

Assessment pilot project 'Animateurs' in cooperation with Yo! Opera Festival September – December 2005

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1. Context and short description of the project

YO! Festival includes a community opera project in close collaboration with Utrecht's company for public transport, Opera in the Bus, with, among other things, six bus operas. One of the buses, number 5, is manned by vocal students of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, who engage bus travellers in a short creative musical workshop. They will be equipped for this during a number of training sessions by singer-animateurs Nia Lynn and Natalie Williams, and Jos Zandvliet, a community musician,

The project in bus 5 is a pilot of the lectorate *Lifelong Learning in Music* of the Royal Conservatoire in the Hague and the North Netherlands Conservatoire in Groningen. Through this pilot the lectorate does not only aim to contribute to the personal professional development of music students, but also to look into a number of issues that are important to the conceptual framework of lifelong learning: key competencies of the music animateur, context-related assessment and reflective practice. Therefore the pilot project is monitored and described as a case study.

The project in bus 5 has no direct link to the busopera's. People get in and out of the bus during the ca. 25 minutes drive between the departure from the railway station and the arrival at the end stop. Participation is voluntary, some people will participate other not. Four students taking the role of the animateur will lead the workshop, six fellow students sit in the bus together with the other passengers

2. Objectives of the project

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Passing time in a pleasant way Feeling good/harmonious/connected

Objectives of the lectorate:

1. Mapping the tactics that animateurs use in a creative music workshop related to the context of the bus-five-project.
2. Determining the ingredients for training the students from the singing department of the Royal Conservatoire / North Netherlands Conservatoire in their role as animateur (engaging audiences in creative music workshops).

3. Research questions

1. How do the passengers of bus five appreciate the creative music making?
2. To what extent is success in the creative music making related to the person of the animateur?
3. To what extent is success in the creative music making related to the tactics and skills handed over to the animateur in the preceding training sessions?
4. What kind of obstacles do the students of the singing department experience in their role as animateur?

4. Competence domain of the animateur

Definition of the animateur:

'a practicing artist, in any form, who uses her/his skills, talents and personality to enable others to compose, design, devise, create, perform or engage with works of arts of any kind' (Animarts, 2003).

Workshop leader skills are essential. Sean Gregory: *An effective workshop leader has to be a multi-skilled musician who can perform many diverse roles, such as composer, arranger, facilitator, improviser, performer conductor, teacher and catalyst.*

In his overview 'What takes place in a creative workshop?' Sean Gregory mentions a range of activities (and skills) that take place in a creative workshop: warm-ups, interpretation, instrumental skills, arranging, improvisation, performance, listening and evaluation. One of the main goals in the process is to create an environment where the activities interact and are interconnected to each other. Although each activity needs a particular focus, the 'turning points' tend to be when elements come together as a whole, each becoming a catalyst for the next

Key competencies of the animateur are

1. Be able to relate and respond to a range of musical styles and genres.
2. Knowing how to work effectively in mixed groups varying in size, age, musical background and experience:
 - how to 'read' the group
 - how to create a safe atmosphere.
3. Knowing how to teach the group:
 - learning a song together; learning to pitch things at the right level, learning not to get into details; engage physically; voice/body coordination, holistic experience.
4. Knowing how to make use of the creative energy and potential of the members of the group
 - make people owner of the musical process and the product;
 - make use of the musical expertise present in the group;
 - take care of the structure of process and product (it must have meaning for the participants);
 - knowing when to intervene and when not.
5. Be able to switch between the various roles of a workshop leader or animateur (composer, arranger, facilitator, improviser, conductor, teacher and catalyst) according to the momentum in the group process.

Tactics

Making contact with and gaining confidence of the passengers in the bus will be the first priority of the animateur (student from the singing department) starting to work with the passengers. Therefore he or she starts with 'warm-ups' that act as a 'tuning in' process aimed at developing concentration, group awareness, self-awareness, confidence and spontaneity.

Fundamental is the ability of the animateur to relate and respond to a range of musical styles and genres as and when they arise during the collaborative process. It is critical that the given material is sufficiently open for the passengers to add to, adjust or discard ideas in order to feel ownership of the process.

The relation between intervention and non-intervention of the animateur is extremely subtle in collaborative forms of music-making. Individual decisions are constantly taken place, but the critical issue is how the animateur uses these decisions for the benefit of the whole group.

Summary of tactics to be used in this particular context:

Critical is 'Leading through Doing': the bus is on the move, passengers get on and off the bus, and the animateur has to keep it going without stopping or explaining (Schön's : Reflection in Action!).

In this context the following tactics are useful:

- The musical idea should be clear and easy to join in.
- Use of simple rhythms (one *feel* to hold on to), and around that just one key idea.
- The concept of 'variations on one theme': stopping, highlighting, moving on. The leader takes an inviting role to 'join in'.

5. Training programme (Thursday September 22)

The training programme will consist of three parts:

I Warm up exercises: body rhythms and voice. In order to gain confidence, and to work on coordination and community skills

II Learn some songs which are useful in a workshop context (like in the bus). They will be songs which are easy to improvise on, like gospel, blues, African songs (world and folk music).

III Song writing work: composing a song together. Goal of doing this is learning how to facilitate song writing in a workshop.

(N.B. no scores, everything aurally).

6. Research methods

We try to use more than one research method for each research question. This principle (triangulation of methods) strengthens the validity of the outcomes of the research. If different research methods generate the same outcomes, the outcomes have more value because they are not connected to one particular research method.

Research question 1

'How do the passengers of bus five appreciate the creative music making?'

Methods:

- Oral interviews with a number of passengers after the event.
- Observations in the bus (how many passengers participate spontaneously in the creative music making).

Research question 2

'To what extent is success in the creative music making related to the person of the animateur?'

Methods:

- Observations in the bus (criterion: not the tactics are decisive but the personality of the student/animateur)
- Observations are done by the students as well as one of the trainers (if possible) and/or the researcher.

Research question 3

'To what extent is success in the creative music making related to the tactics and skills handed over to the animateur in the preceding training sessions?'

Methods:

- Observations in the bus (registration of action and reaction chains that take place in the creative process and evaluating the results of the actions by the fellow students in the bus; if possible successful actions and tactics can be analysed in more detail if the workshop is registered on video tape, this can be done later on).

Research question 4

'What kind of obstacles do the students of the singing department experience in their role as animateur?'

Methods:

- Self assessment of the student/animateur (what were difficult situations, what were the dilemma, why was chosen for the solution as observed in the situation).
- Peer observations (what was successful and what went wrong).

7. Final Assessment

1. All students taking part at the workshop of September 22 write a self reflective account (max. 1 A4)
2. The 10 students taking part in the training sessions in Utrecht in October (Jos Zandvliet) write a self reflective account (questions provided)
3. Self assessment of the four animateurs (questions provided)
4. Peer assessment report of the six fellow students (questions provided)

Monitoring and Report

1. Film: September 22, 15 – 16 October Bus project
2. Overview of the pilot project
3. Scoring of the evaluations
4. Outcomes and conclusions
5. Discussion of outcomes and conclusions with principal study teacher and participating students (2nd half December 2005)