



<http://www.diva-portal.org>

This is the published version of a paper published in .

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Larsson, C., Öhman, J. (2018)

Music improvisation as an aesthetic event: Towards a transactional approach to meaning-making

*European Journal of Philosophy in Arts Education*, 3(1): 121-181

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:oru:diva-70322>

# Music Improvisation as an Aesthetic Event

Towards a transactional approach to  
meaning-making

Christina Larsson and Johan Öhman

Örebro University

## Abstract

Improvisation in general music education is still a somewhat underdeveloped practice. Moreover, attempts to justify its place in the curriculum have often focused solely on its (measurable) outcomes. In this article, we claim that a deeper understanding of students' meaning-making processes in experiences of improvisation is necessary in order to develop improvisation practice and research. The purpose of this article is to offer a music education perspective on improvisation based on John Dewey's transactional perspective on aesthetic experience and meaning-making. Related to this, we suggest and illustrate a Practical Epistemology Analysis (PEA) as a way of analysing meaning-making in music improvisation within general music education. The method of analysis is illustrated by vignettes from video analyses of music lessons in two Swedish schools with pupils aged 9-10 and their free improvisations. The vignettes show how PEA enables analyses of situated meaning-making in the progress of the pupils' improvisation activities. Further, the transactional perspective makes educational values of improvisation visible, such as musical and personal agency, and elucidates cognitive, embodied and ethical aspects of musical meaning-making.

Keywords: improvisation, aesthetic experience, aesthetic event, Practical Epistemology Analysis, meaning-making

# Music Improvisation as an Aesthetic Event

Towards a transactional approach to  
meaning-making

Christina Larsson and Johan Öhman<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Improvisation is a growing area of research in music education. However, research on improvisation in general music education is still underdeveloped (Larsson and Georgii-Hemming, 2018). Research on improvisation has developed a variety of approaches and focused on diverse contexts. However, research on general music education has largely investigated improvisation as a means of achieving certain musical competences. This is often done in order to legitimise improvisation both in the curriculum and in teaching practice. In a focus on the measurable outcomes of improvisation, results and products are emphasised. This is in line with current educational policies in a goal- and result driven education system (Ferm Thorgersen and Zandén 2014; Thorgersen 2014; Ferm Almqvist, Vinge, Väkevä and Zandén 2016). Although this research has contributed valuable knowledge, the authors of this article argue that this way of justifying the place of improvisation in school is problematic in two respects. First, it puts us in a position in which we have to “prove” that improvisation actually fulfils

---

<sup>1</sup> Örebro University; E-mail: Christina.Larsson@oru.se ; johan.ohman@oru.se

predetermined outcomes that sometimes obscure important and non-measurable yet educationally valuable qualities. Second, if these outcomes can be achieved more effectively with other means, it is reasonable to exclude improvisation from the curriculum. In this article, we emphasise that the importance of improvisation is to be found in its potential to bring out educational qualities that go far beyond measurable outcomes. This study is based on the premise that meaning-making in music is understood as the relation between the music/improvisation, the listener/performer and the situation. From an ecological perspective, Clarke (2011/2005) states that “perceptual specification [or meaning] is a reciprocal relationship between the invariants of the environment and the particular capacities of the perceiver” (Clarke 2011/2005, 44). Hargreaves’ Reciprocal feedback model of musical response (2012, 158) also describes how response to music occurs in a relation between the listener, the music and the context. In line with this understanding of music and meaning, Kanellopoulos (2007a) argues that there is a need to broaden conceptions of “what counts as musical” so as not to patronise “children’s intentions”. Instead, Kanellopoulos suggests that teachers could adopt a mode of action that facilitates “Being ‘inside’ the music with the child” (Young 1995, 57 cited in Kanellopoulos 2007a, 140).

However, as Burnard (2000a) and Kanellopoulos (2007a) argue, theories that further our understanding of pupils’ experiences need to be developed. They (ibid.) maintain that current educational discourses lack an emphasis on the unique and significant qualities of children’s experiences. Several researchers call for further studies of creative activities, such as improvisation, in order to develop a music education practice in which students and teachers are perceived as co-creators and co-learners in transformative experiences of deep engagement (e.g. Burnard 2000a; Burnard 2015; Kanellopoulos 2007a;

Wallerstedt, Lagerlöf and Pramling 2014). Also, as Burnard (2015) notes, there is a lack of knowledge as to how to develop and support teachers' actual use of creative practices in their everyday work. Hence, we argue that it is necessary to further articulate, understand and analyse meaning-making processes in students' experiences of free improvisation activities. To this end, we need a theory of aesthetic experience and a way of analysing meaning-making in music improvisation events.

The purpose of this article is to offer a music education perspective on improvisation based on Dewey's transactional perspective on aesthetic experience and meaning-making. Related to this perspective, we suggest and illustrate a Practical Epistemology Analysis as a way of analysing meaning-making in music improvisation within general music education. Here we rely on a previously developed method for transactional analysis, Practical Epistemology Analysis, conducted within the Swedish research group Studies of Meaning-making in Educational Discourses, SMED (see e.g. Östman and Wickman 2001; Maivorsdotter and Quennerstedt 2012; Rudsberg, Öhman and Östman 2013; Öhman 2014).

We argue that a transactional perspective enables us to highlight aspects of the improvisation experience that lie beyond measurable outcomes. These aspects can bring out educational qualities of improvisation by emphasising the different modes through which situated meaning-making is constructed. The suggested approach can tune teachers' ears and enable them to appreciate those qualities that resist measurement. Thus, this framework deepens our understanding of students' meaning-making processes in improvisation by offering specific concepts that could lead to further theoretical and practice-based discussions about the role of improvisation in music education.

The following section first provides an overview of previous research on improvisation in music education. This is followed by research concerned with aesthetic experience in music education with a specific focus on pragmatist perspectives. Finally, an overview of how the concept aesthetic experience has been treated in previous research is presented.

## Previous research: the values of music education and improvisation

Studies of improvisation in music education have often adopted a psychological approach and focused on musical cognitive and personal development (e.g. Swanwick and Tillman 1986; Kratus 1991; 1995; Brophy 2005; Whitcomb 2010; Coulson and Burke 2013). These studies have often employed pre- and post-tests of pupils' competence, knowledge and skills and focused on measurable outcomes (e.g. Guilbault 2009; Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves 2009). Ethnographic methods (that employ various interview formats and sustained observation) have more often been used in studies investigating children's experiences of improvisation (e.g. Burnard 2000a, 2000b, 2002; Kanellopoulos 2007a; Beegle 2010).

Previous research has found that music improvisation experiences can be beneficial to students in numerous ways, such as developing their social capabilities and self-confidence (Beegle 2010; Burnard 2000a, 2000b, 2002). Furthermore, music improvisation has been shown to have a positive influence on the development of creativity (Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves 2009), critical thinking (Hickey 2009) and empathy (Rabinowitch, Cross and Burnard 2013). Other research has focused specifically on measurable outcomes in musical competence emerging from improvisation activities in a music class.

For instance, some have explored musical skills, such as the ability to adhere to pitch and harmony (Guilbault 2009; Coulson and Bourke 2013), or the ability to develop melodic improvisation (Brophy 2005) and maintain a steady beat (Whitcomb 2010).

In Sweden, creative activities in music education practice, such as composition, improvisation and arrangement, have long been overlooked in favour of craftsmanship and reproduction (Nielsen 1998) activities, such as singing and playing (Georgii-Hemming and Westvall 2010; Danielsson 2012; Swedish National Agency for Education 2015). Creative activities are often resistant to the use of predefined assessment criteria. This means that in the context of current goal- and result-driven educational policies in which assessment and documentation play a dominant role, and where “what gets measured, gets done” (Ferm Thorgersen and Zandén 2014; Thorgersen 2014; Ferm Almqvist, Vinge, Väkevå and Zandén 2016), creative activities could be excluded.

However, creativity is a vital part of education. That everyone is musical and creative and hence capable of creating music in different ways was the dictum on which the whole creative music education movement of the 1960’s was based and is still advocated (e.g. Barrett 2006; Burnard 2000a; Hickey and Webster 2001; MacDonald 2014). This could imply that in general music education actions of discovery, exploration and creation are given more space in music curricula and practice. That music teachers could provide more time for group improvisation is suggested by Wall (2018) following investigations of group improvisation with fifth-year students, who found that musical fluency and collaborative emergent developed in students’ group interactions. Here, students learned through exploration and collaboration and were able to create new music and make personal musical decisions, which implies that they were

also able to take control of their future learning (Wall 2018). Regarding children as active agents, Karlsen (2011) defines musical agency as a “*capacity for action* in relation to music or in a music-related setting” (ibid., 110, emphasis in original). In line with this, Wiggins and Espeland (2012) contend that children can develop musical and personal agency when they feel that they can control their circumstances and ability to act.

Earlier research has found that children’s musical expressions are culturally contingent, rather than universal, and that children’s capacities to learn music can be developed through creative music education if they are given opportunities to engage deeply with music and are empowered to trust their capability as musical thinkers, performers and creators (e.g. Campbell 1998; Young 2005; Sundin 2007; Burnard 2015; Wassrin 2016). In Kanellopoulos’ (2007a) study of children’s conceptions of musical meaning and music making in interviews and philosophical conversations he concludes that studying children’s thinking about musical thinking is important for how teachers engage with children, how musical creativity is fostered and for developing diverse understandings of music, its perception and making. To promote a dialogue for balancing structure and freedom and encouraging more freedom in music education, Hickey (2009) purposefully and provocatively claims that true improvisation cannot be taught, because it is a disposition than can only be nurtured. Moreover, she states that a building-block based improvisation teaching practice is counterproductive in that it fails to develop “true creative thought” (ibid., 286) and therefore suggests a more learner-directed approach.

Varkøy (2014) problematises the technical and instrumental tendencies in a utilitarian perspective on musical experience. He argues that in such a perspective, musical experience is evaluated in terms of the extent to which it is thought useful for purposes and goals outside the experience itself. According

to Varkøy (2014), we rather need to discuss, understand and emphasise intrinsic values of musical experience as *action* (in an Arendtian conceptualisation), a form of human activity that is intrinsically valuable, in contrast to labour and work (ibid.). Also drawing on Arendt, similar questions have been raised by Kanellopoulos (2007b) and Wassrin (2016) in discussions about improvisation as an activity that is intrinsically rewarding in itself, rather than as a means to specific predetermined ends. Regarding this, Väkevä (2012) notes that the aesthetic value of music is “embedded in practice” (ibid., 87). Kanellopoulos (2007a) argues that we need to respect and value children’s music-making and enhance our understanding of how they construct and explore ideas. With creative music activities in curricula, such as improvisation, students may encounter transformative, emotional, aesthetic and existential musical experiences. Without such experiences, we risk ending up with a curriculum and a music education that represent an instrumental, economic, technocratic approach to music, where the values of musical experience are omitted (Eisner 2004; Rolle 2014; Varkøy 2014).

We find that there is a tension between an instrumentalist view of music education that emphasises “means to an end” beyond the musical experience itself on the one hand, and an approach that emphasises the musical experience as an “end in itself” and the values connected to these experiences on the other. The problem seems to be how to make visible and understand the meaning of these values in music education. We claim that a transactional perspective together with Dewey’s concept of aesthetic experience constitute a theoretical framework that makes it possible to achieve visibility in and comprehension of the educational values of music improvisation. Before elaborating on this framework, a brief review of the debate about the concept of aesthetic experience in previous music education research is presented.

## Aesthetic experience in music education research

The concept aesthetic experience has been much debated in music education and culminated in the 1990s in a dispute between Bennet Reimer (Reimer 1970) and David Elliott (1995), both of whom later published revised editions of their original works (Reimer 1989 and 2003; Elliott and Silverman 2015). This dispute is well-known and is not within the scope of this article. However, many researchers in music education have contributed to the discussion by comparing and examining differences and similarities (e.g. Daugherty 1996; Westerlund 2002; 2003; 2004; Panaiotidi 2003; 2005; Määttänen 2003; Väkevä 2003).

Westerlund (2003) analyses and discusses the differences in aesthetic and praxial music education and argues that although both Reimer and Elliott claim a theoretical foundation in Dewey, their use of the concept of the aesthetic has been misinterpreted. That this is the case is supported also by Määttänen (2003). Westerlund (2003) argues that the praxialists have not considered the aesthetic concept in a naturalist framework and proposes a reconstruction of the aesthetic drawing on Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience (*ibid.*) She suggests that Dewey's holistic theory explains both the specific and the multi-layered nature of musical experience better than Elliott's cognitive perspective on praxial music education because it offers a way of combining the aesthetical and praxial approaches. According to Westerlund, Dewey's focus on social interaction and communication is an important contribution to the praxial approach (*ibid.*). Westerlund (2003) emphasises that Dewey's notion of meaning is always about interaction and use. Aesthetic experience and meaning are also discussed by Määttänen (2003) from a pragmatist standpoint, who demonstrates the importance of Dewey's notion

of meaning to connect art and other experiential modes. Meanings are based in action and use, because they are ultimately “modes of practice” (ibid., 66).

Westerlund (2003) poses two questions that illuminate the difficulties that both aestheticians and praxialists in music education have in understanding Dewey’s concept of experience: 1) why music as experience is still “considered to be something that goes on inside the skin of the individual?” and 2) “why music as praxis and music as aesthetic are set as opponents?” (ibid., 56-57.) In Dewey’s non-dualistic philosophy, the two notions can be combined (ibid.). Westerlund (2004) argues that Dewey’s aesthetics can be beneficial to music education, but only in combination with how Dewey understands experience and education in general.

In describing a Deweyan music education, Westerlund (2003) points to the possibility of an ethical music education in which individual and social aspects are combined and where musical learning is done in cooperation and by problem-solving. Such a music education is also an end in itself and does not only aim at life in the future (ibid.). However, a “critical multimusical education” (ibid., 56) also contributes to life as a whole. Music education as a form of critical practice that sees how moral and aesthetic matters play an active role in human praxis is also advocated by Väkevä (2003).

That the word aesthetic is continuously multifaceted and complex is made obvious by Thorgersen (2005), who distinguishes no less than eight different meanings of the word in the former Swedish curriculum: aesthetics as a tool for value and judgement - as a skill - as experience - as a way of expressing oneself - as a certain kind of knowledge - as a secondary tool for learning other skills/subjects - as a way of describing a subject and finally as an existential necessity (ibid., 22). Fossum and Varkøy (2012) note that the notion of aesthetic

experience appears in different contexts and leads to diametrically opposed understandings of the aesthetic as either being product- or process-oriented.

Attempts have been made to replace the concept of aesthetic experience in music education. Thorgersen (2018) problematises the notion of aesthetic learning and suggests using aesthetic communication to define and describe learning processes, in order to focus on the communicative situatedness of meaning-making events. Rolle (2010, 2014) suggests aesthetic perception as the basis for aesthetic experiences, resulting in a view of music education as an aesthetic practice. Rolle further maintains that aesthetic experiences can change people by the new perspectives that they enable (Rolle 2014). However, according to Rolle (2010), the specificity of the aesthetic is not fully explained in Dewey's notion of aesthetic experience, because Dewey's theory of art as experience does not take "works of art as its starting point" (ibid., 3). Moreover, Rolle views Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience as solely emphasising unity and fulfilment and does not account for Shusterman's idea of: "the often jarring effect which makes art a positively disturbing and motivating force" (Shusterman 1992, 31-32 in Rolle 2010). On the other hand, Sawyer (2000) suggests that Dewey's theory of art as experience fits well with the performing arts and improvisation, in that Dewey clearly distinguishes between the product of art, which indicates the actual music composition, poem or painting etc., and the work of art, which is an "active and experienced" process (Dewey 1934, 168).

In an article provocatively entitled *The End of Aesthetic Experience*, Shusterman (1997) maintains that from a pragmatist standpoint, pleasure and meaning, feeling and cognition, enjoyment and understanding "tend, in art, to constitute each other" (ibid., 37). Shusterman thus suggests that the philosophical concept of aesthetic experience should be fully recognised for its

importance and richness, since it can “remind us of the variety this concept still embraces as heightened, meaningful, and valuable phenomenological experience” (ibid., 39).

From previous research, it can be concluded that the concept of aesthetic experience appears to be central in music education research, but that the methods and operational tools for examining and analysing such experiences *in situ* are lacking. We argue that with Dewey’s transactional perspective of aesthetic experience, which bridge the dualism aesthetic-praxial, we can show *how* to conduct examinations and analyses of situated aesthetic experiences. In what follows, Dewey’s notions of aesthetic experience and aesthetic events are described. Building on Dewey’s transactional perspective, a method of analysis is then introduced.

## Dewey’s Notion of Aesthetic Experience

In the following we elaborate on the study’s theoretical framework and describe Dewey’s notion of aesthetic experience and how he distinguishes an aesthetic experience from other kinds of experiences. We also describe Dewey’s distinction between art products and the work of art. According to Dewey, human beings experience dimensions of being in the world through different modes of experience. Biesta and Burbules (2003) summarise and exemplify these modes as follows: “Knowing is one mode of experience [...]. Other modes [...] are, for example, the practical mode, the ethical mode, the aesthetic mode, and the religious mode” (ibid., 29). Experiencing something aesthetically is a mode of experience, which according to Dewey (1934) is “a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement” (ibid., 39-40). This “ordered and organised movement” is what Dewey refers to as an “artistic

structure” (1934, 40) that appears in an aesthetic event. This is elaborated on later in the article. To Dewey, there is a clear difference in the product of art and the work of art. The work of art is a “psychological process” contends Sawyer (2000, 153) and refers to Dewey: it is “active and experienced. It is what the product does, its working” (Dewey 1934, 168). The artistic aspect is central in Dewey’s writing on the work of art. According to him, the artist’s thought is “immediately embodied in the object. [...] The artist does his thinking in the very qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it” (ibid., 14-5). This can be compared with children’s creative music activities, such as free improvisation, where there is no right or wrong way of improvising and where children can manifest their musical thinking through “the unity of thought and action” (Kanellopoulos 2007a, 128; see also Espeland 2007). Furthermore, according to Dewey (1934), when something is experienced aesthetically perception and imagination are both important in order to “compose an integral whole” (ibid., 278). Development of perceptual acuity is a key notion in Dewey’s aesthetic philosophy, which indicates that perception is not mere reception, but rather a process of in- and outgoing of energy (Jackson 1998). Dewey emphasises the active processes of doing and making in art, which as noted by Shusterman (2006), emerge through Dewey’s conception of “art’s goal [...] not simply to produce improved art techniques, artworks, and art appreciation (in the spirit of *art for art’s sake*) but instead to improve life itself” (ibid., 356). Hence, aesthetic experiences are not exclusively related to the arts, but also emanate out of human beings’ ordinary actions in everyday life (Dewey 1934). Following Dewey (1934), Maivorsdotter and Quennerstedt (2012) characterise aesthetic experiences as “integral, valued and emotional experiences that move towards the fulfilment or consummation of ends-in-view. In this way, we act and feel an anticipated desire of the outcome” (ibid., 4). Thus, actions are

aesthetic when they are related to each other to form a whole in perception (Dewey 1934).

However, according to Dewey, aesthetic experiences are not always good and pleasurable, but can even be something “that is harmful to the world and its consummation undesirable. But it has esthetic quality” (Dewey 1934, 40). Every experience is a “moving force” and the value of the experience “can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey 1938, 14). Thus, the direction of the process of experience, where/what it moves towards, is what renders the experience valuable. Experiences that stand out from the “ordinary flow of experience as something special [...] distinctive, and memorable” (Shusterman 2006, 357) are what Dewey designates as “an experience”:

[...] we have an experience when the material experienced runs its course to fulfilment. Then and then only is it integrated within and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences. (Dewey 1934, 36-37)

*An* experience leads to a rewarding whole, which should not be mistaken for a “predetermined homogeneous solution or end”, but rather “a continuous process of action on action” (Maivorsdotter and Quennerstedt 2012, 4). *An* experience has an emotional quality in that emotion is the “cementing force” that gives an experience its aesthetic character (Leddy 2016, 10) and provides its unity, or sense of wholeness.

Westerlund (2003) explains that *an* aesthetic experience is a qualitatively different experience: “It means a fulfilling and inherently meaningful mode of engagement in contrast to the mechanical, the fragmentary, the nonintegrated and all other nonmeaningful forms of engagement” (Westerlund 2003, 49-52). She continues that the “aesthetic” is about “bringing quality to the ongoing

experience and not only producing qualitatively good music in terms of some authentic rules” (ibid.). Uhrmacher and Moroye (2014) also talk about aesthetic experiences in education as desirable: an “aesthetic experience means that one is alive, active, and alert; one is engaged to the fullest extent possible” (ibid., 65). According to Dewey (1934), an aesthetic experience with a satisfying conclusion implies an experience of growth. Dewey further describes growth as the capacity for further learning, “the *ability* to develop” (1916/2005, 49, emphasis in original). Where there is no anticipation and engagement, the gap lingers, which implies that there is no fulfilment phase: “such experiences are *anesthetic*” (Dewey 1934, 41). The structure of the aesthetic experience as an aesthetic event is elaborated on in the next section.

## The Aesthetic Event

According to Dewey, an aesthetic event is characterised by a distinctive form that consists of “inception, development and fulfillment” (Dewey 1934, 57). When something is experienced aesthetically, which is the same as saying that when someone has *an* experience, it follows an “ordered and organised movement”. Dewey refers to this as an “artistic structure” (Dewey 1934, 40). Thus, the structure of *an* experience follows a certain pattern, namely the pattern of an aesthetic event (Dewey 1934). Such an event has a clear beginning, a development and a consummation of felt harmony and balance.

The elements of tension and resistance that appear in the development phase are of special importance. Dewey declares that without “resistance, ambiguity and doubt” there would not be any development (Dewey 1934, 143). The fulfilment/consummatory phase of an aesthetic event always presents something new or unexpected that could not have been foreseen. An experience is characterised by the “spontaneity of the unpremeditated” (1934,

144), thus saving it from being something mechanical or calculated. However, spontaneity is not merely an expressive outburst in the moment, but rather results from long periods of activity: “Subconscious maturation precedes creative production in every line of human endeavour” (Dewey 1934, 75-76).

As Westerlund (2002) argues, it is a challenge to music teachers to understand how they can support students to have fulfilling musical experiences. In line with Sawyer (2000), we argue that Dewey’s theory of art as experience, and specifically the concept of aesthetic event, can be helpful in this. Many musical learning and meaning-making experiences, such as learning a new piece of music one is interested in and eager to be able to perform, could be described using the inception-development-fulfilment pattern of the aesthetic event. Improvisation is no exception. For instance, the improvisation process is initiated by a teacher who suggests an improvisation activity. In the development phase, doubts and hindrances need to be dealt with and overcome if the process is to become a fulfilling experience. Music improvisation means making musical decisions in the moment, which includes recalling and re-actualising previous experiences in the current musical situation. In improvisation, previous experiences of music in various contexts are adapted and adjusted to new situations. Hence, improvisation does not occur out of the blue: “All improvisation takes place in relation to the known, whether the known is traditional or newly acquired” (Bailey 1992, 142).

In the next section we describe Dewey’s transactional perspective and suggest a method of analysis based on this that enables analyses of meaning-making in improvisation activities to be conducted.

## A Transactional Perspective and Understanding of Meaning-Making

As this article is concerned with improvisation within music education, meaning-making is of course of utmost interest. In view of this, we now turn to Dewey's transactional understanding of meaning-making. According to a pragmatist perspective, experiences are intimately connected with actions. Human beings constantly do and experience in a continuous rhythmical process of doings and undergoings (Dewey 1938, see also Garrison 2001). Experience emerges in interactions between people and/or between people and objects. In every experience there is a "reciprocal relation between the individual and the sociocultural environment" (Östman and Öhman 2010, 13). This implies that when someone does something, he/she subsequently undergoes the consequences of this action. Hence, through our actions we are interwoven with the environment in what Dewey designates as transactions (Dewey and Bentley 1949).

### Continuity and change

Dewey's principles of continuity and change are vital in a transactional understanding of meaning-making. There is continuity in all human events because "every experience influences in some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had" (Dewey (1938, 37). Continuity in students' learning in general music education can be understood as the way in which they recall previous experiences in order to make sense of new ones (Wickman and Östman 2002; Öhman and Östman 2007). Different forms of music and musical actions that have been experienced before, such as listening, playing, improvising and dancing, can be "included as part of the event, in

action in a certain situation” (Quennerstedt et al. 2011, 165). Recalled experiences that are related to a new situation undergo change and gain different or “extended meaning” (ibid.). Hence, continuity and change are two sides of the same coin (Öhman and Östman 2007).

In the continuous flow of encounters in the environment we are sometimes confronted with disruptive moments and resistance that “open us up to questioning our taken-for-granted ideas and habitual ways of being” (English 2016, 1048). Encountering improvisation as a novice could be such a disruptive moment, or gap, where one is uncertain how to act. In the transactional process of bridging an indeterminate gap and being able to move forward in the situation, previous experiences have to be recalled and re-actualised. Here, imagination plays an indispensable role, in that it opens up the mind to embrace the new. English declares the educative value of disruptive moments:

[...] these moments of discontinuity or interruption have educative value: such moments offer us the opportunity to take in something new—the new idea or object that initially confuses us—in a way that can transform our thinking and modes of acting. (English 2016, 1049)

This is a back- and- forth process that includes previous experience as well as anticipation of a resolution according to participants’ perceived purposes, or their ends-in-view. In these transactional encounters participants (both subjects and objects) undergo change contingent to the situation. This implies that meaning is subject to change when conditions are changed, i.e. the meaning of things, events and actions are contingent on individuals’ transactions in the social, cultural and material environment. Hence, “meaning and essence emerge as a consequence of transactional processes” (Garrison 2001, 286). Meaning is not treated as something intrinsic to things and actions

in themselves, or in the minds of human beings, but is rather “a property of behaviour” (Dewey 1958/2013, 179).

As experiences are social and involve contact and communication, they do not belong exclusively to individual minds (Dewey 1938). Dewey talks about communication as a process of coordinating activities by making something in common, thus indicating that meaning-making is fundamentally a social process (Garrison 1995). Biesta and Burbules (2003) express this as “Finding a response that brings about coordination is therefore the same as saying that the meaning of the situation for *this* organism has become clear” (Biesta and Burbules 2003, 36, emphasis in original). In the improvisation process, it means that meaning is created when actions in the specific situation create relations for a common purpose, which lead to an open ended, rather than a predetermined, conclusion. The encounter becomes a rewarding experience of participation and communication when the interaction between individuals and the environment is carried out to the full (Dewey 1934), i.e. when students have found a response that brings about coordination and have managed to improvise in a specific situation, within a specific environment. Dewey therefore rejects the conception of intrinsic value as some kind of existence or property that has value in itself, regardless of context and action. Thus, the values of music improvisation are things that emerge in the act of improvisation, in transaction with the environment, through experience.

Meaning-making in music improvisation situations is a form of non-linguistic meaning-making (Määttänen, 2010). According to Dewey, knowledge is transformed both in the production and experience of art: “[knowledge] becomes something more than knowledge because it is merged with non-intellectual elements to form an experience worthwhile as an experience” (Dewey 1934, 302). Leddy (2016) explains that in Dewey’s theory

of art, “Life is made more intelligible by art not through conceptualization but through clarification and intensification in experience” (Leddy 2016, 18). Thus, in the transactional process, “aesthetic experiences can genuinely transform habitual ways of thinking, feeling and perceiving” (Jackson 1998, xiv) in ways that can also lead to meaning-making emerging in music improvisation encounters.

We therefore suggest that taking Dewey’s transactional perspective and theory of aesthetic experience as points of departure and applying these concepts to improvisation facilitates an investigation of students’ situated meaning-making in improvisation events.

## Methodological consequences

Based on this transactional perspective, we now turn to investigating meaning-making *in situ*, i.e. improvisation situations in which actions and transactions can be observed. A transactional understanding of meaning-making does not presuppose a division between the inner mind and the outer reality/body. The individual student and the environment are reciprocally constituted in transaction, since “the unity of language, meaning and reality is a natural ingredient in our daily life” (Öhman and Östman 2007, 156). This means that meaning-making is observable in both spoken and embodied action (Östman and Öhman 2010; Quennerstedt et al. 2011). From a pragmatist perspective, information about human beings can only be obtained through their actions (Öhman and Östman 2007). What we know is first revealed through our actions, which is the “import of Dewey’s claim that ‘knowledge lives first in the muscles’ - and not in the mind” (Biesta and Burbules 2003, 11). This enables investigations into ongoing practice.

## Practical Epistemology Analysis

An analysis method is needed to investigate meaning-making in the improvisation of aesthetic events in school. Here we turn to a method called Practical Epistemology Analysis (PEA), which has been and still is used to analyse learning and meaning-making processes in ongoing encounters in which individuals and the environment transact. PEA facilitates an analysis of meaning-making in situ, rather than assessing students in pre- and post-tests. With PEA it is possible to analyse the “direction that meaning-making takes as a result of situated transactions” (Maivorsdotter and Quennerstedt 2012, 6).

PEA builds on a pragmatist perspective on epistemology and on Dewey’s theory of transaction, as described above. It also draws on Dewey’s principles of continuity and change (1938). These lead us to accept that human beings use previous experiences in new encounters, whereby these re-actualised experiences are subject to change. The emerging meaning-making is visible in the consequences of the actions and in the ways recalled experiences undergo change. Furthermore, it uses Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of language game that appears in his later works (1953/1992 and 1969/1992), which underlines that the meaning of language is found in its contextualised use, in practice (for further descriptions of PEA epistemology and ontology, see Wickman and Östman 2002; Öhman and Östman 2007).

PEA is a strictly empirical method in which only observed actions are subject to analysis. For this reason, analyses are conducted on video recordings of students’ improvisation activities in class. The methodology has been developed by the research group *Studies of Meaning making in Educational Discourses* (SMED) (see e.g. Wickman and Östman 2002; Östman and Öhman 2010) and has been applied to a variety of empirical material, such as

video recordings of students' and teachers' interactions in science education (Lidar et al. 2006), young children's outdoor activities (Klaar and Öhman 2012) and recorded classroom discussions in science education (Rudsberg, Öhman and Östman 2013). In this article, PEA has been adapted for the analysis of meaning-making in aesthetic events that emerges in the context of students' musical improvisations.

### Analytical concepts of PEA used in the aesthetic event

The following analytical concepts are central to a PEA: *purpose*, *encounter*, *stand fast*, *gap*, *relation* and *re-actualisation* (Wickman and Östman 2002; Klaar and Öhman 2012; Rudsberg et al. 2013). These concepts are explained below. In this article a PEA perspective is combined with the three integrated phases of the aesthetic event (see Table 1).

### Inception phase

In the "inception phase", the process starts with the task given by the teacher, which functions as the students' common purpose, or their end-in-view. This purpose opens up a *gap* between what is immediately intelligible, what *stands fast*, i.e. what the students already know and hence accept without question, and what they not yet know and need to figure out in the current situation. In the following socio-musical and material *encounters* the students interact with improvised sounds and movements, their peers, their teachers, the material aspects of the room and the musical instruments. In these encounters, the participants' actions call for new actions, such as responding to the music played with improvised movements – "saying yes" and agreeing by imitating – making a musical utterance– responding to a musical utterance– rejecting by not responding etc. Hence, new *gaps* emerge. In order for the interaction to

proceed, these gaps need to be filled with new actions (Rudsberg et al. 2013). These actions relate to the perceived common purpose, or the end-in-view. In the vignettes that are used as illustrations of the perspective suggested in this article, the specific ends-in-view are: (a) to improvise movements to music and (b) to improvise music as an illustration of a story.

## Development phase

In the “development phase”, the *gap* becomes visible between that which *stands fast* and that which challenges the students’ habitual actions. These challenges are observable tension, anticipation and/or hesitation to take a decision to improvise. In order to fill the gap, a *relation* needs to be created between what the students already know, that which stands fast, and the gap that is opened by the intention to fulfil the purpose of the activity at hand. The desirable end-in-view, the improvising purpose, initiates an inquiry process that includes *recalling* previous experiences and anticipating how to *re-actualise* them. Previous experiences can vary, e.g. musicological facts, from long ago, or recent situations (Rudsberg et al. 2013).

## Fulfilment phase

In a successful “fulfilment phase”, a *relation* is created between what stands fast and the current situation. This is done by *recalling* previous experiences and using anticipation and imaginative capabilities to *re-actualise* the previous experiences in the current situation. A recalled experience that is re-actualised in a new situation gains new meaning, because no situation is exactly the same as a previous one. This means that what stands fast in one situation is subject to change in another. This is a process through which music students’

comprehension of music, their own capabilities, their bodies and improvisation becomes more diverse.

It should be noted that the phases of the aesthetic event are analytical tools; the aesthetic event is a unified whole in which these phases are experienced as integrated.

Inception	Development	Fulfilment
The teacher creates a task that becomes the common <i>purpose</i> of the activity.	What <i>stands fast</i> becomes visible because the students act without questioning.	The students <i>re-actualise</i> a previous experience in the current situation.
A <i>gap</i> is opened by the purpose between what the students already know and what they do not know.	Tensions between anticipation and hesitation makes visible what <i>challenges</i> the students' habitual actions.	A <i>relation</i> is then created between what is recalled (and hence stands fast) and the current situation.
The students engage in musical - social - material <i>encounters</i> .	The students start an inquiry, <i>recall</i> previous experiences and anticipate and imagine the next step; how to re-actualise these.	The gap is successfully bridged and as a consequence <i>meaning</i> emerges.

Table 1. The three integrated phases of an aesthetic event in students' improvisations.

## Vignettes to illustrate a PEA of meaning-making in improvisation

In what follows we draw on two video recordings of improvisation activities in a music class and analyse them through a PEA perspective. The recordings are from a larger research project that was conducted with nine to ten-year-old pupils from year four in two Swedish primary schools. The teachers conducted music lessons with free improvisation, where the pupils encountered music

improvisation activities in differing ways. In total twelve recordings were transcribed and analysed. From this rich material, episodes were discerned in which the pupils' observable actions displayed all three phases in an aesthetic event. These aesthetic events were selected for detailed analysis. The following vignettes display two of them.

Free improvisation in this context means non-idiomatic, non-genre specific improvisation with no specific preconceived outcomes, where the teacher provides some frames in order to structure the pupils' improvisation activities, but where the pupils themselves direct the improvisations within the frames they choose. Initially, the improvisation activities focus on improvising movements to music in various ways and do not include playing any musical instruments. Later on, rhythmical/percussion instruments are added, together with ensemble instruments like keyboard/piano, guitar and drums. From the beginning and throughout the project the teachers emphasise that there are no "right" or "wrong" in these improvisation activities and the pupils are instructed to affirm each other's initiatives and not be judgemental. In the first illustration, Sebastian, improvises movements in the moment recalling and re-actualising specific disco dance moves. In the second illustration, Hanna and Mia collaboratively improvise music on the piano as a sonic illustration of a story they have made up themselves. These two vignettes have been selected because they differ in three main ways: (i) the use of recorded music to improvise movements vs. pupils improvising on the piano, (ii) communication in a group vs. communication between two pupils and (iii) the use of clichés vs. the invention of new music.

## Sebastian and the disco moves

The lesson started with exercises aimed at enhancing attentiveness to one another, listening with both body and mind and responding and saying “yes” to each other’s initiatives. At first, the pupils walked criss-cross in an attempt to find a joint pulse. Individual initiatives to start and stop walking were then encouraged by the teacher. After a couple of minutes, the teacher introduced music with a steady fast beat, 120 BPM (Norwegian Mood by Groupa on the album Fjalar) and asked the class to follow the timing of the music and add a *different* way of walking. After one minute the teacher asked them to *add more body movements*. As the pupils did not respond to this request, their ways of walking and moving did not change. In the first 8 minutes of the lesson Sebastian, had not taken any initiatives to stop/start walking, improvise different ways of walking, or introduce new movements. However, he had participated with, followed and imitated his peers.

The aesthetic event that is used as an example is as follows: After a short break the teacher again asked the pupils to *focus on improvising movements more than on walking in time* and introduced new music, this time a typical disco tune from the 1970s with a strongly emphasised beat. The following table (Table 2) displays observations of the class in the left-hand column and the Practical Epistemology Analysis in the right.

Observations	Practical Epistemology Analysis
The teacher starts some new music, this time a typical disco/dance tune from the 1970s with a strongly emphasised beat. When the music starts the teacher says: Now you can just walk around a bit first. In the usual way first, and then go ahead and do... some ... more movement...than walking.	The new music together with the perceived purpose to improvise different movements create a new <i>gap</i> . What <i>stands fast</i> for Sebastian in this situation is walking in criss-cross in the classroom and walking in time with the music.

<p>When the music plays all the pupils immediately start walking. They walk in time to the music, at first in the circle but then in criss-cross.</p>	
<p>The children take turns at improvising movements, all but one, Sebastian, who doesn't take any initiatives to improvise. The other pupils improvise different movements that now are much more energetic, imaginative and playful; enacting for instance animals like a rabbit and an elephant. Sebastian actively participates throughout the activity. He observes, pays close attention to his peers, listens to the music and follows and imitates his peers smiling and obviously enjoying the activities.</p>	<p>In this <i>musical and social encounter</i>, Sebastian and the other pupils transact with the music played and with one another.              It is observable how actions call for actions, i.e. improvised movements call for imitations. Sebastian imitates his peers' movements without hesitation, without questioning, it <i>stands fast</i> to him how to act in this situation              However, the <i>gap</i> lingers, since Sebastian as yet has not improvised any movements.</p>
<p>After two minutes with improvisations and imitations of movements to this disco tune Sebastian now takes an observable improvisation initiative for the very first time in this lesson, ten minutes into the lesson. He suddenly stops walking, stands still for a few seconds and then starts to make moves similar to disco dance moves á la John Travolta. First standing on the spot, he puts his left hand on his left hip and swings his right arm up and down, to and from the left hip, and then starts to walk very energetically in time and with continuous movements. His moves evoke utterances of delight from his classmates: one girl excitedly exclaims - "Wow!" Sebastian is totally engaged in the activity, his dance moves are energetic, he has a big smile on his face and an upright posture when improvising these moves.</p>	<p>Sebastian <i>recalls</i> a previous experience, the disco moves.              Sebastian <i>re-actualises</i> his previous experience, the disco moves, in the current situation.              By doing this he creates a <i>relation</i> between his recalled experience and the current situation.              This relation enables him to move on.              Sebastian has <i>bridged the gap</i> and <i>meaning making</i> has taken place.</p>

Table 2. A Practical Epistemology Analysis of Sebastian and the disco moves

This event follows the structure of an *aesthetic event*. A gap is opened in the inception phase by the common purpose of improvising different movements. In the development phase, that which stands fast and that which challenges the pupils becomes visible and the process of inquiry begins. Finally, in the fulfilment phase, the created relation between the recalled experience and

current situation occurs at the moment when Sebastian happily improvises his dance moves. In this re-actualisation he manages to bridge the gap. This implies a meaning-making experience for Sebastian that is one of growth and musical agency.

Sebastian appears to regard the need to improvise movements as a challenge. This creates a gap filled with tension, which is why it takes him so long to make the decision to improvise. Sebastian hesitates to improvise even though he obviously enjoys the activities. He listens attentively to the music and observes his classmates taking initiatives to stop and start walking, walk in different ways and with various gestures. He participates and imitates his peers without hesitation, which means that imitation does not challenge his habitual actions. For Sebastian imitation stands fast; it is not something to be questioned. But he does not take an initiative to improvise until ten minutes has passed. It is he who must decide whether, when and how he is going to improvise movements, and this is the gap that he needs to fill. Sebastian and his peers pay attention, observe and listen to each other's actions with their "whole bodies". Here, the pupils are engaged in a joint activity and participate in an embodied musical communication. In this communication they respond to each other's actions by imitating. By doing this they accept and affirm each other's improvisations. That they accept and affirm their peers' actions shows that they are aware of the social and moral norms that are privileged in this particular moment.

Sebastian needs time to make the decision to improvise. It takes time for his idea to mature so that he can create a relation that will bridge the gap and turn this situation into a meaning-making aesthetic event. When he finally decides to improvise it is a result of the process of recalling, anticipating and imagining the disco moves, thus adapting his previous experience to the

present moment. This is an act of re-actualisation. Exactly which previous experience he will recall is not clear. Hence, imagination is the capability that enables him to recall an experience and relate it in-action to the current situation. This is how we understand that he is actually imagining something. The task requires that he does not imitate a peer, but rather anticipates and imagines something that he can recall and re-actualise. He finally manages to fill the gap by creating a relation between his previous experience of the disco moves and the situation at hand. Finally, Sebastian is satisfied with how the end-in-view is reached. This becomes obvious through his body posture and facial expressions. For him, this has been *an* experience. Hence, as contended by Dewey, imagination plays a significant role in the meaning-making process.

So far, the emphasis has primarily been on the process of meaning-making, on the *how*. Sebastian creates meaning in this situation by recalling the disco moves in combination with the music played, which correlates with the *continuity* aspect. By re-actualising these moves in this specific context in the music class with his teacher and peers, they gain new meaning in relation to their function in the encounter, which correlates with the *change* aspect. When re-actualising the moves, Sebastian contributes to the improvisation activity by bringing something new to the class, namely a cliché with certain recognisable dance moves that are appreciated by his peers. Sebastian's meaning-making, the *what*, is constituted by the relation between what stands fast for him and what is experienced in the current situation. Sebastian manages to take a decision to improvise and decides what to do and when to do it in accordance with the common purpose, the end-in-view. This implies that he experiences himself as capable of acting in this musical improvisation situation, being in charge and taking ownership of his actions, which can be described as an experience of musical agency. In his improvisation of the dance moves he makes use of a cliché. The way he now seems to understand improvisation

includes making use of clichés, which could be said to reflect a *cognitive* aspect of musical meaning. In the fulfilment phase, Sebastian expresses joy in the freedom of improvising body moves to music, which reflects an *embodied* aspect of musical meaning. Finally, an *ethical* aspect of musical meaning is reflected when he accepts and affirms his peers' improvised movements and imitates them. Hence, Sebastian's comprehension of *what* improvisation can be about and *how* it can be conducted is extended in this transactional process when he re-actualises the disco moves.

This meaning-making experience implies that Sebastian has exceeded his repertoire of possible accessible actions in music improvisation. He has learned that by recalling and re-actualising a previous experience he is able to adapt and adjust his actions to musical improvisation in a way that is satisfying for him and for his peers. With this extended repertoire he now has tools for further development in other situations of musical improvisation and creativity.

## Musical communication with Hanna and Mia on the piano

In another music class, also with pupils aged 9-10 years, the teacher introduced an improvisation activity. The children were asked to work in pairs or in small groups to make up a story together and then illustrate it by improvising on musical instruments of their own choice from those available in the classroom. Finally, in turn, they performed their improvisations in front of the teacher and their peers. The teacher asked the pupils to think of their improvisations as conversations. First, they were given time to make up their story, select instruments and explore ways of improvising musical illustrations of their stories. After eight minutes they began to perform their improvisations; each pupil taking it in turn to perform and listen to each other's stories and music. Two girls, Hanna and Mia, were just about to begin and had decided to

improvise on the piano. Hanna sat at the right-hand side of the piano and Mia at the left.

The analysis of this improvisation is presented in Table 3 and has also been transcribed (Figure 1). In Table 3, time is specified in the left-hand column so as to correlate with the time specified in the score. This vignette differs from the previous one, in that new gaps emerge when the players act on each other's actions.

Hanna narrates their story whilst sitting on a revolving chair, swinging from side to side: “*We climb up a tree ... or we are up in a tree. And then ... (hesitates) we play and so on (spins her wrists around to illustrate the playing). Then we climb down from the tree - and I happen to injure Mia (Mia giggles). Then we get angry with one another and then we climb up the tree again. Up in the tree Mia pushes me (Hanna chuckles a bit) so I fall down from the tree. But in the end, we make up and are good friends again.*” The girls look at one another and laugh and then turn to the piano and Hanna, facing Mia, says: “*Shall we start?*”

<b>Observations</b> and comments to help readers connect the observations to the story The time stated correlates with time in the score.	<b>Practical Epistemology Analysis</b>
3:12': Their musical improvisation commences with Mia playing a tone cluster with both hands, first in the deep bass. She then corrects herself and says “No!” and plays a tone cluster in the treble. (Mia corrects herself because according to the story they are playing up in the tree from the beginning.) Hanna turns to Mia and looks at her with an intense gaze. She smiles in eager anticipation, but looks stern/tense at the same time.	The initiating <i>gap</i> is created by the common purpose to illustrate their story by improvising music. Mia's first action creates a new <i>gap</i> , as it doesn't correlate with their story. In her second action, she <i>recalls</i> experiences and knowledge of pitch and how the piano is constructed in relation to “high” and “low” notes; something that <i>stands fast</i> for her. When she <i>re-actualises</i> this previous experience/knowledge and manages to create

	a <i>relation</i> between her recalled experience and the current situation, the gap is bridged.
3:14': Hanna plays random, descending notes in the treble also using both hands but without looking at the keyboard, she keeps looking at Mia. They then both play random notes and tone clusters in a descending movement. There is no particularly recognisable melody, rhythm or harmony here. (This is where they start to climb down the tree.)	Hanna responds and acts on Mia's actions in this new emerging <i>gap</i> to illustrate climbing down the tree. For Hanna too, knowledge of pitch and how the piano is constructed in relation to "high" and "low" notes, <i>stands fast</i> . When recalling this knowledge, she <i>re-actualises</i> it, creates a <i>relation</i> and bridges the gap.
Mia pulls her fingers over the keyboard from the treble towards the bass trying to perform a glissando, but she doesn't put enough pressure on so her fingers merely slide on top of the keys. (This is the moment when Mia is injured and they get angry with one another.)	A new <i>gap</i> emerges when Mia is to illustrate the moment she is injured. Mia now <i>recalls</i> glissando as an option of musical expression. She <i>re-actualises</i> this knowledge but doesn't fully manage to bridge the gap, because she is not able to perform the glissando. The knowledge of glissando <i>stands fast</i> , but the ability to perform it has yet to be realised.
They both stop playing, look at the keyboard and there's a moment of silence, a short pause. Mia searches the keyboard for a moment. 3:20' Mia hits a note in the bass, F3. Then she continues to play using her right-hand fingers 2-3-4-3-4 and it develops in to an ascending scale: F3-G3-A3-B3-C4. (They start climbing up the tree again.)	This moment of silence and searching the keyboard can indicate uncertainty how to continue; it is another emerging <i>gap</i> . Mia <i>recalls</i> previous experiences of playing scales on the piano, which obviously <i>stands fast</i> to her because she uses all her fingers and not just her index finger. She <i>re-actualises</i> these previous experiences of playing scales in this situation, creates a <i>relation</i> and bridges the gap.
Hanna looks at Mia, smiles almost triumphantly, and without looking at the keyboard but constantly looking at Mia hits a C7, with a very short, stressed touch, like a staccato. (This indicates that they are once again up in the tree.)	Mia's ascending scale opens a <i>gap</i> for Hanna to fill. Hanna responds to Mia's ascending scale, acts on Mia's actions and <i>recalls</i> emotions in previous experiences and <i>re-actualises</i> these in this musically and bodily expressive play and action. The <i>gap</i> is bridged by the relation that is created.
3:27': Again, Mia tries to play a glissando. Her	The <i>gap</i> of the glissando seems to linger but

<p>ascending glissando is again silent, but she finishes it off with a forceful C<sub>4</sub> before playing a sounding descending glissando. (This indicates the moment when Mia pushes Hanna down from the tree.)</p>	<p>is then eventually bridged in the descending glissando as Mia <i>recalls</i> the previous experience of playing glissando and <i>re-actualises</i> it in this situation by applying more pressure. This <i>relation</i> bridges the gap.</p>
<p>3:32': Mia hits a forceful C<sub>2</sub> but uses two fingers so B<sub>1</sub> is also heard. She looks at Hanna and keeps her fingers on the keys, the notes sound for three seconds. Hanna looks at Mia and plays an A<sub>3</sub> without looking at the keyboard, she keeps her eyes on Mia. Mia still keeps her fingers on the key but hits the B<sub>1</sub> again. She then looks up at Hanna. Hanna plays a G<sub>4</sub> and the notes F<sub>4</sub> and E<sub>4</sub> sound simultaneously. She looks a bit hesitant but still smiles at Mia. Then Mia plays a chord with both her hands but lets go of the left hand's notes at once, so the one note sounding is an A<sub>3</sub>. She casts a quick glance at Hanna. (This part of the story indicates that Mia hits the ground.)</p>	<p>Here a new <i>gap</i> has emerged; hesitancy and uncertain actions are evidence of this. The players <i>recall</i> experiences of conversations and private talks and <i>re-actualise</i> these experiences in their improvised play and actions, glances and facial expressions. They have managed to create a <i>relation</i> between recalled experiences and the current situation,</p>
<p>3:41': Hanna steadily watches the keyboard and plays the five first notes of an ascending A minor scale starting on A<sub>3</sub>. She plays in a steady beat with equal length of the notes, using only her index finger.</p>	<p>A new <i>gap</i> is visible as Hanna now watches the keyboard when playing the scale. Scales as a musical concept <i>stand fast</i> for her. She <i>recalls</i> and <i>re-actualises</i> previous experiences of scales, even though she might not have played them on the piano before and through this <i>relation</i> manages to bridge the gap.</p>
<p>Mia suddenly breaks in and continues the melody that Hanna has introduced and plays the notes D<sub>4</sub>-E<sub>4</sub> rhythmically and accurately in time with Hanna's tempo. (They are starting to make up again.)</p>	<p>Hanna's five notes in A minor open a <i>gap</i> for Mia. Mia seems to recognise a melody, <i>recalls</i> a previous musical experience, and quickly fills in the missing notes, thereby <i>re-actualising</i> the previous experience, creating a <i>relation</i> and bridging the <i>gap</i>.</p>
<p>3:45': Hanna responds with an expressive heavily stressed C<sub>7</sub>, much like an exclamation mark, and looks at Mia with an intense, firm and decided gaze. She then plays a seemingly random</p>	<p>Mia's actions create a new <i>gap</i> for Hanna. She <i>responds</i> to Mia's actions and <i>recalls</i> a previous emotional experience, which she <i>re-actualises</i> expressively in musical play, facial</p>

<p>descending melody in marcato with a slight accelerando, using only her index finger: B7-A7-F7-D7-E7, whilst constantly looking very intensely at Mia and not at the keyboard. The improvisation ends and the two girls burst out laughing. (They have finally made up and are good friends again.)</p>	<p>expressions and body gestures. This <i>re-actualisation</i> creates the <i>relation</i> between her recalled experience and the current situation.</p>
---	---

Table 3. Practical epistemology analysis of Hanna's and Mia's improvisation at the piano

### Hanna and Mia's Improvisation

Durata: 36 sec

The musical score is divided into three systems, each with a time signature and a tempo marking:

- System 1:** Time signature 3:12, tempo ♩ = 104. Hanna's part (treble clef) consists of a series of 'x' marks above the staff, indicating a descending melody. Mia's part (bass clef) starts with a whole note chord, followed by a series of 'x' marks and a 'silent gliss.' instruction. A dynamic marking of *ff* is present at the end of the system.
- System 2:** Time signature 3:27, tempo ♩ = 152. Hanna's part has a whole note chord. Mia's part features a 'silent gliss.' instruction, followed by a series of notes and a dynamic marking of *gub* (grace notes) indicated by a dashed line.
- System 3:** Time signature 3:41, tempo ♩ = 160. Hanna's part starts with a series of notes, followed by a dynamic marking of *p*. Mia's part has a whole note chord. The system ends with a time signature of 3:45, tempo ♩ = 112, and an *accel.* marking.

Figure 1. Hanna's and Mia's improvisation score

Hanna and Mia are fully engaged in the task of illustrating their story through improvised music and transact in material, musical and social encounters with the environment. They encounter the piano and experience the resistance of

the keys and the differing pressures they have to use to get the various dynamics and musical expressions they want. Their musical encounters occur in relation to the sounding properties of the piano: to the sounds-timbre-chords-notes-melodies-rhythms they themselves create on the basis of moment-to-moment decision-making. They interact (transact) in social encounters as collaborators in improvisation, involved in a musical dialogue in which they listen and respond to one another and act upon each other's actions. It is an act of musical communication and conversation. Every action opens a gap that the other needs to fill by responding in some way, in action-on-action sequences. In these encounters, the girls pay close attention to one another and to the sounds that are improvised.

Hanna and Mia manage to bridge the overarching *gap* opened by the perceived common purpose, the end-in-view by improvising sounds and music to illustrate their own story. In this, they manage to create *relations* between recalled previous experiences, knowledge and memories and the current situation. These relations are constituted by several *re-actualisations* of previous experiences that the girls *recall* and utilise in this new situation. In this process, the story serves as a structuring frame that offers both possibilities and limitations to imagine and anticipate possible musical actions to illustrate the story. Hanna and Mia anticipate a desired end-in-view and by doing so are able to improvise their story musically. Here, imagination, and especially musical imagination, expressed as instant "thinking-in-action" plays an important role. Climbing up and down trees is an example of a shared experience that they imagine musically and illustrate on the piano by improvising ascending and descending tone clusters and glissandos in the treble and bass.

This musical improvisation experience comes to a satisfying close for the girls, as they, through their actions-on-actions in which they attentively listen,

imagine, respond and communicate, create the necessary relations, bridge the gaps and move on in the situation. This meaning-making can be described in terms of embodied, cognitive and ethical aspects of musical meaning. The embodied aspect is observable in the enactment of their story, which they imagine musically and play out on the piano. The cognitive aspect can be observed in their use of previous knowledge and experiences in order to improvise music, such as knowledge of scales and glissando, the construction of the piano and conversation as a form of improvisation. Ethical aspects of musical meaning imply affirming, responding and saying “yes” to each other’s improvisational actions, without evaluating them. They have learned that they can re-actualise their previous experiences and use their imaginations to collaboratively improvise a musical conversation on the piano. Hence, this is an aesthetic experience that is of particular value from an educational point of view, in that it promotes and affirms a capability to improvise music. In other words, it is instrumental in the development of musical agency.

## Conclusions and Discussion

In this article we have shown that a combination of Dewey’s transactional perspective and Practical Epistemology Analysis can facilitate an understanding and analysis of aesthetic events of improvisation, thereby enabling observations of the improvisation process and aspects of meaning-making. PEA provides a definition of meaning-making as a process of re-actualisation, which implies that recalled experiences are successfully related to the present situation. In this process, both the individual who experiences and that which is experienced are subject to change. This definition of meaning-making helps us to understand *how* meaning is created and *what* meaning consists of. In PEA, the pupils’ previous experiences and the present situation

are considered in order to understand the meaning-making process. This meaning-making process reflects the continuity and change aspects of Dewey's transactional perspective.

## The value of improvisation

Previous research has claimed that activities in music classrooms can lead to fulfilling and rewarding meaning-making experiences (e.g. Väkevä 2003, 2012; Westerlund 2002; 2003; 2004; Määttänen 2003; 2010). In illustrating the use of PEA, we have described and demonstrated a theoretical perspective and a method that makes it possible to analyse the process of such an experience, i.e. *how* it comes about in improvisation activities. We have also shown what constitutes such an experience, namely the specific, educationally valuable aspects of meaning-making that are illuminated, enabled and emphasised in this process. These aspects of meaning-making and the specific aesthetic quality of the experience are not measurable, in that they cannot easily be related to syllabi knowledge requirements and therefore often go unnoticed. We maintain that these important qualities in music education need to be recognised and enhanced. If this is not done they may be lost altogether, which would surrender our practice to an instrumentalist view of music education in which everything has to be measured.

When actions based on previous experiences are introduced into a new context they are inevitably changed, transformed and gain new meaning. That Sebastian can re-actualise his previous experience of the disco dance moves in the new situation implies that he has created a relation that bridges the gap opened by the perceived common purpose: to come up with different ways of moving to music. The girls who improvise on the piano also recall, anticipate, imagine and re-actualise previous experiences of playing together up in a tree,

playing the piano, musical concepts like scales, dynamics and musical articulations like glissando, staccato and marcato, even though they may not be acquainted with those particular musical terms. As a consequence of their successfully created relation between previous experience and the situation in hand, the pupils experience personal and musical agency in these aesthetic events. This in turn extends the pupils' repertoire of possible actions in musical improvisation, which implies that their knowledge is furthered in several ways and that they now have tools that help them to deal with new situations of free group improvisation.

The point that is argued here is that even if children are not experienced instrumentalists or improvisers, they can create meaning through their improvised music by re-actualising previous experiences in situations where they are attentive, communicative and can use their imagination. In the process of experiencing, i.e. their doings and undergoings, they learn something about themselves and what they are capable of. In that they experience personal and musical agency. They also learn something about their peers and about music. This learning is connected to the meaning-making process in which they undergo the consequences of their actions, i.e. the point where the principles of continuity and change "intercept and unite" (Dewey 1938, 44). At the moment when their actions are successfully linked to the perceived common purpose of improvising, the pupils enter a process of exploration that, when it reaches a satisfying close, leads to the creation of the particular meaning of this particular improvisation. Thus, as Westerlund (2003) argues, the pupils undergo change and, in turn, change their musical environment.

The analyses of the vignettes used in this article illustrate how meaning-making takes place both at an individual and a social level. The individual level of meaning-making implies that an individual recalls previous experiences and

relates them to the current situation, i.e. the pupil re-actualises his/her experiences. The social level of meaning-making implies that action-on-action emerges in the class as a result of the communications between the pupils and between the teacher and the pupils. These actions offer possibilities and also limitations, i.e. frames that help to structure the event. Improvising different movements to a certain tune, in this case a disco/pop-tune from the 1970s or creating a story and illustrating it in a musical improvisation/conversation are examples of such structural frames.

Previous research, as mentioned earlier, has shown that improvisation fosters the development of certain musical competences, creativity, critical thinking and social capabilities. To these capabilities we can now add new knowledge about meaning-making processes in improvisation. In these processes, pupils' previous knowledge and experiences are recalled and, when they are re-actualised, i.e. when a relation is created between what was previously known and the current situation, they create meaning of this particular situation. This meaning can be described in terms of *embodied*, *cognitive* and *ethical* aspects of musical meaning. In the improvisation activities the pupils learn how to act when improvising movements and/or music to illustrate a story. Meaning is created in action, in practice, in the actual moment when they make their improvised movements and music, which implies an *embodied* aspect of musical meaning-making. The pupils use clichés, for instance the disco moves and the scales, and make use of their imaginative capabilities to enact different movements and illustrations of the story. Hanna's and Mia's collaborative improvisation is a form of musical conversation. Improvisation as everyday conversation and dialogue has been discussed in previous research, for instance by Sawyer (e.g. 2003/2010) and Kanellopoulos (2007a). This musical conversation reflects their "thinking-in-action" (Kanellopoulos 2000, 221) which implies "thinking musically in the

moment of performance” (ibid., 238). This implies a *cognitive* aspect of musical meaning, namely the pupils understand how to use tools like clichés, imagination and/or conversation in an improvisation. The *ethical* aspect of meaning-making emerges when the pupils accept, affirm, respond to and support each other’s movements and initiatives without evaluating or questioning them. Hence, the pupils learn “in action” about ethical and social norms and values.

In our view, the transactional perspective on aesthetic experience offers a response to Rolle’s (2010) claim that the specificity of the aesthetic is not fully explained in Dewey’s notion of aesthetic experience. We are critical of Rolle’s concept of aesthetic perception, because it limits and narrows the concept of aesthetic experience and does not include communication and imagination. We suggest that the artistic structure of the aesthetic event describes what Dewey calls the “work of art”; the active and experienced process that in our study is observed in musical doings and undergoings. In the vignettes used in this article the pupils are observed to be perceptive, communicative and imaginative, in that they pay attention, listen and observe and are engaged in the in-and-out going of perception (Dewey 1934). Communication between peers and between peers and teacher proceeds throughout these aesthetic events and is observed when they are involved collaboratively in creating improvised actions and music. This could be taken to rather support the use of the term aesthetic communication suggested by Thorgersen (2018). We have also seen that imagination plays a significant role when recalling previous experiences and anticipating how to re-actualise them to bridge a gap in improvising movements and in illustrating a story musically. As we see it, perception together with communication and imagination plays an important role in the meaning-making improvisation event.

Varkøy (2014), Rolle (2014) and also Eisner (2004) emphasise the importance of having transforming and existential experiences in (music) education. A transactional perspective makes it possible to observe how musical experience as *an* experience can induce growth and hence transform “habitual ways of thinking, feeling and perceiving” (Jackson 1998, xiv).

When conducting PEA it is not possible to determine which instances constitute aesthetic events with an observable purpose and gap during the actual recording. Entire sequences therefore need to be recorded, which means that a rich material needs to be gathered. Ethical considerations when video recording young people in school, including obtaining the consent of participants and their parents/caregivers if they are below 15 years of age, is a requirement that is not unique to PEA, but nevertheless needs to be considered at all times when people participate in studies in which video recording is used for documentation.

## Implications

We maintain that the knowledge that is created by using the transactional perspective can contribute to both a theoretical and practice-based discussion about improvisation that has implications for further research and for improvisation in general music education. We suggest that music teachers in their pedagogical considerations when planning and conducting improvisation activities should consider the relevance of previous experience, the *process* (recalling and re-actualising previous experiences in aesthetic events), *content* (the direction that meaning-making takes towards personal and musical agency and as embodied, cognitive and ethical aspects of musical meaning) and time. Sebastian, for example, needed *time* for his idea to mature. Rushing through

improvisational activities could imply that some students will never experience agency in improvisation.

Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience, and specifically of an experience, provides concepts that enable us to apprehend the educative qualities of improvisation experiences and highlight their value for education. The aesthetic event makes the integrated artistic structure of a fulfilling experience visible. Combining a practical epistemology analysis with Dewey's concept aesthetic event clarifies how an improvisation experience can develop in a direction towards musical agency and meaning-making at both an individual and a social level. It also makes evident that in this process, cognitive, embodied and ethical aspects of musical meaning-making are enhanced. The transactional perspective facilitates an in-depth and fuller comprehension of the educational and musical value of incorporating improvisation in music education.

## References

- Bailey, Derek. 1992. *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*. New York: Da Capo Press.
- Barrett, Margaret, S. 2006. "Inventing Songs, Inventing Worlds: The 'Genesis' of Creative Thought and Activity in Young Children's Lives". *International Journal of Early Years Education* 14 (3): 201–220.
- Beegle, Amy C. 2010. "A Classroom-Based Study of Small-Group Planned Improvisation with Fifth-Grade Children". *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 58 (3): 219–239.

- Biesta, Gert and Nicholas C. Burbules. 2003. *Pragmatism and Educational Research*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bowman, Wayne D. and Ana Lucia Frega. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Breault, Donna A. and Rick Breault. 2014. *Experiencing Dewey. Insights for Today's Classroom*. New York: Kappa Delta Pi.
- Brophy, Timothy S. 2005. "A Longitudinal Study of Selected Characteristics of Children's Melodic Improvisations". *Journal of Research in Music Education* 53 (2): 120–133.
- Burnard, Pamela. 2000a. "Examining Experiential Differences Between Improvisation and Composition in Children's Music-Making". *British Journal of Music Education* 17(3): 227–245.
- Burnard, Pamela. 2000b. "How Children Ascribe Meaning to Improvisation and Composition: Rethinking Pedagogy in Music Education". *Music Education Research* 2 (1): 7–23.
- Burnard, Pamela. 2002. "Investigating children's meaning-making and the emergence of musical interaction in group improvisation". *British Journal of Music Education* 19 (2): 157–172.
- Burnard, Pamela. 2015. "Kreativ musikundervisning för barn i förskolan och grundskolan." In *Musik och lärande i barnets värld* [Creative music

education to children in preschool and elementary school. In *Music and Learning in the Child's World*], edited by Ylva Hofvander Trulsson and Anna Houmann. Translated by Nils-Martin Lundsgård. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Campbell, Patricia, S. 1998. *Songs in Their Heads. Music and its meaning in children's lives*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, Eric, F. 2005/2011. *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*. New York: Oxford University Press

Coulson, Andrea. N. and Brigid M. Burke. 2013. "Creativity in the Elementary Music Classroom: A Study of Students' Perceptions". *International Journal of Music Education* 31 (4): 428–441.

Danielsson, Annika. 2012. "*Musik oss emellan. Identitetsdimensioner i ungdomars musikaliska deltagande.*" [Music Between Us. Identity Dimensions in Young People's Musical Participation]. Doctoral thesis, Örebro Studies in Music Education 6, Örebro Studies in Conditions of Democracy 8. Örebro University.

Daugherty, James F. 1996. "Why Music Matters: The Cognitive Personalism of Reimer and Elliott". In *Australian Journal of Music Education* 1996 (1): 29–37.

Dewey, John. 1916/2005. *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to The Philosophy of Education*. New York: Cosimo Inc.

Dewey, John. 1922/2005. *Människans natur och handlingsliv*. [Human Nature and Conduct]. Translated by Alf Ahlberg. Uddevalla: Daidalos

Dewey, John. 1958/2013. *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover Publications

Dewey, John. 1938/2015. *Experience and Education*. The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series. New York: Free Press

Dewey, John. 1934/2005. *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigree Books.

Dewey, John and Arthur F. Bentley. 1949/1991. "Knowing and the Known." In *The Later Works, 1925– 1953*, vol. 16: 1949–1952, edited by J. A. Boydston. Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press, 1–294.

Dewey, John. 1950. "Aesthetic Experience as a Primary Phase and as an Artistic Development". *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 9 (1): 56–58.

Eisner, Elliot W. 2004. "What Can Education Learn from the Arts About the Practice of Education?" *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 5 (4): 2–13.

Elliott, David. 1995. *Music matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*.

New York: Oxford University Press

Elliott, David, and Marissa Silverman. 2015. *Music Matters: A Philosophy of Music Education* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press

English, Andrea R. 2016. "John Dewey and the Role of the Teacher in a Globalized World: Imagination, Empathy, and "Third Voice"". *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48 (10): 1046–1064.

Espeland, Magne. 2007. "*Compositional Process as Discourse and Interaction*

*Study of Small Group Music Composition Processes in a School*

*Context*". Doctoral thesis. Stord/Haugesund University College.

Fagius, Gunnel. 2007. *Barn och sång – Om rösten, sångerna och vägen dit*.

[Children and Singing – On the Voice, the Songs and the Way to Get There]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Ferm Thorgersen, Cecilia and Olle Zandén. 2014. "Teaching for Learning or

Teaching for documentation? Music teachers' perspectives on a

Swedish curriculum reform". *British Journal of Music Education* 32

(1): 37–50.

Ferm Almqvist, Cecilia, John Vinge, Lauri Väkevä and Olle Zandén. 2016.

"Assessment as Learning in Music Education: The Risk of "Criteria

Compliance” Replacing “Learning” In the Scandinavian Countries”.

*Research Studies in Music Education* 39 (1): 3–18.

Garrison, Jim. 1995. “Deweyan Pragmatism and the Epistemology of Contemporary Social Constructivism”. *American Educational Research Journal* 32 (4) (Winter): 716-740.

Garrison, Jim. 2001. “An Introduction to Dewey’s Theory of Functional “Trans-action”: An Alternative Paradigm for Activity Theory.” *Mind Culture and Activity* 8 (4): 275–296.

Georgii-Hemming, Eva and Maria Westvall. 2010. “Music Education a Personal Matter? Examining the Current Discourses of Music Education in Sweden.” *British Journal of Music Education* 27 (1): 21–33.

Guilbault, Denise Marie. 2009. “The Effects of Harmonic Accompaniment on the Tonal Improvisations of Students in First through Sixth Grade”. *Journal of Research in Music Education* 57, no. 2: 81–91.

Hargreaves, David, Jonathan James Hargreaves, and Adrian C. North. 2012. “Imagination and Creativity in Music Listening”. In *Musical Imaginations. Multidisciplinary perspectives on creativity, performance, and perception*. Edited by David Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell and Raymond MacDonald. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hargreaves, David, Dorothy Miell, and Raymond MacDonald, editors. 2012.

*Musical Imaginations. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Creativity, Performance, and Perception.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hickey, Maud. 2009. "Can improvisation be 'taught'?": A call for free improvisation in our schools". In *International Journal of Music Education* 27 (4): 285–299.

Hickey, Maud and Peter Webster. 2001. "Creative Thinking in Music". *Music Educators Journal* 88 (1): 19–23.

Hofvander Trulsson, Ylva and Anna Houmann 2015. *Musik och lärande i barnets värld.* [Music and Learning in the Childs' World]. Lund: Studentlitteratur

Jackson, Philip. W. (1998). *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Karlsen, Sidsel. 2011. "Using Musical Agency as a Lens: Researching Music Education from the Angle of Experience". *Research Studies in Music Education* 33 (2): 107–121.

Kanellopoulos, Panagiotis. 2000. "A Study of Children's Understandings of their Musical Improvisations". Doctoral thesis. Reading: University of Reading.

Kanellopoulos, Panagiotis. 2007a. "Children's Early Reflection on Improvised Music-Making as the Wellspring of Musico-Philosophical Thinking." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 15 (2): 119–141.

Kanellopoulos, Panagiotis. 2007b. "Musical Improvisation as Action: An Arendtian Perspective". In *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education*, Electronic Article 6/3:

[http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Kanellopoulos6\\_3.pdf](http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Kanellopoulos6_3.pdf)

Klaar, Susanne and Johan Öhman. 2012. "Action with Friction: A Transactional Approach to Toddlers' Physical Meaning Making of Natural Phenomena and Processes in Preschool". *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 20 (3): 439–454.

Koutsoupidou, Theano and David J. Hargreaves. 2009. "An Experimental Study of The Effects of Improvisation on The Development of Children's Creative Thinking in Music". *Psychology of Music* 37 (3): 251–278.

Kratus, John. 1991. "Growing with Improvisation". *Music Educators Journal* 78 (4): 35–40.

Kratus, John. 1995. "A Developmental Approach for Teaching Music Improvisation". *International Journal of Music Education*. International Society for Music Education, 26 (1): 27–38.

Larsson, Christina and Eva Georgii-Hemming. 2018. "Improvisation in General Music Education. A literature review". *British Journal of Music Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026505171800013X>

Leddy, Tom. (2016). Dewey's Aesthetics. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/dewey-aesthetics/>. Retrieved February 28, 2017.

Lidar, Malena, Eva Lundqvist and Leif Östman. 2006. "Teaching and Learning in the Science Classroom. The Interplay Between Teachers' Epistemological Moves and Students' Practical Epistemology". *Science Education* 90:148–163.

MacDonald, Raymond. 2014. "We Are All Musical: Investigating Improvisation as Collaborative Creativity". In *Collaborative Thought and Practice in Music*. Edited by Margaret S. Barrett. London: Routledge

McPherson, Gary E. 2016. *The Child as Musician: A Handbook of Musical Development*. Edited by Gary E. McPherson, second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McPherson, Gary and Graham F. Welch, editors. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*. Volume 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maivorsdotter, Ninitha and Mikael Quennerstedt. 2012. "The Act of Running: A Practical Epistemology Analysis of Aesthetic Experience in Sport". *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 4 (3): 362–381.

Määttänen, Pentti. 2003. "Aesthetic Experience and Music Education". *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11 (1): 63–70.

Määttänen, Pentti. 2010. "Shusterman on Somatic Experience". *Action, Criticism and Theory for Music Education* 9 (1): 1–12.

Miell, Dorothy, Raymond MacDonald and David J. Hargreaves, editors. 2005. *Musical Communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

National Agency for Education. [Skolverket]. 2011. *Läroplan för grundskolan, förskoleklassen och fritidshemmet 2011*. [Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool Class and The Recreation Centre 2011]. [www.skolverket.se/publikationer](http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer)

National Agency for Education. [Skolverket]. 2011. *Musik i grundskolan. En nationell ämnesutvärdering i årskurs 6 och 9, Rapport 424*. [Music in the Compulsory School. National Evaluation of The Compulsory

School in 2013. Subject report].

<https://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=3498>

Nielsen, Frede, V. 1998. *Almen musikdidaktik*. [General Music Didactics].

Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.

Panaiotidi, Elvira. 2003. "What is Music? Aesthetic Experience Versus Musical Practice". *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11(1): 71–89.

Panaiotidi, Elvira. 2005. "The Nature of Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts in Music Education". In *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 13 (1): 37–75.

Quennerstedt, Mikael, Johan Öhman and Marie Öhman. 2011. "Investigating Learning in Physical Education– A Transactional Approach". *Sport Education and Society* 16 (2): 159–177.

Rabinovitch, Tal Chen, Ian Cross and Pamela Burnard. 2013. "Long-term Musical Group Interaction Has a Positive Influence on Empathy in Children". *Psychology of Music* 41 (4): 484–498.

Reimer, Bennett. 1970. *A Philosophy of Music Education*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Reimer, Bennett. 1989. *A Philosophy of Music Education*. (2nd ed.) New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.

- Reimer, Bennett. 2003. *A Philosophy of Music Education. Advancing the vision.* (3d ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Rolle, Christian. 2010. “Basic Questions of Music Education from an Aesthetic Point of View”. Paper presented at The Eight International Symposium on the Philosophy of Music Education at the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, Finland.
- Rolle, Christian. 2014. “Musikalisk bildning och estetisk erfarenhet”. In *Musik för alla. Filosofiska och didaktiska perspektiv på musik, bildning och samhälle.* [Musical Education and Aesthetic Experience. in Music for Everyone. Philosophical and Didactical Perspectives on Music, Education and Society] edited by Øivind Varkøy and Johan Söderman, Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Rudsberg, Karin, Johan Öhman and Leif Östman. 2013. “Analyzing Students’ Learning in Classroom Discussions about Socio-scientific Issues”. *Science Education* 97 (4): 594–620.
- Sawyer, Keith R. 2000. “Improvisation and the Creative Process: Dewey, Collingwood, and the Aesthetics of Spontaneity”. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (2): 149–161.

Sawyer, Keith R. 2003/2010. *Group Creativity. Music, Theater, Collaboration.*

New York: Routledge.

Shook, John R. and Joseph Margolis, editors. 2006. *A Companion to*

*Pragmatism.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Shusterman, Richard. 1997. "The End of Aesthetic Experience". In *The*

*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55:1. 29-41.

Shusterman, Richard. 2006. "Aesthetics." In *A Companion to Pragmatism*,

edited by John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sundin, Bertil. 2007. "Barns eget skapande". In *Barn och sång – Om rösten,*

*sångerna och vägen dit.* [Children's Own Creation. In Children and

Singing – On the Voice, the Songs and the Way to Get There] edited

by Gunnel Fagius. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Swanwick, Keith and June Tillman. 1986. "The Sequence of Musical

Development: A Study of Children's Composition". *British Journal*

*of Music Education* 3 (3): 305-339.

Thorgersen, Ketil. A. and Eva Alerby. 2005. "One Word to Rule Them? The

Word Aesthetics in Curricula for the Swedish Compulsory School".

*Utbildning och Demokrati* [Education and Democracy] 14 (1): 63-79.

Thorgersen, Ketil. 2014. "Outcomes-based Aesthetics? Reflections over

Aesthetic Communication and Outcomes-based Learning Based on a

Study of Six Syllabi”. *English teaching: Practice and Critique*, 13 (3):  
19–34.

Thorgersen, Ketil. 2018. “Estetik tack! Estetisk kommunikation och konsten att lära”. In *De estetiska ämnenas didaktik – Utmaningar, processer och protester*. [Aesthetics Please! Aesthetic Communication and the Art of Learning. In Didactic of the Aesthetic Subjects. Challenges, Processes and Protests] Stockholm University Press. Stockholm 2018.

Trulsson, Ylva Hofvander and Anna Houmann. 2015. *Musik och lärande i barnets värld*. [Music and Learning in the Child’s World], Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Uhrmacher, P. B.; Moroye, C. M. 2014. “Experience, Heightened Vitality and Aesthetic Engagement, or Why is the Stick Man Smiling?”. In *Experiencing Dewey - Insights for Today’s Classroom*, edited by Donna Adair Breault and Rick Breault. New York, Kappa Delta Pi.

Varkøy, Øivind. 2014. “Musikalisk erfarenhet som existentiell erfarenhet”. In *Musik för alla. Filosofiska och didaktiska perspektiv på musik, bildning och samhälle*, [Musical experience as existential experience. In Music for everyone. Philosophical and didactical perspectives on music, education and society.] edited by Øivind Varkøy and Johan Söderman. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Varkøy, Øivind and Johan Söderman, editors. 2014. *Musik för alla. Filosofiska och didaktiska perspektiv på musik, bildning och samhälle*. [Music for Everyone. Philosophical and Didactical Perspectives on Music, Education and Society.] Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Väkevä, Lauri. 2003. "Music Education as Critical Practice: A naturalist View". *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11 (2): 141–156.

Väkevä, Lauri. 2012. "Philosophy of Music Education as Art of Life: A Deweyan View". In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education* edited by Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucia Frega. New York: Oxford University Press

von Schantz, Ulrika, Ketil Thorgersen, and Anne Lidén, editors. 2018. *De estetiska ämnenas didaktik: Utmaningar, processer och protester*. [Didactic of the Aesthetic Subjects. Challenges, Processes and Protests] Stockholm: Stockholm University Press.

Wall, Michael, Patrick. 2018. "Improvising to Learn." In *Research Studies in Music Education*, 40 (1):117–135.

Wallerstedt, Cecilia, Pernilla Lagerlöf and Niklas Pramling, eds. 2014. *Lärande i musik. Barn och lärare i tongivande samspel*. [Learning in Music. Children and Teachers in Leading Interplay]. Malmö: Gleerups

- Wassrin, Maria. 2016. “*Towards Musicking in a Public Sphere. 1-3-year olds and music pedagogues negotiating a music didactic identity in a Swedish preschool*”. Doctoral thesis in Subject Learning and Teaching. Stockholm: Stockholm University.
- Westerlund, Heidi. 2002. *Bridging Experiences*. Doctoral Dissertation Studio Musica16, Helsinki: Sibelius Academy.
- Westerlund, Heidi. 2003. “Reconsidering Aesthetic Experience in Praxial Music Education”. *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 11 (1): 45–62.
- Westerlund, Heidi. 2004. “Dewey’s Holistic Notion of Experience as a Tool for Music Education”. In *Nordisk musikpedagogisk forskning Årbok 7* [Nordic Music Education Research, Yearbook 7]. Oslo: Norges Musikhøgskole NMH-publikasjoner. [Norwegian Academy of Music. Publications].
- Wickman, Per-Olof and Leif Östman. 2002. “Learning as Discourse Change: A Sociocultural Mechanism”. *Science Education* 86 (5): 601 – 623.
- Wiggins, Jackie and Magne I. Espeland. 2012. “Creating in Music Learning Contexts”. In *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*. Volume 1, edited by Gary McPherson and Graham F. Welch. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Wiggins, Jackie. 2016. "Musical Agency". In *The Child as Musician: A Handbook of Musical Development* edited by Gary E. McPherson, second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953/1992. *Filosofiska undersökningar*. [Philosophical Investigations] Stockholm: Thales.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1969/1992): *Om visshet*. [On Certainty] Stockholm: Thales.
- Whitcomb, Rachel. 2010. "Rhythmic Characteristics of Improvisational Drumming among Preschool Children". *Research and Issues in Music Education* 8 (1), article 3.
- Young, Susan. 2005. "Musical Communication Between Adults and Young Children". In *Musical Communication*. Edited by Dorothy Miell, Raymond MacDonald and David J. Hargreaves. Oxford University Press.
- Öhman, Johan and Leif Östman. 2007. "Continuity and Change in Moral Meaning-Making—A Transactional Approach". *Journal of Moral Education*, 36 (2): 151–168.
- Öhman, Johan. 2014. "Om didaktikens möjligheter – Ett pragmatiskt perspektiv". [On the Possibilities of Didactic—A Pragmatist

Perspective]. In *Utbildning och Demokrati* [Education and Democracy], 23 (3): 33–52.

Östman, Leif and Johan Öhman. 2010. “A Transactional Approach to Learning”. Paper presented at John Dewey Society, AERA Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado April 30–May 4, 2010.

## Acknowledgements

We would first of all like to thank the anonymous reviewers for very constructive and valuable comments and suggestions. We would also like to thank members of the research groups Studies of Meaning-making in Educational Discourses (SMED), Music and Human Beings at The School of Music, Theatre and Art at Örebro University and the research school UVD, Educational Sciences with Emphasis on Didactics, for their valuable comments. A special thanks goes to music educator Anders Ekman for translating the first author’s hand-written score into a digital one.

## About the Authors

**Christina Larsson** is a classical singer and singing pedagogue and currently a PhD candidate at The School of Music, Theatre and Art at Örebro University in Sweden. She has previously worked as music teacher in primary school and as educator for primary school and recreation centre teachers at the University of Stockholm. Her ongoing thesis is about improvisation in general music education in primary school year four. Her research interests focus children’s aesthetic experiences and meaning-making of improvisation and development of music teachers’ teaching and learning practices. Larsson is currently also co-editor of an

EJPAE: 01 2018 vol. 03

Larsson & Öhman; Music Improvisation as an Aesthetic Event

anthology *Expanding the space for improvisation pedagogy in music. A transdisciplinary approach*, which is due to be published by Routledge 2019.

**Johan Öhman** is professor of education at Örebro University's School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences and is one of the founders of the research group SMED (Studies of Meaning-making in Educational Discourses) and is head of the research school UVD (Educational Sciences with Emphasis on Didactics). His area of research is ethical and democratic perspectives on education, especially learning outcomes of student discussions, students' argumentation and teacher-student interactions. His work is based on John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and especially on Dewey's concept of transaction. In relation to this pragmatic perspective he has developed several different research methodologies which has been used in both empirical and theoretical studies. His work has been published in a number of international research papers, book chapters and books.