

The Inclusive Co-creative Ensemble



A close-up study of ShareMusic's methodological development work with inclusive ensembles, focused on the methods of composer Karen Power. Written by Zofia Åsenlöf

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NATURAL
CREATORS

Signatur



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The Inclusive Co-creative Ensemble

A close-up study of ShareMusic's methodological development work with inclusive ensembles, focused on the methods of composer Karen Power.

Why are inclusive ensembles needed? The arts have a unique ability to bring together people from different backgrounds and experiences. Through these encounters, new knowledge emerges. Knowledge that society needs in order to grow and meet the challenges of the future.

An inclusive approach enables more people to participate. Think of all the art, all the new work that will be written, developed and performed if more people are presented with the opportunity to train and work professionally in the cultural world. Out there are the composers, musicians, educators, employers and policy makers of the future! In order to create a more inclusive society and work-life, we need to ensure that everyone is presented with the same opportunity for quality and equal education.

What happens to us as human beings when we are given our space to create and make our voices heard on equal terms? And what positive effects will this have on society at large?



Musician Ewe Larsson of ShareMusic's ensemble Elefantöra during a film shoot for the Kulturfesten in Region Jönköping County in 2020. Elefantöra mainly works with various digital music tools and belong to a growing post-digital genre that explores the musical expression through instrumentation as well as through work processes.

Foreword

This book is based on approaches we use at ShareMusic & Performing Arts, with a focus on methods developed by composer Karen Power. With this book we want to give you the opportunity to take a closer look at how we at ShareMusic work to further develop our inclusive working methods. We want to inspire you to take this work further so that more inclusive ensembles are formed. We want to share our knowledge and tools so that more people dare to try, to challenge — to break down boundaries and hierarchies! — and question. What is an ensemble and what can an ensemble be?

Whether you want to form an inclusive ensemble with the goal of performing at all contemporary music festivals or work with ensemble playing in your preschool class, our hope is that you will acquire some concrete tools. Tools that you in turn can further develop and adapt based on your work. A fundamental approach is to regard inclusive artistic work as a way of meeting from different perspectives. This is your start. Start now at any level — explore, create and develop together.



Dawn in Galamanta from 2009, with music by composer Christer Lindberg and choreography by Helene Karabuda, was commissioned by ShareMusic and was the organisation's first large scale stage production. The artistic process refined the working methods and experiences from the courses. This was a new level of co-creation for ShareMusic.

Introduction

ShareMusic & Performing Arts started in Sweden in 2002 with courses for disabled persons with an interest in creative work. Our working concepts, methods and tools evolved along the way as we did more courses, workshops and eventually full-scale performing arts productions. We discovered that the knowledge we gained through our work was something that others were interested in – educators, teachers, artists, researchers and many more! – curious people who want to develop the arts and learn from interpersonal encounters. People who want to help create a more equal society where everyone participates and takes their place. Thanks to interregional collaboration between Region Jönköping County, Region Skåne and Region Västra Götaland, we developed into a knowledge centre with the main task of sharing knowledge, but also of generating new knowledge. At the same time, we will always continue to explore, develop and meet. As a reader, you are now already a part of this.

Music has always been central to ShareMusic's activities. It was from music that the working methods developed and broadened to other arts and especially cross-disciplinary artistic work. Fundamental to our work is coming together regardless of knowledge or experience – everyone should feel involved and challenged. The ensembles we have worked with in performing arts productions

and artistic labs as well as workshops and courses have been inclusive. The process of producing the performance *Dawn in Galamanta*, with music by composer Christian Lindberg and choreography by Helene Karabuda, helped refine the work and we found a new level of co-creation.

During the production of the musical work *Mondgewächse*, we decided to challenge ourselves one step further in letting traditional instruments meet music technology. Here we also took the first clear steps towards developing methods for creating an inclusive music ensemble. While working on the performance, we developed an entirely new interface in collaboration with composer Patricia Alessandrini (Stanford University, USA). Musicians with disabilities were involved throughout the development process to ensure that the new interface would work according to their needs in terms of function and music making. It was a technical and artistic co-creation, two parallel processes. The performance was then performed by an inclusive ensemble made up of musicians from ShareMusic and the chamber music ensemble Gageego! who have become a regular partner of ours.

Bits & Pieces was a real milestone for our methodology development. The project started in autumn 2017 when our music ensemble Elefantöra was formed and began collaborating with Gageego! and composers Karen Power and Tomas Hulenvik Klingberg. The aim was to create new musical works in which traditional instruments meet music technology in order to show how technology and digitalisation enable more people to create and play music. Students from the Master's Programme in Composition at Malmö Academy of Music participated at a later stage of the project. An important component was approaching different types of notation. Sheet music is the most common communication tool used between musicians and composers. But how is that communication realized when you have an ensemble where not everyone may have learned to read music? We at ShareMusic have worked with alternative notation before in different ways, including in the opera *Shanghai* that we did in collaboration with the Gothenburg Opera in the 2016/2017 season. There, the composer Line Tjørnhøj worked with an array of notation imagery, so that everyone in the ensemble could interpret the music. There are several ways to work with alternative notation, for example through graphic and tactile scores. We will present different ways in this book, with some focus on the graphic.

The result of *Bits & Pieces* was, among other things, five newly created works, directly composed for Elefantöra and Gageego! Something else happened along the way, too. A methodology for working with an inclusive ensemble emerged through Karen's approach and meeting with ShareMusic. From the very formation of a group to the creation of new works and the performance of concerts. A method that Karen Power then tested and refined during a training lab in Skövde and which she also used with our Skåne-based ensemble.

Elefantöra has made a fantastic journey since 2017. From a group of musicians with completely different experiences and backgrounds to a tightly knit ensemble that confidently collaborates with symphony orchestras as well as sound artists, dancers, researchers and composers. With a palpable sense of pride we can say that they are in demand. They have a unique skill set with extensive experience in co-creative investigative artistic work and a confidence in the process shaped by participation and inclusion. The ensemble consists of musicians who both read and do not read traditional notation, playing both traditional and music technology instruments. Together they continue to challenge and broaden their artistry, describing the ensemble as a safe place for experimentation where they can try new ideas and evolve; a place where they don't have to maintain an image or try to sound a certain way.



Composer Tomas Hulenvik Klingberg (left) together with composer Karen Power (right) during the work with *Bits & Pieces* in 2017–2018. They both composed directly for ensembles Elefantöra and Gageego!. From Karen's approach and meeting with ShareMusic, a new methodology emerged for working with inclusive music ensembles. The starting point for this book.

**I think the way we play is very unique
and it's fun to develop that too.
That's why I think it's important for people to see it,
especially for people who may have difficulty holding an instrument
or need music making to look different.
For them to see that things like that can be fixed.
The accessibility that exists is something I had no idea about
and if people see us, that knowledge will spread
and develop even more!**

Elefantöra musician



Elefantöra in March 2022 at the Elementstudio in Gothenburg. During a three-day-residency, they created their own music that was presented during a live-streamed performance. From being a group of musicians with completely different experiences and backgrounds, they are today a tightly knit ensemble that confidently collaborates with symphony orchestras as well as sound artists, dancers, researchers and composers.

How to include? Preconditions and tools

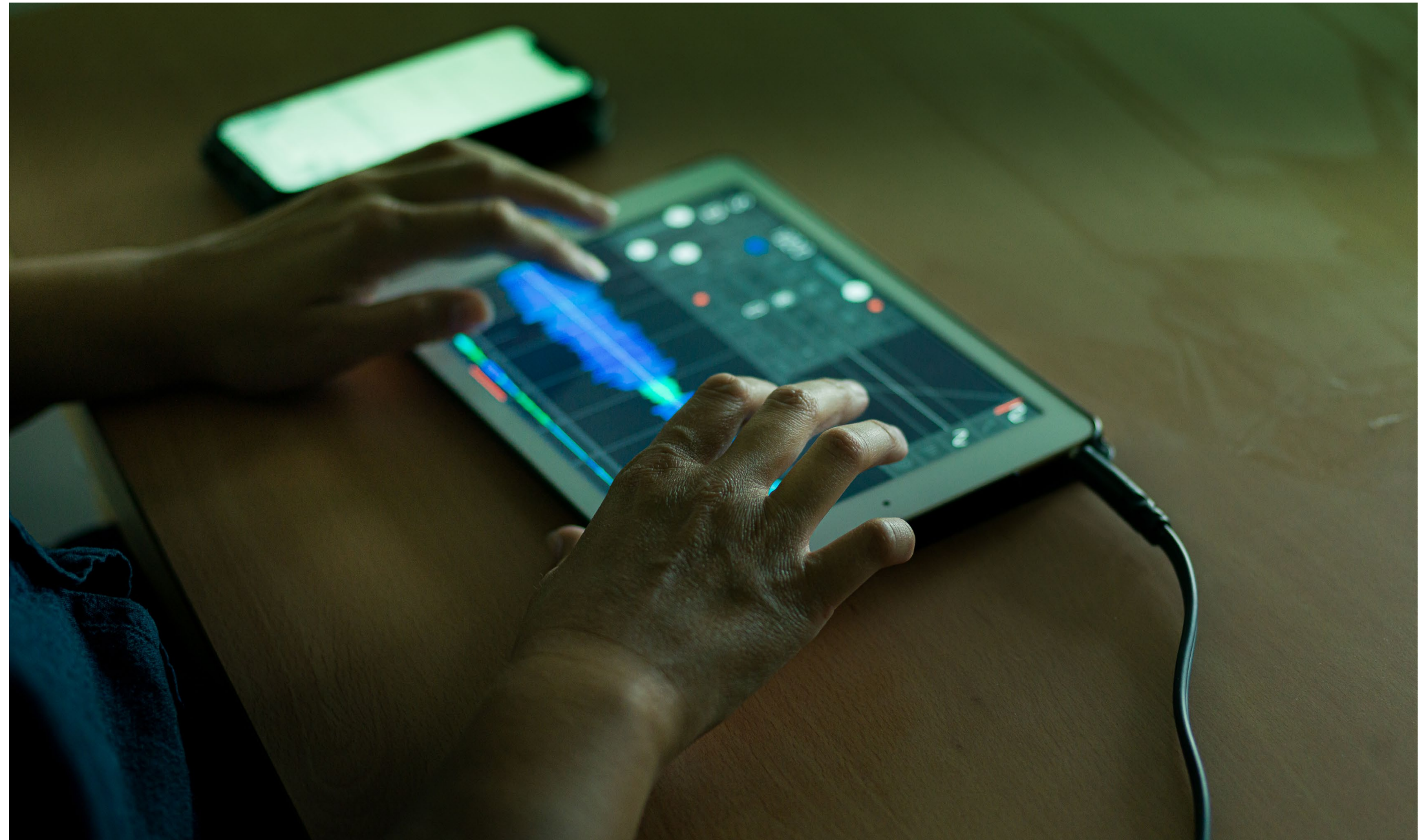
How then, can I work with inclusion in an ensemble and how do I start?

How do I bring people from different backgrounds, experiences and disabilities together, in such a way that everyone feels involved and challenged?

How do I unite an ensemble made up of traditionally trained musicians and untrained musicians, some of whom may not read sheet music or have never played in an ensemble before?

What conditions are needed for an inclusive and equal process to work within an ensemble?

What tools can be used to develop an inclusive working environment and process within a group?



Both ShareMusic and Elefantöra often use digital music tools in their work. However, this is not a must. It is just as possible to play traditional instruments within an inclusive ensemble. The focus is on artistic co-creation and participation on equal terms.



During an artistic lab in Växjö 2020, Elefantöra worked together with string orchestra Musica Vitae. Lab leaders were Karen Power and composer/musician Jonas Jonasson of the Swedish rock band Bob hund. The musicians truly explored the possibilities of music making, meeting with their very different backgrounds, experiences - and instruments!

In this book, ShareMusic and Karen Power take a closer look at these issues. In the meeting between musicians from ShareMusic's ensemble Elefantöra and the chamber music ensemble Gageego!, they have explored the conditions and tools that facilitate people with different backgrounds, experiences and abilities to work side by side, on equal terms. How can a safe space be created that opens up for equal co-creation in which everyone feels involved and challenged? How to break down barriers without creating new ones?

Specific to Elefantöra and Gageego! is that they use both traditional and music technology instruments in their music creation. But inclusive work does not mean that an ensemble has to play digital instruments or become virtuosos on, for example, tablets. ShareMusic sometimes uses digital sound-creating technology as a bridge to come together, but it is just as possible to play traditional instruments within an inclusive ensemble. The focus is on artistic co-creation and participation on equal terms.



Elefantöra performing at the Change Music Festival in Kungälv 2021 with the festival's orchestra. Conductor was Simon Crawford-Phillips. They performed Jesper Nordin's *Retrospective III* with solo violinist Malin Broman.



Elefantöra with Gageego! and Karen Power
back in 2018 during *Bits & Pieces*.

The common language

What language can an inclusive ensemble use to meet in equal communication on equal terms? Is a common language a prerequisite for making an inclusive ensemble work?

A composer usually writes a work for an orchestra of classical musicians that read traditional sheet music notation. They meet for one or a few rehearsals and then the work is played. The composer and the musicians share a common language and context that allows the musicians to play the work as it is written. But what if the ensemble is also made up of musicians who can't read sheet music or are unfamiliar with the world of classical music? How can you as a composer or leader get them to come together and communicate and articulate what you want from a work or task?

Take a closer look at the different types of communication that exist within the group. How can you reconcile them so that all voices can be heard and work equally?

What does the ensemble need to know in order to play the music?

How can you, as composer and director, convey that information? Can you simplify and limit the information to the bare essentials?

One way to develop a common language within an ensemble is to combine traditional music notation with graphic notation and text notation.

Graphic and text notation is an alternative way of conveying an artistic idea and can serve as a complement or alternative to traditional notation. In this way, the formal language is allowed to vary from score to score and can consist of symbols, text instructions, images, illustrations and more. The composer or conductor can then shape the score according to the needs of the ensemble so that more people can understand and interpret. Together, the leader and the ensemble then create a common understanding of the language of the score.

Graphic notation allows you to create a clear framework for a composition and, within that framework, offer musicians more space and freedom to interpret the work. In this way, the members of the ensemble are encouraged to become active in the creation of the music.

Karen Power and Natural Creators

Here is an introduction to Karen Power and her working method. It gives a preview of the upcoming practice examples and a deeper insight into Karen's approach to music and co-creation.

I am a classically trained composer, improviser and educator. My recent works have included orchestral pieces, sound installations, chamber music, improvisation and collaborations with sound and dance, visual arts, and experimental film and performance. In my compositions I use two primary sources: acoustic instruments and everyday sounds/places and soundscapes. The basis of my work is to explore the idea of the score as something creative in itself, which has resulted in the further development of Aural Scores [a spoken instruction or individually designed soundscape that runs over time and contains the information each musician needs to play their voice] as an alternative approach when working outside of the traditional Western art tradition. Alongside my composition work, I have developed new ways of working creatively with babies and young children through the Natural Creators programme. I believe that everything we do – and are – is constantly being reshaped as we grow and develop.

Karen Power



Liv Dahlstrand of Elefantöra in 2017, being introduced to Karen Power's found objects. This is one of the first steps in Karen's working method. The purpose is to create an equal starting point.



William Hedendahl from the Skåne-ensemble exploring found objects during a first workshop with Karen Power. The ensemble was formed in 2020.



Examples of found objects. What would your found objects look like?

Karen's *Natural Creators* programme is based on the natural curiosity and intuitive ability of babies and young children to listen and create sounds and music. She has since developed the method further and uses it in her work with adults as well – both as an educator and composer. Karen highlights the importance of exploring and creating an understanding of children's natural instinct to create music. That we can use natural curiosity in music education to create space for people to develop the ability to listen and respond intuitively to music. Karen emphasises that there is no singular right type of music or sound, it is un-biased music-making with no right or wrong approach.

Sound is everywhere, in everything and we are all capable of making sound. Natural Creators is all about harnessing natural exploration and creativity in a safe, open, and creative environment.

Karen Power

She describes that her workshops with young children are based on slowly integrating sounds into their everyday lives through a series of exercises in observing, repeating and developing sounds. The method is based on openness and guided improvisation and is designed to facilitate each participant's engagement in the process with their own unique approach to creating sound.

*I guess I'm looking for
real communication.
That's my goal.
How I accomplish
that depends on what
skills are in the room.*

Karen Power



"In the world of classical music, we need more of this. You pull apart and you push boundaries, but the quality is still there and you dare to experiment more." Said by one of the musicians from Musica Vitae after the lab with Karen and Elefantöra.

Part of the method consists of using found objects – materials you can find in nature. When children participate in the workshop, they are asked to select and collect objects made of natural materials to place on a tray, such as stones, moss, gravel, dried grass, paper, sand, shells, nutshells and the like. Karen calls the tray a *Soundboard* and it then becomes the children's instrument for future exercises and improvisations. The idea of a self-made instrument of every day and found sounds is to remove the performance requirements and instead allow everyone to focus on exercises in listening, responding and communicating. The children get to meet through a new shared experience and get to know each other and their new instrument.

Later in the process, when the children are familiar with creating sounds themselves, Karen encourages them to play/sound with professional musicians. Karen describes this part of the process as a turning point where participants begin to appreciate their instrument in a new way. Finally, they play a composition together, with everyone participating on their own terms. She argues that by allowing children to play on an instrument made of natural materials, the economic aspect of music education and creation is also removed. Karen also uses *Soundboard* and found objects in advanced artistic processes with adult music practitioners. To remove the

performance requirements there too, she initially asks them to replace their main instruments with found objects, allowing the musicians to meet through an instrument to which they are all new, where they are given a chance to listen more deeply to what is happening in the room and to the interactions between each other.



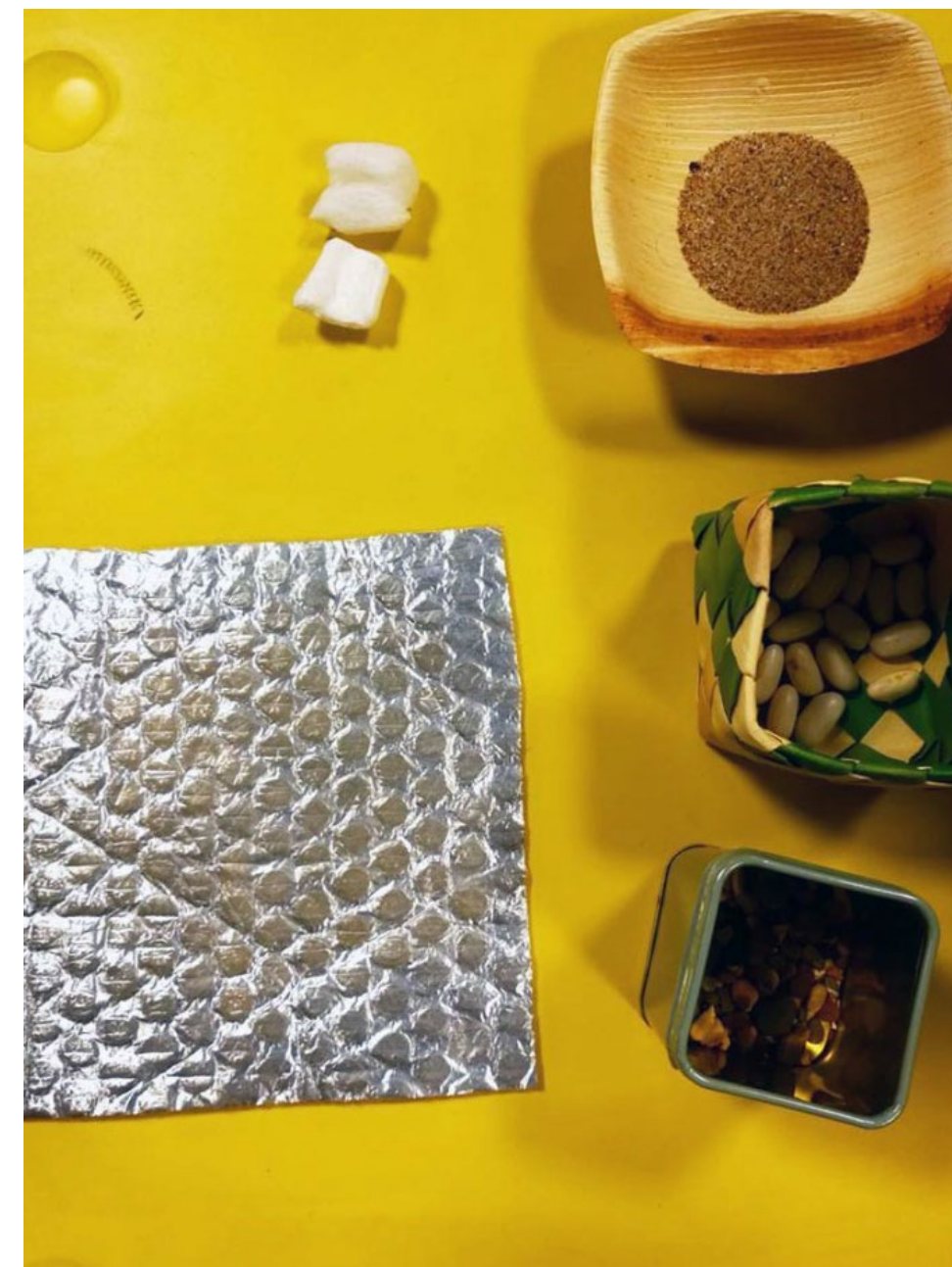
Karen Power during the lab in Växjö in 2020.

***There is no right
or wrong way
to play a stone,
we start from the same
starting point, equal.***

Karen Power



How do you play a nutshell? Seeds in a box? A stone? There is no right or wrong with found objects, only un-biased music making. If the ensemble have skills with specific instruments, these will be introduced later in the process to avoid focus on performance.



Methodology and tools

How might you initiate an inclusive work?

What conditions are required for an inclusive and egalitarian process to function within an ensemble?

What tools can you use to develop an inclusive working environment and process within a group?

Working with mixed ensembles where people come from different artistic backgrounds and experiences presents unique opportunities to develop a more inclusive co-creative process. For ShareMusic and Karen Power, an inclusive ensemble consists of participants who share a common and open approach to creation so that genuine encounters and exchanges can occur.

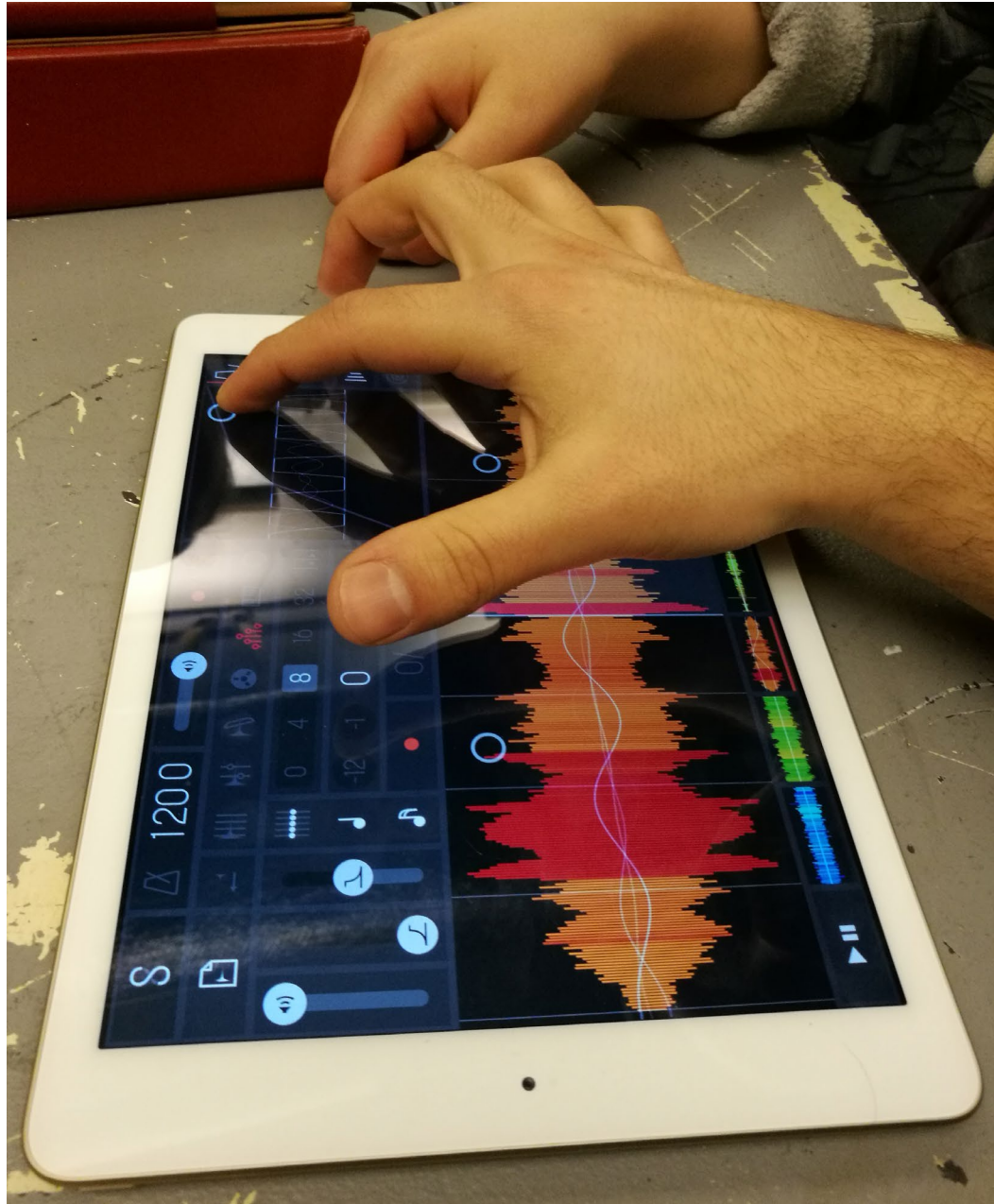
But how do we create an open approach, genuine meetings and exchanges? How do we create a safe space where all voices can be heard and work on equal terms?

We don't want to break out of one box just to create another one.

Karen Power



Ewe Larsson playing the tablet next to the double bass of Musica Vitae. Ensemble communication and exploring a joint language was at the core of the work during this lab.



Close up of Elefantöra's work with tablets during *Bits & Pieces* in 2018. To the right, Caroline Mårtensson and Hannes Glavå are guiding each other through the different apps.

This section describes some of the conditions and tools that have proven to be key to enabling ShareMusic ensembles to work artistically in a safe and inclusive environment. The methodology has emerged from the meeting of ShareMusic's inclusive approach and Karen Power's music-making method. It has been developed and refined through doing, trying, exploring, failing, and trying again. The approach and tools have been designed and adapted according to each ensemble's unique needs and circumstances.

"The method has been developed and refined through doing, trying, exploring, failing, and trying again."



Joel Mansour of Elefantöra has his eyes on the tablet, but listens carefully to the string orchestra. Karen highlights that a prerequisite for creating a safe space and an egalitarian work process is that listening is present as a conscious act in every step.

The in-depth listening

In order to grow and develop as a group, Karen highlights that the ensemble needs to start by deepening and developing their listening skills together and individually. A prerequisite for creating a safe space and an egalitarian working process is that listening is present as a conscious act in every step. She says that the importance of listening is often talked about, yet it is something that we humans so easily forget and lack the tools for – even in music contexts, where we think it would be obvious. Everyone learns differently and carries with them experiences that influence how we listen. Also, within an ensemble, everyone listens differently, and often we may not even know why we are listening. Is it to follow, to lead or to participate? An ensemble therefore needs to develop both an individual and collective awareness of listening and a deeper understanding of why and how they listen.

Listening and responding

In order to build an inclusive environment within an ensemble, ensemble members also need to gain an understanding of how much they themselves take and give space in the room. Karen maintains that most of us can understand what a conversation entails. But in order for us to have an equal conversation between each other, ensemble members need to really listen to what the other musicians are communicating and expressing. There must be air in a conversation for it to be equal. And it's really possible to play with the conversation in a musical context, such as how the different



Liv Dahlstrand, Gusten Aldenklint and Hannes Glavå from Elefantöra during a hybrid workshop in 2020. As the Covid-19-pandemic brought restrictions for travel and social contacts, new questions arose with the increase of digital and hybrid working processes: What happens with music and sound when being transmitted through various digital platforms? How do we assure that the shared time and space is truly a shared experience?

musicians contribute to the conversation within an ensemble. Are they doing a monologue or a dialogue and what are the dynamics of the conversation, is it loving, agitated, shy, or engaged, and so on? What do the musicians want to express with what they play?

Shared time and space

Time helps us provide a sense of structure and meaning. But Karen stresses that even in musical contexts it is important to remember that both performer and audience experience and share common time and space. Musicians can easily get caught up in seeing time in notes and beats, forgetting how they themselves actually contribute to a shared space and time. How time influences the artistic material and outcome. If they've been playing for a long time, they may need to catch their breath, give it some air. What happens if the time in a piece changes from 3 minutes to 1 minute?

The musicians continue to play and follow the same structure but in a shorter time. How is the material affected? As a musician, you need to carry with you the fact that time can change everything and that as a human being and as a music maker you are obliged to relate to time. Karen emphasises that in an effective inclusive ensemble there is a shared understanding of time. That it is important that ensemble members understand and know what their role is in each task. Time helps to constrain and delineate the artistic material. Time can also, at its best, help an ensemble to look beyond its own performance.



Above: Musician Sayam Chortip has introduced poetry into Elefantöra's new music. Here, he plays the tablet, intensely listening to his fellow musicians.

Left: Sound designer Louisa Danielsson and musician Joel Mansour from Elefantöra during their residency at the Elementstudio. The sound design is an important part of Elefantöra's work, but it is the listening that decides how the musical space shifts in size and density.

The inclusive leadership

Does an ensemble need leadership to be inclusive and egalitarian?

If so, what role should a leader play in inclusive work?

Can the leadership role function more as a facilitator? Listening in and giving space to all the voices in the room? An external eye that can help the ensemble with the overall structure?

How can you, as a leader, design a set-up that helps you to be open and intuitive to what is happening in the room? Who are the individuals in the group, are they children, adults, traditionally trained musicians, untrained musicians or beginners? And how can you capture the different needs of a group and balance them in relation to the challenges?

Think about how you can confidently communicate a task to the ensemble, so that everyone understands what they are supposed to do and why.

What tools does this particular group need in order to function in an egalitarian manner and when is it time for you as a leader to step back and let the ensemble grow on its own?

What happens in an ensemble/group where everyone gets to experience leading and being led?

Karen highlights that if leadership is allowed to move around within an ensemble, it offers an opportunity for ensemble members to see each other in different roles. In this way, each individual can gain a deeper understanding of how fellow musicians in the ensemble communicate and create under different conditions. It also gives the musicians a chance to take a closer look at their own role. Are they themselves a leader or a follower, what role would they like to have within the ensemble? Through a mobile leadership where everyone gets to try leading and being led, space is created to reflect together on the different structures and hierarchies that can arise within a group. What roles are needed in the ensemble to make it work?



During a training lab in 2019, Karen developed her methodology further. A group of musicians got to train in workshops with her before leading participants from a day activity centre in various music making workshops. Thus, Karen worked as both leader and observer and the musicians got to experience being both participants and leaders.

The location in the room

An important aspect that is being explored in this research on inclusive ensembles is how the placement of the musicians in the room affects the inclusive working process.

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When musicians from different backgrounds, working methods and conditions come together, it is particularly important to pay attention to the power relations that can arise between different instruments. How the musicians are positioned in the room, in relation to each other and the audience, will therefore have a decisive role in how the interaction will look.

How is equal communication affected by a musician sitting behind a drum kit, for example, or standing behind a double bass, or playing the transverse flute, or playing unconventional instruments such as tablets or stones on a tray? In addition, if they are positioned behind a table, facing away from each other or from any speakers — what impact will this have on listening in the room, on which voices will be heard between the musicians and in the encounter with the audience? If the ensemble consists of musicians with disabilities who use wheelchairs, scooters or other assistive devices, there are other aspects to consider. Therefore, consciously think through every step of the performance, don't forget entrances, exits and applause.



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Just before performance at the Change Music Festival in Kungsbacka 2021. Solo violinist Malin Broman is placed to the left and Elefantöra sits in front of the orchestra, opposite the conductor Simon Crawford-Phillips. This placement lets the audience see Elefantöra well and they blend into the unity of performers. In this case, it was also made sure that Ewe could steer her wheelchair over the stage, not having to criss cross between cables and chairs. Always secure the accessibility well in time and make sure that entrances and exits are equal on a practical as well as an artistic level.



Above: Elefantöra performing during a Sharesymposium in Västerås 2019. The ensemble is placed in front of other instruments, with a speaker to the right of each musician.

Right: Joel Mansour and Ewe Larsson of Elefantöra at *Beats, Sounds & Strings* in 2022, ShareMusic's most recent commission, by composer Hans Ek (conductor in the photo). As seen in the photo, this time the musicians of Elefantöra was placed in the middle of the traditional musicians, using headphones as monitors and sheet music stands for the tablets instead of tables as in 2019. The location in the room always needs to be discussed as all performances have many variables to take into consideration.



If a musician plays a traditional instrument such as the violin, the viewer and the ensemble members can deduce where the source of the sound comes from, allowing them to get closer and know the person behind the sound and what it wants to convey. When a musician sits behind a screen, there is the possibility of creating several sounds simultaneously at the touch of a button, which in turn risks making the person behind the screen more difficult to follow, and thus a little more anonymous. But anonymity can just as easily occur behind a violin or behind a sheet of music, seeing as the musician's own performance is often a greater barrier to their presence and openness to what is happening in the room.

So what is required in the communication between the ensemble members to create equal relationships between the instruments?

Think and try together how you as an ensemble/group can best position yourselves in relation to each other, the room, the speakers and the audience to create a safe and equal space.

What are the conditions for this particular group and space? Look together at the people behind the sound. Play and challenge each other on how each ensemble member can develop their expression and become clearer in their communication within the ensemble and in their encounters with the audience.

Starting up inclusive artistic work

As a first step, ask yourself:

What does inclusion mean to me?

What do I want to achieve with inclusive artistic work?

Take a closer look:

- What are the conditions for your specific inclusive work? And how can an inclusive environment be created based on those conditions?
- What are the backgrounds and previous experiences of the group? What do they need as individuals and as an ensemble to operate on equal terms within a work process?
- What are the different ways of communication within the ensemble? And how can you reconcile them so that everyone can understand and make themselves heard on equal terms?
- Look at the place/room. What is required of the space for everyone to operate on equal terms?
- What preparations are needed to work with this particular ensemble?
- Start from an equal starting point.



A musician from Musica Vitae and Ewe Larsson of Elefantöra after the last day of the lab in 2020. Communication was highlighted as an intriguing area of exploration when participants was interviewed after the lab. What are the preconditions for your inclusive work?

Start inclusive work from an equal starting point, on equal terms, with no performance requirements. Avoid focusing on performance, previous experience and artistic skills at the first meeting. Start with a short presentation, a relaxation exercise or a collaboration exercise focusing on the meeting itself and curiosity about each other. Let the ensemble members start from only their own body and what is in the room. The idea is to start from a new shared experience and from there grow and develop as an ensemble in an equal exploration. The aim is to give time and space through initial exploratory group exercises to build a safe space where there is no right and wrong. A space that encourages a more open and warm environment for co-creation and that is not based on musical rules or comparing each other's different skills.

***What does inclusion
mean to me?
What do I want to
achieve with inclusive
artistic work?***



Initial exercises for an inclusive working process

The following chapter describes some of Karen Power's exercises – How to start up an inclusive ensemble in a safe environment based on an open and inviting approach. If you are working with children or adults who have not played music before, it is possible to adapt and simplify the exercises. Feel free to pick and combine the exercises based on the way you work and the needs of your ensemble. The tools – *In-depth listening*, *Listening and Responding*, *Shared Time and Space* and *Inclusive Leadership* will be included in all exercises. Before and during the work, consider and reflect on how the position of the ensemble members in the room affects the process. How together you can change and develop the placement in the room to create the best conditions for your particular inclusive work.

Musician Marianne Sihvonen of the Skåne based ensemble, experimenting with her first Soundboard in a workshop with Karen Power in 2020.

1. Building listening skills

Purpose: To make ensemble members aware that just by being in the room they have the power to influence and change what we hear and how we listen — which voices are heard in the room. By starting in tasks that are highly constrained, the ensemble can be built up in stages and focus on the basic elements of improvisation and communication.

Implementation: The focus of the exercise is to build listening skills. The ensemble members will communicate and create ideas together using only the sounds around them.

- Have the ensemble members spread out in the room and ask them to be present in the room and with each other. Ask them to close their eyes and listen to what sounds they can hear around them.
- Ask them to think about where they are in relation to the sound they hear. For example, is the sound coming from the street outside or from inside the room? They can do the exercise both as a group and individually.
- Ask them to find/create one sound in the room.
- Let them individually present the sound to the ensemble.

- Let the ensemble explore and communicate with their chosen sounds by passing their sound one by one to someone in the room. The receiver responds by passing their sound on to another ensemble member. At the same time, ask them to reflect on what it takes to create their 'own' sound. How does it feel in the body?
- Explore variations of the own sound. How can they change and shape their sound based on what is happening in the room and in the communication between each other?
- Ask them to open up to receive sounds from the other ensemble members as well. What does it take for an ensemble member to be able to receive a sound?
- Let the ensemble members clarify what they want to communicate with the sounds they create. Do they want to convey harshness or softness? What emotions do they want to evoke in the recipient?

Each part of the exercise ends with a joint reflection on the task. How did the exercise feel? What happened in the room? In the meeting between each other?

2. Listening and responding

Purpose: The idea is to remove performance requirements and instead allow everyone to focus on listening, responding and communicating.

When you ask someone to play an instrument such as the piano or guitar, there is often an inherent demand to perform. There is an explicit manner and expectation of how the instrument should be played. Therefore, it is important to help ensemble members to let go of the focus on their own performance, so that they can see and hear what is happening around them with more open and inclusive eyes. For right here and now, these tasks are all about listening, exploring and communicating through sound.

Try to get musicians to gradually open up so they can focus on developing material in response to what they hear as they listen more deeply.

Implementation: Have the ensemble members create their own instrument from found objects (see page 22, section on Karen Power and Natural Creators). Prepare trays and found objects that you want the ensemble members to use in the exercise. Limit the choices in this exercise as well.

- Have the ensemble members assemble their own instruments — a Soundboard of various found objects. Then ask them to use the Soundboard as their instrument in future exercises. Then perform a series of simple listening and improvisation exercises.
- Let them explore and play with the instrument they have created.
- Ask them to create and select a few sounds that contain a range of musical features and qualities. Limit the types of sounds to 4-5.

Example:

- A thick sound
- A thin sound
- A sharp sound
- An ongoing sound



The idea of this exercise is to remove performance requirements and instead allow everyone to focus on listening, responding and communicating.

Help them explore how they can create a common language and understanding of these sounds.

- Go back and repeat previous exercises based on the different sounds the ensemble members have now created.
- Ask them to pass their sounds between them one at a time. Have them reflect on how they can communicate that they are ready to send their own sound. And as they shape the sound, to think about why they are creating that particular sound.
- What timing should the sound have in relation to the sound of the other musicians and to the whole?
- How can they develop the sound further?
- Get them to listen and respond to the audio sent to them. What do they want to achieve with their answer? Is the sound open or closed, a beginning or an end or something in between?
- Create a conversation that flows between the ensemble. Only one voice or conversation may be heard at a time.
- Ask them to put together different types of sounds collectively and form an overall structure and method of communication. Let what is happening in the room guide how fast the development takes place and how far the ensemble can go.



Musician Edvin Ekman of the Skåne-ensemble, exploring the qualities of a rock in one of the first exercises with Karen Power in 2020.

3. Group performance of a piece:

Pauline Oliveros' Rock Piece.

As example of one kind of score – a text score.

Rock Piece is a text score and an example of the *Sonic Meditations* form of composition created by composer Pauline Oliveros. *Sonic Meditations* consists of attentional exercises in listening and responding based on one's inner reflections and on the surrounding environment. The exercises strive for a state of deep listening and expanded awareness where new forms of shared relationships and encounters can emerge.

Here you can find Pauline Oliveros' material:

<https://popandmom.org/collections/pauline-oliveros-collections>

Purpose: To get ensemble members to focus more deeply on listening, responding, and finding their place in the room and in the ensemble. It is important that each musician becomes aware of what they bring to the shared space and process. Everything they do will affect the process and the whole. There should always be a sense of individual purpose and group balance. *Rock Piece* is a score made up of text instructions that demonstrates what an alternative score could look

like that there are scores that everyone can understand and interpret regardless of background and previous experience.

Implementation: Work through the text score gradually, making sure that everyone is really focused on listening to each other.

The text score of the work briefly described:

The ensemble members choose two stones each as percussion instruments. Based on a free or agreed order, they begin one by one to establish an independent rhythm with the stones. The pulse should be maintained steadily without rhythmic interpretation or accents. It is important that the ensemble listens in and focuses on the overall sound picture throughout the exercise. If two start playing the same pulse, one of them needs to break and start again with a new one.

The members of the ensemble move around the room, sounding slowly and freely, and gradually meet in a tight circle to come to a conclusion. They end independently or in a given order.



An example of a graphic text score. During the residency at the Elementstudio in 2022, Elefantöra created their own music as a collective. For the performance, they also wrote down some scores. Here, Ewe Larsson is playing their handwritten score on the mini grand piano.

4. Introducing layers and the role of the individual

Purpose: This adds more elements for the ensemble to consider in the music-making process. To allow the ensemble members to focus less on their own performance and instead listen more deeply to the other co-creators and the space. Through this exercise, you also ask the musicians to focus on the specific possibilities and limitations of their particular instrument.

Implementation: start introducing pitch by having the ensemble play chime bars. The pace of development is determined by the musicians in the room. Be careful not to rush this segment, but remain aware that the focus and drive of the ensemble members is not lost.

Work through the previous exercises with the chimes. Explore what happens when pitch is brought into the process. Be careful when introducing this step. Once you introduce this element, you will begin to gradually approach a familiar world for most musicians. There is a risk that they will begin to lose focus on shared listening and communication.

5. Time and communication Performance of another Oliveros - Exchanges

Purpose: To show yet another alternative how it is possible to structure and instruct a musical idea. Part of the overall goal is to create a toolbox filled with tools and approaches for the ensemble to choose and pick from. Tools that can help ensemble members develop and build confidence in the co-creative process and in their individual creation and interpretation of the artistic material.

Implementation: interpret and perform another piece by Oliveros, *Exchanges*. This is also a text score, but with more direct and structured instructions. It is important to keep in mind that this form may appeal to some musicians in the ensemble more than others. Briefly, the piece consists of 4 instructions – *Follow the leader*, *Accompany the leader*, *Blend in with the leader*, *Become the leader*.

- Follow each line of instruction and decide as an ensemble how you will interpret it. Divide the instructions between you. Go through the piece part by part and play through them.
- Introduce time. Play through the same piece again but put time limits on each instruction.
- Try different time constraints on each instruction and explore how this changes the piece and the performance.
- Decide time frames on each instruction. Play through the piece.
- As a final step, ask those who usually play traditional instruments to pick up their main instruments. If none of the ensemble members are musicians, you can bring in an outside musician. The ensemble can now try playing through the piece with traditional instruments and musicians. What happens? If any of the ensemble members want to continue playing

Study carefully what happens to the ensemble and the interplay when the traditional instruments are brought into the process.



As a final step in exercise 5, it is now time to ask those who usually play traditional instruments to pick up their main instruments. If none of the ensemble members are musicians, you can bring in an outside musician. Study carefully what happens.

***Stop and summarize and review
the techniques
the ensemble has explored.
Listen, respond — pass on,
leave space, communication and time.
Reveal that the end goal
of this exploratory work
is to create the ensemble's
first co-created work together.***

6. Work with alternative scores and time

Purpose: To throw in another element that the ensemble must relate to as a group and as individuals. To allow the ensemble to create from something that is fixed and cannot be changed. And at the same time have them look more closely at each action they perform, what function it has to the whole and the co-creation.

Implementation: Introduce a recorded/composed soundscape as a kind of score. This will act as a fixed element, something that is fixed and cannot be changed. The ensemble will have to relate to the soundscape, which will influence the artistic choices and the outcome. A soundscape is a composition of sounds that can be composed and/or a composite of various existing sounds. If you are not a musician, you can record about 6-7 minutes of a sounding environment outside or inside. For example, in a park, forest, workplace, shopping centre or school environment.

- Start by having the ensemble listen to the soundscape first.
- Then let them play to the soundscape and interact with it. Let everyone start with Soundboard and found objects first. If the ensemble needs extra support or guidance, ask them to

be inspired and build on the types of sounds they have explored in previous exercises.

- Ask the ensemble to consider the function of each sound created. Is the sound short or long, thin or thick. And that, when creating a sound, they really think about what their goal is in relation to what is happening and to the whole.

Is it in order to, for example:

- Interrupt the soundscape
- Imitate something
- Communicate and build something together with the ensemble
- Or to blend into the soundscape and landscape

Let those who play traditional instruments try playing to the piece with their own instruments. And focus on the differences. What happened? What was the impact on the piece, the individual performance and the group performance?

Relate the time frame to the soundscape, about 7-10 minutes long. Longer than what you have improvised or played before.

7. Interpretation as a method – Introducing a graphic score

Purpose: To use different interpretations as a method for co-creation. As a means of generating ideas and co-creation within the ensemble one can start from a fixed but open score. This leaves room and space for each musician. A graphic score helps to structure and clarify each individual's task and facilitates communication and language between the ensemble members.

Implementation: Use a graphic score, an existing one or one you create yourself.

- Let the ensemble agree together on how to interpret and perform the piece.
- Let them play through the piece.
- Ask them to reflect on what happened when they played the piece and how they can refine and develop it together.

Be open to what is happening in the room. Let the ensemble direct the process but support them when the need arises. Part of your job now is to observe and ensure that everyone's voice continues to be heard in the room and has the opportunity to contribute and participate on equal terms.



Joel Mansour of Elefantöra playing the graphic score of Karen Power's *Machine Chatter* on the tablet in 2018.

8. Create your own graphic/ text score and structure your first inclusive ensemble piece

Purpose: Through the previous exercise, hopefully the ensemble is ready to co-create on their own terms. Challenge the ensemble to employ the tools to create the artistic material together.

Implementation:

- Let the ensemble create and design their own graphic score and together structure their first ensemble work.

It is now time for you to step down as leader and pass on that task to the ensemble. Depending on what is happening in the room – assist and help them maintain focus and direction. It is important that ideas come from all the ensemble members and that there is room for them to make equal, collective decisions.

- Have the ensemble play through and perform the piece a few times. Treat the creation of the score as part of the process so that it can grow and develop along with the musical ideas.

Conclude with a joint reflection. How has the ensemble experienced the process/work? What has been good and what can be developed further next time. Reflect on your own role and the set-up — how can your inclusive work be developed further?



A participant from the day activity centre at the training lab in Skövde 2019, carefully exploring a tablet while Gusten Aldenklint writes notes on the whiteboard. Reflection was a crucial part of this lab as the musicians involved got to be both leaders and being led.

*Your job now
is partially
as an observer,
to make sure that
each member
of the ensemble
is contributing
at their level
and being heard.*

Karen Power

Examples and in-depth information

Here are some in-depth examples from exploratory labs conducted in the context of ShareMusic's development of inclusive ensembles.

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Machine Chatter

Within the *Bits & Pieces* project, ShareMusic commissioned a work by Karen Power for Elefantöra. To create the piece, *Machine Chatter*, Karen and Elefantöra went to the HangOn AB factory in Törestorp to communally listen and then record sound for a day. As a next step, they continued with an exploratory lab where they investigated sounds combined with recorded tones and sounds from the factory. Karen used Soundboard and found objects to remove any demands for performance and to allow the ensemble to just focus on listening and responding. In the third session, they explored different kinds of scores and what they meant to each member of the ensemble. Further, they explored how the musicians within the ensemble experience and view time within a work. Karen began the next process alone with the chamber music ensemble Gageego! Together they tried combining different types of notation within a score, such as graphics, notes, text and aural score. As a final step, Karen brought Elefantöra and Gageego! together as one ensemble and began rehearsing for the performance of the work.



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Sound recording at the HangOn AB factory in Törestorp during the *Bits & Pieces* project. Here, one of the factory workers gets to listen to the sounds collected from his work place by Elefantöra and Karen.



Hannes Glavå of Elefantöra recording sounds at HangOn AB in Törestorp. Karen Power calls this microphone "Elephant Ear" and that is also where the ensemble got their name from. Elefantöra is Elephant Ear in Swedish.

Much of my work is about developing a way of working with an ensemble, rather than for an ensemble. The choice of score type I want to use, the types of materials and the way the participants take these on board, depends on the kind of ensemble I work with. In this case, everything was built from scratch. I started by recording sound with Elefantöra at the factory. That way, everyone started from the same starting point. Then, when we brought in a professional ensemble like Gageego!, we were able to challenge them and make them think outside their professional context. Doing this is very important in this context because, in the end, you get an equal ensemble where everyone takes the same risks and where everyone has to listen and react in the moment.

Karen Power

Karen describes that her goal with *Machine Chatter* was to ensure that active listening was at the core of every step of the process. By carefully considering the artistry and training of each musician, she wanted to develop a challenging environment for all involved. From this, she then designed a process that offered sufficient guidance for the task but was also open enough to allow each individual to contribute. She wanted to create a new, original and qualitative, professional composition that was unique to the context and the group of people.

Collaboration with composition students

At a later stage of *Bits & Pieces*, students from the Master's Programme in Composition at Malmö Academy of Music participated. Under the guidance of different composers, they explored together with Elefantöra how a composer can write for an inclusive ensemble. How do you bring a composer and an ensemble closer together? What can a language look like between a composer and an ensemble?

During the process, one of the master's students told us that combining the traditional ways of working with the graphic functions well. But added that you also need to work with a system that makes the ratio between the voices equal. That it is good if you can use hints of traditional notation and an overall graphic notation so that everyone has an opportunity to interpret, analyse and follow what is happening in the other's voices, on equal terms.

A musician from Gageego! stressed that notation imagery is not always so clear and that it is possible to interpret a notation image very differently. As a composer, you therefore need to be clear about what you are describing and for whom. If there is not a good description, an ensemble will not have

a reasonable chance to rehearse and interpret a work. It is important that everyone knows what they are going to do and why. Then it will be possible for everyone to express themselves, interpret and play.

The collaboration with the composition students highlighted how important it is for an inclusive process that a composer and a conductor dare to explore how they can draw on and combine the qualities of two different ensembles.

Gageego! is good at notes and shaping them. I look unceasingly at the note because the note is the one doing the talking, it's the message from the composer and if I look away it results in something completely different.

Musician from Gageego!

Methodological development

Through the various labs, a methodology emerged on how to start a new inclusive ensemble and then create new works and perform concerts together. Together, Karen and ShareMusic wanted to challenge and test the method. How could it be developed to be more accessible and user-friendly for more people?

It is not necessary to have a lot of experience to create something interesting. Sometimes too much knowledge about theory and rules can even be a hindrance. Instead, if you strip away all previous experience, the creation itself becomes more exploratory and it is in that exploration that you can find really interesting things.

Musician from Elefantöra

ShareMusic and Karen Power share the view that co-creation based on the individual's and the group's own premises facilitates the work towards achieving a more inclusive environment. Thinking inclusively as a first step, it is the driving force to allow the right process for each unique situation to evolve, says Karen. Both ShareMusic and Karen stress that the way musicians and educators work with both inclusion and co-production can look very different, there is no one "right" way.

Karen therefore wanted to let experienced professional musicians from different backgrounds try out the method and develop it within their own context and work. During two days of labs, Karen introduced open and flexible inclusive tools to four musicians. The musicians were then asked to develop and design their own plan to lead a two-day co-creative inclusive work with an ensemble from a day activity centre. Karen was available to the musicians throughout the process, while also providing an opportunity to look at the method from the outside.



During the lab there were conversations and discussions about: what is an inclusive ensemble, what can it be? What is its function? How can everyone contribute and help shape the ensemble so that it develops into an open inclusive environment? How do we avoid that it becomes yet another closed box?

The professional musicians described that it was very rewarding to experience the lab from two different perspectives: during the first part they were participants and had the opportunity to just create and experience, and in the second part they were leaders. They expressed that inclusion creates a freedom, where you are allowed to be an artist and at the same time you are allowed to go outside yourself. They also encountered the challenges that can arise when combining an artistic vision with an inclusive process. They highlighted the realisation that notation can look so different. They stressed that another significant experience was being able to create and perform together as a unit — regardless of background, ability or previous experience. The ensemble from the day activity centre highlighted the experience of working with professional musicians, that it felt like all participants were on the same level, that it was truly equal participation.



Above: Happy faces during the last round of reflections at the training lab. From the left: ShareMusic's chief executive and artistic director Sophia Alexandersson, Karen Power and two of the participating musicians

Left: The ensemble from the day activity centre highlighted the experience of working with professional musicians, that it felt like all participants were on the same level, that it was truly equal participation. The professionals also emphasised the experience of being able to create and perform together as a unit — regardless of background, ability or previous experience.



A common, equal language within an ensemble is an important prerequisite for inclusive, co-creative artistic work. But no two ensembles are the same. Elefantöra have found their way, but always keep on exploring. What will the language of your ensemble be like?

Summary

ShareMusic and Karen Power are now continuing to challenge and develop the method further, in new collaborations, including work with ShareMusic's inclusive ensemble in Skåne.

A common, equal language within an ensemble is an important prerequisite for inclusive, co-creative artistic work. But no two ensembles are the same. The communication tools within an ensemble can be so different. In some inclusive ensembles, all musicians may read traditional notation; in others, improvisation by ear may be the prominent language. Perhaps other factors then also play into how musicians communicate and co-create within the ensemble. Over the years, ShareMusic has used many different approaches to achieve inclusion and co-creation within an ensemble. Alternative notation and new technologies are just some of them.

But how you capture different types of communication and ways of working within a group and how you unite them in a co-creative equal artistic process is the key. It is hoped that the tools and approaches introduced in this material will facilitate and inspire that work.

Final words

As each person and group is unique in its constitution, there will not be one way or one right answer to the question of how to work inclusively. But through years of researching, exploring, challenging and developing the conditions for equal creation, ShareMusic has come to realise that the questions are more important than the answers. The more people who ask questions about how we can work inclusively and create the best conditions for more people to participate, the closer we get to the answer. Because it is in the questions that we can allow ourselves to try, explore, question and reflect. It is through the questions that new ways and methods can have the opportunity to grow and develop.

Now that you have read about our methodological development in inclusive ensembles, we would like to take this opportunity to ask you:

How can you play, explore, challenge and develop your activities and ways of working so that more people can participate on equal terms?

Your perspective is needed!

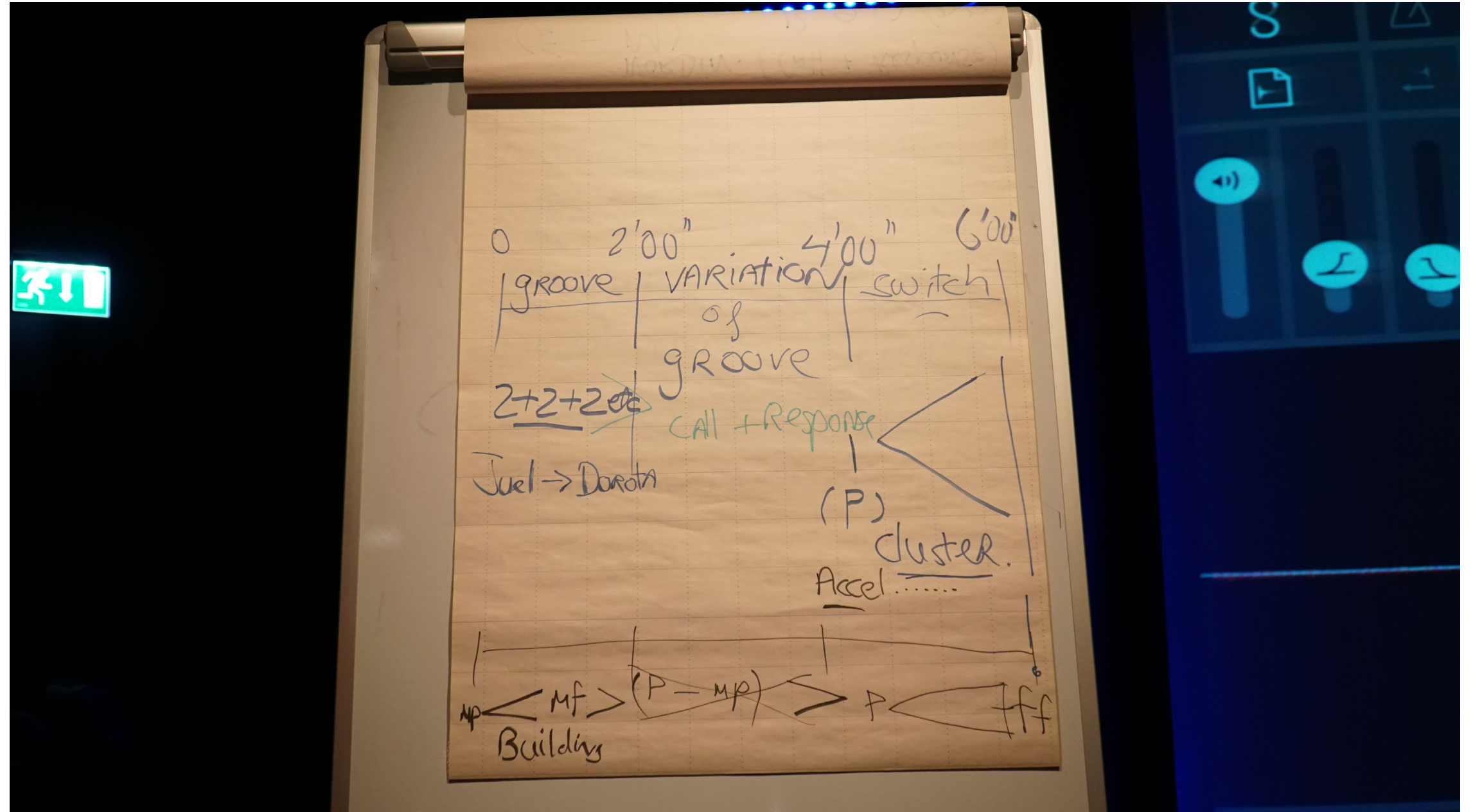


Thank you

Especially to Karen Power for your generous contribution to this text, for your curiosity, creativity, knowledge – everything you bring into each collaboration.

You're a treasure.

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Beats, Sounds & Strings in Helsingborg 2022. Conductor and composer Hans Ek, Elefantöra, Gageego! and the string section of Helsingborg's Symphony Orchestra.

SHAREMUSIC & PERFORMING ARTS

This book is based on approaches used at ShareMusic & Performing Arts, with a focus on methods developed by Irish composer Karen Power and refined in her Natural Creators programme. The aim is to inspire you to take this work further so that more inclusive ensembles are formed. Knowledge and tools are shared in hope that more people dare to try, to challenge — to break down boundaries and hierarchies! — and question. **What is an ensemble and what can an ensemble be?**

Whether you want to form an inclusive ensemble with the goal of performing at all contemporary music festivals or work with ensemble playing in your preschool class, this book presents a number of concrete tools. Tools that you in turn can further develop and adapt based on your work. A fundamental approach is to regard inclusive artistic work as a way of meeting from different perspectives. This is your start. **Start now** at any level — explore, create and develop together.



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