Music Training

It was with my childhood friend, András Hajós, that we developed Music Training with, which aims to train corporate managers in groups. The idea behind the concept is that the participants themselves compose and eventually perform a musical production. Hence this is a creative programme. We tried to ensure that the activity

1. be quite far off from everyday routine work, yet
2. be full of situations, in which the participants could see themselves and the ways they work and behave in their everyday work reality.

Music Training is a means to organization development. The participants play music in abandon and also enjoy being rock stars without having to give up their existing lives. The point, however, is still what goes on in everyday life: we are given the job to help make everyday work life be smoother and more effective.

Colleagues include musician and music teacher, Ferenc Kisvári, who is great in keeping matters move swiftly during rehearsals, and Gábor Buzsa, who gets the guitar section moving and presents a mirror to both participants and trainers with his excellent video recordings.

In this deliberate atmosphere of mutual interdependence and support, the final shared product is arrived at through the creative and active work involving all the participants without exception. All this sounds great, but there is a bumping road leading to it.

We have found that

1. participants get easily carried away; i.e. transgressing the ungainliness of other training activities, participants here are not forced to keep pondering if there is a point in, for example, stepping from one sheet of newspaper laid out on the floor onto the next while blindfolded,
2. they always take something home with them, which they can show to others, and even the company can be proud of,
3. using the means of artistic education, the programme improves skills.

Music Training is for people that cannot play music. It is ideally for groups whose members have not really played an instrument before. This is the very situation that makes the setting ideal for a future "aha-experience".

"Music is not a good pretext for cooperation just because it captivates people; it is also great because it gives you a clear indication of the final outcome without needing feedback from the outside world", says András Hajós. "Everyone will hear if it sounds bad. Hence motivation does not stem from the group within or from the trainer, or your manager; but it is constantly lingering in the air. Literally as a form of sound wave. If the group gets carried away, it is up to the trainer to channel thing back into their normal course.

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"Is it a problem if we have a professional guitarist, drummer or vocalist in the group?", asks one of the HR managers. Why would it be a problem? This is a live situation we have no control over; this is what were in the cards. There is a professional (or at least considered to be a professional by the others) musician among the participants. For the purposes of the training, this is a real treasure. Let us not forget: our ultimate aim is not to end up with a high quality musical product, but to achieve high quality organisation development. These situations are great to work with. Will the professional help the others? How will the others feel about having him? Will the final outcome be a team product, a result of shared success or will the frontman take the stage with a background support team playing a secondary role? What will the others think of the situation? How much can they identify with the final, quality production? Will they feel this to be their own? How will they project their experiences onto their everyday work?

Music Training can be centred around the following concepts:

1. creation: meaningful end product
2. attention: shared responsibility instead of drilling
3. attention given to others and ourselves; instead of praising and punishing, we have self reflection, feedback and positive encouragement
4. courage: to say "yes" and also to say "no"
5. leadership: cooperation to attain a common goal
6. brainstorming, planning, implementation
7. disruption: reality seen from a new perspective; prejudice replaced by thinking; immediate answers replaced by questions.

It is these catchwords that I can perhaps best sum up the core essence of Music Training with. Now, let's see the details.

Creation

The direct outcome of Music Training is a piece of artwork. A complex musical composition that includes music, lyrics, performance (vocal and instrumental), stage visuals, make-up and costume design. We have found that the wide range of activities involved enable everyone to find something they like and can get absorbed in.

Although companies at every step keep emphasising how much they want their employees to be creative, they leave very little room for creativity in practice. I think the reason behind is that most decision-makers are afraid to let the genie out of the bottle. Now this lack of freedom forces those being drowned by it to behave by the books. Neither in their clothing, nor in their ways of thinking, nor in the jokes will they deviate from the standard. Of course, in a well-organised and systematic plant, being creative, or pursuing procedures that are driven by the spontaneity of the moment may have

disastrous consequences. The consistent division of free brainstorming and the disciplined implementation of the finished plan tends to be one of the recurring problem points of training.

On the other hand, albeit corporations (and school education) try to encourage and teach "creativity", they are doing this from some sort of a score sheet and what is most important - i.e. free thinking - not only gets lost, but is most often thought of as dangerous and disadvantageous activity. What Music Training can give you:
- autonomous learning based on self-reflection,
- the reversal of a situation - even to the extremes-, the re-examination of the situation from newer and newer perspectives,
- recognition of own capabilities; the ability to understand that these capabilities can be put to good use in the interest of the company and the person.

It is the experiences of a number of former training sessions that make me say that having a tangible outcome, a final product in a development programme is a must. No matter how much a good organisation development programme desires to have an impact on long-term thinking, your blood and flesh people will like to put their hands on the CD that conceals their voices and the video footage of their performance. And rightly so.

The greatest advantage of creative work is that it has a beginning and ending. The piece of work must first be thought up then brought to existence. All the creative energy of the participants is needed since the product will be created out of nothing (see part on humanrobot below). They must argue and struggle with each other and themselves; they must open up because they will need all their munitions from the slightest stroke of a pen to the most elaborate lick of the guitar. This is the chance to evolve and blossom; an opportunity for everyone to identify an area (we, trainers consciously help the group in this) in which hidden skills can burst forth. (We had one participant who - after the programme - bought himself an electric organ.)

At the same time, there is need for discipline, self-restraint, conscious building, since beyond a certain point, any new idea will only increase the room for error. According to musicians, making a CD or getting a concert under roof is very similar to projects carried out by companies.

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There are groups that might insist in the beginning on performing an already known hit. There are others that would like to reduce the whole thing down to karaoke and make their job an easy one by getting musicians to provide the background music to their performance. In these cases, we tend to create situations in which the groups come out and say that they will, indeed, aspire higher, and get the full job done: a) they will compose the music, and b) they will perform it without any outside help. When looking back at things at the end of the training, this makes a great impact and participants usually project their experiences out onto their own work lives as well: "we said it was not going to work, yet it did!"

Discipline

The term discipline is usually used in the sense of drilling even though no work of art (among others) can be created without discipline. The participants listen to each other, they listen to their ideas, plans, and opinions. The group must learn to regulate comments. They must navigate within the limits of unrestrained breadth and drilling. Speaking of drilling, it can drain creative resources in a snap.

It is necessary that the participants be able to listen to and understand each other and themselves. The success of this may depend on small things such as not hitting the cymbal with your drumstick and pretending to be "just practising the rhythm" while someone else is trying to speak because dialogue will be just impossible. It is important to keep to the time-frame, we are working with a finite resource - just like in the practice of business: the work must be complete by the end of training.

The group turns the idea into a plan, which again requires a special form of discipline. The plan needs to be implemented, which requires the proper delegation of tasks and synchronisation of functions. Vocalists must not overplay their role and sing the soloist off the stage; no-one can lose the beat, musicians must go by the band leader's instructions.

In the end, everyone has a role and place to play in the final product. There is no participant that can afford to remain an outsider. If yes, that person is not really a participant. The creators either make a contribution to or deprive something from the final outcome with all their acts whether deliberate or unintentional. When the group recognises the importance of taking on responsibility, the trainer is given an excellent tool to transpose this to everyday work situations.

Perhaps the most widespread and general experience of managers is that their employees (who they sometimes call a "team") are unable or unwilling to take responsibility. This may well be true. Yet responsibility has many sides to it. If the leader lacks confidence, if there are no or only obscure job descriptions, if internal communication is missing or is unidirectional, there is no chance for group members to assume responsibility for their work or have faith in others. In other words, they will not understand and believe that their colleagues take responsibility for their own work hence no-one will be able to safely rely on the other. There are leaders who do not even show up at the training while their direct employees are struggling with guitars and music scores. Even if unspoken, most groups actually conceptualise and become aware of the absurdity of the situation.

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Sometimes one or two participants are left out of a programme. In the heated moments of absorbed labour, it may go unnoticed, but the group pays the price later. At times these people might "just" get sidelined and watch events unfolding with infinite apathy (or may not even watch at all). (Trainers will consciously use situations like these.) In most cases though people on the sideline will try to get involved; however, after having been ignored and left out in crucial moments, they become more of a hindrance, a source of threat than anything else. These situations are just great for the trainer to work with and help the team transpose the experiences onto their own work life: uninvolved colleagues may present a threat to success.

Attention

Creative work in music and musical rehearsals require a great deal of concentration. Attention must be directed at your own work and also at the work of all others. You must conquer your inherent fear of making a noise with the drum and focus entirely on what you are doing and what you can hear with your ears.

Being able to pay attention to the other person is extremely important. And this is true not only for the duration of music rehearsals when the band is practising to work in synchrony, but also when participants give each other feedback. It is important to note what the feedback is actually based on. Will group members recognise that they may discover themselves (their awkwardness, desires, strengths, and doubts) in the other person?

Feedback (reflection) is an effective means in your everyday life as well. How can I tell somebody that I am unhappy about something he is doing without turning this person against myself or without silencing him for good. The appropriate application of feedback techniques in Music Training may also work as an opportunity for one team member to help another recognise new, so far hidden talents and skills in himself. Many realise during Music Training that they are great writers, painters, or that they are excellent at synchronising people. This realisation is often the result of feedback from others.

Music Training gives participants a technique to open up new doors through music, singing, lyrics, and performance. They will then provide the same channel of feedback to people who otherwise would not want to or would not dare give feedback.

The outcome that naturally stems from paying attention to each other is encouragement and reassurance, which are scarce resources in workplaces. Employees generally expect leaders to play the role of a parent or mentor: he is to praise, reward, and impose expectations. In this instance however, the group ripens to a team through shared creative flight and tearful implementation, just like in everyday work. When the plan is complete, when everyone has taken up their position, when communication is restricted to the exchange of glances, and the first notes of music resound in the air, now this is the moment for the leader to encourage. During times of hardship, during temporary failures, participants must be able to encourage each other. Scolding, trying to find scapegoats, excuses, or self-flogging are of no use. Whether you keep chanting that "we will succeed" or "we will fail" you will be right.

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I often come across groups whose members - that can get deeply absorbed in creative endeavours almost like children - will consider it a real nuisance when they are asked to sit down leave the instruments and microphones behind ans sum up their experiences or to find a solution to a problem there may be. I also feel that I am on the razor's edge, but I do not yield to group pressure and let the whole day go by with rehearsal. Because Music Training is, after all, an organisation development tool, you have no option - and no matter how banal it may look - but to bring unspoken and implied messages and observations on the performance to the level of consciousness. The group will subsequently be grateful, although you may not be very popular at the time.

Courage

It takes courage to say that something we did was simply lousy. I have seen many activities performed with appalling results. So what? This can teach us just as much about the group as any perfect solution offered in an activity. There is, however, a small percentage of cases when the group is unable to accept that their performance was poor, and instead turns against he trainer. This is not an easy situation to overcome, but an excellent opportunity to talk about responsibility or the subject of courage in everyday work situations, where there are no trainers, only mistakes. In Music Training people can learn how to have the courage to express what needs to be improved upon without any reservations. And also, the ability to reveal weaknesses provides courage for the future.

Music Training showed me that courage was not so much needed for people to get rid of their inhibitions and get on stage. In a relaxed atmosphere people can quickly assume roles they feel comfortable with. (If you don't like to be in the centre of attention all the time, you can play the tambourine or paint the setting or hide in the protective warmth of the choir.) What needs real courage however, is standing up to the group and say that parts or even the whole performance must be changed because you think it is (still) far from presentable.

And you need to have courage to come out with the production - any production. You need to have courage to lend your name to it. As for the group, courage is required to take the production on and to identify with it. Many ask me if what they are doing is good or bad. Of course, there are professional and technical considerations on volume, pace, and style. However, it is really up to the group as a whole to decide of the final product is good or not. If they stand up for their performance and their own work of art, then it is certainly good. It is good because they dare call it good.

Leadership

Who is the leader in the group? This is not at all obvious in Music Training. This is what makes this form of training more exciting than others: the creation of the final product in this instance requires more than one leader (at least two), unlike in other forms of training programmes, i.e. those intended to develop project culture. One of them is the frontman, who everyone follows, the other is the coordinator of the rehearsals.

Of course, the situation is more complex than that since at the end of Music Training we may end up with a performance without - or at least seemingly without - a lead singer. Even in this instance there is one performer that the audience will focus on more often from the corner of their eyes because, for example, he may be best in keeping the rhythm or have a feel for the performance. We know from the realm of labour that there are leaders, coordinators, and managers and they each play different roles. These roles may be all be concentrated in a single person. What counts is that everyone in the group acknowledge who the leader is, who makes decisions and when, who is tasked with and responsible for coordination, management and leadership.

This is the same with music bands. We have found that the role of coordinator and the role of leader are usually separated. The guiding light is usually the frontman, who is the heart and soul of the performance. It is his word that will count during performance and also during the normal hours of creative work. And there is a very different person in the

group: the manager or coordinator. He is responsible for conducting rehearsals, keeping things in order without drills, talking with concert managers, making appointments, etc.

In Music Training, the leader and coordinator are not necessarily the very same people that play these roles in real life since - given the core essence of the programme - we end up with a very different product than in the workplace. It is an excellent opportunity for the organisation developer to talk about competencies, decision-making, dominance, or cooperation.

Is there room for competition? Yes, there is. We could stipulate that there should not be competition because everyone at every step talks about the importance of cooperation, but people are are talented to varying degrees. Good is challenged by better. There may be three good singers in a group and they will inevitably compete until there is a singer number one, two and three.

Where does cooperation come into the picture? In the shared expression of the common goal. A production will only be good, loveable and successful if everyone has contributed to it. A tambourine player, hurt in his ambitions, will definitely interfere with the lead singer even if unconsciously. Cooperation is not achieved out of respect for one or the other member. The group does not cooperate because it likes the frontman, but because they are making a joint creation in which the setting is just as important as the lyrics. Once this is realised by the group, the trainer must somehow help raise this recognition into the centre of consciousness.

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I like it very much when a group can elect a leader to complete a task. This, however, does not always work in Music Training either. This may be an excellent gateway for the trainer to point the group in the direction of thinking about leadership, and the conditions of work. In a programme designed specifically for top managers, I found that even though they had an elected a leader, who accepted the appointment, when it came to work, he did not act like a leader at all: he did not make decisions, did not assume responsibility, did not initiate, or provide feedback. He was busy with the drumsticks.

Brainstorming, planning, implementation

The group turns an idea into a plan, as we said it before. This is the dimension for me that can be best transposed on everyday life at work. An idea may be an impressive rhyme, a funny noise to use, or the choice to perform a musical or a Chastúshka. Ideas come in spells; although there is always one or two people who push the group on and urge everyone to get onto the next phase and not to delay things by coming out with newer and newer ideas.

The danger, however, is not inherent in the ideas or in their excessive number; the danger lurks in the group's failure to draw the borderline between brainstorming and planning. It is easy to see that musical production cannot come into existence without ideas and guidelines. However, groups usually only realise that having a pool of ideas is not identical with having a plan once well into the realisation phase. When will a particular sound start and stop? When and who will enter? How many verses and how many choruses will there be? When will the performance finish? What does that musical

or Chastúshka look like from the outside? Who will determine the pace of the performance? These questions must be answered during the planning stage already.

Just as is the case with a work project, feedback plays an important role here as well. Rehearsal is under way. There are good things and there are things the group just cannot get around. Mistakes begin to surface. It is up to the group to notice them, pick them up and correct them. It depends on group climate and culture if a mistake is considered the necessary, inherent feature of operation whose correction is a challenge, or the group submerges in the sludge of incompetence and stiffens up upon the emergence of the first undesired difficulty. Or starts looking to hold someone accountable, or members begin to blame each other.

Disruption, new perspective

"How can Music Training of all forms of training help our steel producing plant? We don't play music, we make alloys of engineering precision. We are hungry for profit; we are not having fun in the drawing office and production hall, but doing serious work. Why will Music Training be good for us?" Disruption is a relatively new business term, but was - in fact - already used in ancient Greece. What lies at its core is that

1. we build a bridge in our heads between seemingly distant areas,
2. making a conscious effort to surpass our prejudice, we consciously change our perspective and look back at the situation we would like to resolve,
3. leaving behind conventional solutions, we sweat out the solution to a problem.

The participants' perspective will widen by making conscious observations during an activity that is very different from their everyday work (music) and draw conclusions. I claim that playing music requires the same skills and knowledge that is needed by a steel manufacturing company: a certain degree of discipline, a certain degree of collegial attention, a certain degree of expertise, and sometimes a bit of courage to deviate from conventions. Preplanned (but not artificial) impact and "emergency scripts" (what to do in case a string breaks, or the audience does not like the song being played). And, of course, the (formal and informal) leadership roles and listening to each other.

Freedom: what is not forbidden is permitted. The greatest obstacle for the participants to overcome is to grab the opportunity. We know form experience that training participants so often find themselves wondering why they did not do the obvious when it was not forbidden. Why did not they use alternative devices, leave the room, not talk to each other when all this was not specifically forbidden. It is not forbidden to beat the rhythm with a pen on the table, it is not forbidden to play a number of instruments at the same time, or to swap instruments. You are not forbidden to sing double Dutch. All this is music. It is the message that counts: disruption: break through your limits. Do not think of your conceived or imposed limits as finite.

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As the group progresses in the rehearsals, I make them sit down from time to time. We talk about what they think was good, and what it is they think should be improved on. When facing a problem, and the group recognises its everyday work situation in it, the discussion may take a defensive course; they may say things like: "this is how we

normally do it" or "we normally do not do anything about it at work". What I would like to arrive at with the group is the recognition that norms are not necessarily to be complied with; after all, it was they who set the goal in the beginning, it is now up to them to attain it. They are free to choose the method. What they can learn from this is the observation of their own decisions.

Possible scenarios

Music Training is two days long. Although a training programme may be of any length, it is best to give it sufficient time. There is always a natural pace for unwinding and switching off from the routines of everyday work and switching gears and getting in the mood for joint creative action. One day will also not be enough because of the immense pressure group members are under to get something under roof in less than a day. But ultimately: many think that there is a point to training only if there is a final work of creation and only if that final outcome is good.

Period	Activity	Expected outcome
09:00 – 09:30 (30')	Setting the training frameworks together with participants	Everyone should understand the objectives, the rules, and the participants have a say in setting the frames
09:30 – 10:00 (30')	Warm-up (non-musical game – for purposes other than music)	Shaking up participants, getting everyone involved
10:00 – 10:30 (30')	Taste of music by having musicians improvise	Participants learn that making music is a creative process even when performed by accomplished musicians. Possible mistakes make the whole think more humane.
10:30 – 10:45 (15')	Coffee break	More relaxed discussion
10:45 – 11:45 (60')	Laying down the foundations of the production	The plan is arrived at, which contains what the participants will do, what they are to create, and what roles each of them will play. Elaboration of emergency scripts!!!
11:45 – 12:00 (15')	Presentation of the plan	All should be clear about the details!
12:00 – 13:00 (60')	Lunch	:-)
13:00 – 13:20 (20')	Rehearsal - frontal education	Everyone to understand what goes on during rehearsal; what the

Period	Activity	Expected outcome
		potential hiccups are. What are you free to do and what is worth doing?
13:20 – 15:00 (100')	First rehearsal	Start building the production
15:00 – 15:15 (15')	Coffee break	Let the steam out, let participants have discussions outside the training.
15:15 – 15:50 (35')	Feedback	Back to life: participants express their views on the progress they have made so far.
15:50 – 16:50 (60')	Rehearsal	Get on with the show
16:50 – 17:00 (10')	Day closure	Participants sum up how far they got and what they still have to do the next day.

Training - Day 2

Period	Activity	Expected outcome
09:00 – 09:15 (15')	Warm-up	Getting over sleepiness, getting back to creative work; make sure everyone understands how each of them are feeling.
09:15 – 10:45 (90')	Rehearsal	Get on with the show
10:45 – 11:00 (15')	Coffee break	
11:00 – 11:20 (20')	Summary	Fine-tuning: trainers provide feedback
11:20 – 12:00 (40')	Special rehearsal	Participants are to focus on the feedback they had received before and make the connection between the world of music and their world of work.
12:00 – 13:00 (60')	Lunch	
13:00 – 15:00 (120')	Final rehearsal	Get on with the show
15:00 – 15:30 (30')	Longer break	Getting ready for the final rehearsal
15:30 – 16:00 (30')	Final rehearsal	
16:00 – 16:15 (15')	Performance	
16:15 – 17:00 (45')	Training closure	1. Provide feedback to all participants
2. Translate experiences to your own work lives
3. Say what has been changed and what hasn't.

Acknowledgement

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Blurb

Why do you get cramps in the stomach when yo hear the word "training"? Where does the problem stem from? Is there a difference between team building and getting sloshed? How can the latter facilitate organisation development? What difficulties can the training venue inherently present? What are the responsibilities of the organisation leader and the trainer? Why do we form a circle during discussion? How can training contribute to the business success of a company? And how can it not? There are the questions the book intends to answer. The author has been working in adult education and teaching in various European universities for over 15 years. He has built his own business organisation on the very principles outlined in the book - so far with success.

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