
TOMMIE BLACK-ROFF

tommieroff@gmail.com

www.tommieroff.co.uk



TEACHING PROFILE

Tommie is a versatile musician and educator with a background in Cornish and English folk music. Experienced as both a tutor and a workshop leader he has worked in schools, privately and on short courses. Tommie has developed his own teaching style at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki and as a founder, co-ordinator and teacher of his own summer music school Crean Folk Camp. As a teacher he loves to draw on diverse folk traditions, art therapy, composition, movement, and free improvisation.

Tommie believes in co-created learning where responsibility and initiative is shared between student and teacher. He strives to inspire others, but is also grateful to his students for all that they have taught him. Teaching is learning and only by embodying those ideals can we engage in education as a truly playful and creative endeavour.

He is a firm believer in developing learning independence and confidence, with a focus on musical tools and growth through reflection. By exploring the basic building blocks of music-making from new playful angles, all musicians can develop the skills for lifelong learning and fulfilled practice. A sandpit has many grains, but countless possibilities.

EXAMPLE GROUP WORKSHOPS

Cornish Folk Music

An introduction to some common dance tunes from Cornwall

Duration: 60 minutes

Size: 2-15 participants

Target audience: instrumentalists at all levels

Description: The session opens with a Cornish song (different depending on the time of year) that contains a simple repetitive chorus. A brief description of Cornwall and its folk music scene follows. As an icebreaker I then use a drone game. We find a common drone and take turns in giving it a rhythm, passing it first round the circle, then via eye-contact, to others across the circle. Then, depending on the speed of the class, I proceed to orally teach two or three contrasting tunes including at least one circle/serpent dance and one song-tune with a mnemonic device. The rhythmic drone concept is returned to in each example allowing for the participants to move freely between melody playing a drone accompaniment.

Learning objectives: Participants are aware of some common Cornish dance repertoire and its cultural context. They are familiar with the concept of rhythmic drone and how it can be used to perform folk tunes in an ensemble.

Impulses

Group exercise that develops musical communication

Duration: 120 minutes

Size: 4-15 participants

Target audience: instrumentalists and singers at all levels

Description: The workshop begins with team building ball game. Standing in a circle participants throw a ball to one another each thrower saying their name and each receiver repeating that name before choosing the next destination. The group is then invited to add a feeling or character to the voice, such as loud, soft, squeaking, growling, shyly, carelessly or lovingly. Each receiver copies that feeling or character as they repeat the name of the previous thrower. The next game replaces the ball with an imaginary one. Still in a circle but now in silence, we pass an imaginary ball showing and imitating a particular character such as heavy and difficult, light and easy or hot and

dangerous. All participants are then invited to sit in a circle with their instruments or voices and we continue the imaginary ball game but now with musical notes instead of physical enactment. Closing the ball games we ask the question, "What is an impulse?" with a group discussion before a short break. In the second half of the workshop we play two ensemble games called 'Drop Off' and 'Push Out'. In the first we broaden the idea of impulse from one note to any and all sound. A duo is initiated by the workshop leader giving an impulse, after an unspecified length of time the workshop leader 'drops off' and the next player joins the duo. This duo then follows a path around the circle, each earlier player dropping off and leaving their partner to form a duo with the next. The variation of 'Push Out' allows the next player to push out the former by join at whichever point they wish. Another discussion is initiated to examine the differences between each game. Finally we set four chairs facing inwards at the middle of the circle. Quartets are then invited from the participants, each group being encouraged to use a mix of impulses, dropping off and pushing out to form improvisations of a given length e.g. 4 minutes. Finally a closure discussion focuses on observations and skills learned.

Learning objectives: Participants have a deeper understanding of ensemble musicianship and musical gesture and are able to use the concept of 'impulse' to inform their decisions when improvising, arranging and performing in a group.

Nordic Tunes

An introduction to Nordic folk music with a diverse selection of tunes including Smålands Slängpolska, Sønderhoning, Vossarudl and Finnish Polska

Duration: 90 minutes

Size: 2-15 participants

Target audience: intermediate and advanced instrumentalists

Learning objectives: Participants are familiar with several Nordic folk tunes and their cultural contexts. They are also aware of the importance of feel, swing or groove in each case and how dance can be used to deepen musical understanding.

Description: This workshop is a tune-learning session, learning by ear, aimed at opening a window onto several localised folk traditions from across the Nordic Countries. The session opens with a song polska about saunas from Pohjanmaa/Österbotten in Finland. This icebreaker can be danced and sung in a circle first, then moved to instruments. Three other dance tunes - from Voss in Norway, Sønderho in Denmark, Småland in Sweden and Pohjanmaa/Österbotten - are then covered with accompanying stories of origins and contexts. Each tune is also approached through the lens of movement, using dance activities to introduce several of the tunes and connect the participants to the dance's feel or swing. A common thread is also established between these markedly different dances, all of which contain an element of continuous pulse (each beat carries relatively equal accent and the dancers are free to dance without adhering to the musical metre). Resources are provided at the end of the workshop for participants to delve further into each tradition.