

Workshop

at Jyske Musikkonservatorium Oct 3rd, 2014
with Peder Karlsson

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TIP: open this PDF in fullscreen mode in your computer,
and use arrow buttons to navigate. Have fun!

“Human metronome” improvisation

real-time rhythmic attention and flexibility; physical and visual



Preparation

Assign one specific person to be the metronome, who can change tempo gradually, by clapping, walking, or dancing, etcetera.

Another person then sings the first bar in the score example above. Call and response – repeat this until everyone synchronizes the beginning and the ending of the note with the “human metronome”. Don’t use the score, learn by heart. Move on to the 2nd bar and repeat that, until the groove feels ok, then continue to the 3rd bar.

Purposes:

- Get used to release a note on a beat; beginnings and endings of notes are equally important.
- Get a spontaneous feel of quarter notes, eighth notes and sixteenth notes. This prepares singers for the improvisation that follows.

Improvisation

Rotate the “human metronome” function. Every member of the group improvises quarter notes, eighth notes and sixteenth note rhythms – in terms of how you make noise, sing, walk, dance, etcetera. Sing any notes that you feel like.

Synchronize everything with the human metronome – notes, beats and physical movements.

To count beats will take you off center – the point here is to relate to pulse and subdivisions by intuitive physical and visual means.

Purposes:

- Rotate leadership.
- Physical and visual attention: follow external tempo from the groove provider, and synchronize with beat.
- Learn new things by having fun.

“Human metronome” improvisation

variable pulse. individual responsibility

This improvisation is for all vocal groups and choirs regardless of the style of music. Variable pulse is applicable to all styles.

One may argue that certain styles of pop and rock’n’roll music has steady pulse. To which I would respond

1. that is not always true. Listen to “In the stone” by Earth, Wind & Fire, for example. The tempo changes many times in the song.
2. Listen to any live blues or rock band. They change tempo, unless they play to a click.
3. If you ask a drummer or a bass player how often they pay attention to the tempo and whether they are in sync, they would reply “on every quarter note”. Because the tempo may change a little bit.
4. I’ve rarely heard a choir sing in a steady tempo anyway. So why not practise synchronization in a variable tempo?

What this improvisation does, is that it puts every singer in the position of leading the tempo. This is a

hands-on method for placing them into a position where they must assume responsibility for one of the foundations of making music – rhythm.

To keep roughly the same tempo is possible to do without rhythmic awareness – all you need to do is to get into some kind of physical routine.

But to change the tempo, in a natural, gradual manner, is possible only with an inner awareness of pulse.

Some singers may be slow to step up to the courage required to do this. But when they see other singers do it, they will all want to try it. Especially when you as a leader presents the whole thing in a playful context.

That’s my experience.

Take your time.

Floor-Roof Games

collectively improvised phrasing

by Peder Karlsson
version 3.07, May 23rd, 2014

TIP: open this PDF in fullscreen mode in your computer,
and use arrow buttons to navigate. Have fun!

in my experience...

“Listen to each other!” is a phrase I’ve often heard conductors say to their choir. However, what to listen for or whom to listen to is rarely specified.

The “Floor-Roof” improvisations put the finger on precisely that. Group members take turns being a guide singer to listen for, and each improvisation specifies a parameter to use as the current target for improvisation; dynamics, timbre, vowel colours, amount of vibrato, manner of articulation, amount of breathiness, etcetera.

Singers who do these improvisations will learn not only to make distinctions between various parameters of musical expression, they will also learn many things about each other - by non-verbal communication.

When all members of the group has been the guide singer, then leadership has been rotated between all singers. This is typically a very refreshing experience,

perhaps especially for some of the choir singers who may feel a little shy.

They see themselves, each other, and the choir in a new light.

I have done these improvisations with hundreds of different groups in all sizes up to eighty singers, maybe. You can use any standard choir arrangement that has a homophonic verse or chorus; SSA, SATB or whatever.

In some of these occasions, the choir conductor has also been present. After doing the improvisations, a typical response from the conductor is *“why don’t they listen so well to each other when I conduct?”*

Then I don’t say *“because you constantly tell them a story that goes like this: your hands are the center of the world in this group, and the singers are of lower importance”* – even if I would perceive that to be the truth.

in my experience...

Instead I might say: *“why don’t you try and conduct this piece now”*.

At this point, several singers have been the leader, if only for a few moments. So the conductor is (temporarily) seen as “one of us”.

And then the singers typically follow the conductor’s intentions. Win-win situation. Happy happy.

When I do a workshop where the participants come from different groups and don’t know an arrangement that all of them can sing, then I ask them to suggest a song, any song that all of them can sing a couple of bars of. And then we sing in unison or in octaves. That’s also an arrangement. And it works.

Perhaps the coolest thing about using a standard arrangement or melody as a basis for improvisation is that it gives you an opportunity to say a word less problematical than “improvisation” to describe what you do.

I usually say:

Let’s do something called “Floor-Roof exercises!”.

After doing the improvisations, when singers feel comfortable about themselves and about each other, then the coast is clear, usually, and you can say the dangerous phrase: - *We improvise!* 😊

In the case of a large choir, you can divide the group into “sub-choirs” of 5-8 people and do these improvisations.

Over time, the sub-choirs will typically develop a sense of collective emotional security.

How you take the experience made in the smaller groups and transfer to the whole choir I cannot say. That would depend on the cultural patterns of your choir.

Anything Can Happen

SATB version 2.0

May 2013

Peder Karlsson

A

$\text{♩} = 100$

Soprano

I do I need to be true a - ny thing can hap pen when you love me too

Alto

I do I need to be true a - ny thing can hap pen when you love me too

Tenor

I do I need to be true a - ny thing can hap pen when you love me too

Bass

I do I need to be true a - ny thing can hap pen when you love me too

Group identity and musical expression

- based on members' voices

In vocal groups and choirs, all singers need to feel that they are important for the development of the group's music. This is necessary for an organic process where each singer assumes individual responsibility.

Doing the Floor-Roof improvisations is a foundation for development of group identity and collective blend based on real-time musical interaction.

Goal: for each person to be able to imitate any other singer's timbre, while singing simultaneously.

A typical scenario is to pick a homophonic section of an arrangement; 8-16 bars, and then sing the same piece in several different ways.

Yes the notes are written, but the sounds and phrase shapes are improvised.

Purposes:

- get to know the other group members' voices
- to leave the comfort zone, in a structured way
- introduce the singers to the concept of a guide singer

- the guide singer will get a chance to experience how it feels when the other singers pay attention and follow. This is very good for self-esteem. Rotated leadership!

Most important things

- Copy and clone whatever sound that comes out of the guide singers
- Be non-judgmental about individual voices
- The guide singer is always perfect, by definition
- Make sure that all singers in the group are guide singers at some point during the course of the improvisation session.
- It's often a good idea to rotate the order of improvisations.

First steps

- Sing through the homophonic example once or twice.
- Check that notes and note releases are correct and simultaneous, to avoid confusion later.

About shadowing and cloning

Shadowing

This is a term often used to describe when one singer, or a section of singers, improvise guide phrase curves and the other singers "copy and paste" the phrases by imitation.

This is a popular method to give a specific singer responsibility for the musical expression, and to increase awareness of several musical parameters, such as tempo, dynamics, timbre, vowel colors, inflections, vibrato, breathiness and amount of articulation.

Experience has shown that it helps the singers to first distinguish basic parameters separately. How to do this is described in the next pages; step by step.

After doing the Floor-Roof improvisations, the singers are usually ready to move on to "collectively improvised phrasing", without a conductor.

Sometimes "shadowing" is referred to as a method to provide a chorus effect in concerts.

If one person is the guide singer, and two other singers "shadow" the guide singer, for example, while

singing slightly more quiet, then the guide singer will come across as a soloist dubbed by two other voices. Jesper Holm does this with his group Touché, for example. Very cool stuff.

Cloning

But what I refer to here is something else - one guide singer's voice being "cloned" by other singers; imitation in real time while singing oneself, with the same dynamics. Not easy, perhaps, if you feel that you must hear the guide singer clearly. To look at each other helps a lot.

In my experience, however, cloning works great – even if you stand a bit apart and turn off the lights in the room. I guess because of this thing called *intuition*.

Intuition has been a very important component in the performance style of The Real Group for decades.

I know it works. I may not be able to define how, in scientific terms. But me or other Real Group or Perpetuum Jazzile singers can *show* you how.

Floor-Roof improvisations

1. QUIET / LOUD

- a. Sing as quiet as possible
- b. Sing even more quiet
- c. Sing so quiet that you cannot even produce a note sometimes.
- d. Add a little bit of support so you get into the "room".
- e. Sing as loud as possible. FOCUS: how does this feel physically? We don't want destroyed voices.
- f. Stretch and sing even louder.

FOCUS (again): how does this feel physically?

- g. Assign one guide singer who makes continuous changes between quiet and loud.
 - Explain that the exercise is mainly for the group – to follow the guide singer
 - Anything the guide singer does is "right"
 - Let the guide singer sing twice.
- h. ask the guide singer how it felt.
- i. validate the guide singer's feelings (mirror)

2. BRIGHT / DARK

- a. Sing as bright and nasal as possible
- b. Sing even brighter and more nasal (repeat this until it sounds Really Ugly)
- c. Sing as dark as possible
- d. Sing even darker (if singers add an "over-classical" vibrato, ask them to sing with a normal but dark voice)
- e. Assign a guide singer who makes continuous changes between bright and dark.
- f. ask the guide singer how it felt.
- g. validate the guide singer's feelings (mirror)
- h. Assign another guide singer

Purposes:

- have Fun :-)
- pay attention to timbre differences
- to distinguish between timbre differences

When everyone sings bright, they usually sing with their own idea of what bright is. But when they imitate a guide singer, they will naturally adapt to this person's idea of "bright" and "dark".

Floor-Roof improvisations

3. INFLECTIONS

- a. Maximum vibrato on every note / no vibrato
- b. Scoop every note / sing straight on every pitch (same procedure as with 3 a-d)
- c. Ask a guide singer to add vibrato or scoop by intuition, and all others to follow
- d. Same as c, except that you ask the bass singer to sing with straight pitch on all notes.

4. BREATHY / NON-BREATHY

(same general procedure as with inflections)

5. MINIMUM / MAXIMUM ARTICULATION

(in this exercise: small / big mouth)

- a. Sing with minimum articulation: open your mouth by 1 millimeter.
- b. Sing with maximum articulation: open your mouths as much as possible.
- c. assign a guide singer who makes continuous changes between minimum and maximum articulation, but without doing crescendo / diminuendo.

6. CLONE EACH OTHER'S NATURAL SOUND

After doing the Floor-Roof improvisations above, the singers are usually ready to open up to imitating the natural voice sounds provided by each other.

"Clone each other's sound" is when the guide singers do nothing in particular... except sing with their natural voice, while providing a phrase that comes natural to the moment. Again - improvised phrasing.

This may sound simple, but in fact, this type of focus touches something essential in music, I think - to learn from each other by simply "being oneself".

And when the whole choir follows natural phrases of the guide singer – then magic can happen.

From an outside listener's point of view, hearing a choir sing like this can give a unique musical experience.

For the focus singers, a huge boost to self-esteem may happen when they feel the attention of the other group members – to hear ones phrases being "cloned" by other singers.

Floor-Roof improvisations

For me, this improvisation is very close to the real thing. And when it begins to get really interesting. Usually a few Floor-Roof improvisations need to be done first, in the same session, before the attention of the singers are fine-tuned to make “cloning” described here possible.

- a. Assign a focus person who sings with his/her natural voice, and does whatever phrasing or sound he/she feels like doing.

As a session leader, I recommend you to pay attention to whether the focus singer needs to be provided with a form for the improvisation in order to feel emotionally secure. If you find that to be the case, you could ask her/him to change between loud/quiet, bright/dark, with inflection/no inflection, etcetera. Then chances are high that the focus singer's voice timbre will change gradually – in which case the group is provided with musically interesting source material.

- b. Ask the focus person how this feels
- c. validate
- d. Assign a new focus person, until everyone's voice has been heard.

When I lead this type of session, I usually recommend singers to pay attention to the specific *vowel colors* of the focus singer.

To me, that is a parameter slightly distinct from voice *timbre*.

Voice timbre is the same thing as overtone spectrum, basically.

Voice *color*, on the other hand, is the individual pronunciation of vowels. Different people typically have slightly different articulation and pronunciation of vowels. An “aa” can be slightly more dark in one singer's voice, compared to another, for example.

When the whole choir gets the vowel colors synchronized, then you have a chance to achieve a fantastic blend.

Collectively improvised phrasing

7. NO CONDUCTOR, NO GUIDE SINGER

A musical phrase can have an infinite amount of shapes.

As one phrase follows another, the shape of the phrase curve extends over the gap between the phrases.

Imagine yourself drawing a curve on a paper; the curve representing the shape of the musical phrase. When several singers overlay several "curves" on top of each other, the resulting summation of the sounds will make musical sense, even if the individual curves are not identical.

The goal with this improvisation is to have nobody or everybody in the group being the focus person/leader, depending on how you see it.

Before your group tries out this improvisation, I recommend that you do the "Floor-Roof" improvisations.

In my experience, the group needs to be tuned in to improvising changes in the phrasing by following one

focus person, before you move on to having no specific guide singer at all.

To me, *that* is the real thing!

Again, you sing a homophonic passage from a song in the group's repertoire that everyone knows very well.

But how can you phrase, without any specific leader?

As soon as you hear that something happens with the phrase, or with the articulation, timbre, vibrato, etcetera, follow what you hear and emphasize it. "Skate to where the puck is going", not to where the puck is at the current moment.

You need to exaggerate the phrasing quite a lot at first, until you get a hang of it. That way, the whole group will phrase as if they were one organism.

When you incorporate this phrasing style into your concerts, each performance will be slightly different from the other. And the phrases will feel natural.

Organic Choirs

artistic and social *diversity* in musical ecosystems

Organic Choirs

artistic and social *diversity* in musical ecosystems

- from competition to playfulness



by Peder Karlsson

version: Oct 3rd, 2014

The Great Book, always open
and which we should make an effort to read,
is that of Nature.

Antoni Gaudí

My client is not in a hurry.

Antoni Gaudí



La Sagrada Família

Goals

Inspiration

Curiosity

Imagination

Balance 

Responsibility

Guidelines for myself as a leader

Feedback types:

- Positive reinforcement
- Help
- Stop

If I point out a problem, then I must also present a *solution*, ask for *help*, or *improvise*.

Positive reinforcement shall be given first. I can give it at any point, spontaneously while the choir sings, or after the choir has sung. This provides encouragement to the group, especially when I point out *specific* things that I like or think is good.

Help (or “constructive criticism”) shall be helpful to the singers, must always be specific, and shall always be given in a matter-of-fact, neutral tone of communication.

Check first if the singer wants help. Always provide help when a singer asks for a challenge.

I shall say “*Stop!*” – or “*No!*” – when someone does something that I do not accept from a leadership point of view, or when somebody does something that violates the group rules.

Rehearsal methods

- five main areas

Five main areas

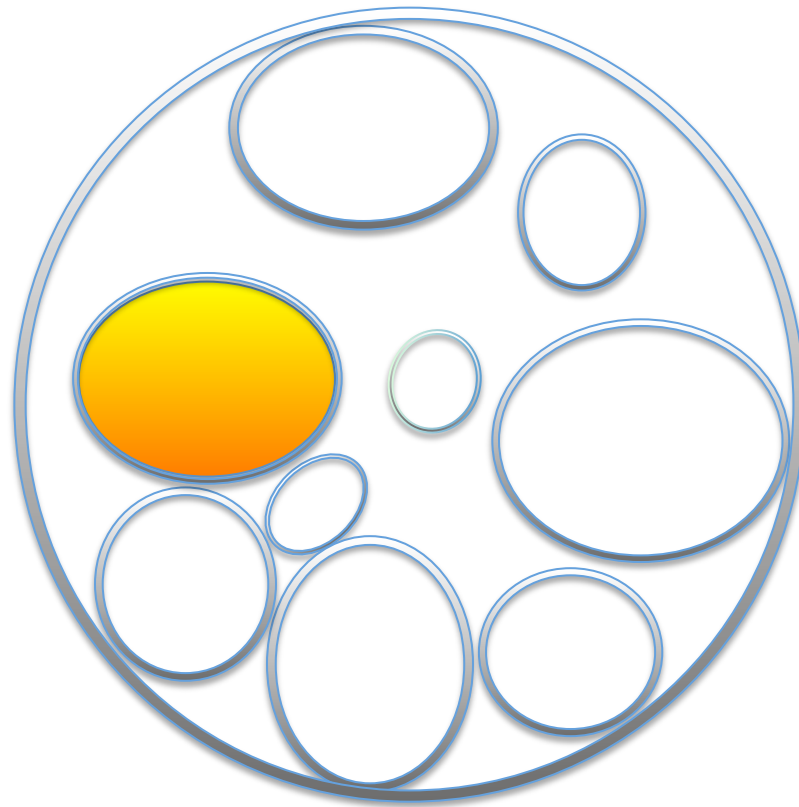
Knowledge within each area needs to be assimilated physically, emotionally, visually and intellectually.



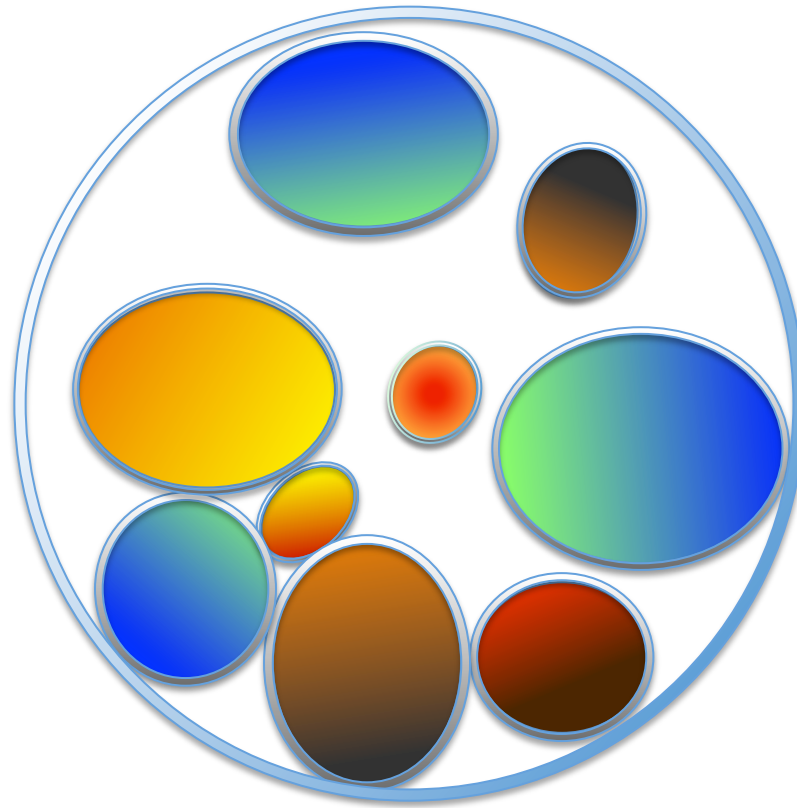
General guidelines

- Practise one item at a time.
- Identify a couple of problematical bars, a short section of a song.
- Be specific about what the current item of focus is, as well as which of the main areas is currently being practised. Ignore temporarily the other four areas.
- Sing the short section, followed by an evaluation. Sing at least three times.
- When the singers feel that the group gets better within a specific area, then the group gets stronger.
- Since a cappella music does not provide a clear reference point for intonation and rhythm, help the singers as much as you can.
- Let singers take turns being the reference for blend, rhythm, phrasing, intonation, and communication.

every voice makes a difference



every voice contributes to harmony



Unique artistic expressions

In an organic choir or vocal ensemble, ideas can be shared by all members and developed through collective creative efforts.

This is possible in groups where the members assume individual responsibility and have learned how to manage rotated initiative.

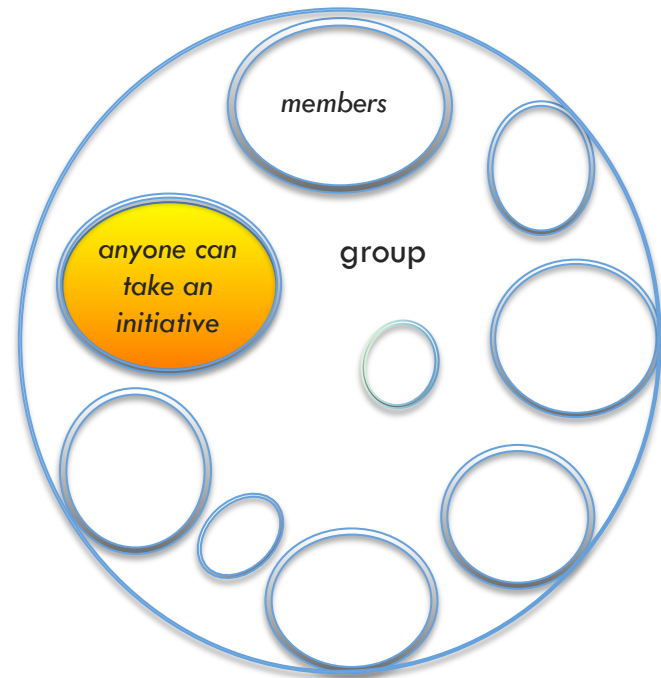
To set such collective creative processes in motion, it is important that group members first learn how to provide each other with a sense of emotional security.

Before singers are ready to express a variety of musical expressions, each member needs to feel comfortable to share feelings of joy, and to be allowed to express what makes them feel uncomfortable.

A sense of security for singers is a necessary starting point for exploration of a *diversity* of individual sounds and personal expressions that form the basis for development of a unique artistic collective identity.

Rotated initiative is a form of shared leadership. Leadership requires a sense of responsibility.

If a new idea has long-term consequences, then the responsibility for realization of the idea lies upon the singer who suggested it.



Organic Choirs - ideas overview

The **Organic Choirs** concept is open to **interpretation** and further collaborative development

- No branding
- Openness to any musical style

Musical and artistic development

- Preparation and improvisation
- Embodied singing; physical grounding

Natural organization

- Rotated leadership
- Group identity and musical expressions based on members' voices
- New music developed without microphones

Trial-and-error approach

Singers are encouraged to explore ideas beyond the “comfort zone”, in creative group processes where failure is seen as a necessary part of success.

Why “organic”?

Because we consist of organs, that consist of cells, that consist of molecules, that consist of atoms, that consist of...

When people form a group, then we become the “organs” of that group.

When group members assume different responsibilities and functions spontaneously as the group develops in a natural process that changes over time, then the group has an *organic* structure.

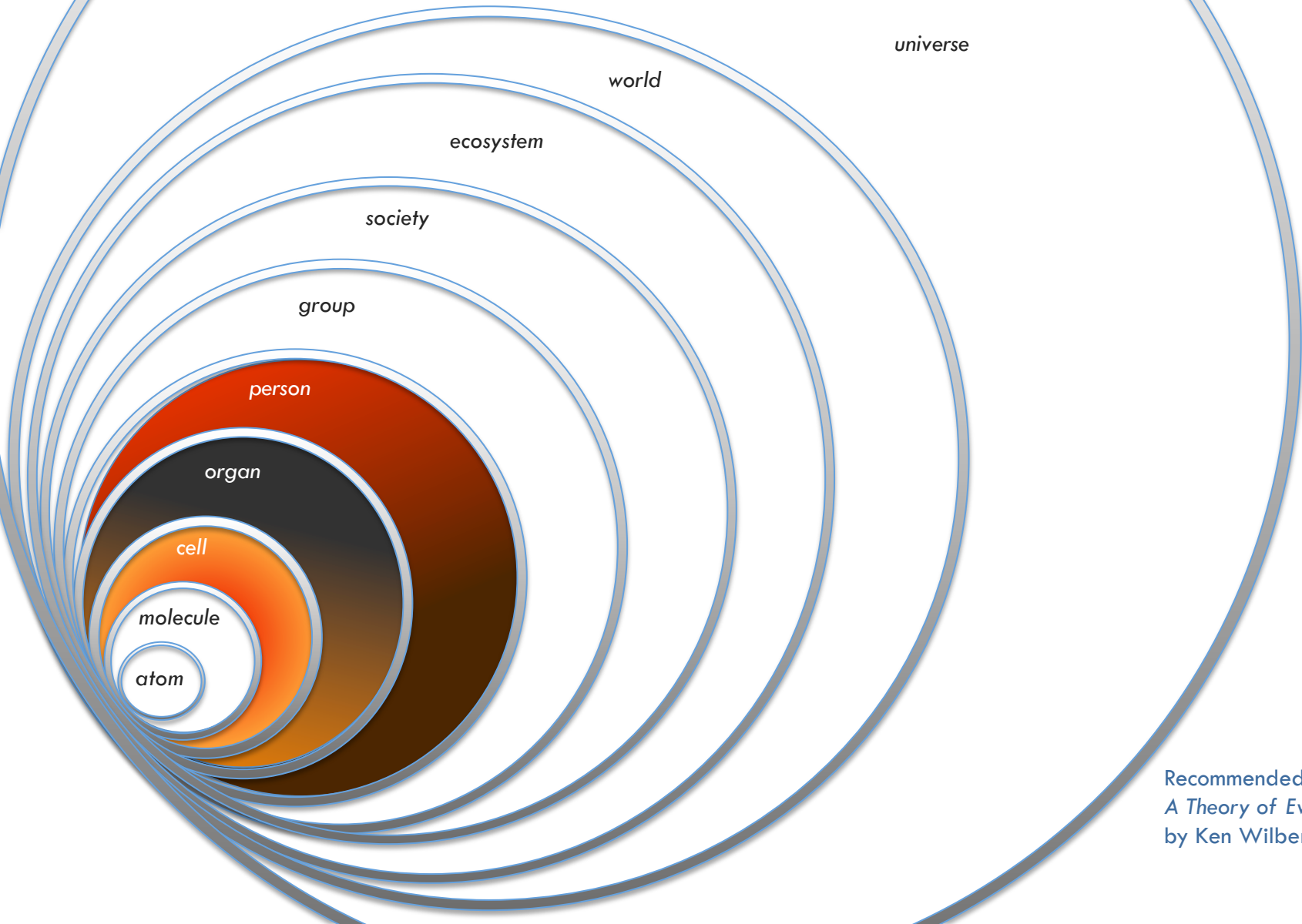
The whole world is in a process of change from *dominance hierarchy* to *natural organization*.

Sustainability of the ecosystems of the Earth depend on the success of such transition, in all countries and societies.

The “Organic Choirs” concept reflects this global process of change.

Recommended book:
The Great Turning
by David Korten

Natural organization



Recommended book:
A Theory of Everything
by Ken Wilber

Transformation of modern society

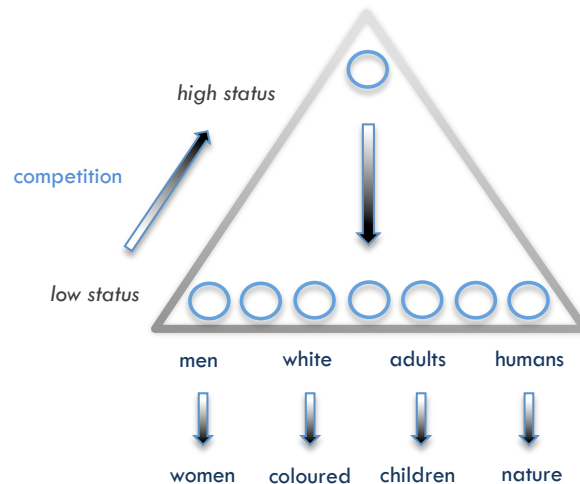
*In order to change an existing paradigm, you do not struggle to try and change the problematic model.
You create a new model and make the old one obsolete.
That, in essence, is the higher service to which we are all being called.*

- Buckminster Fuller

NOW

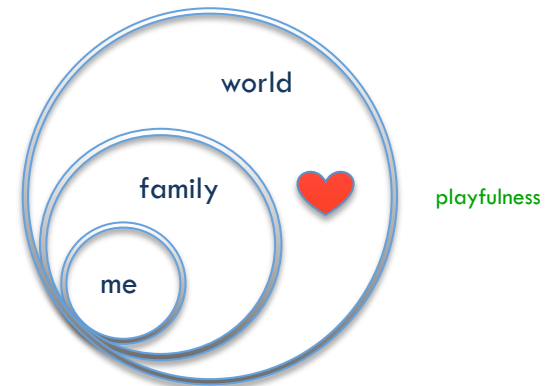
economical, political, cultural, educational and religious structures that have grown out of balance

*application of power by force;
with money, influence or violence*



FUTURE

a diversity of lifestyles. We live, love and create according to natural principles of balance



Recommended books

The Power of Partnership - by Riane Eisler

The Ascent of Humanity - by Charles Eisenstein

This Changes Everything - by Naomi Klein

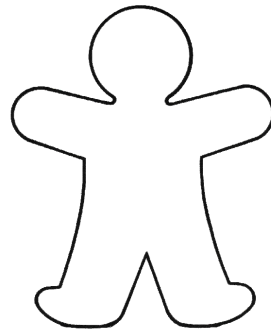
Earth is Our Business - by Polly Higgins

Treading Lightly: The Hidden Wisdom of the World's Oldest People
- by Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe

Balance

inspiration, fun,
challenge

feeling, taste
imagination



logic,
thinking

physical
skills
responsibility

Balance

Fire

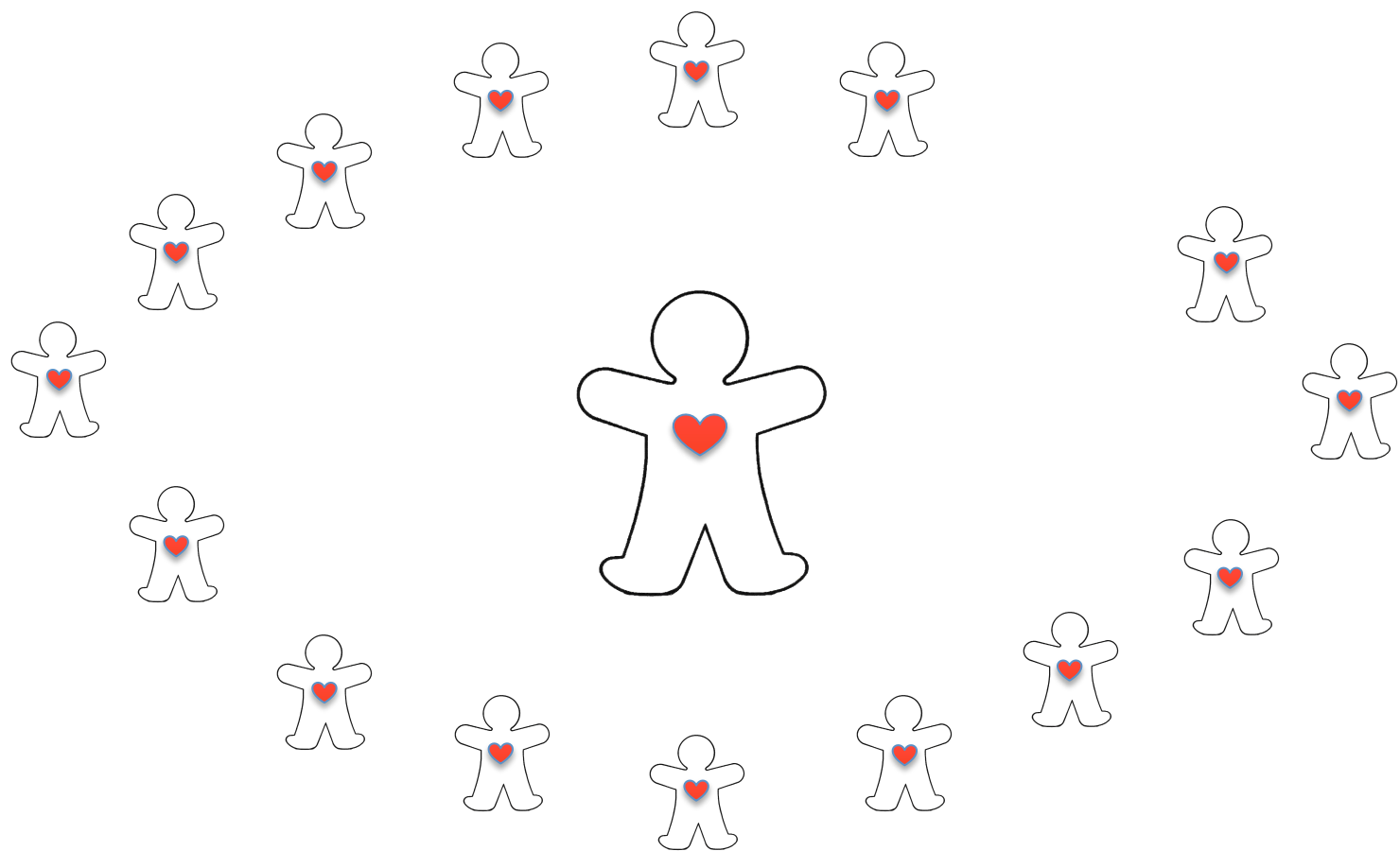
Water



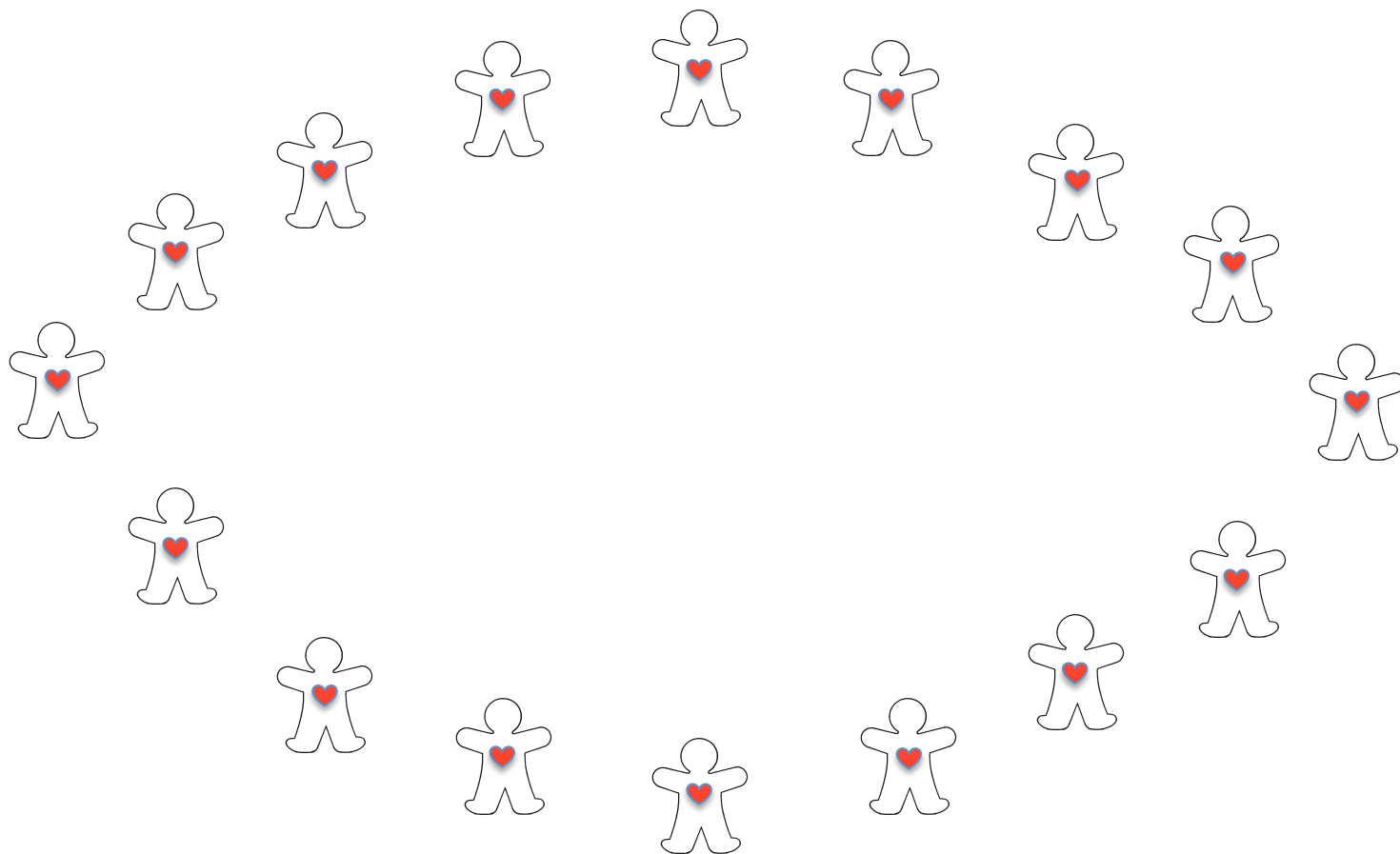
Air

Earth

Groups



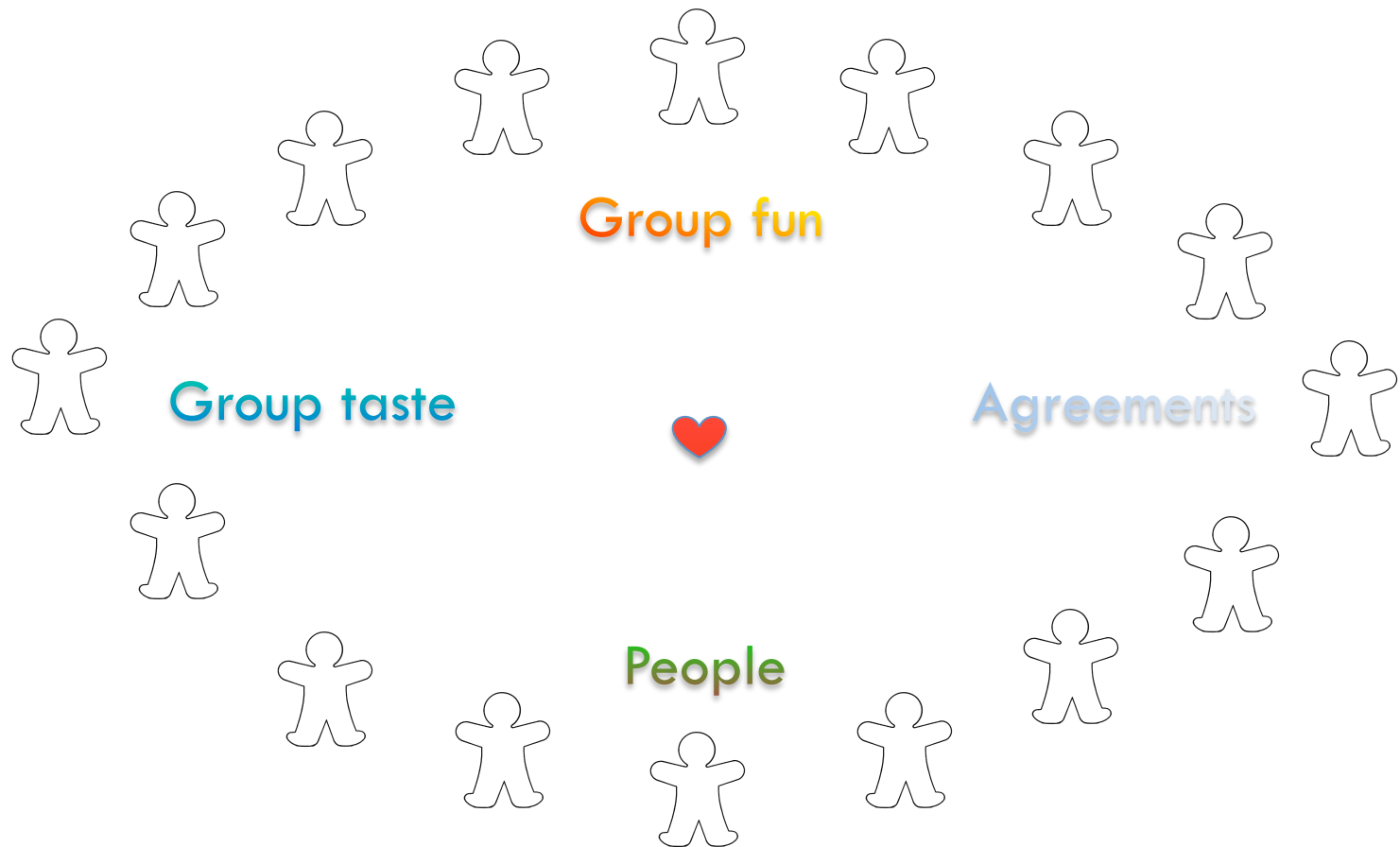
Groups



Groups



Group balance



Think for yourself.

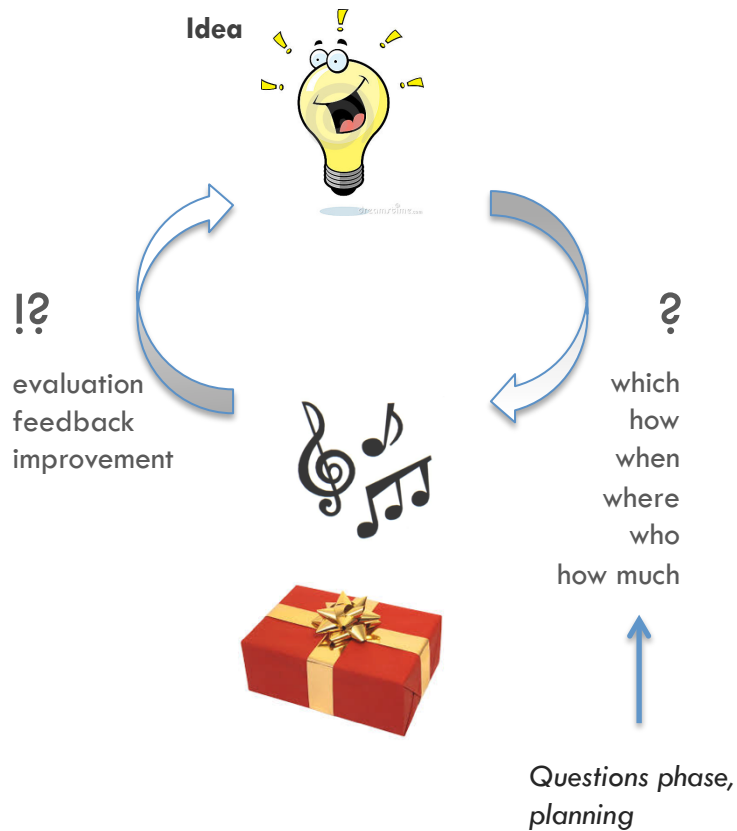
George Harrison

Collaborative Creativity

ideas development in organic groups

From idea to gift

cycles of ideas development



Possible responses to ideas

YES!

= fast-forward
→ positive reinforcement of an idea

NO!

= stop
→ possible death of an idea

MAYBE
...

= slow-forward
→ the idea stays alive
→ yes/no decision can be made later

silence

= unclear response
→ the sender of an idea
must interpret the meaning –
whether it is a quiet “yes”, “no”,
or a “maybe”

Creative expression

- development of identity

any instantaneous moment

imagination

fun

inspiration; inner glow

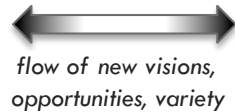
emotion

motivation

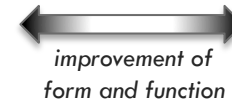
intuition

improvisation

let it sink in



identity



sequences of time

curiosity

skills

physical, sensual experience

structure

responsibility

logic

planning

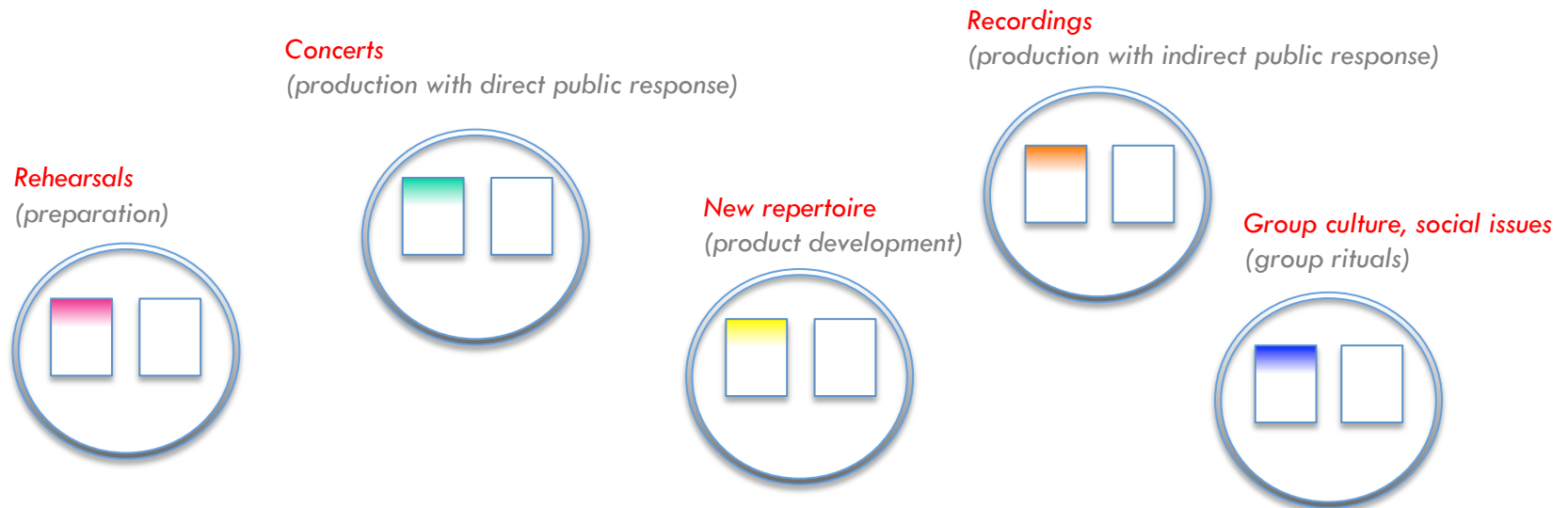
focus



release
response from others
failure, success
identity check
acceptance

Collaborative Game

Group inspiration session. Brainstorming. Suggested duration: 20-90 minutes



Games guidelines

- Feel free to play around with this format to fit your group and present circumstances.
- **Allowed responses to ideas: “Yes” and “Maybe”.**
- A “tablemaster” at each table writes down all ideas on paper. This person is allowed to say “Stop! Next idea, please”, when needed.
- Write down ideas on two types of papers at each table: Any idea and *Specific area*
- Go to the table that applies to your idea and talk with the people there

- **Specific areas** = areas of intended creative results; core activities; you need to adapt area titles to your group.
- Any idea: not related to specific areas.
- Beginning: 2-6 persons per table

GOAL: to stimulate ideas flow in the group by creating a space to share ideas where you don't have to assume responsibility for the outcome. This is possible when saying “No” is not allowed.

Reference books

“The Great Book of Nature”

Julia Cameron - *The Artist's Way*

Ken Wilber - *A Theory of Everything*
an integral vision for business, politics, science and spirituality

Riane Eisler – *The Power of Partnership*

Charles Eisenstein - *The Ascent of Humanity*

Naomi Klein – *This Changes Everything*

Polly Higgins - *Earth is Our Business*

Karl-Erik Sveiby and Tex Skuthorpe - *Treading Lightly: The Hidden Wisdom
of the World's Oldest People*

David Korten – *The Great Turning*

Dutch Organic Choir



Dutch Organic Choir

met: Merel Martens

& Peder Karlsson (ex-Real Group)

Elke donderdag
19.30-22.00 in Utrecht
Start 25-09

Stijl?

Eigen, stijlvrrije a cappella muziek
Geen dirigent, roterend leiderschap

Wie?

Alle leeftijden
Verschillende achtergronden
(Klassiek/Pop-jazz/instrumentaal)
Amateur en professional

Auditie?

Jouw vermogen om te improviseren
en anderen exact te schaduwen
11/18/19-09

Aanmelden via www.merelmartens.eu

 The Royal Academy
of Music
Aarhus / Aalborg

THE
Real
GROUP
ACADEMY

Dutch Organic Choir

project plan

Master's education Project Plan

by Merel Martens

Version 1.5 – May 10, 2014

*Version 1.3 was approved by professor Jim Daus
Hjernøe, Royal Academy of Music, Aalborg, Denmark
on 25th April 2014*

Group type

A new music group (a cappella)

Repertoire

50% Original repertoire

50% Circle song/improv

Non-copyrighted music

Process-oriented arranging; openness to change
after the songwriter provides the basic material

Introduce a starting point, and work collectively from
that

Pre-created frameworks, for example harmonies. Or
riffs

Music shall be developed without mics. But
microphones can be used once the music has been
developed

Style and sound

Style free ("blue world"): open borders between
what is arranging and what is improvisation

Combine vocal techniques, harmonic structures
etcetera from different styles and genres

"Pure body music"; expressions and sounds that come
natural to humans, regardless of which part of the
anatomy that creates the sound

No literal translation from instruments to vocal sounds

Members

All ages and types of experiences are welcome

Various backgrounds.

Combine classical and rhythmical singers and
instrumentalists.

Both professional and amateur

Auditions

Check singers capability of improvising as well as of
"shadowing"; in other their capacity to balance
individual and collective expression

Max 30 singers. Min depending on auditions

Dutch Organic Choir

project plan

Performance

Audience participation

Songs developed including audience lines

If possible, audience improvisation. Perhaps as a result of the development of a performance

In some pieces the audience could create the framework, and the artist group improvises. Or vice versa.

One type of audience could be children

Leadership structure

Shadowing

Rotate leadership; voice part leaders, rehearsal leadership

Improvisations: multiple people make choices

Conductors also sing in performances

A 'me' and 'us' culture, that can transcend group boundaries (temporarily)

Group will be monitored by Peder Karlsson via Skype monthly. Goal is to have Peder over at least once in the process. In the meantime we can exchange rehearsal recordings.

Ideas / discussions

Evaluation with children in different age groups. For ex 5/12/20(after may 2015)

Discussion item: how make money within this concept?

Singers pay a monthly contribution for the rehearsal room

How to put in words the 'roles' Peder and Merel have
Involve people that take an interest in the project by blogging/posting on social media from the start.

Ask interested people to be our advisors/counselors, let people give feedback musically; out in the open.

Ask people to join the rehearsal and give feedback?

Timeframe

Now – summer 2014: preparations

Sept 2014 auditions in Utrecht

Late Sept – start rehearsals: Thursday's, weekly 19.30-22.00

Late feb/early march 2015 – first concert. Perhaps 30 minutes or so.

March 2015: evaluate with children, write evaluation

April 1st 2015: hand in Paper/Master's Project

Merel Martens

I am a choir leader and arranger from Holland. I currently study for my Master's degree in Rhythmic Choir Conducting in Denmark under the tutelage of Jim Daus Hjernøe and Jesper Holm.

Next to that, I have been influenced and inspired by Peder Karlsson during the last three years. I totally like the combination of Jim's 'Intelligent Choir' and Peder's knowledge and experience when it comes to creativity in groups. We have been talking about leadership a lot, exchanging ideas and examples from daily life.

In Holland I am the conductor of Pitch Control and VOÏSZ Vocal Projects, among others, and Peder knows both groups.

When Peder explained his ideas about 'Organic Choirs' the whole thing immediately made sense to me. Somehow it feels like the next step to take, yet at the same time we go back to basics. Music without microphones, influenced by musicians from various



backgrounds and rotated leadership. Being in the moment, making embodied music that is style-free, hopefully, involving everyone that feels like it - this can be a dream scenario.

Of course there are many 'but how's'. Therefore my project might be more about the process rather than the result. I'm hoping that "Dutch Organic Choir" will become a permanent group. Let's find out. Let's do it!

Peder Karlsson

Merel suggested that I write something about how the ideas for “Organic Choirs” got started, from my point of view.

“Organic Family” is a title that Kaichiro Kitamura (vocal percussionist from Japan) gave to visions and ideas discussed during the Vocal Asia conference in Taiwan in August 2013, in an ad hoc meeting initiated by Clare Chen and me. Topics:

How to spread new ideas and make things happen in our local communities.

How to make new global connections via friends’ and friends-of-friends’ circles, with a focus on mutual support and inspiration.

Clare Chen, the leader of Vocal Asia, often asks “how can we help each other?”. That is typically the starting point for our discussions. I really like her approach - both visionary and practical.

That first “Organic Family” meeting had a “round table”-style; with Christine Liu and Wuming Chen (Taiwan), Chan Xiang Ju (Singapore) , Clare, Kaichiro-san (“Kai-san”) and me.



Peder Karlsson
photo: Mats Bäcker

Peder Karlsson

Later, inspired by the talks we'd had, I was involved in various discussions on Facebook and other places about this vision called "Organic Family".

From September 2013 I immersed myself into the very hectic and hands-on lifestyle of Perpetuum Jazzile, and our preparations for concerts in Arena Stožice, Ljubljana, November 9th and 10th.

20000 people saw our show; two sold-out unforgettable nights.

I guess that was one of the biggest public a cappella concerts ever made with just one group. Quite far from the "Organic Family" visions about local community activities... perhaps.

But I felt then, and still feel, that Perpetuum Jazzile could play an important role for local choirs around the world, somehow.

After catching my breath from Arena Stožice, the ideas and visions from August slowly came back to me. A few months ago I had a Skype session with Merel, where I gave her an overview about various visions and ideas that I had picked up, packaged into a slightly more concrete title - "Organic Choirs".

Merel came back a week later and said that she

wanted to try this as a master's project, with me as her mentor. An idea that her professor Jim Daus Hjernø gave his whole-hearted support to.

Kai-san's title for a visionary concept has grown into a concrete project - in less than a year!

For me personally, it started many years ago.

The Real Group is an "organic choir", I think.

We always rotated leadership functions.

Various competences within the group were developed by individual preference, in an asymmetrical creative style.

My brother Fredrik is an important role model for me. He is an exceptionally inspirational, natural leader, I think, and he has learned about enthusiasm and wits from our father Janne, another natural leader. From an early age, we were invited by our parents to a say-so in important decisions. I think we are an organic family. My mother Eva used to say "What do you think, Peder?".

She was my first role model.