

Group playing by ear from recordings as a vehicle for the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth

Dr Maria Varvarigou¹, PhD

C.C.R.S.M. Cyprus Centre for the Research and Study of Music

1. Introduction and terminology

The aim of this chapter is to advocate for the adoption of playing by ear from recordings in groups as a means of supporting the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth in formal music education and Community Music (CM) settings. *Social inclusion* is ‘the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society’ and ‘the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society’ (The World Bank, 2013). This chapter explains how group playing by ear from recordings could become a vehicle for ‘improving ability and opportunity’ by fostering the musical, social and personal skills of:

- *immigrants* – people who come to live permanently in a foreign country;
- *refugees* – people who ‘have been forced to flee [their] country because of persecution, war, or violence’ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), and
- *disaffected youth* – youth who are ‘disengaged from learning and educational opportunity (as manifested by non-attendance or under-achievement at school)’ (Burnard, 2008, p. 59).

As a music teacher I have worked with immigrants and disaffected youth and I have observed that these two groups share some common attributes. Firstly, both groups appear to share the desire to maintain group characteristics, such as cultural identity, attitudes or behavioural patterns. Secondly, they relish interaction with other groups initially with curiosity about the ‘other’ and with a desire to experience security rather than discrimination from this interaction (Berry, 2001). Berry (2001) who has studied the psychology of immigration uses the terms ‘acculturation’, to describe the former; and ‘inter-group relations’ to describe the latter.

The maintenance of group identity and inter-group relations appear to be characteristics that are shared amongst both immigrants and refugees. In her work with young refugees and newly arrived immigrants in Australia, Marsh (2015) stressed how the desire to maintain one’s ethnic identity in group dance in combination with a strong motivation to be accepted ‘both within a performative group and by a mainstream audience in a venue with significant status in the host culture’ (2015, p. 185) empowered young children from Sierra Leone to use music and dance to ‘develop and demonstrate their capabilities’ (Marsh, 2015, p. 185).

Rusinek (2008) who explored the musical behaviours of disaffected adolescents reported that they enjoy upholding group attitudes and behaviours, such as taunting and challenging their teachers by boycotting teaching and being provocative or violent, regardless of the fact that these attitudes and behaviours are reprimanded by the school community. He also underscored that disaffected adolescents treasure inter-group relations, including interactions with fellow learners through collaborative and peer learning. For example, he observed a shift in their attitudes towards

¹ Dr Maria Varvarigou is a Senior Lecturer in Music at Canterbury Christ Church University, a Senior Researcher at the Sidney de Haan Centre for Arts and Health and an Honorary Research Associate at UCL Institute of Education, University of London. She completed her PhD in 2009 as a scholar of the A. S. Onassis Foundation. Her special areas of interest include music and wellbeing; ear-playing and performance practices of vernacular music; effective teaching and learning in higher and professional education, intergenerational music-making; and choral conducting education.

music lessons as a result of engaging in informal group music making that offered them opportunities to exert power over choosing ways of working together as well as the musical material that they would use.

This chapter explains the rationale for and proposes ways of using group playing by ear from recordings with immigrants, refugees and disaffected youth as a way of nurturing a variety of musical, social and personal skills in these disadvantaged youth. Through the development of these skills, group music making is experienced as an opportunity to participate fully in the musical activity of their classroom or the community group.

2. Why group playing by ear from recordings?

Green (2002) identified playing by ear from recordings as one of the core skills used by popular musicians in the process of learning music and of creating their own music within friendship groups and without the supervision of a teacher or expert. Playing by ear from recordings combines the incorporation of listening, performing, improvising and composing throughout the process of learning new repertoire. Popular musicians find this process highly creative. In addition, the fact that they copy music in friendship groups enables popular musicians to experience high levels of enjoyment and motivation in music making.

When this approach was adapted for small groups of music learners in secondary schools (Green, 2008) it emerged that there was a significant increase in the learners' reported enjoyment of playing a musical instrument as well as their motivation in engaging in music-making and in practicing. Furthermore, the learners' musical attainment improved significantly as they developed listening and music appreciation skills, skills in playing un-tuned percussion instruments, in finding pitches on instruments, in composing their own music and in improvising. Lastly, there was a reported improvement in the learners' social skills due to the process of collaborating on a music project where they could agree as a group what repertoire to rehearse as well as because they had to help each other whilst copying this repertoire by ear from recordings. Developing leadership skills was also one of the identified contributions of the approach. In particular, many pupils who had previously been identified as disaffected turned around and showed themselves to be responsible group leaders, helpful, keen students and in many cases able musicians (Green, 2008).

When group playing by ear from recordings was adopted by instrumental ensembles in primary school settings (Baker, 2013; Varvarigou, 2014) the development of the same musical, social and personal skills was identified by the teachers. In particular, the teachers underscored that allowing the learners to work with fellow learners and to choose what music to perform enhanced their enjoyment in group music making, peer learning, collaboration and assisted the development of musical skills such as listening with expectation, being more aware of dynamics and phrasing and having greater motivation to improvise (Varvarigou, 2014).

When group playing by ear from recordings was adopted by music learners in Higher Education (Varvarigou, 2017b) similar musical, social and personal skills were identified by the learners themselves. In particular, the learners reported honing their listening and repertoire appreciation skills; learning to improvise and to play a new instrument; learning to harmonise melodies and to listen for harmony; gaining knowledge on their principal instrument and developing musical creativity. Furthermore, group playing by ear from recordings enabled them to explore different ways of working together, to engage in peer learning by teaching one another and it promoted the idea of making "new" music together. In addition, it helped them develop leadership, social awareness, teamwork and communication skills. Finally, it facilitated the development of confidence and creativity by playing within ensembles that often had an unconventional combination of musical instruments. These are exactly the kinds of musical, social and personal skills that music teachers and CM facilitators would like to cultivate in all young people who engage in active music making as they give them access to full participation in musical activities promoting in this ways social inclusion.

2.1 Why does it work with groups of immigrants, refugees and disaffected youth?

There are some core principles that underpin the practice of music teachers and CM facilitators who use informal learning approaches to group music making with disadvantaged groups as a means of nurturing the development of the participants' musical, personal and social skills, hence promoting social inclusion in group music making. These are articulated by Rusinek (2008) as well as Green (2008) and Varvarigou (2017b) and are summarised below:

- **Clear musical goals** – music making is always at the core of the activity. Having clear musical goals enables the participants to see a purpose in working together to complete the task at hand.
- **Participant agency** – enabling participants to decide how they will go about engaging in music making as well as what musical material to use.
- **Collaborative and Peer learning** – encouraging participants to build relationships with fellow participants, their music teachers or CM facilitators and/or other individuals who supports their learning and wellbeing.
- **Sense of Responsibility** – encouraging the participants to work independently with a sense responsibility for the musical outcome, which could be a work-in-progress live performance, a final live performance, a recording, or a group presentation. This musical outcome could later be shared with their music teachers and CM facilitators and/or an audience.
- **Expectation for Success** – promoting the idea that all participants can make a significant contribution to the musical activity in focus as individuals.
- **Strategies for Learner Autonomy** – enabling the participants to identify the strategies that work best for them when making music with others.

Figure 1 illustrates how group playing by ear from recordings becomes a vehicle that promotes the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth in active music making by fostering the development of their musical, social and personal skills. This can be achieved through core principles that should underpin the practice of music teachers and CM facilitators.

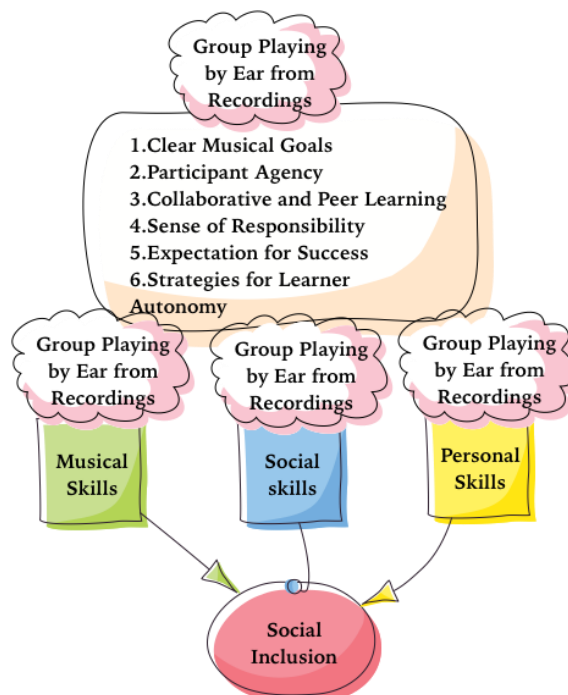


Figure 1: Group playing by ear from recordings as a vehicle for social inclusion

3. How music learners' have experienced social inclusion - testimonies

Adolescent music learners who have engaged in group playing by ear from recordings have reported experiencing agency and a sense of responsibility that made the process of learning and interacting with one another really rewarding. These music learners have underlined that group playing by ear from recordings had enabled them to experience responsibility and autonomy regarding the degree of their participation in the group and the repertoire selected.

- *'We came up with our own ideas and it was fun. We weren't being told what to do, and the teachers put trust in us'.*
- *'We just chose a part that would fit our abilities, so if we were good we played something that was quite difficult, but if we weren't good we would just play something that was quite easy'.*
- *'Because it was really hard getting it all together, when we actually performed to the class we were all really proud of ourselves'.*

They also reported that group playing by ear fostered their confidence in team working and in music making.

- *'People can learn on their own what to do, so build up self-confidence....[I also learnt] ...how, about working in a team to help others, in trouble.'*
- *'My motivation has increased tenfold, 'cause I just want to get out there and make songs'.*

Groups of advanced music learners who have engaged in group playing by ear from recordings have also emphasised that making music as a group was thoroughly enjoyable and that it encouraged collaborative and peer learning and interactions.

- *'I found it quite useful working the phrase out with someone else because we helped one another on different parts and shared ideas of where we thought the music was going'.*
- *'I most enjoyed putting all the parts together as a group and discussing how to change it'.*
- *'I learnt how to help, encourage and co-direct an ensemble of various experiences and instruments'.*
- *'I learnt to listen more to the people around me and be more conscious of key etc'.*

These young learners have also recognised that the process of peer learning gave them the confidence to create a stronger connection with the other group members.

- *'I think I became much more confident in playing by ear in an ensemble'.*
- *'Some of the girls were very confident. Gina was very confident. I know Sophie was a little bit apprehensive; she felt out of her comfort zone but I enjoyed seeing the other girls when they were really confident. I thought 'Actually I can do that. I can get to that level, but with a lot of practice'.*

4. Methodology - How does group playing by ear actually facilitate social inclusion?

It is recommended that music teachers and CM facilitators provide real pieces of music rather than short aural exercises as an introduction to group playing by ear, so that the participants – which may have not worked together before – do not waste time looking for and agreeing on musical material. What is more, using real pieces of music has been shown to motivate the music learners to engage in playful experimentation and improvisation straight away. Through such creative interactions relationship building is fostered, which is actually central when working with groups of disadvantaged youth. After the groups have worked together for some time, then they tend to focus more on developing their musical (listening, improvisation, memorising, harmonising) and personal (confidence, leadership, creativity) skills.

Group playing by ear from recordings enables groups of disaffected youth who might not know each other to work together in small groups to:

- Develop their *musical skills* by exploring a variety of musical repertoire. Popular-style music repertoire is recommended as the first musical genre to be explored because it is favoured by young people probably due to its engaging rhythm, repetitive riffs and lyrics, and because the melodies are easy to sing along to.
- Develop their *social skills* by choosing, as a group, repertoire from musical genres that the group members enjoy and identify with. This might include classical, popular, folk or any other musical genre that the participants desire. Deciding as a group what pieces to rehearse promotes teamwork, communication skills and social awareness by adapting one's way of interacting with the other members of the group.
- Develop their *personal skills* such as confidence and leadership by encouraging individuals within each group to propose pieces of music from their own musical heritage or simply music that they like, and to teach it to the other group members.
- Develop their *creativity* by inventing new renditions of or/ and improvisations on the pieces of music rehearsed through imitation and playful experimentation by ear (Varvarigou, 2017a).

5. Workshop description - How to use this approach

Lucy Green has advocated for the inclusion of informal learning strategies in formal music education and these same strategies can also of course be used in CM as a means of developing music learners' musical, social and personal skills. Her latest book, 'Hear, Listen, Play' (Green, 2014) has made a significant contribution to the field of music education and CM by proposing a structured approach to introducing informal learning through playing by ear from recordings to learners of all ages and abilities. The book explains the rationale behind the approach and provides strategies and, most importantly, audio material, that music teacher or CM facilitators could use as a starting point. I have used the audio material and the strategies with learners in HE (Varvarigou, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). I have also used the strategies alone with groups of primary and secondary school learners. Therefore, the sections that follow include my recommendations to music teachers and CM facilitators on the ways that group playing by ear from recordings could be adapted for groups of disadvantaged learners of varied levels of technical expertise and experience in group music making.

5.1 Proposed audio material

As mentioned earlier, it is important that specific musical material is provided when groups of disaffected youth are introduced to groups playing by ear from recordings. This allows them to start interacting with one another with a focus on copying the musical material by ear rather than spending time looking for musical material. Music teachers and CM facilitators that have limited time to look for repertoire could, as a starting point, use the audio material that has been created by Lucy Green (2014). This audio material includes two popular-style pieces entitled 'Link Up' and 'Dreaming'; and six pieces of classical music. This material is presented in parts to allow the participants to explore it in stages. For example, there are six riffs to 'Link Up' and nine riffs to 'Dreaming' to be explored independently. These are looped for two minutes so that the learners can play along or listen and then copy at their own pace. Both popular-style pieces have one track where the complete instrumentation is presented. Each piece of classical music is played in its complete instrumentation; then in a two-part version; then in single parts phrase by phrase.

Music teachers and CM facilitators who do not wish to use this audio material, could use audio material from YouTube or Spotify, or create their own compositions or arrangements of existing repertoire that cater for the musical instruments that they have available. For example, if there is a shortage of tuned instruments, they could compose or arrange music pieces for a variety of un-tuned percussion instruments.

In my experience, the audio material that appears in Green (2014) works well with all groups of learners regardless of musical experience and technical expertise because of three distinct features:

- a) the short melodic or rhythmic lines or riffs,
- b) the fact that each riff or melodic line includes an underpinning rhythmic beat or the pulse from a metronome, and
- c) the fact that the recorded material is looped.

These features allow the participants to engage in playful experimentation with the audio material whilst the rhythmic beat or metronome pulse act as a scaffold to this musical exploration. One of the music learners that I have worked with said the following regarding the support he felt by having an underlying pulse whilst learning the riffs by ear: *'Today we had technical problems with the keyboard so we were lacking in parts. However, we added percussion which gave us all something to latch on to. I thought the drums made the piece have a dance feel to it and it kept us moving'*.

Therefore, I would suggest that the teachers or CM facilitators who wish to create their own audio material preserve these features in their compositions or arrangements. I also recommend that the music teachers and CM facilitators compose and/ or arrange at least three pieces of music before the first session with each group. I suggest that these pieces include two pieces of popular style and one of another musical genre such as soundtracks from films, which also appear to be appealing to young people.

5.2 Sequence of music repertoire and timeframe

Popular music-style pieces are the ideal repertoire to start off with, for the engaging rhythms, the repetitive riffs and the sing-along melodies seem to connect with young people straight away. My students tend to find starting group playing by ear from recordings with popular music-style pieces particularly accessible compared to starting with any other musical genre. One music learner said:

- *'Link Up – everybody sort of built it up and it was the same thing. Once each person knew their thing then they could play'*.

After creating a freer rendition of one song learnt by ear from recordings in a group, and depending on the timeframe that music teacher or CM facilitator has with each group (a single workshop or a series of sessions), the next step is to encourage the group to: a) find a piece of music of their choice to copy by ear as a group; or b) copy a second piece of music made available to them by their music teacher or CM facilitator.

It is advised that the music teachers of CM facilitators do not interfere with the process of repertoire selection by recommending pieces that they feel might be appropriate for the participants' musical expertise or 'authentic' to the cultures that the participants come from. Carolyn Cook (2015, p. 534) uses the term 'visiting others' ...turfs' to describe how it is often the case that music educators in their effort to promote social justice and social inclusion 'transfer their own musical practices, values and ideals onto those of others (quite possibly unconsciously)' (op cit. 2015, p. 534). As she explains "living" another person's music is practically impossible', so including music repertoire from other cultures or from the cultures present in the group might not actually contribute to promoting social inclusion. On the contrary, letting the group members engage in a conversation about what piece(s) they wish to copy by ear could facilitate the development of musical, social and personal skills, which could promote social inclusion in group music making activities.

5.3 Who can take part and equipment needed

I have used this approach with groups of music learners of various degrees of musical knowledge and technical expertise on a musical instrument (from beginner learners to advanced music performers) and regardless of musical knowledge or technical expertise these music learners have reported high levels of enjoyment, collaboration and creative expression as a result of engaging in

group playing by ear. Priest (1989, p. 173) explains that, contrary to most instrumental teachers' belief, creativity does not necessarily require technical competence or proficiency with specific repertoire. Thus, regardless of the level of technical expertise, all learners can engage in group playing by ear from recordings. For instance, a complete beginner on the piano could effectively imitate most of the melodic lines of the musical pieces that they are copying. They could also create their own renditions of the pieces copied whilst being supported by a partner with who they share the same piano. By contrast, learners who play brass, bowed string and woodwind instruments might need to have a basic ability to create pitches before they engage in group playing by ear from recordings.

With regard to the equipment needed, the use of musical instruments (preferably tuned) but also potentially a variety of un-tuned percussion instruments is required to copying music by ear from recordings in groups. Additionally, a means of playing audio tracks in the music room is essential. This could be a CD player, a set of iPod speakers, a computer or any other means available to the music teacher or CM facilitator.

6. The process of group work and practical tips

Preamble:

- After the music teacher or CM facilitator has tuned up the available instruments, they explain to the participants that they are going to work together to learn a piece of music by ear from recordings. The **musical goal** is for the different groups of learners to create freer renditions of the piece of music copied by ear from the audio recording provided.
- One of the strengths of group playing by ear from recordings that makes it adaptable to the different levels of musical knowledge and technical expertise of the participants is that the notions of 'correctness' and 'incorrectness' cease to exist. Given that the task is to create freer renditions of the pieces copied, what might be considered 'wrong' in a notational context, might be considered appropriate here. A great example that demonstrates how 'right' and 'wrong' can be the two sides of the same coin during group playing by ear from recordings and during group experimentation is a comment made by one of my students, Freya, who on the third week of copying music by ear from recordings with her group wrote the following '*...when I played my part with the bass and piano it seemed to be quite dissonant and to not fit together but we decided that it sounded good that way*'. Enabling the group members to feel free to use the musical material as a fodder for creating something new nurtures an **expectation for success**. This is very important when working with disadvantaged youth who often lack the confidence and the skills to engage in group musical activities.
- If the group is large, it is advisable that it is divided into smaller groups of five to seven participants. When working with disadvantaged youth such as immigrants, refugees and disaffected youth, in particular, having smaller groups could make the music learners feel more comfortable as the number of people that they would need to interact with is smaller. This might encourage them to start working in pairs and to experience greater **learner agency, and collaborative and peer learning** amongst the group members.
- With groups of young people who are of secondary school age and above, I would suggest that the facilitator explains the task and then leaves the room/ area where these young people are going to work. The absence of an adult or teacher allows the learners to feel more autonomous in selecting the ways that they will employ when copying music by ear as well as the pace and manner of their interaction (Varvarigou, 2017b). They also feel more **responsible** for their contribution to the group. The facilitator could return after 20 minutes to listen to and to record the work-in-progress of each group. The recordings could then be played back to the group at a later stage to encourage group discussion and to promote group reflection.

- With primary-school-age participants, the music teacher or CM facilitator could explain the task and then stand back for regular, short periods of time (ten to fifteen minutes) allowing the young learners to find their own ways of interacting with each other and with the music repertoire. Instrumental teachers who have used group playing by ear from recordings with school ensembles and have taken some distance from the learning process have indicated that this has given them the opportunity to assess the students' needs more carefully and consequently provide more effective support.

In preparation for copying music by ear from recordings:

- Before you [music teacher or CM facilitator] leave the group(s) to work alone, you should listen together with the group members the first piece that the group will copy by ear from the recording.
- Explain that the task is to copy the music by ear but not necessarily as an accurate imitation of the original. Suggest instead that it would be more fun to create freer renditions by making changes in the dynamics, tempo, rhythm, harmony, and even the melody. For instance, some groups of advanced learners that I have worked with really enjoyed changing the key of the piece from major to minor. Also, encourage the participants to come up, as a group, with new material that they could add to the musical piece copied provided that they keep the flow of the music as they play.
- Ask if they are clear about what they are expected to do and whether there is anything particular that they might need help with before they start working as a group. For example, I have been asked to sing some melodic lines along with the recording, for some beginner learners found separating the melodic lines slightly confusing. I did provide this support without giving away note names or showing them how to play the notes on a musical instrument.
- Not providing specific advice on how to go about copying music by ear from recordings is a core principle of the approach. This enables each group member to develop the *strategies* that could give them *autonomy* in copying music by ear from recordings and in improvising that best suit each individual. Having well-defined strategies for dealing with these two musical tasks (copying music by ear and improvising) boosts the participants' confidence and autonomy as music learners. For example, a variety of individual strategies for developing improvisations from the material copied was adopted by advanced music learners that I have worked with. These music learners had never improvised before. Some of them added ornaments based on scales; others changed the rhythm for variety; some incorporated other melodic riffs, some missed notes out and some others experimented by changing the key or by plucking and strumming the strings of the instruments that they played (Varvarigou, 2017b).
- With beginner music learners, the music teacher or CM facilitator could encourage them to listen to and copy two or three melodic lines from the piece provided. This could be the rhythmic line and one or two additional melodic lines played by two different instruments, for example a guitar and a keyboard or two different keyboard melodies. Then the music teacher should withdraw for allowing the group members to work together without adult supervision.
- Intermediate or advanced music learners could decide how to divide the melodic lines of each musical piece amongst them – for example, which instrument is going to play which riff/ melodic line; at what point they will engage in group improvisation; and how they are going to structure the final performance of the piece.

After the groups have experienced group playing by ear from recordings for some time:

- When the music teacher or CM facilitator returns to monitor how group work is progressing, they could ask each group to perform what they have created up to that moment.
- Then, with groups of beginner music learners, the music teachers or CM facilitators could initiate musical games that could make the activity more enjoyable. Some games proposed by Green (2014, pp. 47-48) that could particularly work with beginner and /or younger music learners are the following:
 - Playing ‘throw and catch’: one player fixes on another player and tries to throw them the riff that they are playing; the other player tries to catch it; they swap riffs, ideally, whilst keeping the flow.
 - Assigning a point when everyone swaps to a different riff.
 - Assigning a point when each section swaps to a different riff.
 - Using hand-signs to switch riffs.
 - Passing riffs around the ensemble.
 - Adding other parts or percussion.
 - Appointing group members to become music leaders. The music leader could use hand gestures or body movements to bring about changes in the speed, dynamics or articulation of the pieces performed.

These music games could also work with intermediate or advanced music learners. Furthermore, they could be adopted as warm-up games in subsequent sessions. The music teachers and CM facilitators could use their professional judgement to decide whether they feel that including such games in their session would encourage social bonding and enjoyment.

- What intermediate or advanced learners might enjoy more is that these games are engaging in reflection on the process of creating their own renditions. Some suggestions on how the music teachers and CM facilitators could facilitate this reflection are the following:
 - Ask the group members of each group to talk about one aspect of group playing by ear that they liked the most and one that challenged them. In my experience the social interaction and the autonomy experienced are the two most common responses to what they have enjoyed about the approach.
 - Record each group’s performance. Then ask the other groups to identify at least two aspects of each group’s performance that they liked. Continue by pairing up the groups. Then ask each group to act as a critical friend to their pair by identifying one single element of their performance that could be improved. Encourage the group members to make *a single suggestion* on how a future performance could be improved.
 - Ask each group to create a short story of the process of selecting the music repertoire and of learning it by ear. Encourage different group members to share the narrative and ask them to make musical demonstrations whilst recounting the experience of group playing by ear from recordings to the other groups. I have used this reflective approach as an alternative to a final musical performance when groups have limited time to work together or when challenges with collaboration come up that limit the time that each group spends on imitation, invention and exploration.

7. The role of the music teacher and CM facilitator

The role of the music teacher or CM facilitator is to facilitate the process of group playing by ear from recordings and not necessarily to have an active musical role in it. However, depending on the musical expertise of each group of music learners as well as the time that they have with them (for example, one two-hour workshop or a series of five sessions), the music facilitators might

need to use the following strategies to help the group members when they feel that they ‘got stuck’ due to technical weaknesses or due to lack of confidence. Most of these strategies have been identified as effective when playing by ear from recordings was used in one to one instrumental lessons (Varvarigou, 2014, p. 477) and can also be found in Green (2014, p. 56). So, the music teacher or CM facilitator can:

- Ask questions about the music (‘How many different pitches can you hear’?, ‘If you were starting from D, would it go higher or lower?’)
- Sing or hum along to the recording.
- Encourage the group members to sing or hum along with the recording.
- Prompt the students to listen (‘You can listen to it for a bit. You can try and join in, and then, see how you get on’).
- Modell by playing on their instrument.
- Modell by taking an instrument used by a student and showing them some of the notes.
- Give actual note names (if the participants find this useful) especially the name of the starting note.

Additional strategies that could be employed which provide emotional and social support are the following:

- Offering positive feedback, either general (‘You are doing really well’) or attributional (‘Your phrasing is really clear’, ‘I like the dynamics that you are playing’, ‘It is so enjoyable observing how well you work together’) and encouragement (‘Keep doing what you are doing; it sounds great!’).
- Encourage the participants to experiment with different notes without fear of playing a ‘wrong’ note.
- Encourage the participants to listen to the recording, then to listen to themselves and to one another.
- Encourage members of the same group to work in pairs to copy the musical riffs/melodies as well as create some new material that they could pair up with the riffs copied – something like a ‘call and response’ approach.
- Finally, the music teacher or CM facilitator should acknowledge ‘their own assumptions and beliefs and the impact they have on their view of music and music learning’ (Cook, 2015, p. 536). This is particularly important when working with disadvantaged groups, such as immigrants, refugees and disaffected youth who desire to maintain group attitudes or behavioural patterns, despite the fact that these might be disapproved of by people around them. The variety of musics copied and the ways that these youth engage with one another might feel unfamiliar to the music teachers and CM facilitators. Standing back and observing rather than interfering straight away might actually help these young people to experience social inclusion through music making in ways that the music teachers or CM facilitators have not considered before.

8. Limitations and Conclusion

Group playing by ear from recordings has been proposed here as an approach that effectively promotes the social inclusion of disadvantaged youth in group music activities by enabling them to: a) develop the musical, social and personal skills that allow them to work together, and b) experience security rather than discrimination from peer musical interactions. Both of these features have boosted my students’ confidence in full (rather than peripheral) participation in the musical activity of their groups and it has motivated them to work together experiencing high levels of agency and autonomy.

There are also financial benefits to adopting this approach with disaffected groups such as immigrants, refugees and disaffected youth. Firstly, the approach facilitates quick music learning – the music participants use their ears, peer support and some guidance from the music teacher or

CM facilitator. There is no requirement for the music teacher or CM facilitators to be specialists in specific musical instruments or musical genres. Secondly, the approach requires very few resources, namely musical instruments and a means of playing audio tracks.

Some of the challenges that the music learners I have worked with have reported from using this approach were related to remembering the different melodic lines or riffs; initially having a self-conscious feeling when playing with people they did not know; getting the group to focus and work together; moving out of one's comfort zone, especially when engaging in musical exploration and improvisation; and combining different instruments together. Most of these challenges were reportedly overcome as the time that the groups worked together went by. In particular, the music learners explained that as they spent time engaging in copying a variety of musical repertoire by ear, their memory skills were strengthened. Furthermore, their sense of self-consciousness was reduced as they got to know one another. Working towards creating a piece of music that was going to be recorded by the teacher also allowed them to work with greater concentration and responsibility and they experienced autonomy regarding their contribution to the musical work as some learners had a leading role whilst some others were modest in their musical contributions.

All in all, this chapter has explained how and why group playing by ear from recordings could be used with the vulnerable groups in focus and has made specific suggestions on the ways that music teachers and CM facilitators could use this approach to promote social inclusion in group music activities.

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