

Arting Experience Analysis Exemplar: Moving to Music

Overview: I led a ‘moving to music’ arting experience. TCs walked/moved 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. (E.g. group **A** rests for 8 counts then moves for 8 counts, while group **B** does the inverse, moving for 8 counts then resting for 8 counts.)

Depending on the number of counts assigned to the groups, sometimes the two groups moved or were still together, at other times the movement and/or stillness overlapped. (E.g. group **A** rests for 8 counts then moves for 8 counts, while group **B** moves for 6 counts then rests for 6 counts.)

Goals	Comments
<i>To provide an opportunity for TCs to work with challenging musical concepts, i.e. to move in patterns that both worked with and against the musical rhythmic patterns</i>	--participants certainly achieved this goal. However, a number described being uncomfortable or uncertain about the movements—they did it, but it was a struggle. It would have been helpful if I provided more scaffolding, e.g. by suggesting or asking participants to suggest strategies for moving and resting in the right places.
<i>To recognize and viscerally experience moments of synchronicity and asynchronicity</i>	--one participant described noticing a feeling of synchronicity in the song ‘Hurt’, when the counts lined up in such a way that both groups were sometimes at rest together, and how this accentuated some of the emotion in the music --a number of participants described the feeling of discomfort when the music did not align with the movement. Unfortunately, while I was hoping people would relish playing with this tension, I think most found it too uncomfortable to enjoy
<i>To contribute to community building by bringing participants together in an enjoyable shared experience of engaging with music</i>	--While a number of participants seemed to enjoy the opportunity to move to the music and engage with it in this way, this did not seem to be the case for everyone. There was a greater level of inhibition than I expected, suggesting the complexity of the task was too great. --I also think the musical pieces I chose may not have resonated as much with the participants as I was hoping. I think I need to choose more upbeat music.
<i>To enable individual self-expression through movement, and</i>	--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.
<i>to enable that expression to be received by others</i>	--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). However, I noticed that individuals did not seem to be interacting with each other as much as I had hoped. This was happening a little, but it seems the parameters I imposed were too tight to enable the kind of interaction between people I was hoping for

<p><i>To deflect the self-consciousness often associated with moving to music by prescribing some parameters (i.e., the specific numbers of beats for moving and resting)</i></p>	<p>--My hope was that the prescribed number of beats spent moving/resting would allow participants to focus on the counting and the music and so worry less about how they looked as they moved (focus serving to inhibit self-consciousness). I hoped it would give 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 'free for all' moments.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><i>To share/expose others to music that I enjoy</i></p>	<p>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.</p>

Other thoughts...

--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 probably should have taken a little longer to scaffold, e.g. by offering and asking for strategies to help in negotiating the tricky movement patterns, and taking time to practice and perfect some of the trickier sequences.

--Overall, the complexity was too great. I think a lot of the problems could have been alleviated by simply having participants move to less complex patterns, that is, by sticking to groupings of 4 and 8.

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.

Concluding Remarks

On the whole I felt the class did not respond as positively as I had hoped. If I lead this activity again, I will certainly make some variations as identified above.

Reference

Csikszentmihályi, 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