10 World In Motion ensemble

My professional journey with refugee musicians and music university students

Katja Thomson

Introduction

Musical collaboration with refugees brings music practitioners face-to-face with local and global political and socio-cultural issues. In this chapter I critically review my professional journey in an open-access music ensemble project that stretched my professional boundaries as a music practitioner artistically as well as socially and emotionally, and demanded that I reflect intensively on how I position myself both within the music profession, and within wider discourses of immigration and social change. I took the initiative to form World In Motion ensemble following the arrival of over 32,000 refugees in Finland in 2015. Its purpose was to provide a welcoming musical space in the centre of Helsinki for refugee musicians to collaborate with music university students and teachers, and to focus on creating new music together, drawing on the musical backgrounds of the participants and the students. I myself both led the project and played and performed with the ensemble. The initiative can be seen as an example of Thirdspace (Soja, 1996): a novel artistic space was created, in which our musical interactions produced an emerging practice.

Although the project was clearly successful in many respects, this context of Thirdspace collaboration significantly challenged my approach and reflexivity as a professional musician and educator, in particular my preconceptions about professional boundaries. The ensemble highlighted the political nature of musical interaction and the invisible social boundaries and preconceptions that had largely remained unnoticed in my previous professional experience in music education and as a performer, even though this has been centred over many years around collaboration with musicians from different traditions, genres, and backgrounds. The educational contexts in which I have developed my professional knowledge, skills, and identity have steered me towards a strong socially engaged ethos and an exploratory, creative focus. Yet, World In Motion ensemble nudged me to engage with issues of belonging, integration, and individual and social responsibility at totally new levels. Investigating how my values and preconceptions impacted the participants and the students, and how reflecting on my actions fed back into our practice, became particularly significant.

In this chapter, I will examine my reflexive process as the leader of World In Motion ensemble, and how this led to re-negotiating my professional identity

as a socially responsible music practitioner. The project was an intensive and extremely rewarding journey through intercultural musical dialogue and participatory methods in music, but I also found myself dealing with difficult ethical questions. Entering unknown artistic, educational, and socio-political territories through the ensemble deeply impacted my professional practice and identity as a music educator, viola player, improviser, and teacher in higher music education.

World In Motion ensemble: Taking local action

The impetus for the ensemble originated from an instinct to develop an interactive musical space for musicians with a refugee background and students from the University of the Arts Helsinki, where I teach. Motivation to start the ensemble was also tied to my own political stance, which opposes derogatory attitudes toward basic human rights, including artistic expression, which has arisen amidst the European refugee situation. With my previous experience in intercultural settings I felt confident in having the artistic and pedagogical skills and flexibility needed in this ensemble context. I had an inkling from the beginning that the collaboration would present social and emotional challenges I had not encountered before. However, I wasn't prepared for the impact that the politics of the musicians' home countries had on the collaboration. Developing the structure and content without a pre-existing model felt like a fascinating task, but I was on thin ice when some of those political complexities started to raise their heads.

My first encounter with a reception centre for asylum seekers was in my hometown in autumn 2015. The media was filled with coverage of refugees arriving at the borders of European countries and footage of people at sea trying to reach the shores of Southern Europe. There were contrasting stories of families welcoming strangers into their homes, and attacks on buses transporting refugees to temporary centres. I decided to visit my local reception centre to find out if there was scope for university collaboration. While several other centres later welcomed collaboration, this first encounter conveyed a strong message that the arts played an insignificant, if not downright inconvenient, role in this crisis situation. I was escorted around the centre to witness the cramped sleeping halls. The tone of this quick tour made it clear that there was no space for any form of arts activities. Perhaps the worry about having enough guards able to hold peace at the centre was a pressing concern, or the people in charge had negative experiences of (benevolent) arts interventions in the past. I didn't find out why the rejection at this particular centre was so strong, but it led to an important reflective process for me. I saw how I might easily have given the impression of a familiar type of well-educated, white academic bursting with enthusiasm and good intentions, but unable to acknowledge the *real* needs of the refugees (and the centre), let alone understand the potential unrest and tensions that collaborative arts could hardly solve. Yet, I was not satisfied with this message or the stereotypical image, and I decided to pause, and to consider other ways to proceed.

The next step emerged from a serendipitous encounter in my local park. I had continued to envision a project for refugee musicians, wondering how I might find

musicians interested in collaboration. As I happened to walk across the park carrying a musical instrument, a man speaking a little English spotted me, a fellow musician, and asked if I knew somewhere he could play drums and meet other musicians. He was a resident at the abovementioned reception centre and did not have access to any instruments. With the help of internet links and a translation application he told me about the traditional instruments and music he played. Our conversation was brief, but a few months after this accidental encounter, he joined as one of the first members of the World In Motion ensemble.

Founded in January 2016, this open-access ensemble was enabled by a partnership between my university and a municipally run arts centre, Caixa. The arts centre offered a space called the Living Room for weekly workshops. With the help of a resourceful producer, refugees from local centres quickly found their way to the Living Room. Over the following months, around 20 musicians from different regions of the Middle East attended the group, the majority of them being Arabic-speaking men. The size of the group varied from four to eight participants depending on the week. Altogether eight Finnish and international music students studying either in folk music or global music programmes attended the ensemble as part of their elective studies, and three other musicians from different European countries joined as regular participants. My task as the leader was to instigate and steer the creative processes, and to provide artistic and educational support for the participants and the university students alike. I asked everyone to bring traditional songs, instrumental music, or smaller musical components such as rhythm patterns and melodies, which we learnt from sheet music or by ear. These starting points were then used for improvisation and collective composition, and arranged into new pieces of music by the ensemble. In addition to the weekly workshops, there were four intensive three-day projects.

The collaboration was characterised by its intercultural dimensions, and by the vulnerable position of some of the participants. In some ensemble workshops we were fully immersed in exhilarating artistic freedom and adventure. There were other times when the participants felt exhausted from the prolonged investigations into their right to stay in the country. This sometimes impacted their motivation and concentration in the workshops, but simultaneously the ensemble seemed to provide an important community for escaping the worries of daily life. Although the refugees were dealing with constant challenges and uncertain life situations, I got a sense that drawing attention to this would have been counterproductive, limiting their role and musician identity. The ensemble therefore needed to be organised in a way that acknowledged the challenges linked to being a refugee, but was strongly driven by what drew the participants to join the ensemble and what they had in common: a passion for music and a curiosity for what could happen when musicians from different musical traditions meet, interact, and generate something new.

Creating musical works collectively was my chosen artistic and educational strategy for the ensemble, not only because I find such artistic collaboration motivating and interesting per se, but because in my experience creative tasks enable musicians to connect on a more personal level and to develop commonalities. As

the participants came from a variety of educational, social, and musical backgrounds they inevitably heard, played, and constructed music with very different parameters. Therein lay one of the central professional challenges, and my inspiration, for the leadership of the ensemble: to ignite musical imagination and interaction resulting in concrete musical products, and to embrace the diversity of musical minds and possibilities while maintaining a grounded, practical focus. The processes were far from linear or straightforward, but rather an attempt to be “in sync” with each other, to be able to connect without previously shared musical meanings and history.

One such fairly typical example of our collaborative process encompassed four (overlapping) phases, stretching over three workshops:

- 1) *Starting point*: I asked one of the percussionists to choose and teach us two Arabic rhythms.
- 2) *Collectively generating material*: We became more familiar with the rhythms by listening and using body percussion. The bass player came up with a groove for the first rhythm, other instrumentalists, including violin, viola, and cello joined in with improvised parts, and the singers came up with vocal lines as the band jammed together. One of the students started to improvise with lyrics from Finnish mythology and another singer found similar poetry in ancient Greek. The two singers experimented with having a dialogue using the two languages. The instrumentalists tried out different arrangements building on the two rhythms and instrumental parts, and learnt a new, third rhythm from the percussionist. Different sections of the ensemble worked in pairs and small groups developing the material further.
- 3) *Consolidating the material*: We organised the musical material through playing, listening, and discussing. Taking cues from facial expressions and body language became especially important without a common spoken language. Some participants needed a lot of encouragement and convincing that their contributions were appreciated by the rest of the ensemble.
- 4) *Rehearsing the finished piece*: We played the piece and worked on the structure and the nuances, highlighting the dramatic expressiveness of the vocal duet and the wild instrumental improvisation accompanying it.

Reflexivity through at-home ethnography

In order to discuss how the 18-month ensemble project (2016–2017) significantly contributed to my self-understanding, reflexivity, and ethical sensibilities as a music practitioner, I will unpack the personal turning points and discoveries involved in the process. The ensemble project was undertaken as research, which overall generated an in-depth case study with a critical ethnographic lens. This lens was chosen in order to be able to focus on social issues and activism (Dutta, 2016; Sachs, 2003), manifested, in the case of this ensemble, by resisting the isolation of refugees through music collaboration. Within this frame, describing my personal experiences and attempting to break out from the taken-for-grantedness of the

setting I was actively leading, and had natural research access to, the analysis presented here constitutes a form of at-home ethnography (Alvesson, 2009). At-home ethnography embraces the idea of the researcher as the observing participant (Alvesson, 2009), for whom the participation in the setting is the first priority, and whose research is born out of this position. The process of examining my own actions has then involved connecting “the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis & Adams, 2014, p. 254).

To trace my professional journey as a reflexive music practitioner I use the data from research journals kept for the 18-month period “capturing the meaning making of the researcher in real time” (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016, p. 70). In an attempt to catch my immediate thoughts and puzzling questions following each workshop, or grabbing spontaneous thoughts and discoveries emerging in unpredictable moments, I utilised the functions of my mobile phone on underground trains, buses, and any imaginable locations. In addition to these electronic memos of varied depth and length, the recorded and notated musical pieces and experiments served as a great resource for accessing my aspirations, worries, questions, and emotions I had experienced during the process. I analysed the aforementioned written documents and recordings in parallel with each other, looking particularly for unexpected and ambiguous moments that would reveal tensions between my artistic and pedagogical aims and what actually happened in the ensemble process. The strongest thread to follow came from the musical works, supported by notes and key questions I had written down for further investigation in my research. Through examining what music we had created and how, I was able to revisit my emotions and thoughts about the key moments that pushed me to re-evaluate my approach. This in turn helped me to see how I had developed reflexivity in the process.

For me as the ensemble leader, reflexivity meant trying to grasp what I might take for granted as a music practitioner, be it the prioritising of improvisation and creativity or assuming that our practice would be experienced as open and inclusive by all the participants. Reflexivity involved the constant relational aspect of the work, where I tried to understand how my actions would impact the participants and the students, intentionally or unintentionally (Cunliffe, 2016). Examining my own leadership within World In Motion ensemble enabled self-reflexivity about my own educational background and professional practice, and critical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2016) about music education with individuals in vulnerable situations in culturally diverse communities.

Creative music making in Thirdspace

Fostering musical dialogue within an intercultural environment, including recently arrived refugees was a complex leadership task. It involved facilitation of creative group processes inviting new possibilities and artistic outcomes amidst unpredictable conditions. Such practice calls for critical reflexivity, beginning with reconceptualising institutional spaces and redefining the purpose of artistic activities within them. With these perspectives on arts practices and their location, the ensemble is

conceptualised as a Thirdspace. The geographer and urbanist Edward Soja (1996) developed the concept of Thirdspace, highlighting the human experience of lived spaces and the meanings given to these spaces (Soja, 1996). Soja's views are fundamentally concerned with spatial justice (Soja, 2010), maintaining that the right to inhabit space encompasses also people in transit. His ideas expand spatial thinking from materialist and idealist understandings of space to how human experience socially produces urban space. World In Motion ensemble embodied a musical Thirdspace, which simultaneously contains a real, *perceived* space and an imagined, *conceived* space. The real, material Living Room in Caisa provided a setting for the imagined, symbolic space that was conceived by us musicians who gathered there to create music. Together we formed new interpretations of life and possibilities through our artistic interaction and produced a third, *lived* space (Soja, 1996, p. 74), carrying an alternative, collective musical identity. This idea of musical Thirdspace invited me to examine my leadership critically, and the aims, processes, and conditions that underpinned the ensemble collaboration.

Developing socially responsible musical leadership

I built my professional identity in London, one of the most diverse cities in the world. During those years, aspects of the deeply multicultural environment became a part of my everyday life and existence, a familiar routine, despite signals of the same nationalistic undercurrents that affect all of today's Europe. Returning to Finland, where I had been brought up, meant experiencing a rather different way of life and atmosphere, especially in public spaces. This feeling was amplified when the reactions to the refugee situation started to roll in, and it became worryingly commonplace to witness hatred openly expressed towards newcomers. Processing these experiences and the insights I gained from the World In Motion ensemble project gradually enabled me to get involved in the societal debates at a more informed, analytical level. Linked to this, there has been a change in how I now position myself as a musician and university teacher. Below I illustrate how World In Motion has been a catalyst for (1) understanding the foundations, strengths, and limitations of my musical leadership, and (2) becoming aware of the scope of reflexivity in my musical practice.

Understanding the foundations, strengths, and limitations of my musical leadership

Balancing control and freedom

A participant has written a poem about longing. His wife in Syria composes a melody to it and sends it to back to him. Another participant composes a song based on the lyrics and the wife's melody. We learn the song together. One participant criticises the song and the creators of the song would like us from the music university to tell what we think of it. It is difficult to offer

feedback on music drawing on aesthetics unfamiliar to me, as some participants have a professional background in music while others have not made music professionally. This sometimes causes tensions.

(Researcher journal, 4.3.2016)

My intention as the leader was to let go of fixed ideals and nurture an exploratory attitude in the ensemble. Open-ended improvisational musical activities were not built on a common musical language but rather relied on creating a safe enough environment for everybody to feel willing to contribute. I regularly faced uncertainty about the “right” amount of structure and instruction, often wondering which improvisational approaches felt safe enough for the participants and what might get in the way of artistic experiments and interaction. Being open to unplanned turns and being inspired by each other’s unlimited imagination corresponds to the idea Thirdspace and viewing the ensemble as a musical Thirdspace helped me to frame the emerging nature of the work as a particular approach to creative music making. This approach was born from the interplay between free-flowing ideas and the musical craft and specialist musical knowledge within the ensemble, as well as the interaction between musicians. As such, our musical Thirdspace was built on a relational approach to professional practice (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2015, p. 126), relying on my knowledge and skills as a musician while aiming to capture and respond to what the participants offered. The leadership role was pronounced in the negotiation of musical starting points, with the group’s musical interaction driving the process if the starting point was met with enthusiasm. However, I sensed that the musicians’ commitment increased and partly depended on consistent involvement on my part.

I was responsible for the direction and outcomes of the work, but I was also one of the musicians in the band with my gender, personality, insecurities, passions, peculiarities, imperfections, and artistic preferences. It was a constant challenge to gauge how much guidance was optimal to sustain a dynamic process. This question was on my mind from the beginning, not least because I intentionally aimed to lead from within the ensemble and avoided dictating the outcomes. One strategy I used was making suggestions in order to spark musical “counter-ideas” amongst the participants. This technique, resembling free-flowing stimuli in improvisation, was often the most effective way to ignite interesting ideas. It involved a repeating cycle of sensitive listening, interpreting, reacting, and quick decision-making on my feet. A central ability required of me was a readiness to offer possible musical directions and solutions to keep the process afloat, but simultaneously being prepared to quickly step back to listen and give space to an alternative idea coming from the participants. This “stepping back” seemed to be sometimes interpreted by the participants as undecided, and therefore demanded a fine balancing act from me. The lack of common language, and therefore our inability to discuss the processes, made it difficult to explain any aims and decisions that seemed unclear to the participants.

Two students teach a Finnish folk song. We have rarely incorporated Finnish folk music, good to try that too. I'm wondering what "Finnishness" feels like to the participants. A group from a Greek choir has joined the project and they find a traditional Greek song they try over the chords played with the Finnish song ... I'm also wondering about how to develop our collective composition methods. Would it be a good idea to offer compositional starting points not so strongly linked to a particular tradition? But if the material is composed by me, it is still Western music one way or another. But maybe that's OK.

(Researcher journal, 9.11.2016)

The message I tried to convey in and through World In Motion collaboration was a sense of exploration and discovery without a fixed destination. The collaboration contained a variety of perceptions of "good performance", artistically interesting expression and how such outcomes could be achieved. Subsequently, I then had to accept that there were a number of opinions on what constitutes the role of the leader guiding the group through the creative processes, including those craving for set destinations and pre-planned outcomes. Because the idea of creative collaboration is, at least in principle, open to limitless directions and outcomes, it easily gets tangled in highly charged debates about the values of process and product (Kenny, 2016). Like many arts practitioners, I am reluctant to delve into this debate, because the process constitutes a product and vice versa: the two are inseparable.

We have played some traditional Arabic repertoire, which feels better than trying to do music that "sounds a bit Arabic". The whole mix and match danger, blending influences from different musics. Then on the other hand, why avoid going there? We need to try out ideas and processes and see where they take us. It is a little like doing dozens of exercises and letting the emerging skills and musical ideas discuss and sometimes fall in the perfect place.

(Research journal 14.12. 2016)

Learning traditional songs and instrumental music from the participants from Iraq and Syria, and generating new music based on Arabic music, was central in the ensemble work. Without a common spoken language, the different types of specialist musical knowledge held by the participants, the university students, and I, had to be communicated through the practical, musical interaction. This must have left many questions unanswered. I carefully tried to pick up the ideas

and viewpoints expressed by the participants and strived for ways for everybody to use their musical knowledge in the ensemble. I also tried to find out what (new) roles the participants potentially wished to explore through our ensemble practice—composer, poet, performer, listener, rebel, translator, mediator—and encouraged everyone to express their opinion on artistic decisions. The participants often pointed out that I was the expert, the teacher and leader, the one who should make the decisions.

The leadership of this type of collaboration deals with decisions about whose voice is heard and how this voice can be endorsed. I wanted to convey through my actions that new musical viewpoints would arise when I stepped back, and that learning and being in dialogue with the participants' musical tradition was a core feature of the collaboration. I think, for many of us, the most exciting musical moments were the ones where ideas and traditions spontaneously merged together. This of course was a leadership choice, prioritising experimentation over a more conventional style of teaching and learning musical repertoire. Reflecting on my leadership role was a relentless search into my values and purpose in this position, and I repeatedly pondered questions about the most fruitful approach to include everyone's knowledge and interests.

Dealing with uncertainty and discomfort

A new musician joined the group last week and today we worked on a poem by him. He is very excited about the collaboration. A very special impro session, lights out in the room, everybody really listening. One singer was particularly excited about the artistic possibilities. Looking forward to developing the idea with the group.

No trace of our new member. I have sent several messages but can't get hold of him. I feel quite worried, I hope he is OK.

(Research journal 22.3.2017)

Working with refugees felt distinctly different from any other contexts due to the refugees' particular life situation, whether their reason to leave the home country was war, persecution, or otherwise bleak future prospects. Uncertainty and incompleteness featured in all aspects of the work. Uncertainties stemmed from the volatile life situations of the refugees, the improvisatory nature of the practice, and the dynamics reflecting the global political tensions surrounding the relationships within the ensemble (although most of the time rather subtly). Some moments of struggle arose from distinctly different artistic expectations. While a search for synchrony through detailed work on phrasing, rhythm, timbre, intonation, and so on, seemed to unite us, there were differing experiences of how such synchrony should be reached. The open-endedness and improvisatory nature of co-creating the works demanded autonomy and resilience of the musicians as well as trust in the process itself, with the outcome depending on the quality of

the interaction. I see this uncertainty and dealing with the expectations around it as key to my professional identity in a Thirdspace context: if the creative process with its unpredictable components produces something meaningful for the musicians involved, it implies that the people have truly engaged with the process and developed a certain level of trust in each other.

We rehearsed a pattern composed by a participant. Difficult material, and another participant seemed a bit stressed out. The score was maybe hard to read, and I tried to teach it in different ways. I find the material really inspiring but wonder if the complexity makes the participants feel inadequate.

(Researcher journal 12.4.2017)

Ensemble structures based on strong hierarchy often suggest a certain understanding of efficiency. Trying out musical ideas and abandoning them can be mistakenly seen to imply a lack of artistic goals or a dysfunctional system. There were a number of rehearsals after which I worried whether we had “wasted time” on working on an idea that did not turn out the way I (or someone else) was hoping for. My main concern in such situations was the participants’ motivation, and in those moments, it was easy to lose faith in the process and instead prioritise the outcome. From this perspective, the project was an exploration into an improvisatory approach specifically in the intersection of different musical cultures and traditions.

On many occasions I also witnessed a sense of deep satisfaction for pursuing an idea that took a while to come to life, but then generated something unique, and of which the group also felt proud. It was those moments that elevated the work to a level that resembles Soja’s search for radical openness with the potential to transform our environment. My confidence in trusting the unknown process came not so much from a belief that I knew how to solve artistic dilemmas at any given moment but from knowing that if the interaction in the group remained open and alive, the collective effort would produce an artistic solution. This in turn demanded trusting intuition and being sensitive to quiet signals in the group.

Scoping reflexivity as a socially engaged music leader and music practitioner

The university students and I are bewildered by the political dimension of a planned performance event and the students want to know if they are part of political activity without realising it. We realise that our visiting artist is in exile due to political activism, which divides the refugees. We discuss the tensions and possible solutions, taking a stance, the impossibility of being neutral, supporting the members of a community torn

apart by war, political groups and terrorism, the anguish of the silenced. I'm worried about the emotional toll on all the people involved in the music project. We have entered a new zone beyond our seemingly non-political musicianship.

(Researcher journal 18.5.2017)

Although the ensemble project has confirmed my belief in fearlessly taking action and allowing for mistakes on the way, I have become more analytical of my professional values and responsibility, and those of socially engaged arts initiatives in general. In *World In Motion* my responsibilities included fostering the university students' learning (Solbrekke, 2008), while learning in the process myself. In addition to the musician network formed through the ensemble, the project has led to many encounters outside the field of music, giving me an opportunity to construct a wider picture of migration and the responses to it locally and globally. Learning how conflicting the suggested solutions presented by experts from different fields are has encouraged me to re-evaluate my own professional ethos, and has prevented me from becoming complacent with my current knowledge and experience. This can be seen as engaging with the hard-to-grasp qualities of reflexivity in and through our practice. As Lynch (2000) points out, reflexivity is a feature of the way actions are "performed, made sense of and incorporated into social settings" (Lynch, 2000, p. 26) rather than a moral or political virtue.

The context of the ensemble collaboration has helped me identify subtle forms of "othering" that are sometimes extremely hard to recognise in my field of work and in my closest professional settings. This includes my own attitudes and actions, conveying that any potentially reflexive thinking and action is only a step towards ethically sound practice, not a technique to ensure it. Many of the approaches I have adopted and developed for improvisation and collective composition have been inspired by artistic traditions from different parts of the world, but they have been amalgamated with European pedagogical traditions. For example, an improvisation exercise that in principle is an invitation to any musical tradition is still embedded in a certain frame when it is initiated and led by me. It is not so much that the exercise couldn't work perfectly well with musicians from the Middle East, but I want to be more aware of what and why I do as a leader.

The practical work with *World In Motion* has compelled me to examine multiculturalism and interculturalism as theoretical concepts. In the arts they are often used without deeper investigation, and it has been important for me to gain an understanding of how these perspectives influence political decisions and societal structures, and consequently my own professional practice. For several years, theoretical conceptions of identity have strongly pointed at interculturalist views of multiple and changing identities, and the processes of identification (Westerlund et al., 2017; Cante, 2016; Kenny, 2016). The work with the ensemble has

illustrated the stark contrast between these views and the basis on which current integration policies are presented. The ensemble project has convinced me that it is possible as a citizen and a higher music educator to influence the way diversity is portrayed and understood in societies. Rather than having answers to difficult questions I have developed persistence for taking action without guarantee of successful impact. Furthermore, the work has given me the confidence to participate in societal debates, knowing that I am neither oblivious nor uncritical when it comes to even the most complex refugee issues. This has sharpened my focus as a teacher in higher music education and has connected my work to a wider professional field beyond music and education.

Activist outlook as a musician

Mustafa and I had tea at the café, just chatted casually about everything, not an interview or anything. He is feeling really stressed out though not showing it much, just talking about it. There is no news from the Finnish Immigration Service. He said all his friends have received a negative decision and he can't sleep at night.

(Researcher journal 21.2.2017)

Along this professional journey, many times I felt helpless in the face of the refugee situation and my musician friends. Ongoing political tensions in the Middle East, the restlessness of the reception centres, missing families and friends, and participants being unable to make plans for the future were present also in the ensemble work. At times it was hard to assess how the participants were coping. During the project I scrutinised my professional capacity to support them on a continual basis, wondering where my ability, if not responsibility, to make a difference ended. This is linked to negotiating my professional boundaries. On the one hand, developing emotional commitment to the lives of the participants in a project like this could turn against itself and shift the focus away from the music making, which is what I, as a musician, do best. On the other hand, it is possible for me to close my eyes from the most difficult issues and claim it is due to having to remain within a professional role. Accepting this ongoing friction was possibly the most crucial aspect to approach reflexively.

Ellis and Adams (2014) argue that “abstract collective change can be represented by personal stories of actors” (p. 261). The serendipitous encounter with the refugee musician presented earlier was an opportunity for me to take a decisive step on an activist's path as a musician. The resistance at the reception centre, combined with a lack of existing institutional structures, was a professional challenge to overcome, pointing at the vague goal of changing something through the professional practice. Although I agree that music and musicians' capacity to resolve conflict situations should not be exaggerated (Bergh & Sloboda, 2010; Henderson et al., 2017), I now continue to be highly motivated to keep exploring

the uniqueness of musical activism. The impetus for me to consider social responsibility high on the professional agenda comes from the palpable, grassroots practice of creating music collaboratively.

Thirdspace practices within higher music education

The key dimensions of working with World In Motion that marked a departure from my previous experience were the project's connection to intense political tensions in Finland, dealing with situations and emotions linked to war, persecution, and resettlement, and internally negotiating my professional boundaries. My reflexive process brought on a new stage in my professional career, with the focus shifting from my own leadership to enabling others to develop their leadership skills for intercultural, creative collaboration. Another dimension was the development of an activist identity as a music practitioner, and feeling comfortable with participating in societal debates as a musician, educator, and researcher.

A musical Thirdspace such as World In Motion ensemble inherently encompasses a variety of aesthetic traditions and musical vocabulary, but perhaps more importantly various worldviews, values, and social structures. In Thirdspace, artistic creativity is not limited to highly trained professionals or groups sharing a common artistic language, but it is seen as the central dimension of any artistic dialogue. This is why it is so important for higher arts institutions to develop Thirdspaces where teachers and students can be in dialogue with new influences and understandings. Through focusing on creating works together it is possible to get a step closer to the "unlimited scope" (Soja, 1996, p. 311) of Thirdspace, and re-interpret the closest urban environment, the material real spaces, into spaces of new encounters, meanings, and new possibilities (p. 82).

World In Motion demonstrated how the innate complexity of working with refugees may provide a vital learning experience for students in higher education. When students engage with human rights issues and practice intercultural dialogue through their arts, they inevitably face questions about the purpose and scope of their profession. This, together with practising the skills for leadership of creative processes in Thirdspace, can nurture the development of a socially responsible musician's identity. Evolving such professional identity is crucial for students in building confidence to use their imagination to start creating artistic Thirdspaces themselves. For higher music education, Thirdspace arts is therefore a way to prepare students for working in and with diverse communities and societies in the changing world.

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