OLD CATS / NEW TRICKS:
INTRODUCING FREE IMPROVISATION TO OLDER ADULT MUSICIANS

by

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Abstract

This research project was designed to document, examine, and analyze the experiences of older adult musicians as they participated in a series of ensemble music improvisation sessions. One of the goals of the study was to synthesize and augment the following existing bodies of research: 1) current studies demonstrating improved quality of life for retired senior citizens who routinely participate in notation-based group music making; and 2) data supporting the theory that young people who engage in ensemble improvisation activities see significant improvements in their musical skills. To carry out this study, the researcher facilitated 12 weekly 90-minute music improvisation workshops with six older adult musicians, four of whom participated in the data gathering.

Quantitative data was collected through a pre-study questionnaire designed in accordance with the Likert model. An observational weekly field notes journal compiled immediately following each session and a series of post-study semi-structured interviews comprised the qualitative component. At the conclusion of the study, participants reported an enhanced appreciation of some elements of music discourse and performance practice, increased self-awareness regarding comfort level when playing in ensembles, and a reinforcement of their strongly-held belief that the benefits derived from group music making go beyond the gratification and fulfillment of the music itself; specifically, social relationships are often built and strengthened through musical engagement with others.

Conclusions provide sufficient evidence to suggest that an environment featuring improvised music making can potentially bring about perceivable improvements in quality of life for older adult participants and can broaden their musical perspectives.

Résumé

Ce projet de recherche visait à documenter, à examiner et à analyser les expériences de musiciens âgés participant à des groupes de musique d'ensemble improvisée. L'un des objectifs de l'étude consistait à synthétiser et enrichir les études suivantes : 1) études actuelles démontrant la qualité de vie supérieure des musiciens âgés retraités qui participent régulièrement à des ateliers d'exécution musicale annotée; et 2) données appuyant la théorie que les jeunes qui s'adonnent à des activités d'improvisation de groupe observent une nette amélioration de leurs compétences musicales. Pour mener à bien cette étude, la chercheure a organisé deux séances hebdomadaires d'improvisation musicale de 90 minutes chacune avec six musiciens âgés, dont quatre participaient aussi à la collecte des données.

Les données quantitatives ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire de type Likert administré avant le début de l'étude. La composante qualitative prenait la forme d'un cahier de notes d'observation hebdomadaire rempli à la fin de chaque séance et d'une série d'entrevues semi-structurées menées à la fin de l'étude. À la fin de l'étude, les participants disaient apprécier plus divers éléments de la pratique musicale et du discours de la musique, être plus conscients de leur degré de confort personnel lorsqu'ils jouaient en groupe et plus convaincus qu'avant que la musique de groupe va bien au-delà de la

gratification et de l'épanouissement musicaux et favorise, en particulier, l'établissement et le renforcement des relations sociales.

Les données de conclusion portent à croire qu'un environnement favorable à la musique improvisée est susceptible d'améliorer de façon perceptible la qualité de vie des musiciens âgés et d'élargir leurs horizons musicaux.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to the project participants: Jane, Irv, Carol, Shira, Fran, and Barbara for taking the time to attend; for their energy and enthusiasm; for making me a better facilitator; for their truly valuable insights and feedback; and for creating some wonderful memories.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr. Lisa Lorenzino for her valuable feedback, her willingness to freely offer her time and attention, and for her unruffled, even-tempered presence. She truly motivated me throughout this process. I would also like to recognize the support I received from Dr. Jesse Stewart, who has been a mentor to me since I became interested in expanding my passion for improvised music from performance to academia. He introduced me to the field of improvisation pedagogy and served as an excellent role model in facilitating improvisation workshops. As a performer, an academic presenter, an innovator, a devoted community advocate, and a friend, he never fails to inspire me.

Thank you to fellow McGill students Audrey-Kristel Barbeau and David Larochelle-Peretz with the Montreal New Horizons band who graciously welcomed me and assisted me in recruiting participants for this project.

Inspiration for this work also came from the late Pauline Oliveros, who exemplified what it means to be a true innovator; Festival International de Musique Actuelle de

Victoriaville, which has been fearlessly presenting avant-garde music since 1984; the Guelph Jazz Festival and founder/artistic director Ajay Heble for their immeasurable contributions to the music and the research; and finally to those who created, built, and continue to sustain ICASP/IICSI as a point of convergence and source of support for those of us who are passionate about improvisation pedagogy, performance, research, and study.

Much gratitude goes to those with whom I have had the great honour and pleasure to improvise over the past fifteen years. Thank you for opening my ears to new sounds and my mind to new ways of hearing and of thinking about music. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my family, without whom I would not be the person I am: my four children who would make any parent proud, and my seven grandchildren, all of whom have improvised with me from the time they were able to bang on things. I love you all.

Preface

Prefatory remark: “music improvisation” and “improvisation” will be used throughout the text to refer to improvisational music which is not structured according to a pre-composed musical plan, but is simply created in the moment. “Free improvisation,” “non-idiomatic improvisation,” or “pan-idiomatic improvisation” more accurately describe the specific sub-genre of improvised music with which this study is concerned.

How did I come to decide to design, develop, and run improvisation workshops for older adults? In my relatively recent (2012-2013) observations working in Montreal area high school music classrooms supervising McGill student teachers, I noted that classroom music teachers, for whatever reasons, were not including improvisation in their lessons. I was aware that in the Quebec Education Program, “improvisations, arrangements, and compositions” are named as the “three types of complex tasks” to be used in order to fulfill the requirements of “Competency 1: Creates musical works” (QMECAE, 2007 p. 9).

Having twenty years’ experience as a classroom teacher (adult education, academic sector), and being a strong advocate for music improvisation, my original intention for this masters degree was to locate and compile information, lesson plans, professional

development ideas, and organized pre-written activities that would assist music educators in facilitating music improvisation in their classrooms. Not only is this type of music improvisation a part of the stated curriculum both in Quebec and at least three other Canadian provinces, the U.K. and New Zealand, but research in schools has confirmed its benefits to music students in improving their skills and anecdotal evidence points to significant enhancement of social relationships in groups that take part in improvisational music.

Through a fellow McGill student, I was introduced to Audrey-Kristel Barbeau, a McGill PhD candidate whose research involved concert bands for older people. With support from her supervisor, she established the Montreal New Horizons Band as a branch of the New Horizons International Association, an ever-expanding organization dedicated to providing music making opportunities for older adults. Audrey-Kristel had recruited members, located a venue, organized weekly rehearsals, and assembled appropriate repertoire. Then she went on to conduct the orchestra and collect the data for her study.

Unlike other New Horizons Bands, the Montreal group is intergenerational and fully bilingual. Audrey-Kristel has integrated music education students from McGill University into the band to both play and conduct. At her invitation I attended two rehearsals and spoke with the members informally during their refreshment break. Then she asked me to lead an improvisation workshop one evening during the spring of 2015. I had never led this sort of workshop, but I have participated in a number of them. In addition, I had experienced transitioning from playing written music to playing in an ensemble without anything pre-composed, so I prepared the workshop from that perspective. Approximately 20 band members attended, and everyone was able to participate and play together with

laughter, smiles, good humour, and a relaxed comfort level. A few of the New Horizons Band members inquired about doing another session, so indefinite plans were made for one to take place in the fall of 2015.

At this point, I decided to organize my masters thesis work around a series of free improvisation workshops with retired adult musicians. In that way, I could achieve something similar to my original goal: compiling an easily-implemented curriculum for ensemble improvisational music creation, only it would be geared towards people of post-retirement age. As a member of that demographic myself, I could offer an insider point of view into unique needs of older people, rather than having to theorize, observe, and rely on other studies. If successful, I could facilitate similar workshops at community centres for older adults and encourage others to continue promoting this type of music pedagogy.

Aware of my interest in improvisation pedagogy, my supervisor sent me a dissertation containing references to recently-completed research projects with music students aged 7-20. Quantitative data collected in these studies indicated significant benefit that regular improvisation activities had on music students' sight-reading, memorization, and ear training. Qualitative data pointed to perceived improvements in general musicianship and group music-making dynamics as a result of regular improvisatory music activities. Perhaps I could find similar results with older musicians. When my daughter informed me that she had arranged for me to lead eight music improvisation workshops from October through December, 2015 at the local elementary school her children attend, preparing and facilitating these sessions solidified the approach that I would take in the workshops with older adults.

I then discovered research on the many benefits to older adults who make music together: elevated mood, improved quality of life, and cognitive and physical improvements were all documented in these studies. The obvious conclusion was that older people should be encouraged to engage in ensemble music-making, and the most efficient means to that end would be improvisational music, because there is no need to learn notation. In addition, those who read music can potentially improve their skills through participating in improvisation on a regular basis. If creating music in ensembles is beneficial to such a degree, maximum numbers of older people should be encouraged to participate. I was further motivated by the knowledge that, in nearly all countries of the world, the increase in the population of older adults is overtaking that of all other age brackets, and this trend is projected to continue to the latter years of the 21st century (U.N., 2015).

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Purpose of the Study

This research project consists of an examination and analysis of all aspects of the process as well as the recorded results of offering weekly improvised music activities to adults aged 55 or older who are currently playing music on a regular basis, but who have never engaged in improvisation. Data collected includes a pre-study questionnaire, the researcher's journal of observations and reflections on the weekly sessions, and post-study interviews. Audio recordings were made of parts of two sessions.

The broader purpose of the study is to identify and define some of the essential elements of a successful improvisational music program for older adults in general. The results of this study can be used by music educators, or by anyone who wishes to facilitate music improvisation workshops for any group of older adults: experienced musicians, beginners, or even non-musicians. Individuals of retirement age and beyond have the capacity to continue to learn new skills, and to contribute to and be actively involved in society if given appropriate mechanisms for engaging - such as opportunities to participate in improvised music making. If the inherent value of playing music is that it results in perceivable improvement in quality of life for older participants, then improvisation will allow greater numbers of people to play music and thereby realize this benefit.

I hope that this study encourages the successful establishment and perpetuation of improvised music making as a fundamental component of arts programmes in seniors' social centres, and retirement facilities, and that it offers another tool for hospice and palliative care providers.

Research Questions

The following questions served as the primary focus for the research:

1. How do older adult musicians describe their experience of improvised music-making? What do they value about it?

2. In what ways do music improvisation activities serve to allow people with any level of music experience to play together?

3. Which of the following improvements were noticeable and in what ways: music skills such as music fluency, sight-reading, and/or memorizing music; confidence and comfort level?

4. How does engaging in ensemble improvised music-making enhance participants' quality of life?

Need for the Study

Given that the percentage of people within the oldest age demographic is rapidly increasing and that elderly individuals are prone to greater dependency as well as increasingly declining mental, emotional, and physical health, any means to mitigate the issues and challenges common to older age should be welcome. Engaging in ensemble music making has been found to enhance personal development, has been linked to recovery from depression, and is shown to motivate further participation in other social activities (Creech et al., 2013). Older individuals who participated in music activities scored more positively on scales of loneliness and morale, and reported decreased anxiety

and an elevated mood (Clements, 2010). The compelling nature of these research results leads to the conclusion that more opportunities should be made available for older individuals to participate in making music. One means of more quickly achieving this outcome would be to eliminate the task of learning to read music notation. The ability to engage in music improvisation does not include this prerequisite.

Although researchers have examined the various benefits of music making for older adults, no projects of any scope concerning music improvisation for seniors could be found. This project addresses that gap as well as adding to the existing research into the issues and challenges with regard to aging populations worldwide. Those involved in the medical field, in social work, and in seniors' health and wellness organizations are all potential beneficiaries of this research because it will inform them about the specific and broader applications of improvisational music in the lives of older adults.

Summary

This document consists of five chapters: Chapter 2 comprises a comprehensive review of relevant literature; Chapter 3 explains the methodology used in the study; Chapter 4 includes the interview results and analysis; and Chapter 5 presents conclusions, summary, and suggestions for future study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

As the number of individuals over the age of 65 continues to accelerate within the total population worldwide (United Nations, 2015), there is a greater necessity for the unique needs of this age group to be identified, examined, and managed. Healthy adults transitioning into retirement want to maintain a satisfying quality of life, adding "life to years" and not simply "years to life." A number of studies confirm considerable benefits to seniors who participate in music ensembles (Creech 2014; Clements, 2010) . In addition to the creative fulfillment of engaging in a collaborative artistic activity, these individuals cite the gratification they derive from regular social contact with the other members of the group (Creech et al. 2013; Varvarigou et al. 2013; Hays et al. 2002). In order to encourage more seniors to make music together, improvisational music sessions could be made more widely available. Improvising is immediately accessible, given that notation-reading is not a requirement. This chapter includes four sections that examine the following topics relevant to this study: 1) the global aging phenomenon and the means to optimizing quality of life for senior citizens; 2) the science of music and the benefits of ensemble music-making; 3) improvisational music and its pedagogical forms; and 4) working with older adults and constructing models for facilitating improvisational music workshops with them.

Aging and Health-Related Quality of Life

The continued increase in the number of elderly people in Canada, the United States, and the world brings with it a significant rise in the old-age dependency ratio, which represents the number of elderly as compared to those of working age (Economist, 2009).

In other words, a greater proportion of the population will become dependent to some degree upon fewer numbers of individuals who are in their younger productive years. This section examines the upsurge in numbers within the older population, and offers results from studies into how best to fulfill the needs of the elderly in such a way that they can maintain their autonomy well into their later years.

Dimensions of the Aging Phenomenon

In Canada, the percentage of people 65 years of age and over has been steadily increasing since 1971; as of 2013, the senior demographic represented over 15 % of the total population. As shown in the following figures (Figure 2.1 and 2.2), by the end of 2017, the number of older adults is expected to exceed that of individuals 14 years and under, and all projections predict an increasingly wider gap, with those over 65 years old reaching 30% of the population by 2046 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

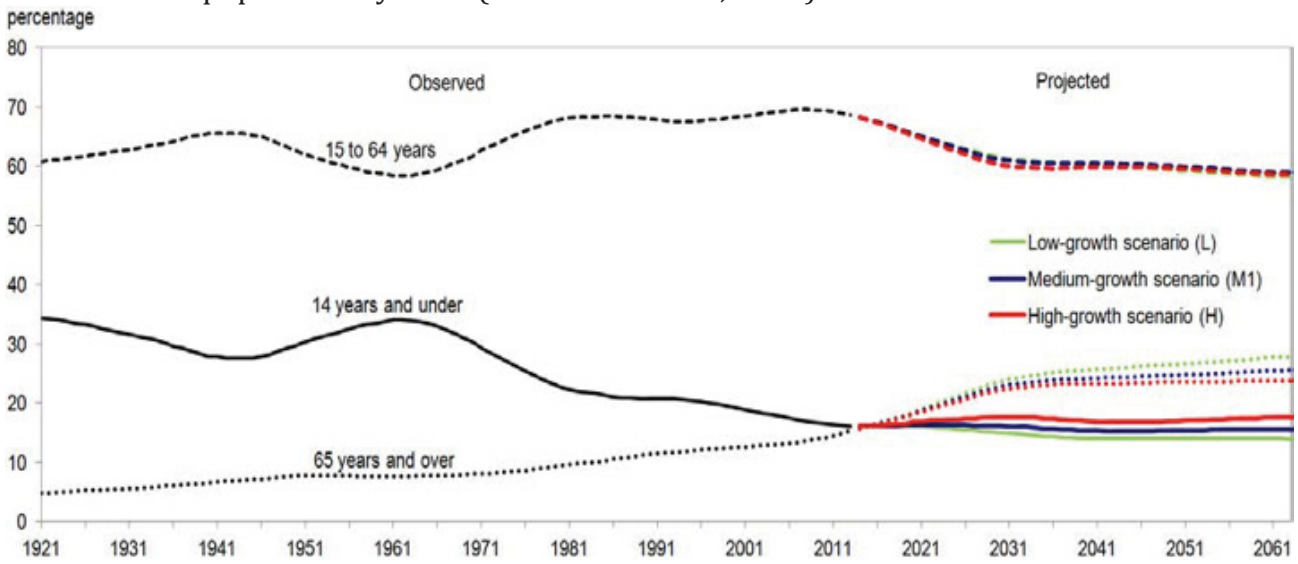

Figure 2.1. Toward a higher proportion over 65 years than 14 years and under (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The causal factors seem to be a combination of increased longevity due to medical advances, the aging of the "baby boomer" population bulge, and a decreasing birth rate; but regardless of why or how, the reality is that Canada's population is aging, and this trend is likely to continue at an increased rate. The over-65 demographic is projected to include at least ten million individuals in Canada by 2061, as shown in Figure 2.2 below (ibid)

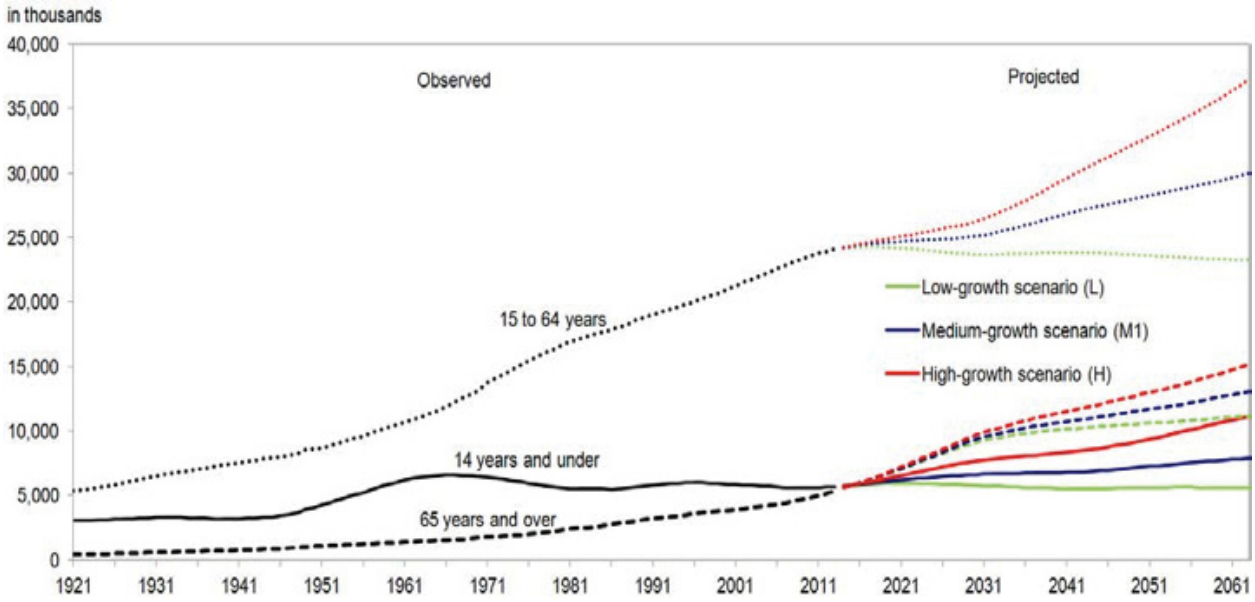

Figure 2.2 Number of Canadians over 65 years old to be at least 10 million by 2061 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

In the United States, persons over 65 years old comprise one-eighth of the population. Those over 85 are the fastest-growing group and their numbers are projected to triple by the year 2030 (Drewnowski, 2001). The same phenomenon is occurring worldwide. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (see Figures 2.3 and 2.4 below), the global population of people aged 65 and older is expected to exceed 1.6 billion, or 16.7% of the 9.7 billion projected total population by 2050. By the end of this century, the number is 2.5 billion persons 65 and older, out of a predicted total of just over 11 billion, or 23% of the world's population. At the current time, the proportion is just over 8.5%. (U.N., 2015).

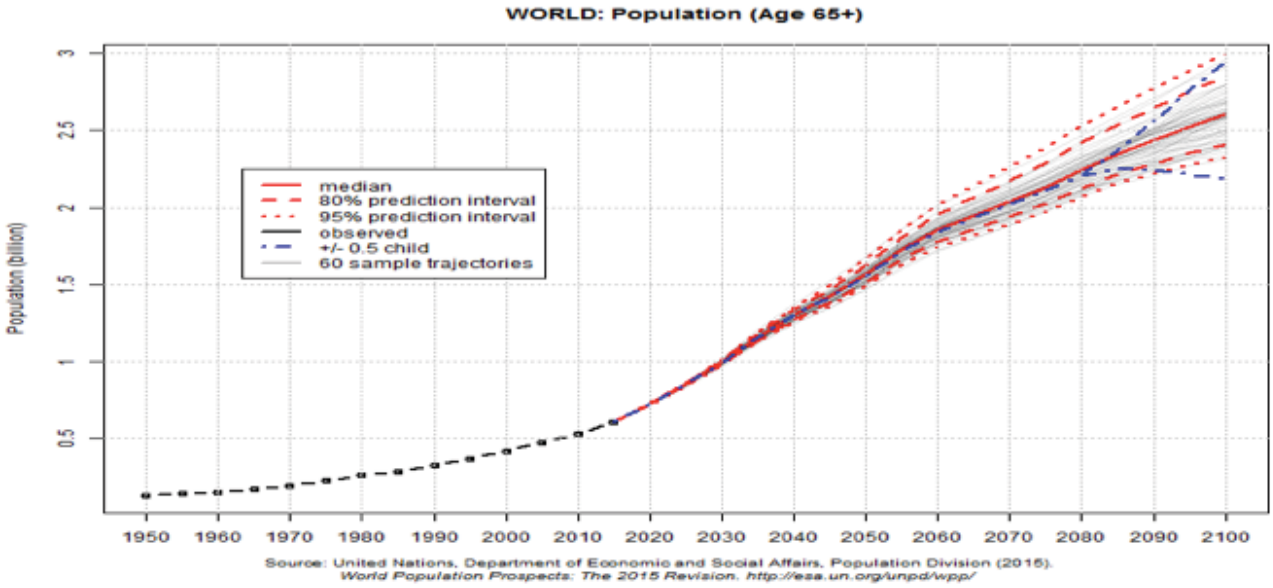

Figure 2.3 Global population numbers of individuals over 65 years old (U.N. 2015).

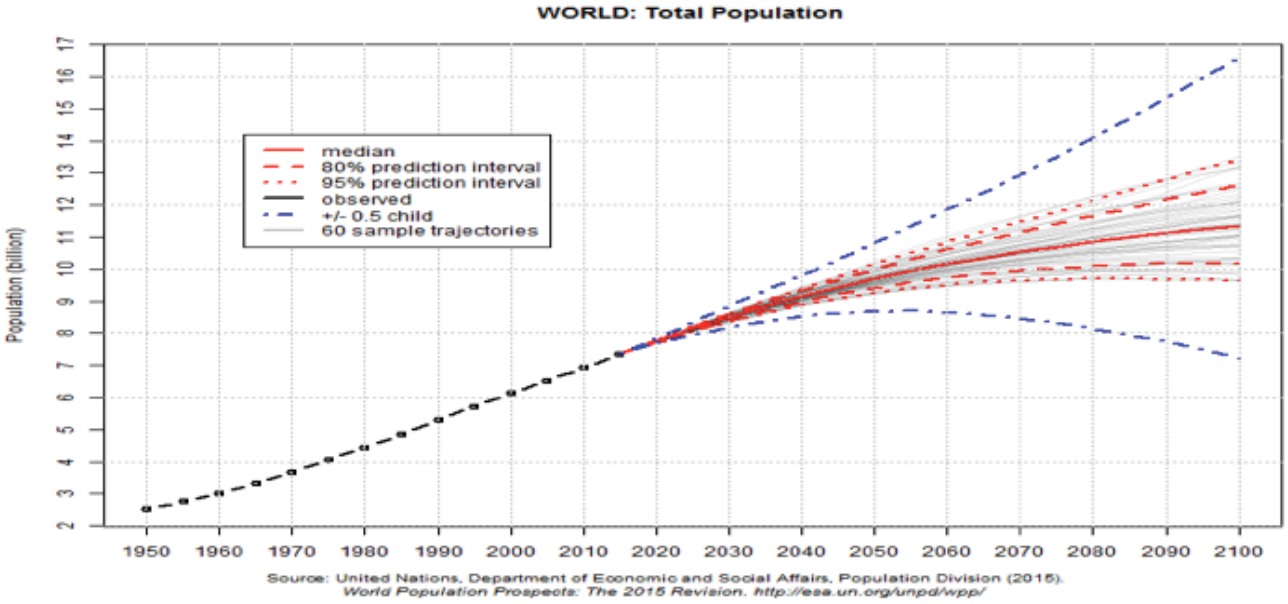

Figure 2.4 Total global population numbers projected to the end of the 21st century (U.N., 2015).

As shown in Figure 2.5 below, regions with the highest predicted pattern of aging, notably East Asia and several of the larger countries in Europe, are expressing a greater degree of concern that aging is a "major problem for their country." With increasingly fewer people comprising the working-aged population, retired individuals in these areas are less confident about their future security, and younger adults are equally concerned about their ability to provide the necessary support (Pew, 2014).

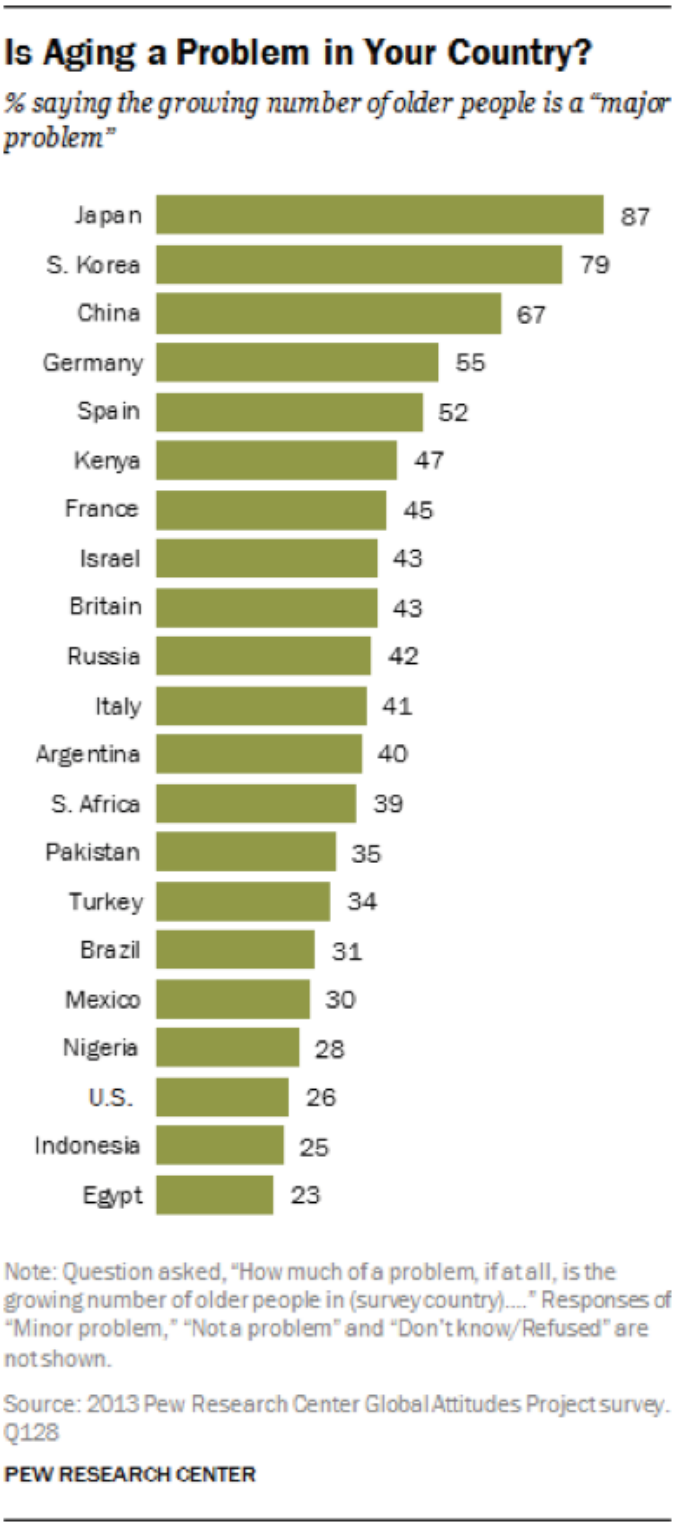

Figure 2.5: Percent of people reporting that aging is a problem in their country (Pew, 2014).

Mitigating the Challenges Associated with Aging

Regardless of one's status or occupation, the transition from middle to older age brings a common set of challenges; and with rapidly expanding numbers of individuals entering that phase of life, these challenges will continue to become increasingly significant for society as a whole. The focus on "adding years to life" is shifting to "adding life to years," and the emphasis is on productive and successful aging rather than simply achieving maximum longevity. In order to begin addressing these concerns, attention has shifted to Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL) (Drewnowski & Evans, 2001).

Improving nutrition and increasing physical activity are no longer simply viewed as a means to increase lifespan or avoid disease; but are considered in relation to how they affect or are affected by the individual's current quality of life (ibid). That is, how do eating and exercise habits contribute to the resulting HRQOL and how does the individual's HRQOL influence the choices he/she makes with regard to diet and exercise?

Motivations for behavioural change and the perceived benefits, as assessed using HRQOL measures, also include the desire to strengthen social relationships, increase life satisfaction, and enhance happiness. For example, physical activity can be viewed simply as a means to improve overall physical health, but when viewed within the Health-Related Quality of Life context, exercise done in a social setting has additional value in generating feelings of pleasure and enjoyment, increased self-esteem, and human connection; all of which directly or indirectly impact one's ability to continue to function autonomously (ibid). Table 2.1 (below) represents a tool used to measure HRQOL by assessing aspects of physical and psychological health, social relationships, and the individual's environment.

Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Health-Related Quality of Life in Older Adults

Domain	Facets Incorporated Within Domain
Physical health	Activities of daily living
	Dependence on medicines and medical aids
	Energy and fatigue
	Mobility
	Pain and discomfort
	Sleep and rest
	Work capacity
Psychological	Body image and appearance
	Negative feelings
	Positive feelings
	Self-esteem
	Spirituality, religion, personal beliefs
	Thinking, learning, memory and concentration
Social relationships	Personal relationships
	Social support
	Sexual activity
Environment	Financial resources
	Freedom, physical safety, and security
	Health and social care: accessibility and quality
	Home environment
	Opportunities to acquire new information and skills
	Participation in recreation/leisure activities
	Physical environment (pollution, noise, traffic, climate)
	Transport

Table 2.1 Quality of life measurement instrument developed by the World Health Organization, 1999 (ibid).

Social well-being is a factor that makes a major contribution to overall HRQOL in that it directly benefits physical and mental health. In their 2000 study, *"Social Support and Health-Related Quality of Life Among Older Adults,"* researchers working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States measured the relationship between subjects' perceived level of social support and the number of reported occurrences of depression, anxiety, feelings of vitality, and physical or mental illness (Keyes et al., 2005). The research subjects were grouped as follows: a) those who lived alone; b) those who lived with one person; and c) those who lived with two or more persons. The frequency of social interaction outside of the home was tabulated, and the subjects' perceived number of close friends was factored into the results. Conclusions showed significant correlation in negative moods and conditions with those who "almost never" visited friends or relatives. There was no indication that living alone led to social isolation; and in fact, the larger the household, the greater number of negative observations (ibid).

Increased levels of perceived social support were associated with fewer mentally unhealthy days and with increased vitality. Having at least three friends was also of significant benefit. Community support can be critical for older adults who are at greater risk of isolation, and programs that bring these individuals together and are designed to both create interactive situations and to reduce social isolation can improve HRQOL (ibid).

Cognitive decline is another age-related concern, with recent studies showing mitigating effects of leisure activities such as walking, reading, socializing, and playing music. Increased social interaction has also been correlated with reduction of cognitive decline, as well as other positive dimensions of seniors' health (Wang et al., 2012).

Rudman, Cook, and Polatajko conducted research into the benefits to senior individuals who regularly engage in what they termed mental, physical, and social activities. Titled *"Understanding the Potential of Occupation: A Qualitative Exploration of Seniors' Perspectives on Activity,"* the study examined the extent to which retired people seek out activities in order to access social contact (1997). Given that retired adults have lost day-to-day access to their network of co-workers and have perhaps experienced the deaths of friends or family members, social connections must be found elsewhere (ibid).

Participants were asked about their preferences for activities that stimulate or fulfill mental, physical, and social needs; and in many cases, a single activity was cited as satisfying at least two and in some cases all three of these need categories. The study emphasized that mental, physical, and social stimulation were all essential in maintaining an acceptable quality of life, and in addition to the physical and mental/cognitive benefits, informants mentioned that their emotional wellbeing was enhanced through participation in their chosen pursuits. They stated that they derive much-valued feelings of accomplishment, competency, and mastery; satisfaction from doing something worthwhile, and feelings of pleasure from social interaction and group involvement. One of the main themes that arose during the course of this study was the connection between involvement in specific activities and the resulting social engagement. In some cases activities were intentionally chosen in order to facilitate social contact. "Activity can be used to make connections with new persons and expand one's social network" (ibid, p. 644).

Another function of regular activity was said to be its contribution to effective time management. Some seniors expressed a need or desire to use activities to impose structure upon their days, which, in some cases, also related to ensuring sufficient social contact

(ibid). Individuals who retire from their jobs lose not only social connection, but their daily routine. Results from the research indicate that older adults can benefit from considering a self-chosen schedule of activities, including those which provide physical health benefits, psychological and emotional need fulfillment, and social support and connection.

The Benefits of Engaging with Music

In order to fulfill their need for social contact, older adults must find the motivation to participate in activities outside of the home. Physical fitness classes can provide an opportunity for social interaction as well as enhancing health; and some seniors enjoy taking weekly art classes, bowling, curling, or playing cards, just for pleasure. Many enjoy music and attend concerts together. Although recent research indicates that seniors can benefit from participating in group music making, most do not have music experience and may lack the confidence to participate in an ensemble (New Horizons, 2007).

This section discusses music's universal biological function, how making music with others enhances quality of life and some of the social dynamics of ensemble music making. The latter portion of this section presents information on the documented benefits to elder individuals who play music together; the goal being to support efforts to offer them increased opportunities to engage in music-making and to motivate them to do so.

The Biological Nature of Music

Although music has existed in all known human cultures throughout recorded history, its definition and function remain unsettled. "Music has no obvious utility" (Peretz,

2006, p. 1); its role is often defined within its specific cultural context. Generally music is regarded as more than simple entertainment, and its power to ignite emotional responses can be profound. Peretz's study, as described in her article: "The Nature of Music from a Biological Perspective," offers evidence that everyone has a biological capacity to create music; that it is part of the nature of being human. In addition to detailed neurochemistry data, she cites 1) the ubiquitous presence of music; 2) evidence that it has existed since ancient times; and 3) the possibility that it might have an adaptive function or survival advantage in human evolution. The most compelling, universally-agreed-upon, and relevant theory for the current purpose is that music contributes to establishing group affinity. Observing that music is a central focus within many cultural and religious ceremonies, Peretz posits that "the utilitarian value of music is to enhance co-operation and educate the emotions and the senses. It is a form of communion whose adaptive function is to generate greater sensory awareness and social cooperation" (ibid, p. 24).

In a 2013 research study titled *"The Neurochemistry of Music,"* Mona Lisa Chanda and Daniel J. Levitin examined the medicinal qualities inherent within music, and music's potential for positive health enhancement, relaxation, and pain reduction. Areas analyzed were: 1) reward, motivation, pleasure; 2) stress and arousal; 3) immunity; and 4) social affiliation. With regard to its rewarding aspects, music is reported to be "one of life's most enjoyable activities… music has special, almost mystical properties" (p. 180). Several tests indicated that listening to music of one's own choosing can minimize stress and anxiety to the extent that pain medication can be withdrawn. Music induces positive emotions, a more optimistic attitude, happiness, and humour; all of which are contributing factors to healthier aging (ibid). The study concluded that group drumming circles for the elderly

should be promoted as a means of low-cost and low-risk mood enhancement. Citing the combination of creative expression and social connection along with easy, immediate access (no need for music education) and health benefits such as improved immune function, conclusions indicated positive significant results for older adults who engage in these rhythm ensembles. Similar benefits were noted in group-singing participants.

Lastly, Chanda and Levitin studied the connection between music and the element of social cohesion. Coordinated activities such as group dance, marching, and music orchestra are generally acknowledged to engender a sense of social bonding and mutual trust (ibid). Studies on the direct contribution of the music itself are inconclusive, however there are indications that subjects who participate in ensemble music-making secrete increased levels of oxytocin, a neuropeptide linked with the establishment of social affiliations. Given that social support is known to reduce depression and stress and to contribute to healthy aging, the extent to which music can engender a sense of group bonding increases its value as a life-enhancing activity for elder individuals (ibid).

Social Nature of Playing Music

Given that social contact is a sought-after element in activities for older adults, and given that one of the goals of the present research study is to provide and examine a context within which older adults can make music together, the social aspects of ensemble music-making must be further examined. Of particular concern is the role of music in inspiring and shaping the construction of relationships between those taking part in the experience. From among theorists of musical meaning and expression, arousal and reception, philosophy of music, and music and identity construction, Christopher Small's

work was specifically chosen for its direct relevance to this distinctly social aspect of the research study: in what ways does music provide a vehicle for people to relate to one another? First, Small argues that music is not a concrete entity or product, but a process; something that people do. Grounding all of his assumptions in the belief that "the way in which we approach music has a bearing upon the way in which we approach the business of living" (1987, p. 49), he describes performing music (or to use his term: "musicking") as "an activity in which people engage together in an encounter mediated by humanly organized non-verbal sounds" (1998, p. 4). He asserts that the meaning of the experience is not within the musical work performed, but within the meaning of the human encounter and the relationships that people construct while musicking. These relationships include those between the players, between the players and audience members (if any), and between the sounds created (ibid).

Small contends that these musicking relationships mirror relationships in the world outside the performance space as the players imagine them. In other words, when people play music, they are creating idealized versions of relationships through the communication of giving and receiving musical information. "Musical gestures communicate what words cannot" (ibid, p. 4). Further, Small theorizes that there is an inverse relationship between the proportion of predetermined or prewritten notated (as opposed to spontaneously created) musical material, and the degree of intimacy between the individuals participating in the musical event. He supports this contention by analyzing musicking styles along with the relationships constructed within their resulting contexts; citing differences between relationships apparent within a symphony orchestra performance context where everything is predetermined, and relationships that emerge at

a free jazz show where most if not all of the sonic material is spontaneously generated. If musicians are playing from notation, they will be expected to focus their attention upon their written music and the conductor, while free jazz players have only each other; thus, a more refined level of communication is required, along with a greater degree of openness or intimacy. The sonic result is entirely dependent upon the creative largely unscripted choices of the individual musicians; and nuances of interpretation must be negotiated within the group in process. Cues can be very subtle, and everyone must listen to one another in order to produce the optimum result (ibid).

This perspective contrasts with the notion that the essence of a musical experience consists of the expression of the composer's emotions as encoded within music notation which is then interpreted by a neutral entity; i.e. the performer. If emotions are intertwined with relationships, then music is a discourse of relationship in which emotions are embedded. If music "moves" us, then we are feeling interconnected rather than objectively observing an event from a distance (ibid).

Small concludes that the musicking experiences of different cultures are each modeled on their particular ideal view of relationship structures within their societies, and if we want to understand the social nature of musicking, or a sociology of music, then we must consider the nature of the relationships between those taking part in the experience. Our opinions of any specific musicking encounter will be based upon the degree to which it aligns with our notions of ideal relationships (ibid).

Benefits of Music Education

In her book *The Power of Music*, Susan Hallam presents results from a number of studies that conclusively demonstrate that the skills acquired in the learning, playing, and performing of music transfer to proficiency in several academic disciplines; to physical, psychological, and social well-being; and to personal growth and development. One example she cites is the alteration of brain anatomy; specifically the enhancement of the auditory cortex and the resulting overall refinement in the brain's ability to process sound more effectively. Auditory processes influence phonological skills such as speech development, listening ability, and general literacy (Tallal & Gaab, 2006; Patel & Iverson, 2007; Douglas & Willatts, 1994; cited in Hallam, 2010). In addition, the visual processing involved in reading music notation directly transfers to learning to read written language (Hallam, 2010).

Hallam asserts that math skill acquisition also benefits, both from musical instruction focused on notation-reading and rhythm (Vaughn, 2000 cited in Hallam, 2010), and from spatially-focused movement activities such as dance, which are linked to global reasoning. Personal skill improvements include increased attention span, which is thought to be related to frontal cortex development; self-regulation and discipline; greater motivation, focus, and openness; and improved cognitive ability, memory, and motor skills. When music students are encouraged to improvise, they score higher on global creativity tests (Hallam, 2010).

Specific cognitive psychological benefits include higher self-efficacy, positive self-esteem, mood and behaviour improvement, and increased motivation and enjoyment of school life. Greater social cohesion and inclusivity were observed; leading to the conclusion

that collaborative music making engenders bonding among group members, helping them to develop stronger emotional intelligence and empathy through collaborating and listening to one another (Young & Colman, 1979; Murningham & Conlon, 1991; cited in Hallam, 2010).

Psychological, physical, and emotional well-being were all improved, regardless of the entry baselines of the students, with optimum outcomes noted in the following cases: where group work is included, when music instruction is begun at an early age and continues for a number of years, when performance options are offered, and when the curriculum includes all of the following: pitch, rhythm, singing, instrumental, composition, improvisation, and notation-reading. Maximum benefits were observed when music instruction was geared toward interaction and classes were enjoyable (Hallam, 2010).

The benefits of music education to the academic, social, psychological, and emotional development of children and adolescents and to the school environment itself are significant, according to both Hallam's own research studies and those she cites (ibid). Her primary focus is on childhood and adolescence, although she does review some work on the benefits adults derive from participating in a choir. These include: stress release, mood enhancement, increased feelings of well-being, a confidence boost, easing of psychological trauma, and the pleasure of engaging with others in a goal-directed activity (Clift et al., 2008; Stacey et al., 2002 cited in Hallam, 2010). She states, "There is every reason to suppose that these benefits would also apply to children" (Hallam, 2010, p. 21). Can a case be made that Hallam's research findings with children are equally applicable to adults? Her conclusion confirms a "strong case for the benefits of active engagement with music throughout the lifespan……Group music making is also beneficial to the development

of social skills and can contribute to community cohesion providing benefits to society as a whole" (ibid, p. 22).

The Positive Role of Music in the Lives of Older Adults

Further to Hallam's work, a number of research studies undertaken over the first decade and a half of the 21st century have looked at how music making sessions can enhance quality of life for older adults. Results and conclusions from all of these projects are very similar, although they vary in specific focus, scope, duration, and location. Five will be summarized here.

In her recent paper, Andrea Creech presents compelling evidence pointing to the profound and extensive benefits derived by older adults (ages 60-90 and beyond) who participate in ensemble music making. This research echoes the need for activities that promote productive social engagement among the elderly in order to improve their health, well-being, and quality of life (Creech et al. 2013).

In a case study called the Music for Life Project, where music activities were conducted twice a week for five weeks, those who participated reported greater positive life satisfaction levels as well as improved attitudes around music and their engagement with it. Cognitive, physical, mental, emotional, attitudinal, and intellectual benefits were specifically noted. Active group music making was shown to: 1) enhance social life through increased cohesion within the community; 2) motivate personal growth, development, and empowerment through providing a regular enjoyable participatory activity; 3) promote recovery from depression; and 4) encourage participation in daily health maintenance routines (Hallam et al. 2011 cited in Creech et al. 2013).

The 2013 project conducted by Varvarigou et al.: "Different Ways of Experiencing Music-Making in Later Life: Creative Music Sessions for Older Learners in East London," is premised upon the debunking of several myths with regard to aging and older adults: 1) the notion that seniors should be regarded in terms of degree of decrepitude and diminishing capacities; 2) that they are a homogeneous group; 3) that they function as dependents; and 4) that they prefer passive rather than creative activities (2013). In fact, as people age, they enter what can be a profoundly creative stage of life, and are actively fulfilled by reflection upon their personal stories and are receptive to new learning opportunities. Older people do not become increasingly alike; in fact, quite the opposite. They are increasingly more diverse from one another as they age, and rather than becoming more dependent, they are interdependent, since they are able to reciprocate with more developed levels of skill and life experience. As for dimming intellectually, brain activity between the hemispheres in some elders becomes more synchronous, and their stores of knowledge and wisdom can be a valuable mental resource (ibid).

When the option of music-making was offered to a group of adults aged 75 and older, those who participated cited five rationales: 1) interaction with others; 2) interaction with others and reminiscing; 3) interaction with others and developing a new skill; 4) wanting to return to active music-making after several years; and 5) wanting to engage in creative self-expression. The researchers concluded that facilitators of music activities for elderly individuals should offer their clientele a flexible diverse repertoire of ideas and activities in order to meet the needs of older participants. This type of collaborative creative engagement can contribute to supporting healthy aging, they concluded (ibid).

According to Hays et al., music has a multi-faceted role in our society. It can be spiritual, therapeutic, social, emotional, and recreational. Since the beginning of recorded time, music has had the power to heal, entertain, effect emotions, and to influence societal equilibrium (Hays et al. 2002). The most meaningful contribution that music makes to the lives of older individuals is that of social connection. Taking part in music making activities brings people out of their daily routine and introduces something entirely different. This process has been shown to relieve stress by triggering endorphins, leading to a sense of peace and relaxation. Further, when people connect to one another through music, they share an experience. Music can dissolve the barriers that separate and divide people, ending feelings of isolation, loneliness, and depression and kindling self-esteem, teamwork, and friendship (ibid).

A study into the benefits of music for an aging population appears within a project: "*The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults*," administered by the Centre on Aging, Health and Humanities at George Washington University in 2001. This study found that participants in arts activities used fewer medications, had fewer visits to the doctor, experienced elevated mood, had increased level of independent functioning where decline would have been expected, demonstrated increased motivation to participate in activities while the control group experienced decreases, and scored more positively on scales of loneliness, depression, and morale (Clements, 2010). The older adults who participated specifically in the music classes cited decreased anxiety and exhibited a significant increase in human growth hormone (hGH) levels as well as all of the results noted above. Low levels of hGH contribute to osteoporosis, decreased energy, wrinkling of skin, sexual dysfunction, and other symptoms of aging (ibid).

In their article, "The Role of Musical Possible Selves in Supporting Subjective Well-Being in Later Life," Dr. Andrea Creech et al. contribute to a growing body of research that demonstrates significant positive outcomes for older adults who engage in group music making; not only in measurable cognitive areas, but in anecdotal reports of enhanced subjective well-being, increased sense of purpose, greater autonomy, and a perceivable sense of accomplishment (2014). Given that music programs show potential to offer older adults more options for achieving optimal quality of life, they conclude that additional resources should be allotted to offer music-making opportunities for seniors. Music serves as a catalyst for self-expression and offers a joy-filled creative environment that promotes positive attitudes and contributes to increased motivation to participate fully in life. Music has a bonding effect; it encourages cooperation among members of a group, and its communicative aspects allow everyone to speak. Music is experienced at a physiological, emotional, cognitive, and physical level by everyone of any age (ibid).

The relationship between music and the older person's brain has been convincingly demonstrated in patients with brain disorders or damage who will recall lyrics or melodies to familiar songs even after they cease to recognize their own family members. Copious anecdotal evidence reinforces this theory.

> An amazing transformation happened at the Ottawa Grace Manor. Kathy Armstrong brought her hand drums to do a workshop, and the staff and volunteers watched as residents who have dementia magically began tapping their drums in rhythm and danced to the beat. These are residents who are not able to feed themselves or communicate. It was absolutely beautiful. - Marsha Goodfellow, Grace Manor (Armstrong, 2016).

Improvisation and its Pedagogy

The many benefits realized by older adults who engage in music-making ensembles have been thoroughly documented, as has the reality that greater numbers of people are reaching the age of retirement. In order to offer music making opportunities to more members of this ever-increasing demographic, an improvisational approach should be undertaken and offered more broadly. Any person of any age, with or without musical expertise, can participate in improvisation on an equal footing with all the other participants. This section will consider the nature of improvisational music and examine some perspectives on its place within music pedagogy. The inclusion of improvisation within public school music curricula further demonstrates its validity as a musical practice.

Improvisational Music

> Improvisation is the creation of a musical work, i.e. the final form of a musical work as it is being performed. … To some extent every performance involves elements of improvisation, although its degree varies…and to some extent every improvisation rests on a series of conventions or implicit rules… By its very nature – in that improvisation is essentially evanescent – it is one of the subjects least amenable to historical research (Nettl et al. 2001, p. 1).

Improvisation is an element found to some degree in music within virtually all cultures. In Middle Eastern and Northern Indian music, the improvisational element is highly valued; while in Western society, jazz, the most improvisation-driven music, is considered by some people to be inferior to the performance of pre-composed music. In the latter case, the performer attempts to perfectly replicate notated music by reading what the composer wrote on a chart or score, whereas improvisation allows more free choice (ibid).

Improvised music can take many forms. One example common to jazz is the "soloist/accompanist" model in which the soloist improvises and the ensemble members offer musical support. More relevant within the current context is the case where all or most of the players are improvising freely; otherwise known as "collective improvisation," "simultaneous improvisation," and "free jazz." The implication is that all of the players within the ensemble are equally empowered to improvise; that is, make musical decisions on the spur of the moment. One of the most definitive characteristics of improvisation is the element of risk (ibid).

In the introduction to his 1993 book *Improvisation,* pioneering improviser Derek Bailey notes: "Improvisation enjoys the curious distinction of being both the most widely practiced of all musical activities and the least acknowledged and understood. While it is present today in almost every area of music, there is an almost total absence of information about it" (Bailey, 1993, p. ix).

Improvisation is central to the vast majority of the world's musical traditions, ranging from Classical Indian music to a myriad of African musics. It was also a part of the European classical music tradition for most of its existence, from medieval organ music to the music of Baroque, Classical, and Romantic keyboardists/composers; notably Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and Liszt (ibid).

Beginning in the mid-19th century, classical music became increasingly reliant upon the written score. In contemporary Western music, improvisation is often considered solely in terms of its relationship to the jazz genre since it has been a part of that idiom since its inception (Nettl et al. 2001).

Given the preponderance of musical improvisation worldwide, it may be more useful to view it in terms of its social or cultural context rather than strictly as a musical phenomenon. George Lewis defines improvisation as "a social location inhabited by a considerable number of present-day musicians coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and musical practices, who have chosen to make improvisation a central part of their musical discourse" (1996, p. 110). He uses the terms "Afrological" and "Eurological" to refer to "musical logics" associated with creative musical practices from specific cultural, social, and ethnic contexts, emphasizing that these terms are to be interpreted as "historically emergent and not ethnically essential" (ibid, p. 93). These Afrological and Eurological approaches are in constant dialogue with one another in contemporary improvised music practices as are an increasing number of other musical/cultural logics. In fact, improvised music has become increasingly transcultural in nature over the past several decades. Lewis suggests that, due to its open-endedness, improvisation is key to facilitating musical code-switching, a practice whereby players combine elements of multiple genres of music. Code-switching can "include musical exchanges across borders of language and musical culture" (ibid, p. 105).

Since it does not rely upon a pre-composed, notated format, improvisation has an inherent flexibility, providing an opportunity for musicians from any musical background to engage in a shared impromptu music-making experience by establishing a comfortable musical relationship with one another and having a non-conceptual sonic "conversation."

Christopher Small theorizes that "developments in jazz…can be seen as a search, not so much for new sounds or new rhythms, as for new kinds of relationship…(To improvise) is to establish a different set of human relationships, a different kind of society" (1987, p.

296). Derek Bailey expresses similar views: “For most people, improvisation is about playing with other people, and some of the greatest opportunities provided by free improvisation are in the exploration of relationships between players” (1993, p.105).

Ideally, improvisation provides an opportunity for all participants to collaboratively explore sound together despite potential differences in culture, aesthetic tastes, gender, race, or class. “Improvisation serves as a site for the negotiation of individuality and collectivity through the mulitplicitous interactions of improviser to improviser, improviser to audience, and audience members to one another (Smith, 2004, p. 236). When such musical negotiations are successful, individual needs and group needs coincide. Further, its “capacity to generate community in spite of difference marks the kind of relationships that music improvisation can bring to bear on community formation generally” (Fischlin & Heble, 2004, p. 34).

Free improvisational modes of music-making challenge some of our socially-conditioned perceptions about what music is, about which sounds are and are not “musical,” about the proper method of musical sound production, and about how sonic elements are to be combined in order to produce the optimal musical result, as defined by the participants (Heble & Fischlin, 2003). Engaging in this type of improvisation implies an interrogation of musical norms as well an examination of the structures and components of the relationships between individuals who prefer to undertake this form of music making. Improvised music has a role to play in identity construction, motivating, establishing and reinforcing relationships, contributing to music-focused community building, cultural cross-pollination and genre hybridity. Freely improvised music can be considered an oppositional or resistant music form, feeding cultural, social, and political transformation.

"Engaging in improvisational musicking activities offers an opportunity to develop practical skills to acquire knowledge, and to form alliances with others in a safe environment. Because it is social, it can represent a microcosm of an alternative ideal society and advance the struggle for inclusivity" (ibid, p. 238).

Implicit in the above is that improvising has much to offer, including greater opportunities for creative expression, personal growth, and deeper relationships among players. Results of research studies into the changes in neurological activity when subjects improvised and evidence of musical skill enhancements experienced by students who participated in regular improvised music classes further support the position that improvisational music activities have value for both musicians and non-musicians of any age. Some of these studies will be discussed below.

Improvisation and Neurological Activity

Neurological researchers Charles Limb and Allen Braun studied the brain activity of musicians while they were improvising and while they were performing pre-composed music. Six jazz pianists played and then improvised on a C major scale. Then they played a piece of pre-written music, after which they improvised on the chord progressions of that piece. During each of the four scenarios, their brain activity was analyzed by means of an MRI scanner, and patterns of activation and deactivation were identified (Limb & Braun, 2008).

The results indicated that the areas of the brain that were activated when the musicians were playing written music were deactivated during improvisation, and vice versa. Playing pre-composed music activated evaluative, self-conscious, self-monitoring

parts of the brain, and improvisation activated areas responsible for self-expression, creation of fictional stories, and describing a memory. Some theorizing suggests that deactivating the evaluative areas of the brain can unblock creativity and spontaneity; both of which are needed in order to navigate unplanned novel ideas and gestures in an uninhibited manner. Self-monitoring can inhibit the flow of creative energy. In addition, those musicians who regularly engage in improvisation show more of a tendency to be creative in general and score higher on tests of divergent thinking (ibid).

Improvisation and Music Skill Enhancement

Several studies indicate significant positive effects on overall musicianship and musical achievement when improvisation activities are added to the beginning and intermediate music curriculum. Sight-reading and memorization skills are enhanced, and the student gains a deeper understanding of the elements of musical structure (Azzara, 1993; Stringham, 2010; Montano, 1983, Lehmann et al., 2007).

Researcher Yawen Eunice Chyu cited five significant results of incorporating improvisation into the classroom: 1) Improvisation helps to develop an overall comprehensive musicianship. This occurs because in order to improvise, the student must assimilate their musical studies with great understanding in order to then create their own music. 2) Improvisation promotes concentration and overall aural skills since it demands that students listen closely to what they are playing and what is being played around them at all times. 3) Improvisation fosters a development of sight-reading skills as it helps students identify patterns and key elements of the music they are performing. 4) Improvisation offers a unique opportunity for students to express their musical identities

influencing both their motivation and overall enjoyment of the music learning process. 5) Lastly, improvisation helps to cultivate and encourage the creativity of the student (2004).

Improvisation within the Music Education Curriculum

Improvisation is a relatively recent innovation within music education curricula and is described below as it appears within the most recently obtainable curriculum documents from two countries and three provinces of Canada. All are from the 21st century. The inclusion of improvisation within the public school system indicates a wider awareness and acceptance of this music practice, and supports continued research and study into methods of implementation both within the classroom and elsewhere. Documents from New Zealand (2000), the United Kingdom (2013), and the Canadian provinces of British Columbia (2011), Alberta (2015), and Quebec (2003) were reviewed.

New Zealand's 2000 Music Curriculum Levels 1-8 mentions "improvisation" in the "Developing Ideas in Music" sections of Levels 1, 3, 6, 7, and 8, which seem to correlate to ages/grade levels of students, although these are not specifically noted. As an element in music programs for young children, improvisation is described as a means of "selecting and organizing sounds," and "expressing ideas through drawing on experience and imagination" (2000, p. 56). Later levels suggest these uses of improvisation: "improvising over an ostinato," "using found sounds," "improvising melodic phrases while playing or singing over an ostinato" (ibid, p. 58). The curriculum described in levels 6-8, suggest using "musical elements, structural devices, instruments, and technologies to improvise, arrange, and compose music for specific purposes" (ibid, p. 61). In levels 7 and 8: "students will improvise music" (level 7), and "students will improvise music in performance settings"

(level 8) (ibid, pp. 62-63). The glossary includes an entry for "improvisation" as "spontaneous or semi-spontaneous musical creation; in jazz, improvisation is often based on the melody and harmony of an existing song or work" (ibid, p. 65).

The National Curriculum in England: Music Programmes of Study, 2013 mentions improvisation as part of the mandatory "Attainment Targets" for Key Stages 2 and 3: "Pupils should be taught to … improvise and compose" (Dept. for Education England, 2013).

The Province of British Columbia's 2011 Music Education curriculum emphasizes "create, perform, and notate" throughout the document. The word "improvise" or "improvisation" appears on pages 8, 22, 38, 39, and 45. The latter includes an improvisation activity in which students are given an emotion and small groups are invited to compose a short musical work including rhythmic, melodic, and expressive elements that represent their relationship with that emotion. Then the other groups must try to determine what specific emotion is being expressed through the music played. The Grade 10 Jazz Program also includes "improvised solos" in the Jazz Improvisation Appendix (D in that document). Students are "expected to use a prescribed scale and jazz rhythmic patterns to create short riffs including those notes within the scale" (British Columbia Music, p. D-32).

Alberta's 2015 secondary music curriculum makes mention of improvisation as one of the "General Learner Expectations" (Music Program Alberta Education – Fine Arts, p. 5). The goals and objectives of the secondary music program for "Music: Creating" include "to learn how music is organized, through improvising, arranging, and composing for a personal musical experience" (ibid, p. 6). "Instrumental Music Program – Creating" states: " to develop an additional avenue of self-expression by composing, improvising, and

interpreting music." Improvising also appears in "The Elective Component – Enrichment" (ibid, p. 8)

"Improvisation" appears as part of "Competency One" in the Quebec Education Program's Secondary Cycle Two: Arts Education Curriculum of 2003. Secondary Cycle Two is equivalent to grades 9-11. Competency One specifically targets the creation of musical works, and "improvisation" is cited as one of three "complex tasks" along with "arrangements" and "compositions" (Quebec MECAE, 2007, p. 9).

> Improvisations, which can be rhythmic or melodic, spontaneously organize sounds within a specified or unspecified framework. Whether they improvise, arrange, or compose a piece of music, students can draw inspiration from a variety of sources: their areas of interest, historical and sociocultural contexts, ethical, moral or career issues, etc. Students use a variety of sound sources for their creations: voice, body, found objects, percussion instruments, various melodic instruments, and instruments associated with information and communications technologies. If appropriate, they graphically represent elements of musical language using notation code (personal, traditional, or non-traditional). The emphasis is on authenticity and the search for originality, consistency, and expressiveness. Students usually work in groups but can occasionally work individually or interact with others (ibid).

Improvisation Pedagogy - Theories, Challenges, Approaches

Although several countries now propose the inclusion of improvisation within their music education curricula, implementation has been a gradual process. Music improvisation skill instruction requires both a different approach and a revised evaluative template when undertaken within traditional music education, since the latter is generally based upon prewritten structured material and is focused mainly on the product rather than the process. This section offers perspectives on improvisation pedagogy, including some of the challenges of situating improvisational music activities within the traditional

music classroom. Possible approaches for supporting and encouraging students to learn to improvise within a musical context are then suggested.

Maud Hickey contends that improvisation is not a skill that can be taught, but is a "disposition to be enabled and nurtured" (2009, p. 292). Improvisation requires a fostering of "true creative thinking and growth" and current academic techniques do not facilitate or encourage these potentials, relying as they do upon "building blocks;" i.e. tonally-centered, rhythmically simple, short and uncontextualized patterns. Hickey argues that such tools do not truly open the mind to create (ibid).

Late twentieth-century American Arts Education initiatives resulted in a highly-detailed, structured, standards-based, strategy-driven, achievement-oriented, evaluative, assessment-of-tasks approach to improvisation (see Table 2.2 below). Such a prescriptive approach would not trigger truly improvised material, but would only offer exposure to and instruction in elements of rhythm, melody, and harmony; and would enhance listening skills. All of these learning outcomes have value, however they are not conducive to an "independent creative investigation and spontaneous invention that can lead to the discovery of what jazz musicians often call 'one's own sound'" (Lewis, 2000, p. 83).

Hickey argues that musical freedom must be the priority. Improvisation is not "taught," but rather experienced, facilitated, coached, and stimulated; the focus should be on the process rather than the product, and on the knowledge that there is not one correct approach. "What is needed are materials specifically written for school practitioners by the textbook and method writers to provide useful support and ideas for teachers to begin using free improvisation in their classrooms" (Hickey, 2009, p. 294). She acknowledges the challenges inherent in assessment and evaluation of improvisation, and suggests that

students be offered the option to set their own goals and self-assess. “If the goal is to inspire and motivate students to think and to create from a place of freedom, then improvisation has a role to play in the classroom” (ibid, p. 296).

Achievement Tasks for Content Standard

Achievement Strategy Task A (grade K–4): Students improvise ‘answers’ in the same style to given rhythmic and melodic phrases

Assessment strategy: The student is asked to improvise a rhythmic ‘answer’ to a ‘question’ played by the teacher. The teacher plays a four-measure pattern; the student plays an ‘answer’ of the same length and in the same tempo.
The student should play immediately following the teacher, with no interruption of the beat. The teacher and the student may play on woodblocks or other percussion instruments or may clap the pattern.

Description of response:
Basic Level:
1. There is hesitation/interruption in the beat between the question and the answer.
2. The tempo of the answer is close to that of the question, though by the end the answer is definitely faster or slower.
3. The rhythm of the answer is not performed with precision.
4. The answer is close but not identical in length to the question.

Proficient Level:
1. The answer follows the question with no hesitation or interruption in the beat.
2. The tempo of the answer is the same as that of the question. The beat is steady.
3. The rhythm of the answer is performed with precision.
4. The answer is identical in length to the question.

Advanced Level:
1. The answer follows the question with no hesitation or interruption in the beat.
2. The tempo of the answer is the same as that of the question. The beat is steady.
3. The rhythm of the answer is performed with precision.
4. The answer is identical in length to the question.
5. The answer includes essentially the same rhythmic patterns as the question, but it is not identical. Any new rhythms introduced in the answer are derived from the rhythms of the question.

(MENC, 1996, p. 39; cited in Hickey, 2009, p. 291)
Table 2.2: American arts education improvisation evaluative strategy.

Since it is a highly intuitive behaviour, improvisation comes easily to very young children; conversely, it is considered sufficiently challenging that generally only the most highly advanced music students are offered courses in it. John Kratus recommends that the optimal approach would be to link the spontaneous intuitive behaviours of young children with the more musically developed playing styles of advanced music students (1995).

He states that all improvisations share three qualities: 1) the goal to create musical sounds over time; 2) the lack of retrievability and replication once the music has been played; and 3) an inherent freedom to allow the improviser to make pitch and rhythm choices within given constraints. Improvisational competence, he argues, is measured by the performers' increasing proficiency on their instrument and performance technique, and a more highly developed ability to anticipate sounds; or audiation. An advanced improviser will tend to create a sort of composed musical product with a beginning, middle, and end (ibid).

Kratus's developmental model has seven phases: exploratory, discovery of patterns, creating more coherent structures, a noticeable relaxation in the playing of the instrument, more advanced structures, incorporation of stylistic elements, and finally, the player's achievement of a personal style (ibid).

In his essay entitled "Creativity and its Origin in Music Improvisation," in Sullivan and Willingham's volume *Creativity and Music Education*, Raphael Prieto defends the place of creativity within the music classroom. He cites the universal value of creativity and reinforces the contention that creativity is "motivating, stimulating (and helps to develop) divergent thinking" (Prieto, 2002, p. 111). The challenge for music educators lies within the process of teaching creativity, and Prieto suggests the use of improvisational approaches in

order to help inspire students and activate the creative process. He describes how a typical lesson could proceed: beginning with stretches and physical warm-ups, moving into breath and vocal exercises, then instructor-led clapping patterns. These would be imitated by the students and then coordinated with movements. The teacher could then begin to introduce melodic elements, and if desired, harmonic accompaniment. Dividing the group and having some students play an ostinato pattern while the others explore and improvise melodic structures is another suggested activity. This is a process-based approach that could also be adjusted if the class wishes to produce, write, and/or record a composition (ibid).

In his 2013 doctoral dissertation, Daniel Spencer suggests a set of easily-implemented approaches for the novice improvisation teacher:

1) Call and response: the teacher invents short rhythmic motifs and has the students repeat them back to her/him. This is the first activity in the lesson. It can be done one-on-one or with the group. As success increases, so does the difficulty of the motif. This can also be done around the circle with each student responding to the previous student.

2) Choose three notes and only use those three notes: each person takes a turn to choose three notes. Repeat in original order. Change the order. Change the rhythm. Use the notes as a motif and create a sequence, changing the pitches while using the original intervals. Everyone can take a turn with each set of three notes, and/or small groups can play together using the above ideas.

3) Three note patterns: find something within the pattern and repeat it using different notes, different rhythms, different intervals – all while keeping something the same.

4) Duo or solo and group. One player chooses from among the following: i) drone (sustained long tone); ii) pulse drone (with a regular even rhythm or complex syncopated

rhythm or anything in between, but must repeat only one note); iii) ostinato (a series of 2-3 notes repeated); iv) stately dance (a 3::4 waltz pattern consisting of two notes; one is played for 3 beats and the other is played on the "and" of the 3rd beat, and then return to the original note.). The other player(s) then create(s) a melodic piece over top (Spencer, 2013).

The teaching or facilitating of improvisation requires non-traditional strategies, and music educators who wish to successfully incorporate improvisation activities into their music education classrooms can access some specific resource organizations whose models and ideas have been developed for this purpose. These, along with current music improvisation exercises and activities, are offered in the latter part of the next section.

Education for the Older Population and Improvisation Pedagogy Models

As a result of examining the unique needs of those elder adults who wish to pursue further education, researchers have produced theories as to the most appropriate and effective methods and practices for facilitating adult education in general. This section includes information about the development of the field of andragogy, along with some practical suggestions with regard to establishing a well-functioning learning environment for older people. The latter part of the section discusses some of the resources that could be used for implementing improvisational music classes appropriate for older adults. Organizations promoting this type of music pedagogy offer a number of easily-implemented activities, some of which suggest parallels with the ideal andragogy curriculum design.

Andragogy

In order to differentiate itself from pedagogy as applied to elementary and secondary education, the term andragogy was coined. Andragogy refers to the theory and practice of lifelong and lifewide education/learning of adults. The term originated in 1833 in Germany and emerged again in the 1920's in several European countries. Its primary intention was to separate theories of childhood education from those of adult education; and secondarily, to differentiate adult scholarly or academic learning from adult practical or skill-based learning (Reischmann, 2004). In recent times, andragogy has been contextualized within Malcolm Knowles's humanist/constructivist approach, as formulated in the 1970's and 80's; i.e. learners are self-directed and autonomous; they have choices. Teachers are facilitators as opposed to being experts who impart knowledge and exert control. Deschooling theory, the student-centred approach, and the principles of Paolo Friere are all implicated within andragogy (Pappas, 2013).

Since its inception as a set of accepted contextual strategies and tools in training aspiring adult education faculty, the field of andragogy has continued to develop. One recent iteration is Jost Reischmann's 2004 work. His andragogy model includes: 1) intentional learning of two types: a) education from external sources; and b) self-directed or autodidactic learning; and 2) unintentional learning which can occur a) within planned activities for which learning is not the goal; b) unplanned events; or c) as part of everyday experience (Reischmann, 2004). This model is illustrated in Figure 2.6 below.

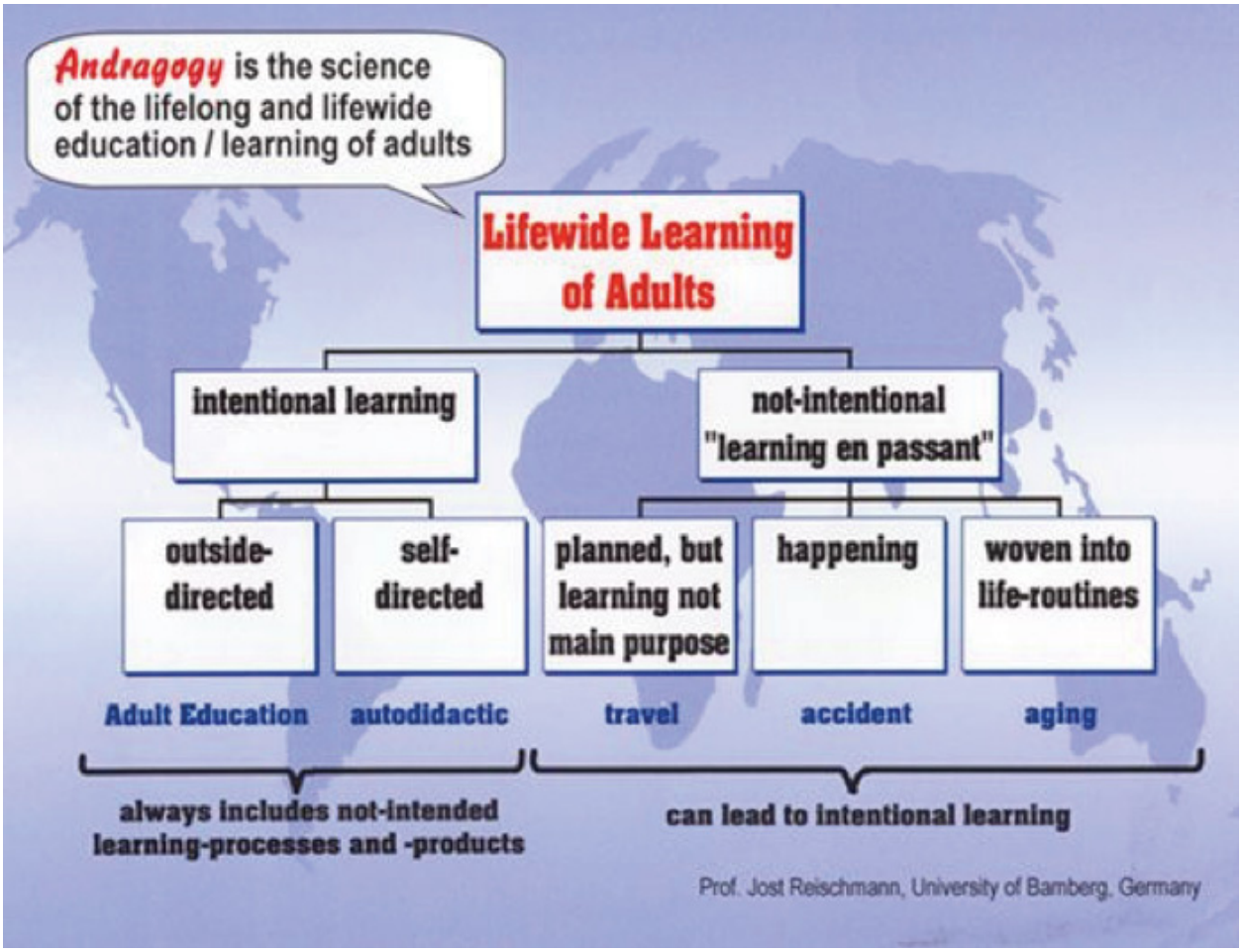

Figure 2.6 Facets of andragogy as lifelong and lifewide adult education (Reischmann, 2004).

Researchers examining the phenomenon of older adults who pursue various educational options well into their retirement years have incorporated material from Malcolm Knowles's andragogy/adult learning theories. They conclude that facilitators working with older adults should 1) consider the focused motivation of these older learners which increases their capacity to learn; and 2) ensure that lesson designs are flexible and inclusive in order to accommodate the more individualized personalities of the student population in this age group. As people age, they establish more fixed identities. (Crawford, 2004)

The Older Learner Network, an online organization headquartered in Sweden posits life-long learning as a valuable contribution to solving current worldwide aging challenges. H. Tietgens suggests that those working with older learners must: 1) always remember to build upon the student's previous knowledge base; and 2) situate the learning experience within a social context. Group learning, social contact, and interaction between learners is essential for older students (Tietgens, cited in Schmidt-Hertha, n.d.).

Improvisation Pedagogy Models for Older Adults

In addition to considering the principles for successful andragogic learning, the process of selecting the most appropriate improvisation pedagogy literature, resources, and models for seniors required an examination of books, hand-outs, anecdotal histories, and web resources. In his book, *The Properties of Free Music,* Joe Morris compiled detailed descriptions and explanations of the seminal methodologies of iconic free improvisers Cecil Taylor (Unit Structures), Ornette Coleman (Harmelodics), Anthony Braxton (Tri-Axiom Theory), and the European School (Morris, 2012). I also reviewed written hand-outs and anecdotal histories of my participation in several performances of works which are well-known within the field; e.g., John Zorn's Cobra, Terry Riley's In C, and an improvised soundtrack for the silent movie *Metropolis*. I also considered and examined some of my other relevant workshop experiences with well-known improvisers and facilitators. These include: performances in Toronto-based Christine Duncan's Element Choir; workshop sessions led by 1) pioneering deep listening designer Pauline Oliveros; 2) Montreal/New York improvisers Malcolm Goldstein, Lori Freedman, Rainer Weins, and Ellwood Epps; 3) Toronto-based improviser Nick Fraser who used and distributed one version of Anthony

Braxton's graphic scores; 4) Ottawa-based composer, drummer, and improviser Jesse Stewart; and 5) Guelph-based improvisers and ensemble facilitators Joe Sorbara and Scott Thomson whose sessions included performances by participants at four shows at the Guelph Jazz Festival in 2012. Some elements in each of the above were important and useful for this research study.

Two on-line resources were also of great value: 1) a United Kingdom music educators' website (musicalfutures.org); and 2) a United States-based international improvisational music organization site (musicforpeople.org), both of which were found to be in alignment with the principles of andragogy and will be discussed below.

It should be noted that none of the above resources; nor any others accessible through either internet or print media offer any material geared specifically toward improvisation for seniors. This section summarizes the essential information concerning the two organizations mentioned above, along with the parallels between improvisational music pedagogy and curriculum designs suggested by andragogy theorists.

Musical Futures

Established in 2003 on a) a foundation of academic research and b) the practice principles of popular and community musicians, *Musical Futures* has become a successful and sustainable music education initiative through which over a million students in 71 countries have benefited (musicalfutures).

Their website freely offers a number of video resources tailored to music educators in classrooms for students aged 10-18, and I replicated a number of these exercises during the course of the current study. In addition, this UK-based organization hosts training

sessions in North America, Southeast Asia and all across Europe. These sessions are hands-on, process-oriented, and focused upon the practical application of music improvisation principles. The website also offers networking opportunities to music educators who are interested in pursuing a freer and/or more creative approach to music making in their classrooms. *Musical Futures* provides "consultancy for organizations on: building a community of practice; communications including social media; creating and developing resource materials for schools" (ibid). The key components of *Musical Futures* ideology are non-formal teaching, finding your voice, and just play. "*Musical Futures* believes that music learning works best when people are making music, and when their existing passion for music is reflected and built-upon in the classroom" (ibid).

Music for People

Music for People (MFP) is another organization that promotes free musical expression; however unlike *Musical Futures,* it is not oriented specifically toward assisting classroom teachers. The MFP focus is broader; in addition to music education classroom facilitators, it encourages health care providers and social activity centre coordinators to participate. *Music for People* is based in the United States and draws its extensive repertoire of activities from many music genres and cultural styles. Since 1986, MFP has offered training programs for improvisation workshop facilitators where the focus is on community music making with an emphasis on relaxed self-expression within an ensemble. Deliberately inclusive, clientele include adults, children, the disabled, teachers, music therapists, and amateur as well as professional musicians. These training programs are available in the USA and in Europe (MFP).

Key terms emphasized within its philosophical foundation are: community, discovery, connection, celebration, improvisation, transformation, inclusion, deep listening, high energy, and mindfulness. With regard to the latter, one MFP fundamental principle is that making music in the moment, being totally focused, aware, and without mental chatter is a type of active mindfulness. In order to achieve this state, MFP facilitators are encouraged to help their participants co-create a safe and comfortable space to express themselves, to support and uplift one another, to create a community within the group, and to find ways to motivate each other to access their individual creativity (ibid).

MFP promotes three attitudes: openness, curiosity, and acceptance. Participants are asked to focus on listening and to acknowledge the value of silence. When they find a way to connect with a self-created sound, they then interact with others. Using non-verbal sound to communicate, participants collaborate and co-create a piece of music, while continuing to both seek inspiration and share ideas with the other players. After approximately an hour where the facilitators move the group through various activities, the music-making ends and a verbal reflection and debriefing process commences. The MFP process is based on the results of research on the effects this type of music making has on the corpus callosum, the part of the brain connecting the two hemispheres; i.e., that engaging in mindful music improvisation with a group enhances neuroplasticity and allows the two hemispheres to communicate more effectively. In addition to creative play, making music, and movement, *Music for People* also emphasizes the importance of 'numinous experiences'; i.e. those during which the individual self is subsumed within the group. The activities MFP promotes are structured with this orientation in mind (ibid).

Music For People founder David Darling has developed a "Music Bill of Rights" which includes the following: "humans need to express themselves daily in a way that invites physical and emotional release; musical self-expression is a joyful and healthy means of communication which is available to everyone; sincerely expressed emotion is at the root of meaningful musical expression; any combination of people and instruments can make music together; there are no 'unmusical people' only those with no musical experience; music improvisation is a unique and positive way to build skills for life experience "(ibid).

In reviewing the above material concerning the most important elements to consider in designing either a successful learning environment for older adult students or a successful improvisatory music class, some general principles are common to both: 1) the teacher is a facilitator rather than an expert imparting knowledge ; 2) the teacher builds upon the students' pre-existing knowledge; 3) students/participants are invited to freely make choices within a flexible structure and in a self-directed manner; 4) inclusivity is of primary importance; and 5) learning/participation is always situated within a social context. In improvisational music workshops, consideration must be given to the needs of the participants in order that they will be comfortable, un-self-conscious, and amenable to risk-taking. When improvising, there is no script for players to follow, and they must rely solely on their communication with one another; thus, relationships are paramount and must be nurtured. Andragogy literature suggests including these same features: consideration of individual needs, building upon previous knowledge, focus on social relationships, flexibility, and inclusivity. Thus, in some respects, improvisational music classes are ideally suited to older adult learning styles, as proposed by andragogy theory.

Summary

With numbers of elderly citizens set to increase exponentially during this century, any initiatives inherently beneficial in meeting their unique needs should be pursued. Since music making activities have been shown to: 1) make significant improvements in the lives of older individuals; 2) enhance their quality of life; and 3) contribute to the fulfillment of creative, mental, and social needs, it can be validly argued that more music making opportunities for seniors should be encouraged. In order to maximize the numbers of older adults who can participate in making music, the more inclusive approach of improvisational music pedagogy could be given further consideration. Since improvisation eliminates the task of learning to read music notation, more people can have immediate access and participate. Further, improvisation pedagogy strategies parallel the educational approaches that andragogy experts recommend as being ideal for older adult learners; e.g. they are flexible, inclusive, and are situated within a social context. A comprehensive improvisational music program would be an asset to seniors' social centres, continuing education music conservatories, and elder care facilities. While it is true that many older adults do engage in traditional music programs, the notion of introducing and familiarizing seniors with improvisational music making deserves to be investigated further.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research project was to gain a deeper understanding of how older musicians view their initial experiences with ensemble improvisation. To that end, it was necessary to organize and facilitate a series of music improvisation workshops for older adults who were currently engaged in some form of music performance and who had had little to no previous experience with improvising. (Research Ethics Board Approval certificate for Research Involving Humans is included in Appendix A).

Questions guiding the research were as follows:

1. How do older adults describe their experience of improvised music-making? What do they value about it?
2. In what ways do music improvisation activities serve to allow people with any level of music experience to play together?
3. Which of the following improvements were noticeable and in what ways: music skills such as music fluency, sight-reading, and/or memorizing music; confidence and comfort level?
4. How does engaging in ensemble improvised music-making enhance participants' quality of life?

Participants in this study ranged in age from 46 to 76 years old, all of whom were currently performing in orchestras and/or choirs. Two, three, or four individuals participated with me in each of the 12 weekly 90-minute improvisational music workshops. I collected data in a mixed methods format with detailed observational field notes and post-study interviews comprising the qualitative component, and a pre-study questionnaire providing quantitative data.

In order to achieve the most valid, rigorous, and comprehensive results, I determined that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was essential. By means of semi-structured interviews, I was able to elicit the most relevant viewpoints, perceptions, opinions, and narratives from the research subjects. Participant observation provided me the opportunity to situate myself within the context of the study such that I could experience the phenomena, document what took place from my perspective, and include my own interpretations and reflections, as Shah & Corley describe (2006). Creswell suggests that qualitative tools provide a means through which the researcher can come to a deeper understanding of how individuals interpret their personal and social experiences (2011). This was a major aim of the study.

Quantitative data gathered by means of the pre-study questionnaire was crucial in addressing the research questions regarding previous musical experience and noticeable improvements. The latter required an initial baseline which the questionnaire provided (a copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B). In the process of completing the questionnaire, the subjects were invited to offer details concerning their musical background along with their personal goals and expectations for the workshop. One advantage in conducting quantitative research, such as a questionnaire, is that results can be obtained easily and quickly (Watkins & Giola, 2015). Combining quantitative and qualitative methods can broaden the extent of the research, given that the strengths of each method compensate for limitations in the other (ibid). The data collected through the questionnaires, field notes and interviews comprises an accurate and definitive portrait of the research subjects, the workshop sessions, and the study itself.

Overarching themes upon which I focused, both in collecting field notes and in conducting the post-study interviews were: 1) the place of music within the participants' lives from childhood through adulthood and into the present time; 2) the positive effects of workshop participation on subjects' comfort levels and confidence in playing music with others in their regular ensembles; 3) how playing improvised music expanded their previous notions concerning the nature of music; 4) the extra-musical or social value of playing music with others on a regular basis; both in general and specifically in these workshops; and 5) the subjects' opinions about the value of learning music at any age; its role in furthering academic achievement and personal growth and development. Prior to the first workshop session, all study participants completed and signed a consent form, as designed by the McGill University Research Ethics Board II (see Appendix C). When offered the option of whether or not to adopt a pseudonym, all subjects chose to have their given names used.

This chapter includes a detailed description of this research study: its overall design, methodologies and rationales, the tools used, and how the data was collected and coded.

Design of the Study - Improvisational Music Workshop

All of the data for this research project was drawn from the improvisational music making sessions; gathered either directly from the participants through the pre-study questionnaire and during the post-study interview process, or indirectly from my observations of and reflections on the sessions. This section offers a detailed description of the process of organizing and facilitating the music workshops, including their structure and format.

Subject Selection

My recruitment process began in Fall 2015 in a major metropolitan, ethnically diverse Canadian city, whose downtown centre is home to two large universities. Optimally, I had hoped that these efforts would yield a group of about ten adults over the age of 60 who regularly participated in music making activities. I was also considering any individuals of that age who were not currently playing, but had previously played music. I anticipated that my workshops would begin sometime in the late fall or early winter.

First, I contacted Audrey-Kristel Barbeau, a McGill University PhD candidate and conductor/director of the Montreal New Horizons Band (MNHB), whose membership includes a number of retirement-aged persons. This orchestra was established in connection with New Horizons International Music Association (NHIMA) primarily situated in North America and specifically geared toward serving the needs of retired adults who want to play in a concert band. Some members have previous experience playing in high school bands, however novices are also welcomed. These orchestras rehearse weekly, hold several concerts each year, and often travel to other communities to play with other New Horizons Bands (New Horizons International). Since Audrey-Kristel had invited me to facilitate an improvisation workshop with her musicians on May 5, 2015, I was already acquainted with some of them, so she was my first contact. I was invited to attend one of their rehearsals on October 6, 2015 where I described my research study to the members, after which six people added their names to my contact list.

I was aware of another orchestra geared toward older adult amateur musicians: Canadian Amateur Musicians/Musiciens Amateur du Canada (CAMMAC) Symphony Orchestra. The CAMMAC organization is similar to New Horizons in that it strives to be

inclusive and non-competitive (cammac). During the summer, CAMMAC operates a music centre on Lake McDonald in the Laurentians near Montreal, holding week-long music camps for all ages. Genres include classical, jazz, Celtic, Broadway, blues, and chamber music. During the off-season, CAMMAC members participate in bi-monthly conducted sight-reading get-togethers at Vanier College in Montreal, and weekly orchestra rehearsals, which are held in the same location as the Montreal New Horizons Band: the Yves Jetté Auditorium in the Montreal Geriatric Institute (ibid). When I contacted the conductor, Jean-Pierre Brunet on October 20, 2015, he invited me to come and explain my research study at one of the upcoming weekly rehearsals. After a short talk, I was also able to speak informally to a few interested members during their refreshment break. Six CAMMAC members followed up by email inquiring about the workshops I was going to offer.

My other recruitment efforts included designing, printing, and distributing posters around McGill University music buildings and sending a mass email to McGill University graduate students. The latter yielded a response from one graduate student who directs a seniors' choir and who offered to pass along the information. I also solicited advertising space in both the Senior Times, a local online and print journal geared toward the interests of older adults, and McGill University Alumni Newsletter. Neither replied.

I had also kept in touch with several of the MNHB members who had participated in my improvisation workshop on May 5, 2015 and, along with the additional six sign-ups after my follow-up presentation in the fall, plus the CAMMAC members, I had 16 in my email contacts group as of November 2015. During the month of October, one of these contacts from New Horizons emailed me twice (October 7th and 8th) inquiring about when and how long the sessions would be and what sort of prerequisites there were with regard

to playing proficiency. She suggested that I use the Doodle program with all participants in order to establish a time/day and gave me detailed instructions as to how to use it when I informed her that I had never set one up.

Upon completion of the ethics approval process in February 2016, I began organizing the workshops. My supervisor suggested that I contact Professor Alain Cazes of McGill University's Schulich School of Music (SSM), so I sent him an email on February 15, 2016, and he permitted me to presented my project proposal to the 20 or so members of the McGill University Lab Band the following week. This group consists of older amateur musicians who perform in the ensemble and McGill University music education students who do the conducting. They rehearse weekly and perform concerts a few times during the year. There was some interest and two of the participants followed up.

My supervisor reserved a room in the McGill University SSM Strathcona building for what we both agreed was a perfect day/time for the participants. We knew that some of them would be on campus for band rehearsal and/or instrument lessons that day, and chose a time that would not conflict. As a member of the target demographic, I am aware of some of the activity-scheduling dynamics, including the appeal of attending a class that is offered during a time when I am already out of the house. The duration was to be from 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm on Thursdays during the 12 weeks between March 10th and May 26th, 2016. On February 21, 2016, I re-established connection with everyone on my list, and had a total of nine responses: four people responded expressing strong interest; while two others indicated that they were interested, but could not commit to the entire duration. Three were unable to participate at all due to: 1) a conflict in schedule with oboe lessons; 2) staying in Florida until the end of April; and 3) a full schedule. Seven from the original

group did not respond. One in the committed group asked whether she could bring her 46-year-old daughter. Feeling a need for additional participants, I agreed to that. Another musician I had met at the CAMMAC rehearsal contacted me and confessed that she was only 47 years old, and would agree to attend only if there was sufficient space for her. I assured her that space was available. One woman who ultimately attended only one session emailed me each week to let me know whether or not she would be there, and why or why not. One of the committed participants recruited three others: one became a regular attendee, one other attended once, and the other twice. I had had no previous contact with them, and this participant had mentioned nothing about this to me. In all, six people attended over the course of the twelve-week period, however attendance ranged from two through four participants each week. For the first seven weeks, two attended every week, one attended once, and one other came twice. Then for the final four weeks, two others came every week and the initial four did not attend. Since the workshops were organized in a flexible manner and were not in any way cumulative, only those results that were contingent upon longer-term engagement were affected. The attendance record is shown below in Table 3.1.

Each of the four main participants completed the pre-study questionnaire (see Appendix B), and signed the participant consent form on their first day of attendance (see Appendix C). After the study had been completed, these four subjects were interviewed (Interview questions appear in Appendix D).

Subjects	03/10	03/17	03/24	03/31	04/07	04/14	04/21	04/28	05/04	05/11	05/18	05/25
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Irvin,67 saxophone	x	x	x	x	x		x					
Jane, 63 piano	x	x	x	x	x		x					
Barb, 63 saxophone						x	x					
Carol, 76 guitar									x	x	x	x
Shira, 46 piano									x	x	x	x
Fran, 47 violin					x							

Table 3.1 Attendance of six subjects over the course of 12-week sessions

Factors Beyond Control - Attendance

In reflecting upon why the response to my recruitment efforts did not translate into higher attendance at the workshop sessions, I am certain that the paramount cause was a loss of contact with quite a few of the musicians during the four-month lag time between my initial meeting with them (October, 2015) and my email confirming that the workshops were going to begin (February, 2016). I had indicated to them in a group email sent in early November that the workshop sessions were immanent, because this is what I believed to be the case. I simply lacked the experience and the knowledge about how much time the organizational process would require. I could also theorize that my promotion did

not succeed in attracting people to participate, that they lacked experience with this type of music and I failed to inform them properly, and/or that the concept of improvisation was not appealing.

Other reasons for non-attendance included the following: three potential participants were planning to be in Florida for the winter and one requested that I schedule the workshops for later in the spring; two mentioned transportation issues, three stated that they had other work, health, and family-related commitments; and one cited the unpredictable weather. Two eventual committed participants had both family and health-related matters that conflicted with scheduling for the first eight weeks. They both attended each week thereafter. There were three specific one-time conflicts. Jane arrived one hour late on March 24, 2016, saying that there had been a fire in her neighbourhood. On March 31, 2016, she was an hour late due to a lengthy resolution of an issue with her computer technician. On April 7, 2016, I spoke informally with Irvin and learned that Jane lived 25-30 kilometers from McGill, had no car, and could only access the train at times that would bring her downtown either a full hour before the workshop or five to ten minutes after it began. She had volunteer work on alternate weeks during the hour before the workshop, so would attend the sessions on time on those weeks, but otherwise it would suit her better to be a bit late. I contacted her about this, but she did not respond. She continued arriving a few minutes late on alternate weeks. The third incident occurred on April 14, 2016. Irvin phoned me to say that he was sick in bed and would not be attending. Further, he suggested that he phone Jane and cancel since she was the only other regular participant, and the workshop wouldn't function well with only one person. I agreed. Unbeknownst to me, Irvin had been speaking to two others in his circle of friends, both of

whom had decided to attend together for the first time on that specific day. I am uncertain about the long-term effect of that turn of events. Irvin was also unaware that these two individuals were planning to attend that day, and forwarded to me an email that one of them had sent him on April 16, 2016 regarding this mix-up. I contacted her with details and apologized for the confusion. She attended the following week, but stated that she was uncertain about adjusting her work schedule so that she could participate in additional sessions. We communicated by email the following week, and she said that the scheduling would not allow her to participate further.

The final attendance issue arose on April 27 when Irvin emailed me stating that he and Jane would both be unable to attend the remaining five sessions; the next one of which was the following day. Jane did not contact me. Irvin explained that both of them had a busy recital and concert rehearsal schedule, and that "it was too much stress" (Griffith, personal communication, April 27, 2016). On May 1, 2016, I emailed a short Likert scale post-study questionnaire to both Jane and Irvin in order to solicit their feedback on the workshops and thereby collect additional data for the study. Neither responded. I received an email from Irvin on May 30, 2016 after seeing him at the Music For People workshop at SSM on May 29, 2016, which he noted "had some similar exercises" to my workshops; he mentioned that he would like to come back and attend my workshops during the week of June 20, 2016 if I were still conducting them; that it was "too bad that (he and Jane) were so busy with courses and other commitments;" and "a big problem was the lack of people" (ibid, May 30, 2016).

Classroom Environment

Throughout the workshop sessions, I reiterated the following information that I have heard repeatedly from facilitators throughout my 14 years of music improvisation workshop participation experiences, beginning with my first encounter at a jazz improvisation workshop in 2003. I believed these three (paraphrased) statements would provide the most valuable support to participants in the context of the research project:

1. "There are never any wrong notes in this type of music." I initially heard this stated by John Geggie, Ottawa bassist, music educator, and former Artistic Director of Jazzworks Canada. He continued, "If you play something you don't like, keep playing it until you like it, or play a note a semi-tone above or below it, and consider whether or not you prefer that sound." My intention in suggesting this was to mitigate risk-taking by assuring participants that whatever sound they either chose to produce or produced unintentionally was not only acceptable, but was valued as a contribution.
2. "You are invited to use your musical judgment in deciding what you wish to play and what you prefer in terms of consonance and dissonance; however you are encouraged to have an open mind to consider the beauty of sounds that you may have previously thought that you disliked or those sounds that you have never heard before." This suggestion follows from the previous one. Although I have heard a number of facilitators make this same general point in introductory improvisation workshops, my initial exposure to the concept was by the late Pauline Oliveros, a world-renowned innovative composer, improviser, accordionist, and founder of the Deep Listening Institute in Kingston New York who conducted a workshop with students at Carleton University in Ottawa in April, 2010 that I attended.

3. “Think about being curious and relaxed. Don’t feel that you have to always be making a certain kind of sound or any sound at all for that matter. Silence is equally powerful.” The suggestion to direct the attention onto curiosity offers novice improvisers a means to escape the self-conscious mental chatter that can arise in any creatively expressive activity, and has been known to occur when people begin to engage in this type of music making. I was initially introduced to this suggestion while reading material on the Musical Futures website (Musical Futures). Promoting relaxation and silence functions to alleviate any self-imposed pressure to be constantly producing musical sounds. In fact, silence is often deliberately imposed as an element of some improvisation exercises as a means of framing the sounds that are being made, and/or to limit the sonic chaos when many individuals are playing simultaneously. Relaxation is an antidote to anxiety generated by the inherent risk-taking nature of improvisation, which is described in works by Ajay Heble and Daniel Fischlin (2004). In addition, relaxation functions to remove any blockages or obstacles that might hinder the flow of creative energy.

I wanted to encourage divergent thinking and ensure maximum comfort through designing an inclusive, egalitarian, and informal setting. Recent studies into the value of humour and shared laughter in the promotion of classroom learning suggest that “students and teachers with a sense of humour… (have the) ability to set people at ease, equalize situations and status relationships, find unexpected connections and insights, and increase group rapport” (Korobkin, 1988, p. 154). Further, “laughter receives high marks from teachers and students alike because it unleashes creative thinking and reduces social distance” (ibid).

My objective was to relax and empower my participants and boost their self-esteem in a subtle manner; e.g. by highlighting something that they were doing or creating that they could agree was beautiful and worthy of being valued. In order to encourage them to freely express themselves, I adopted a light-hearted approach, including laughter.

Curriculum

Since I was not able to locate any suitable information regarding music improvisation workshops for older adults, I formulated a programme based upon a combination of strategies and approaches for creative and improvisatory music workshops with younger people as suggested in the literature and on relevant websites. Where necessary, I made additions, adjustments, adaptations, and alterations based upon andragogy theory, studies on facilitating conventional music workshops with elder adults, and my personal experiences as an improvisational music workshop participant; particularly as a member of the target demographic. I incorporated approaches, learning strategies, and ideas from the following sources:

1. Raphael Prieto's essay, "Creativity and its Origin in Music Improvisation," from the volume entitled Creativity and Music Education (Prieto, 2002):

Prieto suggests beginning with stretches and physical warm-ups, followed by simple breath and vocal exercises, then instructor-led clapping patterns which are coordinated with movements. After covering the rhythm element, the teacher introduces melodic material by means of grouping students into two sections; one of which plays an ostinato pattern while the other engages in improvisational exploration.

2. Daniel Spencer's 2013 dissertation: Spencer describes call-and-response ideas, a three-note activity involving rhythm, pitch work, note placement, and interval switching; and promotes the idea of group work with one group's drone, pulse drone, or ostinato providing a basis for the other group's improvised melodic material (Spencer, 2013).

3. Musical Futures website, sponsored by an international music educators' network originally established in the United Kingdom (described in Chapter 2): The videos on this website provided valuable visual information in that I could see the leader communicating instructional information and the group responding to it. The most useful videos were those that depicted music teacher trainees who were in the process of learning implementation strategies and approaches for activities such as warm-ups, rhythm work, clapping, and movement; and suggestions as to how to teach in an informal, flexible style.

4. ICASP Improvisation Tool Kit: Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice (ICASP) was an international academic research project centred in Guelph Ontario and dedicated to the promotion of improvisation broadly construed. It was funded from 2007-2014 by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and promoted community partnerships as well as a wide range of academic and performance opportunities. In 2014, the organization expanded and became the International Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation, with the same mandate and sponsorship as its predecessor. The original ICASP website remains up as an archival record. I reviewed the many offerings for improvisational music activities as posted on its "Improvisation Tool Kit" page, and added several of them to my curriculum.

5. Improvisation workshops facilitated by: a) Pauline Oliveros, whose exercises functioned to encourage group cohesiveness; b) Jesse Stewart, whose main contribution to this

research project was his workshop facilitation tools and techniques; c) Sienna Dahlen, vocalist and voice instructor at Concordia University and McGill University, from whom I learned several vocal improvisation exercises that were transferable to my workshop activities; d) Nick Fraser, from whom I received the Anthony Braxton graphic score material (see Figure 3.2); e) Christine Duncan, Element Choir conductor, and teacher at Humber College and University of Toronto, some of whose improvisation techniques; for example: loops, patterns, and sequences, guided and inspired melodic material suggestions.

One overarching principle that proved to be of greater value than any specific technique or approach was to simply remain focussed upon the participants and to attempt to always be aware of and to anticipate their needs. I remained flexible at all times and prepared to either move to another activity, repeat the previous one, continue what we were doing, or encourage discussion, according to my perception of their needs. As each session began, I wanted to establish a sufficiently comfortable environment so that the participants would be willing to experiment and take risks. This approach was based upon my personal observation of workshop facilitators, independent of any research guide or previous reading. Although I consider it to be a useful pedagogical tool within any learning milieu, paying close attention to the students/participants was an undeniably important strategy within the context of these improvisational workshops with older adults.

Sessions Overview

The following is a general overview of the weekly sessions:

1) 10 -15 minutes of introductory warm-ups consisting of physical movements designed to loosen up the body and help people to focus.

2) 20-25 minutes of rhythm exercises while sitting, standing, and moving; for example, hand-clapping, playing percussion instruments, and counting while moving in a pattern.

3) 5-10 minutes of pitch warm-ups

4) 20-25 minutes of improvisational music activities. For example: call-and-response, group work using the ostinato or drone, playing music within various improvisatory structures such as duos and trios

5) 10 minutes playing pre-constructed graphic scores.

Sessions In-Depth

1. Warm-Ups Each week began with warm-ups designed to bridge the transition between day-to-day life and the music sessions. Participants were instructed to mimic my movements.

a. Clasp hands, bend elbows and hold fists in front of face. Rapidly shake hands, moving the elbows and allowing the neck to move freely while vocalizing: "Ah..ah..ah.. ah…" (Musical Futures video).

b. Place hands on stomach and vocalize "sh sh" in short bursts; then "huh huh huh" (ibid).

c. A series of seven stretching exercises, ending with students bent from the waist and allowing the arms to hang loose from the shoulders (independent idea).

2. Rhythm Activities

Following this, we did a number of rhythm activities.

a. The first exercise was designed to synchronize our rhythmic feel by counting together to four until we were in unison. Then I had the participants close their eyes, and we would

count to four aloud, after which we would all silently count to four, and then we would attempt to come in together, saying “one” aloud (Musical Futures).

b. Next we did a series of clapping exercises beginning with clapping and verbalizing all four beats on a slow count of four. Then I divided the group into two with one-half clapping on beats one and three and the other half on beats two and four. Variations included: everyone verbalizing all four beats, each half verbalizing the beats they were clapping on, each half verbalizing the beats they were not clapping on, clapping only on your group’s beats without verbalizing at all, clapping without verbalizing with eyes closed, and switching the groups and repeating the sequence. The goal was to synchronize with the other members of the group and keep a steady four-beat rhythm (ibid).

c. We did a two-group body-percussion exercise in which one group clapped over 8 and the other over 6. This was done as follows: (8) left thigh, right thigh, left hip, right hip, left hand on right chest, right hand on left chest, clap in front and verbalize “8.” I did this as a four-four meter. The other group did left thigh, right thigh, left hip, right hip, clap, verbalize “6.” This was done as a three-four meter. The goal was to learn polyrhythms (ibid).

d. We continued the rhythm component with some standing exercises. First we made a line one behind the other. The person at the back of the line would create a short (1-2 measure) rhythm pattern which they would tap on the back of the person ahead of them. This person repeated the pattern, as they understood it, and so on until the first person in the line received the pattern on their back. They then turned to the group and clapped the rhythm as they interpreted it, and we would all give feedback (ICASP).

e. The last rhythm exercise was movement-based. Initially, we would begin a slow pattern forward and back to a count of four as follows: left foot, right foot, (forward); left foot, right

foot (back). When this was synchronized, we added clapping and verbalizing on all four moves/beats; then only on 1 for a few rounds; then only on 2, then 3, then 4. Upon successful completion of this sequence, they would clap on 1 the first time, 2 the second, 3 the third, 4 the fourth, 1 the fifth, and so on (Musical Futures).

3. Pitch Warm-Ups

The short pitch warm-up had three activities.

a. Start with silence. Everyone closed their eyes and tried to come in simultaneously, making any vocal sound at all. This was repeated a few times (Oliveros, 2010).

b. Repeat 1) only this time, we all seek to find a common pitch within the group. Everyone was instructed to listen to one another and shift their pitch until it became a unison (ibid).

c. Repeat 1) trying to find pitches that no one else is sounding (ibid).

4. Improvisation Activities

The following are some of the improvisation activities from the curriculum.

a. Improvising over a structure – I picked a tonic "doh" and one person played "doh," "doh," "ti," "doh." Another person played "me," "me," "fa," "me." A third person played "sol, "sol," "sol," "sol." All three played together while everyone else tried improvising music along with it. I also tried this with two participants, one playing "doh," "doh," "sol," "doh," and the other improvising (Azzara, 1992).

b. Note experiments – Count off "1, 2" around the circle. Then all of the 1's say "1" together and the 2's say "2". Then 1's say "Beep" and the 2's say "Bop." Participants were instructed to pitch their syllables differently each time and to pay attention to the combination of tones in each group (Musical Futures).

c. Call-and-Response activities. I played a short musical phrase and the group would play it back to me; then the second time, they would complete the phrase as a group. Next: I would direct my phrase to one participant who would turn to his/her neighbour and either repeat my phrase or complete my phrase. This was done successively around the circle (personal idea).

d. Ostinato exercise – The group counted off in 1, 2. Then the 1's played an ostinato, a drone, or a pulse drone. The 2's invented melodic lines to play along with whatever the 1's were doing. Then groups would exchange tasks (Spencer, 2013).

5. Duos and Trios

One person played a melody of their choice. The next person assumed the role of accompanist. After playing together for about thirty seconds, the third person entered and the first person dropped out. Theoretically, the second person then became the soloist and the third person the accompanist. This process continued with the fourth person and so on around the circle with each successive "third person" dropping out (personal experience).

6. Graphic Scores

Graphic notation is well known in avant-garde music, and several systems have achieved popularity. In the context of this research study, graphic scores were useful in providing a visual focus for those participants who were more comfortable playing from written notation and basing their sonic choices upon material that they could see. For this purpose, I created some graphic charts based upon one of Anthony Braxton's advanced systems (see below) that I had been given at a 2015 Jazzworks Canada camp workshop led by Nick Fraser. I wanted to use straightforward images that would be clear to beginning improvisers, so I combined the symbols into my own versions of legato trills, staccato

intervals, and multiphonic attacks. During the study, we used two variations of each of these types, and I included one representative sample below. The charts were conducted by giving participants a count-in of four, after which we played the charts in eight, four and/or six beats.

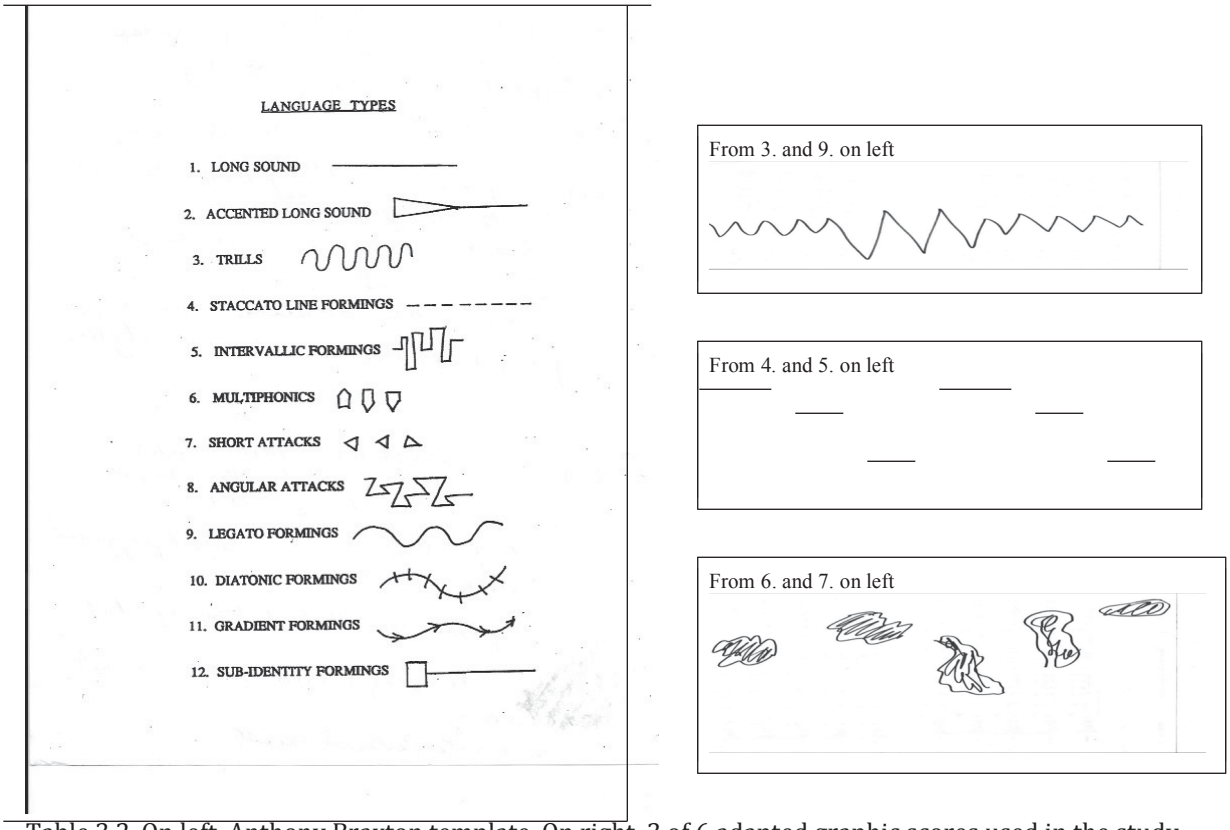

Table 3.2. On left, Anthony Braxton template. On right, 3 of 6 adapted graphic scores used in the study.

Data Collection

In order to ensure 1) the most accurate portrayal of the views of those whose experiences were being examined and analyzed; 2) a broader, deeper, and enhanced understanding of the phenomena being examined; and 3) that any theories generated from the research would represent an honest, detailed, comprehensive, and plausible

interpretation of the data; I used a mixed methods methodology, as recommended by Shah and Corley (2006). The following tools comprised the qualitative component: 1) participant observation from which field notes were recorded; and 2) post-study interviews during which four subjects offered feedback on their workshop experience and recounted narratives detailing the role of music over the course of their lives. I also administered a pre-study questionnaire (see Appendix B), which represented the quantitative data-gathering element. This section describes the research tools I chose, and how and why I used them within the context of this study.

Questionnaire

This research project, while predominantly qualitative, did undertake a questionnaire from which data was retrieved and analyzed. According to Babbie (2010), the modality of quantitative research I used would be considered descriptive design as opposed to experimental design, since my goal was to derive a definitive account of a specific research environment by means of considering relationships between existing variables rather than to establish causality by measuring subjects before and after the application of the variable being studied. The questionnaire functioned as a means of 1) soliciting data relevant to the subjects' previous music-related experiences; 2) allowing subjects to indicate their feelings about ensemble playing and performing; 3) inviting subjects to share their thoughts about the extra-musical value of engaging in music making; and 4) discovering subjects' expectations and preferred outcomes over the course of the twelve week workshop. The demographic information they offered was useful in

correlational and comparative data analysis, and the substance of the questionnaire results as a whole were integrated into the context of the data presentation and conclusions.

Some specific information I wished to elicit through this questionnaire was the extent of the participants' a) formal musical training; b) performance experience; and c) improvisation experience. In researching various facets of improvisational music performance for this and other projects, I came across a theory arguing that when people have no external musical reference point (such as a sheet of music notation) upon which to focus, they must rely on one another for guidance as to what to play and what sounds to produce at any given moment. The musical product is, therefore, a reflection of the relationship they construct during the experience (Small, 1998). With this theory in mind, I added a statement soliciting participants' beliefs concerning how playing music with people can potentially motivate the formation of social relationships. This concept was revisited during the interview process.

I wanted to discover in which areas the subjects felt confident, which skills they would prefer to improve, what their expectations were, and the extent to which they valued the extra-musical elements of ensemble music making. Because 1) much of the data was being collected for the purpose of pre-study/post-study comparisons; and 2) I planned to make use of some of this information in formulating our workshop sessions over the following weeks, the questionnaire had to be completed at the onset of the study. Aside from the introductory demographic material, all of the areas covered on the questionnaire were those that had arisen within the literature review either in the studies into improving quality of life for older adults or research on the benefits to music students who have had improvisation added to their curricula. One unintended feature of administering the

questionnaire to the participants at the beginning of our initial session was that it served as a focus for them within what could have been an awkward environment. Since the questions concerned them personally, they may have been more comfortable completing them on paper as an alternative to verbally sharing the information. As Babbie states, questionnaires are an unobtrusive form of inquiry, in which subjects may interact directly with the document, responding as they wish on their own time (ibid).

In constructing the questionnaire, I followed McColl et al.'s recommendations to 1) order the questions from general to specific; 2) use unambiguous wording to minimize effort required to comprehend and respond; and 3) include elements of direct relevance to the participants in order to retain their interest and positively influence their perception of the value of completing the questionnaire (2002). In the first section, participants were asked to disclose the extent of their music training, performance experience, and previous involvement with improvisation. The second section of the questionnaire consisted of 17 questions structured using a five-point Likert scale; the responses for which were: "very much," "somewhat," "neutral," "not much," and "not at all." Many of the statements for which a response was solicited included the phrase "(desire to) improve," and several questions were intended to inquire into participants' feelings about music, performing, and the social value of playing music with others. In drawing up the questionnaire, I was seeking to determine the participants' levels of confidence and comfort; their specific goals, and the role that music plays in their lives. This data was then revisited during the interview process, thereby revealing some of the perceptible effects of their workshop participation. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

Interviews

In order to collect additional data directly from the subjects in their own words and framed in their own style (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009), I conducted semi-structured interviews with four of them after the completion of the 12-week workshop sessions. The duration of these interviews ranged from 30-60 minutes and, with their permission (Consent Forms in Appendix C), all were recorded and stored on my iPhone 5s. I then transcribed them in their entirety and stored them as a Word docx. file. Formulation of some questions was based upon Schippers's "Sample Questions for Interviewing World Musicians on Learning and Teaching" (2010). Examples of such questions are: What can you tell me about your own musical history? Can you share a memory of your earliest musical experience? Where do you see music in terms of its value in your life? How do you see music's value in society? In addition, I included a number of questions directly related to those guiding the research; e.g. What are some of your thoughts about participating in the workshops? Can you share any specific or general feelings that arose while you were playing or afterward? How was your previous concept of music in general/improvisational music specifically influenced by the workshop sessions? Why do you think some people theorize that improvising improves musicianship? Are you interested in doing any additional improvising in the future? (A complete list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix D).

Carol Katz was interviewed in her home on September 8, 2016 from 3:30 p.m. until 4:30 p.m. Carol's daughter Shira, who had also participated in four of the workshops and had signed the consent form, entered the room at 4:15 p.m. while recording was in process; and, after her mother completed the structured interview, offered to answer the interview

questions and in the process shared some valuable perspectives about improvisational music and important feedback on the workshops which I transcribed and included in the collected data. Irvin Griffith was interviewed in the lobby of the Elizabeth Wirth building located on the McGill University campus on September 20, 2016 from 3:00 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. when he had to go to a music lesson. At that point, Jane Amro arrived, and I conducted an interview with her in the same location from 3:30 p.m. until 4:15 p.m. when Irvin returned from his lesson, and we continued our (recorded) discussion.

These interviews were a necessary tool because they served to draw information from participants that I would otherwise have had no means to access, while giving them 1) the freedom to prioritize the stories that were most important to them (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009); and 2) the opportunity to recount their personal narratives as an amalgam of their life experiences (Shah & Corley, 2006). I had hoped to discover new perspectives from them so that I could more accurately assess their views on improvising, ensemble music making, and the potential for ensemble improvisational music making to further enhance quality of life for older adults generally. The interview component was vital to this participant-focussed study for which the conclusive theories were concerned not only with music making, but also with social phenomena: people, relationships, and human interactions within an environment.

Participant Observation

During the workshop sessions, I primarily acted as the facilitator moving the group through the series of activities I had planned for the week. When appropriate, I would also participate as a member of the group. In either case, I would be engaging with the subjects,

thus not able to fully focus upon recording field notes until immediately following each session. Since I wanted to capture as many of the relevant details as possible and document events most accurately, I made some handwritten notes during the session, and drafted a complete report once I arrived home. The notes were typed and saved as a .docx file within approximately an hour after each session. I recorded what I remembered having seen take place in the research setting; that is, what people did and what they said. According to Saldaña, the researcher chooses those observations relevant to the research questions and whatever material that may be related to them in some way (2011). The 12 pages of field notes also included interactions between the subjects of my observations; and at times, I included observer's comments, opinions, personal reactions, and theories as to possible intentions or motivations. These were made clearly distinct from the observations.

One of the challenges within qualitative research is gathering data sufficient to document patterns, categories, themes, and meanings from which conclusions can be drawn and theories generated. Observation is a well-regarded research tool that can provide information that cannot be accessed by other means. It is considered to be a natural complement to the interview component because it serves to allow the researcher input into the participants' domain (ibid).

When taken together, the field notes from this study, the interview material, and the completed questionnaires represent a balanced and comprehensive portrayal of the research subjects and the events that transpired during the workshop sessions. This data provided ample material from which responses to the research questions could be compiled.

Data Coding/Analysis

To begin the process of analyzing the data gathered during the course of this study, I first transcribed the recorded interviews in their entirety in order to do a content analysis. In reading through this text, some words, phrases, and general themes seemed to recur, and these were noted on separate sheets of paper for each interview subject. Each successive reading revealed additional themes and more material to place within the previously identified topics and themes. Content analysis was similarly applied to the questionnaire data and to the field notes that were based on my participant observation and post-session reflections. All prominent repeating themes were noted on sheets of paper labelled with either the participants' names in the case of the questionnaires and interviews, or labelled "Field Notes" for everything else.

As suggested by Mason (2002), I read all of the written material a total of three times at each of three levels: the literal, interpretive, and reflexive, taking separately-labeled notes during each of the readings. This process is justified as follows:

1. A literal reading is done in order to focus upon the data content itself. The researcher refrains from adding opinions, judgments or associations, and the substance is noted as much as possible in a descriptive, observational manner (ibid).
2. During the interpretive reading process, the researcher allows the data to trigger wider meanings and associations by inquiring into what the data represents or indicates; in other words, the possibilities that can be inferred from the data (ibid).
3. A reflexive reading overtly includes the researcher's perspectives, values, and assumptions that influence both the methods of data generation and its interpretation. This

type of reading goes beyond the content and into the dynamics of the relationship between the researcher and the data (ibid).

Seven themes common to all interviews and written reports were listed on another sheet of paper, and each was assigned a colour, as suggested by Ryan and Bernard (2003). All of the written material was then colour-coded by topic in order to construct a visual representation of theme-frequency. After reviewing the coded data and considering the seven themes, I was able to find two core categories within which the seven themes could be framed. Ryan and Bernard refer to this as metacoding (ibid) while Bryant and Charmaz describe it as conceptual coding (2007). Each of these two potential core categories was assigned a colour and the written material was again colour coded. Following that step, I was able to begin to construct a cohesive narrative of results from which interpretations could be drawn.

It should be noted that data concerning the phenomena under investigation represented the viewpoints of the research subjects as well as my own, and that both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied in this study. In assessing the data drawn from all sources using the same analytic format, I was able to triangulate the results and thereby reinforce and add credibility to them. As Mathison states, viewing a phenomenon from more than one perspective provides further credibility and a more valid portrayal of it (1988). Rather than simply seeking confirmation or convergence of findings, I was also endeavoring to use "triangulation as a strategy… (in order to provide)…a rich and complex picture of the social phenomenon being studied" (ibid, p. 15). As suggested by Simons, I considered all conceivable interpretations of the data in order to rule out those that appeared to be irrelevant, contrary to the purpose, biased, or unconfirmed (2009).

Summary

This chapter describes the research design of the study, elaborating details of the process and the rationales for the methods and tools used. In order to achieve my purposes; namely, to examine the capacity that ensemble improvisatory music making may have to enhance older adult musicians' quality of life, both in terms of their ongoing musical endeavours and in their lives more generally, organizing and facilitating improvisation sessions was of paramount importance. This necessitated a subject selection process involving a search for older musicians who were sufficiently interested in attending and participating. As stated above, data from these sessions was gathered qualitatively by means of participant observation and post-study one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each subject. This data comprised a number of perspectives from which the phenomena could be considered. In addition, a pre-study questionnaire, a quantitative tool, provided essential background information and further insights into the subjects' musical history, including a self-analysis concerning their musicianship and comfort level in performing with others. Three time dimensions were represented by the three data gathering tools: 1) before the study - by means of the questionnaire; 2) during the process of the study, through observational field notes; and 3) after the study, using the interviews. After I collected the data through the use of these three tools at these three times, I analyzed and coded it; I then was able to interpret and configure it as theoretical answers to the research questions.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

This research study, undertaken in accordance with the methodology described in the previous chapter, was premised upon the following: 1) the reality of a global aging phenomenon; 2) some of the unique needs of elderly citizens, as established and supported by scholarly research; and 3) results of studies demonstrating benefits to older adults who regularly engage in ensemble music making. The paramount goal of this study was to begin looking at the range of potential advantages for seniors who incorporate ensemble improvisational music making into their weekly routines, given that improvisation is a more inclusive approach that permits people to engage in ensemble music making without having to learn to read music notation.

Considering this to be an inaugural project of its kind, I selected research subjects who were older adults: 1) with an extensive music background, including some formal training; 2) with considerable experience playing music with others; 3) who were currently involved in ensemble music making; and 4) who had had virtually no experience with improvisational music. I wanted to solicit the views of individuals who had made the choice to spend substantial time and energy engaging with music throughout their lives; both because they would have the capacity to examine and comment upon improvisational music relative to music with which they were familiar, and because they could provide valid, relevant, and compelling data concerning the experience of ensemble music making in general and its potential to enhance quality of life for older adults. As described in Chapter 3, a series of 12 weekly one-hour improvisational music sessions comprised the focus for the study.

I gathered data through 1) a preliminary questionnaire completed by four

participants (see Appendix B); 2) observational field notes that I documented directly after each music workshop session; and 3) post-study interviews with the four subjects who completed the questionnaire. These interviews were audio-recorded on an iPhone 5s and then transcribed in their entirety (interview questions appear in Appendix D).

The pre-study questionnaire served as the subjects' assessment of 1) their music background, including formal training and performance experience; and 2) their individual long-range objectives regarding improvement of musical skills, comfort level, and feelings of confidence in ensemble performance.

The interview questions were open-ended; and, in addition to inquiring into the issues specific to the research problems, I added several questions to encourage the subjects to share their personal narratives, experiences, feelings, and views around music and its presence in their lives. Thus, my interview goals were twofold:

First, I wanted to situate engagement with music within the subject's personal history; not only their formal and informal training, performance experiences, and present music activities, but also a description of the extra-musical benefits they have experienced through participating in music ensembles. How does music performance enhance their quality of life? The subjects shared their feelings about what music means to them, their appreciation of their own musical strengths, how they have worked and what they have sacrificed in order to continue to fulfill their musical potential, and the satisfaction and inspiration music has provided them.

Second, I wanted to elicit the subjects' thoughts and opinions concerning the improvisation workshops; including their motivations and expectations around participating, their concepts about improvisational music before and after participating,

their reactions to the activities, and what they learned and gained through the experience. In addition, I was seeking their views regarding the benefits of music education in general and for seniors specifically. Should more opportunities for music making be offered to retired persons? In what ways could improvisational music appeal to those older adults who never learned to read music?

The presentation of data will proceed in the following manner: first, I will summarize the results of the pre-study questionnaire; next, I will present relevant excerpts from the field notes, organized according to the themes that emerged during data coding; and third, I will discuss the post-study interview results, formulated by means of the topics as described above. All relevant quotations from the interviews will be copied verbatim into the text. A summary of findings will conclude this chapter.

The Pre-study Questionnaire

The questionnaire solicited relevant data concerning subjects' previous music-related experiences, their feelings about ensemble playing and performing, their opinions about the extra-musical value of engaging in music making; and their expectations and preferred outcomes over the course of the twelve week workshop. The demographic information they offered was useful in correlational and comparative data analysis, and the section on their expectations for the workshops and the specific areas of music performance they wished to target for improvement contributed to formulating the content of the music sessions. As shown on Table 4.1 below, the demographic data retrieved included the extent (Yr. = years) and the substance of the participants' formal music training (M.T.), performance experience (P.E.), and improvisation experience (I.E.). Fran

and Barb did not complete the questionnaire, having attended only one session each: Week 5 and Week 7 (respectively), thus are not included in the table.

The Pre-Study Questionnaire – Basic Information

Subjects	Gender	Age	Yr. M.T.	Details	Yr. P.E.	Details	Yr. I.E.	Details
Irvin Saxophone	Male	67	15	Piano lessons Theory and Ear training MC Collegial 2	10	recitals, concerts	very little	music camp
Jane Piano	Female	63	10	RC Gr. 9 piano MC Collegial 2 Theory Ear training	10	piano recitals choir performances	none	took a course about jazz
Carol Guitar	Female	76	30	Recorder Guitar	20	small group, orchestra, band	very little	
Shira Piano	Female	46	30	piano lessons singing lessons Beginner guitar	2	solo, choir, small group (2), per-formed for kids	1	with guitar, singing

Table 4.1 Demographic information collected from subjects' questionnaires.

To summarize the demographic information: three of the subjects were female and one male; three were post-retirement age, ranging from 63 to 76 years old, while one was in her mid-forties. Years of musical training ranged from 10 (Jane), to 15 (Irvin), to 30 (both Carol and Shira). Three subjects had had traditional piano lessons early in life, with

Jane achieving a Grade Nine in the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) program, a widely-known piano curriculum established in Toronto in 1886, taught by RCM-accredited instructors, and providing an internationally-recognized standard of musical achievement (Royal Cons.). Both Jane and Irvin attended McGill Conservatory, a Montreal-based all-ages community music education facility founded in 1904 and operating out of two McGill campus locations (McGill Cons.). During their years of training at the conservatory, Jane and Irvin studied music theory, ear training, and jazz music, completing the Collegial Level 2 which is equivalent to two years of post-secondary education. They also continued private studies on their instruments: piano (Jane) and piano and saxophone (Irvin). Carol's musical training consisted of summer music camp and private lessons through which she learned to play recorder and guitar. Shira had private lessons in piano, voice, and guitar.

Years of performance experience ranged from two (Shira) to 20 (Carol) with Jane and Irvin indicating 10. Irvin described his performance experience as consisting of recitals and concerts; Jane indicated piano recitals and choir performances; Carol stated that she has performed in small groups, orchestras, and bands; and Shira has played as a solo act, in a duo, in choirs, and has performed shows for children. With regard to experience with improvisational music, three participants answered none or very little, citing exposure at music camp and during coursework. Shira improvised with guitar and voice for one year.

Following the initial section of the questionnaire, as summarized on the above table, the subjects responded to 17 questions, with answers structured using a 5-point Likert scale for which the choices were: "very much," "somewhat," "neutral," "not much," and "not at all." The statements and areas covered in this portion of the questionnaire were drawn from the literature review; specifically from within the sections concerning studies into 1)

enhancing quality of life for older adults; 2) the benefits of ensemble music making for seniors; and 3) improvements to music skills in elementary and secondary students whose music education curricula was supplemented with improvisational music activities on a trial basis. These three areas are foundational to the premises and purpose of the study.

The 17 questions can be categorized as follows: 1) Desired improvements to music- and performance-related skills; 2) Beliefs concerning the social benefits derived from making music with others; 3) Personal relationship with music; 4) Expectations about the improvisation workshops.

Desired Improvements to Music and Performance Skills

Seven of the first nine questions in the Likert-scale section began with either "I would like to improve" or "I am satisfied with." The other two (4) and 5) below) were worded in the passive voice: "could be improved." The nine areas for consideration were drawn from the literature demonstrating a link between adding improvisation activities to the music education classroom and improvement of general and specific music skills, comfort level, and confidence: 1) sight-reading skills; 2) rhythm accuracy; 3) ability to play by ear; 4) listening skills; 5) musical expression; 6) harmonic understanding; 7) overall musical skills and musicianship; 8) comfort level when playing music with other people; and 9) degree of confidence while playing music with other people.

Irvin (Irv) responded that he would "very much" like to improve his overall music skills and musicianship, his comfort level when playing music with other people, his ability to play by ear, his listening skills, and his musical expression and understanding. He is satisfied (neutral) with regard to his level of confidence while playing music with other

people, his sight-reading skills, and his rhythm accuracy, and he would "somewhat" prefer to improve his harmonic understanding.

Jane "very much" desired to improve her comfort level when playing music with others, her sight-reading skills, ability to play by ear, listening skills, and harmonic understanding. She would "somewhat" like to improve her overall musical skills and musicianship, level of confidence when playing music with other people, rhythm accuracy, and musical expression and understanding.

Carol responded that she would "very much" like to improve her overall musical skills and musicianship, her comfort level when playing music with other people, her sight-reading skills, ability to play by ear, listening skills, musical expression and understanding, and harmonic understanding. She is "somewhat" satisfied with her level of confidence when playing music with other people, and her rhythm accuracy could be "somewhat" improved.

Shira would "very much" like to improve her overall musical skills and musicianship, her rhythm accuracy, ability to play by ear, musical expression and understanding and harmonic understanding. With regard to her comfort level when playing music with other people, her level of confidence while playing music with other people, her sight-reading skills and listening skills, she indicated a "neutral" response.

The only statement from this section that elicited a unanimous response ("very much") was "I would like to improve my ability to play by ear." Jane, Irv, and Carol all responded with "very much" to the statements "I would like to improve my listening skills" and "I would like to improve my comfort level when playing music with other people." Shira indicated a "neutral" response to both of these statements. "I would like to improve

my overall musical skills and musicianship" and "I would like to improve my musical expression and understanding" received a "very much" response from Irv, Carol, and Shira, while Jane indicated "somewhat" to both. Jane, Carol, and Shira all "very much" want to improve their harmonic understanding, and Irv would "somewhat" like to improve his. With regard to sight-reading, Jane and Carol indicated that they believe that their skills could be improved "very much." Shira and Irv both responded with "neutral" to that statement. "My rhythm accuracy could be improved" elicited a "very much" from Shira, Carol and Jane responded with "somewhat" and Irv offered a "neutral" response. The only other statement that received three different responses was: "I am satisfied with my level of confidence while playing music with other people." Irv and Shira were neutral, Jane said "not much," and Carol responded with "somewhat."

In general, results from this section of the questionnaire reinforced some themes that recurred during the research study process: the degree to which the subjects demonstrated awareness of their strengths and their insecurities; their self-critique; and their seemingly tenacious determination to fulfill their musical potential. There were only two questions that received three different responses, and one question for which there was agreement from two subjects on each of two answers. Six of the nine questions had agreement from at least three participants, and in all instances, the agreed-upon response was "very much."

As alluded to earlier, music students who engage in a regular practice of music improvisation, demonstrate a measurable improvement in performance-related skills such as those mentioned in the questionnaire. These include the following five areas: overall musical skills and musicianship, sight-reading skills, rhythm accuracy, musical expression

and understanding, and harmonic understanding (Azzara, 1993; Stringham, 2010; Montano, 1983, Lehmann et al., 2007). Three of the subjects indicated that they "very much" wish to pursue improvement in three of the above areas: overall musical skills and musicianship, musical expression and understanding, and harmonic understanding.

Listening skills and playing by ear have an even more profoundly interconnected relationship with improvisation. Interestingly these two areas received the strongest responses on the questionnaire with three and four subjects (respectively) indicating that they would "very much" like to improve in these areas.

The two non-skill-related statements regarding confidence and comfort levels were added in order to allow for a post-study comparison, analysis and discussion with the subjects. This took place during the interview process; the details of which will be discussed below. Three of the five subjects reported wanting "very much" to improve their comfort level when playing music with other people, and the degree of satisfaction with confidence levels received two "neutral" responses, one "somewhat" and one "not much."

This section of the questionnaire noted a correlation between areas of desired improvement indicated by the subjects, and areas noted in the literature, which have shown improvement for subjects in other research projects using improvisational music activities in a manner similar to that which was offered during the course of this study.

Beliefs Concerning the Social Benefits Derived from Making Music with Others

Two statements concerning the above topic were included in the pre-study questionnaire: "One of the reasons I like to play is to get out and see people," and "I feel that I can get to know people when I play music with them." Similar to the confidence and

comfort questions in the previous section, the rationale for adding these statements to the questionnaire was, in part, to invite responses which could then be discussed during the interviews. In addition, the extra-musical, and specifically social benefits to be derived from engaging in ensemble music making is one of the main tenets of this research project, given that seniors seek social stimulation and given that ensemble music making can potentially provide it. Interestingly Shira, the only non-senior participant responded with "neutral" to both statements. Carol and Jane answered "very much" to the first. Carol also responded with "very much" to the second, while Jane responded "somewhat." Irvin indicated "somewhat" to both. These topics were discussed in detail during the interview process, reported below.

Personal Relationship with Music and Expectations about the Workshops

Three questions regarding the subjects' personal relationship with music performance were included in order to confirm the value they place upon it: "I like to play music," "Playing music makes me feel good," and "Music is a big part of my life." Irv responded with "somewhat" to all three statements. Carol and Shira indicated "very much" to all three and Jane answered "somewhat" to the second statement and "very much" to the other two. As with the previous topic, these three statements were revisited and discussed in detail during the interviews.

I included the following statements relating to the subjects' degree of awareness of improvisation and their expectations of possible outcomes from their participation in the workshops: "I am aware of the value of music improvisation," "I think that this workshop will help me become a better musician," and "I think that this workshop will strengthen my

relationship with the other people I am playing with." Shira responded with "neutral" to all three, Irvin answered "somewhat" to all three, Carol indicated "very much" as her response to all three, and Jane answered "somewhat" to the first two and "very much" to the last. The first two statements were part of an inquiry into the subjects' perception of music improvisation and provided a topic for further discussion during the workshops and post-study interviews.

A summary of the questionnaire responses is shown below in Table 4.2. The numbers indicated refer to the Likert scale described above: i.e. 5 = very much; 4 = somewhat; 3 = neutral; 2 = not much; 1 = not at all. The responses with regard to the seven music skill areas were averaged, as were those referring to music's value. Expected outcomes of the workshops indicate to what degree the participants believe that they will benefit.

	Desire to improve			Music's value		Expected outcomes of workshops	
Name, Age	Music skills	Comfort levels	Confidence	Personal	Social	Musical	Social
Irvin, 67 Saxophone	4.3	5	3	4	4	4	4
Jane, 63 Piano	4.6	5	4	4.6	4.5	4	5
Carol, 75 Guitar	4.9	5	2	5	5	5	5
Shira, 43 Piano	4.4	3	3	5	3	3	3

Table 4.2 Likert scale responses collected from subjects' questionnaires

Questionnaires with Likert scale response structures can minimize ambiguity, revealing an easily-reported result. The four subjects who completed the questionnaire and participated in at least four of the workshops were older adult musicians with at least 10 years of music training, many years of performance experience and very little exposure to improvisational music. They all indicated that they very much wanted to improve their ability to play by ear, most (3) wanted to improve their listening skills, musical expression and understanding, overall music skills and musicianship, harmonic understanding, and comfort level while playing, and half of the group very much wanted to improve their sight reading ability. Rhythmic accuracy and confidence level were of less concern to the group in general.

The Observational Field Notes

In closely examining all of the field notes while completing the process of literal, interpretive, and reflexive readings, as suggested by Mason (2002) and as explained in detail in the Data Coding section of the previous chapter, the following themes became apparent: 1) the need to adapt the workshop session plans due to unexpectedly smaller numbers of participants; 2) the need to adapt the workshop sessions due to lack of alignment between Irv's/Jane's preconceptions about the focus of the workshops and my own; 3) those aspects of the workshops with which the participants appeared to be more comfortable and which appeared to trigger discomfort; 4) comparison of the overall nature of the workshops with Jane/Irv as opposed to those with Carol/Shira; and 5) my process of being flexible in attempting to meet the needs of the participants while working to achieve a successful result. The field notes excerpts have been organized around those topics; 3) and 4) are subsumed under one heading and 5) is integrated within the others.

Adapting Workshop Sessions to Accommodate Smaller Numbers of Participants

According to my records, six individuals: Irv, Jane, Fran, Carol, Frank, and Jean-Phillipe had confirmed that they were planning to attend the workshops. Brenda had also indicated strong interest initially, but was potentially going to be too busy. Irv had informed me by email that he had been speaking to other members of the two ensembles in which he regularly participates and thought that there was a possibility for additional people to attend. Had I known that only two: Jane and Irv would be participating for the initial eight weeks, I would have planned accordingly; however since I was not aware, I had formulated the workshop activities to accommodate a group of between four and eight individuals. Another complication involved the timing of administering the pre-study questionnaire and completing the consent forms as required by the McGill Research Ethics Board. The workshop was to begin at 13:00, and at 13:15, Irv, Jane, and I decided that we would begin the session, assuming that others would arrive during the time remaining. Irv and Jane completed the questionnaire and paperwork, and we began.

> I had my lesson plan made up and had to alter it considerably in order to accommodate the smaller number of people. We still did some warm-ups and rhythm work (Field Notes, March 10, 2016).

During the next three sessions, Irv, Jane, and I were the only individuals in attendance, and I planned the workshops for three participants. I continued to email Frank, Carol, and Fran, having received responses from them stating that they were hoping to attend at some point. Brenda informed me that she would not be able to participate at all, and I never heard from Jean-Phillipe.

> So I went up to the room around 12:30-12:45, having reviewed last week's lesson

> plan, and made adjustments as to which activities we wanted to do again and which new things we wanted to add to the agenda. I also considered that other people could attend - Frank, Carol, and Fran from CAMMAC. Wouldn't that be amazing? There are a few other rhythm activities that work better with a larger group (ibid, April 7, 2016).

Impact upon the warm-ups was minimal and most of the rhythm activities were adaptable to the smaller group, although one was not possible to do and one was less effective. The pitch warm-ups were not successful with such a small group, and most of the improvisation activities were designed for larger groups; specifically, the introductory semi-structured exercises that are described in the Curriculum section in the preceding chapter. The duos and trios activity (details below) was very successful when Fran joined us April 7 and when Barb attended on April 21st.

> Fran came in with her violin! YAY!! She said that she could only stay for the first hour - till 2 or so. Everyone agreed that we would do the usual warm-ups, and after warm-ups we did rhythm stuff and it was fun! I didn't take it too far because I wanted to get to some playing. We tried playing along to Irv's piece, and then I asked what they thought about doing some freer call and response exercises and then after Fran left, we could do more of Irv's piece. They all agreed. So we went around the circle playing phrases… Then I introduced the duo/trio activity where one person starts, the next person comes in, the third person comes in after 30 seconds or so, and the first person drops out. The idea being that there are only two people playing at a time. It sort of worked, but needed a bit more structure, so I suggested that the first person play a solo line and then the next person come in with an accompaniment line.

> The third person waits and then comes in with another accompaniment line, and the first person drops out while the second person then shifts into solo mode. This worked very well and everyone was smiling and having fun! Then Fran had to leave, so I took Jane and Irv through some of the material from a presentation given that morning in my seminar. It was fun! We all agreed that it was the best session yet. (ibid).

Barb attended on April 21st:

> A new person showed up today - Barb McDonald… What we did (N.B. details of all of these activities are given in the Curriculum section of Chapter 3): warm-ups, rhythm, the clapping game from Ellwood Epps, the standing rhythm exercise with up up back back and clapping on the 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, etc. Barb was great at that! Then coming in on the "1", rhythm in a line (We really have to do that one a lot more!), the pitch warm ups, and then improvising as duos and trios as we did with Fran … the energy was great! Barb said that she will try to come again next week (ibid, April 21, 2016).

On April 27th, the day before the next session, I received an email from Irv stating that he and Jane would be withdrawing from the study because of their need to focus upon preparing for their upcoming recitals and concerts. I reacted by contacting Barb, Frank, Fran, and Carol once again in order to ensure that I would have some participants and could complete the workshops. Since the next session was the day following Irv's email, I was not certain what to expect. I also sent Jane and Irv a short request for feedback, and I wondered why Jane did not contact me herself.

> I received notification on the 27th from Irv that both he and Jane were quitting the workshop due to stress from their upcoming concerts. I sent them a request for

> feedback. Just a few sentences with the Likert scale and asked them to put a number 1= agree, etc. and to please be honest. No response. I contacted Carol to confirm that she would come next week. Also contacted Frank again and tried to think of other people who could do it. I am so disappointed that I didn't ever get to record us. They signed their consent forms and everything! Too bad. So no one showed up this week. I did get in touch with the Cummings Centre, and after emailing a few people, spoke with the person in charge of programming and she offered me an interview for May 26th. So that's exciting (ibid, April 28, 2016).

The following week, on May 4, when Carol and Shira began attending, I was expecting that the workshop would involve two participants in addition to myself, and having previously adapted the original plan of activities to accommodate that number, I based the remaining sessions upon that altered plan and made no further adaptations.

Impact of Irv and Jane's Preconceptions about the Workshop Focus

Given that Irv had attended the improvisational music workshop I facilitated at the New Horizons Band rehearsal, and given that I had indicated that the workshops I would be offering during this study would have a similar structure and content, I became somewhat confused that during the first session, Irv set up his saxophone music book and put a few charts out to play. I had not mentioned that anyone should bring or use music notation, and the workshop with the NHB that he attended was completely oral; no music sheets were used. When Irv got out his charts, I decided to use a combination of notation and improvisation-based activities in order to meet Irv's needs as well as my own.

> They really were more comfortable playing with charts or at least Irv was. Jane

> said that she would be happy to play piano and could improvise with her right hand, but what would her left hand do? So this is one thing I am working on with her. I have a few more ideas about things that the left hand can do (pretty much anything that the right hand can do!). With Jane, it's more about playing something and deciding to like it - if you possibly can. She is picky about what she likes! Irv got out his book and said that he wanted to try playing a piece, so I said "sure," and Jane and I improvised on his piece. Then I asked him to play fifth loops and Jane and I played (improvised piano) on that. Then Jane played a fourth looped, and we played on that (ibid, March 10, 2016).

I was able to incorporate improvisation work into what I perceived to be Irv's desire for structure and skill attainment. During the second week, I made these observations:

> Was very similar to the previous week in that it took forever for Irv to put his sax together - he has to do a lot of wiping, searching for reeds, selecting a reed, inserting parts into one another, more wiping, moistening the reed, blowing through it a bit, wiping the horn part, making sure that he is in tune…. makes me glad that I play piano. Irv took his book out right away today, and I went along with things rather than declaring what we were going to do… Jane was not happy to have Irv take the lead and said, "Let Gretchen tell us what to do." So I did that. I had noticed that without the warm-ups and entraining activities, we were not as much in synch as we had been the week before when we did do them. So we went back and did a few rhythm things, and I informed them that from now on we would do all of the warm-ups in order to be more effective at improvising… Irv still really seems to put a lot of effort into just blowing notes on his sax (ibid, March 17, 2016).

During week 4, I set up my graphic charts, (some of which are included in Chapter 3), in order to provide a concrete reference for Irv and Jane to use in guiding their choices for making music.

> I showed them my graphic charts, explained how they worked, and then we played each of them to my count of 3 (ibid, March 31, 2016).

The following week, Irv arrived before Jane and brought in a CD which he inserted and played on the sound system in the room while we waited for Jane.

> So, Irv came in around 1:10 and put on a CD of a tune that he said he would like to play along with. I thought that he was talking about improvising on it, but I'm not sure. Or maybe he wanted Jane to play the bass line and chords and he would play the melody on sax. I did ask him for details, and he responded that it was a song from his band. I think that maybe Jane had said something about Irv trying to learn this tune. Anyway, he put on the CD, and we listened to it. Soon Jane arrived, and they began talking about what they wanted to do with regard to the tune. Then Fran came in with her violin… (ibid, April 7, 2016).

During the post-study interviews, I was able to clarify some of the confusion with regard to my intentions for the workshop, and Irv and Jane's preconceptions and expectations. This material is located within the Perspectives on the Improvisation Workshops section of the interview material below.

Comfort Level and its Impact on the Workshops

As noted above, I observed that Irv was more comfortable playing with his book, his charts, and the CD that he brought with him. He appeared to be uncomfortable with the

unstructured aspects of the workshop. I attempted to accommodate his needs by including more structure and introducing the graphic charts. Jane was somewhat comfortable with unstructured playing; more so when she was pleased with the sounds she created. Her standards appeared to be strictly defined, so we discussed that. She was willing to improvise along with Irv's CD or when he used his charts, and became increasingly relaxed with unstructured playing in later weeks.

> Jane is getting more comfortable improvising on piano I noticed (ibid, March 24, 2016).
>
> We haven't yet really attained a comfort level with just playing aimlessly, so I haven't attempted "play an emotion" (ibid, March 31, 2016).

I noted that Irv and Jane exhibited more of a relaxed demeanor when Fran and Barb attended the sessions. As noted above, when Fran joined us, "… everyone was smiling and having fun!" (April 7, 2016) and, the week Barb attended, "… the energy was great!" (April 21, 2016). I concluded that the sessions would have been more successful had greater numbers attended, and this theory was supported in an email I received from Irv on May 30, 2016: "A big problem was the lack of people." (Irvin Griffith, personal communication, May 30, 2016).

Carol and Shira appeared to express and resolve their discomfort while engaging in a thorough dialogue with me previous to their attendance at the music making sessions. They both asked a number of questions regarding the details of the workshops and what their participation would entail and require. After all of their questions were answered satisfactorily, they appeared to be comfortable with every aspect of the workshop. I facilitated all of the activities as I had originally intended, aside from having adapted to the

smaller-sized group, and they participated enthusiastically in a completely cooperative and relaxed manner.

> The dynamic was great because the mother-daughter combo was so supportive. The time went fast, and we spent the last 10 minutes or so discussing future plans, what they wanted to get from the workshop, and what I wanted to get. I think that we will all get what we want! (ibid, May 4, 2015).

Carol asked whether or not she could make an audiotape and video with her iPad the following week. I agreed, and I decided to set up my iPhone to record at the same time. Although they were enthusiastic and comfortable with doing all of the warm-ups and rhythm activities every week, what they appeared to enjoy most was the unstructured free playing.

> We had over half an hour free playing with the three of us: Carol on guitar, Shira on piano, and me playing maracas, sticks, cowbell, and egg shaker (ibid, May 11, 2015).

And the following week:

> I am loving these sessions with Carol and Shira! They are so enthusiastic and cooperative, really wanting to do all of the physical warm—ups, rhythm exercises, and pitch activities; then a bit of call and response, and today we tried the graphic scores. It seemed that they do well with free playing, so we spent the remainder of the session improvising. We did three separate improvisations: one for about 10 minutes, then another for almost 20. The third one was shorter. I was impressed with the amount of creative material Carol and Shira could generate (ibid, May 18, 2015).

The final week:

> I am disappointed that this is the last session with Carol and Shira. They both

> expressed similar feelings, and said that they wished we could have additional workshops. This week, we did all of the warm-ups, which I generally move through a lot quicker, but these two are so thorough. I really wanted to give them everything, but I also wanted to get to the improvised music because we all enjoy that… When we got to the playing, Carol went to the guitar again and Shira went to the piano. I suggested that they trade instruments for the first improvisation. It was interesting! Carol and I recorded again (ibid, May 25, 2016).

Conclusions

In reflecting upon explanations for the degree to which these music workshops were successfully accomplished as I had envisioned them, I concluded that, aside from my inability to recruit a larger number of participants which would have had an impact upon the group dynamic, a major determinant was the alignment between the subjects' expectations about the workshop content/objectives and mine.

Both Carol and Irv had participated in the preliminary workshop I led at a New Horizons Band rehearsal session, and Carol mentioned during the interview that that experience had strongly motivated her to attend these sessions. I had assumed that Irv had similar preconceptions. I knew that Irv was highly motivated to improve his musical skills, and, as stated in the literature, andragogy theory asserts that focused motivation results in increased learning capacity. Irv never spoke about his intentions, even when I inquired as I observed him focusing upon his personal music sheets, charts, books, and CD's; all of which were outside of the scope of the curriculum I had intended to implement. I was mindful of the need for flexibility, another andragogy principle, and had suggested that Jane and I

improvise along with Irv's pre-written and pre-recorded music for the first few weeks. I attempted to encourage and motivate him to improvise more freely. My goal was that he achieve a positive result from the experience. Four weeks after he withdrew from the study, Irv and I both attended an improvisational music session sponsored by Music for People. The following day, I received an email from him stating, "Yesterday's workshop had some similar exercises that you were doing. It was too bad that we were so busy with courses and other commitments… Are you still conducting the sessions? If there is one during the week of June 20th, I may attend" (Irvin Griffith, personal correspondence, May 30, 2016). If Irv and I had been able to communicate effectively, the sessions may have been more fruitful for both of us.

Jane was a more verbal participant, and offered frequent commentary about her feelings and reactions to all of the exercises. This provided a valuable reference, allowing me to make appropriate choices so that she could attain her goals. Carol and Shira were also very communicative, especially before they agreed to join. They were open, receptive, and enthusiastic. The sessions they attended proceeded in an almost effortless manner. All of the above thoughts, ideas, and observations were revisited in some form during the interviews, the results for which appear below.

Interview Results

In order to thoroughly address the implications and concerns raised within the research questions, to focus upon the major objectives of the study, and to better synthesize the interview data with data gathered through the pre-study questionnaire and the field notes, I organized this section into the following two broad areas: I) music's

influence upon quality of life and II) perspectives regarding the improvisation workshops. Data was further segmented by the interview questions as they related to those topics.

I. Music's Influence upon Quality of Life

. One of my overarching goals in carrying out this research was to elicit the views from those subjects who had had a great deal of music making experience over the course of their lifetimes. In that way I could more easily establish credibility regarding the musical and extra-musical benefits of music making upon quality of life. My initial interview questions explored each subject's musical background in order to discover the context from which their views emerged. Aside from their narratives, specific areas I wanted to examine included: 1) the value music has had for them during their lives; 2) the social benefits ensemble music-making has offered them; and 3) other extra-musical benefits of engaging in music performance.

Subjects' Musical Histories

I began by asking each subject about their earliest musical memories, their years of music study, what genres they prefer, and how their participation in music making endeavours has evolved, developed, and changed through the years.

Irvin Griffith (Irv)

Irv was aware that he had musical talent at a young age, and took some piano lessons as a child; but only in later adulthood did he have the drive to incorporate the work

of learning music into his routine. I asked him about his early musical training.

> As a pre-teen, like a number of other kids, my mother made me take piano lessons. And I really wasn't interested. So she forced me to go for about a year. I wasn't into it, and when I stopped, her famous line was "You'll be sorry one day!"… And then, actually what happened when I was somewhere probably in my 40's, I said that I always was going to go back to the piano and take lessons, so I started taking lessons here at McGill, and then I did the (Conservatory) program all the way up to collegial 2. Piano, theory, ear training, everything…The first several years, it was basically an individual activity where you lock yourself up in a room and practice and practice and practice… when I was doing my collegial levels, I started playing recitals as well. (personal conversation, Irvin Griffith, September 21, 2016).

Beginning in his early 50's and up to the present time, Irv has been taking weekly piano and saxophone lessons, playing recitals, rehearsing weekly with one orchestra and twice weekly with another, and performing in several concerts annually with those two ensembles. For the past three years, he has attended a summer music camp in Maine, and he travels each year to cities such as Chicago, New Orleans, and Memphis to enjoy the abundant blues and jazz music offered in local clubs or at festivals.

Jane Amro

Jane noticed at age eight or nine that she could discern the difference between singers being "on pitch" and "off." She participated in church and school choirs as an alto from the age of eight and has continued to gravitate toward singing the harmony parts rather than the melody. She began her piano lessons at the age of seven. Her piano studies

continued through Grade Nine in the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM) program, and she performed recitals at the completion of each level. RCM is a well-known piano curriculum established in Toronto in 1886, taught by RCM-accredited instructors, and providing an internationally-recognized standard of musical achievement (RCMusic). In high school, she also participated in the Kiwanis Music Festivals. I asked her about her musical training and she expressed mixed feelings about piano performance, although she continues lessons to the present time:

> The piano – it was intimidating for me. I was good but not the best, and my mother made me practice when I wanted to go out and play. I was always worse at the recital than I was at home… I didn't hate it, because I knew I was getting better, and I kind of liked to fool around on the piano, but I wasn't a natural who wanted to do it all the time… I found it a bit of a burden, but I tend to stick with things. I didn't really have a lot of discipline, and I would look at the clock and say "Is an hour up yet?" (personal conversation, Jane Amro, September 21, 2016).

In addition to Grade Nine piano with RCM, Jane completed grade one and two theory, and then later continued her studies at the McGill Conservatory where she completed the two collegial levels, scoring in the 98th percentile in solfege and ear training. McGill Conservatory is a Montreal-based all-ages community music education facility founded in 1904 and operating out of two McGill campus locations (Conservatory-McGill). Jane and Irv perform recitals together including solo piano, duo piano, and piano with saxophone.

Jane also currently sings in a women's community choir that performs three or four times annually at seniors' residences and presents two concerts each year. Jane told me that the repertoire covers music spanning many genres and time periods from 12th century

religious music to post-modern shout pieces.

> We did a Cape Breton lullaby, a Portuguese children's piece, a French piece; we've done Gordon Lightfoot, jazzy Christmas songs with jazz rhythms… we do everything I guess you could say…. what I like most are the Ave Marias and the folk songs more than the jazz "really out there" ones. I have fun doing them, but to listen to them… my ear is more attracted to an older style of music, I guess. (ibid).

Carol Katz

Carol has engaged in a number of musical pursuits throughout her life. Until adulthood, her musical training was entirely informal; for example, singing songs learned by rote and playing memorized melodies on recorder. By the age of six or so, she was aware that she could "sing in tune" and yearned for piano lessons, however the family budget would not allow for that. Although offered the opportunity for musical training in high school, Carol believed that it was not the type of music instruction that she wanted. She explained:

> I looked at the musical training, and I thought that it would turn me off completely. They would say, "You have to do this and you have to do this." And I was worried that it wouldn't let me be spontaneous… The teachers weren't even musicians. I think they were just teaching the course so you could pass an exam. And I would have to memorize things so that I could pass the exam. I was worried that it would take away my enjoyment of music. (personal conversation, Carol Katz, September 8, 2016).

At the age of 21, Carol decided to learn guitar, so she bought herself a guitar, found a teacher and did the necessary work. Now, with her husband on piano, she seeks

performance opportunities for both of them, either as a duo or as a quartet with a clarinetist and a violinist. She also enjoys making music with her daughter, and said, "music is part of our whole family" (ibid).

Carol began annual trips to the CAMMAC Centre at Lake MacDonald near Montreal in 1985 and continues to take bi-monthly guitar lessons at the present time. She was involved with the Montreal New Horizons Band for several years, sings in a local seniors choir, and plays weekly in a community centre band. Her musical involvements include a variety of genres: classical, folk, blues, popular music, Italian and Spanish pieces, Yiddish, and Hebrew music. She is particularly fond of klezmer, celtic, and the folk music from any country. Currently her plans are to pursue additional ear training and theory by enrolling in courses at Concordia or seeking individual instruction with her guitar teacher.

Shira Katz

Shira remembers being immersed in classical music as a child, and was inspired by her father to begin taking piano lessons which she continued for a number of years into high school. When I asked about her earliest musical experiences, she expressed fond memories of her years at a pre-school music programme where there were opportunities for a great deal of free play:

> My parents put me in this music school when I was 3 or 4, and I had the time of my life. It was total heaven that place… I remember playing the triangle and having a puppet show… and I remember I liked the triangle, and we would play in a group. It was just heaven for a kid. (personal conversation, Shira Katz, September 8, 2016).

Her interest shifted from classical to the Beatles, and rock music became her passion. She

described the transition:

> My brother came home with a Beatles record. It was the first time in my life that I ever heard anything like that, and there was no turning back. Why listen to classical when you can listen to that? Forget about classical. I didn't care anymore or want to know anything about classical once I knew that rock and roll existed. Wow! I was blown away… We had every record, and I couldn't get enough; which led to discovering other rock and roll music on the radio, and I started to listen non-stop. (ibid).

Gradually Shira overcame what was an initial shyness and began singing in public after being encouraged by the director of a musical theatre programme at her summer camp. She said:

> I was too shy to get up, and then the musical director of the musical theater insisted that I have a singing part, but I was so shy. That's when I started singing, and then I noticed that I loved to sing. I automatically started singing. My brother and I just started singing. I don't know where that came from (ibid).

That experience led to a strong love for singing, but not regimented choir singing. She was more interested in the expression of emotion behind the words and pitches, and preferred to use the songs on the radio as her source material. She stated, "With rock and roll, I was free. I was just crazy for the music. Most of the time I didn't know what they were singing about or what the words were about; it was just about the emotion.. the expression.." (ibid.)

As an adult, she has continued singing in various formats including auditioning for Pop Montreal and Canadian Idol; participating in karaoke; and meeting musicians with whom she can relate, compose, and perform. Although rock and roll is her first love, she has

developed a fondness for some of the music presented at the Montreal Jazz Festival after attending with her family. This, she says, has opened her ears to other kinds of music.

Music's Value in their Lives

I asked the subjects to describe and quantify the value music has had for them during their lives. How do they feel about music, and what are some of their motivations in setting aside time to engage in it?

When I asked, "What does music bring to your life?", Carol, Shira, and Irv responded briefly. Carol said, "You feel better, maybe. Pleasure…Music takes me to my happy place" (Katz, C.). Shira stated that, to her, music is "honest expression. Just saying, 'Yes, I have been through that.' Or, ' I felt a certain way'" (Katz, S.). Irv explained, "I just like to make music" (Griffith). Jane described her relationship with music in detail:

> There is personal satisfaction in practicing something and it gets better and better. I enjoy that both with the piano and with singing. I will keep trying to sing something, and then record myself and listen and say, "That wasn't really very good. I'm going to try and do it better." So then I practice, and I do enjoy that. It gives me pleasure. I would say for the choir, it sounds good and gives other people pleasure too. (Amro).

Then later, she added, "I didn't say this before, but there have been times in my life where music has been an outlet. Like when you are tired or frustrated or angry… you can go play something on the piano and it's… yeah…. " (ibid).

I then asked, "How have you made time for music within your schedule over the course of your life?" and "Have you made sacrifices in order to pursue it?"

Irv shared the following:

> While we were working, for example, I did the collegial programs, and that was the busiest years of my life; I was working full-time and taking collegial ear training, and solfege, and I was doing collegial level of piano all at the same time. Oh, and I continued to play squash, but that was all I could make time to do" (Griffith).

Regarding whether he felt that he had sacrificed anything in order to play music, he responded:

> No … no, no… when I stopped working, I thought I would be doing a lot of other things like travelling, but basically I don't sit here thinking that I want to go to Europe or I want to go to the west coast or something. I always dreamed of vagabonding around, but I just feel like I don't have the time for that. (ibid).

Jane had some specific examples:

> Well, the piano lessons and the choir make me sacrifice things all through the winter, because I have to practice. For example on Sunday it was a perfect day to go for a bike ride, but I said, "I haven't practiced my piano for my piano lesson, and I have to practice my choir piece," and I made myself stay in all day, and I might have to sacrifice other things for the sense of having to keep up with either the lessons, or to do good enough at the choir, so I sacrifice little things like reading my book… going for a walk…Yes,. Sometimes it feels like a real sacrifice if it's a nice day (laughs). (Amro).

Carol responded: "At this point, I'm retired living on a pension, so what could I tell you? I sacrifice my pension? It's not a sacrifice; it's worth it! As long as I can keep doing it. I guess it's a big priority in my life… " (Katz, C.).

When I asked whether they value music more now that they are retired, the

consensus was that they always valued music, but in retirement, they have more time to engage in it. Carol stated: "It was always a big part of my life, (but) now because I am retired, I have more time to devote to it. When you are working full-time, you don't have time for lessons, but now I have more time to do what I want, (so) I am expending more effort" (ibid) Jane said, "Music couldn't be a part of my life when I had children, but I valued it the same. I just didn't have time" (Amro).

Social Benefits of Engaging in Ensemble Music Making

Playing music or singing with others brings more to people's lives than simply the pleasure of the music itself. I asked the subjects for some details about whether they had experienced any other benefits of ensemble music making. Irv responded:

> Other than the enjoyment of the music, what do I like? The social interaction is nice. Getting to know people. For example, the New Horizons Band is a group of people who are getting to know each other, and the same with the camp…I've only been going for three years, but I'm getting to know a number of the people there. (Griffith).

Jane said that she was motivated to join and continue with the New Horizons Band for social reasons:

> Basically because I was retiring, and a few of the other people I had worked with were going. I wanted to do something where I would still have the opportunity to see the same people… Well, really it was an opportunity to see the same people *and* do something together…. It wasn't a driving desire to learn the flute; it was a driving desire to participate in something I thought I would like. (Amro).

Jane also emphasized the social aspects of participating in a choir:

> We have to have a blitz where we have to rehearse for 5 hours pre-concert. After the concert - and if it sounded great than that is satisfying - then we have a pot-luck… then we find out that some of our members have other concerts, and then we all go together to those, and then we will all go for a beer or for coffee, so it's a spin-off thing. One time, I wanted to get some CD's from Carla, so she said "Bike to my house," and I never knew where her house was, and then we sat around her house. I don't know whether it goes as far as being friends; but for example, Irv and I on our trip to Gaspe in the summer, Gerald who was in Irv's band was going to be in the Gaspe too, told us to stop by his trailer park, so we did, and we had smoked mackerel and it was fun to see him. So I don't know whether to say that it's friends, but it is social. (ibid).

Carol described her music experiences at a local seniors' centre called the Creative Social Centre:

> I'll tell you something. The main goal is socialization. We had a choir, but it wasn't soprano, alto, tenor, bass like that, it was just informal, so we decided to call it a sing-along. It's really a sing-along. There's a conductor; he picks some songs, he plays piano, and we all sing, so it's a sing-along. It's not like I am going to become a soprano, so it really doesn't matter. He's a terrific conductor, he plays the piano, and we sing the songs we like. I'll tell you something. At Creative (Social Centre), the main goal is socialization. So we sing for an hour, then we have a snack. We go in the kitchen and we socialize. It's very important to make people feel welcome. Having fun. Having a snack, having a cookie… (Katz, C.).

Other Extra-Musical Benefits Derived from Music Performance

I wanted to elicit the participants' views on the hypothesis that engaging in music making activities benefits people of any age. Carol and I had the following discussion:

Carol: "When we went to school, we were so busy learning four languages that music wasn't a part of the curriculum, which is too bad. Maybe it is in some schools maybe it isn't. Music and art are really important. Really important" (Katz, C.)

Gretchen: "Why?"

Carol: "Well, because through music…I think that kids who do music can do better in school" (ibid).

Gretchen: "Is this something you've read?"

Carol: Yes I've read things, but I've also seen it myself because I taught kids with learning disabilities, and there's some research being done… reading with the brain… music and the brain… there's something that music does to the brain that helps kids learn better. I think it's the focus! They learn to focus you know? On something enjoyable; something that they can focus on.. (ibid).

Gretchen: "So, would you like to see music placed more prominently in the school curriculum?"

Carol: "Yes, definitely" (ibid).

I asked, "What about retired people? Should they play more music?"

Jane cited several advantages:

I think that it's just good for your brain, and it's good for your heart as long as you don't try to learn the flute! (laughs)… but it's also because, when you retire, you are withdrawn from that social connection, and it's good to be doing something; I mean

> really doing something. Not just… you can go to a concert or a class where you are fed information, but to do something that you participate in together… (Amro).

Carol responded as follows:

> Not only can retired people benefit from this, but retired people can learn a new skill! And I think that if you read the research, it's being said over and over… retired people can learn new skills. It keeps your brain going. I can't say whether it prevents Alzheimers, but it is a way of keeping your brain going. Your brain, your body, your mind, everything… you know the thing with Creative (Social Centre)… well, they want to learn a skill, but they also want to enjoy what they are doing. (Katz, C.).

Shira also spoke meaningfully to the topic (although she is not retired):

> Also I wanted to say because you were asking does it make a difference in seniors' lives and all that? Just from an observation perspective, I find… that people who are retired; from what I've seen, I don't know if it's true for all, but the ones who play music… there's less complaining. Maybe it gets their… you know what I mean? I don't know. You know when people are retired…. something artistic gives them something to focus on instead of getting together and whining about all that's going wrong. It's positive and it gets you thinking about something else… and then, from that, good things can happen. So it has a positive result; it's something positive. (Katz, S.).

II. Perspectives on the Improvisation Workshops

Given that a number of previous studies have confirmed significant enhancement to quality of life for those older adults who engage in ensemble music making, I wanted to organize this research project around a series of improvisational music workshops in order

to provide greater visibility to improvisation, a more inclusive form of ensemble music making that does not utilize music notation; thus, does not require the ability to read it. My objective in selecting participants with prior music experience and training was to solicit their feedback relative to previous studies undertaken with elementary and secondary music students who added improvisation activities to their curricula and who noted improvements to aspects of their music skills and harmonic understanding. This section of interview results includes subjects' reported motivations, expectations, preconceptions, and goals concerning the improvisation workshops and some positive outcomes that they attributed to having participated.

Preconceptions, Motivations

I asked the subjects about their rationales for participating in the workshops. Their responses included their initial intentions and expectations; opinions and beliefs about improvisational music, previous non-musical experiences with it, and outcomes they hoped to achieve by participating. As discussed earlier in the field notes section, having previously facilitated a similar free improvisational music workshop in which Irv actively participated, and having described to him that these workshops would consist of the same sorts of activities, I was confused about Irv's inclination to use his charts, books, and CD's.

Both Irv and Jane appeared to assume that the workshops would enhance their current music practice. Irv said:

> We were wondering what it was about… because as you pointed out, all of my musical training has been … reading it off of a page… And so I just wanted to explore what it was about and also in my mind, I'm always thinking, "When can I try to fit in some

> improv?"… And another thing is… what we do, we play duets, and I'm sort of jealous of Jane because she plays the piano, and she has developed a skill which she learned from my sax teacher where she can accompany me without reading notes, but just reading the chord progressions (Griffith).

Jane's response:

> So, MY answer… the short answer is that I was interested to do it because Irv was doing it. Irv is fascinated by improvisation – that's what **I** think. He's been interested in improv for a number of years now. How do people improvise? Is there a knack to it? Is there a way to make yourself better at it? And we had previously tried another course with someone about that kind of thing. So he's like "let's go" and so I went because he wanted to go, and also because he keeps learning these new saxophone pieces, and he wants me to accompany him and there really isn't any music for it. So that's why I went...(I wanted) to be able to better figure out either by piano or by voice to accompany someone's main melody without having someone tell me exactly what to do. (Amro).

I asked everyone to share their thoughts about the value of learning improvisation. Jane said:

> I think that if someone got good at it… and I believe that there's an inherent talent for it, so not everyone can get good at it, but if you can, it helps when you are learning to play on the page because you don't have to stare at the music to figure out what is coming next. You can just sort of hear it and then play something that will sound right. (ibid).

Irv mentioned, "If you are performing a piece and there is a memory lapse, you can

improvise…the really good performers do" He added, "For kids learning music they don't have as much structure as I do. I keep trying to figure out how improvisation fits into my structure so I can understand it. " (Griffith).

When I invited Carol to share her thoughts on improvisation, she said:

> Well, the thought of improvisation in anything has always intrigued me. I did some acting with some musical theatre productions at CAMMAC, and it was lots of fun, so when I heard the word improv(isation) and then it was you, and I remember having taken that workshop with you at New Horizons, I knew it would be good, so I mentioned it to Shira and she said, "Let's do it together!" (Katz, C.).

I asked Shira for her impressions of improvisation and she said, "I guess I kind of associated it with jazz… and thought that now that I like jazz, I would like it. It's something a little bit different. Even though rock and roll is my number one and jazz is my number two, why not learn a little something more about jazz?" (Katz, S.)

Views About the Workshop Experience

As stated, Jane and Irv appeared to view the workshops as a means to enhance their current musical pursuits, and, although they appeared to enjoy participating in the sessions, they reported no noticeable changes. As mentioned in the field notes section, they were both competent with all of the structured activities; and, over the course of the study, Jane became increasingly comfortable with the unstructured playing. Irv exhibited greater confidence during the sessions when more participants attended.

During the interviews, Carol and Shira shared some relevant details about the ways in which their experiences participating in the workshops made a positive contribution to

their personal musical growth. In addition, they cited some of the more effective and enjoyable instructions and activities. From their feedback, I concluded that they had wanted to be gently encouraged to go beyond their usual boundaries, and that they appreciated the freedom to express themselves creatively.

Musically, Shira learned something new about rhythm:

> When we were improvising… now that I think about it,,, the memories of when we were doing it... I really realized how important rhythm is. I have been told this before, but it became crystal clear that the rhythm is just as important as what you play… whether what you are playing is rhythmical or not, what an integral part it is of all music - improv or any music. (Katz, S.).

Carol wanted to offer feedback on the importance of being comfortable:

> I wanted to say how important it is to have a teacher or workshop leader such as yourself where I felt comfortable. First of all, you have to trust the person, make yourself feel comfortable enough, so that I could play without thinking, "Oh, god! I'm terrible. What is she going to think of me?" (Katz, C.).

Shira added her thoughts on the value of expanding her musical aesthetic:

> …Because at first, I played the piano and the first chord I played, it was discordant, and I didn't know what I was doing, and you said, "Yes, that chord is great!" and I was like "okay." And then I really got into it. You made it fun and interesting. Like what do YOU want out of this… asking for feedback…. I don't know… I thought it was fantastic and then at the end of it, I wanted more. It's too bad that it had to end. (Katz, S.)

Carol agreed, "Oh yes, we wanted more. We came out wanting a lot more. Ten more sessions! If you do more workshops, I will definitely come. I will certainly come to the one

at Creative (Social Centre), if it works out" (Katz, C.).

So would they like to do more improvising? Carol: "Oh yes. Definitely" (ibid). Shira was conditional: "I don't know if the size of the class would make a difference or an impact, but it depends on who the people are who show up. How many? We don't know" (Katz, S.).

I asked them for feedback and suggestions concerning what was helpful to them during the workshop, and Shira had two comments:

> 1) You think, as a teacher… you giving this type of direction to "play anything," that people will just sit there. It is not so good; but giving options: "You can play this or this," Just by saying "OR" - it gives directions… something else…this type of direction because it's not automatic for people to think this way. So this type of direction is really helpful. (Katz, S.).
>
> 2) Something that was really interesting and helpful was saying, "Okay, what are you used to doing?" and "What do you like doing?" And then I think I said, "Melodies," and then you said, "Maybe you could NOT do melodies." So you find out what the person likes, what they are used to doing, and then challenge them or suggest what if you didn't do that? I thought that was so interesting! (ibid).

I wondered whether I was forcing Shira to do things that she wasn't comfortable doing, but she said:

> No, you said, "You can try this or that. Or you can try what you usually do and then try something different." And it made me realize, "Yeah! Why should I do what I normally do? Maybe if I try something else, it won't sound so bad! Maybe I SHOULD try that. Why do I limit myself?... Why do I lock myself in?" To think that I have to do the same thing all the time. I thought it was so cool! (ibid).

Summary of Findings

In order to fully examine and address the issues relevant to the research questions for this project, I organized a series of improvisational music workshops, selected subjects to participate, and then gathered, examined, coded, analyzed, and summarized the data collected through: 1) pre-study questionnaires completed by the subjects; 2) field notes I compiled during the workshop process; and 3) post-study semi-structured one-on-one and group interviews which I audio-recorded and then transcribed in their entirety. I read through all of the data at least three times.

Questionnaire

The four older adult musicians who participated in the study all had at least 10 years of musical training and many years of performance experience that included little if any improvisation. All of them indicated great interest in improving their ability to play by ear, three of the four very much wanted to refine their listening skills, musical expression, overall musicianship, harmonic understanding, and comfort level while playing with others. Half of them were very concerned with improving their sight reading ability, and most were satisfied with their level of confidence and their rhythmic ability.

Field Notes

The field notes present my observations and perspectives on the events that transpired during the workshops, as well as some commentary and editorializing. Themes that arose in data analysis included the phrase “need to adapt due to” which was applied

both to smaller numbers of participants than anticipated and what appeared to me to be some participants' misunderstanding (for whatever reason) of the aims of the workshop.

Other themes, indirectly following from the latter, included elements of comfort and discomfort, and a comparison of those workshops that only included participants who appeared to clearly understand the workshop goals with those sessions where participants may have had other assumptions. The field notes findings indicate a direct variation between the degree and level of communication among the participants and myself and those workshops which were most in alignment with my research goals. I should also note that, in many instances within the field notes, I mention making efforts to accommodate what I perceive to be the needs of the participants; even when the activities were outside of the bounds of the pre-established curriculum.

Interview material

In interviewing my subjects, I hoped to gather data that would be sufficient to allow me to assess the value music has had for them over the course of their lives and to determine the specifics of these benefits; that is, how their lives were enhanced, how music (both listening and playing) improves their mood, and what keeps them motivated to practice, to attend rehearsals, and to continue to pursue more advanced musical goals. The interview process included an opportunity to discover personal details that contributed indirectly to the findings by providing background and context from which conclusions could be drawn. Finally and most relevant to the project, I wished to elicit feedback on the workshops, so I inquired into the subjects' initial motivations to participate, their views about the activities, and any benefits they had experienced by having participated.

All four of the interviewees explicitly expressed a love for music and confirmed its value in their lives. They all stated that they were confident in their music abilities, and acknowledged that they were aware of their talent at a young age. Two mentioned the challenges of practice discipline, and how, although it is easier now, they have felt constrained to make sacrifices terms of other leisure activities. One of these individuals also mentioned the deep satisfaction she derives from solo practice, and another mentioned that music is a big priority. Three participants leave the house at least twice weekly for lessons and/or rehearsals, and two are doing more performing now than in their younger years. Social interaction was mentioned as a strong motivator by three of the subjects; one cited that, in her experience, the social aspect is the main goal and that retired people need social connection. Another participant expressed a similar view, adding that, in addition to simply doing something together, music making allows people to create something together. The younger (46 year old) participant claimed that retired people who play music are less likely to complain, and she believes that music's inherent value is that it is a positive influence.

With regard to the workshops, motivations cited were the following: one participant was interested in learning to improvise within a jazz context, having heard others do it. He said that he had been trying to understand it and trying to figure out how it fits into "his structure." Another participant wanted to attend because her friend was going to go, and they do a lot of performing together. One participant had done improvisational theatre and was fascinated with improvisation in general. Another participant said that she associated it with jazz and she likes jazz, so she thought that she would enjoy the workshops.

Two participants mentioned that the workshops contributed to their personal musical growth, and stated that they appreciated being pushed beyond their usual boundaries and encouraged to express themselves creatively. One participant mentioned "trust" and "comfort" which, in my experience are the two main qualities necessary for successful improvisational experiences. One participant mentioned that the workshops expanded her musical aesthetic and allowed her to become aware of the value of rhythm. Two participants expressed enthusiasm to do more improvisation workshops.

This chapter represents a presentation of the data generated and collected during the course of the study, and it was organized in terms of its relevance to the central aims and objectives of the research; more specifically to the concerns and implications arising out of the research questions. These will be examined in detail in the following, concluding chapter.

Chapter 5: Summary of the Study, Discussion, and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused upon documenting, examining, and analyzing the experiences and the responses of older musicians as they participated in a series of improvisational music workshops. The overarching purpose of the research was to demonstrate the potential benefits to older adults who engage in a regular improvisational music making practice. For this project, I elected to gather quantitative and qualitative data from subjects who are veteran musicians currently involved in a regular, ongoing ensemble music making practice, but who had little to no improvisatory experience.

The study was situated around the following research questions:

1. How do older adult musicians describe their experience of improvised music making? What do they value about it?
2. In what ways do music improvisation activities serve to allow people with any level of music experience to play together?
3. Which of the following improvements were noticeable and in what ways: music skills such as fluency, sight-reading and/or memorizing music; confidence and comfort level?
4. How does engaging in ensemble improvised music making enhance participants' quality of life?

This chapter includes: 1) a summary of the research study; that is, its process and its product; 2) a discussion of the findings with regard to the research questions; and 3) recommendations for subsequent related research investigations.

Summary of the Study

In order to access and examine all of the significant material crucial to my research, I undertook a comprehensive review of the relevant literature in the following areas: 1) aging and quality of life; including the dimensions of the global aging phenomenon and the identification and current methods of managing some of the unique challenges that accompany this stage of life; 2) how music performance enhances quality of life: the nature of music and its capacity to influence mood; social and other extra-musical benefits of performing music with others; studies showing how and why music education improves students' academic performance; and some of the research documenting the benefits to seniors who engage in ensemble music making; 3) music improvisation and its pedagogy: the nature of improvisation, improvisation pedagogy as included within current music education curricula in Canada, New Zealand, and the UK; and recently documented improvisation pedagogy philosophies and approaches; and 4) andragogy principles and some existing improvisation pedagogy models that could be adapted and applied within the field of adult education.

The research study itself consisted of selecting subjects, organizing and facilitating 90-minute weekly improvisation workshop sessions with them over the course of 12 weeks, and gathering pertinent data before, during, and after the conclusion of the sessions. Subjects were chosen according to predetermined selection criteria, and workshop session facilitation materials were drawn from the literature described above.

Quantitative data was retrieved by means of a pre-study introductory questionnaire (see Appendix B) designed in accordance with the Likert model and completed by the subjects prior to the initial workshop session. This tool was designed to elicit a) a profile of

the subjects' previous music training and experience; b) their musical goals; c) their feelings regarding comfort and confidence when performing with others; d) how they see music as a vehicle for developing social relationships; and e) their experience with and views regarding improvisational music.

Qualitative data was collected by means of observational field notes of each of the music workshops compiled directly after the completion of every session, and semi-structured interviews conducted with four subjects after the conclusion of the workshops. The interview questions were designed to: 1) encourage the subjects to share their narratives; specifically, their experiences and views concerning a number of facets of their lifelong musical involvements; and 2) elicit reactions, opinions, thoughts, and perspectives directly arising out of their interest and participation in the improvisation workshops.

I wanted to synthesize these two areas into a broader and more extensive exploration of the issues emerging from the research questions. Anecdotal evidence of both the musical and the extra-musical benefits of participating in any ensemble music practice strongly supported the central contention of my research: that efforts to provide further opportunities for older adults to engage in music making are certainly warranted. The four 60-minute interviews were recorded using an iPhone 5s, and the resulting audio files were transcribed in their entirety. The text was reviewed for common themes which were identified and then colour-coded throughout the interview material, the questionnaires, and the field notes. The seven main themes were then subsumed under two core categories. The resulting themes and categories comprised the outline for my data presentation in Chapter 4, into which the most relevant and important interview quotations were copied verbatim.

Discussion of Findings

This section is organized in accordance with the research questions, and includes the gathered data relevant to the issues arising from each of them.

Research Question 1:

How do older adult musicians describe their experience of improvised music making? What do they value about it?

In his article concerning the teaching of improvisation, John Kratus argues that since it is a highly intuitive behaviour, it is more accessible to young children who have not yet developed inhibitions that prevent them from fully engaging in free creative expression (1995). Older, more advanced music students who are proficient on their instruments and performance technique can also learn to master the skill by engaging in what he has determined to be a seven-stage process (ibid). Martin Norgaard interviewed aspiring improvisers in his 2016 study, and was able to formulate an experiential model of this skill-building process as seen through the perspectives of the participants, aged 12-17. Using Kratus's seven-stage model as a guide, Norgaard found that self-monitoring and pre-planning were most often cited by the participants when asked to describe their improvisation experience. The novice players thought in terms of scales and space, while more advanced musicians mentioned chord progressions, melodic elements, and sonic preferences. Those with the most experience emphasized the underlying theory and phrase structure, and one focussed upon the "feeling" (Norgaard, 2016).

The above research studies presuppose a musical product that is amenable to the aesthetic standards of traditional music genres, thus this type of improvisation experience would be described through that frame of reference. When discussing a free improvisation session, the Western art music lexicon is not applicable. As Maud Hickey discovered through working with four improvisational music pedagogues, the vocabulary "spoke to metaphors, density, feeling, texture, and energy"(2015; p. 435). Students used terms such as "logic, colour, development, and relationships" (ibid), and no one mentioned qualitative assessments or judgmental descriptors of any sort. "I think that what sounds good to me might sound terrible to somebody else. And I think that's okay. I think that what improvisation is teaching us is that it's okay for things to be not objectively the same for everybody" (Ballou, quoted in Hickey, 2015, p. 436). In these types of sessions, the focus was on what happened and how it felt. "Each player's subjective experience as an individual and as an ensemble member seemed more important than how the music sounded on a good/bad continuum" (Hickey, 2015, p. 436).

During the course of facilitating the workshop sessions for this research project, I confronted the concerns exactly as described in the previous paragraph. My subjects' verbal feedback concerning their feelings, thoughts, and opinions about what they had played assumed a standard; namely, familiar or traditionally aesthetically pleasing sonorities to which they compared their playing. In some cases, my feedback was effective in achieving a level of comfort sufficient to their needs, and they would willingly embark on another improvisation activity. Other times they were reticent. My lack of effective vocabulary due to my limited experience facilitating free improvisation workshops can be cited as a factor. Also, when one-time attendees Fran and Barb were present, Irv and Jane

appeared more comfortable and their playing was more fluid, so sparse attendance could have contributed to the results I observed. If the learners that I studied had all initially been made more aware that the focus was to be solely on playing free music together rather than learning jazz improvisation, outcomes may have differed. The four subjects who were interviewed were asked to speak about their experience of improvised music making and to describe what they valued about it.

Although Irv had attended the preliminary free improvisation workshop session with New Horizons Band members that I facilitated in May 2015 and was present when I announced that the research study sessions would consist of similar activities, it became increasingly clear to me that he was viewing "improvised music making" within a template of structured music skills, and could be intending that my workshops augment his current jazz improvisatory music curriculum. As a saxophonist in the process of studying jazz performance, Irv had an understandable desire to learn jazz-style improvisation, and as articulated within andragogy theory, adult learners exhibit focused motivation in the pursuit of their desired learning outcomes, which facilitates greater learning capacity. Irv stated during our post-study interview that his ongoing approach was to learn and then to integrate the principles of improvisation practice within the structure of his personal musical understanding. He had also expressed a desire to improve his ear and to learn to play without reading the notes. What he said that he most valued was using the ability to improvise as a means through which he could successfully navigate a composition while experiencing a temporary memory lapse, should one ever occur.

Irv's friend Jane suggested that her impression of improvisation was that it is a knowledge-based skill or a technique. If it can be learned, she wondered, how do people

learn it? Jane stated that she believes that the ability to master improvisation is contingent upon possessing an inherent talent, and that not everyone can achieve competency. The value of learning to improvise, she says, is that the musician does not need to be reliant upon the score. Further, if one learns to improvise, one would then have the ability to hear the music internally; thus, one would be intuitively certain of what sounds would be appropriate to play. Edwin Gordon has described this as the capacity for "audiation"; that is, an individual hears or feels sound when it is not physically present" (Gerhardstein, 2002). In the literature I have studied on improvisation both for this project and for a previously completed masters degree focusing upon improvisational music, I have never encountered any improvisational music theorist, academic or otherwise, who has asserted that competency in improvisation is limited to those with an innate ability of any sort.

Carol had a more open view and described her concept of improvising as being a means by which she could feel free to express herself creatively in any way that she might choose. She spoke about appreciating the experience of exploring and expanding her musical horizons beyond her self-imposed limitations, and emphasized the importance of a mutual trust in and respect for her fellow players so that she would feel sufficiently comfortable to take risks. She wanted to focus upon listening and creating rather than falling victim to the cycling of incessant self-conscious negative self-talk. The opportunity for free expression was what she said that she valued most.

Shira had a great deal to say about her improvising experiences. She said that during the process of improvising, she realized that she had never before appreciated the importance of the rhythmic element in music; how integral it is to all music whether improvised or not. Acceptance of the validity and beauty of discordant music was another

epiphany Shira experienced, and this led her to a greater degree of comfort with the notion of "no wrong notes." Like Carol, she also cited the trust issue and necessity of comfort with the other players, and said that during the sessions, she appreciated being offered options and suggestions as to how to proceed. She was particularly intrigued with the prospect of being invited to undertake unfamiliar techniques in an arbitrary manner rather than feeling constrained to follow established norms or conventions. What Shira said that she valued most about the improvisation experience was increased self-awareness of the degree to which she limits herself, and the realization that experimentation and risk-taking can bring about fulfilling and satisfying musical opportunities.

Research Question 2:

In what ways do music improvisation activities serve to allow people with any level of music experience to play together?

In her 2011 book, Estelle Jorgensen likens the music classroom to the "little red schoolhouse" of the past, where teachers were expected to concurrently educate children from ages five to fifteen. "Even within a single-grade (music) classroom, students may range in musical ability from beginners with little musical experience to competent instrumentalists and skilled musicians, and the music teacher engages all of these young people in activities in which they can participate, albeit in differing ways and levels of musical accomplishment" (p. 182). This, she explained, is done through the use of "classroom instruments that can be played at differing levels of proficiency, and approaches to the development of improvisational skills; (for example), texts (can) form

the framework for songs that are improvised by the class" (ibid). She is referring here to the play-focused "community model" which is a concept taken up by Lee Higgins, Patricia Shehan Campbell, Gary McPherson, Keith Sawyer, and others.

When the focus is on play, participation, the process, and the expressive experience rather than on an objectified musical product, all members of the group are made to feel welcome to contribute freely; interaction is encouraged, and events are valued as opportunities to explore, to experiment, to take risks, and to create (Higgins & Campbell, 2010). The facilitator ensures that an egalitarian approach is taken and that group members are supported in feeling comfortable and safe (ibid). "Effective facilitators are mindful of the participants' range of abilities… providing opportunities that are safely located within the realm of the familiar but with the freedom to move to less familiar sounds and structures too" (ibid, p. 18). In order to represent a structure of power equality within the group, Higgins and Campbell recommend that participants and facilitators form a circle, eliminating any sense of hierarchy between students with differing abilities and/or skills as well as between students and facilitator(s) (ibid).

Keith Sawyer considers ensemble improvisational music making to be a collaborative process of engaging the creativity of each individual and establishing communication strategies through group interaction. "An effective group activity…allows all learners to participate meaningfully regardless of their level" (Sawyer, 2014, p. 99).

The above theorists describe improvisational music making as a collaborative and egalitarian communication activity brought into being by means of social interaction. In offering these notions of the process of ensemble improvisatory music creation, I am attempting to demonstrate the degree to which this sort of music not only does not require

traditional music training or experience, but does not valorize it. Improvised music activities as described above and as implemented in the research project under consideration make no use of traditional music notation, thus participants are not required to know how to read it. Players in my workshops were invited and encouraged to produce their own choices of sonic material; thus, although previous music experience implies some degree of familiarity with and facility on one's instrument, which contributes to an increased comfort level and a potentially greater repertoire of ideas for sound production, successful improvisation activities are not reliant upon one's level of musical technique, skill, or education. Participants with any level of music experience can be equal contributors.

Jane and Irv, the subjects who participated in the workshop sessions on a regular basis during the initial eight weeks, were of similar musical experience and training. An illustration of the principle implied within the research question above occurred during the two sessions when Fran and then Barb attended. Irv knew Barb, but Jane did not. Fran was unknown to both Jane and Irv, having been recruited by me from the CAMMAC orchestra, while Jane and Irv were connected through the New Horizons Band. During Jane and Irv's sessions with both Barb and Fran, the entire group was able to engage in ensemble music making together, creating fluid musical material almost immediately. Thus, it is valid to say that improvisational music allows the integration of diverse participants regardless of music experience or of familiarity with similar musical material, because the activities are designed to encourage free expression. I structured the physical space so that participants were in a circular configuration and stressed the importance of communication and interaction in order that everyone could engage collaboratively.

From what I observed during the course of the workshops, I concluded that, in this situation, it is fair to say that the subjects' fixed attitudes and beliefs affected their participation to a greater extent than their previous music experience. For example, during his interview, Irv stated that Jane was "better" than he at improvising, and that his ear was weak. I observed that Irv was more hesitant than Jane to take risks with the improvisatory activities and music making. Jane agreed with Irv's assessment in a qualified sense; in addition, she stated that she believes that people either have an inborn talent for improvisation or they don't. I observed that although Jane was somewhat calmer and looser in her approach to the free improvisation, her reflections on her playing included analysis of the musicality of the product, as traditionally defined. I did note in later weeks that Jane began to accept a wider and broader range of harmonies; that although she was playing similar material to what she had played initially, she seemed more pleased with her playing, and she was more relaxed with the process. Carol mentioned that she needed to feel comfortable in order to release her negative thoughts about what she was hearing herself play. Because this music is so unconventional and difficult to judge by established standards, she struggled to acknowledge that the unfamiliar-sounding music was acceptable. Shira concurred with that assessment, saying that she initially doubted herself, and then was able to overcome her fear after realizing that all sounds were welcome.

The means through which music improvisation activities serve to allow people with any level of music experience to play together are inherent within the improvisation process itself, as suggested above by Sawyer (2014), Higgins & Campbell (2010), and Jorgensen (2011).

Research Question 3:

Which of the following improvements were noticeable and in what ways: music skills such as music fluency, sight-reading, and/or memorizing music; confidence and comfort level?

Several studies, as cited in the literature review, confirm that elementary and secondary music students who participated in weekly improvisation activities as an adjunct to their conventional music programmes for a period of at least six months demonstrate significant improvement in the music skills as described in the above question (Azzara, 1993; Stringham, 2010; Montano, 1983; Lehmann et al. 2007). Conclusions were based upon comparative scores on music aptitude tests administered before and after the studies. Having not administered any music aptitude tests in the course of my project, the data gathered was anecdotal only; and given that individual subjects in my study participated in fewer than eight one-hour sessions, any noticeable improvements in music skills were unlikely. When I raised this topic during the post-study interviews, none of the subjects reported noticeable improvements in their music skills. Further research, over a longer period of time and including a standardized Gordon music aptitude test administered before and after the study, should be undertaken in order to draw valid conclusions regarding improvement of music skills in older adults who participate in improvisational music activities.

The pre-study questionnaire provided subjects the opportunity to assess their degree of satisfaction with their levels of confidence and comfort in playing music with others. Three of the four reported a very strong desire to improve their comfort level, while

most were reasonably satisfied with their confidence levels. During the post-study interviews, this topic was revisited, and Jane and Irv reported no noticeable improvements. Carol and Shira both indicated that participating in the improvisation sessions helped them to achieve a greater level of self-awareness when making music and this led directly to greater comfort and confidence levels. For example, Carol realized that her thought patterns consist of worrying about what others think of how she sounds, and that this impedes her ability to focus on her playing. Becoming aware of this phenomenon allowed her to release those thoughts, and she was able to relax and gain confidence through greater self-assurance. Shira commented that she learned something about the importance of trusting those with whom she collaborates; that the more she trusts, the greater her comfort and confidence. Even more significant and far-reaching was her realization that taking risks, challenging herself to embark on unfamiliar musical trajectories, dissolving her limitations, and striving to continue expanding her musical horizons into completely unknown territories has tremendous appeal to her.

Research Question 4:

How does engaging in ensemble improvised music making enhance participants' quality of life?

Seniors are often encouraged to participate in any regularly occurring, pleasant, collaborative, creative activity in order to elevate their mood, increase their sense of well-being, and enrich their daily lives. Research results indicate that a major determinant of optimum quality of life for those of retirement age and older is their degree of social

stimulation; and that, when asked, older people will acknowledge that they seek out and participate in activities for the expressed purpose of social engagement as well as for physical or cognitive benefit (Rudman et al., 1997). The connection between social support and mental health demonstrates that the two vary directly; that is, frequency of social engagement and number of close friends has been positively correlated with feelings of vitality and fewer incidences of depression or anxiety (Keyes et al., 2005).

Ensemble music making can provide a rich opportunity for establishing and maintaining social connection. As presented in the literature review, a number of recent research findings with older adults clearly demonstrate that those who engage in ensemble music making see significant benefits to their quality of life (Creech et al., 2013, 2014; Hays et al., 2002; Clements, 2010). Through providing creative fulfillment, productive social interaction, and stimulation of cognitive, mental, and emotional faculties, collaborative music making can make a considerable contribution to healthy aging (Varvarigou et al., 2013).

Therefore, given that in order to optimize quality of life, older adults seek pleasurable social activities, and given that ensemble music making can be described as such, it follows then that additional opportunities for music making be made available to seniors. In allowing both musicians and non-musicians to collaborate meaningfully in the music making experience, improvisational music provides a unique opportunity for all older individuals to participate in this beneficial activity regardless of previous music experience.

The research study under consideration here: 1) examined the process through which four older musicians with little to no prior exposure to improvisational music

making approached ensemble music improvisation; and 2) documented participants' responses to the experience within the context of their lifelong music involvements. All of the subjects currently engage in ensemble music making on a regular basis, and described what makes this practice so fulfilling and satisfying.

The participants all stated that music making activity is a priority for them; that is, they have chosen to pursue music rather than engage in other hobbies, travel, or social pastimes. Two gave specific examples as to how ensemble music making has been either: 1) a vehicle for additional ongoing social engagement with long-time friends and associates; and/or 2) a means of expanding their social circles to include those with whom they were previously unacquainted. One participant cited three specific instances where a music making experience with unfamiliar individuals led to extra-musical social interaction after they had engaged in music performances together. Another subject stated that the explicit goal of the music making activities in which she regularly participates is "socialization;" the creative music activity is scheduled for an hour, followed by social time for the next hour. New Horizons Band is structured in a similar manner.

The data drawn from the section of the questionnaire regarding the connection between ensemble music making and establishment/strengthening of personal relationships is also relevant to this topic. Three of the four subjects responded that the social element provides them with motivation for engaging in making music with other people. When asked whether relationships between people who make music together can attain a greater depth, three answered positively.

All of the subjects agreed that music is a major priority in their lives, and that it brings a degree of pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfillment that inspires them to continue

engaging in it. One participant mentioned that she has found music making to have a noticeable therapeutic effect. While two of the four participants strongly expressed the immediate desire to continue pursuing improvisatory music practice, a third seemed to become aware of the value of free improvisation only after the completion of the workshops.

Research (as cited above) has conclusively demonstrated that social interaction of any sort brings about benefits to seniors' quality of life, and, as confirmed throughout this document, ensemble improvisational music making has a significant social element. In addition to fulfillment of social needs, my research findings suggest that improvisational music practice offers opportunities for personal growth and development which would also necessarily contribute to enhanced quality of life.

Conclusions and Implications

Given the increasing numbers of citizens over the age of 65 both in North America and in most of the world, and given some of the challenges to these individuals in managing their unique and often-varying needs as they age, additional research into those tools that could be beneficial or remedial, could minimize dependency, or could potentially assist in optimizing quality of life for older adults is not only justified, but perhaps even essential at the present time.

Data gathered here from older musicians who participated in this study supports previous research that found that engaging in a regular ensemble music practice enhances several quality of life indicators; for example, it stimulates cognitive and creative faculties and helps to satisfy the need for fulfilling social interaction among this demographic

(Creech et al., 2013; 2014; Varvarigou et al., 2013; Clements, 2010; Hays et al., 2002). The popularity of New Horizons Bands throughout North America demonstrates that, if given an opportunity, older people will choose to join music ensembles (Coffman, 2008). New Horizons Bands are open to novices as well as experienced musicians, however they are notation-based and require participants to read music. The type of improvisational music under consideration in this study does not utilize traditional notation, thus there is no requirement to learn to read it. As an alternative music making activity, improvisational music ensembles present an inclusive option in which any interested individual can immediately engage.

The sample size was too small for conclusions to be generalized across the field; in fact, simply facilitating the sessions with between two and four participants presented a notable challenge in terms of adapting the intended curriculum.

Questionnaire results indicated that all four subjects were highly motivated to improve their music skills, and, although research findings indicate that adding improvisational music activities to the school music classroom results in significant improvement to students' music skills (Azzara, 1993; Stringham, 2010; Montano, 1983, Lehmann et al., 2007), my study was of a short duration and individual subjects attended a maximum of six sessions. No music skill enhancement was noted by participants, however two of them observed improvement in their musical awareness; one cited that it was the first time she had realized the value of the rhythm component, and the other mentioned benefits to her listening skills. Both of these participants also stated that because they were "made… (to) feel comfortable" and had a sense of "trust" during the sessions, they now were noticeably more receptive to the notion of taking musical risks, having gone outside

of their comfort zone during the sessions. One individual mentioned that she became aware of her habit to "limit" herself and wondered "Why do I lock myself in? (Why do I) think that I have to do the same thing all the time?"

All four participants confirmed the theory that older/retired adults must make an effort to ensure that they have sufficient social contact, and that participating in music activities with others provides a fulfilling source of that essential need; thus, they are compelled to continue to pursue ensemble music opportunities. One stated that she gains noticeable satisfaction from individual practice sessions also, and in addition to playing music, she is motivated to attend shows and travel considerable distances to attend concerts and music camps. Her summation with regard to the value of making music with other retired individuals is that "when you retire, you are withdrawn from the social connection, and it's good to be doing something… really doing something. Not just… you can go to a concert… where you are fed information, but to do something that you participate in together."

A central premise of my study was the extent to which music making can be a profoundly fulfilling activity that brings individuals into social contact with others, whether it be family, friends, or strangers. My goal is to bring additional retired people in to this experience by means of offering improvisation as an alternative immediately-accessible music making option.

Recommendations for Future Research

Proceeding from the present study, further music education research could be undertaken in the following areas:

1) Qualitative research into introducing improvisational music to those healthy elderly persons who have never played music and wish to engage in it as a creatively fulfilling social pastime.

2) Mixed methods research using the principles of andragogy; one of which is the notion that older adults are both capable of learning new skills and are eager to do so. This contention was emphatically reinforced by one of my research subjects. Using improvisatory tools, techniques, and approaches to generate musical material, a skill such as music composition could be taught to older adults.

3) Quantitative research with older musicians who are able to commit to including improvisation activities within their weekly schedules on a regular basis for a relatively lengthy period of time; for example, six months. I would test their music skills before and after their improvisation sessions in order to document improvements over a number of areas. This research has been completed successfully and has demonstrated significant positive results with children and adolescents, but not with older persons.

The principle tenets of andragogy are embodied within an improvisatory music education programme for older persons whether they self-identify as musicians, aspiring musicians or non-musicians: 1) the learning is situated within a social context; 2) activities build upon students' previous knowledge; and 3) sessions are necessarily flexible and inclusive, accommodating the more individualized personalities of older individuals. Improvisational music activities can provide learning opportunities or serve simply as a creative, fulfilling, and pleasurable means of the social connection and engagement with others which retired individuals seek.

Suggestions for Future Researchers

For anyone undertaking a workshop such as this in the future, I would recommend ensuring that there were between eight and 12 participants committed to attending. In my case, I would have delayed recruitment until I had confirmed the approximate start date for the sessions rather than beginning to advertise and speak to potential participants, assuming that I would be beginning the workshops soon afterward. My initial recruitment efforts were quite successful in terms of numbers of interested individuals, however over the course of the four-month delay, people became understandably discouraged, especially since I could not give them definite start-date information. Ultimately most of them lost interest. When it appeared that I had only between four and six participants, and when only two attended during the initial eight weeks, I had to radically alter several aspects of the project, as described in detail above. For the final four weeks, I was fortunate to have subjects who were quite enthusiastic to engage in what I considered to be the most valuable aspects of the project.

I would also put more effort into communication with the subjects regarding their specific preconceptions and goals, along with a more detailed explanation of my own intentions with regard to the project. When this topic initially arose during the first of the 12 sessions, the assumption was that more participants would be attending, and we would revisit this topic at a later time. To be fair, I did make an effort to communicate with both the earlier and later participants regarding my concept of improvisation and my goals for the project, however in the case of the first group, it was necessary that I alter my curriculum in order to meet their needs as well as my own.

During the data analysis process, I noted that only one statement from the questionnaire ("I would like to improve my ability to play by ear") elicited a unanimous response ("very much"). Had it crossed my mind or had I been made aware of the idea of copying musical material by ear, as undertaken by Varvariou (2017) in her research using recordings with groups of higher education music students, I would have suggested that we make use of the CD's that one of the participants had brought along each week. We could have listened to the recorded music, and then attempted to replicate some of it. Perhaps in this way, other musical ideas could have been triggered, and then subsequent experimentation more easily facilitated. Musicians find it easier to improvise when they copy musical material by ear first before engaging in unstructured improvisation (Varvarigou, 2017).

Also, when working with older individuals, consideration must be made of lifestyle issues such as routines, logistical complexities, fluctuating energy levels, health issues, the need for regular physical exercise, and dietary restrictions. The participants in my study were already committed to what I (as a member of this demographic) would consider to be a very busy schedule of music lessons, ensembles, and volunteer activities. Needing them to commit to another 90 minutes per week was risky on my part, especially since their music activities included periodic concerts and recitals for which rehearsals and practicing were necessary.

Ultimately, as Maud Hickey reiterates in her study, "Learning From the Experts: A Study of Free-Improvisation Pedagogues in University Settings," mastering the facilitation of improvisational music workshops is best done through experience. One of her interviewees, Pauline Oliveros, stated "that the only reason she is successful at leading free-

improvisation ensembles is because she has been doing it for over 60 years. She could not pinpoint a specific pedagogy – only experience doing it a long time" (Hickey, 2015, p. 426).

This contention was reinforced a few days after the conclusion of my study when I attended an improvisation workshop led by facilitators from the Music for People (MFP) organization, an international network dedicated to promulgating free music making on global scale and from which I derived a number of my activities and facilitation tools (MFP is described in Chapter Two). One of the facilitators from this group stated that she has been leading workshops for almost 30 years. During that session, I noted that Irv, one of my research subjects, was also in attendance. He had been the first participant who enthusiastically agreed to participate in my study; he recruited others to join, and then always brought his music books and CD's along, sometimes appearing to be uncertain as to what the premise was or what concepts I was attempting to convey. The day after the MFP workshop, Irv sent me an email stating, "Yesterday's workshop had some similar exercises that you were doing. It was too bad that we (he and Jane) were so busy with courses and other commitments. ... Are you still conducting the sessions? … If there is a session during the week of June 20, I may attend" (Griffith, 2016, personal communication). I wondered whether, through the MFP workshop, Irv had made the connection and finally fully understood the intentions and the essence of this unconventional music making style. If so, I could offer this anecdote as further support for the theory that engaging in free improvised ensemble music making contains a personal growth component. Some individuals who are introduced to this music can immediately embrace it, while others require time and reflection before they can accept it. And of course there are those who never will be fully comfortable with this music.

Final Thoughts

The premises upon which this study was based were the following: 1) the reality of the global aging phenomenon; 2) the unique challenges that accompany the aging process; 3) the features of ensemble music making which enhance quality of life; specifically for older individuals; 4) the necessary hurdle of learning to read music notation in order to participate in traditional music making; and 5) improvisational music making activities which are a non-notated option. During the course of completing this project, I observed that some of the innate capacities of ensemble improvisational music making; namely, to engender and encourage socializing, to create feelings of true connection, and to inspire the formation of community, are of particular value to those in the elder population.

Andragogy principles include the benefits of situating learning within a social context, which, I believe I can say, is optimal where possible for any age of learners, as is the notion (another andragogy principle) that new learning experiences must necessarily build upon the students' previous knowledge. Older individuals have acquired numerous competencies through both formal and non-formal learning experiences throughout their years of living, and facilitating the acquisition of a skill such as improvisational music making can build upon as well as draw from many areas of one's life.

After having undertaken this research, I have realized that learning to play improvised music is akin to learning to speak or to read, both of which I have worked to help both children and adults master. Improvisation is not a skill or a technique like reading music notation or learning to play pre-composed music. It cannot be grasped through prescribed step-by-step instruction, but only mastered through bringing together a number of capacities, some of which go beyond the musical. Maud Hickey argues that

improvisation is not a skill that can be taught, but is a "disposition to be enabled and nurtured" (2009, p. 292). It is experienced, facilitated, coached, and stimulated; the focus is on the process and on the knowledge that there is not one correct approach, but many (ibid).

As someone facilitating their first series of improvisation workshops, after having nearly twenty years' experience teaching academic subjects in the adult education classroom, three years teaching in the elementary sector, four years as a literacy group instructor, as well as countless years tutoring one-on one with ages five through sixty-something, I came to see that leading these sessions is a learning-by-doing, trial-and-error process, and it is quite independent of my previous teaching experience or even my relatively extensive knowledge and background performing this type of music. Since the conclusion of my project, I have attended two Deep Listening sessions (inspired by Pauline Oliveros who, as stated above, attributed her success at facilitating improvisation workshops to the fact that she did it for over 60 years), three Music for People workshops, including a full day facilitator training session led by a 30-year facilitation veteran, and a full week of improvisational music camp which was loosely structured by experienced facilitators and included three public performances. Aside from acquiring additional facilitation tools and approaches, as a member of the retired adult demographic, I can reinforce the theory that older people **do** gain a great deal from engaging in improvisational music making, and that it is worth making the effort to pursue these opportunities. I truly appreciate that my subjects attended my workshops, bringing their love of music, their drive to fulfill their musical potential, their playful spirits, their courage to take risks, and their willingness to trust the process and the facilitator.

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APPENDIX A

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office
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845 Sherbrooke Street West. Rm 429
Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Tel: (514) 398-6831
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Research Ethics Board II
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 272-1215

Project Title: Music Improvisation and its Benefits to Older Musicians

Principal Investigator: Gretchen Schwarz **Status:** Master's Student

Department: Music Research **Supervisor:** Prof. Lisa Lorenzino

Approval Period: **January 20, 2016 to January 19, 2017**

The REB-II reviewed and approved this project by full board review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans.

Deanna Collin
Ethics Review Administrator, REB I & II

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* All research involving human participants requires review on at least an annual basis. A Request for Renewal form should be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval.
* When a project has been completed or terminated, a Study Closure form must be submitted.
* Unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications must be promptly reported to the REB. Serious adverse events experienced by a participant in conjunction with the research must be reported to the REB without delay.
* Modifications must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented.
* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.
* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this project.
* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.

APPENDIX B

Introductory Questionnaire

Name: _____ Gender _____

Age (optional): _____

Number of years of musical training _____

Describe: (e.g. lessons, classes, school, classical, jazz, etc.)
If you need more space, please use reverse.

_____

Number of years of performance experience _____

Describe: (e.g. solo, small group, orchestra, choir, etc.)

_____

Improvisation experience (describe) _____

Questionnaire with Likert Scale: 5 = Very much; 4 = Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 2 = Not much; 1 = Not at all; 0 = Don't know

____1. I would like to improve my musical skills and musicianship

____2. I would like to improve my comfort level when playing music with other people.

____3. I am satisfied with my level of confidence while playing music with other people.

____4. My sight-reading skills could be improved.

____5. My rhythm accuracy could be improved.

____6. I would like to improve my ability to play by ear.

____7. I would like to improve my listening skills.

____8. I would like to improve my musical expression and understanding.

____9. I would like to improve my harmonic understanding.

____10. I am aware of the value of music improvisation.

____11. I like to play music.

____12. One of the reasons I like to play is to get out and see people.

____13. I feel that I can get to know people when I play music with them.

____14. Playing music makes me feel good.

____15. I think that this workshop will help me become a better musician.

____16. I think that this workshop will strengthen my relationship with the other people I am playing with.

____17. Music is a big part of my life.

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Title of Research:
Old Cats / New Tricks: Introducing Improvisation to Older Adult Musicians

Researcher:
Gretchen Schwarz
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Purpose of the research:
To determine and document the benefits of adding weekly improvisation exercises to the routine of those adults who are currently playing notated music. Existing research 1) with older musicians indicates that ensemble music making contributes positively to quality of life; and 2) with young music students aged 7-20 suggests that music improvisation accelerates improvement in sight-reading skill, rhythmic fluency, and harmonic acuity. This project is examining both musical and extra-musical benefits to older adult musicians who commence a weekly improvisation programme.

What is involved in participating:
The subjects will participate in a 90-minute improvisation session on the McGill University campus one afternoon per week for 12 weeks.

Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may choose to attend any number of sessions they wish, may decline to take part in any of the activities, may decline to answer any questions, and may withdraw from the study at any point and for any reason. Any information collected from participants will be accessible only to the researcher and will be stored on a password protected hard drive. The name of each participant will be protected and any audio recordings made will be stored on a password protected hard drive.

There will be no form of remuneration for participation.

There are no anticipated risks for involvement in the study.

I agree to participate in this study	YES/NO
I would like to make use of a pseudonym for the duration of the study	YES/NO
I agree to be audio-recorded and my sound creations used in the dissemination of results.	YES NO
I agree that the video or photograph of my image may be used in future presentations of this research.	YES/NO

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant name: _____ Date: _____

Participate signature: _____

Researcher name: _____ Date:_____

Researcher's Signature: _____

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions (Guideline)

What can you tell me about the first musical experience that you can remember?

Please describe your early musical training - both informal and formal. Where did you learn music?
Teacher? Formal lessons? In the community? To what degree was it rote and to what degree was it notated?

What has been the place or value of music in your life?

What are some of the benefits or rewards of playing music? Alone and with others?

With which genre or genres of music do you feel most closely connected?
In terms of listening preferences? In terms of playing? In terms of music events that you prefer to attend?

Are you familiar with or do you enjoy music outside of the Western European Art or so-called Classical North American popular lexicon? (Examples: Klezmer, Celtic, folk, roots, African drumming) Where have you experienced these?

Which aspects of the music have most value to you? (Examples: cultural context, community of others interested in that kind of music, history, social potential)

How and when did you become involved with New Horizons and/or Cammac? Describe the process.

What music activities do you currently engage in?

Are you more engaged in music now than previously? Why or why not?

Do you value music more or less than previously?

Do you sacrifice anything in order to pay music? What is an example?

Is music of value aside from the pure enjoyment of playing? What are your thoughts?

Do you think that society values music as much as you do? What do you believe is the value of music for society?

Should music be more prominently placed within the school curriculum? Why or why not?

How can retired people specifically benefit from ensemble music making? Should more opportunities be offered to them?

How did you come to decide to participate in the improvisation workshop?
In what ways did your concepts of improvisational music change as a result of participating?

Which of the activities in the workshops did you enjoy most? Least? Which were most valuable? Which ones provided the best opportunity for you to express yourself?

What, if anything, did you learn about music and your relationship to it by participating in the workshops?

Can you share any specific or general feelings that arose while you were playing or afterward?

Do you think that you will want to do more improvising? Why or why not? Would you recommend it to other musicians or non-musicians that you know?

Is there anything else you can add?