development. Finally, the interview themes suggest that older adults in these groups were open to trying new things, including technology—which seemed to have provided a transformative 'way in' to learning music, for at least some participants. However, adapting to an online environment presented many challenges (see Chapter 9 of this volume for a detailed discussion of the process of shifting to—and persisting with—online learning). The responses indicated that overall, participants felt a loss of the in-person experience, and yet were surprised at the achievements that were possible within the online space.

Table 8.1 Beliefs about learning and making music

Beliefs about learning and making music (themes)	*No. of interview extracts coded at each theme, and example quotes*	
	Beginning of the workshops	*Post-workshops*
Achievement and development is exciting and sometimes surprising	2 Other instruments also like the iPad. People could see that Hey! that's both fun and it makes a nice sound!	21 We've been able to pull that off …it was a big accomplishment that we were able to do the songs and when I heard the song from the other groups, I mean, that was great
Asking for help and feedback is OK	0	3 I realised that it is harder sometimes to just say like 'I have no idea what's going on right here' and I actually loved that some of the people in our group sometime would say it out loud
Goals can support learning	7 The objective of the two of us [is] to be able to play something together	8 I have goals that I set now for listening…I found that this was good discipline for myself
Learning is a process	1 It's practising, and having courses, and practising in a group…	12 When it comes to learning music…people … have fun and they just enjoy the process
Learning is supported in a peer group	5 By myself I can't learn more than what I am trying to do, you know…I am here to learn with other people	8 Being with other people who have different experiences, who all lend themselves to the same exercise… it's like everyone dives at the same time, and there are some who know more or less how to swim but they go anyway. It's like a feeling of 'I'm part of the group', it's okay and there's no judgment, there's nothing like that
Learning means embracing challenge	9	37

(continued)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Beliefs about learning and making music (themes)	*No. of interview extracts coded at each theme, and example quotes*	
	Beginning of the workshops	*Post-workshops*
	I like to try, to be in a zone of discomfort	There is always something to be learned, no matter what…It's much more difficult [than I expected], but I guess I will finally arrive to a good sound
Facilitators are key in supporting learning in a pressure-free environment	1 A teacher…they give you the gust to go further	7 Cause the way she explained everything, and even the people who didn't have much background, I think that they were able to learn quite well… She puts you really at ease and she's very good at that she really feels at ease you know, doesn't put you on the spot you know
Music-making is accessible with technology	5 That instrument with the (makes gesture referring to the Beamz [a tabletop digital instrument that uses motion sensors to trigger samples]) that will help to show that people can do something with no knowledge and let them play with the other things	5 Last night I was fiddling around with the iPad and …I went to the program where you play the piano there… you chose a song, like moonlight sonata …it's so beautiful, it's like I'm in another world when I'm making music, like it's like I, it's me, I'm the one playing, it just like, I love it, I just love it
Moving to an online environment brought new challenges	0	17 On Zoom I found it harder, because I just couldn't hear like what other people playing, what's the instrument they're using and being able to learn from them on Zoom was harder than in person, it flowed, and it was faster when we were in person I think that's the way things are going in the future whether I like it or not. I have to change … if I want to continue on Zoom was hard, it was harder, I still enjoyed that I knew the people…so we got to connect and really try and it was nice to create a song over the weeks That was a, some achievement and a surprise that we were able to do it. Especially doing, being able to do it when we were on Zoom

Conclusion

In this chapter we have analysed and discussed our pedagogical approaches to facilitating music workshops for older adults, in offline and online contexts. In addressing our research questions, concerned with the facilitation approaches and resources that may support creative music-making with older adult novice musicians, some key issues have emerged.

First, facilitation is an expression of values and beliefs. Hence, it was crucial that we examined our own values and intentions with our groups, and that we reflected on the ways in which those values were expressed through the pedagogical choices that were enacted in our activities and interactions with group members. As we have explored in this chapter, we aimed to create a learning environment that privileged opportunities for developing musical potential, while also fostering interpersonal connection, creative expression, and joy in collective music-making. As Coffman (2018) has stated: "…an environment that supports learning […] includes not only the physical environment […] but also the emotional climate. If adults are to work collaboratively, they need a safe, accepting, respectful environment that fosters openness, cooperation, and trust" (p. 697).

This foundational aim was expressed through deceptively 'simple' pedagogical choices, such as seating participants in a circle to encourage a sense of community, equality, and inclusion (Pavlicevic, 2003). In accordance with evidence that has suggested that scope for active contributions and participation decreases as group size increases (Jaques, 2000), we alternated between whole ensemble activities and small group activities; while the ensemble brought everyone together, small groups such as duos or trios provided opportunities for celebrating individual preferences, experience, creative ideas, and achievements. Indeed, varying the group size allowed for rich collaborations, peer learning, and personalised engagement. Additionally, the small groups in particular provided a safe space where participants felt comfortable asking for help, which supported learning as well as strengthening trusting relationships among peers and facilitators.

Second, we made extensive use of various forms of scaffolding (Creech et al., 2014b), with a view to fostering incremental experiences of success and achievement. Scaffolding included singing or playing alongside participants, conducting, and introducing achievable layers of complexity

in musical skills and concepts, always through practical activities where learning was experienced through 'doing' and collaborating. In tandem with scaffolding, goal setting played a vital role in our workshops, as goals provided all of us (participants and facilitators alike) with a clear pathway and sense of purpose (Coffman, 2018). In this vein, to promote a sense of participation and ownership of their learning, we encouraged individuals to help us to understand their own musical goals. This in turn guided our pedagogical choices, allowing us to respond with scaffolded activities that were aligned with the participants' goals.

Our third key reflection was concerned with the importance of supporting exploration, and the facilitator's role in balancing this with familiar anchors such as well-loved songs. Curiosity in later adulthood has been under-researched, yet opportunities to be curious, derived via lifelong learning, may be related to enhanced self-esteem and pleasure (Knopf & Talmage, 2018). In this vein, a vital feature of our workshops was the time devoted to exploration of instruments and their physical demands, musical concepts, songwriting, and the aesthetic possibilities of free improvisation. Importantly, 'being curious' included exploration of digital technologies such as iPad applications, which for some participants provided accessible 'ways in' to making music either individually or as part of an ensemble.

In a sense, the participant experience in moving from strongly guided to free exploratory activities was mirrored by the facilitator experience in shifting from highly structured and scripted to more improvisatory pedagogy (see Chapter 4 of this volume), as required. While providing rich opportunities for learning (from each perspective—the participant or the facilitator) these shifts in orientation could involve some discomfort that was mediated by a strong and positive interpersonal climate. Perhaps the most profound experience of discomfort and ensuing growth as facilitators was through the experience of pivoting to an online context. As discussed in the chapter, this experience presented many challenges, requiring us to explore unfamiliar 'facilitation territory'. Ultimately, the lessons from the online environment have many applications in any context; for example, listening actively; embracing the possibilities that digital technologies offer in an ensemble context; making use of instructional resources via something resembling a flipped classroom (e.g., whereby self-directed learning can be supported with resources such as video tutorials that participants access in their own time); expanding scaffolding approaches to include more extensive use of open questions and

dialogue (as recommended by Creech et al., 2014b); and devoting time to collaborative projects such as songwriting.

Whether the learning environment was offline or online, our participants reinforced for us the importance of focusing on the creative and developmental process of learning, while at the same time scaffolding their progress towards recognisable musical goals. The participants' beliefs about learning also reminded us that successful facilitation is grounded in warm and mutually respectful relationships, expressed through pedagogical strategies that establish trust among participants and between participants and the facilitator. This final point may seem obvious but requires deep and critical reflection on the part of facilitators, with regard to the pedagogical orientations, strategies, or activities that can best support participants in feeling valued and secure in taking risks in their musical explorations.

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CHAPTER 9

Adapting to Change: A Community Band's Journey in Using Technology to Continue Music-Making During the Pandemic

Mariane Generale, Audrey-Kristel Barbeau, and Andrea Creech

Introduction

Later-life is often characterized by increasing loss and profound change in life circumstances, requiring strategies and resources for adaptation (Kaspar et al., 2022). Many researchers have attempted to explain the ways in which older adults adapt to change (Coleman & O'Hanlon, 2008), perhaps one of the most prominent frameworks being that

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_9

proposed by Baltes, who identified the three processes of selection (being selective in relation to the goals one devotes resources to in later-life), optimization (optimizing and refining the available resources to function well and achieve goals), and compensation (using compensatory processes to mediate decline in specific areas) (see Baltes & Carstensen, 2003, for example).

In this chapter, we explore processes associated with later-life adaptation and persistence in the face of stressors associated with the global pandemic, declared on March 11, 2020 by the World Health Organization (Infection Prevention and Control Canada [IPAC], 2023). Several measures were enacted to limit the spread of infection, including restrictions or total bans on social gatherings, curfews, and contactless engagements. Though this may have created opportunities for some to step back and spend time with family at home or acquaint themselves with new and old hobbies, the new regulations disrupted many peoples' normal ways of life, causing stress, fear, and worry about future uncertainties.

Perhaps most impactful to all, regardless of age or background, were the strict rules on social distancing and bans on social gatherings. Many people found themselves isolated and alone, as public spaces closed and activities ceased (Dalmer et al., 2023; Raman, 2023; Segerstrom et al., 2023). Music communities in particular were significantly impacted, as "traditional" rehearsals—involving many people in a room, often in close proximity—were no longer possible under new social distancing rules. In response, many musicians and ensembles found ways to creatively and flexibly adapt by moving into the virtual format (Barbeau et al., 2022; Daffern et al., 2021; Ferreri et al., 2021; Hansen et al., 2021; Onderdijk et al., 2021).

Context

The Montreal New Horizons Band (MNHB), a bilingual and intergenerational community wind band operating in the heart of Montreal's downtown, is primarily a learning-ensemble, with the goals of promoting healthy ageing through engagement with music and offering a safe and welcoming environment for people, no matter their musical background, to come together to learn and make music (Montreal New Horizons Band [MNHB], n.d.). As such, many members join the MNHB wanting to learn music to keep their minds and bodies active, to build a community with others who share a passion for music, and because music

is a highly significant and important part of their lives. Being mainly comprised of older adults aged 50 and over, on April 2, 2020, the MNHB was forced to stop in-person rehearsals due to the health risk it posed to our population. This led us to explore the ways in which we could adapt to the pandemic environment.

As well as being researchers in the field of music and ageing, we are the founder of the MNHB (Barbeau) and one of its main teachers and conductors during the pandemic (Generale). The push to change and adapt not only affected MNHB's musical activities, but our original research plans. Prior to April, 2020, we had aimed to investigate the effect of a peer mentorship programme on the members' relationships within the band by pairing more experienced musicians with newer, less experienced musicians. Due to the suspension of in-person rehearsals, this project could no longer be carried out.

After much thought, planning, and encouragement from MNHB musicians, it was decided that we would open new music-making opportunities, notwithstanding the limitations of COVID-19. This meant adapting from our traditional in-person rehearsals and exploring a virtual rehearsal format (Barbeau et al., 2022). For our teachers, this adaptation required a high degree of creativity, openness, and flexibility in pedagogical approaches (Barbeau et al., 2022). For our musicians, the changes required that they make the choice to adapt—not only to the new format of rehearsals, but also to learning the tools they would need to maintain their participation. This dual adaptation (in the context of the prolonged global pandemic)—to going from in-person to virtual *and* learning the technological tools along the way—became our new research focus. In this chapter, we therefore look at the process of adaptation by six members of the MNHB to an online environment, and factors that helped or hindered their persistence with their participation in the band. We aimed to address three main research questions:

(1) Shifting: What were the perceived challenges or benefits of shifting to an online environment?
(2) Learning: What were the factors that were perceived to support or constrain online music learning and participation?
(3) Attitudes: How did participation in online group music-making affect participants' attitudes towards technologies and technology-use?

A Rationale for Moving to an Online Environment

There exists an already extensive and still growing body of literature that examines the challenge of social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Several studies have found isolation and loneliness to be associated with poorer quality of life (QoL), health, and wellbeing outcomes (Labouvie-Vief, 2015; Löfgren et al., 2022; Lopez et al., 2021). In response to this, music-making and learning—and particularly *group* music-making and learning—have been found to provide cognitive, physical, and emotional stimulation, while also helping to build and maintain social networks, fostering both a sense of belonging and agency, and contributing to finding meaning in life (Barbeau & Mantie, 2019; Creech et al., 2013, 2014; Varvarigou et al., 2012).

Within the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, strict pandemic rules regarding social distancing and gatherings resulted in even greater risks of later-life isolation (Dalmer et al., 2023; Raman, 2023; Segerstrom et al., 2023). For the MNHB members, the cessation of collective music-making activities added another layer of deficit within their lives, as they risked losing access to the benefits derived from music. In response, we were committed to offering continued music-making opportunities for our members. To do so, we needed to embrace and utilize technologies, which up to that time had not figured prominently in our usual pedagogical practices. Some MNHB participants did decline the online option, choosing to cease their activity during the pandemic. This was reflected in a large drop in registration numbers, echoing similar studies looking at organizations who shifted their activities online. For example, in a paper looking at the library as a space for older adults to read magazines for leisure, though the library dedicated much of its resources in expanding their digital offerings, many older adults chose to stop their magazine-reading in the library altogether due to factors like a strong preference for print media, or simply not liking the experience of reading magazines digitally (Dalmer et al., 2023).

Study Procedures

Participants

During the winter semester of 2021, 23 musicians participated in MNHB online activities (approximately one quarter of our pre-pandemic group). From this online group, six participants were recruited for the research, aged between 57 and 66 years old (mean age of 63 years): Dorothy, Agnes, Charlotte, Abby, Oliver, and Benjamin (pseudonyms to preserve anonymity). The six participants each completed a musical background questionnaire, showing that, overall, music was a significant activity in their lives, expressed through playing or singing at home, and listening to music in some form (live, recorded, or background music). Regarding their musical skills, there was variability in self-perceptions concerning the extent to which they considered themselves to have good musical skills (or not).

Data Collection and Measures

Data collection took place at the beginning of the second semester of virtual rehearsals (Jan–Feb, 2021) and again at the conclusion of that semester (June 2021). Participants were asked to complete: (1) an Attitudes to Technology (ATT) rating scale derived from González and colleagues (2015), who validated a measure of seniors' attitudes towards computer use; (2) the Self-report Quality of Life Profile: Seniors Version (QoLP:SV—brief version: Raphael et al., 1995, 1996); and (3) open-ended questions regarding their motivations, expectations, and experiences of participating in virtual rehearsals. The ethics board of the Université du Québec à Montréal approved this project.

Analysis

Because of our study's small number of participants, answers for each item on the ATT were compared to investigate item-by-item changes pre- and post-study. A similar procedure was followed for the QoLP:SV. Responses to open-ended questions were explored for information or examples regarding significant changes in the ATT and QoLP:SV pre- and post-study. Open-ended responses in French were translated using a translation software (DeepL, n.d.) and double-checked for meaning and clarity by the second author, a native French-speaker.

The data presented and discussed here complement an earlier article on conductors' and older amateur musicians' perspectives about virtual music-making (Barbeau et al., 2022). In that paper, we explored how intergenerational relationships supported online group music-making; how the transition may have supported digital literacy in later-life; and what online music-making looked like in a COVID-19 context with three older adult musicians and three young adult conductors. Pedagogical implications were also discussed, examining best practices and reflections from both teachers and students on their experiences. By using our previous findings and analysing them in the light of the new data collected and presented here, we aim to paint a more holistic and retrospective view of MNHB's adaptations to change during the COVID-19 pandemic, shedding light on older adults' response to change, their motivations to adapt, and their personal experiences.

The Motivation to Continue: Shifting and Persisting

Our six MNHB study participants attached a high personal significance to music in their lives. When explaining their reasonings for signing up to virtual rehearsals, one musician wrote:

> I've had a passion for music for a very long time. I've always enjoyed playing a musical instrument, learning and making people feel good through music. I thought it was interesting when it was mentioned in the objectives of the survey and project that the "aim was to develop creative musical activities to promote the quality of life of people aged 50 and over." I think that this is quite a valuable goal and point and it allows (amongst many things) a way for people to gain knowledge and learn how music can be an important tool to help people maintain certain cognitive awareness. (Oliver)

In addition to this, other participants described music as a resource that helped them to manage their stress (Benjamin) and boost their morale (Charlotte).

Besides a love for music, it seemed many were also looking for a way to keep their minds active in their post-retirement years calling it a "way to keep my neurons active" (Dorothy) by learning a new skill (Agnes). Additionally, one musician in this study was able to find a positive, despite the

less-than-ideal circumstances of the global pandemic and what it meant for MNHB's rehearsals, saying: "[music] keeps me from regressing, if not improving. I also hope to learn how to use technology, which sometimes seems to operate in an obscure way" (Abby). This may indicate that MNHB's online rehearsals also provided her with the opportunity to learn technology in addition to feeding her passion for music and being around others who shared her values (such as music playing an important role in life and a commitment to learning new skills).

These responses illustrate how music—and engagement in this ensemble—functioned as an important resource in our participants' lives. So, how were these musicians able to shift their perspectives and goals in an environment that limited or removed certain resources, such as seeing meaningful others face-to-face, or being able to make music in the same room together as a group? And how were they able to find meaning in this adversity?

For the musicians who did choose to continue with MNHB into the virtual rehearsal format, there was potential uncertainty and discomfort as they adapted to and adopted technology as a means to maintain their music participation. To deepen our understanding of the experience of those of our members who persisted with their learning, even where this meant a shift to the online environment, we consider the shift-and-persist (SAP; Chen & Miller, 2012) theory, whereby it is posited that one adjusts to stressors by *shifting* and *persisting*. The concept of resilience—defined by Chen and Miller (2012) as the capacity for successful adaptation in response to threat, as well as a type of "thriving" in which individuals experience positive outcomes even in hardship—was utilized in SAP to understand how children of low socioeconomic backgrounds were able to cope despite prolonged adversity. This theory has since been recognized for its potential applications in different contexts (Chen & Miller, 2012; Chen et al., 2023). According to SAP, *shifting* involves the acceptance of the stressor while adjusting oneself and one's goals to the environment or finding new ways to achieve one's goals using methods like emotion regulation (e.g., reappraisal, see Gross, 2014). Meanwhile, *persisting* is "enduring adversity with strength by holding on to meaning and optimism in life […]" (Chen & Miller, 2012, p. 144). It helps further adaptation by nurturing a broader life perspective during times of difficulty. SAP further hypothesizes that it is the use of these two methods together that promotes resilience during times of hardship (Chen & Miller, 2012).

Shifting

When responding to our open-ended questions, musicians seemed to be able to accept the stress and uncertainty of their situation while also finding new ways of adjusting or reaching their goals. One participant wrote that:

> By taking advantage of technology, it has been a good thing to have a computer and take courses online, lessons for music, and keeping the communication lines open. By living through the COVID-19 pandemic, our quality of life has certainly seen its limitations, but at the same time [the pandemic] has created new opportunities to allow time to move more swiftly than expected (Oliver).

This illustrates that, despite rules telling them they could not make music together as a group in-person, they found new ways of doing so: by using technology. In fact, participants even displayed a sense of flexibility and composure—being "adaptable to life's ups and downs. […Taking] things as they come and [learning] with age that stress doesn't help" (Agnes) and by "[…taking] a stand to reduce the few irritants in […] life" (Abby).

Additionally, at times engaging with music—even online—provided a sense of distraction from the negative impacts of the global pandemic, by offering an activity and "creating an impression of normality in terms of activities" (Dorothy) because they were attending rehearsals weekly, just like they were before. In addition to reappraisal, distraction has also been found to be an effective emotion regulation strategy (Getz et al., 2014; Hanser et al., 2016; Joorman & Siemer, 2014; Randall et al., 2014; Saarikallio & Erkillä, 2007; Sheppes, 2014) to give oneself a "break" before addressing the issue at hand.

Furthermore, responses to the QoLP:SV suggested that at the end of the semester, MHNB musicians seemed to place more importance on being free from worry, stress, and sadness. After already having gone through one semester of virtual rehearsals, perhaps accepting the situation and learning what they could do to make the most of it had become paramount. Other studies have shown older adults' ability to do just this. When examining older adults' experience of the pandemic and their subjective wellbeing, results showed that despite the negativity of the situation, feeling stress, and being aware of their heightened risk to COVID-19, older adults were still able to recognize the positives in their

circumstances and even find sources of joy (Carstensen et al., 2020; Kivi et al., 2021; Kobayashi et al., 2023; Whitehead & Torossian, 2021). Not only did they demonstrate the ability to accept hardship by finding new ways to cope and even find comfort, but they also seemed to be able to find meaning by building or maintaining a broad perspective and staying focused on things they could look forward to—a sign of *persisting*.

Persisting

Our MHNB musicians reported that participating in online rehearsals gave them a sense of hope by giving them an activity to look forward to (Agnes) and a goal to work towards (e.g., practising hard so that when in-person rehearsals started again, their contribution would help the band progress). Additionally, though the musicians could not play synchronously, and often had to adjust their personal music goals, it was still a joy to hear beautiful music together (Abby). This reflects the importance they placed on social contact, especially after so long of being unable to see meaningful others face-to-face. Indeed, post-study responses to the QoLP:SV indicated that participants placed greater importance on their social connections, perhaps suggesting that being forced away from friends and family had prompted greater appreciation of these connections.

Furthermore, while the pandemic and social distancing rules may have caused some to spend more time than they would have liked by themselves, participants mentioned not minding the alone-time, using it as an opportunity to take up other ventures like increasing their physical activity (e.g., Agnes mentioned taking more walks) and wanting to make better use of their time in order to help family and friends in any way they could (Abby). This demonstrates a degree of agency in how they chose to use their time and what they chose to do, despite the various restrictions the pandemic placed on them. Notwithstanding unavoidable stressors that they could not control, our participants indicated that they chose to exercise their agency elsewhere in their lives. This was further reflected in participants reporting an increase in seeking opportunities to improve their thoughts and feelings, and to adapt to the difficulties they faced. One musician wrote that "music has allowed me many opportunities to feel good. It has given me the chance to learn and see my progress in real time" (Oliver). And despite setbacks and non-ideal circumstances, Abby added:

> After each rehearsal, I feel energized and I tell myself I'm going to make it. Even if I don't like what I'm doing when I'm recording myself, for example. And I still feel like practising my songs, it's almost the same feeling for me as in person.

Our participants indicated that despite the difficulties they faced during the pandemic, they were able to maintain a sense of community through music and to sustain meaningful relationships with one another and within their own circles of loved ones. Such relationships contributed to a sense of belonging, continuity, and a sense of purpose (Bigby, 2010). Furthermore, the ability to adapt to changes or less-than-ideal situations while cultivating meaningful social connections, striving to be a part of a community, and connecting with the wider world seemed to help give meaning to their lives (Löfgren et al., 2022).

Implications of the SAP Theory

It is important to reiterate that SAP places an emphasis on *both* shifting and persisting used in tandem in order to adapt successfully in the face of adversity, and that we must even go beyond considering adaptation by encouraging growth and the learning of new skills (Chen & Miller, 2012). Other studies have shown that the inability to adapt to change, particularly in the long-term, makes functional and cognitive decline more likely. Therefore, learning to adapt to diverse situations may equip individuals to be more prepared in handling age-related changes that come with time (Nguyen et al., 2020). Lifespan development researchers note that life is full of gains and losses at any age (Berk, 2008; Lally & Valentine-French, 2019; Schwall, 2012). Thus, rather than emphasizing the absence of disability in older age it may be more important to encourage adaptation and the learning of new skills that support personal interest and enjoyment (Tournier, 2022). As we have seen from our participants' ability to adapt and strive during the unavoidable hardship of the pandemic, this process was proactive. As mentioned in other studies, situations and people rarely stay static, and the adaptation process requires exercising one's agency in order to shape themselves (goals, perspectives), and their environment if possible (Kärner et al., 2021; Nikitin & Freund, 2019), while finding ways to cultivate meaning, optimism, and belonging.

Adapting to the Technology

As technology held a crucial role in the process of shifting and persisting, we considered more closely the factors that may have influenced our participants' capacity to continue with their learning in the online environment. We identified two models examining the factors that influence older adult's adoption of technology: the adaptation-effort-based hierarchy of adaptation strategies (Hage et al., 2020), and Schroeder and colleagues' framework (2023) that proposes a typology of key factors related to older adults' intentions to use technology.

Model 1: Adaptation-Effort-Based Hierarchy of Adaptation Strategies and Their Outcome

This model by Hage et al. (2020) seeks to explain older adults' strategies to engage with technology. Three complementary adaptation efforts are explored: *knowledge development*, *emotional coping*, and *value alignment*.

Firstly, while some older adults express a desire to use technology, the language surrounding it may be unfamiliar and exclusionary. Therefore, they must engage in *knowledge development* to build a background or glossary of terms to become more comfortable when engaging with technology. Secondly, during this adaptation process, feelings of fear, frustration, or stress may emerge, causing some older adults to take a break from adopting technology or stop altogether. *Emotionally coping* with these feelings builds on their knowledge development. Gaining familiarity may encourage more engagement and therefore give them more confidence to continue, despite emotional setbacks. Additionally, this process can also be significantly influenced by peer support.

Lastly, for older adults to be more likely to adopt the technology, they must engage in *value alignment*, either to reconcile their a priori beliefs about technology and how they use it with how other people around them engage with it or by realizing that the technology may help them achieve personally meaningful goals. Because older adults' choices to engage in technology are complex and diverse, we also consider Schroeder et al.'s (2023) framework on factors that may influence older adults' decisions to adapt and adopt technology.

Model 2: Key Factors of Older Adults' Intentions to Use Digital Technologies

According to Schroeder and colleagues (2023), there are several factors regarding technology use in later-life contexts that are not always considered by more widely used technology adoption models (see *Technology Acceptance Model* [TAM], Davis, 1989; and *Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology* [UTAUT], Schroeder et al., 2023; Venkatesh et al., 2003). This model posits that older adults' intention to use everyday technology and assistive technology for various reasons (i.e., health and safety; social interaction; independence) was influenced by six factors:

1. *Demographics and health status*: certain health limitations had negative associations with the intention of using technology (e.g., physical limitations or cognitive issues);
2. *Knowledge, competence, and perception*: similar to *knowledge development* and *value alignment* above, this factor comprises gaining familiarity, satisfaction in technology-use, and agency in their choices as being positively associated with intention to use technology;
3. *Emotional awareness and needs:* Similar to *emotional coping* above, feelings like fear and anxiety were found to have a negative association with the intention to use technology, while self-efficacy, stigma-consciousness, and self-determination had positive associations;
4. *Motivation*: represents users' needs and goals and whether they perceive the technology as helping them achieve or support their goals, and can be likened to *value alignment* above;
5. *Social influencers*: may include negative pressures like peer pressure or societal pressure, but also positive pressure like encouragement or peer-support from loved ones; and
6. *Functional features*: if older adults perceive the technology as easy to use and accessible (e.g., affordability).

Commonality and Difference Between the Models

While these two models have some common factors—such as some aspects seemingly having counterparts in both models (e.g., *knowledge*

development (Hage et al., 2020) and *knowledge, competence, and perception* (Schroeder et al. (2023) as explained above)—some elements from Schroeder and colleagues (2023), namely the *demographics and health status* as well as the *functional features*, were not found to directly relate to those in Hage et al. (2020) model, and so both perspectives were worth exploring in the light of our data. Additionally, the two models appear to differ in terms of focus regarding older adults' use of technology. The first model (Hage et al., 2020) explains the processes and strategies that may support older adults in adapting to technology-use. Comparatively, the second model (Schroeder et al., 2023) provides a framework for factors that may help or hinder technology-use among older adults. We consider both (i.e., the processes and strategies associated with adaptation to technology, and the factors that may promote or hinder technology-use) to be important when discussing older adults' adaptation to and adoption of technology.

Drawing on our retrospective reflections, we consider how our data may be interpreted according to these two technology adaptation models discussed above and illustrate the ways in which these findings complement the results from our earlier paper (Barbeau et al., 2022).

Older Adults' Adaptation Process to Technology

This section details participants' responses to the ATT and open-ended questions and how they may be interpreted according to the two technology adaptation models summarized above.

Building Knowledge

Hage et al. (2020) describe the factor of *knowledge development* as building one's base understanding of technology in order to gain familiarity and confidence to engage with it more. As indicated previously, this is similar to *knowledge, competence, and perception* from Schroeder et al.'s (2023) framework.

The development of technological knowledge was highlighted in our 2022 article, where both teachers and students expressed the importance of building a list of resources and a checklist, for example to prepare one's set-up for Zoom rehearsals (e.g., turning on Original Sound). Additionally, teachers placed an emphasis on co- or collaborative teaching, where one teacher focused on teaching musical concepts while the other would

stay in the background to answer technical questions that came up in the Zoom chat. This may have encouraged participants to become more familiar with the language surrounding technology, therefore motivating them to take a more active role in their technology-learning process by seeking out other resources or exploring other avenues of using technology (Barbeau et al., 2022).

This factor of building knowledge was not as pronounced among the six participants whose experience this chapter focuses on, perhaps reflecting their overall familiarity with using technology. In general, responses to the ATT did not suggest that participants felt nervous about using technology pre-study, and they did not seem to hold a particularly negative view of technology going into the virtual semester. On average, these six MNHB later-life musicians reported that technology-use could be fun, pleasant, useful, and could make their lives easier. Additionally, though our participants already seemed to trust themselves when using technology, one participant improved their trust rating at the end of the study.

When asked if learning to use technology required dedication, there was a slight increase in agreement among the six participants, suggesting that after their semester of virtual rehearsals, they felt it took more dedication to learn technology, as compared with the beginning. This may represent an opposite view of knowledge building that is not mentioned in our technology adoption models: that sometimes "the more you know, the more you *don't* know".

It is important to note however that this study took place during the MNHB's second virtual semester, meaning that the generally positive attitude they held towards technology may have partly been due to them having been trained and having become adept at using the online platform. Despite this, participants were not exempt from sometimes dealing with frustrations or worry in the process.

Learning to Cope with Emotions

Both technology adoption models suggest that *emotional coping* and *awareness of needs* are important factors in learning to adapt to and adopt technology. This is in line with other studies looking at older adults' technology-use, where it has been suggested that great uncertainty or unexpected setbacks can often cause high levels of resistance in technology adoption (Tsai et al., 2020). Indeed, answers to the ATT item

regarding feeling fear when using technology revealed that, while few participants sometimes felt fear, this improved slightly at the end of the study. Peer support may have contributed to reducing fear of technology among participants (Barbeau et al., 2022). In this vein, peer support was suggested by Hage et al. (2020) to be important in learning to handle emotions and is further echoed by Schroeder et al. (2023) under the *social influencers* factor. Similarly, as reported in Barbeau et al. (2022), the significance of receiving support from peers and teachers contributed greatly to building a safe and supportive environment. One conductor mentioned the importance of being supportive and to "be fine with things that didn't work or if we made mistakes… and even to celebrate the things that go right" (p. 6). To add, one musician appreciated being in a group with people of differing technology skills, stating that if she did not know something, there was a good chance someone else knew it and could help so the group would not all get "stuck" in the same place (p. 4).

Our reflections as teachers for the MNHB reveal that facilitating the emotional life of the group was a significant part of our role; dealing with certain emotions during the learning process was something that was always present—not just in technology-use but learning music as well. One participant in this study highlighted that this fear of making a musical mistake could be alleviated or hindered by technology. For instance, one of the reported benefits to virtual rehearsals reported in the 2022 article was that musicians were less fearful of making mistakes because they were the only ones to hear it. In contrast, for the current study, one participant mentioned that this aspect made her feel uncomfortable because she could clearly hear her mistakes. She writes that she was "too embarrassed to play alone, [… to play a part she was] not comfortable with because there aren't enough people [around]" (Charlotte). This seems to suggest that she felt discomfort playing by herself while muted on the online platform because, even though no one could hear if she made a mistake, she also did not have the support of her bandmates who could "cover" the mistake—an aspect that was not mentioned in our 2022 article.

The fact that conductors could not hear the musicians as a group while making music online was highlighted in the 2022 article, where teachers mentioned that it was difficult to diagnose problem areas because they could not play in sync on Zoom. In-person, even though there may be negative feelings associated with making a mistake in front of peers, musicians also receive support from their teachers and peers who "ease" them through the mistake and learning process. In virtual rehearsals, this

immediate feedback may not always be available if an individual group member is the only one hearing their own mistakes and they don't always know how to "fix" them, contributing to feelings of frustration and stress and therefore a break or stop in the technology-adaptation process (Hage et al., 2020).

However, MNHB participants suggested that teachers and students were able to build a supportive environment online; this was achieved in part by teachers not assuming anyone's familiarity with technology and by creating opportunities for peer learning among older adults with varying technology skills (Barbeau et al., 2022). Such support may have contributed to our research participants indicating that their engagement with technology was meaningful and that it helped them realize their goals of continuing to make music and stay in touch with their bandmates.

Beliefs, Motivations, Goals, and Influence

Encompassing *value alignment* from Hage et al. (2020) and *motivation* and *social influencers* from Schroeder et al.'s (2023) model, the motivation to keep music in their lives during the pandemic and to share that experience with peers equally passionate about music were significant motivating factors that influenced the MNHB musicians' choice to adapt to virtual rehearsals.

While our 2022 article found that some participants were surprised by the sense of community they were able to build despite not seeing people face-to-face (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of building a sense of community in online musical environments), responses from the six participants in this study further highlight how grateful people were to be able to stay connected—even through a screen—while playing music together. One musician wrote:

> I would have been really sad not to have been able to make music with the *Harmonie* [band] during the pandemic. It's true that it's not the same, but it's still stimulating and has enabled us to continue making progress and, above all, to enjoy hearing beautiful pieces recorded, even if we haven't yet achieved our personal goals. It also kept me in visual contact with my teachers and colleagues. I really enjoyed it! (Abby)

The use of technology became significant because, for most, it was the only way to stay connected and to keep music in their lives. Being able

to make music in this way was needed for "morale, and to see people again who love music" (Charlotte). And while our musicians expressed that virtual rehearsals would not take the place of in-person rehearsals, the virtual alternative nevertheless provided a structured environment—something to look forward to every week—where participants could learn new concepts, keep playing their instruments, and socialize (Benjamin, Agnes).

While participating in virtual rehearsals demonstrated how technology could be used to reach their goals, there were some varied attitudes towards it as well. Unexpectedly, when asked on the ATT if they found technology to be boring, overall responses stayed the same before and after the semester. This may illustrate the notion that perhaps technology was very much seen as a "tool" or a "means to an end"—something they felt they *had* to use in order to fulfil more important aims: making music and keeping contact with friends. Consistently, participants expressed their interest in Zoom because they felt it was easy to use. But while teachers also compiled a list of other technological tools members could use to supplement their learning (e.g., music apps, websites, etc.), participants did not mention these. Additionally, though technology seemed important for achieving their musical and social goals, by the end of the study, there was a slight increase in feeling that technology was *too* important in the world. This may be a result of our second semester coinciding with the end of the first pandemic-related confinement (Rowe, 2020) in Quebec, with people growing hopeful that meeting in-person was close and growing tired of always meeting loved ones and others through a screen. Responses to the ATT regarding creativity in technology-use were also mixed, perhaps illustrating that engaging with technology for their second virtual semester may have drawn attention to certain perceived limitations (e.g., not being able to play synchronously together). Additionally, the ATT revealed a slight increase in feeling clumsy using technology at the end of the semester, perhaps because of instances where—no matter how familiar or prepared one could be—there were still issues that could be out of one's control, such as one's internet unexpectedly disconnecting or programmes crashing (Barbeau et al., 2022).

Functional Features

Our musicians appreciated the simplicity and organization of the Zoom platform, used for virtual rehearsals. However, the biggest limitation of our virtual rehearsals, perceived as a pronounced drawback in the technology's functionality, was the inability to play synchronously together as a group. This is aligned with the *functional features* of Schroeder et al.'s (2023) framework. We were aware that other technologies existed that did make it possible to play together online, but we noted that these programmes were not as user-friendly to a casual audience (Onderdijk et al., 2021). For example, some low-latency programmes were found to demand too much, either in terms of technological tools or comfort, and we did not want to overload our MNHB participants' learning processes or impede their progress just when they began to feel comfortable with Zoom. However, not being able to play together in sync might have negatively affected some participants' motivation to practise. One musician wrote:

> Simply practising every week without being able to give myself the challenge of playing the piece [with everyone] left me perplexed, and I even hesitated to re-register for the spring session. Setting a goal and achieving it is a motivator for me and one that I felt was lacking (Benjamin).

Participants were disappointed in not being able to hear the *group's* progress, even if they were able to perceive their own individual progress. This meant that though a musician could work hard and make progress on their own, they were unable to see how their hard work fit in with the whole ensemble. While musicians were grateful that technology could open the way to rehearse together during the pandemic, they said "the feeling of belonging in a group and the pleasure of listening [...] and sharing with others" was missing musically when they were unable to play in sync (Dorothy) and that part of the fun was seeing "the group's progress in mastering a piece of music as [we practise]" (Benjamin). Unfortunately, this sense of weekly progress as a group was not as evident for the musicians in the online environment.

Additionally, despite technology being able to mediate some barriers to accessing music (e.g., commute to and from rehearsals in severe weather conditions or challenging terrain, difficulties transporting certain instruments due to weight/size, lower cost for participation in online activities versus in-person rehearsals), for some, it may have created a barrier

because "using technology requires technology" (Barbeau et al., 2022, p. 6). This is echoed in other articles investigating access to technology and the digital divide, where it has been noted that while technology may help break some barriers, it may also highlight or enforce others (Lopez et al., 2021; Schehl et al., 2019; Sen et al., 2022).

The above limitations in functionality seemed to underscore a major aspect of group music-making: being able to play together and hearing the group's progress as a whole. Accordingly, our MNHB musicians generally expressed the view that virtual rehearsals were a nice *alternative* to traditional, in-person rehearsals, and not a replacement, a finding that has been mirrored in other studies (Draper & Dingle, 2021). As one musician illustrated:

> Overall, the whole thing worked well and still provided a great experience. What's missing is the opportunity to hear the whole thing at once, and the camaraderie that comes with making music with other people (Benjamin).

And another added:

> For the time being and depending on how the pandemic unfolds, if it's possible in September, I'd prefer us all to be together, but if not, the virtual way is a nice alternative to continue our favorite hobby. (Agnes)

Implications Related to the Adaptation Process

Our results show support for both of the adaptation models discussed in this chapter (i.e., Hage et al., 2020; Schroeder et al., 2023), although not every factor appeared to carry equal weight—for instance, *demographics and health status*. Our participants were relatively healthy and also came from highly educated backgrounds, therefore not representing conditions that have been found to be negatively associated with technology adaptation and adoption, such as cognitive limitations (Hage et al., 2020). While some factors were supported equally by data presented in Barbeau et al. (2022) and this chapter, some were more significant in the former (i.e., knowledge development; emotional coping; emotional awareness and needs), and others were more pronounced in this study (i.e., value alignment; motivation). This is indicative of the different foci of each study and the kinds of questions we asked each sample of participants

and supports our view of the two studies as being complementary, in explaining our MNHB members' adaptation process.

Furthermore, arguments have been made that the pandemic has highlighted technology's importance in the current world, even calling it an essential need in society (Rajan & Ghosh, 2023). Although our participants displayed relative comfort and ability in using technology, we argue that it is still important to consider the pedagogical practices that may hinder or encourage adaptation and adoption of technology among older adults.

Pedagogical Implications

Three research questions guided our reflections concerned with the pedagogical implications related to the perceived challenges or benefits of shifting to an online environment (Question 1), factors that supported or constrained online music learning and participation (Question 2), and how participation in online group music-making affected participants' attitudes towards technology (Question 3).

Regarding the first question, despite some uncertainty and fear, the change to an online environment provided an opportunity for musicians to shift their perspectives and identify new ways to reach their goals and experience personal growth within an otherwise negative situation. This led to an increased appreciation of social connection, self-directed choices concerning how and on what they spent their time, and sharing music with others in order to build community and belonging, even during the social restrictions imposed by the pandemic. However, while musicians ultimately thought that learning within an online environment had some advantages (further elaborated in Barbeau et al., 2022), they did not perceive it as a replacement for in-person rehearsals, but rather an alternative. Overall, the musicians who had taken the decision to explore online learning were grateful for the opportunity to continue making music during the pandemic through the use of technology, as it allowed them to progress or maintain their skills, keep contact with others, and sustain a sense of "normalcy" in their lives by looking forward to weekly rehearsals. From a pedagogical standpoint, providing strategies during rehearsals to help musicians reappraise situations when confronted with difficulties related to music (e.g., opening a safe space for discussion, guiding reflections on how music can communicate emotions and function as a coping strategy, fostering an environment where it is okay to

make mistakes) and finding ways to strengthen their sense of agency (e.g., consulting musicians during rehearsals to encourage democratic decision-making, giving them space to share knowledge with others, providing opportunities for leadership roles among musicians) could contribute to supporting adaptation, shifting and persisting. These pedagogical considerations encourage proactive growth and learning and may build a sense of meaning and optimism despite hardship.

There were several factors that were perceived to either constrain or support online music learning and participation (Question 2). Personal motivation appeared to be a significant factor in supporting our participants' engagement in online music activities. Making music together online and keeping in touch with friends seemed to be significant incentives for our musicians. Additionally, the perceived ease of using Zoom (e.g., not needing to make an account to join meetings) and peer support from both the teaching team and their bandmates appeared to mitigate any frustrations or confusion related to online music participation. However, the inability to play together synchronously as a group due to latency issues was perceived to be a significant drawback and may have also had an effect on musicians' motivations to practise. In the MNHB's case, both online and in-person music activities were perceived to offer advantages as well as disadvantages, and there may be opportunities for the two to be used in tandem. For example, post-pandemic pedagogical practices could include the design of online musical activities that complement in-person rehearsals rather than replace them (for instance, online music theory lessons, music history lessons) and that offer an opportunity to develop new skills (for instance, how to compose music using digital tools, how to record music). Offering online peer mentorship programmes could also contribute to fostering social support among musicians, which would add value to the online experience compared with the in-person experience, where it is not always possible to consult peers without disrupting the conductor or the flow of the rehearsals. Additionally, thinking of latency as a feature and not as a drawback may help address it being perceived as a constraint to online music participation, and instead inspire musicians to use it in creative ways, such as using silence in improvisation or more call-and-response types of music playing (Rofe et al., 2017; also see Chapter 3 in this book).

Regarding the third question, it is worth noting that while our participants already held a generally positive attitude towards technology before partaking in virtual rehearsals, their individual experiences brought more

nuances to the picture. Our participants had completed one semester of online rehearsals before this study, and so they may have already had significant perceptions regarding technology and making music online from their experiences in the first semester. For instance, while they considered that technology could be enjoyable and make their lives easier, they could still experience frustrations, perhaps further emphasized by this being their second semester. Additionally, going through a second semester of virtual rehearsals may have also again highlighted the amount of dedication that was needed to learn the technology, in comparison with what they may have thought at the beginning of their first virtual semester.

A key message is that in order to build a safe space for learning online music-making it is important to take the time to teach technology before planning any musical content, meeting learners where they are and not taking for granted any prior technological knowledge or ability (Barbeau et al., 2022). Promoting collaboration and peer learning, not only about music, but also about technology (for instance, by pairing more tech-savvy people with less experienced users) may also be an effective strategy to have fun and develop a positive attitude towards technology. Finally, highlighting that technology can be used to reach personal goals (such as making music or keeping in touch with friends and loved ones) can strengthen motivation to develop technological skills. One way of approaching this could be to pair technology-learning with a personally meaningful activity—in our case, music-making—but to ensure that the proper learning scaffolding is still in place (Wu et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter sought to paint a holistic and retrospective view of a community ensemble's journey of adaptation in the face of prolonged and unavoidable difficulties—the global COVID-19 pandemic—by highlighting how our older adults responded to change, their motivations for adaptation, and their lived experiences during this time. Building on Barbeau et al. (2022), where we looked at how intergenerational relationships facilitated group online music-making from the perspectives of young conductors and older adults, we extended our analysis of the results with pre and post data from the ATT, QoLP:SV, and open-ended questions, to offer a broader view of MNHB's adaptations to change during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summary, we illustrated how the motivation to continue making music with others who shared the same passion was an important factor in driving not only the adaptation from in-person to online rehearsals, but in learning the technologies necessary to facilitate this change as well. We described what older adults' adoption of technology looked like and how, through the desire to keep music in their lives and maintain contact with peers who shared the same musical values, musicians were able to shift and persist in the face of prolonged and unavoidable adversity. Our story of one community ensemble's journey of adapting to change contributes to the body of knowledge concerned with how older adults are able to deal with potentially negative circumstances, continuing to find sources of joy and meaning and exercising agency. Additionally, by illustrating their use of technology as a tool for reaching goals, we add to the body of work concerned with supporting learning with technology among older adults. We suggest that instead of pushing older adults to conform to an increasingly digitized world, we should first consider their motivations and personal experiences with regard to technology, and use these as starting point to foster further growth. For instance, learning to use technology to keep in touch with family and friends may function as a stronger incentive than simply learning it to avoid becoming technologically outdated. Finding meaningful ways to engage with technology, for example with music-making, may be a creative strategy to promote digital literacy among older adults. This encourages not just adaptation and growth in adversity, but highlights older adults' capacity for ability, as opposed to disability, and to meet challenges—even unavoidable ones—in meaningful, proactive ways.

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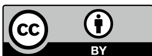

CHAPTER 10

Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation: Critical Reflections

Andrea Creech and Colin Enright

Introduction

In this book we have examined some key facets of pedagogy that may support positive and engaged learning in later-life contexts. Chapter 1 set out a rationale for *why* later-life learning—and later-life *music* learning in particular—may deserve attention, and it is not our intention to once again rehearse those arguments in detail, as they have been made eloquently by an international community of researchers and practitioners committed to understanding the role of music and learning in the enrichment of later-life (e.g., Creech et al., 2014; Fung & Lehmberg, 2016; Laes & Creech, 2023; Lehmberg & Fung, 2023; MacRitchie et al., 2022). However, a key message of this volume is that facilitation of learning goes hand in hand with the learning experience; thus, the *why*

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A. Creech and C. Enright (eds.), *Pedagogies for Later-Life Music Learning and Participation*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8_10

is important to keep at the forefront of our minds, as we explore the pedagogical values, beliefs, frameworks, and approaches that may support positive experiences in later-life learning. Therefore, this chapter first summarises some prominent discourses concerned with later-life learning before turning to the key principles of pedagogy that may be particularly relevant for later-life lifelong learning and participation in music.

Thinking About Later-Life Pedagogy: Key Messages for Music

Contemporary understandings of later-life learning have developed against a backdrop of a global "longevity revolution" (Scott, 2024), characterised by increasingly aged populations. Notwithstanding a recent slight decrease in life expectancy attributed to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the overall trend over the past several decades has been upward, and it is now projected that "by the late 2050s, more than half of all deaths globally will occur at age 80 or higher, compared to 17 per cent in 1995" (UN, 2024, p. 3). Longer life expectancy is accompanied by lower birth rates; thus, "by the late 2070s, the number of persons at ages 65 years and higher globally is projected to reach 2.2 billion, surpassing the number of children (under age 18)" (UN, 2024, p. 4). Within this context, our attention has turned to *how* we age, and to the role of lifelong learning within the latter part of our lives.

Several authors have debated the idea that a specific pedagogy is needed, for older adults, and if so, how such a pedagogy may be characterised. As early as 1976, Peterson defined educational gerontology as the "…study and practice of instructional endeavors for and about aged and aging individuals" (p. 62), drawing a distinction between education for older adults, education about ageing, and education of those who serve older adults in a variety of capacities. Following this, research in the field of later-life learning addressed questions concerned with older learners themselves (e.g., motivation, memory, aptitude, needs), curricular issues (e.g., quality control, content, evaluation, tutor skills), and approaches such as self-help, reminiscence, independent learning, and so on (Formosa, 2021).

The idea of "geragogy" (Lebel, 1978) was likewise founded upon the idea that there was a need for a theory of later-life learning, and in its early iterations encompassed teaching strategies and activities deemed to meet the needs of older adults (John, 1988). Critics argued that geragogy

conceptualised older adults as a disempowered and homogenous group (Findsen & Formosa, 2011), calling for a critical approach that would "unsettle assumptions of older learners' dependence and…promote the idea that later-life learning can act as a vehicle for effecting social change" (Creech & Hallam, 2015, p. 45). Accordingly critical educational gerontology, emerging in the 1990s (Glendenning & Battersby, 1990) highlighted dialogic relationships, emancipation, and consciousness-raising (Formosa, 2021), while critical geragogy, described as a "a collective and negotiated enterprise amongst older adults"(Formosa, 2012, p. 41) was framed with a commitment to examining and protesting ageist power dynamics and societal structures.

Critical perspectives on later-life learning have been countered with person-centred humanistic ideas (Withnall, 2010), whereby later-life learning was thought to be founded upon the pursuit of personal curiosities, meaningful experience, and fulfilment of personal potential, rather than an emancipatory agenda (Formosa, 2021). As Formosa (2021) points out, there is no easy resolution to the critical-humanistic debate, where both sides put forth convincing arguments. It may be that lifelong learning in later-life may encompass both—an emancipatory agenda and the pursuit of personal growth and self actualisation among older adults, although circumstances and context will always shape the specific emphasis.

Overall, the critical and humanistic rationales for later-life learning, and later-life music learning in particular, may be summarised in relation to four arguments proposed by Findsen and Formosa (2011). First, the functionalist argument—which, as Laes and Creech (2023) have highlighted, remains prominent in music contexts—is oriented towards needs satisfaction and thus focuses on how later-life learning can support active ageing, responding to various challenges that may be experienced in the transition to older adulthood. For example, Tam (2014) highlights coping needs related to age-related changes that may include the loss of close relationships, as well as expressive needs concerned with opportunities to engage with meaningful activities, and contributive needs concerned with a continuing sense of having a positive influence on one's community. Finally, transcendence needs are concerned with contemplation of the meaning of life, life review, and the cultivation of spirituality and wisdom.

The idea of needs satisfaction is strongly echoed in much of the later-life music education literature, where a predominant justification for later-life music learning and participation rests upon music's potential to

bring a sense of coherence to one's life experience, as well as fostering social connections and providing multiple wider benefits associated with enhanced quality of life and wellbeing (see Laes & Creech, 2023, for a full discussion). In this volume, too, a discourse of needs satisfaction is prominent. For example, Chap. 3 (focused on the potential for music to meet the need for a "sense of community"), 4 (exploring the idea of improvisational pedagogy as a framework for meeting the needs of learners in residential care), and 6 (focused on an intergenerational choir as a vehicle for meeting the needs of older adults living with dementia, their partner caregivers, and teenaged volunteer collaborators) highlight the ways in which music participation can fulfil various needs, within offline and online contexts. In each of these chapters, the authors trace a direct link between sense of community and wellbeing; for example, the facilitators in Chap. 4 (long-term residential care contexts) summarise their goals as building a sense of community, fostering meaningful interactions, and enhancing quality of life, through facilitating opportunities for collaboration and socialisation. From this perspective, wellbeing needs (and particularly the need for a sense of community) are articulated through linking pedagogical values (e.g., inclusion; ethics of care) with practices such as improvisation, meaningful listening, and musical storytelling.

A second "liberal-humanist" perspective proposed by Findsen and Formosa (2011) has some synergy with the functionalist argument, for example concerning the potential for social, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual development, as well as personal meanings and self-directed learning. However, Findsen and Formosa differentiate the liberal-humanist perspective, highlighting its core belief in the idea of learning for learning's sake, across the lifecourse. In the specific context of music, this perspective has been reflected in research and practice founded upon the belief in lifelong music learning and participation as a vehicle for personal development and self-fulfilment (Laes & Creech, 2023). Accordingly, it has been argued that "the purposes of education and learning for older people should, in fact, be no different from those of people of any age" (Percy, 1990, p. 236). However, others have argued that such a view may risk downplaying the importance of "specific social, physiological, and psychological changes" encountered in old age (Findsen & Formosa, 2011, p. 97).

Liberal-humanist ideas are found in Chaps. 5 and 8 of this volume, where there is strong support for the idea that creative expression and musical development are entirely possible among later-life music learners,

irrespective of age-related cognitive or physical challenges. The authors in Chap. 5 argue that opportunities for creative experience counter dominant narratives of decline among older adults, and highlight the integral role of facilitation in shaping developmental and creative musical experience. One of their overarching messages is that there is no prescriptive model for pedagogies of later-life music learning; rather, facilitation must be flexible, responsive, and empathic, encompassing skilful guidance and scaffolding strategies alongside collaborative and exploratory approaches. Importantly, the authors remind us that it should not be seen as remarkable that older adults can be creative, or that "they" (and as a side note, we should all remember that we are all ageing, and most of us will reach older adulthood) can do musical things. Rather, we should direct our attention to the pedagogical environment where creative musical expression is possible.

A third rationale for later-life learning focuses on the moral dimension of lifelong learning, founded upon a belief in "equality of opportunity, democratic participation, and equal citizenship" (Findsen & Formosa, 2011, p. 92) across the lifecourse. In this volume, rationales founded upon democratic participation and equality of participation may be found in Chap. 3, where the philosophy of "Music for People" is framed as a *Bill of Musical Rights* expressed through eleven articles that emphasise the right to self-expression, recognition and valuing of diversity, and ethical responsibilities as community members. Chapter 9, too, brushes with moral arguments concerning equality of opportunity within online spaces, and the ways in which older adults can be supported in shifting to an online environment and persisting with their learning within those spaces. The authors advocate a learner-centred approach to determining how technology can be leveraged to support sustained and meaningful music participation.

This third "moral" argument is closely related to the fourth, which focuses on critical questions concerning the "social and political rights of old age" (Findsen & Formosa, 2011, p. 93). Arguments framed by this "critical educational gerontology" (p. 93) recognise the diversity that is found in groups of older learners, and move away from deficit models of ageing, instead highlighting the systemic marginalisation of older people in society and challenging this with "concepts such as emancipation, empowerment, transformation, and consciousness-raising" (p. 94). Of particular importance for later-life music pedagogy is the centrality within

the critical educational gerontology (CEG) paradigm of "praxis", thus explained by Findsen and Formosa (2011, p. 94):

> …praxis—that is, theory based on action—or in pedagogical terms: critical geragogy. It advocates the developing [of] and epistemology for professional practice based on dialogue between tutors and learners—a process which facilitates communication, openness, trust, and commitment—together with a reflection on the content and strategies of teaching.

Chapter 7 of this volume, focusing on identities that are achieved in and through music learning and participation, aligns with these critical perspectives on ageing. The authors highlight participant "subject positions" (i.e., the ways in which they position themselves in relation to music), which in some cases function as barriers to musical engagement. They discuss pedagogical roles and responsibilities that may mitigate those barriers and promote so-called "insider" identities in music as learners, listeners, and music makers. In particular, they draw attention to the importance of valuing and building upon prior learning, and of finding the tools that function as a way in to making music. Like Chap. 2 of this volume, the authors also draw attention to the deep relevance of relational practices in empowering older adults to fully realise their musical possible selves.

As illustrated in this discussion of how rationales for later-life music learning and participation may intersect with functional, humanistic, moral, and critical perspectives, there are often overlapping goals, intentions, and principles. As ever, real life examples rarely lend themselves well to being categorised into neat boxes. Overall, while Formosa (2021) cautions us that a resolution of the broad critical-humanistic perspectives is elusive, there may be common ground in the idea that facilitation of later-life music learning must be founded upon a critically reflexive and flexible framework that can respond to "democratic, personal, and other concerns across the lifecourse in an inclusive way" (p. 1566).

A Model for Reflection: Facilitating Later-Life Music Learning and Participation

In this section, we propose a model of later-life pedagogical principles and practices (see Fig. 10.1). Our model, derived from the contributions to this volume, is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather as a point of

departure for critical reflection. As both critical and humanistic perspectives demand, facilitation of later-life music learning and participation requires a responsive and responsible leadership, and inclusive practices that serve diverse communities of learners. Our model, based on the image of a ship, is inspired by the metaphorical idea of a 'shared lifeboat' (an idea proposed by a group member) or ship, found in facilitation and leadership literature (e.g., Killion, 1999; Rasoal et al., 2017; Thomas & Thorpe, 2019). In this vein, for example, authors have alluded to steering groups through stormy seas of organisational change (Senge, 2006), or to the role of the group "captain" in navigating inner and outer landscapes (Palmer, 2017), and navigation of collaborative journeys (Gergen, 2009).

Our model is intended to represent the idea that facilitation of learning in later-life contexts, while firmly anchored in values, beliefs, and experience, can take communities of learners in many directions. As many facilitators of later-life music learning and participation will recognise, when a group is functioning well, the learning environment feels like a container such as our "ship", buzzing and full of possibility, where unexpected directions can lead to creative and deeply expressive musical moments.

At the foundation of our model is a metaphorical anchor, representing the values, beliefs, and experience that shape pedagogical practice. Of course, in "real" life an anchor would need to be pulled up for the ship to set off on its journey; however, we ask that the reader consider this anchor as a symbolic representation of the deepest level values that may influence the course of the pedagogical journey. This volume has highlighted some foundational values that guided pedagogical practices within the contexts discussed. Overall, the principal values that reappear throughout the volume are relationality, community, critical reflection, and curiosity. For example, Chap. 2 focuses on the principles of relational pedagogy, where music learning is necessarily participatory, and emerges within intersubjective spaces founded upon mutual respect and empathy. Chapter 3 illustrates that later-life musical engagement is framed by a sense of community, referring to feelings of inclusion and belonging that can be fostered through collaborative activities. Curiosity is a theme that appears throughout the chapters, but is particularly prominent in Chap. 8, where the authors discuss the importance of opportunities to satisfy musical curiosity through playing with new ideas and resources.

Alongside these underpinning values (relationality, community, curiosity), some foundational beliefs have emerged, including a belief in

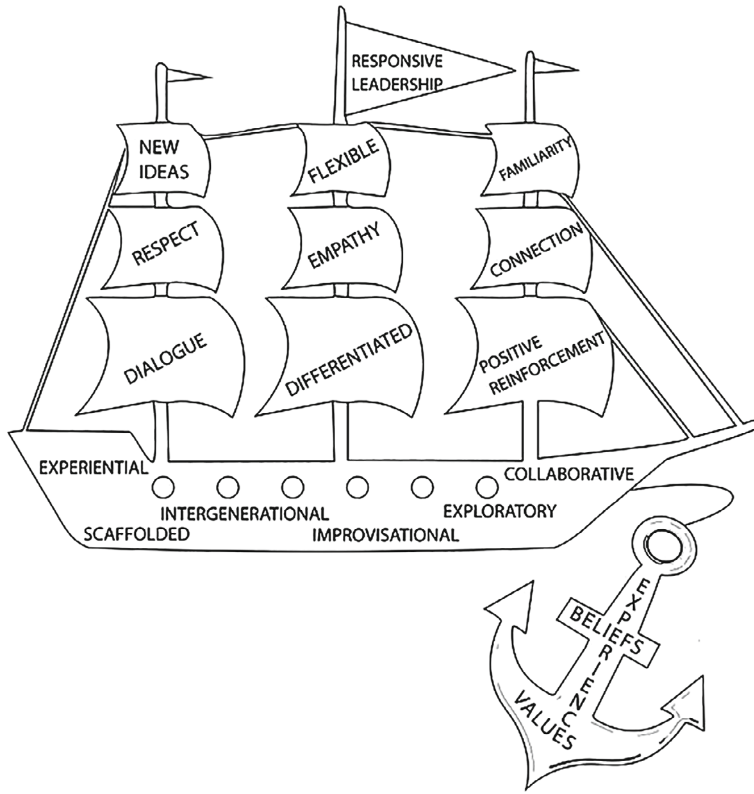

Fig. 10.1 A Shared Lifeboat: Facilitating later-life music learning and participation

the potential for lifelong creativity and musical development (Chap. 5), and a belief that identities in and through music can be formulated anew, rekindled, or strengthened (Chap. 7). A further deep-seated belief that frames many of the chapters is related to a commitment to critical reflection in and on practice; it is through such reflective practice that facilitators are able to be creative, responsive, and improvisatory in their pedagogical work, in particular in supporting music groups in building meaningful connections with their collective life experiences and wisdom (illustrated in Chaps. 4, 6, and 9). Of course, values and beliefs are shaped by—and in turn have an influence on—the experiences that facilitators

bring to later-life learning. While this point has not been discussed explicitly in this volume, it is clear that the values and beliefs discussed in each chapter have reflected to a greater or lesser extent the musical and life experiences of the facilitators themselves. To summarise, we propose that pedagogies for later-life music learning are founded upon consistent and deeply anchored values and beliefs derived from experience; these are relationality, community, and curiosity, accompanied by a belief in lifelong creativity, musical development, and musical identities, and a commitment to critical reflection.

Upon this basis of experience, values, and beliefs, facilitators take decisions as to how to structure the "pedagogical container" that frames their later-life learning environments. As has been reinforced in this volume and in the wider literature concerned with later-life learning, older learners and the contexts within which they learn are not homogenous, and accordingly the frameworks that emerged within this volume include a range of orientations to pedagogy that serve differing purposes. These pedagogical frameworks, conceptualised in our model as the structure of the ship's hull, will certainly vary from one context to another, or indeed from one session to another or even from one activity to another. Ranging from scaffolded (Chaps. 5, 9) to exploratory (Chaps. 2, 8), and encompassing experiential (Chaps. 4, 7), collaborative (Chaps. 2, 3), improvisational (Chap. 4), and intergenerational (Chap. 6) pedagogies, these frameworks together provide a structure for later-life learning that may support creative and empowered learning. It is important to notice that the hull of our ship contains multiple portholes, representing critical reflections characterised by an openness to new ideas and outward looking perspectives. Thus, the pedagogical frameworks, irrespective of where the emphasis is, are always shaped by critical reflection in action, and reflection on action.

The juxtaposition, in our model, of apparently contradictory concepts such as "scaffolding" alongside "improvisational" and "exploratory", is intentional. As discussed in each chapter, and particularly so in those chapters that addressed issues encountered within online contexts for learning, facilitation within later-life contexts requires a "situated understanding of instructional support" that is "sensitive to the current situation of being an older adult in the aging society" (Cerna et al., 2022, p. 18). Cerna and colleagues refer to this as "situated scaffolding" that does not assume homogeneity of experience, and that pays particular attention to the ways in which mutual understandings are built, when (as is often the

case within online environments) facilitators cannot see the challenges that learners are coping with. Situated scaffolding also acknowledges that the traditional idea of "fading"—that is, gradually withdrawing instructional support as learners expand their skills and knowledge—may not always be appropriate within later-life contexts, particularly online contexts where "unanticipated problems constantly arise" (Cerna et al., 2022, p. 20). Indeed, situated, responsive scaffolding may function in tandem with exploration, which provides vital opportunities for acknowledging and satisfying curiosity (Knopf & Talmage, 2018), often fostering empowering moments of "everyday" creativity (Hunter, 2020).

The final layer of our model encompasses the ship's sails, representing features of creative and developmental later-life music learning that have been discussed throughout the book. Specific activities—whether they are in the form of songwriting, free improvisation, learning well known and well-loved songs, singing together, experiencing large or small music ensembles, developing understandings of musical concepts, or exploring digital or acoustic instruments—offer opportunities for a flexible balance of new ideas with familiar material, for fostering connections among learners through small group music-making or peer learning, and for supporting learners in forging meaningful connections between their own life experiences and the material. Furthermore, irrespective of their specific nature, we advocate that musical experience be enriched through positive reinforcement, dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect, with a responsive leader at the helm (Fig. 10.1). Of course, the emphasis will vary according to context and participants; hence, the ship's sails represent the array of choices a facilitator may make, and illustrate that each pedagogical choice, or combination of choices, will take the learners in a particular direction.

Looking Forward: Critical Questions

This volume has discussed later-life music learning and participation from a number of perspectives, including relational pedagogy, sense of community, intergenerational learning and communication, co-creativity, musical development, improvisational pedagogy, and adaptation to technology. It is important to note some limitations to this work, and critical questions to consider, as we move forward and expand our practices with older adults.

First, the conclusions drawn in each chapter are founded upon case study research with older adults within specific cultural contexts, with groups that (for the most part) comprised White anglophone or francophone Canadians. Notably, Indigenous perspectives were not represented in these projects, notwithstanding the projects' oversight by university researchers who worked on the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) (Chaps. 2, 3, 9); the Huron-Wendat, Wabanaki, Innu, and Wolastogey peoples (Chaps. 4, 5, 7, and 8); the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples (Chap. 6); and the Coast Salish Peoples (Chap. 4)—places which have long served as sites of meeting and exchange among nations. Bouvier et al. (2016) highlight the distinctive vision of "purposeful, holistic, and lifelong" learning among First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. According to these authors, lifelong learning (from an Indigenous perspective) is thought to be holistic, experiential, spiritual, place-based, and rooted in Indigenous languages and culture. Whereas in this volume we have discussed individual goals, development, and identity, an Indigenous perspective highlights communal processes and intergenerational exchange (Bouvier et al., 2016). Furthermore, the role of Elders as "living bearers of cultural-ecological knowledges" (Sunderland et al., 2024, p. 295) brings a distinctive and deeply significant lens through which to further our understandings of intergenerational learning. In particular, Elders play a vital role in preserving and rehabilitating cultural heritage, establishing form of cultural continuity that is thought to be a potential resilience resource for Indigenous communities (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). With specific reference to music, Sunderland and colleagues (2024), highlight that "strong connections to family and community are often strengthened through arts and music collaboration" (p. 295), and add that intergenerational musicking may function as a mediator of cultural determinants of health, providing essential connections to family, culture, Country, and kinship (p. 301).

Secondly (and related to the first point), in this volume our discussions of "inclusion" or "inclusivity" are founded upon research with those who *have* been included—in other words, our research has been focused on how we can be inclusive of those who have already made it through the door, as participants of the musical activities described. This may seem obvious, but is important to reiterate, as it is a major limitation of much research in the area of music and ageing (including our own). While the

chapters in the volume do touch on many pedagogical values and practices that may have implications for inclusion, research is needed that explores the idea of inclusion (and its counterpart, exclusion) in much greater depth, in later-life music contexts. In short, who is *not* represented in the literature concerning later-life music learners, and how do our pedagogical practices and wider beliefs and systems relating to older adults reinforce or alternatively challenge those patterns of inclusion and exclusion?

A third critical question concerns the absence of discussions concerning intersectional identities, in much of the theory and practice concerning later-life music learning (Laes & Creech, 2023). In particular, the role of music within the lived experience of later-life among racialised older people remains under-researched, notwithstanding a growing body of research that has highlighted "the nexus of structural, personal and relational processes that are experienced by diverse groups of older people across the life course and into late life" (Ferrer et al., 2017, p. 10).

Fourth, the groups described in this volume were privileged, in the sense that they had access to resources and support. A key message throughout the volume has been that at least part of a facilitator's responsibility is to support older adult novice musicians in finding the resources or activities that will open the door to the world of music-making. However, not all contexts are well-resourced, and we cannot assume that all older adults can sing or can interact with various tools. There needs to be more critical thinking about what pathways to musical engagement can be made available, in multiple diverse contexts, and indeed how older adults (particularly those living with high levels of dependency in residential care) can be empowered to exercise some measure of autonomy or self-direction in accessing those "ways in" to music-making.

Finally, we return to the question of whether there is a discernible and distinctive pedagogy (or geragogy) that is characteristic of later-life contexts. As we have highlighted in the previous paragraphs of this section, the idea of "later-life" encompasses multiple potential intersecting identities, and multiple contexts, each presenting distinctive affordances as well as challenges. We would argue that later-life is unique in terms of the sheer number of years of life experience that participants bring to musical groups. Depending on the context, this may have a range of implications. Our key point is that responsiveness and flexibility are always needed, for facilitators to be present and to build a learning environment that honours

experience, celebrates participation and community, and provides situated scaffolded support towards meeting individual or collective goals.

Our parting message is that we should not be surprised that older people can do "musical things" and can express themselves through music. However, there remains much scope for an increasing focus on expansive, reflective, and responsive facilitation practices within relational spaces. With this focus, our older adult friends, companions, and participants will access creative, communal musical experiences that can be deeply enriching and meaningful.

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https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-87136-8

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