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Envisioning imaginary spaces for musicking: equipping students for leaping into the unexplored

Marja-Leena Juntunen[a], Sidsel Karlsen[b]*, Anna Kuoppamäki[a], Tuulikki Laes[a] and Sari Muhonen[a]

[a]*Faculty of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music, Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland;* [b]*Department of Fine Arts and Computer Science, Hedmark University College, Hamar, Norway*

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In this article, we argue that music teachers working in a fast-changing society could focus on envisioning their students' imaginary spaces for engaging with music and equipping them for leaping into what for the students would be the musically hitherto unexplored. Taking Christopher Small's writings as a point of departure, we contest his recently expressed view that music education should be taken out of schools, and lean on his concept of *musicking* to explain how school-based music education practices can be transformed from spaces dominated by enforced structural demands to spaces in which teachers and students engage in a joint exploration of musical identities, relationships and possibilities, and which then may provide something unique for the school culture to retain. Leading a discussion of how music teachers may reach the understanding of themselves as transformative intellectuals or change agents, and hence facilitate and lead such reconstructions of their own practices, we also attend to the frameworks of critical pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching.

Keywords: imaginary spaces; musicking; music education; school culture; music teachers; change agents; school music

Introduction

Music educators have traditionally put considerable effort into formulating philosophies that could function as advocacy for offering music as an obligatory subject in comprehensive education. They have not, however, always agreed on the nature of and reasons for music's educational value, or whether this positive educational resource is to be found in the music itself (Varkøy 2010) or in the extra or non-musical outcomes of music education (Mark 2002). Still, as Bowman (2002) notes, the seemingly 'extramusical' ends and aims of music may not be so easily separated from music's intrinsic nature and value. Rather, in the educational context, these dimensions merge and are accessed through the subject of music which is generally thought of as a boon and which most music educators would fight to keep within the frames of school curricula available for *all* children and adolescents.

In a similar way, Christopher Small (1998) has argued that the values of music itself are inseparable from the values of music as process, action and experience. He

*Corresponding author. Email: sidsel.karlsen@hihm.no

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rejects conceiving of music as a noun, and, much like Elliott (1995), emphasises understanding it as a verb – *to music* (Small 1998, 9). Having a background as a musician, composer, philosopher and anthropologist perhaps more than that of a music education scholar, Small has still been an important contributor to the music education field – at least in the Nordic countries – through his writings about music and its functions in society and education (Small 1996, 1998, 1999a, 1999b).

However, in a recent article, written as an afterword in an anthology focused on the topic of sociology and music education (Wright 2010), Small (2010, 288) surprisingly takes a radical turn, rejecting the idea that music ought to be taught within the framework of school, arguing that 'classrooms are not good places for the gaining of significant musical experience'. He argues that the values of the middle class (rather than the working class) are still the main ones celebrated in music education in the schools. Consequently, many forms of musical expression that represent important points of identification for a majority of people are excluded from the school curricula, resulting in the exclusion of these people from 'full participation in the institution that is ostensibly there to serve them' (288). To resolve this value conflict, Small suggests that the teaching of music should be taken out of schools; or rather he sees 'no alternative to taking the teaching of music out of schools' (288). He believes that such an act would 'do more good than harm to the pupils' experience' (288), and that, outside of school settings, pupils, by themselves, will find meaningful ways of engaging with music corresponding to their personal values, also 'as and when it suits them' (288).

In this article, we aim to reconsider Small's recently expressed views. We argue that music education in schools can help students to find their personal interest in music, to build up their musical identities and to celebrate and express their own values. As a point of departure, we shall focus on the perspective of teachers when looking at the interrelated teaching–learning situation. Given that music education in the twenty-first century is mostly about empowerment (O'Neill 2006) and about *becoming* rather than *being* a music learner (O'Neill 2012), we argue that, in order to provide meaningful music education in a pluralist and rapidly changing society, music educators may need to envision imaginary spaces in which their students may want to utilise their knowledge and skills and provide them with the necessary tools and self-confidence to do so. Furthermore, we assert that the route to developing such pedagogy is based on an understanding that acts of *musicking*, to use Small's (1998) own concept, allow for the exploration, affirmation and celebration of relationships and that through engaging in such activities students develop specific forms of individual and social agency which can be explored and exercised both inside and outside the classroom, even in situations that are unimaginable both for the teacher and the student. Music education is not 'something on the side'. In our view, it contributes to sustaining and developing culture and to identity development as well as social cohesion. Furthermore, music education offers meaningful interactions where students acquire knowledge, values and understanding by drawing from their personal worlds (O'Neill 2012). Since music is one of the few school subjects that allows for such processes to take place, we find this to be a strong argument for keeping music within the school framework.

We should note that our understanding of the possibilities of music education at school is based on the education system in the Nordic countries, where the values of the school system are supposed to reflect the needs of the different learners. Our national core curricula for basic education are learner-centred and remind 'us to think about learners rather than only about subject matter' (Bransford et al.

2005, 52). Moreover, music teaching is required to aim at helping pupils to identify their personal musical interests as well as involving them in diverse musical activities including various styles (see FNCC 2004; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2006; Swedish National Agency for Education 2011). The national curricula set only the basic goals and leave a lot of freedom for the teacher to decide on the 'whats' and 'hows' in music teaching. Furthermore, in all the Nordic countries music teacher candidates are encouraged, through their education, to become change agents and to work in schools as they *might* be – not as they *are*. In addition, in the Finnish context, the trust in teachers' competencies relies partly upon the pre-requisite for all music teachers to possess a master's degree, which is a 5-year education in minimum.

We further note that in our argumentation we lean on Small's philosophy of musicking (Small 1998), his ideas on music's role in society and education (Small 1996, 1999a), on critical pedagogy (Abrahams 2007; Freire [1992] 2004; Giroux 1988) and on ideas of culturally responsive teaching (Villegas and Lucas 2002). However, before we start our theoretical exploration, we shall discuss the problems of school music – highlighted by Small (2010) – as seen through other scholars' work. We shall also elaborate on what we mean when using the term 'imaginary spaces' and why we consider this to be a relevant issue for music educators.

The ambivalence of school music

Despite our strong conviction that music ought to have a place within formal schooling, we find that Small's (2010) assertions about the shortcomings of school music are not completely groundless or without foundation. The problems he identifies seem to occur during secondary level schooling and are reported across countries and school systems. In their article about young people's music in and out of school, for example, Lamont et al. (2003, 229) report that 'a good deal of lower secondary school music seems to be unsuccessful, unimaginatively taught, and out of touch with pupils' interests'. Looking for reasons to explain this situation, they point, among other things, to the assumed lack of authenticity in the students' experience of the music lessons they receive in school as well as the fact that the teaching strategies often remain traditional. While pondering the obvious contradiction that even though music is an increasingly important part of the lives of young people and 'seems to be central to the identities of many school pupils, the "problem of school music" remains' (231), they also seem to have faith that developments towards more active music making across a broader variety of genres (forecasting, for example, the pedagogy of Green [2008]) will lead to improvements, both in teachers' strategies and students' attitudes. However, according to recent research conducted in the Nordic countries (Anttila 2010; Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010; Juntunen 2011), such approaches may not be entirely unproblematic either.

For the last 25 years, popular music has been present in Nordic music education classrooms (Karlsen 2010; Väkevä 2006; Westerlund 2006), together with pedagogies developed having this music's specific characteristics and related ways of learning in mind. Still, this supposedly adolescent-friendly way of teaching music does not seem to have reached all classrooms or to have fixed the interest/authenticity problem. For example, Anttila (2010) reports that contemporary music cultures are absent in many Finnish classrooms, and also that many of the students experience an undermining

of their musical self-esteem. Likewise, Juntunen (2011) shows, through a Finnish national assessment of the learning outcomes of the music subject, that, even though the students are offered many opportunities for ensemble playing (most often in bands and supposedly playing popular music repertoire), students' perceptions of their own musical capabilities are, on the average, negative. Following Georgii-Hemming and Westvall (2010), a popular music-based music education can even, if pursued over several years and carried out in similar ways as has been the case in Swedish compulsory education, lead to a situation in which limited repertoire, content and teaching methods become characteristic features and where the students are given few opportunities of 'creative engagement with music' (21). Supporting this latter observation, the Finnish national assessment revealed that half of the music teachers never, or only occasionally, had incorporated 'musical invention' in their lower secondary school teaching (Juntunen 2011). Furthermore, despite the focus on current popular music culture in Nordic schools, 'it appears that students [still] experience the subject as old-fashioned' (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010, 26).

So, why is it that, even within school systems where music teachers *do* make conscious efforts to teach on the youngsters' own terms and take their tastes as points of departure, school music is *still* seen to be out of touch with the students' reality and interests? In our opinion, some of this situation occurs because music teachers are unable – for many reasons – to envision their students' prevailing musical situation, their musical futures and hence also imaginary spaces for their prospective musicking. Despite the fact that the Nordic teacher education system encourages teachers to become change agents, and that we are aware of change being possible only if 'we think about what learners do, should do, and can do' (O'Neill 2012, 163), we might still teach as we have learned and not as what we think is 'the best' for our students. In order to elaborate on our ideas, we will in the following engage in an exploration of what 'imaginary spaces' might imply and what such spaces may look like from a musical point of view, after which we will address the question of why imaginary spaces are not necessarily easily pictured by the teachers who work within the music education classroom.

Imaginary spaces – what and where are they?

An everyday understanding of the concept of 'imaginary spaces' implies a space which might exist, but which is unknown or hitherto unexplored and which might therefore be hard to picture or even comprehend. In the scholarly literature, however, there exist somewhat different understandings of the term. Imaginary space can refer, for example, to a re-imagined physical place or homeland apart from the location or situation of diaspora (Oliver-Rotger 2003). It can also designate a secret and hidden space which serves as a mirror in which children can explore and play with identities but where the spaces also function as windows to the real world 'through which children develop an understanding of social interactions and societal norms and expectations' (Sturm 2008, 47). However, from the point of view of music education, as Jorgensen (2008) notes, this type of 'making of space' is not something reserved for children. Rather these are practices that we all engage in and which are often tied to the arts. Drawing on Frye (1964), she asserts that 'human beings characteristically create worlds, beyond physical survival and social life and institutions, that are spiritual, felt, expressed in music, poetry, and dance among

the other arts, interconnected with myth, and enacted in ritual' (Jorgensen 2008, 235). Still, even though the idea of imaginary spaces that we seek to define for further use in this article is clearly connected to music, the art-related worlds that Jorgensen describe are not quite what we have in mind. Rather we seek to conceptualise the spaces that music teachers need to *envision* in order to develop ideas of the directions in which their students may want to go – musically speaking – in a fast-changing society, of the contexts in which they may want to make use of their musical abilities, and, most especially, of the tools they may need in order to do so. This does not mean, however, that teachers should, somehow magically, be able to envision non-existent, yet-to-be-created spaces. Rather, it may be spaces known to the teacher, but in which she had never imagined that there could be a place for her students. Or, it may be spaces known to the students, but of whose existence the teacher cannot know without talking to her students and finding out what they do – outside of school or even in other educational contexts. Still, our suggested approach goes beyond mere sensitivity towards students' present beings and doings and emphasises the need for teachers to envision particular social-musical spaces as potential *future possibilities* for their students. Recognising the paradigm change in the twenty-first century educational thinking that has led us to think about music learners 'from *being* to *becoming*' (O'Neill 2012, 164), we want to nurture the idea of *transformative music engagement* which is about empowering all of us to 'take an imaginary leap from a world "as it is" to a glimpse of the world "as it could be"' (O'Neill 2012, 180).

However, as we have said, it may not be easy for a music teacher to be able to envision the kinds of spaces that seem relevant for the students. In learning to do so teachers certainly need to be able to observe and become sensitive to students as they take the initiative to create the space they need or want in formal or informal settings of music education, inside or outside the music classroom. In the following, we present four snapshots of 'real-life' imaginary spaces which we have encountered in our own practices as music educators and researchers. These snapshots exemplify instances in which students have come to utilise their musical abilities in situations and ways that their music teachers – for different reasons – probably would not have predicted or envisioned *for* those same students.

Imaginary-space snapshots: explorations and celebrations

Exploring musical-digital spaces

A 9-year-old Jonas finds his private musical-digital room in the company of family and friends. However, he is also an enthusiastic piano student in a formal, classically oriented music school and actively takes part in a music theory class which also involves creative music-making such as composing in a group. Nothing is mentioned of his domestic, digital explorations though until he is interviewed in a one-to-one situation. Then, his music theory teacher comes to know that, despite his young age, he exercises notable creative musical agency also outside the formal music learning settings. Improvising and inventing his own pieces – sometimes with his friend, sometimes with his father – he uses digital devices in multiple and innovative ways:

> When we make those pieces, we kind of first record some stuff my father plays with a guitar, and then we go on the Internet and download some vocals and stuff. We kind of

> break those into pieces, combine them in different ways, and make new pieces out of them.

With his friend, Jonas also has jam and recording sessions – he playing the piano and his friend playing the drums. Also these peer sessions tell about his flexible agency in acting in the digital musical surroundings.

Composing halfway around the world

A 14-year-old Joyce seems shy in the classroom and barely participates in the musical activities. Joyce's music teacher suspects that she is musically talented but knows very little about her background except that she is of Filipino origin. Only when she is interviewed does Joyce mention that she is part of a musically very active family and that she knows how to play drums, guitar, violin and flute. She also reveals that her music-making practices stretch far beyond her local, everyday existence in Norway and connect to family members living halfway around the world:

> My cousin, who also lives in Norway, and I, write music together. She makes the melody and I write the lyrics. Sometimes we compose using GarageBand® and then record it. My cousin writes the melodies and I put them into the computer, and then we send it off to another cousin in the Philippines. He owns a recording studio, and edits the files so that they sound really good, and then returns them. My dream is to become a musician, but I do not have a lot of self-confidence in that respect.

Perhaps if Joyce's music teacher finds an opportunity to know about and encourage and acknowledge her global and local digital music creation, he can also find a way to help her follow her dreams.

The punk band of disabled adults

Sometimes, people not only break geographical boundaries in creating personal musical spaces but also expand the limits of their subject positions or of the 'ableist assumptions' (Gaztambine-Fernández 2011) of people in their situation. This is the case for four adults, Finnish men who had a chance to have access to a music school targeted for students with special educational needs and cognitive disabilities. The teachers of this music school use simple notation and other techniques in order to make the learning of music possible for students a majority of whom need support in handling their daily routines. After years of taking music lessons and gaining adequate skills in playing the electric guitar at this school, Pertti decided to have a punk band of his own since he was an old punk rocker. The three other members of the band are Pertti's friends from the music school. They began to write songs that tell mostly about the faults and drawbacks of being a disabled person in a society that tends to forget people who are outside the realm of 'normality'.

Soon after *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät* (PKN) was founded, their radio hit song *Kallioon* quickly became famous, having thousands of hits on YouTube on a daily basis. The band released their first album in November 2010 along with successful promotion tours in Finland and Germany. A documentary film about PKN's story premiered in 2012 and has gained a lot of attention at international film festivals.

PKN now has a constantly growing crowd of fans and they are touring around the world. Pertti and the rest of the band members have developed from 'disabled music students' into professional, performing musicians. If Pertti's former music teachers had been asked some years ago, it might have been difficult for them to imagine his present career.

The rocking grannies

Musical space also can be a way of breaking social boundaries and claiming a space of one's own.

A few years ago, six women around the age of 70 committed to learn to play music in a group. They did not know each other from before but they all shared the need to participate socially. They also shared a mutual interest in music, an interest they had carried since childhood. However, none of them had any earlier experience of playing in a rock band. Joining the music school, they started to get instruction once a week from two skilful teachers, playing *Crocodile Rock* and other rock classics.

Gradually, the band members started to practise more and more on their own since they wanted to play more advanced songs. But for some of them, playing alone felt boring. Occasionally, the guitar player took a taxi and drove to the other side of the town in order to practise together with the drummer. It had its downsides since the amplifier was heavy to carry along. The band needed to find a solution to their problem: how to play together and become even better musicians so they would have a larger repertoire and more gigs. Finally, two of them found the ultimate solution: they decided to sell their homes and move in together. Joining their forces and resources they were able to buy a house big enough to have an extra room for the band equipment so the members would not have to carry their instruments to the rehearsals. By now, the band had become quite a significant part of the women's lives.

The music classroom as imposed space: looking for trajectories of renegotiation

The people in the four snapshots above found personally meaningful ways to engage themselves in musical activities. They were able to create unforeseen spaces for exploring and celebrating in and through music. As music educators and scholars, we have to ask ourselves if such spaces can also occur in, or have connections to, the music classroom, and, if the answer is no, we might ask, 'Why not?'

Earlier, we noted that imaginary spaces for students' musical engagement are not necessarily easily pictured by teachers. In our opinion, some of this situation can be linked to music lessons being perceived as *imposed spaces* rather than imaginary ones. While music teachers may have the best of intentions when it comes to foreseeing their students' musical needs, connecting to their musical reality and envisioning their musical future, the imposition of limiting factors caused by curricula, examinations, school codes, subject-related traditions, out-dated textbooks (when speaking in terms of repertoire) and economic constraints may seriously affect their ability to do so. This is also the observation of Small (2010, 284), who writes:

> Despite whatever efforts we may make, as individual teachers, to further the individual development of our pupils, it is the demands of the state, as expressed through national curricula and above all through examinations, which finally determine not only what we teach but also how we teach it, that in the long run take precedence.

Furthermore, however much we would like to change it, for the students the formal classroom setting *is* imposed in the sense that they are expected to be there and that not showing up will have unfortunate consequences. As a result, the volitional dimensions of so-called informal learning and of the ways of using music outside the school context cannot be completely recreated or achieved. It seems that, in order to challenge this situation, it is, as Jorgensen (2003, 62) reminds us, 'necessary to ask probing questions, challenge the status quo, and have the courage to re-vision education in genuinely novel and imaginative ways'. However, the question still remains – how? In the following, we aim to explore some possibilities.

In order to overcome the problems connected to music classrooms being experienced or perceived too much as 'imposed spaces', it seems that music educators would need new ways or paths for thinking – paths that would allow the teaching of musical skills and knowledge to meet the current and future interests and ambitions of the students, and where the whole point of such meetings would be to collectively explore each other's musical abilities and possible travelling directions as well as construct the necessary tools for enhancing and setting out on these. This might not necessarily be so difficult or even contradict existing curricula; however, it would require teachers to think differently about what a possible travelling direction might be. Take, for example, the above snapshots involving Jonas and Joyce: if their teachers could envision collaborative digital music making and composition as potential present and future practices for these two students, these same teachers could also contribute compositional tools and resources that would enhance Jonas' and Joyce's abilities. Furthermore, in the countries in which they live (Finland and Norway), that would actually align with the current music curricula.

Still, Small (2010) rightly asserts that school traditionally has given little room for such educational efforts as previously described. In his view, today's schooling is more aimed at standardisation and teaching the students the 'toleration of boredom' (285) than actually bringing them to a higher level of socialisation – musically or otherwise. Moreover, he points our attention to the two forms of socialisation that are available for teachers but which they also have to choose among or navigate between, namely individual and structural. By 'individual socialisation', Small means ways in which music is used to make the student familiar with her culture and her place and capacities within that culture. 'Structural socialisation' is concerned with adapting the student 'to the needs of society' (284) or even to the needs of the school culture. The contradictions and tensions embedded in the relation between these two forms of socialisation often make music teachers end up between a rock and a hard place. As discussed above, their efforts to implement and create teaching and learning environments that foster rich opportunities for individual socialisation in and through music are inevitably chained to the structural demands of the surrounding school systems and therefore often unfortunately aborted or disrupted. On the other hand, challenging and expanding the given frames for the two forms of socialisation may not always be impossible or come at a high cost. For example, if Pertti's teachers had been able to challenge the 'individual socialisation assumptions'

that his musical capacities were limited and that, therefore, he could not hold a position as a prominent performer in the music world before he did so himself, they could have enhanced his musical development at a much earlier stage of his life. Furthermore, doing so would also have meant challenging the 'structural socialisation assumption' that the best thing for society, and perhaps for Pertti himself, would be to categorise him as a disabled person, also musically speaking. Performing a mentality change with regard to these matters would perhaps not have been so hard for Pertti's teachers, had they been conscious of the possibility of challenging these assumptions. Certainly, this would have given them an entirely different point of departure for making decisions about what kinds of musical training and tools to give him access to and what travelling directions and routes to suggest or open up. Similarly, if the rocking grannies had been offered something else than 'age-appropriate' music in the social gatherings for senior citizens, they might instantly have found thriving ways of expressing and building musical identity in and through rock music.

Holding on to the pessimistic belief that teachers are forever captured within the structuralist trap of school systems will not lead us to ask the hard questions of how the situation can be remedied or how we might challenge the status quo or re-vision education as advised by Jorgensen (2003) above. Instead, we ought to look for ways and tools by means of which the 'classroom as imposed space' situation can be renegotiated. Towards these goals, the music teacher need not only to re-imagine the practices of her classroom but also to rethink her own position as well as the positions of her students, as shown in the example above. This may require altering one's sense of professional identity, moving from seeing oneself as the 'carrier of musical knowledge' or 'the one who is expected to carry out the will of the state/school culture/music curriculum' to becoming a 'co-constructor of experimental and collaborative musical learning environments' as well as a person who challenges structural expectations and demands. After all, the tensions of individual and structural socialisation processes may not be seen as black-and-white as described by Small. Rather, within the framework of critical pedagogy, we strive for increasing awareness to view music learners 'as part of an intricate socio-cultural web involving particular structures and practices that empower some and prevent others from purposeful and positive music engagement' (O'Neill 2012, 166). In the remainder of this paper, we will explore frameworks that we believe will help to cultivate a sense of teacher identity that constructs the teacher as a responsible and powerful agent of change for culturally responsive teaching.

Critical pedagogies as tools for transformation

Critical pedagogy provides some adequate insights for renegotiating the music classroom as a place and space for transformative music engagement. As the Brazilian father of critical pedagogy Freire ([1992] 2004) observes, educational practice never happens in 'zero space-time', in other words it is unable to be neutral because 'educators cannot escape their responsibility as ethical agents with political and directive purposes' (65). Similar ideas are expressed by Villegas and Lucas (2002), who strongly contest the belief they claim is quite common among teachers, namely that teaching is 'a politically neutral activity' (19). Rather these authors stress the commitment and skills teachers need in order to become 'change

agents' (xxi). So, we may ask, if music teachers are, and need to perceive of themselves as, vehicles for change, and the change that needs to be achieved is one in which imposed music education practices are transformed into spaces for envisioning the hitherto unimaginable, what approaches or situations would need to be created? What tools could be given? What philosophies could underpin music teachers taking on such a task or role? We may ask, in Freire's ([1992] 2004, 117) words: 'Is it possible to be democratic and dialogical without ceasing to be a teacher?'

Within the framework of critical pedagogy, a teacher envisioning or creating new spaces is seen as *a transformative intellectual* (Giroux 1988) who is equipped with critical literacy and active citizenship. The main aim of this practically based theory of education and schooling is to bring about cultural and political change and transformation by educating teachers and students into languages of critique, possibility, and democracy, not so much in order to give rise to revolution and deconstruction but rather to address the questions 'How can we make schooling meaningful so as to make it critical and how can we make it critical so as to make it emancipatory?' (Giroux 1988, 2). Looking for ways in which students and teachers can mutually renegotiate their structurally constrained school music situation and create frames for leaping into the unexplored, we embrace critical awareness as a central tool and also note that, according to Freire ([1970] 2006), a democratic and dialogical relationship between teachers and students – in his terms 'a partnership' (91) – is one of the main features of critical pedagogy. For example, if Pertti's teachers had listened to his dreams of becoming a professional punk rocker and been able to envision and educate him as one that would certainly have been a critique against the ableist assumptions surrounding him elsewhere in educational and other caretaking institutions. Likewise, seeing and treating Joyce as a digital and cosmopolitan music-maker, and facilitating her further development in this direction in the classroom, would have been one step towards transforming the social position and label given her by the majority society, namely that of a somewhat disadvantaged immigrant student. In addition, it may have provided a foundation for her leaping into becoming a future musician. Not to mention the teachers who laterally helped the six older women to attain their rocking grannies' status, thus giving a disclaimer of ageism that critical pedagogues have noticed as a prevailing discriminatory force that places older people in 'a culture of silence' (Freire [1970] 2006).

By teachers breaking up structural constraints and adopting new tools and critical attitudes, we believe that music education can become not a *politicised* but a *political* act inside the school environment. This view is shared by Abrahams (2007) who illustrates how critical pedagogy in music education can be utilised as part of this process, enabling the teacher to identify and meet individual needs while simultaneously recognising the surrounding structural and political demands:

> Music education is political. There are issues of power and control inside the music classroom, the school building, and the community. Those in power make decisions about what is taught, how often classes meet, how much money is allocated to each school subject or program, and so forth. Those who use critical pedagogy are able to transcend the constraints that those in power place on them. They do this in their classrooms by acknowledging that children come to class with knowledge from the outside world and, as such, that their knowledge needs to be honoured and valued. (229)

Similar observations are made by Villegas and Lucas (2002) who, from the perspective of culturally responsive teaching emphasise that teachers need to know about 'the lives of the *specific children* they teach' (80) which includes their personal social lives – use of leisure time, favourite activities, hobbies, interests – as well as their lives within the family and the wider community in order to build bridges between home, society and school and hence make education meaningful. Consequently, music teachers need to spend some time mapping students' musical lives in order to discover the competencies they bring as well as to be able to envision paths for their possible musical futures. To once again make a connection to the above snapshots: if Joyce's competence and family-based music-making network had been acknowledged and further facilitated by her teacher, she may not have appeared so passive and withdrawn in the classroom and she may also have had a clearer idea about how she should reach her dream of becoming a musician. Probably, her school-based music education would have been of greater significance to her, and Joyce's participation may also have been more meaningful in the eyes of her teacher and her peers.

While Small (2010) stresses the structural demands put on music teachers and the limitations this sets for the efforts to provide opportunities for rich individual socialisation in and through music, he argues elsewhere (1998) that musicking is – in the ultimate sense – a political act with great liberating potential and through which agency can be enhanced and explored, as we suggest in the example involving Joyce above. Similar ideas are expressed by Karlsen and Westerlund (2010) who, inspired by music sociologist DeNora (2000), state that musical agency is linked to individuals' abilities to capacitate themselves using music's affordances to, in a variety of ways, re-negotiate and re-narrate their selves and their position in the world. Drawing on Giddens (1984) they argue, on a broader level, that structural levels are not fixed; rather they are something we reproduce by repeating everyday patterns of action. Hence, it is also possible to transform structures by changing how we act. Pertti is an excellent example in this respect. By deciding to act and envision himself primarily *as a punk rocker* and not as a disabled person, he greatly expanded the structurally imposed limitations on his own life. Likewise, the rocking grannies chose to resist the age-related music repertoire offered to them and break away from stereotypes of older women through climbing on stage with their rock band instruments.

The struggles to negotiate structure and individual agency – often by expanding the frames for exercising the latter – is also recognised in feminist theory, where theories of agency and gender identity are reconstructed in order to 'explain the differing motivations and ways in which individuals and groups struggle over, appropriate and transform cultural meanings and resources' (McNay 2000, 4). From this reconstruction, an understanding of agency occurs which is not based either on individuals' passive submission to constraints or a willed adoption of dominant norms; rather McNay's (2000, 9) concept of *generative agency* allows individuals to choose whether to act according to the norms or resist them. Hence, what Pertti and the grannies have done in their own lives, music teachers can do in the classroom – for themselves and their students. Resisting the norms surrounding the role of an obedient music teacher as well as refusing to accept the pre-labelling of students with respect to their social positions and capacities, music teachers may be able to establish new, even unanticipated modes of action and to challenge the social

structures for a requisite change or transformation. Working as change agents within their practices, featuring critique, creating partnerships and acknowledging competencies, it should be possible for music teachers to transform their teaching environments and envision opportunities for their students to transform their lives through the powerful capacitating force of music.

New values, new roles: this is who *we* are

When searching new values and new roles in music education, we find it helpful to go back to Small's (1998, 10) ideas on musicking as a 'human encounter'. For him, 'it is in those relationships that the meaning of the [musical] act lies' (13). As in all relationships, what counts is the mutual commitment and respect, shared interests and openness towards the views of others – *partnership* – as also Freire ([1970] 2006) suggests. This is, however, not something that occurs automatically. It is something that needs to be practised over and over again, and it is the teacher's responsibility to build up a social environment in which such relationships can be nurtured. Only when showing an interest in each other's ambitions and hopes can the envisioning of the imaginary spaces of everyone involved in the process become possible. Such an atmosphere may also enable exploration, affirmation and celebration of the relationships created, and constitute a backdrop for considering 'who *we* are' instead of only accepting that 'this is who the constraining systems of school force us to be'.

Considering the teacher as a change agent seems to call for an intensified focus on the *relationships* established in the musical situations and on the *construction of the individual and collective identities* that is embedded in the acts of musicking, whether that happens inside or outside the school context. Building up a learning environment that encourages the students to equally participate, explore and experiment with music – here and now – helps the students to create tools and achieve confidence in envisioning what one could possibly do with music, also in the future. That way it may also promote personal agency and contribute to the students' hopefully lifelong engagement with music. In this process, the teacher can act as a more experienced agent, helping the students to identify and pursue their ambitions and interests. Going back to Jonas and Joyce again, even if their teachers are perhaps not experts in digital music making, they can provide general compositional tools and insights that their students might need as well as support their efforts and strengthen their self-esteem as composers. Furthermore, it is within the teachers' powers to invite for example Jonas' obviously knowledgeable father to the classroom so that he can share some of his competences within digital music making and capacitate both the teacher and her students so they can engage in digital explorations *together*. Then, the acts and activities of music education are 'not merely instruments for learning to experience an already existing world, [rather] potentially they themselves involve satisfaction and enjoyment and the possibility of change' (Westerlund 2008, 82) and the exploration of a musical landscape that, although it certainly pre-exists, has not been occupied and inquired into by *this* particular group of people before.

If the mutual commitment and the sense of 'this is who *we* are' is what we are looking for in order to pursue more meaningful learning experiences in musicking and to promote lifelong engagement with music in multiple and changing arenas, the

question still remains: how do we engage the students? As we all know, it takes two to tango and it certainly takes teachers *and* students to music in the classroom. Still, this does not necessarily mean that the teacher is completely absorbed in the act of musicking together with her students. Rather, as a responsible and responsive teacher, she may take the role of *facilitator*, enabling and supporting the students' growing of musical interrelationships and affirming and helping the young musicians' efforts to mutually explore and build individual and collective agency as well as future paths for musical development. Hence, by being actively present, the teacher may motivate and commit the students to their learning and transform her classroom from an 'imposed musical space' towards an arena for something that even Small would recognise as musicking.

Exploring relationships and 'knowing the world': the reasons why music should remain in schools

And here we arrive at a crucial point worth further investigation: If the music teacher is able to transform her classroom and facilitate and support actual musicking, what would be the significance and meanings of such actions? What would the musical interrelationships of her students imply? Looking for answers, we choose once again to draw on Small (1999b) and his view that 'music' is more of a verb than a noun. In short, he reminds us that 'the essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action' (9) and furthermore that 'the musicking lies *in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance*' (9, our italics). In other words, musicking is not just about creating partnerships or experiencing cohesion, it is about exploring human relationships in a very profound way; it is 'an activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world, not as they are but as we would wish them to be (…) through "musicking" we learn about and explore those relationships' (Small 1998, 50). The best example from the snapshots is perhaps the grannies, who, in joint music making, explored each other in a way that deeply transformed their extra-musical relationships. For them, musicking certainly became an act of world-making, and a way of 'knowing the world' for the purpose of learning 'to live well in it' (50).

Considering the joint playing of music as a possible path for world-making as well as the current research paradigm which cherishes transformativity and future prospects with regards to this, we take as a pre-requisite that music teachers have the abilities and the agency to see themselves as change agents who are able to escape and transform the constraints of the school system and facilitate actual musicking experiences for their students. If musicking entails all of the above, that is, in our opinion, the strongest argument for keeping music as a subject in school. Of course, this presupposes that music is not solely taught as 'appreciation of musical works' nor entirely as 'learning to play an instrument' or even 'learning to play in a group or band'. Rather the joint exploration of and curiosity towards that which is musically unknown – the actual looking for imaginary spaces – becomes a crucial part. Who would have believed 20 years ago that students would have everyday access to computer programs for composing, such as GarageBand®? Who could foresee that they would log on to the Internet and learn to play guitar by watching YouTube videos? Which ones of Pertti's teachers would have dared to foresee that

he would one day tour Germany? And what about the persons who organised the course for the grannies – how could they possibly have guessed that these women would sell their homes, pick up their bags and claim a rehearsal space of their own? By building individual and social agency in and through facilitated musicking, we have an opportunity to equip our students with the tools they need in order to leap into the unexplored.

Notes on contributors

Marja-Leena Juntunen (PhD; MMus) is a senior assistant at the Sibelius Academy, Finland. Her research is in the field of music education and her research interest areas include narrative inquiry, music teacher education, embodiment of musical knowing, and Dalcroze pedagogy. She has presented papers at several international conferences and published articles in international and Finnish journals. She serves as review reader in the *International Journal of Music Education: Practice* and the *Finnish Journal of Music Education*.

Sidsel Karlsen (PhD) is professor of music education at Hedmark University College in Norway as well as docent at the Sibelius Academy in Finland. She has published widely in Scandinavian and International Research journals and is a contributor to international anthologies such as *Sociology and music education* and *Collaborative learning in higher music education*. Her research interests cover, among other things, multicultural music education, the interplay between formal and informal arenas for learning and the social and cultural significance of music festivals.

Anna Kuoppamäki (MMus) is a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy. She is also a teacher in West Helsinki Music School. With research interest in Deweyan pragmatism and Wenger's community theories, she focuses on how children construct learning communities in music, how their musical agency is constructed and how gender is negotiated in those processes. The title of her ongoing PhD project is "The ambivalence of gender in constructing children's learning community in music."

Tuulikki Laes (MMus) is a doctoral student at the Doctoral School of Music Education, Jazz and Folk Music at the Sibelius Academy. She is also a teacher of graduate students in the subject of Special Pedagogy at the University of the Arts Helsinki. Her ongoing dissertation project deals with marginality, democracy and inclusion in music education. She has published peer-reviewed articles in Finnish and international journals and presented her work at several academic conferences. Prior to her doctoral studies she worked as a rock band music teacher for students with special educational needs.

Sari Muhonen has a Licentiate degree in music education and a Master's degree in general education. Her main research interests lie in creative approaches to music education and the building of new practices within music. Her position at the University of Helsinki, The Viikki Teacher Training School involves work as a teacher educator, primary school teacher and music teacher. She has also published material for the teaching of primary school music for students and teachers as well as books for those learning to read Finnish as their mother tongue in grades 1 and 2. Her most recent book is on *Songcrafting with Children*. Muhonen is currently finishing her doctoral thesis at the Sibelius Academy.

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