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## **Pedagogical Encounters in Music: Thinking with Hannah Arendt**

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# Pedagogical encounters in music

Thinking with Hannah Arendt

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## Abstract

This paper employs aspects of Hannah Arendt's thought to explore different but inter-related questions that haunt contemporary music education. We see the importance of a return to Arendt now more than ever as we find ourselves, three authors in three different countries, trying to contribute to democratic music education practices and to researching the conceptual base of such practices, in countries where technocratic approaches to policy development prevail. More specifically in this article we address the following questions: how can we re-think the political and creative dimensions of music education pedagogies in the face of recent educational policy trends? How can we go beyond linearity in our everyday educational encounters? How can we create forms of music education practice and research that induce a continuous interplay between acting and thinking? We pursue these questions through reference to three specific forms of music education practice: research seminars for PhD-students and senior researchers, pre-service music teacher education, and teaching music improvisation. In the first part of the paper, Cecilia Ferm-Almqvist elaborates upon how Hannah Arendt's thinking influences our teaching, taking an on-going research seminar in music education as an example of a common place. In the second part, Cathy Benedict writes of 'meeting' Arendt and coming to an awareness of how Arendt can help us interrogate practices we have come to assume as 'the right ones'. Seeking to create together with her students an epistemological space of appearance she challenges common teaching strategies that seem to 'work'. Working within a teacher preparation program she comes to realize that students must also reflect on these moments so as to name what has occurred; thus they need to engage in acts of performative listening, setting aside their own desire and need to speak and be heard first. Finally, in the third part, Panagiotis (Panos) A. Kanellopoulos raises the complex issue of how we should respond to the current deluge of entrepreneurial approaches to creativity, its use value, and its role in education. Based on the proposition that acts of musical improvisation belong to the realm of action, Kanellopoulos revisits Arendt's notion of conservatism with the aim of outlining a possible way through which contemporary improvisation pedagogy might be re-thought. Taken together these three sets of reflections serve to

offer a framing of Arendt's thinking for music educators in different contexts, showing how Arendt's ideas might serve as a fertile ground for thinking over our own teaching, our curricular decisions, and the choices we daily make over space and time that connect us through our distinctness.

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, philosophy of music education, common sense, action, seminar model, free improvisation pedagogy, music teacher training.

# Pedagogical encounters in music

Thinking with Hannah Arendt

Ferm Amqvist, Benedict, Kanellopoulos

## Introduction: Setting the scene

**H**annah Arendt has influenced reflection and contemplation of scholars in many different fields. Her thinking on politics, community building, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism, epistemology, freedom and responsibility, but also on authority, tradition, technology, feminism and education has been interpreted and re-adapted to contexts much broader than Arendt herself might have ever imagined. For those philosophers specifically grounded in issues of education, Arendt has been particularly influential and controversial when it comes to the educative process and the conservancy of such. From theoretical contemplation to operationalization, Arendt continues to frame and guide conversations about agency, citizenship and moral and ethical responsibilities of education. Education scholarship has pondered over Arendt's views on education (Elshtain 1995; Gordon 2001; Greene 2009); but it has also tried to engage with Arendt's ideas on a much larger scale (Schutz 1999; Levinson 2001; Duarte 2001; Wilson 2003). To an extent, this is a sign of educators' constant but sometimes unsaid desire to work for a better world (a desire that current trendy jargon treats as outmoded, or irrelevant). Maxine Greene puts the matter succinctly, arguing that "If teachers can begin to think of themselves

as among those able to kindle the light Arendt described or among those willing to confront the dread and keep alive the sense of ‘a possible happiness’, then they might find themselves revisioning their life projects, existing proactively in the world” (2009, 139). This desire that leads to proactive engagement with students, knowledge, and practices of teaching and learning, inevitably links education to politics in the way conceived of by Arendt’s uncompromising mind: “as the organization or constitution of the power people have when they come together as talking and acting beings” (Young-Bruehl 2006, 84). For to probe education for a better world means nothing less than a constant search for how to enable children to become “talking and acting beings”.

Music educators have not been exempt from the lure and guidance of Arendt (Ferm Almquist 2017a, b, 2016; Ferm Thorgersen 2015; Kanellopoulos 2007, Pio & Varkøy 2013; Varkøy 2013; Wassrin 2016). We, however, face different sets of issues as we think through what it would mean to create the conditions for an Arendtian framing of action in musicing environments. Certainly one will note that each of the authors of this constellation of papers interprets and re-engages with Arendt in ways that speak to the historical impossibility of placing Arendt in one home or another. Nonetheless, as philosophers and educators we make a commitment in the following three reflections to consider those ways Arendt has influenced our own teaching, our curricular decisions, and the choices we daily make over space and time that connect us through our distinctness.

We see the importance of a return to Arendt now more than ever as we find ourselves, three authors in three different countries, struggling to contribute to democratic music education practices and to researching the conceptual base of such practices, in countries where dominant views of technocratic approaches to policy development prevail. We feel the need to return to the ideas of the prime 20th century theorist of political action in a European and US context that gradually but steadily de-

nies democratic inheritance in favour of the advancement of a liberal oligarchic system of bureaucratic stultification (Castoriadis 2007), that recently has been led to a dramatic rise of far-right populist ideologies. We feel the need to return to Arendt in times when everyday thinking tends to become almost thoroughly instrumentalized, frozen and unreflective, allowing for the re-emergence of certain discourses that depict certain people as having the right to rightness as their exclusive property, and certain people to be constructed as incompetent, living in incompetent countries, 'destined' to be(come) 'failed states'. Such discourses are alarming and cannot be just ignored, for they may be signals of the danger of returning to dark historical situations. For as Elizabeth Young-Bruehl reminds us, "When willingness to impose an image has replaced imagination, when calculation has replaced judgment, the life has gone out of politics" (2006, 156). We feel the need to return to Arendt in times when "finance (and the monetary and fiscal policies that go with it) is the politics of capital" (Lazzarato 2015, 13). The resultant economization of education has been masked in the jargon of 'structural reforms', 'efficiency', 'accountability', relevance to 'real' life. In Arendtian terms, this is nothing but the result of a deeper structural change, whereby the social overthrows the political, limiting any real possibility for human action, thereby leading to what Castoriadis has referred to as "generalized conformism" (Castoriadis 2007, 126), ironically masked as 'openness' (see also Rosich & Wagner 2016).

This article<sup>1</sup> explores Hannah Arendt by focusing on three different, but interrelated questions, that haunt music education: how can we re-think the political dimensions of creative music education pedagogies in the face of recent educational policy trends? How can we go beyond linearity in our everyday educational encounters? How can we create forms of music education practice and research that induce a continuous interplay between acting and thinking? We pursue these questions

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<sup>1</sup> This article began its life as a panel presentation at the 10th International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education, June 3-6, 2015, in Frankfurt am Main.

through reference to three specific forms of music education practice: research seminars for PhD-students and senior researchers, pre-service music teacher education, and teaching music improvisation. Cecilia Ferm-Almqvist elaborates upon how Hannah Arendt's thinking influences our teaching, taking an on-going research seminar in Music Education as an example of a common place. Cathy Benedict writes of 'meeting' Arendt and coming to an awareness of how Arendt can help us interrogate practices we have come to assume as 'the right ones'. Seeking to create together with her students an epistemological space of appearance she challenges common teaching strategies that seem to 'work'. Working within a teacher preparation program she comes to realize that students must also reflect on these moments so as to name what has occurred; thus they need to engage in acts of performative listening, setting aside their own desire and need to speak and be heard first. Finally, Panagiotis (Panos) A. Kanellopoulos raises the complex issue of how we should respond to the current deluge of entrepreneurial approaches to creativity, its use value, and its role in education. Based on his argument that acts of musical improvisation belong to the realm of action (Kanellopoulos 2007), he revisits Arendt's notion of conservatism with the aim of outlining a possible way through which improvisation pedagogy might be rethought. Thought together these three sets of reflections serve to offer a framing of Arendt's thinking for music educators in multiple contexts.

## **I. Academic growth as Common Sense – braveness, trust, participation and structure in a Music Education text seminar**

Our general desire in this joint effort to elaborate upon how Hannah Arendt's thinking influences our teaching, has led me (Cecilia) to reflect on an ongoing research seminar in Music Education as an instance of the creation of a common place. A crucial point for Hannah Arendt, is the need for balance between *Vita Activa* (the active

life), consisting of labour, work and action, and Vita Contemplativa (the philosophical thinking life) consisting of different ways of thinking. Arendt sought to see, and make possible, connections between the two. For Arendt (1958) Vita Activa takes place in the world wherein we are born, through speech and action, where actors and audience depend on each other. To reach common sense, we also need to step back, Arendt writes, and think, imagine, value and reflect – activities that constitute Vita Contemplativa.

An aspect of academic life is characterized by equality and pluralism, or the political life. There are no other qualifications to participate in Arendt's conception of the good life; human beings are born into political life simply by the process of birth. Together people create political and economical institutions in society, which in turn become carriers of history. Norms are created in cooperation by active human beings where language functions as a pre-condition. In the political life human beings meet as equals in a public space where they speak and act, and freely express their opinions. Through human actions and appearance in public, reality is created, and through conversations and actions with each other, the 'who' appears in relation to a common and meaningful world – a world where people are related as well as separated.

## **Arendt in the academia**

The translation of Arendt into academia, and thus, seminars, could then be framed as the following: Vita Activa consists of Labour (animal laborans) which focuses on the survival activities of human beings. This could, for instance, be connected to quality criteria in academia, publishing, and tasks to which students are asked to attend. Work (homo faber), which for Arendt is the creation of necessary things that afford profit, can provide safety, but is also compulsory and is not in harmony with nature. This could consist of, for instance, the creation of texts, articles and publications that are accepted by publishers. And finally, Action – (the political life) through which

human beings cast themselves as political beings. Actions at this level do not have goals in themselves, rather they concern economics, politics and art, and contribute to something lasting (Arendt, 1958). Action, thus, is comparable to the seminar where academics thrive, become themselves, and develop academic competences in the community in interaction with each-other.

The above are all crucial aspects of a PhD seminar that embraces the tenets of Arendt. How then, can a seminar be driven and organized in a way where the spirit of equality and mutual recognition and respect for each other's rights, not only each other's existence, is prevalent? In being with others in the common, given world, individual existence becomes possible. However, as Arendt underlines, there is also a need to reflect upon activities, which must also be built into the design of a seminar for common growth. In this section, I outline and discuss the benefits and challenges regarding situating a music education seminar in the spirit of Arendt's thoughts. The purpose of which is for PhD-students and senior researchers in music education to develop academic skills, experience common growth and develop well-designed texts. In the following I will explicate how the seminar is conducted as well discuss how structures for preparation, ownership and participation can create a place for expressions, mutual listening and common sense.

## **Thinking and listening together**

According to Arendt, thinking is about dealing with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense perception. Hence, an object of thought is always a re-presentation, something or somebody that is absent, only present in the form of an image (a familiar concept for those interested in philosophy). However, Arendt believes that philosophers, who primarily cope with thinking, have separated themselves from the communalism that she stresses as man's most human condition. She further expresses that as the philosopher turns away from most of the perishable world of illusions to

enter the world of eternal truths, (s)he turns away from the other, and withdraws into him- or herself (Arendt 1971).

This responsibility to respond to the appearance of something or someone is what Arendt calls ‘thinking’. This kind of thinking cannot be acquired in conventional ways; it is not a capacity for reflexive problem solving, or a skill or a strategy: rather it is a search for meaning (Arendt 1971). To that end, time and structures for such thinking is crucial when it comes to (re)conceptualizing the seminar and commenting on the work of others. As such, in order to return to the common of the seminar, withdrawal is a necessary and crucial phase when reading, and imagining possibilities prior to commenting on the work of another.

Through the meeting of the *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa*, common sense is constituted; a condition toward which human beings strive, or in other words, inter-subjective validity. To reach common sense, each needs to take into account the differing back-grounds and experiences of others, otherwise individuals can be excluded from traditions, lose their power of initiative and feel rootless. Common sense also brings together several senses in interplay in experiencing the world. We need contact with other people’s sense-connected common sense, which in turn presupposes curiosity and respect, ability to imagine and engaged partaking in creating processes, where it is also possible to move into each other’s worlds of imagination (Holm 2002). To be able to experience this in a seminar culture, participants must first have the chance to delve deeply into the work of each other and have time to think, imagine, value and reflect. Secondly, they must then have the same time to formulate themselves, to communicate, to become themselves as academics in interaction with each other.

Hence, an important starting point is the right to make oneself heard and be listened to. Holistic being in this setting is where *Vita Activa* and *Vita Contemplativa* are balanced, which in turn can be seen as a prerequisite for holistic learning; holistic

in the sense that ‘all’ have the possibility to experience and embody the language and become able to handle the world (Arendt 1958; Ferm Thorgersen 2015). Through the process of sharing texts, having time to formulate comments on texts, and then to share those comments can be a way of creating space for common sense in a public space.

This view of democracy requires of human beings the courage to relinquish the position they hold; for example, taking and changing roles, and to be engaged in an uncomfortable position (and hence dispositions) that is not theirs. This act of ‘disposition’ is freedom, Arendt stresses, and it cannot exist without the other. The impossibility of relying on and trusting oneself totally is the price a human being pays for freedom.

Democracy then, is the possibility of transforming the self, of putting the self in question, which is crucial when our own work and the work of others is to be commented upon. To make this possible in places that have historically been steered by traditions and strongly agreed upon norms, demands structures, braveness, engaged participation and trust.<sup>2</sup>

## The seminar structure

An Arendtian seminar, that disrupts the normative model of seminar, would then need to be built on the following attributes (Ferm Thorgersen & Wennergren 2010; Ferm Thorgersen & Wennergren 2015; Ferm Almqvist & Wennergren 2016).

- The participants in the seminar choose amongst themselves who will be the weekly author.

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2 For a more detailed consideration of Hannah Arendt’s perspective of democracy and its value for music education, see Ferm Thorgersen 2015  
<http://musikforskning.se/stm-sjm/node/50>

- The author sends the text she desires to be read among the group at least one week in advance.
- The author informs the others as to what stage of the writing process they are in, as well as what kind of response they desire. These responses are done by color coding the text, which will be explained below.
- The seminar participants read the text in line with what the author has asked and send their individual responses to every member in the group. All participants prepare for the seminar by reading each individual response sent to them by the others.
- The author then collects the responses, chooses points of discussion and the shape and the form the seminar will take. In other words, the author and the participants 'own' the seminar. As a group, each gets the chance to be heard and listened to through separation and relation. Everyone has had time to both think and use written language, and as such, growth and the shaping of identities occurs through thinking in and through interaction.

## Structures for the collective

Through such a model, the culture of the seminar has moved from being individualistic (and often teacher driven) to collective. The challenge for the seminar leader is to step back, to be in the public place in the spirit of common sense; to change roles, and to be curious about the others' growth and sharing of experiences towards becoming themselves; to be free and to encourage freedom, within the pluralistic common place where music educational issues are treated and investigated, surrounded by rather strict frames.

The goals, as well as the differing structures for the seminar are common, while at the same time continually reflected upon and critiqued. There is sufficient time for

building an atmosphere for common trust, which is needed in order for all participants to share their thoughts. There has also been the opportunity for the authors, as well as the readers, to separate themselves from the text, to see it as something outside of themselves, which in turn has afforded the possibility to take the perspective of the other. This is encouraged by differences; differences in backgrounds, interests and, for example, theoretical perspectives. This context affords contact with other people's worlds of imagination (Holm 2002), sense-connected common sense, which in turn presupposes curiosity and respect, ability to imagine and engaged partaking in creating processes. The differing structures of the model help to let the participants be in and develop common sense, where action and reflection are interrelated. Taking the perspective of the other is also necessary in order to be able to give constructive, motivated and possibility-making responses, which is both about confirmation and challenges at a level that makes sense for each.

When it comes to the use of language, of which Arendt (1958) stresses in the political life, clearness has shown to be crucial: in the text itself, in the call for response, independent at which level the text exists, in the formulation of response, and how the author wants to design the specific seminar. All these dimensions of clearness in language set the precondition for how further response-giving and taking can be formed. To share the text beforehand and to separate oneself from the text, is an act of 'disposition' that demands braveness. As I mentioned earlier, Arendt implies that the impossibility of relying on and trusting oneself totally is the price that must be paid for freedom. When participants have the chance to delve mindfully into one's own work, to imagine possibilities, and to share them, one receives responses of several types. According to Arendt (1958), that is a way to understand democracy, as the possibility of transforming the self, of putting the self in question. This is a precondition for development of the ability to take a stand, to grow as an academic (and thus, for Arendt, a human). The sharing of thoughts, the encounter between individuals as

equals in a public space, has already begun before the actual seminar, where they speak and act, and freely express their opinions. At the same time, everyone has had to step back and imagine.

This space of imagination, freedom, available within this seminar structure, is something I have been working on now for several years. I have learned (and continue to learn, in the Arendtian spirit) that it is crucial to enter this process willing to let go of the idea that everything will move according to a specific plan, that a definitive endpoint exists; a disposition that runs counter to the ethos of this project. I have also recognized the importance of stepping outside of this seminar framework to discuss with the students the specific intent of this curricular framing. Thus, in both doing and reflection, students come to an understanding of Arendt and her framing of the common, common sense, and democracy.

## **II. Setting-right the world: Epistemological spaces of wondering and wandering**

I (Cathy) have been preoccupied for quite a long while with and by pedagogical encounters. It began as I realized those ways my ‘training’ in Kodály dictated (and limited), through the use of specific (even scripted) language, the musical experiences of the primary students I had been teaching. However, upon contemplation I realized it was more than just musicing that I was limiting. Because of the scripted nature of Kodály there was no space for thinking together; no space for the spontaneity of questioning, or wandering and wondering. There was simply the day after day, year after year indoctrination of, ‘this is how it’s done’.

My preoccupation continued to evolve as I met and worked with others (particularly teacher educators in higher education) who made clear, in actions and deed, a proclivity toward vainglory. Unhappily, we were unable to share “perplexities”

(Arendt 1971, 24). There was no space to wonder aloud with the other, only space for certainty and rightness. Their “sovereignty and integrity” (Arendt 1958, 234) needed to be (and was) protected by inaction. Thus, any encounter that did not already have an intended (predetermined) end, was thwarted. It was made clear that the possibilities of encouraging or facilitating pedagogical encounters that might shift or interrogate the production of self through (or as) product were to be, at best dismissed, and at worse, punished. Isolation and alienation were too often chosen over the potentiality of revelatory opportunities. Decidedly, the unpredictability of wandering and wondering is the enemy of imagined sovereignty.

I have come to believe that there is a sanctity involved with knowledge construction; an obligation to be present and to honor and respond to the thinking of others. This is easier said than lived, of course, as it is a space that can’t always exist, perhaps because, as I hope to exemplify, and as Arendt (1958) underscores, most “do not live in it” (ibid., 198).

I met Hannah Arendt several years ago at an International Philosophy of Music Education conference. Clearly, I didn’t meet her in person, but I met her in the personage of others. Although, even then I didn’t realize I was meeting her. I only knew that I was meeting people who were engaging with me differently than I had normally experienced: they were listening without expectations, judgments and not assuming to know, predict or control what I might say. In turn, I found myself responding differently. I experienced the freedom to think out loud with these people. It felt nothing like previous experiences where the wielding of the ‘real world’ narrative signified legitimation of certain practices that perpetuated and reproduced ideological structures I was seeking to interrogate together with students.

As I kept hearing references to *Vita Activa* (labour, work, and action), Arendt pushed her way into my consciousness. I began to read, as we all do when we are called to the work of another, and recognized Arendt’s words reflected in the actions

of those with whom I had come to know myself differently. These scholars' intellectual work, furthered my understanding of Arendt, particularly in the context of musicing and creativity. As I contemplated their words, it was clear how Arendt can help us think through musicing as sites of plurality and thus action and new beginnings. It was less clear, however, how these spaces came to be. What fascinated me was the pedagogical space between the physical appearance of students and the moment of musicing or creating. In other words, when the students walk through the door what does the teacher say or do to facilitate moments that have no predetermined ends or expectations?

What, then, does Arendt's thinking offer as I consider anew an epistemological space that could be opened? Firstly, the case must be made that teaching is a form of action rather than labour or work. For Arendt, action isn't concerned with products or goals, but rather that which simply becomes in the interaction. Therefore, the typical goals connected to the educative process do not as such embrace or encompass action. As well, the classroom, for Arendt, is not a public space, as such not a space for the unpredictability of action. It is rather a space of conservation where "the essence of the educational activity....is always to cherish and protect something—the child against the world, the world against the child, the new against the old, the old against the new" (ibid., 192). Thus, Arendt believes, to protect or conserve the natality of the students, it is the responsibility of the teacher to mediate the space of the classroom and the world as she prepares students for a life of action outside the space of schooling. Perhaps there was once a time when such worlds could be separated, but I suspect this world Arendt may have known was a privileged space that lacked any of the diversity that now binds our common world. Students now (and always could) read their world and know, for instance, who gets what and why. I would like to posit that teaching not only can be but should be a form of action, and the classroom a space that offers plurality. Arendt believes that in the plurality of all others, our dis-

tinctness changes as we distinguish ourselves, our distinctness, through speech and action. Plurality, then, for Arendt, is “*the condition*” (ibid., 7, italics in original) for action to take place. To attempt to control, in any way, is to mediate and disrupt plurality and to close the space for miracles of “startling unexpectedness” (ibid., 178). To control is to assume we know or have met before the person in front of us, eradicating all possibilities of the new entering the world. It is to retreat from the responsibility of the world. Teaching, rather than construed as control, could thus be thought of as gestures that both direct and facilitate without presupposition; enabling wondering and wandering and interrogative thinking (or participation, as Veck, (2013) frames the Arendtian classroom) with the other. Action could occur, then, when for example, mandated accountability, curricular goals, and taken for granted processes are explicitly addressed and interrogated together. Conservancy might then be thought of as an ethic of care accompanied by the necessity of promise and forgiveness. Each would not only have to both forgive the other but our own past selves as well, and promise a future constructed in common with the other. To accomplish this the teacher, rather than an agent of control, would need to model through both language (speech) and deed (action) processes that both protect the student from the world as it is, and present it so that it may be interrogated.

To that end, the rest of this section offers pedagogical strategies that interrogate ‘commonsense’ ‘methods’ of teaching in order to open epistemological spaces that seek to “prepare [students] in advance for the task of renewing a common world” (Arendt 2006, 193).

## What do you 'know'?

A common method of introducing a topic in U.S. classrooms (primary through higher education) is to broadly ask students what they know about something. In the U.S. this is referred to the KWL teaching model.<sup>3</sup>

	KWL	
What I know	What I want to know	What I learned

The benevolent idea behind this method is that if we start with what students bring to the class we can connect to their previous understandings. Beyond the problematics of having to state what one wants to learn previous to immersing oneself in a topic and the final summation of what one has 'learned', I argue that when we are asked to definitively speak to what it is we know the possibility of new beginnings or even "startling unexpectedness" (Arendt 1958, 178) is closed down. 'What we know' is a question that depends on either how safe, or how confident, one feels that their certitude will be honored. Without a thought of the consequences (and antecedents) of such a tactic, we place students in positions to tell untruths, to pretend, to come up

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3 For more information on KWL see Ogle (1986).

with a ‘right’ answer. Those students who learn very early on that there will always be somebody who has the ‘right’ answer, simply rely on those they know will know, thus effectively removing (alienating) themselves from the learning environment. Those students who ‘know they know’ shut themselves off from any possibility of finding new ways of knowing among others.

The problem here is not that we begin from the pedagogical space of knowing. The problem, rather, is the epistemological space that is created when we are asked to speak to what it is we definitively know, whether we know it or not. Irrespective of how one came to know ‘it’ and even what it means to know, the answers are placed in public, there for all to recognize as known. There is no public space for wondering or doubt; it is dismissed, severing the very thinking processes of doubt (Arendt 1958, 280). This form of thoughtlessness, in the form of the acceptance of the first and easiest answer, indoctrinates students into a world from which we should be protecting them. Our responsibility, and our authority to do so, is to help students take “thinking seriously” and to “get [them] to keep thinking about the problem, beyond the first thought that comes...” (Duckworth 2005, 259).

Therefore, I am suggesting that we shift the construction of that entry point from what we know to ‘what we think we know’, so that a different epistemological space opens, one in which the possibility of new beginnings of “startling unexpectedness” (Arendt 1958, 178) can occur. With this one-word shift in language students are forgiven before they even speak, they are “released from the consequences” (ibid., 207) of what it is they don’t know or can’t do. In essence, when we ask what we think we know we promise a space in which there will be freedom to speak that is not predicted on certainty or a predetermined identity. We embrace the power of contingency and demonstrate that the world is chaotic and unpredictable and thus, infinitely renewable.

## Invitations

When I begin classes I rarely explicitly address the language I am using; the goal is for students to experience and internalize the narrative space before naming. After a few weeks, I step out of pedagogical moments to call attention to phrases I use (the narrative construction) and ask students to consider what is not being said as well as why I might be using the language I am using. Arendt did not concern herself with quotidian teaching practices so stepping outside of moments that engender action to name what has just happened might not occur to her. However, if I am asking pre-, and in-service educators to think and reflect explicitly on teaching and learning processes, I have found that when we are in the midst of the flow of activities led by me they must be disrupted from what might appear as ease and seemingly effortless teaching on my part. If I do not ask them to step out of the process and reflect on my processing and their engagements with others they will not be able to take responsibility for this same kind of mediation when they teach. When these moments occur, I ask them first to individually construct and reflect upon their experiences and then share with a partner, with a keen focus on how they came to think what they are thinking. In this partnership, they are instructed to refrain from agreeing or disagreeing but rather to push the thinking of the other with the purpose of returning to the community via communicated metacognitive strategies, modeling to others (perhaps) new and multiple ways of thinking and meaning making. They practice this engagement of unexpectedness by asking more questions of the other based on what they have listened to rather than the insertion of self. Therefore, these engagements both disrupt and prevent mindless groupthink where all statements are agreed to and/or left uninterrogated. These directed strategies of performative listening necessitate the removal of inner narratives, and mediations such as ‘I know, I know, my idea is better and more’ or ‘I know what she is going to say next’.

To that end just as students must learn to welcome and invite multiple ways of thinking they must also ‘learn’ to recognize tendencies, responses, dependencies, thoughts even, that have been constructed from an early age that remove them from community responsibility. Students have been schooled to take note of and expect the multiple ways teachers interfere even as they demand ‘good behavior, turn taking, sharing, respect for others’ and of course, ‘the inclusion of everyone.’ However, since my goal is the facilitation of thoughtful (mindful) interactions I ask students to consider that if it *is* the teacher’s job to be model and tend to all those dispositions, what responsibility do they take on for others? Remarkably this question always seems to surprise students (including pre-service educators) of all ages. They have clearly internalized (and in many cases learned to manipulate) how teachers are the ones to mediate (punish/reward) all moments of engagements. As time passes they invariably come to look around the room to include those who may not know how to join a group activity (discussion or musicing), or for whom joining may yet not be a social skill, or for whom joining has always been fraught with exclusion. They begin, then, using each other’s names when discussing the thinking of others: ‘Carlos, David, Kevin and I were discussing... Carlos made the point.... David responded to Carlos by asking him .....’ At first, they find this amusing; as they all know each other’s names. But they begin to recognize the different space created when hearing their names spoken by others, and realize the power in honoring the other before they name themselves. As they begin to relinquish their positioning; favoring trying new thinking based on what others have said, rather than needing to speak first, they begin to experience teaching as an “invitation...to participate in education...and not as a means for self-confirmation” (Veck 2013, 42).

## Lingering thoughts

The pedagogical space of appearance is one that is demanding and of course, it doesn’t always work. ‘Works at what?’ is a response I ask students to continually pose

so that they might always be reminded that ‘It’ or ‘What’ never works in a way that neither we nor the author of the statement can predict. This is the essence of action. The pedagogical space of appearance requires us to embrace this inevitability and surrender certainty, and engage in what might seem like acts of courage. Students must also feel they are able to relinquish certainty and realize that knowledge and knowing isn’t simply that which is declared. This space, where we come to know ourselves and each other, is based on Arendt’s belief in both forgiveness and promise. Forgiveness happens as we facilitate a space that challenges and shifts ways of teaching that close opportunities. We promise, in that everyone in the community both allows and affords these spaces through thought-full and purposeful encounters.

### **III. “Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child”: Revisiting free improvisation pedagogy via Arendt's 'conservatism'**

“Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative” (Arendt 2006, 189).

This excerpt has truly haunted me (Panagiotis); in fact what follows is nothing but my humble response to this forceful declaration; for in my whole educational practice I’ve tried to build on musics that spring from the children, to think music together with them, purposefully putting aside the wealth of canonical works that have come down to us as well as their values, preferring to work in ways that allow for wonder, value intuition, and build musical and student-teacher relationships on the basis of equality. In a kind of way, I’ve always thought of myself, and the educational vision I’ve been trying to shape, as non-conservative. Which does not mean, that I do not value musical learning and understanding. Yet, Arendt’s words are a real challenge. What if I got it all wrong? What if I have overemphasized doing instead of

learning? What if, by attending to the child's voice, I have just left children to their own devices (as Arendt would say), depriving them of the possibility of growth? And what if I have erected an invisible but equally dominant form of authority that is imposed to my students despite my assertions to the contrary? What if free improvisation is something to which children should attend once they've mastered 'the tradition'? These questions keep coming back. In what follows I will try to offer a response to the Arendtian challenge, a response that does not in any way 'prove' I've got it right, but at least might offer a more nuanced way of thinking about the bringing of free improvisation practices into education, making us more alert to the ambiguities that haunt educational practices of the first quarter of the 21st century. But let's begin at the (or better, at a possible) beginning.

## The changing face of creative improvisation discourse

Improvisation as a facet of musical creativity has a long history in music education theory, research and practice. That improvisation is a means for cultivating forms of child-centric, playful, anti-authoritarian, 'informal' modes of music education practice that pave the way to musical and intellectual freedom has been a deep belief of all of us of a creative persuasion who have acted as fervent supporters of the inclusion of improvisation in education (e.g. Barry 1985; Addison 1988; Prévost 1985; Bašić 1973; Pond 1980; Kanellopoulos 1999, 2012). The link between improvisation and children's 'natural' developmental trajectory goes back a long way. Satis Coleman, in 1922, declared that "the child who begins in the earliest stages of his musical development to improvise songs and dances and instrumental melodies, will grow naturally into it as flowers turn to the sun [...]. And it is not difficult when one begins at the natural beginning" (1922, 176).<sup>4</sup>

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4 Systematic investigations of the possible contribution of improvisation in music education began in the early forties; the oldest research projects that I have been able to locate are those by Dorothea Doig (Doig 1941; 1942a; 1942b) and by Gladys Moorhead

The modernist pedagogic view that improvisation has an important role to play as part of arts' larger mission for cultivating personal authenticity, can be seen as belonging to a broader trajectory that sees art as a creative endeavour that opens inroads towards personal authenticity, and at the same time works in ways that liberate us from sterile everydayness: "present day musical esthetics invite us to consider children's 'sound scribbles' as a starting point to a new pedagogy in which the musical instrument, no longer merely an object for skill development, becomes rather a means for self-expression" (Prével 1973, 13). Such assertions should be read within a wider context; as Ken Jones has argued "there is a clear connection between the artistic critique of capitalism (and of modernity more generally) and major strands of educational thinking about creativity. The progressive, or child-centred, tradition revolves around the idea that there is a tension between the possibilities of self-development and the constraining forces of the social" (Jones 2011, 20). The conviction that music learning should pay substantial attention to musical improvisation and collaborative composition can be seen as belonging to a long tradition of arts education that sought to combat world-alienation:

The arts education innovators [...] believed the creative act as practiced in the arts to have unique powers and thought that when individual creators set to work they transform a portion of the world at the same time that they themselves are affected by the transformative powers of the creative process (Leeds 1985, 77).

This approach was based on a vision of school not as a place for induction into the cultural milestones of the past, nor as an institution responsible for the production of skilled individuals ready for the market-place, but as "the place of possible deregulation where life could be lived in its fullness and where particular requirements of the

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and Donald Pond (1941; 1942; 1944).

social order would be unselfconsciously accommodated, disregarded or explicitly rejected” (Finney 2011, 75).

But this is not the entire story. As I've tried to show elsewhere (Kanellopoulos 2012), this trajectory runs parallel with a second one: the increased psychologisation of education through the production of normative psychological accounts of development that, in Castoriadis' (1991) terms can be understood as part of the process of unlimited expansion of 'rational' mastery that permeates the project of modernism at large. Arendt's (2006) criticism that progressive education contributes to world-destruction through a programmatic dismissal of teacher authority, is usually read in terms of her general preoccupation with the loss of authority in the modern world and the merits of maintaining a clear distinction between the public and the private: "It is, of course, the lack of authority, or the power of tradition, that Arendt suggests is the real cause of the crisis of education" (Dahlgren 2006, 44).<sup>5</sup>

Here I would like to suggest a different possibility: we could see Arendt's vehement rejection of progressivism as a perceptive reaction against the imposition of normalizing psychology-based discourses that conquered education in the 20th century, particularly in its second half. In 'The Crisis in Education', written in 1958 "while *The Human Condition* was in press" (Higgins 2010, 377), Arendt exclaims that "only in America could a crisis in education actually become a factor in politics" (Arendt 2006, 171). 'America', this "land of immigrants" (ibid., 172) has always shown an "extraordinary enthusiasm for what is new" (ibid., 173). But there has been something

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5 Interestingly Arendt has made a forceful comeback in recent educational debates in Greece, through rather reactionary readings of her thoughts on education, in an attempt to argue for a 'return' to educational practices that promote an approach to teaching [didaskalia] as an act of transmitting authoritative knowledge [paradosi], building core literacy skills, and cultivating respect for the cultural achievements of the past [paradosi] (Zouboulakis in Polony 2006; also Zouboulakis 2017) — note that the noun παράδοση [paradosi] in Greek means both tradition and the act of delivering something, of passing something on [παράδω].

very specific happening in the US during the time Arendt was writing ‘The Crisis’: in the 1950s, right in the midst of Cold War antagonisms, education was assigned the mission of ‘nurturing’ the creative capabilities of individual children, preparing the ground for the emergence of novel ideas that would place the US ahead of its vehement rival - the Soviet Union (see Ogata, 2013). Psychological research, by approaching creativity as an objectifiable, measurable, controllable and predictable capacity of individuals to “getting novel ideas and making something of them” (Elliott 1971, 146), has been instrumental to the advancement of pedagogic discourses that placed creativity at the center of the educational process. R. K. Elliott, in his seminal paper ‘Versions of Creativity’ (1971) refers to this as the ‘new’ concept of creativity. In a recent cultural-historical examination of the Creativity Movement in the US, Bycroft (2012) shows that research on creativity has been a prominent theme in Cold War Social Science casting it as “a new trait in human cognition” (198).<sup>6</sup>

In a sense, one could argue that it is not that modern education has destroyed authority, preferring “to establish a world of children” (Arendt 2006, 183), but that (reductionist) psychological accounts erected a new form of authority that rules this world: accounts of ‘natural’ (cognitive) development created a new largely invisible but pervasive ‘authority’ that tried to control the young. By attempting to “to regulate the irregular” (Bycroft 2012, 198) creativity researchers that have been active right at the time when Arendt was writing ‘The Crisis’, were erecting a new form of authority that, to use Arendt’s words, acted “as though the new already existed” (Arendt 2006, 173). It is not, therefore, that progressive education placed undue emphasis to children’s ‘doing’ rather than knowledge (Arendt 2006), but that by

6 The political agenda that underpins a large part of creativity research during the 1950s and 60s is made clear in the following statement: “America must treasure and foster all the creative ability that she has in her” (Toynbee 1964, 9). The very title of Toynbee’s paper – “Is America Neglecting Her Creative Minority?” – is indicative of the core beliefs of a whole generation of researchers (for further details see Kanellopoulos 2012, 173).

putting what was purported to be a set of ‘natural learning processes’ in the service of a larger educational and political project, it was politicizing education while claiming that it was ‘just’ educating the young “according to nature” (Walkerdine 1986, 56). Moreover, as Valerie Walkerdine (1986) has argued, progressivism rendered oppression invisible because it appropriated the meaning of one of the most pervasive products of oppression, the feeling of powerlessness: “within the naturalized discourse it [i.e. powerlessness] is rendered ‘unnatural’, ‘abnormal’, ‘pathological’ - a state to be corrected” (69). Thus, according to Walkerdine, progressivism transformed the class into “a laboratory, where development could be watched, monitored and set along the right path” (ibid., 59).

In the light of this, Arendt’s conviction that “we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look” (Arendt 2006, 189), takes on a radically new meaning that retains a relevance to our situation today. For, indeed, the current neoliberal appropriation of education can be seen as paralleling the 1950s entanglement of education with politics. It seems that, once again, dominant educational policies aim at nothing less than dictating what “the new” will look like, as today’s global ‘schooled society’ (Baker 2014) gradually bows to the neo-liberal calls for forging an entrepreneurial attitude to knowledge (Ball 2003, 2012; Peters 2009). Music education creativity researchers seem increasingly interested in linking music education to the imperatives of the entrepreneurial turn of education, arguing, for example, that “there is a need to reshape conceptions of creativity in relation to learning, to equip populations with the knowledge, skills and innovative potential required to compete in 21st century knowledge economies” (Triantafyllaki & Burnard 2010, 2). The task of education, in this view, is to nurture “the students’ innovative talents” (Odena 2014, 129). This is a direct call for putting music-education-for-creativity in the service of economic logics that aim at casting education a means “to develop more creative and entrepreneurial students” (ibid. based on Zhao, 2012). Thus,

we witness an increase of calls for rethinking the rationale of how and why education should encourage creativity, calls that suggest the adoption of “an alternative order of performance creativities, one which enhances risk taking and entrepreneurialism and brings about new forms [of] professionalism through creative mediation” (Burnard 2014, 79). Keith Sawyer, a researcher that has extensively researched music and theatre improvisation as a way of promoting “collaboration, group-problem solving, and collective creativity” (Sawyer 1999, 193), has recently began applying lessons learned from how improvisation works in the service of developing entrepreneurial skills, organising workshops that help “university professors [...] [learn] how to think like entrepreneurs” (Sawyer 2015). Improvisation, once thought of as that musical process that lies ‘close’ to the child’s authentic musicality and/or as a means for upsetting the educational status quo, is increasingly conquered by a market-driven discourse. A discourse that treats *flexibility, risk-taking, adaptability, rapid weighting of the possibilities at hand*, “an appetite for upending the status quo, an inspiration-centered approach to innovation, economic value, a growth mindset and the ability to learn from failure” (Radbill 2013, 12; also Haddon & Burnard 2015, 263) as qualities of seminal importance for the production of a new form of subjectivity, that of the so-called ‘post-capitalist’ entrepreneur, whose prime ‘skill’ is ‘creativity’ (Kanellopoulos 2015; also Jones, 2011).

## An Arendtian conservationist approach to free improvisation pedagogy?

How should we think of improvisation pedagogy in relation to the increased psychologisation of education and market oriented uses of creativity just outlined? Against the increasingly forceful co-optive strategies of neoliberalism, my suggestion is to turn ‘conservative’. This suggestion is based on a purposefully unorthodox but not unfounded reading of Arendt’s assertion that,

Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative (Arendt 2006, 189).

What is this that needs to be conserved? Natasha Levinson has suggested that Arendt's invocation of conservatism as a way of preserving newness, points towards an education where "students acquire an understanding of themselves in relation to the world without regarding either the world or their positioning in it as fixed, determined, and unchangeable" (2001, 19). On the basis of Arendt's "conservationist attitude" (ibid.), I would say that to argue in favour of a conservative improvisation pedagogy does not imply the transmission of a solid, authoritatively preserved tradition that is to be handed down to the next generation. Nor does it adhere to an impoverished view of improvisation as a set of skills that prepare the young for entering a particular form of musical practice. A conservationist approach to improvisation pedagogy seeks to emphasise that our teaching practice, by deciding to remain 'closed' to the neoliberal calls of efficiency, cleaves firmly to its original mission as a site for safe experimentation with the world. This stance apprehends education as occupying a liminal position, a space neither public (in the sense of being just part of the dominant tides of the time) nor private. The act of education creates a space that induces the possibility of learning to think the new, the possibility of natality, and thus allows for each student to emerge as a singular being.<sup>7</sup> A conservationist improvisation pedagogy refuses to contribute to an impoverishment of creativity; it refuses to adhere to a neo-liberal appropriation of the notion of creativity education as an individualistic

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7 This argument is indebted to way Duarte (2010) and Masschelein & Simons (2010) approach Arendt's conservationist stance - despite their different interpretations of the notion of public space in relation to school, I find that their views share important similarities.

struggle for learning how to invest in dispositions that enable students to be ‘flexible’, to experiment with ‘unpredictable’ situations and to exploit ‘uncertainty’ in profitable non-linear ways.

Instead, a conservationist improvisation pedagogy would aim at staying close to the logic and the ethical imperatives that underpin the practice of free improvisation, “a very pure form of improvisation operating without any formal system or limitation” (Cardew 2006[1971], 127) as it emerged in the second half of the 20th century. A free improvisation ethic induces a form of musical practice that is axiomatically dedicated to making sounds and material available (as Masschelein & Simons 2010, 544 would put it) for “free use”, “disconnected” from given usages. This results to a mode of musical and pedagogical practice that regards wonder as a precious quality of our approach to music, resulting to a radical rethinking of how we view our students: “the status of someone confronted with things that are for free use is different. It is the status of the child as someone who is born in the world without destination and thus in a position to give it a destination.” (Masschelein & Simons 2010, 545)

As I have argued elsewhere (Kanellopoulos 2007) improvisation constitutes the musical analogue of action in Arendt’s (1958) sense: improvisation-as-action displays a unity of means and ends, materialises itself through irrevocable utterances, and its particular form is shaped through acts whose character can only be molded in the course of their appearance. It allows for the disclosure of the voice of the agent (equality and distinction), exactly because a core condition of its existence is plurality. Lastly, its frailty it can only be redeemed through promise and forgiveness — through promise to make the best out of each uttered sound/pattern/phrase and through acceptance of its partiality (forgiveness) (Kanellopoulos, 2007). What we need to conserve is the logic and the spirit of improvisation-as-action, initiating educational encounters with improvisation on the basis of those principles that cast it a form of action. We therefore need to redefine improvisation from a pedagogical

point of view, foregrounding not which aspects of it can be of use-value but those qualities of musical improvisation that allow it to be considered as belonging to the realm of action. In what follows I elaborate on the core constituents of improvisation-as-action against the backdrop of a brief account of the “virtues that a musician can develop” (Cardew 2006[1971], 131 in her/his engagement with free improvisation that composer Cornelius Cardew (1936-1981) published in 1971.<sup>8</sup>

- In improvisation-as-action there exists a unity of means and ends: what we have to learn is delving into ‘designless purpose’ (Prévost 1995, 109). “Integrity” (Cardew, 2006[1971], 132) is the key term here. “What we do in the actual event is important [...]. Often what we do is what tells us what we have in mind” (ibid.). To learn to play in full concentration but without referring to pre-determined structural devices is no easy thing. To learn to love playing for and in the moment, fully experiencing the preciousness of each moment but with no wish to create something that will endure (except, maybe, in the form of a recording) is a very special kind of learning.
- Irrevocability: in improvisation-as-action we learn to live ‘inside’ a special world of time, where ways forward are being forged in the knowledge that the here and now is fatally incomplete, yet irrevocable. “Amongst the infinite possibilities for continuation, the sound played at each moment is felt as if it were the only one that could have been made” (Kanellopoulos 2007, 109). In my ethnographic studies of children’s improvising, I’ve often experienced this feeling of being ‘hooked’ into this special sense of time that is created in and through the act of improvisation. And I’ve been struck by the sense of responsibility that is developed in and through improvisation: “As when there is a boat in the middle of a lake, we do not just leave it there, to sink

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8 Cardew’s short and neglected in the field of music education text, bears the title “toward an ethic of improvisation”, and was published as an accompaniment to *Treatise*, his monumental collection of graphic scores.

and reach the coast by itself. We try to drive it to the coast; so it is with music” (Ermioni, primary school student, age 10, in Kanellopoulos 2005).

- In improvisation-as-action, one cultivates a stance of “Preparedness for no matter what eventuality (Cage’s phrase) or simply Awakeness” (Cardew 2006[1971], 131). The moment of experimentation makes one alert to the musical possibilities that arise; yet, one’s actions are not executed with regard to a predetermined end. In improvisation-as-action there is “Acceptance of Death[.] From a certain point of view improvisation is the highest mode of musical activity, for it is based on the acceptance of music’s fatal weakness and essential and most beautiful characteristic - its transience” (ibid., 133).
- Improvisation-as-action creates a ‘public space’ that becomes the enabling condition of freedom, where players communicate on the basis of unpredictability, fearlessness and no external rule. Learning to pursue “simplicity” (Cardew 2006[1971], 132) while retaining a fervent passion to experiment with the unknown, learning to let oneself be driven by what happens when each incomplete action is being thrown in this public space of collectively improvised actions, induces a non-sovereign approach to freedom (on the importance of this for Arendt’s thinking see Brunkhorst 2000). “Where everything becomes simple is the most desirable place to be. [...] The simplicity must contain the memory of how hard it was to achieve” (Cardew 2006[1971], 131-132). The pursuit of simplicity thus conceived might lead to:
- Disclosure of the voice of the agent—equality and distinction. Improvisation-as-action goes beyond self-expression, inducing a distinctive conception of identity. In improvisation-as-action we are our sounds “(as ignorant of them as one is about one’s own nature)” (ibid., 132). At the same, identity is forged through ‘Selflessness’: “To do something constructive you have to look beyond yourself. The entire world is your sphere if your vision can en-

compass it” (ibid.). This cultivates a sense of willingness to forge one’s identity through actions that do not aim to show what one has already gained. Rather, the aim is “to lead your life” (ibid., 131) by surrendering to the unexpected. This “inherent unpredictability” (Arendt 1958, 191) of action removes all forms of safety.

- From an Arendtian angle, the inherent unpredictability of improvisation-as-action can only be redeemed through promise and forgiveness (Arendt 1958). In accepting the challenge of thinking music free, one, in a sense, makes a promise: I’ll be present in the moment to the best of my ability, I’ll be searching for deep simplicity in the faith that you’re doing the same. We thus hold on to a mutual promise. And I’ll perform “forgiveness”: “letting things go, weighing possibilities and problems but without allowing judgment to become an impediment of action” (Kanellopoulos 2007, 113). In this way “Forbearance” is being cultivated: “Improvising in a group you have to accept not only the frailties of your fellow musicians, but also your own. Overcoming your instinctual revulsion against whatever is out of tune (in the broadest sense)” (Cardew 2006[1971], 131).

These are the core elements of an educational vision that is rooted in an understanding of free musical improvisation as action. This understanding allows us to formulate a set of virtues that might act as ideals in our effort to pursue a form of creative music education that counters the currently dominating market-derived visions. It is in this sense that improvisation pedagogy might be thought of as conservative, in that it requires us to treat improvisational music making as an autonomous field of cultural activity, trying to maintain firm links with free improvisation traditions that sought to enter into the turbulence of the emancipatory struggle, “exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child” (Arendt 2006, 189), and exactly because “we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it” (ibid., 193). This is

how I think one could read, today, Arendt's insistence that 'politics' should remain out of education. Education should resist to be turned into a managerial game organized on the basis of economically driven conceptions of knowledge. In this way, Arendt's insistence that sticking to the here-and-now of young denies them the possibility of creating something new, takes on a radically new meaning: musical creative practices that do not operate as forms of legitimation of entrepreneurship [the dominant 'here-and-now'] might be able to create micro-worlds where new beginnings can be made possible.

## Concluding thoughts

When one chooses to operationalize Arendt's words one embarks on a process Arendt herself never projected. However, we imagine Arendt would have wanted this kind of grappling with her thinking. For she would certainly want her readers (or students, in a more general sense of the term) to cultivate a stance of careful thinking about and understanding "what we are doing" (Arendt 2004, xxvi) - this has been her lifelong mission: careful, daring thinking about our contemporary situation, bold theoretical constructs "in which familiar words receive completely unfamiliar definitions" (Young-Bruehl 2006, 79). Arendt scholar Roger Berkowitz reflects that when we read Arendt the goal is "to try and understand what she says – not so much to accept it, but to understand her" (Bard, Virtual Reading Group, January 4th, 2017). In our effort to think about specific music education issues and contexts with and through Arendt we seek to come to a better understanding of what her words offer our own music educational practices in a world in which nihilism is quickly being overshadowed by totalitarian non-sense of potentially devastating consequences. There is, then, a heightened responsibility of being with others as these totalitarian actions embolden the false to be true, the fake to be real. Our need as three music educators, no, as three individuals among so many others who long for a more just soci-

ety, is to preserve the capacity to interrogate our ways of being in the world. We seek through our thinking together to make common a pedagogical vision that is simply meant as a porous framework rather than a blueprint for music educational practices. The world we make together, the questions we pursue together, our right to belong to a community, which moral and ethical responsibilities guide our actions in common, transcends disciplinary thinking. We are called to recognize that this world we make in common is and is both more than the music we make together. While we take seriously our desire (perhaps even our wiring) to music we recognize our responsibility in embracing, rather than running from, the gloriousness of plurality.

Recently it feels that the discourse of ‘privileged positioning’ and ‘onoring the spaces of others’ has simply become, at best, a manifestation of false humility. At worst the provision of platforms and protected spaces for (and by!) others simply reifies the conditions for organized mass movements. Hoffer (1951) warns of “the inevitable shift in emphasis once [a] movement starts rolling” (68). His point is that we too easily shift from moment to movement as if the “present...were an unclean thing” (ibid.). We are acutely aware of a sense of existential loss as global capitalism engulfs every aspect of our lives. Thus, the forfeiture of, or need for, a meaningful life in and with others is too easily subsumed by neo-liberal orthodoxies (such as hyper-self-individuality and an individualistic conception of citizenship) for the good of a global future. The present becomes meaningless, as does our life in the here and now. To deny plurality, though, is to deny oneself. And also, to deny our students the right of developing themselves as thoughtful musical beings.

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