

Time flies: Temporal pacing and transitions in newly-formed music groups

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Disciplinary background A. Music psychology. In Western classical music, participation generally involves a preparation period, and a performance. Time constraints have been shown to affect behaviour during rehearsal (Kokotsaki, 2007) and shifts in focus observed as performance approaches, from verbal communication to nonverbal interactions (King & Gritten, 2018).

Disciplinary background B. Organisational science. The punctuated equilibrium model of team development (Gersick, 1991) predicts a change in behaviour at the calendar midpoint, regardless of the timeframe over which this unfolds. Later research suggests this provides a type of 'semistructure' (Okhuysen & Waller, 2002), which, along with familiarity, norms and goals, provides a framework for working on complex tasks.

Abstract

This research aims to explore the group development and interactions experienced by newly-formed music ensembles as they prepare for performance.

This study contributes to understanding of the role of time in the pacing and unfolding of activities in rehearsal series, using a mixed-methods approach including patterns of verbal interactions, interviews, and visual diagramming. Two newly-formed vocal quintets were studied over a three-month period. The study identified time-bracketed periods of rapid development and change, which were triggered by internal factors (interactions, feedback, new ideas) and external influences (deadlines, time constraints). Within this cultural context, the practice-based norms of Western classical music provided a source of structure and stability, whilst internal and external events were catalysts for change (Pennill & Breslin, 2021). These opposing tensions gave rise to a series of transition points and phases of development. The findings also revealed that non-conscious patterns of verbal interaction arose during the earliest interactions, became more complex to the mid-point of the rehearsal series, and then simplified as the group progressed towards their recital at the end of the study period. Qualitative data from interviews and visual diagramming with group members also supported a mid-point shift in group development. Together, these findings suggest a new, three-phase framework for small group collaboration.

The study contributes to research on emergent behaviour in newly-formed groups, providing further evidence to support the punctuated equilibrium theory as a dynamic, time-based model of group development. For music groups, it provides new insights into ways that group processes contribute to performance outcomes, and therefore better understanding of ways that rehearsal time can be better managed, and the transition points to be anticipated and managed. Finally, it contributes a novel combination of methods, drawn from music psychology and small group research.

Interdisciplinary implications. This study brings together two fields of research; small group dynamics and music participation. It highlights the value and importance of longitudinal research in understanding the evolving nature of collaboration in music ensemble rehearsal. Further research could extend the timeline into performance, and into different genres of small music groups. The use of the chosen suite of methods can be used to explore more types of interaction, for example when and how decisions are made. In particular, a focus on the emergence of leadership, in which there is

an extensive body of research in the small group literature, could be readily adapted for the music ensemble context.

References

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