Addressing new challenges for a community music project in the context of higher music education: A conceptual framework

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Abstract

In response to Europe's societal challenges, such as current issues about migration, the Institute of Music Education at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz established Meet4Music (M4M), a low-threshold community music project. M4M is open to individuals from all sociocultural and musical backgrounds and ages, and provides them with the opportunity to socialize with others and to express themselves musically. M4M is based on collaborative learning in an open community ensemble, which includes choir, dance, theatre and percussion, alternating with one another on a weekly basis. University students can choose M4M as an elective course to gain relevant experience in leading heterogeneous and intercultural ensembles. The aim of this paper is to present this project, with a special focus on its dimensions, aims and pedagogical implications for educating reflective teachers. A conceptual framework that contributes to the concept of lifelong learning in (higher) music education will be provided, and foundations for further research and theory will be offered.

Keywords: music education; community music; new audiences; facilitator; lifelong learning

Introduction

Currently, Europe is confronted with demographic changes, including refugee migration. This was an urgent issue in Europe in 2015, as thousands of refugees cross borders every day. It is not only society that is changing, but also the cultural landscape, so that the ways in which music is created and perceived are transforming as well (Smilde, 2009). This raises the question of how to respond to these changes, as there is a need for new approaches in music education, so as to open it up for new audiences. As a result, transferable skills are crucial when it comes to more flexible careers and new professional fields, for example in community music settings (Camlin, 2016; Smilde, 2009).

In this paper, a project in the context of community music and higher music education is introduced. The project Meet4Music (M4M), established in March 2016 at the Institute of Music Education at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, may help to identify and describe emerging pedagogical challenges when dealing with new audiences. The project will be analysed based on observations and pilot interviews conducted during the first semester of the project, and the paper will answer two research questions:

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    (1)   Which skills are crucial for facilitators of the M4M community music ensemble?

    (2)   How can higher education training develop these skills in music students?

Finally, a conceptual framework will be introduced, which is expected to form a theoretical background for further research and theory on related issues.

Background

Music education and practice in the Austrian context

Formal music education in Austria is traditionally associated with general schools, public or private music schools, *Konservatorien* and *Musikhochschulen* (music universities), and similar institutions. *Konservatorien* and *Musikhochschulen* can be subsumed under the term *conservatoires* in the broadest sense, as they both provide training for professional musicians and instrumental/vocal teachers (see Smilde, 2009: 38), and therefore this term will be used throughout this paper. Instrumental and vocal tuition for the public is mostly carried out at music schools; each Austrian state has a different music school system. Apart from public music schools, the private music school and private tuition sector is also relevant for instrumental music education. Additionally, music practice in many informal contexts, such as brass bands, choirs and folk music ensembles, has always played an important role in shaping Austria's musical identity. Those communities of practice (Wenger, 2000) are still of importance, most notably in rural areas.

Community music in Austria: A matter of definition

While the concept of community music has been gradually established in Germany, and projects and research on community music are picking up pace (for example, Hill and de Banffy-Hall, 2017; Higgins *et al.*, 2016), the term is relatively unknown in Austria. Here, there is a need to differentiate the *concept* of community music and collaborative music *practices*.

    Austrian instrumental and vocal folk musical activities, and their corresponding communities of practice, fall under the definition of community music as 'music in the community' and 'communal music making' as defined by Higgins (2012). The emphasis (whether consciously or not) is on the collaborative learning of the group members, for example in informal settings such as brass bands. It is worth noting that many folk music practices also resemble the definition of community music as 'active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants' (Higgins, 2012: 3). However, most Austrian folk musical activities do not correspond with the political and sociocultural aspects of community music as a *concept* deriving from the community arts movement (Higgins, 2012). Folk music ensembles generally did not emerge from social issues (such as the integration of marginalized groups), as is typically the case for community music projects in other countries.

Exclusive contexts

Although there are many vivid examples of joint music-making in rural areas, there are reasons to assume that this may not be the case everywhere. Society is composed differently, and is more diverse, in urban areas (as a result of migration, among other reasons) and specific demographic groups are not familiar with active music-making. Also, musical life in cities is to a great degree shaped by established institutions, including conservatoires, functioning as cultural operators and mostly addressing a narrow, proficient audience.

The fact that musicians have pursued exclusiveness, as teaching and learning often take place behind closed doors (see, for example, Gaunt, 2008), and that music at Austrian conservatoires is practised by an artistic elite, means that access to those institutions is alien to a large part of society. The connection between conservatoires and society should be a guiding principle to provide a richer musical life for cities and individuals, as emphasized, for example, in the development plan of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (2015). From our observations, this aspiration often fails because many people perceive conservatoires to be elitist. Accordingly, music tuition at music schools and conservatoires often addresses those people already actively playing music and who most likely grew up in an environment open to music, fostering their musical development (Jorgensen, 2000). These circumstances, as well as the ongoing professionalization of music education since the 1980s (Grosse, 2016), cause an emerging gap for those who are not given these opportunities, specifically in German-speaking countries. Thus, music education should face the challenge of developing new concepts and practical strategies to avoid an increase in the gap between formal and informal learning (Silvey, 2001). For example, new approaches could be generated to address individuals from diverse backgrounds and to help them get involved in music and arts beyond formal education.

Community music projects as a possible response

Demands for an expansion and opening up of traditional elite contexts have already been expressed in the German-speaking scientific community (see, for example, Ardila-Mantilla, 2012; Röbke, 2009; Röbke, 2015). Possible solutions are provided by the participatory approach to music in communities of practice, where individuals can discover and exert their own musical potential through collaborative learning (Wenger, 2000). Issues related to justice, cultural participation and equitable access to musical education, regardless of cultural origin, age, social class or abilities, have become increasingly important in order to dismantle real barriers (see, for example, Röbke, 2015). Because the target audience is becoming increasingly heterogeneous and intercultural, it is crucial for music educators to face these challenges (Campbell *et al.*, 2005; Westerlund *et al.*, 2015). Appropriate strategies for music educators, and for professional development in higher music education, are being reconsidered.

In this situation, community music can offer new perspectives for institutions and professional musicians to connect with new audiences, and it may provide those audiences with the opportunity to get involved with music and creative arts in novel and fascinating ways. As a result, it is hoped that the gap between conservatoires and society can be bridged. It is crucial that an educational environment that gives all parts of society not only access to musical practice but also the opportunity to express themselves musically and creatively, can and should be created at conservatoires (European Music Council, EMC, n.d.). Open-access participation could be made feasible, which can also benefit those who have so far been unable to participate in active music-making in their family and social environment. As an example, this paper outlines a perspective on music education arising from our experiences within the M4M project.

Project outline

Genesis: From Music4Refugees to Meet4Music

As noted above, there has been a refugee crisis, and solidarity led many Austrian citizens to volunteer to help in refugee camps and train stations. Students and staff at the Institute of Music Education, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, were concerned about the

humanitarian and political developments. A first meeting was held in September 2015, attended by the head of the institute, several staff members and students. The purpose of the meeting was to reflect on how to make a contribution to improve the situation of the migrants from the perspective of music education. Several potential actions were discussed, including hosting a charity concert. On the one hand, this was intended to raise money for refugee relief; on the other hand, it aimed to prevent and diminish xenophobia and encourage refugees to connect with Austrian citizens. The idea was further conceptualized and called Music4Refugees: university students, teachers and alumni, as well as an intercultural band, provided musical performances, to which refugees contributed with meals using recipes from their native countries. Cooperative partners were found among the managers of refugee homes run by the organization Caritas, and in the caterer Café Global, which was willing to allocate their kitchen for collaborative cooking with the refugees. Invitations were distributed via the university's department of promotion and Caritas to refugees and citizens of Graz.

The charity concert took place on 4 December 2015. An intercultural audience of more than 500 guests attended the concert. Music was performed on four different stages and international food was cooked by refugees, with Café Global providing fine dining. At the close of the concert, the focus was placed on shared music-making and dancing. A drum circle, which brought an overwhelming response from the audience, revealed to us the potential of music-making in a large and heterogeneous group, as participants enjoyed bringing together their rhythmic ideas in a group improvisation, with call-and-response patterns led by a percussion facilitator.

Music4Refugees was not designed as a temporary project, but as the beginning of a sustainable, long-term initiative. During the follow-up evaluation of Music4Refugees, we discussed how to continue with the initiative and possibly take it to another level. Soon the concept of an open ensemble, with an open-access approach, was developed, where people from all sociocultural backgrounds could create music together on a weekly basis. Another goal was to emphasize the social and communicative aspects of music-making to reinforce community bonding. The sequel project (M4M) was established in March 2016.

M4M offered three artistic fields during the first semester – drum circles, choir singing and dancing – that rotated weekly with one another. In the second semester, drum circles and choir sessions were continued, but theatre was substituted for dance. These disciplines have in common the possibility of an open-access approach: choir singing, dancing and theatrical performance do not require any special equipment, and are means of elementary artistic expression. The instrumental workshops did not focus on difficult playing techniques, and therefore could easily be picked up by the participants, even without previous knowledge.

Dimensions

There are three main functions of M4M, which form a complex synergy system (see Figure 1):

(1) It was designed as a social initiative, providing an open community music platform for all possible audiences.
(2) Given the challenges of instructing an open ensemble, it became clear that M4M was an ideal area of practice for teachers, as well as university students. To exploit the institute's potential and benefit long-term, M4M was additionally proposed as an elective course for university students.
(3) To gain knowledge of this specific approach to music education, and of ways to address heterogeneous groups, M4M soon became the centrepiece of an empirical research project.
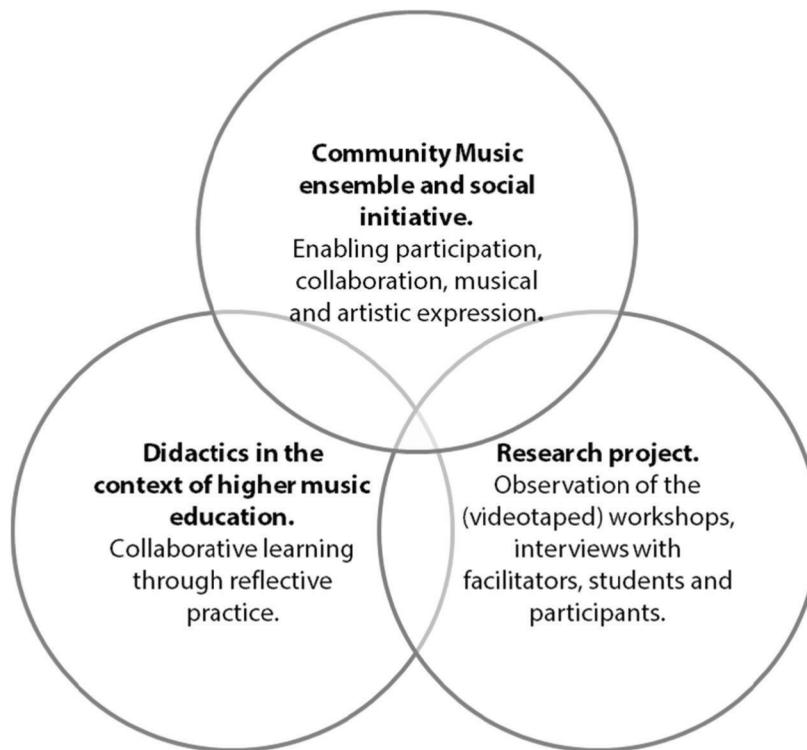
Figure 1: Dimensions of Meet4Music

(1) Social initiative

Meet4Music is open to participants of all ages and dispositions, from all sociocultural backgrounds, whether already musically trained or not. The invitation addresses children as well as elderly people, citizens of Graz, migrants, trained musicians, amateurs and people with disabilities. To facilitate an open access approach, the M4M workshops are free of charge, and require neither prior registration nor previous knowledge. As described above, the two main goals are to offer individuals access to music-making and to facilitate social bonding among group members. Music has the power to affect participants' well-being and enhance their social skills, and affects many areas of life. Active engagement with music can therefore impact beyond the development of musical skills (Creech *et al.*, 2013; Hallam, 2010; Hallam and MacDonald, 2013). In addition, based on the areas of development within inclusive pedagogy identified by Dehler (2016), we strive to reinforce the following skills of the participants:

- (superior) professional skills, such as practical instrumental skills
- key competences, such as tolerance of frustration, self-responsibility, willingness to compromise, openness, problem-solving skills and creativity
- personal development: self-esteem, confidence in self-efficacy, dignity, autonomy, maturity, willingness for co-determination and responsibility.

(2) University course

At the same time, M4M was implemented as an elective course for students to explore and experience music-making in a social context. Students of all programmes can attend the elective course and actively participate in it. Each student can facilitate the ensemble with his or her own distinct approach during a session lasting approximately 15 minutes, embedded in the one-and-a-half hour workshops. For example, this could be done by introducing short songs in a choir workshop or rhythmical patterns during a drum circle, or by giving acting instructions during a theatre session. The initial concepts and creative ideas for these sequences are devised by students themselves, and subsequently supervised and advanced with the facilitators during additional meetings. With this in mind, it should be noted that facilitators function as coaches: they do not give teacher-centred instructions, rather they support students by drawing from their experience as artists and teachers. If necessary, students' concepts were adapted to make them feasible in the context of M4M. Students' experiences are retrospectively discussed together with their peers, facilitators and the authors (respectively, the project coordinator and the person in charge of the elective course and the person in charge of the whole project).

Students' learning outcomes are defined as follows:

- learning how to deal with heterogeneous groups
- learning how to facilitate enthusiasm for music-making and artistic expression
- spontaneous and flexible pedagogical actions
- initiating creative processes
- intercultural exchange
- being able to reflect their own identity and learning as musicians and educators.

The purpose of M4M as a university course also becomes clear when looking at the interconnections between facilitators, students and participants, as shown in Figure 2.
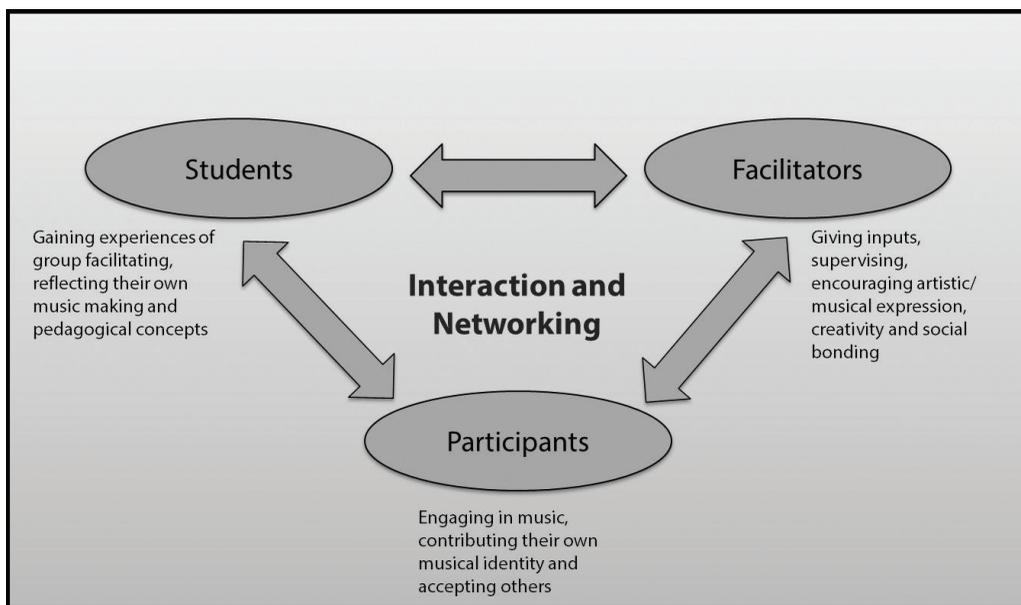

Figure 2: Interaction and networking between facilitators, participants and students

(3) Aspects of the research

Research on M4M aims to gain an understanding of the facilitators' role in responding to the demands emerging within this context. Thus, the workshops during the first semester have been continuously documented (including video recordings) and reflected on collaboratively by facilitators, students and the authors. The observations made during the initial phase led to specific research questions, which became core topics for three pilot interviews with the facilitators (during the summer semester of 2016, the facilitators were a dancer, a choir leader and a percussionist):

- What new challenges do teachers from 'traditional educational backgrounds' have to face when facilitating the M4M ensemble? What strategies did they evolve to meet these challenges?
- What skills are crucial for facilitators of the M4M community music ensemble?

Pedagogical approaches to Meet4Music: The facilitators' perspectives

In this section, we approach the research questions based on the results from the pilot interviews.

To characterize the pedagogical setting more distinctly, the facilitators were asked to describe the difference between M4M and their regular musical (or artistic) teaching activities. These activities mainly include teaching music and dance at secondary schools and music schools, choir leading and voice training. The main differences were:

- Participants: a broad and diverse audience was targeted – refugees and migrants, students, citizens of Graz of all ages including elderly people, university students and sometimes staff attended the workshops. Securing the participation of the audience proved to be another important factor, which should not be underestimated. Even though participants were explicitly invited, some did not feel comfortable attending a programme organized by the university, because they felt that they were not musically qualified.
- Curriculum: compared to teaching at schools, there was no commitment to teaching content at M4M. Furthermore, facilitators had to respond to the fact that the M4M workshops did not build on one another; instead, each meeting constituted a self-contained unit.
- Teaching approach: one facilitator stated that the *preparation* for the workshops did not differ much from usual teaching situations, but the actual *performance*, especially the means of communication and interaction with the participants, differed a lot, as we discuss in the following section.

The setting of M4M presented major issues for the facilitators. Not only did they have to manage an extremely heterogeneous group, but also they did not know in advance which, or how many, participants were going to attend the meetings. There was also the challenge of discontinuity. Sometimes participants took part repeatedly, and facilitators were able to get to know them over time. At other times, new participants were in the majority and the group composition was therefore different. Additionally, the explicit aim was to create a constructive and encouraging environment, in which even newcomers felt safe to explore and express musical ideas. Fulfilling these goals and responding to the challenge of heterogeneity and discontinuity required a complex variety of pedagogical and artistic skills. In this paper, we use summarized passages and examples from pilot interviews to explore selected aspects upon which the facilitators reflected in the interviews. These aspects are:

- flexibility and spontaneity
- empathy and attentiveness
- acceptance and openness
- communication
- collaboration.

Flexibility and spontaneity

One facilitator remembered a situation in which there were far fewer participants attending the workshop than expected:

> You prepare a few things, but in this case I really expected many people and prepared the repertoire accordingly. … And it was really difficult, because I had to rethink everything in so little time and had to come up with something new in order to make [the concept] work at all.

The informal setting at M4M required the ability to adapt immediately to prevailing circumstances, to remain flexible in each moment, to react rapidly to incidents and to implement new approaches if necessary. Group sizes, which varied enormously (from about 12 to 85 participants) were mentioned by facilitators as the most determining factor. Their observations showed that smaller groups not only required a different repertoire from that that suited large ensembles, but also gave participants a feeling of exposure. As a result, the level of inhibition rose. Put simply, the smaller the group, the higher the artistic level required of the individual participants in order to create a 'satisfying' quality of music. Also, the scope of action was limited in small groups; a larger group allows a greater number of possibilities for interconnection and interaction (for example, by dividing the group into smaller parties). Two facilitators stated that 15 and 20 respectively were the minimum numbers of participants for successful lessons.

In the event of an unforeseen reaction by the audience, or an unexpected group composition, facilitators had to alter their didactic concept rapidly. This revealed two different facets of pedagogical and didactical action: didactic planning and reflection in advance versus pedagogical action in the moment. On the one hand, the repertoire, concepts and sequence of a lesson had been carefully planned and explicitly practised; on the other hand, spontaneity during action was one of the most essential requirements for a successful session. If the planned activities did not work out in a certain situation, facilitators adapted them flexibly, by reflecting-in-action (Schön, 1983). If necessary, facilitators had to perform something totally different from what was planned in advance. One facilitator stated that he considered this kind of flexibility, combined with high pedagogical skills, as a core competence for facilitators at M4M.

Empathy and attentiveness

When one of the facilitators was asked which skills she regarded as crucial for leading the ensemble, she answered:

> To be honest, a lot, I think. … I think the most important thing isn't musical competence but rather an interpersonal, subtle sense: What is the group like? What does the ensemble need? Not only the group as a whole, but also single individuals within the group. And that I acquire the ability to interpret the behaviour, facial expression et cetera of them within a couple of seconds: the group is bored. Or: they're overtaxed. And that I notice within a short time: these few people are not challenged enough … so I give them additional tasks and keep everyone satisfied.

In order to function properly, groups needed experts who had the ability to assess the skills of their members quickly and accurately. Being able quickly to recognize how to adjust to specific

needs and enhance individual abilities seemed to be crucial. It was necessary to be able to identify when group members were bored, overtaxed or distracted, so as to take appropriate action. This could entail giving under-challenged participants more challenging tasks, or repeating a task to remove ambiguities if the group showed signs that the demands were too great. Facilitators needed high attentiveness and the ability to focus completely on the situation.

Acceptance and openness

> We are (some of us) very much accustomed to preparing and training something until it's good. And in this field, that's not really feasible somehow. … It's mostly about accepting. As facilitator, or as listener, I must immediately accept what is happening. … Mutual acceptance is linked to society. Listening, observing, stating one's opinion, but also accepting other opinions – it's the same as in a drum circle, where you express your own rhythm but approve the rhythm of others as well.

Acceptance in this context refers to the approval of different performance levels, as well as the artistic ideals of one's counterparts. Especially for the facilitators, trained in their fields and with a focus on excellence, it required open-mindedness to accept the musical product, even if it might not fit into their conception of the expected standard for music performance. The facilitators said that there were many artistic perspectives, and that one should be encouraged to address this diversity. This attitude was not only an important issue for the facilitators, but also for every group member of M4M. The facilitators also mentioned that they did not have concrete ideas or specific expectations in mind prior to the project, but reacted with openness to the situation to 'keep themselves open to what was going to happen'.

Communication

In the interviews, facilitators reflected on their means of communication at M4M. When asked whether there was a difference between M4M and other musical or pedagogical activities, one facilitator answered: 'In terms of preparation, essentially no. When it comes to execution, I think, definitely. … the way in which things are communicated.'

Non-verbal communication

Each of the facilitators noticed an enhanced need for non-verbal communication, and focused on communicating non-verbally, assuming that gestures and facial expression would speak for themselves and would also easily be understood by non-German speakers. They were surprised by how non-verbal communication influenced the lessons. In their opinion, they could convey the message faster and more effectively because non-verbal instructions served as a fundamental means of communication and sharpened the attentiveness of the participants. As a result, they reduced verbal instructions to a minimum, and kept them as brief as possible. By not explaining every action in advance, they hoped to reinforce peer-group communication, believing that participants would help each other out if there were ambiguities.

Feedback

As well as non-verbal communication, facilitators emphasized humorous interaction and constructive feedback. One of the facilitators avoided using the word 'no', because it would have inhibited the constructive learning atmosphere, and instead used another form of communication:

> A few times I recapitulated: 'What's important [to me]', for example, not to say 'no' or 'no, that's not good', because it inhibits and doesn't contribute to this atmosphere we're striving for. This was a real adjustment for me, because during rehearsals I do say: 'No, not this way, please do it another way', and then explain how I want it to sound. Here [at M4M], I had to concentrate on not saying 'no', and instead to express it in another way.

Collaboration

A facilitator described the importance of teamwork within M4M:

> Altogether [the concept] Meet4Music is definitely teamwork. It wouldn't be Meet4Music if it weren't for the different disciplines. … The fact that a team [collaboratively] decided to implement this should be emphasized, because it was no individual idea conceived by a single person. … I regard it as essential that the team exists, because thereby these considerations gain more weight.

At M4M, responsibilities were assigned for specific tasks, but the responsibility for the project as a whole was shared among the core team members (that is, the facilitators, with the two authors as supervisor and coordinator). Facilitators were in charge of their workshops and stated in the interviews that generally they appreciated this pedagogical and artistic freedom. The workshops were followed by collective discussions to reflect on the sessions in detail. Feedback was given reciprocally: non-facilitating team members were present as 'external' observers of the workshops, taking notes and reporting their observations to the facilitators, whereas facilitators were expressing their needs (for example, special equipment and organizational issues) and sharing their pedagogical concepts with the other team members. Facilitators regarded the atmosphere as very open for giving feedback. They mentioned that personal and professional dialogue between the facilitators and other team members had a high value for them, as they regarded it as a chance to learn from others' experiences, and that communication between team members augmented their identification with the project.

Discussion

Key competences in teaching

The competences and strategies presented above give an insight into the perspectives of the facilitators. A flexible attitude that allows spontaneous (re)action, as well as empathy, attentiveness, openness, non-verbal and other constructive ways of communicating, and the ability to collaborate are not competences that are beneficial to M4M exclusively. We claim that they are essential for every teacher and facilitator, whether working in community music projects, teaching elementary music, giving instrumental tuition or leading a choir. Facilitators' skills and approaches have already been investigated in various studies (for example, Creech *et al.*, 2014; Hallam *et al.*, 2016). We assume that a lack of these competences is made more apparent within M4M than within traditional and more formal settings. It takes flexible, attentive, creative and communicative leadership to convey M4M's main aims of developing musical expression and enhancing social cohesion and interaction.

The list of competences proposed in the previous section gives a preliminary overview of our findings from the pilot interviews, but it is not yet complete. A more in-depth study is planned, which we expect will provide further insights into the competences of facilitators.

Higher music education from the perspective of lifelong learning

We now consider the question of key competences from the perspective of lifelong learning.

Professionals in instrumental music pedagogy in Europe are confronted with major changes in the sociocultural and educational landscape (Smilde, 2009; Smilde, 2012a: 99). Instrumental music teachers and universities or conservatoires for higher music education have to deal with these new challenges, for example more flexible and less secure employment compared to permanent positions in the past, changes in the cultural sector and the popularity of music styles other than classical. As a result, transferable skills, entrepreneurship and cross-genre collaborations are becoming more important (Smilde, 2009: 1). As Smilde puts it:

> In order to meet the challenges of rapidly changing cultural life in the twenty-first century, professional musicians need to be life-long learners, drawing on a wide range of knowledge and skills. To be successful in a variety of roles, they require a reflective and responsive attitude to change.
>
> (Smilde, 2012b: 289)

Musicians have to 'connect to the context' and they need to 'respond artistically to changing societal contexts' (Smilde, 2012c: 2). Conservatoires must respond to the new requirements and prepare graduates in higher music education for their professional lives (Smilde, 2009). Furthermore, music education has to reconsider and, if necessary, adapt traditional music programmes, 'whose intake has always been predicated on competition and selectivity' (Carruthers, 2016: n.p.). Society is confronted with a rapidly changing cultural life, and this is one reason why students in particular are increasingly attracted to community music programmes, because 'they want to apply their talents to better the world around them' (Carruthers, 2016: n.p.). Students aim to align their studies with the opportunities they will face on graduation. Therefore, the goal of music conservatoires is to ensure that their teaching enriches students' lives and careers, adding cultural values to society at large. Thus, universities have to create sustainable programmes that foster and further the public good (Carruthers, 2016). For example, students and teachers can get involved in community music programmes to experience diversity and integration, and to broaden or extend their competences. Musicians are in need of training that provides quality, accessibility, diversity and flexibility. This requires broader curricula and appropriate projects for students' engagement in diverse musical activities (Smilde, 2006).

A community music project in (Austrian) higher music education: A conceptual framework

Because of the long tradition of master–apprentice relationships, and the aspiration for excellence, selectivity and competition are common practice within Austrian conservatoires. However, there is general agreement with the need to embrace social responsibility and to create a lively dialogue with all parts of society. We now provide a preliminary conceptual framework for how community music projects in conservatoires could enhance the reflective practice of teachers (facilitators) and students. We will pick up facilitators' pedagogical approaches and link them to: (1) lifelong learning; (2) considerations concerning community music programmes in higher education, as presented by Carruthers (2016), for example; and (3) the concept of reflective

practice, as illustrated by Schön's (1983) conception. The framework, which might provide guidance for similar projects, is defined by the following aspects:

- collaboration and dialogue
- crossover between musical styles and exploration
- reflective practice.

Collaboration and dialogue

As a community of practice, M4M is 'formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015: 1). Based on the essential characteristics for a community of practice, M4M is, first, a shared domain of interest and commitment to its content; second, an environment for participants to build relationships to interact and learn together and therefore form community; and, third, a means of facilitating, sharing and sustaining practice (interaction) over a period of time (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

Various forms of communities of practice and collaboration can be detected within the different dimensions of M4M. First, we observe collaborative music-making during the workshops, where participants, students and facilitators form an ensemble. Interpersonal exchange and cooperation within this community are further reinforced by encouraging students to interact with the participants.

Second, all stakeholders within the elective course (students, facilitators and the authors) are collaboratively engaged with the endeavour of exploring and developing M4M. Preparation and realization of, and reflection on, the workshops are accomplished together. By assigning explicit roles to the students (for example, minor organizational tasks or promoting the project), we could observe them gradually taking on responsibility for the project.

Third, exchanging ideas, collaborative feedback and teamwork within the core team are essential foundations on which the idea of M4M is built. Regular team meetings and collective feedback discussions led to significant improvements to the project, including optimized involvement of the students and extended hours for the university course to implement feedback discussions for the students and ideas for promoting M4M.

Crossover between musical styles and exploration

As an elective course for university students from various disciplines, M4M offers an opportunity for diverse individuals and groups to collaborate. It is not only future music teachers and instrumental pedagogues who enrol on the course, but also students from all majors, including sound design or instrumental studies. This cross-genre work, where students from different disciplines, countries and cultures, and of different ages, collaborate, is considered artistically and socially valuable (Smilde, 2006; Carruthers, 2016).

The setting of M4M provides a safe and open environment for learners. Students are encouraged to bring their own interests and knowledge, and to experiment, when facilitating the group. A wide variety of different approaches is deployed, revealing students' personalities as well as their expertise. For example, they provide humorous warm-up songs, acoustic collages and exercises for sharpening interpersonal perception during theatre workshops, and Bach preludes on string instruments within a drum circle. In supplementary meetings with the facilitators, they introduce their concepts to them and receive support in shaping them. Facilitators act as mentors, respecting students' individual approaches.

Reflective practice

After the workshops, there is additional time for feedback and reflective discussion. Students, facilitators and core team members can share their impressions with one another. The aim is to enhance students' perception, self-reflection skills, trust and self-confidence by giving constructive feedback, welcoming their meaningful statements, asking open questions to make the working process more visible and offering support (see Lerman and Borstel, 2003).

Reflective practice is the centrepiece of M4M, because it allows individuals and institutions to adapt flexibly to new situations. Within the M4M project, reflective action emerges in the collaborative feedback discussions between students, facilitators and core team members (reflecting-on-action), and through facilitators' reflection-in-action as new ideas are constructed from consideration of a unique case (Schön, 1983, in Camlin, 2016) when facilitating the ensemble. We have highlighted two pedagogical dimensions of planning and action in-the-moment. The latter requires skills such as flexibility, spontaneity, attentiveness and interpersonal perception of the group members, as we have discussed.

Furthermore, reflective action is an issue in higher education, and is crucial for long-term curricular developments; therefore, a university as an institution can be considered as a reflective practitioner itself. As Alheit and Dausien describe, a high level of institutional self-reflectivity is demanded of educational institutions. For their part, institutions have to accept the need to become 'learning organizations'. The necessity of preparing their clients for lifelong, self-determined learning processes presumes an idea of life-wide and holistic learning (Alheit and Dausien, 2002).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed current challenges that confront professional musicians and institutions providing higher music education. We have presented the community music project M4M, its implementation at our institution and the main aspects of the pedagogical approaches, and discussed them in the context of lifelong learning and reflective practice. On this basis, a conceptual framework has been developed, which can provide orientation for higher music education and empirical research.

Given the short time since the project was implemented, research on M4M is still in its initial phase. To comprehend its possible impact, we plan to conduct interviews and/or focus group discussions with facilitators, students and participants. A main research topic is the competences of facilitators. What skills are crucial for the leaders of an open ensemble? How do they adapt to the different pedagogical settings? What impact does the project have on their artistic and pedagogical identities? Additionally, the weekly workshops were videotaped, so that aspects such as non-verbal communication can be further observed. Interviews with the participants give an insight into their points of view, which are of great interest: What experiences do they gain? What motivational issues are important? What are their expectations? A presentation of these interview outcomes may lead the facilitators to reflect on their role within M4M, and their teaching aims and approaches.

In the long term, we hope to contribute further to the implementation of, and discourse on, community projects in higher music education, and to the development of a model of lifelong learning in higher education, enabling cultural participation and co-creation for both individuals and groups.

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