FOCI 222 Reflection Exemplar: Moving to Music

Overview: In our first ACE FOCI 222 class I led a 'moving to music arting experience. The participants were invited to walk/move in time to a variety of recorded music selections. I divided the class in two; a table on the blackboard indicated how many counts each group was to rest and move. Sometimes the two groups moved or were still together, at other times they alternated movement or stillness.

Goals	**Comments**
To provide an exemplar of an 'arting' experience—a starting point of reference for class members to envision the sessions they will design and lead themselves in FOCI 222 (and beyond)	--I believe the activity was successful in this respect—students nodded when I asked if this gave them a sense for what they might do. However, I wish I had asked for some of those ideas to ensure students were thinking along the right track… Fortunately a number of students asked good questions to help clarify the concept.
To contribute to community building by bringing participants together in an enjoyable shared experience of engaging with music	--I believe the activity was successful here as students seemed engaged (they were participating) and seemed happy (smiles and positive energy). In my experience giving people the opportunity to move to music—particularly if that movement is prescribed enough to overcome awkwardness—is very enjoyable. However, I noticed considerably varied levels of overt engagement—some people were moving in more varied ways and some were responding more intentionally to the music than others, who simply wandered around in time to the music. However, I do not believe this means the simple wanderers were necessarily any less engaged; *I* was one of those simple wanderers, yet I know that I was fully engaged watching and enjoying what others were doing—that was far more of an engaging focus for me than organizing my own movements to the music. In addition, students mentioned in the debrief that they felt the activity worked as an icebreaker, and provided new ways for us to interact with each other.
To enable individual self-expression through movement, and	--The instructions 'move in time to the music' were deliberately vague so that participants could move as they wished. This allowed participants to do what they wanted, but perhaps inhibited expression to some extent as it did not encourage people to move beyond natural inhibitors of expression (e.g. 'looking silly'). A few suggestions such as 'explore different levels; it's OK to look foolish; imagine you're a modern dancer' may have helped promote greater expressivity of movement. As one student suggested, I could also have suggested other movements to do in time with the music (other than just stepping) e.g. moving arms.
to enable that expression to be received by others	--the fact that participants were moving intimately amongst each other offered the opportunity for the expression to be received by others, and also for interactions to occur (if participants felt like interacting) (and so building community again).
To create a low-stress environment for engaging in the activity	--I believe the prescribed number of beats spent moving/resting allowed participants to focus on the counting and the music and so worried less about how they looked as they moved (focus serving to inhibit self-consciousness). I believe also it gave people something tangible to work on and achieve and be successful at, which enhances enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) 'Flow'*). However, I learned in the de-brief that some felt frustrated by the movement parameters, and would have appreciated opportunities also for a 'free for all' moment or two.

	I also noticed that some people felt discomfort when they messed up the counting. Although I tried to put these participants at ease by saying, 'it really doesn't matter if you have the counting right…just move when someone else is moving' I think in retrospect it would have been helpful in a couple of instances to take the time to stop and ensure all were feeling successful in negotiating the moving/resting at the appropriate times.
To share/expose others to music that I enjoy	Achieved! Whether or not the music was appreciated, I'm not sure…(and it probably doesn't matter all that much). This also serves the purpose of allowing others a window into who I am (we are our music collections—at least to some extent), thereby building community again.
To provide context for my story of finally, briefly, reaching the grade 7 boy who was not enjoying my music classes	I hope this story found some traction. I think inviting participants to share stories about 'stumbling across ways to reach students' might have enhanced this aspect.
To provide future teachers with a back pocket activity they might use one day	I'm not sure if the participants will use this activity with their own students or not… I hope so!

Other thoughts…
--As a student pointed out, we were too confined in terms of space. I probably should have used the drama room.
--Pacing is crucial in activity leading. I made the conscious decision to move quickly through the activity (minimal time explaining, clarifying, etc.). It is always tricky finding the right balance between under and over explaining an activity. I am glad I did not talk too much, but still took time to explain (e.g. stop to ask 'can I clarify anything?') and stop to practice and perfect the first few sequences.

Possible Extensions
To engage more actively with beat groupings within the music selections, I could consciously choose music in 5/4, 7/4, 3/4, time signatures and arrange the resting/moving numbers accordingly so that participants are connecting kinaesthetically with those rhythmic groupings. This would be satisfying for participants and valuable in terms of enhancing musical understanding. I think the non-matching counting is fun too, however (as some students articulated in the de-brief, so I would still do that as well. (E.g. move in blocks of 7 when piece is in 4/4).

Concluding Remarks
On the whole I felt the class responded appreciatively and my goals were, for the most part achieved. There was a good buzz and feeling during and after the activity. I would definitely lead this activity again. However, I would certainly make some minor variations as identified above.

Reference
Csíkszentmihályi, Mihály. (1996). *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Notes
*Three conditions necessary to achieve the flow state: 1. a clear set of goals (direction and structure) 2. a good balance between the *perceived* challenges of the task and the individual's own *perceived* skills (confidence in eventual success without the task being too easy). 3. clear and immediate feedback