FILIP VERNEERT
LUCA School of Arts

AN DE BISSCHOP
Ghent University

LUC NIJS
University of Luxembourg

THOMAS DE BAETS
LUCA School of Arts

The pedagogical–artistic strategies of community music facilitators as an inspiration for formal music education: A single case study

ABSTRACT

In this article, we elaborate on the pedagogical–artistic strategies of a community music project and how they may inspire formal music educational practices. To do so, we draw on findings from a study on the pedagogical–artistic strategies of the musicians–coaches of The Ostend Street Orchestra (TOSO), a community

KEYWORDS

community music
facilitators
teaching strategies
musical improvisation

Filip Verneert | An De bisschop | Luc Nijs | Thomas De Baets

collective free
  improvisation
community music
  pedagogy
music education
participatory music
  activities

music project that started as an artistic response towards the commotion around a group of homeless people in the coastal town of Ostend, Belgium. The pedagogical–artistic strategies adopted by the TOSO coaches foster the emergence of an educational approach that may have the potential to enrich music educational practices by creating a learning environment that is more democratic and inclusive. Data collection included in-depth semi-structured interviews with the TOSO coaches in 2017 and 2021, as well as video-stimulated recall. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. Seven themes emerged from our analysis: embodied interaction, co-coaching, re-thinking musical parameters, personal musical skills, collaboration, collective experiential learning and inclusion. We present the framework and rationale of the study, describe the pedagogical–artistic strategies of the coaches, and discuss the results. In conclusion, we briefly consider possibilities for further research and music teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the growing number of community music projects, scholarly interest in investigating the social and democratic benefits of joint music-making has recently increased (Bartleet and Higgins 2018). Several studies examined the outcomes of community music programmes from the *participants'* perspective (Lamont and Ranaweera 2020; Vougioukalou et al. 2019). Recent research (Dylan Smith and Silverman 2020; Verneert et al. 2021) connects these findings to the concept of well-being, or *eudaimonia* ('a good and meaningful life'). Active participation in art or music positively affects aspects of a flourishing life such as a sense of competence, community building, agency and self-expression (e.g., Croom 2014).

Next to investigating the benefits for participants, scholarly interest has recently started focusing on the *facilitators'* role in CM projects (e.g., Camlin and Zeserson 2018; Howell et al. 2017). According to Higgins, the role of the facilitator is to 'enable music interactions' (2012: 16). Current findings of the ongoing research project Music for Social Impact (Sloboda et al. 2020; Van Zijl and De bisschop 2023) indicate that facilitators' perspectives on the social impact of community music activities are layered and dynamic, integrating musicians' intentions, core aspects of practice, and (believed) effects. Addressing the question of music and well-being, Lee et al. state that 'the important role of group leaders and music facilitators can be contemplated further' (2017: 18).

In this article, we focus on the pedagogical–artistic strategies of the facilitators (referred to as *coaches*, as they call themselves) in The Ostend Street Orchestra (TOSO), a grassroots community music project in Ostend (Belgium), founded by the organization kleinVerhaal. TOSO is an inclusive orchestra working with a diverse group of mainly local homeless people, but it welcomes everybody who wants to join. As such, TOSO is rooted very strongly in the local context. Focusing on collective free musical improvisation, TOSO engages in a diversity of activities such as open rehearsals, meetings, jam sessions and performances.

The objective of our study was to explore which strategies the coaches employ to make music with a socially and musically diverse group, as well as the underlying beliefs and values that guide their pedagogical–artistic practice. In our view, disclosing these artistic–pedagogical strategies may contribute to the critical reflection on current approaches in formal music education,

supporting the plead for an inclusive stance according to which 'music education is not for the excellence of the few but for all of us to do music as well as possible' (Wright 2019: 226).

BACKGROUND

Community music in Belgium

In Belgium, the interest in community music projects has gradually grown since the early 1990s, when it became clear that people living in poverty, refugees, immigrants and people with disabilities were barely reached by any artistic or cultural activity funded by the government (Neirinckx and Carton 1994). This growing interest can be explained from diverse perspectives and aims, such as the use of culture as a lever for societal struggle and contributing towards the accessibility of the arts (De bisschop et al. 2011). Today, the field of community music projects in Belgium is more professionalized and includes a wide range of practices, from grassroots projects to more institutionalized practices.

To capture some characteristics of the present state of the field of community music projects in Belgium, we draw on the findings of a recent survey research that focuses on the musicians' perspectives of musicians being active in this field (Sloboda et al. 2022). This study revealed that most Belgian musicians (57%) are active in small community music or social–artistic organizations. The majority of them (50%) indicate their work as 'important' to them, and for 45% of the musicians it is even 'essential'. Interestingly, this perceived importance of the work contrasts with the perceived feeling of being equipped to work in community music: only 20% of the musicians feel totally equipped for working as a musician in a community music project. This means that musicians, although they find the work important, think or experience that they did not have enough specific training for the work and are sometimes confronted with situations they cannot handle with confidence. Compared internationally, Belgian musicians feel less equipped than Colombian, Finnish and UK musicians (Sloboda et al. 2020). These recent survey results articulate that, although the field of community music projects in Belgium has grown rapidly and professionalized to some extent, it may still be considered a *developing* rather than a *mature* field of practice. Progress is still possible, for example, by educating musicians accurately in community music contexts.

Pedagogical–artistic strategies in music education

Community music projects typically occur in a non-formal context, taking a middle position between formal and informal contexts (D'Amore 2006; see also Folkestad 2006). The former includes schools and training institutions and is characterized by supervised and structured learning with a focus on technical proficiency and product-oriented assessment; the latter refers to interaction with friends, family and colleagues and is characterized by unsupervised learning, emphasizing self-expression and the social aspects of music making (Mak 2006; Smart and Green 2017). Non-formal contexts are still led by adults but are student-centred, whereby students and their teachers' co-construct curriculum, have low entry barriers to music-making, involve a sense of immediacy and exploration in which learning is rather tacit, and also aim at the development of non-cognitive skills. In such contexts, the 'teacher' takes on the role of a 'facilitator' (Higgins and Willingham 2017). Rather than

direct instruction, the facilitators aim to create a safe learning environment by adopting specific strategies and conditions that foster self-guided, self-directed, discovery-orientated, experiential learning. As such, many facilitators in community music see themselves as coaching musicians rather than teachers, combining both pedagogical and artistic elements in their work. Hence, facilitating community music involves pedagogical–artistic strategies to foster learning.

Pedagogical–artistic strategies can be considered teaching strategies that involve the instructional procedures that teachers use to achieve specific learning outcomes. Teaching strategies are an important part of teaching effectiveness (e.g., Stronge 2018; Zahorik et al. 2003). However, as Hattie (2016) emphasizes, teaching strategies are not readymade recipes that can be taught outside of a specific context. Effective teachers often call upon a variety of strategies 'that have proven successful for them with students of varying abilities, backgrounds, and interests' (Stronge 2018: 69). We deliberately chose the term pedagogical–artistic strategies to emphasize the importance of the creative pedagogue. According to the framework of Abrazo and Reynolds (2015), creative pedagogues are responsive and improvisatory, comfortable with ambiguity, juxtapose a variety of ideas in new ways, and acknowledge and use fluid and flexible identities.

The pedagogical–artistic strategies adopted by the community music facilitators are often seen as part of their tacit and situated knowledge. This type of knowledge is acquired through practical experience. This project aimed to make the implicit and situated knowledge of facilitators explicit. As the need for more democratic and open pedagogical strategies for formal music education has furthermore been emphasized by many researchers (Wright 2019; Hickey 2015), the pedagogical–artistic strategies in community music projects might offer an opportunity to rethink formal music education. It is within community music projects that alternative pedagogical approaches are used as means to engage participants from varied backgrounds (Higgins and Willingham 2017). Moreover, as the dominant framework for music teacher education remains an ableist discourse, i.e., emphasizing the cognitive and motor processes of score reproduction (Stijnen et al. 2023), the integration of such alternative pedagogical approaches is still reduced to a subsidiary of informal learning (Laes and Westerlund 2018; Wright 2019). To address this problem, reflecting on pedagogical–artistic approaches is required. Community music practices often demonstrate what a more inclusive music education could look like, modelling alternative ways of learning, teaching and creating music with highly diverse groups.

METHOD

Rationale of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the pedagogical–artistic strategies of the coaches in a community music project (TOSO). Community music practices require a flexible and responsive approach to pedagogy. Therefore, this study aimed to identify and reflect on the strategies of the coaches and how they use their musical and pedagogical skills to engage with a very heterogeneous group of participants, both socially and musically. This study sets out to gain a better understanding of the important role of the community music facilitator and contribute to the development of possible innovative ideas for formal music education. To expose the implicit and situated knowledge of the

coaches, we used a qualitative research design, including in-depth interviews and video-stimulated recall over a four-year period.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were the three musicians who coach TOSO. They are experienced performers and music teachers with a formal training in music. Coach 1 (C1) is a trumpet player and composer with a background in free and structured jazz improvisation; Coach 2 (C2) is a singer with a more traditional jazz background and a degree in social sciences; and Coach 3 (C3) is a drummer with extensive experience in free improvisation.

The three coaches work simultaneously with the orchestra. Members of TOSO are not expected to have any prior musical skills or experience and can freely come and go during rehearsals. Amplifiers, drums, small percussion instruments, an electric piano and a small sound system with microphones are provided for the rehearsals.

DATA COLLECTION

The data in this study were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The use of in-depth and repeated interviews allowed for exploring the coaches' subjective and personal experiences and revealing the implicit knowledge embedded in their practice. We opted to use individual interviews rather than focus groups to capture the unique perspectives and narratives of each coach without the influence of group dynamics (e.g., dominant voice, convergence of ideas). Collecting individual interview data regarding the contextual investigation of the pedagogical strategies in this project is also in line with recent work in phenomenological psychology, which is increasingly using this methodology (Englander and Morley 2023; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Each coach was interviewed twice. The first interviews (average duration: 40 minutes, average word count: 3100) took place in 2017 and were conceived as an open and informal talk about the project between the coaches and the primary researcher. The second interviews (average duration: 1 hour 30 minutes, average word count: 2400) took place in 2021. The second round of interviews was prompted by questions on the artistic–pedagogical strategies adopted by the coaches, which emerged during a study on the experiences of TOSO's members (Verneert et al. 2021). Questions (see Appendix 1) spanned the coaches' attitudes towards teaching, musical skills, formal music education and preparation. To obtain a certain level of coherence while, at the same time, allowing an extended, open discussion, the interviews were designed as a semi-structured, in-depth conversation between the individual coaches and the researcher–practitioner.

To support in-depth reflection on their coaching behaviour, the second interview included video-stimulated recall (VSR) as an additional research tool. Additionally, we considered VSR a helpful tool due to the distance between Interview 1 (2017) and 2 (2021). VSR is a research method in which people, while watching a video sequence of their behaviour, are invited to reflect on their actions and concurrent thinking during the event. The video sequences help to relive and, as such, recall the situation with a certain vividness, thereby stimulating an in-depth reflection (e.g., Després 2022; Parkes and Daniel 2023). Each coach was given three video sequences of approximately three minutes, selected from a two-hour, 30-minute video footage of rehearsals. Sequences were selected by the researchers based on critical

incidents (Harrison and Lee 2011). Next to serving as a means to increase the level of information and clarification during the interviews, these recordings also provided an additional meaningful source of information to be triangulated with the interview data. All interviews were audio and video recorded.

DATA ANALYSIS

In the first phase, the interviews were transcribed ad verbatim. Next, the interview data were analysed following a thematic analysis approach (Clarke and Braun 2017). The latter's interpretative nature puts the analyst's personal reflections at the heart of the coding processes, such that findings entail an explicit encounter between the participants' constructs and the researcher's theoretical sensitivity. According to Bumbuc (2016), the integration of the researcher's creativity, professional competence and experience is crucial in the analysis of qualitative research data. We adopted such a methodological approach to keep an open view of the data and obtain a *bottom-up* stance.

After a first immersion phase to gain familiarity with the transcripts, the data were analysed in ATLAS.ti (version 9.0.5) using open coding. In a second phase, we performed another round of coding, looking for the emergence of major themes. During this bottom-up coding process, codes were clustered together based on their shared characteristics. Joint analysis of the interview transcripts led to 175 codes that were grouped into five pedagogical–artistic strategies: (1) co-coaching, (2) re-thinking musical parameters, (3) embodied interaction, (4) personal musical skills and (5) collaboration. In addition, two general themes were found, reflecting the coaches' overall beliefs about their teaching approach, which we labelled (6) collective experiential learning and (7) inclusion. The coding process was performed independently by two researchers, the first and second authors. Furthermore, the merging of the two distinct codings, as well as engaging in discussions with a third researcher, served as a measure to mitigate the influence of personal biases. Comparison between the data of both researchers led to the alignment of the seven emergent themes.

FINDINGS

In this section, we describe the themes that emerged from our analysis. The selected statements (Figure 1) illustrate the coaches' ideas about *how* and *what* they do when working with the TOSO orchestra.

Re-thinking musical parameters

Commenting on their work with TOSO, the coaches regularly alluded to the need for a different way of considering music and performing music. That is, common – or maybe idiomatic – rules and procedures regarding musical parameters (e.g., structure, tempo, tonality and harmony) do not necessarily work in the context of a community music project:

> Like a good musician, we try to sing and play in tune and at the right tempo. In TOSO, that won't work.
>
> (C2)

> These are people with very different backgrounds, both human and musical, so you can forget about standard musical procedures.
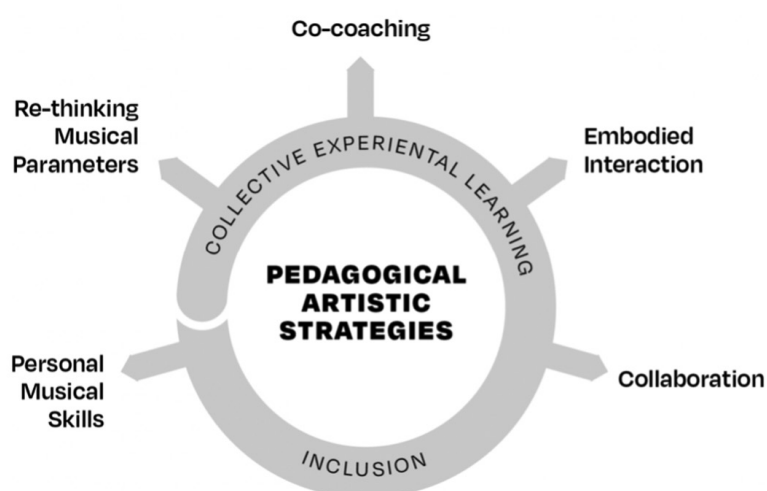>
> (C1)

Figure 1: Pedagogical–artistic strategies.

Instead, to initiate and sustain the musical process, the coaches acknowledge the necessity of accepting mistakes and chaos in the here and now while nevertheless – as it remains important to them – trying to work on musical parameters to shape the music:

> I remember a moment when everybody was on stage, playing different things, discussing, and asking questions, all at the same time. New musicians are showing up who never came before. For me, that was too much to handle in the beginning. But as a coach, I've learned to accept the noise, accept the chaos, and work with it.
>
> (C1)

Moreover, letting standard procedures and rules aside has a liberating aspect that promotes the human connection in joint music playing:

> Giving up the idea that you have to conform to certain musical rules creates an explosion of energy. It puts humanity back into the music. Music makes encounters possible, without prejudice.
>
> (C3)

Out of necessity ('In TOSO that won't work'), coaches felt provoked to *rethink musical parameters*, which involved a shift from striving for technical perfection and clear structure, as is often the case in the tradition of Western art music, to accepting 'mistakes' and 'chaos' as a way of initiating and sustaining the artistic process. In this sense, re-thinking the concepts of what is 'good' and what is 'bad' in music allowed the coaches to work with this orchestra in a similar way as in George Lewis's quote, 'throw them in the deep end and work with what naturally happens' (cited in Borgo 2022: 49). Therefore, while such re-thinking might be spurred by the heterogeneous assemblage of the orchestra regarding both personal and musical backgrounds, this may also be related to the particular musical activity that characterizes music making in TOSO, namely free improvisation. As Ben-Tal and Salazar (2014) acknowledge, free improvisation risks becoming aimless and chaotic. Conversely,

according to Borgo 'free improvisation is not an "anything goes type of anarchy" but involves collective discovery in a communal environment and a mode of personal liberation made possible through cooperation and mutual respect' (2022: 32).

Embodied interaction

Another strategy mentioned by the coaches and observable in the recordings, was the use of bodily communication through full-body involvement. Examples are the frequent use of non-verbal cues, dancing or walking while playing, and facial expressions. One reason for this strategy was to keep the process of playing uninterrupted. In this way, players can immerse themselves more in the activity of playing, leading to a better feel for the music:

> We never stop the music; by creating a flow in the group, constantly making eye contact, moving, and dancing, the groove gets better, and they see that I am excited.
>
> (C3)

> By moving and dancing, they get more into the rhythm.
>
> (C2)

Another advantage of this strategy is that, in addition to keep on going the energy flow going, it may promote a positive atmosphere and enthusiasm and foster connection:

> The non-verbal cues while playing, not stopping the music, walking around while playing, dancing, facial expressions: it enhances the drive, enthusiasm, involvement, and a positive atmosphere.
>
> (C2)

> Starting from that positive atmosphere, I can give more bodily signs, and we play more actively together as a result. You can achieve togetherness, that is my plan. So, I do it deliberately.
>
> (C1)

To foster the collective and experiential nature of TOSO rehearsals, the coaches adopted a specific strategy, denotable as *embodied interaction*. The coaches emphasized the importance of communication through full-body involvement and the frequent use of movement, dancing and non-verbal cues to encourage the musicians, promote enthusiasm in the group, and create an energetic and positive atmosphere. For the coaches, such *embodied interaction* was also a way to interact with the group without stopping the music, thereby reducing downtime and creating a positive flow that slowly immersed everyone in the act of music playing, into the groove. As such, this strategy not only had an affective or motivational dimension but also a musical dimension, helping the group to actively play together through bodily signs. Moreover, too many verbal instructions and feedback can diminish flow and musical learning. This finding is also reflected in Schiavio and colleagues' (2019) consideration of non-verbal communication as a form of participatory sensemaking (De Jaegher and Di Paolo 2007). In this context, people make sense of each other and the world around them by interacting with each other (e.g., by

imitating each other). This embodied interaction is a socially sensitive, embodied approach as opposed to a cognitive, language-based approach and can be understood as a multimodal learning process (Bremmer and Nijs 2020).

Co-coaching: Teaching through negotiation

The three coaches worked simultaneously with the orchestra. Although this was not always easy, the coaches deem this a strength of the project. On the one hand, the different approaches were often perceived as complementary rather than competing:

> Yeah, they are both great, I mean, it takes great musicians with a lot of experience to do something like this, you know? Everybody's approach is different, you know? But anyway, I think all three of us complement each other.
>
> (C3)

On the other hand, the coaches challenged each other through their different views, even to the degree that it was sometimes experienced as a struggle. The strength of this approach lies in shaping the process of teaching through negotiation, based on open-mindedness, respect and the desire to learn from each other:

> We also learn a lot from each other, and to me that's what makes it exciting. What's great about this concept is that every approach is always being challenged by the coaches in some way, and that's just great. So, nothing is certain, everything can always change.
>
> (C1)

> The three coaches are all different. One believes in total freedom, the others are more attached to structures, but try to apply them in an open way or understand them. There are also many differences. I think I'm a bit more free and want to give more responsibility to the instrumentalists. It is also important that we learn to 'tolerate', 'accept', 'trust', 'respect' others and learn from each other.
>
> (C2)

Co-coaching required open-mindedness, respect and the willingness to negotiate and learn from each other. The emphasis on democratic music-making was reflected in the collaborative approach of the coaches. In other words, coaches needed to adopt a democratic and egalitarian stance rather than taking on a hierarchical leadership position. While this was experienced by the coaches as an enriching process, arguably it was also beneficial to the orchestra members. In the first place, they could perceive and experience that the coaches did not always agree and that a democratic negotiation enhanced the musical process. In the second place, more individual attention could be given to participants during the rehearsals, and occasionally coaches could work with a smaller group while the others continued playing together.

Personal musical skills

Several of the coaches' statements concerned their individual musical and pedagogical tricks, i.e., a kind of toolbox of experience-based individual

techniques that can be used 'on the spot' (De Baets 2022) to shape the musical process and achieve specific goals. On the one hand, these *tricks* concern specific musical activities; on the other hand, they require the ability to pick up what the participants play and start from there. Also, the use of non-musical techniques was emphasized by the coaches:

> It becomes organic, and I add elements by improvising. I listen very carefully to what the TOSO people are doing. The elements that work for me are harmonizing, question-and-answer, parlando, and working with dynamics.
>
> (C1)

> I try to trigger them, using a few notes and developing them; why not take a piece that's too difficult, but just play the intro or a piece of the melody, write something on the spot, use the notes or groove they're playing, and try to get them in while playing.
>
> (C2)

> Working with simple themes that offer a foundation, working with images, accompanying a film, working with stories or poems, or reinforcing individual skills by playing in small groups.
>
> (C3)

The coaches often referred to a personal repertoire or toolbox of experience-based *tips and tricks*, as a mixture of general musical skills (e.g., the use of dynamics, knowledge of chords and scales, use of different rhythmical grooves) and more personal and social skills (e.g., the ability to arrange on the spot, trigger people and let everybody play something). It seems that a solid musical and technical basis, in combination with personal 'tips and tricks' that can be deployed 'immediately' in different situations, is a prerequisite for adequate teaching in these kinds of projects. Also, Hickey emphasizes the importance of personal 'teacher tools' in free-improvisation ensembles: 'Each pedagogue seemed to own a personal set of tools, or "repertoire of techniques", which was used seamlessly to guide the improvisation ensembles during rehearsals' (2015: 434). In addition, social skills might sometimes be seen as belonging to a teacher's toolbox, enabling them to adapt 'on the spot' to 'immediate' demands. An example of this was the coach, who deliberately used the local dialect to initiate social connection or the use of musical games to engage the participants.

Collaboration

In our project, *collaboration* is defined as working with the input of the participants to create music together. It is an important part of the musical process at TOSO. The coaches stated that the input of the group is very important. Connecting with the group and playing together was deemed an important aspect as opposed to being a leader:

> But really, the main thing is that we listen to what's going on in the group, which spontaneously comes up with a riff, a piece of melody or a story or a text. And we work with that, and then the coaches translate that into notes for some who need it.
>
> (C1)

> Start with their impulses to find their qualities. Don't be a conductor; they don't accept that. Be yourself, play with them. Start with their input, their stories, their world. Connect and blend into the group (being yourself) and play with them all the time.
>
> (C2)

The democratic approach in TOSO was also reflected in this theme. Here, collaboration refers to 'authentic' collaboration between coaches and participants on an equal level. The starting point of the musical process was often the contribution of the participants, whereby the coaches and the orchestra worked together as one team. This was facilitated by the coaches by always playing along with the orchestra, trying to connect with the group without taking on the 'role' as leader or conductor. Such collaborative work leads to increased interaction within the group and greater cohesion (Sawyer 2008; Verneert et al. 2021). Starting with the musical ideas and personal stories of the participants is recognized as a powerful strategy in community music projects (Higgins and Willingham 2017).

Inclusion

Several statements by the coaches referred to an inclusive mindset. The position that coaches took on was one aspect of such a mindset. Clearly, they dismissed a hierarchical relationship between themselves and the orchestra, which could possibly be induced by their skill level or by a rather therapeutic stance. For the coaches, it was important to be authentic and not to act as a social worker:

> I think that from the start, the coaches were at the same musical and social level as the participants with whom they were making music. In my opinion that sets them apart from many other coaches in similar projects. Just because you are a pro musician or technical better doesn't mean that interesting stories can't pop up from the participants to work with. That kind of equal level, well, it's a double attitude; you're a coach, but at the same time, you don't have a monopoly on the truth or say, 'We have fixed structures here' and we're going to try and get everyone into them.
>
> (C1)

> You cannot be or play a 'social worker' or 'psychologist'! I think that's exactly what you shouldn't be doing. It's much more about authenticity and a strong artistic signature.
>
> (C2)

To the coaches, it was clear that such an egalitarian position, in which everybody can be themselves, was seminal to working with this kind of group and earning their respect. One coach referred to the need for teaching experience to take on such a position:

> It is going on the road together; I am fully me, and they are also themselves. They feel that very well! [E].g., at TOSO, one of my strong entry points was that I spoke the local dialect, so I won them over much quicker.
>
> (C3)

You see that with beginning teachers in such a project, they want to do it so well that they become too friendly, and therefore they don't reach the goal.

(C3)

An inclusive mindset relates to what Higgings (2007) describes as an act of unconditional hospitality. This hospitality is reflected in the description of TOSO on their website, which states that it welcomes all possible target groups, involving people with different social and musical backgrounds, with or without shelter, newcomers or people who have lived here all their lives, young and elderly, people with or without scars, and people who do or do not read music.

Collective experiential learning

This theme refers to the statements of the coaches about their 'general learning idea'. The beliefs of the coaches about the application, interpretation and purpose of learning and education in this specific context. This theme considers the coaches' conviction that learning is all about creating a *collective experiential learning*. Learning is something you do together (collective) and happens in the moment (experiential). In such an approach, there are no fixed formats, and there is freedom to question everything. Music is seen as a medium rather than a product; there is a focus on learning *through* music-making rather than learning *how to play* music. Through interaction and question and answer, improvisation is used to construct meaning collectively, using musical elements and own musical experiences:

It seems that you can only have something of significance in music if you are in the picture individually. But behind every person who makes music here, e.g., as a soloist, is a large group of others, a total structure, and this one man emerges as a result. Make people aware of this so that they understand. Students who now come out of the music conservatory take that image with them, and that is wrong. Methods for instruments are focused on individual, short-term results, but making a larger understanding of how instruments and people can work together in larger structures is completely ignored.

(C1)

What I learned as a musician was that when I was teaching, I was only concerned with one thing, and that was that people should become better with an instrument. Learning to play better was important to me. And working with TOSO, that changed. I learned that people should not only become better with an instrument. They need to use their instruments to better read the words they speak. Which not everyone does, and what is totally different is exactly what I learned with TOSO.

(C2)

If you really try to create an artistically strong story, you get something good. That's what drives me to TOSO, to take on that, to take on that challenge.

(C3)

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In our view, the pedagogical–artistic strategies that coaches use in community music projects such as TOSO have much to offer for music education in general and music teacher education, including the use of collective musical play and the acknowledgement of participants' autonomy and initiative. Although there is a vast amount of research (Willingham and Carruthers 2018; Higgins and Bartleet 2018; Larsson and Georgii-Hemming 2019; Hickey 2009) about the benefits of incorporating popular music pedagogies for improvisation, the integration of such pedagogies is not yet fully embraced in formal music education and music teacher training (Laes and Westerlund 2018). The artistic–pedagogical strategies in a community music project like TOSO offer learners and music teachers the opportunity to move beyond the traditional pedagogical practices in the formal music education system.

Recent research (Stijnen et al. 2023) shows that playing from score is still the dominant activity in instrumental music classes at the expense of improvisational activities. The same goes for general music education (Larsson and Georgii-Hemming 2019). We deem the strategies we found a way to initiate and support collaborative musical play and improvisation. In doing so lies a possibility of bridging the gap between playing from a score and free improvising and between the *individual* and the *collective*. As more traditional approaches of music learning focus more on an individual approach, the strategies in our study highlight the collective. As we saw, the coaches in our study emphasized the importance of collective experiential learning, including the idea that music learning is something you do together, underlining the social dimension of music and improvisation. In doing so, they can create a diverse music education landscape that bridges formal and non-formal learning contexts. This approach involves paying more attention to the diversity of learners and working with this diversity in an inclusive way (Lewis and Piekut 2016). The inclusive mindset we found in our study refers to the idea that through collective free improvisation, every participant can be reached regardless of technical or musical skills. Indeed, the strategies of the coaches are used to facilitate this inclusiveness through a joint musical process where everybody can participate. Thus underlining a present-day cultural challenge and relating to an ethical responsibility ('ethic of care') the teacher holds towards society (Lines 2018; Silverman 2012; Higgins 2012).

Looking at the pedagogical–artistic strategies in TOSO from a teacher perspective would not position this type of strategies in the field of informal learning but in the field of non-formal learning, which includes learning activities in community contexts (D'Amore 2006). The characteristics of teacher strategies in a non-formal learning context (Ng 2020) can easily be linked to the pedagogical–artistic strategies we have found: in TOSO, the coaches and the participants co-construct the learning material (collaboration, co-coaching), we mark a low-entry barrier to music-making (re-thinking musical parameters), and a sense of immediacy and exploration in which learning is tacit and is present as well (embodied interaction). Furthermore, if we understand teacher strategies as described by Hattie (2016) and Stronge (2018) – no readymade recipes but the critical ability to develop and apply a broad repertoire of approaches that can be used context-specifically to work with groups of various backgrounds, interests and abilities – there is no doubt the pedagogical–artistic 'facilitating' strategies used by the TOSO coaches can be seen as strategies to work musically and inclusively with a diverse group

and in various contexts. Music is not taught here in the theoretical or formal sense, but music is created together with a heterogenous group, and this is an important aspect of what a music teacher should be able to do.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

While we believe this study has led to interesting findings about the artistic–pedagogical strategies of the TOSO coaches, we wish to point out some limitations of the study and highlight areas for further research.

A first limitation concerns the sample. Being a single-case project, it is evidently not possible to generalize our findings beyond the context of TOSO. Nevertheless, we believe such studies are necessary, as a dearth of studies focuses on the facilitators of such projects (Lee et al. 2017; Sloboda et al. 2020). Moreover, studies about similar projects, such as Room 13 (Adams 2015) or Meet4Music (Gande and Kruse-Weber 2017), have led to comparable results. Furthermore, the coaches in this project are all musicians with a more formal musical background in jazz. As such, engaging in coaching TOSO may be characterized as an encounter with the strange, leading to a particular way of viewing participatory traditions as heterodox or *other*. This might have introduced a bias in their narrative as they tried to make sense of less formal music-making practices. Further research might involve comparing the perspectives of coaches with how participants who are more naturally *inside* participatory music projects perceive the coaching. This could shed light on the possible epistemological bias that comes with the positional complexity of musicians with a formal musical background while engaging with participatory traditions of music-making.

A second limitation relates to the methods used in our study. We are aware that adopting thematic analysis as analysis method cannot allow us to fully capture the complexity of this project. The analysis focuses on the identification of themes derived from the data without considering the interconnections between these themes. Further research could explore how working in a community music setting changes the personal beliefs of teachers and may lead to the development of more inclusive pedagogies in formal music education. As one of the coaches stated:

> One of the most beautiful projects for me, the most difficult but the most sincere, it has changed me. It felt like a kind of brainwashing, as a music teacher I became lazy, doing the same things over and over. In TOSO I was confronted with my prejudices and started to look at people from a 'I'm curious of who you are and what we can do with music' mindset.
>
> (C2)

CONCLUSION

As the need for more creative and open pedagogical–artistic strategies has been emphasized by many and the coaches in the TOSO project reach a very diverse group of people and succeed in finding a way of working with music that is 'relevant to the musical self', we deemed it important to look closely into the pedagogical–artistic strategies of the coaches in this project.

In our study, *co-coaching*, *re-thinking musical parameters*, *embodied interaction*, *personal musical skills* and *collaboration* emerged as central themes. In addition to these concrete pedagogical–artistic strategies used by the coaches, *inclusion* and *collective experiential learning* emerged as important foundational

ideas. We believe that the strategies we described offer the possibility of an equal exchange of musical ideas and a means of expressing emotions. The employed strategies allow for personal musical expression regardless of the level of technical and musical skills. The development of these strategies has had an impact on the personal and musical beliefs of the coaches and is a good way to develop social dynamics, interaction and musical training. Pedagogical–artistic strategies in a community music project can inspire music education by providing a hands-on and experiential approach to learning. Through participation in a project, music teachers can observe and experience different methods of teaching music, such as community-based and collaborative learning, and gain a deeper understanding of how these methods can be applied in the classroom. Additionally, participating in a project can also provide opportunities for reflection and self-evaluation, allowing music teachers to develop their own teaching style and methods.

We believe that the diversity of artistic–pedagogical strategies found in community music projects needs to be implemented throughout music teacher education (Laes and Westerlund 2018; Camlin and Zeserson 2018; Ballantyne and Mills 2008) and can play a role in changing society through music (Willingham and Carrtuhers 2017; Wright 2019). Implementing the strategies we propose in teacher education might support the development of resilient and reflective music teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FUNDING

APPENDIX 1

Semi-structured interview questions TOSO coaches

1. How would you describe the music you play with TOSO?
2. When you got this assignment – was it with the purpose of working with collective free improvisation – or how did it become part of your work here?
3. How would you describe your methods, strategies, preparation, etc. for the TOSO project?
4. What is the advantage–disadvantage of working simultaneously with three coaches?
5. What skills do you need for working with a project such as TOSO?
6. What, if any, audience considerations do you keep in mind when performing/rehearsing with TOSO?
7. How is your role as teacher of your music classes different than your role as coach in TOSO?
8. What could formal music education learn about improvisation from the TOSO approach?
9. Why do you suppose TOSO is unique?
10. How would you, in your own words, describe the added value of TOSO for the participants you work with?

11. What is the added value of TOSO for yourself?
12. What else do you think I should be asking in order to learn and understand better about TOSO?

VIDEO-STIMULATED RECALL

What can you tell me about this? What happens in this excerpt? What did you think?

REFERENCES

Abramo, J. M. and Reynolds, A. (2015), 'Pedagogical creativity as a framework for music teacher education', *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 25:1, pp. 37–51, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1057083714543744.

Adams, J. (2015), 'Room 13 and the contemporary practice of artist-learners', *Studies in Art Education*, 47:1, pp. 23–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2005.11652811.

Ballantyne, J. and Mills, C. (2008), 'Promoting socially just and inclusive teacher education: Exploring perceptions of early career teachers', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 30:1, pp. 77–91, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1321103X08089891.

Bartleet, B.-L. and Higgins, L. (eds) (2018), *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ben-Tal, O. and Salazar, D. (2014), 'Rethinking the musical ensemble: A model for collaborative learning in higher education music technology', *Journal of Music, Technology & Education*, 7:3, pp. 279–94, https://doi.org/10.1386/jmte.7.3.279_1.

Borgo, D. (2022), *Sync or Swarm, Revised Edition: Improvising Music in a Complex Age*, 2nd ed., New York: Bloomsbury.

Bremmer, M. and Nijs, L. (2020), 'The role of the body in instrumental and vocal music pedagogy: A dynamical systems theory perspective on the music teacher's bodily engagement in teaching and learning', *Frontiers in Education*, 5:79, http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.00079.

Bumbuc, Ş. (2016), 'About subjectivity in qualitative data interpretation', *International Conference Knowledge-Based Organization*, 22:2, pp. 419–24, https://doi.org/10.1515/kbo-2016-0072.

Camlin, D. and Zeserson, K. (2018), 'Becoming a community musician: A situated approach to curriculum, content, and assessment', in B. Bartleet and L. Higgins (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 711–33.

Clarke, V. and Braun, V. (2017), 'Thematic analysis', *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12:3, pp. 297–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613.

Cote, M., Day, R. and Peuter, G. (2007), 'Utopian pedagogy: Creating radical alternatives in the neoliberal age', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 29:4, pp. 317–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714410701291129.

Croom, A. (2014), 'Music practice and participation for psychological well-being: A review of how music influences positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment', *Musica Scientae*, 19:1, pp. 44–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864914561709.

D'Amore, A. (ed.) (2006), *Musical Futures: An Approach to Teaching and Learning*, London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

De Baets, T. (2022), 'The music teacher in "on-the-spot" musical interactions: A practitioner research study', *International Journal of Music Education*, 40:3, pp. 364–77, https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614211061591.

De bisschop, A., Rutten, K. and Soetaert, R. (2011), 'A case study in discourse analysis of community arts in cultural policy and the press', *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 13:4, https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1750.

De Jaegher, H. and Di Paolo, E. (2007), 'Participatory sense-making: An enactive approach to social cognition', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 6:4, pp. 485–507, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-007-9076-9.

Després, J.-P. (2022), 'First-person, video-stimulated recall method for studying musical improvisation strategies', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 44:1, pp. 34–51, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X20974803.

Dylan Smith, G. and Silverman, M. (eds) (2020), *Eudaimonia: Perspectives for Music Learning*, New York: Routledge.

Englander, M. and Morley, J. (2023), 'Phenomenological psychology and qualitative research', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 22:1, pp. 25–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-021-09781-8.

Folkestad, G. (2006), 'Formal and informal learning situations or practices vs formal and informal ways of learning', *British Journal of Music Education*, 23:2, pp. 135–45, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051706006887.

Gande, A. and Kruse-Weber, S. (2017), 'Addressing new challenges for a community music project in the context of higher music education: A conceptual framework', *London Review of Education*, 15:3, pp. 372–87, http://dx.doi.org/10.18546/LRE.15.3.04.

Georgii-Hemming, E. and Westvall, M. (2010), 'Music education – a personal matter? Examining the current discourses of music education in Sweden', *British Journal of Music Education*, 27:1, pp. 21–33, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051709990179.

Harrison, J. and Lee, R. (2011), 'Exploring the use of critical incident analysis and the professional learning conversation in an initial teacher education program', *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 37:2, pp. 199–217, https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2011.558285.

Hattie, J. and Donoghue, G. (2016), 'Learning strategies: A synthesis and conceptual model', *Science of Learning*, 1:1, pp. 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1038/npjscilearn.2016.13.

Hickey, M. (2009), 'Can improvisation be taught? A call for free improvisation in our schools', *International Journal of Music Education*, 27:4, pp. 285–99, https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761409345442.

Hickey, M. (2015), 'Learning from the experts: A study of free-improvisation pedagogues in university settings', *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62:4, pp. 425–45, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022429414556319.

Higgins, L. (2007), 'Acts of hospitality: The community in community music', *Music Education Research*, 9:2, pp. 281–92, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613800701384441.

Higgins, L. (2012), *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Higgins, L. and Bartleet, B.-L. (2018), 'The community music facilitator and school music education', in B.-L. Bartleet and L. Higgins (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 277–94.

Higgins, L. and Willingham, L. (2017), *Engaging in Community Music: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge.

Howell, G., Higgins, L. and Bartleet, B.-L. (2017), 'Community music practice: Intervention through facilitation', in R. Mantie and G. Dylan Smith (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Music Making and Leisure*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 601–18.

Kvale, S. and Brinkmann, S. (2009), *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed., Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Laes, T. and Westerlund, H. (2018), 'Performing disability in music teacher education: Moving beyond inclusion through expanded professionalism', *International Journal of Music Education*, 36:1, pp. 34–46, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0255761417703782.

Lamont, A. and Ranaweera, N. (2020), 'Knit one, play one: Comparing the effects of amateur knitting and amateur music participation on happiness and wellbeing', *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 15:5, pp. 1353–74, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-019-09734-z.

Larsson, C. and Georgii-Hemming, E. (2019), 'Improvisation in general music education: A literature review', *British Journal of Music Education*, 36:1, pp. 49–67, http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S026505171800013X.

Lee, J., Krause, A. and Davidson, J. (2017), 'The PERMA well-being model and music facilitation practice: Preliminary documentation for well-being through music provision in Australian schools', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 39:1, pp. 73–89, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X17703131.

Lewis, G. and Piekut, B. (2016), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lines, D. (2018), 'The ethics of community music', in B. Bartleet and L. Higgins (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 385–402.

Mak, P. (2006), *Learning Music in Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Contexts*, Groningen: Hanzehogeschool.

Neirinckx, P. and Carton, B.(1994), *Algemeen Verslag over de Armoede*, Brussels: Koning Boudewijnstichting and ATD Vierde Wereld.

Ng, H. H. (2020), 'Towards a synthesis of formal, non-formal and informal pedagogies in popular music learning', *Research Studies in Music Education*, 42:1, pp. 56–76, https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X18774345.

Parkes, K. A. and Daniel, R. (2023), 'Using stimulated recall and reflection on action with music studio teachers in higher education', *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 35:1, pp. 67–78.

Sawyer, K. (2008), 'Learning music from collaboration', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 47:1, pp. 50–59, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2007.11.004.

Schiavio, A., van der Schyff, D., Gande, A. and Kruse-Weber, S. (2019), 'Negotiating individuality and collectivity in community music: A qualitative case study', *Psychology of Music*, 47:5, pp. 706–21, https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735618775806.

Silverman, M. (2012), 'Virtue ethics, care ethics, and the good life of teaching', *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education*, 11:2, pp. 96–122.

Sloboda, J., Baker, G., De bisschop, A., Karttunen, S., Mazzola , A., Rojas, J. S., Van Zijl, A., Westerlund, H. and Zapata Restrepo, G. (2020), 'Music for Social Impact' *Finnish Journal of Music Education*, 23:1&2 pp. 116–43.

Sloboda, J., Van Zijl, A. and De bisschop, A. (2022), 'Music for social impact: Practitioners' contexts, work and beliefs: Research introduction and survey results', *Play Ground: The Social Impact of Music Making*, Ghent, Belgium, 7 December.

Small, C. (1998), *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Smart, T. and Green, L. (2017), 'Informal learning and musical performance', in J. S. Rink, H. Gaunt and A. Williamon (eds), *Musicians in the Making: Pathways to Creative Performance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 108–25.

Stijnen, J., Nijs, L. and Van Petegem, P. (2023), 'Instrument teachers' practices, beliefs, and barriers regarding musical creativity: Exploring the creative process of interpretation', *International Journal of Music Education*, article first, https://doi.org/10.1177/02557614231175777.

Stronge, J. (2018), *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Van Zijl, A. and De bisschop, A. (2023), 'Layers and dynamics of social impact: Musicians' perspectives on participatory music activities', *Musicae Scientiae*, 28:2, pp. 348–64, https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649231205553.

Verneert, F., Nijs, L. and De Baets, T. (2021), 'A space for collaborative creativity: How collective improvising shapes a sense of belonging', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, p. 648770, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648770.

Vougioukalou, S., Dow, R., Bradshaw, L. and Pallant, T. (2019), 'Wellbeing and integration through community music: The role of improvisation in a music group of refugees, asylum seekers and local community members', *Contemporary Music Review*, 38:5, pp. 533–48, https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2019.1684075.

Willingham, L. and Carruthers, G. (2018), 'Community music in higher education', in B. L. Bartleet and L. Higgins (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 595–616, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190219505.013.9.

Wright, R. (2019), 'Envisioning real utopias in music education: Prospects, possibilities and impediments', *Music Education Research*, 21:3, pp. 217–27, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2018.1484439.

Zahorik, J., Halbach, A., Ehrle, K. and Molnar, A. (2003), 'Teaching practices for smaller classes', *Educational Leadership*, 61:1, pp. 75–77.

SUGGESTED CITATION

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Filip Verneert is Ph.D. researcher at the LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven (research cluster music education) and director of Muziekmozaïek, the organization for folk and jazz music in Belgium. He is Doctor of the Arts (LUCA School of Arts–KU Leuven), holds a Master's degree in Educational Sciences (KU Leuven) and studied jazz guitar. Filip is a member of the Ethno Committee, a global steering committee that ensures that the Ethno programme develops in a sustainable, positive and democratic way, and is affiliated with the Centre for Social Action and Music Making (CESAMM). His research includes community music, collaborative creativity, music education and improvisation, with a particular interest in the social and educational effects of collective free improvisation.

E-mail: filip.verneert@luca-arts.be

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7685-0680

An De bisschop is professor and holder of the Academic Chair Jonet (CESAMM) at Ghent University. Her Ph.D. involved international comparative

research of the discourse used in policy and press to talk about 'community arts' in Flanders (Belgium) and the Western Cape Province (South Africa). After her Ph.D. she became director of Demos (2010–15), a knowledge centre for encouraging the participation of disadvantaged groups in culture, sports and youthwork, funded by the Flemish government. Since 2015 she has been working as a lecturer at the School of Arts-Royal Conservatoire Ghent, where she teaches courses about participatory arts and arts education, and mentors master students in their research projects. She was the Belgian CI for the International Comparative Research 'Music for social impact: Practitioners' contexts, work & beliefs', a AHRC-funded research. Her domains of interest are participatory arts, social impact of music, arts education and teacher training in the arts.

E-mail: an.debisschop@ugent.be

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4859-7817

Luc Nijs is associate professor in early childhood music education at the University of Luxembourg, head of the bachelor in music education at the University of Luxembourg and visiting professor at Ghent University, affiliated to IPEM and to the Academic Chair Jonet on Social Action and Music Making (co-founder). He holds a Ph.D. in arts sciences (systematic musicology), MA degrees in music performance (clarinet) and philosophy, and a teacher certificate (clarinet, sax, ensemble playing). His research integrates theory development, empirical studies and practice, focusing on the musician–instrument relationship, on the role of body movement in the instrumental learning processes and on the role of technology in provoking an embodied approach to instrumental music education. Luc is associate editor (Europe, Middle East) for the *International Journal of Music in Early Childhood* (*IJMEC*) and member of the scientific committee of the *International Conference of Dalcroze Studies* (*ICDS*).

E-mail: luc.nijs@uni.lu

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7054-2660

Thomas De Baets is professor of music education at LUCA School of Arts and KU Leuven, in Belgium. He is currently programme director of music and drama at LUCA. He holds a master's degree in music education (Lemmensinstituut, 2005), a degree of advanced studies in music education (Lemmensinstituut, 2008), and a Ph.D. in music education (KU Leuven, 2012). His main research interests are professional development, innovation and practitioner research in music education. He served as president of the European Association for Music in Schools (EAS) from 2019 to 2021. He is a member of the editorial boards of international refereed journals, and honorary member of the EAS.

E-mail: thomas.debaets@luca-arts.be

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8455-3061