

From the book by Arthur Hull
Drum Circle Facilitation: Building Community Through Rhythm

CHAPTER FOUR

Arthurian Facilitation Triplicity

You will need to use the following three foundational elements as you facilitate successful rhythm-based events:

- Tools: Ways to use body language to facilitate an ongoing drum circle event.
- Techniques: Ways to use tools to provide directions and guidance to players in a rhythm-based event.
- Intention: Your motivations for the actions you take as a drum circle facilitator.

This combination of tools, techniques and intentions is the Arthurian Facilitation Triplicity. By striving to master these elements, you will set yourself on a never-ending path of facilitation skills development and personal growth. Developing the facilitation tools and techniques will help you become a skillful facilitator. By adding a foundational understanding of your intention to those two technologies, you will mature into more than simply a good percussion ensemble conductor. As you develop this triplicity within yourself, you will bring valuable service to your community.

Tools

The tools leg of the Arthurian Facilitation Triplicity represents the body language signals that a facilitator uses to provide directions and guidance to players in a rhythm-based event. Once you have a basic grasp of the body language triplicity described earlier, the mere handful of signals needed for facilitation are easy to learn and utilize.

In the next sections, I describe each of these basic body language signals used in facilitating rhythm-based events.

Call to Groove

Call to groove is a way to start a group rhythm, from no one playing to everyone in the circle or some specific subgroup starting to play at the same time. To call to groove, vocally count the group into a groove while physically marking the pulse as a model. “One, two, let’s all play” is one vocal version of call to groove. When you do this it is helpful to the players if you set the pulse and pace of the upcoming groove with your voice, your body and your musical instrument before the call. You want to start each rhythm with minimum cacophony and maximum congruency among the players.

The group will almost always make rhythmical adjustments during the first few measures after you start the groove, but there are ways to minimize the adjustment they must make after each individual player starts their own independent rhythm on the same first beat.

Counting the first two pulses “one, two” and then using the last two pulses in the starting measure of “Let’s all play” to verbally indicate where to start playing does not always give participants enough time to be ready to play. Prepare your group rhythmically using your voice and body language before you lead a call to groove. Otherwise, you will almost always put some, or most, of your circle into crisis mode, especially if it is the group’s first drum circle experience.

A few tricks can make the call to groove less of a surprise and a lot smoother, with less adjustment needed after

the first note:

- Play a pulse on a cow bell, starting at least one cycle before your count to groove. Continue playing the pulse on the bell as you count and after the group starts. Marking the pulse helps lock in the groove for the players.
- Step in time at the pace at which you want the rhythm to start.
- Prepare the group for the call to groove by speaking to them at the pace at which you want the rhythm to start.
- Use a series of calls and responses at the pace you are going to start the rhythm. Then, after the group's last response, start your count to groove.
- Have one dunun player start a groove and verbally count the remaining players into that groove.

Because call to groove does not have an internationally understood body language, it is helpful to learn how to say the phrases listed above in the native language of the country in which you are facilitating. A few examples:

- Cantonese (Hong Kong): yat, yi, yat-chai da
- German: eins, zwei, alle spielen
- Norwegian: en, to, sett i gang
- Japanese: ich knee o skinny dozo
- Portuguese: um, dois, vamos, tocar

Attention Calls

Attention calls are body signals that gain the group's attention and let them know that a new facilitation signal is about to be given. These calls are typically given by the facilitator when the group is in full groove. In some situations you can use vocal calls to help reinforce the body language attention call signal.

Full Group Attention Call

A full group attention call from the orchestrational spot gives notice to the whole circle that something new is about to happen. Do this by simply holding up your hand with your index finger pointing to the sky while you walk around the orchestrational spot and make contact with the circle.

The following two specific attention calls, tempo-up-or-down and call-and-response, each communicate an upcoming facilitation direction, while simultaneously calling attention to the facilitator.

Tempo Up or Down Attention Call

Body language for tempo up looks like a full group attention call but instead of pointing your finger in the air, you use a closed fist with your thumb in the air to let the circle know that you are going to raise the group tempo. Point your thumb down to let the circle know that you are going to slow down the tempo. You can also use vocal reinforcements, such as "We are going to speed up."

The famous French mime Marcel Marseau traveled all over the world for years and entertained audiences for hours without saying a word. Most facilitator body language signals are recognized all over the world. Regardless of the many different languages that we speak on this planet, we can communicate many things to non-native speakers using only facial expressions and body language. If body language signals are not immediately understood, it is easy to educate a group of players about a new signal by using it with its connected action a few times until participants understand.

A few body language signals mean one thing in western cultures and something entirely different in other cultures. For example the thumbs-up signal we use as a tempo-up signal in most western countries means

something entirely different in Australia.

Up Yours

When I first visited Australia I noticed hitchhikers standing by the side of the road with their arms out, their hands in a fist with their thumbs sticking out like any hitchhiker, except that their thumbs were pointing down to the ground instead of up into the air. On that same trip, my American friend and I were dropping off our American business consultant friend at a steel plant south of Sidney. The headquarters sat on a hill overlooking several big rusty buildings and blast furnaces. When we arrived, the CEO and all of the executives had been told of our arrival and were waiting outside to greet her. As we got out of the car, she proceeded to introduce my friend and me to the group of thirty men. It seemed evident that these men had risen to their executive positions from the huge gritty plant below. They were all big, tall, burly men with faces as rough as their hands, which were enveloping and crushing mine in greeting. After the introductions and a few pleasantries, my friend and I returned to our limo and drove away, leaving our petite business consultant friend surrounded by a half-circle mountain of men. As we drove away she took two steps forward, thrust her arm high into the air and made a fist while giving us the good old American “thumbs up” as a symbol of good luck and best wishes. Without a word, my friend and I reciprocated in kind by sticking our heads and half our torsos out of the open windows on either side of the car. We each stuck an arm high in the air and gave two big thumbs up back to her. A second later, I noticed strange looks on the executives faces as the car disappeared around a corner and started jerking its way along the twisty road heading down the hill. My friend and I immediately sat back in the car and put on our seat belts as the poor driver was trying to control the car while having convulsions of belly laughs. He finally got control of himself and the car enough to be able to speak. With tears in his eyes from laughing so hard, he said, “I don’t know what you Yanks were saying to each other with your goodbye gestures, but down here at the steel plant in Australia thumbs up means “Up Yours” or “Go F--k yourself.” Now I know why they hitchhike with their thumbs down in Australia. Needless to say, whenever I am in Australia I experiment with new gestures to give a circle a speed-up signal. Call-and-Response Attention Call

Hold up a bell and point first to the bell and then to the circle with your drumstick. Alternatively, hold up the bell while repeatedly pointing to yourself and then to the circle. A drum can be used in place of the bell.

The Whistle

Each time I do a REMO drum circle tour in Italy, we gather volunteers who are potential facilitators. We travel together on the tour for days down the west coast of Italy south of Rome, and boat together out to the islands in the Mediterranean Sea. I facilitate drum circles for communities, personal growth programs and retreat spas on the islands. The volunteer facilitators participate in the circles and take notes, and at the end of each event we have a question-and-answer meeting. By the end of each tour, I create a situation where the volunteers get a chance to jump into a drum circle and facilitate.

One of the volunteers, Giovanni, is a well-known singer and musician who performs Cuban, Salsa and World Beat music throughout Italy. Bright-eyed, with a winning smile and convincing body language skills, he shows great promise as a facilitator. At the end of the tour when it was Giovanni’s turn to facilitate, he accompanied each attention call he did with an ear-piercing whistle, by putting his fingers to his lips and blowing. With that whistle as a part of his attention call there was no mistaking that something was about to happen.

A year later, on the next Italy tour, Giovanni demonstrated to me that he had developed a different-sounding whistle for each of the different types of attention calls. With this new development, by the sound of the whistle he makes as he enters the center of the circle, players are able to tell whether they are going to do a speed up or a call-and-response before he gives the physical version of a specific attention call. By the end of an event he is facilitating, Giovanni does not need to give the body-signal attention calls. His whistles do the job just fine.

Stop Cut

A stop cut is a facilitation action that stops a person, a subgroup or the whole circle from playing. By giving a full group attention call and then giving a full group stop cut at the beginning of the rhythm cycle you are often able to stop the circle's music on a dime.

The stop cut is the most powerful technology in your facilitator's tool box and must be used with the utmost care, integrity and humility.

The body language for a stop cut signal is well documented in "Body Language Triplicity" on page 45.

The Sharpie Catch

At a playshop training, Stephen Sharpe was facilitating a circle populated entirely by drum circle facilitators. In the middle of a particular sequence, Stephen gave a large theatrical stop-cut signal to the whole circle. In the same stop cut, as his hands and arms were making the sweeping movement across the front of his chest, he grabbed a hand full of air and held it above his head in a fist as we all stopped playing. He shook it vigorously as if something was inside trying to get out of his fist. We all sat in stunned silence as we realized that Stephen had caught our rhythm and was holding it in his hand. He then teased us, asking with elfish glee, "Do you want your rhythm back?"

We all yelled yes with excited anticipation. Stephen then gave us a call-to-groove count and threw the rhythm back into the circle. We all started the rhythm on the same beat with shouts of joy and excitement. As you might guess, the Sharpie Catch began to be used internationally as soon as all the facilitator-training graduates returned home.

Exercise: Starts and Stops

This fundamental exercise provides an opportunity to work on three of the most-used facilitation moves: starting a group groove, giving an attention call to the group and creating a clean stopping point in the music. You can use each of these three moves as a full circle intervention. Alternatively you can modify the exercise and use it with specific sections of the circle.

While the group is not playing, each player takes a turn, one at a time.

- Walk into the center of the circle.
- Give a vocal call to groove, such as "one, two, let's all play" to start the rhythm.
- Let the rhythm develop and solidify for a few cycles.
- Give an attention call by raising a finger up into the air and doing a 360 degree turn on the orchestrational spot while connecting with all the players.
- Make a stop cut.
- When the circle stops, walk off the orchestrational point, and return to your place in the circle.

Sculpting

Sculpting is a basic facilitator's tool that you use throughout a rhythm-based event. It is the action of selecting and identifying a person, a group, a drum type or a timbre in order to give specific facilitation direction to that group. That action prepares whomever you have sculpted to react to the upcoming direction. You only give a sculpting signal when you plan to give that person or group another signal. You usually use sculpting body language while your event is in full groove. Sculpting can also be effective in the windows of communication. Depending on the different sound level scenarios that you might encounter, you may choose to use vocal sculpting directions in

conjunction with body language signals.

When you sculpt you identify a specific group of your players. By definition this includes some while excluding others. You can think of the sculpted group as your platform, and the remaining players as the rest of the circle (ROC).

Described below are some examples of different ways to use sculpting, depending on your drum circle situation.

Sculpt a Song

To sculpt a song choose participants around the circle who are playing a variety of different instruments. Make eye contact with the person who you would like to sculpt. Give them what I call the “Disneyland point” by extending your hand, with your fingers closed and your palm up, toward them. Give the selected players a continue-to-play signal. Stop cut the remaining players to unveil your song.

Exercise: Sculpt a Song

This exercise provides immediate feedback as you develop your sculpting ability. You can assess the music you uncover. Does the group you choose to sculpt have a synchronized musical relationship and balanced timbre? You will know as soon as you stop cut the remaining players and uncover your sculpted song.

- Enter the circle while it is in full groove.
- Sculpt a song, choosing a variety of instruments.
- Stop cut the rest of the players.
- Let the song go for a few cycles.
- Signal to all the players who have stopped to resume playing with a call to groove.
- Leave the circle in full groove for the next facilitator-in-training.

Sculpt by Timbre or Drum Type

To sculpt a full group by timbre or drum type, identify every person in your circle who is playing a certain type of instrument and signal to them that they will be part of an upcoming facilitated action.

By timbre I mean all the people playing bells, or woods, or shakers or drums. By drum type I mean the people playing specific membrane instruments such as the djembes, ashikos, congas, dununs or bongos. Alternatively, sometimes drum type can mean small, medium or large drums.

If you are sculpting a small group (ten to thirty people), then it will be easy for you to individually sculpt each of the players throughout the circle who is playing a particular timbre or drum type. It is similar to sculpting a song except you are sculpting each person who is playing the same type of instrument or timbre.

If you decide to sculpt a large circle by timbral group or a drum type, then selecting that particular group by choosing and signalling each individual can be a long and daunting task. It can be long because the players you signal first may forget they were chosen by the time you get around the whole circle. It can be daunting because you as facilitator must go around the circle and signal each individual, and you may not be able to remember who you did or did not sculpt.

Instead of individually sculpting each player with a bell, to showcase all the bell players in the circle you can simply hold up a bell, point to it and make the continue-to-play sign to the whole group from the orchestrational spot. When you signal the stop cut, those playing bells will continue to play while everyone else stops. The same can be done with any other timbres and drum types.

Sculpt by Gender

To sculpt all the men or all the women in the group for showcasing, you do two things. Call from the orchestration spot “all the men” or “all the women” while making gestures that indicate which gender you are calling. Up until recently, to physically designate the men, most facilitators have taken on the position of a body builder by making a fist and flexing their arm muscles over their shoulders. To physically designate the women, most facilitators have used both their hands to draw the outline of a woman in the air in front of them—bosom, waist and hips. After years of discussing the implications of these gestures, I recognize that these physical signals may imply to some that all women need to be curvaceous and all men need to be strong.

While she was facilitating a circle in England, Yvonne showed me the perfect solution to this dilemma. When she was ready to sculpt all of a single gender, she simply held up the international gender sign used on restroom doors, pointed to the sign and made a continue to play signal. When Yvonne held up the sign for women they continued to play when she gave a stop cut to the men, thus uncovering the women’s song.

Even if I am blindfolded, if the facilitator of a circle sculpts a gender-specific song, I find I can consistently identify which gender is playing based on the resultant song that emerges. Experiment and listen to your groups’ songs. Viva la difference!

The Rainbow Women

In the sixties, the Rainbow Gathering drum circles were male dominated. They didn’t call us hippy thunder drummers for nothing. With little technique and even less traditional drumming knowledge, the guys in the circle would power their way into, through and out the other side of an in-the-moment rhythm into a rhythmical train wreck. They would then start another rhythm out of the chaos. We thought that finger splits, calluses, and sometimes peeing blood were necessary trade-offs of following our rhythmical bliss. By expressing our macho energy through the drum, we were unconsciously excluding women from the circle. The women who did choose to play with us would have to compete with the rest of “the boys in the noise” for space and presence in the rhythm. Being new to group drumming at that time, I accepted that it was just the way things were.

My first lesson in drumming sensitivity came at a rainbow gathering, when I happened across a group of women drumming far away from the thunder drummer circle. I respectfully sat down outside the circle and listened. These women, like us men in those days, were ignorant of drumming styles, traditions and drumming techniques. And, like us men, they were exploring their group song through what I now call rhythmical alchemy. But the song and energy coming out of their drumming circle was totally different than any I had ever experienced. There was a sense of conscious cooperation rather than unconscious competition. There was power without loud volume. The women were using their notes to make space for each other’s creativity, rather than trying to fill all the space. (At that time, playing lots of notes was standard operating procedure for the men.) The result of these combined elements was something little heard in the thunder drummer circles back then or today: subtlety, grace and beauty.

Then I heard something that I also had never before experienced in a drum circle. Without a word being spoken, the women drummers slowly faded their groove into silence. In the end, the silence was as loud as the drumming had been, and the rhythms were still moving inside. As I sat in tears and in awe of what I had just experienced, one of the women drummers looked at me sitting outside the circle and said to me, “You can join us if you promise to listen.”

Sculpt by Sections

To sculpt a section of your circle you are simply cutting a piece of pie out of the circle from the center. The size of the piece of pie you cut is the size of the section that you want to sculpt.

Know what section in the circle you are going to sculpt before you start.

To sculpt a section on your left, start with your left hand. To sculpt a section on your right, start with your right hand.

Sculpt by using the Disneyland point to designate one side of the pie. Then place your other hand, palm to palm on your extended hand, and open your arms, sweeping your other hand out until you have included the complete section of the circle that you want to sculpt. The part of the circle you are now encompassing between your two outstretched hands is the piece of the drum circle pie that you have just sculpted. It looks like you are hugging all of them.

1/2 1/4 1/3
Sculpting Shorthand

Eye contact and personal contact are essential because your next facilitator's body language signal will be directed toward this particular group. Your signal to the sculpted group will typically be an active one, such as continue to play, stop cut or volume up. This contact is also essential so you will recognize which humans are part of your sculpted group when you return to them after turning away to work with others in the circle. Relationship is a key element of all facilitation.

Sculpting by Concentric Circles

At a festival we co-facilitated, I saw Shakerman, aka Kerry Greene, sculpt the circle for showcasing by having different concentric rows of players continue to play while stop cutting the other rows. He showcased each row of a two hundred person drum circle. This was the first time I saw this unique way of sculpting. He tells his story:

As drum circle facilitators, we typically stand on the orchestrational spot surrounded by concentric circles of seated participants. We usually view our participants in pie-shaped sections based on the open aisles distributed throughout the circle. I had been shown over the years how to select sections of participants by pointing to and sculpting slice-of-the-pie shaped groupings.

As a facilitator who also is a musician, one of my goals is to enhance and elevate the experience of the group's hearing and perception of the ongoing music. Keeping the golden rule of "have no plan" in mind, I entered the circle with a concept I would present if it felt appropriate and would serve the circle. My concept was based on concentric circles, much like those found in a pond when you toss a rock into it. The result is a series of rings that spread out away from the center. I realized this approach would yield a result that would allow the players to hear and experience the contributions of those behind and in front of them rather than in sections far away that may not be heard at all. For example, the first row of participants would hear everyone playing behind them.

The technique was fairly simple to initiate. I simply waited to allow the right time and place to present itself, and while co-facilitating at a large circle in Seattle with about two hundred players, it appeared! First I indicated that the front row of drummers would continue to play. By looking into each person's eyes while turning around in the circle a couple of times until we had the necessary agreements. I then continued turning around and selecting everyone else to watch and be prepared for a shift and initiated it with a countdown from four to one with a clean stop cut. This left the inner circle playing all by themselves, and everyone seemed to like it. I next invited the second row to be ready to join in and offered a rhythm that would work hand in hand with the inner circle's ongoing rhythm. Counting from one to four this time, I invited them to play, being sure that I used multiple points in my radar to engage all the players in that second row. I repeated the process and brought in the third row, then after a minute or two, the fourth row. Finally, I released everyone to make up their own after first giving them a big thumbs up and thanking them for allowing me to interject. I was happy to have this first attempt work without a hitch, as sometimes new concepts don't work the first time.

Like any good facilitator, as soon as I saw Shakerman's unique way of sculpting I started experimenting with different ways to sculpt concentric circles. Within a few months, the concept had spread like wildfire among the facilitator community and every facilitator I saw used sculpting by concentric circles as part of their repertoire. It is my belief that Shakerman uncovered, discovered and presented the concept.

Continue to Play

When you want a selected group of players to continue playing while you give different directions to others in the circle, you can give a continue-to-play signal. The standard continue-to-play body language signal is to point your two index fingers toward each other in front of your chest and rotate them around each other.

Before sculpting and stopping a particular segment of your circle, it is good to give a continue-to-play signal to the rest of the group. Otherwise, the whole circle might stop when you give the stop-cut signal.

Because my Arthurian body language for continue to play is not automatically recognized in other countries, I also learn to speak the words "continue to play" in the native language of the country where I am facilitating. A few examples:

- German: weiterspielen
- Italy: continuata es sonata
- Mandarin (mainland China): zhi shu
- Swedish: fortsätt spela
- Vietnam: deep dop choi
- Canadian: continue to play eh?

Natural Timing

I am facilitating a team building program with two hundred corporate trainers for a medical insurance company. It is scheduled as a one-and-a-half hour program with a social hour planned afterward. Good music is emanating from a hot drum circle. The group's groove is moving through its transition points to ever higher and stronger rhythmical places. This event has elevated itself to a level equal to a very successful community drum circle. My GOOW spot is a seat in the innermost circle of chairs where I am sitting playing my drum as one of the participants. They don't need a facilitator at this point. With only five minutes left in the program, the group is deep in a great groove with no end in sight.

I am concerned about the time. If this program was a community drum circle, I would typically let this beautiful groove go on until it reaches a natural transition point where I would bring it to a close. But with an upcoming scheduled break, I am concerned that I will need to facilitate "rhythmical interruptus" to close the program on time.

The meeting planner responsible for the program is sitting across the circle, deep in the musical trance with the rest of the circle. Reluctantly I pull her out of her trance to give her a five minute warning. I get her attention by waving my hand in the air. I then point to an imaginary wrist watch on my arm and then hold my hand up with all five fingers extended. Catching my signal she nods yes, stops playing and looks around the room and understands that the whole group is entranced. She looks back at me and with a smile she gives me the continue-to-play signal by twirling her fingers around each other and goes back into her drum trance with the rest of the group. I let the fantastic groove go on for another ten minutes until it finds its own natural closing.

Baba's Memorial

The famous folk singer Joan Baez and I are casual acquaintances. As followers and supporters of Babatunde Olatunji, we met many times at Baba's programs and at WOMAD concerts. After Baba's passing, we met again at his memorial concert, along with Mickey Hart, Santana and many of Baba's friends. Many of the audience members brought their own drums to the service. During the memorial service, Mickey asked me to facilitate a soft heartbeat rhythm with the audience while he passed around a mic to various dignitaries on the stage who spoke about their love and remembrance of Baba. I facilitated the audience of a thousand drummers to a muted heartbeat. Joan came up beside me and asked whether it would be all right if she sang low notes softly at one of the standing mics while the memorials were being given. I said I thought it would be great, but to let Mickey know what she intended to do. As Joan walked to one of the front mics she got Mickey's attention from the other side of the stage. She pointed to herself and then to the mic and gave Mickey a continue-to-play signal. He understood and gave her a nod while moving his handheld mic to the next dignitary. The combination of the audience's heartbeat and Joan's crystal clear heart-wrenching notes created a perfect emotional sound platform for the words of love being expressed for Baba.

Call and Response

In a call-and-response sequence, you as facilitator create a one-measure call pattern with your instrument or voice and wait for the response to come from the circle. The call can be done with a bell, a drum, a whistle or your voice. With an attentive, responsive group of players you can extend your call to two measures. Calls longer than that may push your circle's ability to remember the pattern and respond without going into student crisis mode.

The call-and-response signal is a simple, yet powerful device that you can use to start a groove, to facilitate a musical transition or to bring a groove to a clean stop. You can use calls and responses to synergize a group's attention, especially when working with kids. You can also do call and response with a sculpted subgroup of your circle.

During a drum call at the beginning of an event you want to keep the patterns in your calls simple, while you assess the rhythmical ability of the group. Avoid playing complicated patterns that show off your playing chops, as this can create student crisis mode in your players.

You can do call-and-response signals with a drum stick on a cow bell to keep it simple. Using only the two bell notes: high and low, your signal can be easily interpreted and translated onto whatever instrument the players have in front of them. Alternatively, if you were to use a hand drum, you would be applying specific hand techniques to create any one of three basic sounds: the bass, the tone or the slap. With even a simple drum pattern you may intimidate beginning-beginner players. They may be struggling to model and reproduce the exact hand placement and sounds that you just played. But when you give a call on your bell, the drummers of the group can reproduce your pattern without worrying about the specific sounds and hand techniques. This gives the players lots of room for interpretation.

Some music teachers use the term echo for the call-and-response sequence. Music teachers expect the echo (response) to be exactly the same call that the teacher plays. As a drum teacher, it is also appropriate to expect a response to be an exact echo of the call.

As a facilitator using an Arthurian-style call and response, you may receive a response that is not exactly what you called. You want to accept your group's response without judgement. Whatever response they give to your call will be the correct one.

Volume Up or Down

Volume up or down means to either change the volume in your percussion orchestra as a whole, or to change the volume of some smaller group within the orchestra. This tool adds a dynamic musical quality to your group's compositions.

Volume down can be used to help the group be able to hear. With a lower volume the "hearing sphere" of each player is larger, so they can experience more of the overall orchestra's music. By lowering the group's volume, you can also create a space to vocally address the players while music is being made.

To raise the volume of a group, I extend and raise my arms with my palms turned upward, as if I am lifting the group. The higher I raise my hands, the more volume I get from the group.

To lower the volume, I extend and lower my arms starting with them above my head, with my palms turned downward. The closer my palms get to the ground the quieter the group plays.

If I want to lower the volume in a larger circle to a whisper, I first lower the overall volume as described above. But in circles with more than one row of players, the back rows of people cannot see my signal once we get quieter, because the signal is hidden by the heads of those in front. For them, I can create a visual floor by holding one hand, palm up, at a level just higher than the heads of those seated in the front row. By bringing my other hand toward that visual floor, I can bring my whole circle's volume down to a whisper.

Tempo Up or Down

Tempo up or down means to facilitate the speed of the circle's rhythm to go faster or slower. The key element to facilitating a speed up is to lead the group, in full groove, from one tempo to the next using your body. As the facilitator you are the physical model for the tempo change.

Once you have established a relationship with your circle, you as facilitator can ascertain common denominator speeds at which your group can comfortably play. I call these speeds where the group is comfortable and plays most solidly tempo plateaus. Many times a transition point is created in a group groove when the players have been playing at a comfortable tempo plateau, but due to some discordant elements, the tempo has slowed below that plateau and become shaky. You can choose to lead their tempo back to the previous common group speed or past it to their next faster tempo plateau. For dynamic musicmaking, I prefer to change to the next faster tempo.

Tempo up is a great tool to use in transition points where the group's groove has slowed and become unsteady. Most facilitators point their thumb up to signal the group to speed up (but remember not to do this in Australia!)

For a group slow down, you can use one hand, palm down, to play a slightly slower tempo while giving a thumbs down signal with the other hand. Avoid moving the thumb up and down so you don't accidentally look like you are criticizing their groove.

After signalling which way you want the tempo to change, the instrument of choice to lead the change is the cow bell. By telegraphing the drum stick in a wide arc as you swing it down to the bell, you are able to show the group the basic beat of the changing tempo before your stick hits the bell.

Using the concept of pacing and leading, after you give the speed-up signal to the group, you play at the speed that the group is playing. By doing so you are pacing the group. Then you gently push the groove by playing a little ahead of the next pulse, thus leading the group toward the next tempo change.

When the group has reached the desired tempo plateau there are various ways to signal that they have arrived so they don't play even faster, toward a possible train wreck. One way to signal your players to hold their new tempo

is to hold your hands out, with palms down, while moving them in an arc that stops at each pulse, thus marking the desired tempo. Another signal is to hold one hand steady, palm down, while using a drum stick in the other hand to mark the pulse in the air. A third way to signal the group is to hold a drum stick horizontal to the ground, while marking the pulse you want to solidify with the other hand.

Accent Notes

As facilitator you can direct a person, a sculpted group or the whole circle to accent certain notes or pulses. You mark these notes or pulses by jumping into the air and giving a stop cut body signal on the way down. To prepare your circle for accent notes, teach them the difference between a stop cut and an accent note: do a group rumble and a stop cut at the end of a groove. Everybody will hit their last note at the stop cut. Then, do a simple accent note pattern. On the first accent note, perhaps only half of the participants will play, but by the end of your pattern everyone will be following your body and hitting the note each time you land. Once the accent note has been established in your relationship with your circle, you can create different accent patterns with the group.

This facilitation signal usually directs a group of players that has been sculpted. The sculpted part of the circle responds to your stop cut jump by playing a note on their instruments as your feet hit the ground. Whenever you jump they hit an accent note.

Accent notes are very popular for closing a musical piece or as a way to work with a non-playing part of a circle while another part of the circle is being showcased. You can also create accent notes within the group's music while they are playing if you are careful to give them a continue-to-play signal first. When no one in the circle is playing, accent notes can be directed to the whole circle.

Rumble

A rumble is an action that initiates and controls rhythm chaos. It is a very versatile facilitator's tool with many uses. You initiate a group rumble by holding your hands out in front of you and wiggling them quickly from the wrists. The group responds, creating musical chaos, a non-rhythmical noise, with their instruments. It sounds like the stampede of musical hoofs, a rumble of sound. You can direct your rumble to the whole circle or to a group that you have sculpted.

Use the rumble as its own entity or to make the transition to another groove. You can use a rumble inside an ongoing rhythm, or as a musical call for attention.

My good friend Heather MacTavish has developed a technique called drum~story~song. Using this method she masterfully facilitates well elderly and special-needs groups into playing percussion instruments while singing popular songs from their formative years. Heather has Parkinson's disease, so her right hand often shakes uncontrollably. When introducing basic facilitation signals she holds up two fluttering hands and asks: "What is this?" The group members shout back "Rumble!" Then she holds up her fluttering right hand and asks: "What is this?" She pauses while others try to figure out what one hand flapping signifies. She then shouts out: "Parkinson's disease! Know the difference!"

There are many different varieties of rumbles. Below are some additional uses of the rumble.

Rumble Wave

Once you initiate a group rumble, then by moving your arms up and down like an actor imitating the flight of a bird, you indicate how fast the volume and intensity of the rumble wave increases and decreases.

Stadium Rumble Wave

A stadium rumble wave passes a rumble around the circle in a way very similar to the way the audience in a football stadium does a standing wave. Instead of people taking turns standing up and sitting down, drummers are raising and lowering the volume of their rumble.

To initiate a stadium rumble wave the facilitator starts a full group rumble. Then she lowers the group's volume. Then she indicates to a section of the circle to raise their rumble volume while the people next to them keep the lower volume. Once the stadium rumble wave has been started, the facilitator can direct the volume wave at any speed and in whatever direction she prefers.

Once your circle has experienced a stadium rumble wave you may facilitate additional waves by simply pointing and turning around the circle during a rumble.

Mime Rumbling

Dirk Iwen, a mime from Germany, used a unique style to signal for rumble waves from his group when he facilitated. First, he pantomimed the shape of a ball. Then he cupped his ear and pointed to his imaginary ball. When he tossed his ball into the air, a few drummers rumbled like a snare drummer might do for a trapeze act at the circus. The drummers stopped rumbling each time he caught the ball. He tossed the ball into the air until the group caught on and everyone was rumbling to the flight of the ball. That's when he pointed across the circle to a player and tossed the ball to them. The group rumbled until the player across the circle stood up and caught the ball. That player then pointed to someone else across the circle and tossed the imaginary ball, to the accompaniment of the rumble, creating a game of toss and rumble.

Layering in a Rumble to Start a Groove

A dynamic way to start a group groove is by layering in a rumble by sections. The volume and mass of the rumble increases with each added section until the whole circle is rumbling.

Once your full circle is rumbling, you can give them a call to groove to go from full rumble to full rhythm expression with a simple count of four.

Alternatively you can sculpt your rumblers and bring in sections of players to the groove, adding sections until the whole group is in full groove.

Layering in a Rumble from Full Groove

With your group in full groove, you can layer in a rumble. When you do this you create a growing rumble crescendo. As the rumble emerges, the rhythm becomes softer in volume and disappears. Here are two ways to do it:

- While in full groove, sculpt one quarter of the circle at a time and give them the rumble signal, Once that section is rumbling, sculpt another playing section to rumble. Continue sculpting rumble sections until the whole circle is in full rumble.
- Instead of standing in the orchestrational spot and making a rumble signal to get a full group rumble, step off of the orchestrational spot and walk up close to someone in the inner circle of players, only the people directly in front of you will rumble when you give the signal. You can then choose whether to continuously move to your right or left along the inside of the circle while giving the rumble signal. As you do this, you continuously add more rumblers to the group. The speed with which you move will be the tempo at which you create your growing rumble crescendo. You dissolve the rhythm being played by the circle into a full group rumble, facilitating a very dynamic transition from rhythm to rumble.

Layering Rumble by Instruments

Layering in a rumble by instruments is another dynamic way to either start a groove or introduce a rumble into an ongoing groove. You facilitate by sculpting specific instrument types in the circle and initiating a rumble of those instruments until the all the instruments in the circle are in full rumble.

Teeter-Totter Rumble

A teeter-totter rumble happens when the whole circle rumbles loudly. Then, with your guidance, they exchange volumes dynamically.

To facilitate this, you simply extend your arms to become a human teeter-totter. Your hands are the volume controls. The one tipped downward is lower volume and the one tipped upward is higher volume. By tipping your arms back and forth you direct the two sides of your circle.

A variation of teeter-totter rumble is to sculpt half the circle and give them a continue-to-play signal. Then start the other group rumbling. You can facilitate the volume dynamics between the rumble and the groove in the same way as you would when both halves are rumbling.

Rumble Jumps to Groove

A unique way to either start a groove or change from an ongoing groove to a new one is to use a series of rumble “pulses.”

First initiate a full group rumble. To end the rumble, jump up in the air and as your feet hit the floor, you make a stop cut that signals for the players to hit their last note of the rumble. There will be instant silence. Then initiate another full group rumble to a stop cut, but facilitate this rumble to be shorter in duration than the last one. Then initiate another even shorter full group rumble to a stop cut.

This process continues until you have an ongoing sequence of evenly-spaced short rumbles that set the pulse for the next group groove. While continuing to facilitate the pulse rumbles, give the continue-to-play signal to the whole group and away they go into the next groove.

Exercise: Full Group Intervention

This exercise provides an opportunity to practice full group interventions, educating the group about your body language by teaching without teaching. Pay special attention to the clarity of your body language and to facilitating in the round.

While the group is not playing, each player takes a turn, one at a time:

- Walk into the center of the circle.
- Give a series of calls and responses or a rumble wave series.
- When you have completed your turn, walk off the orchestrational point, and return to your place in the circle

Techniques

The techniques leg of the Arthurian Facilitation Triplicity represents the ways we use body language signals to provide directions and guidance to players in a rhythm-based event.

Techniques are used for specific purposes. The techniques described below are utilized over a period of time using combinations of tools.

Sophistication comes into play with finesse in choosing which techniques to use and when to use them. How and why the techniques are used is based on the facilitator's intentions and philosophy.

Drum Call

Drum call is the opening groove of an event that happens as people come in, settle down and start to play together. This is your opportunity to welcome each individual, and help them feel safe and comfortable as they each make their contribution to the group's rhythmical expression.

Drum call can be thought of as a technique that will set the foundation for a successful event. These are the basic objectives while you facilitate during this time:

- Take responsibility for the physical circle.
- Teach the facilitator's body language.
- Define the roles.
- Establish trust.
- Teach without teaching.
- Orchestrate self-facilitation.
- Read the group.

Each of these objectives will be discussed fully in "Call of the Drum" on page 115.

Orchestrational Spot

The orchestrational spot, from which you facilitate the group, is usually in the middle of a circle of participants. You define this spot by using the same place in the circle every time you give facilitation signals to your players. By using the orchestrational spot as a group-focus technique you create a place with the power to pull the group's attention to you as you step into it. We will go into more depth about ways to use the orchestrational spot later in the Center of the Circle on page 139.

Marking the Pulse

Marking the pulse is a technique for solidifying the groove using your body, and bell or voice, or both, to reinforce the pulse of an ongoing groove. You can also use marking the pulse with exaggerated body language as a way to have the players accent the pulse.

Transition Point

A transition point is a time during which the rhythmical relationship among the players shifts. The resulting sounds tell the facilitator that the playing group is at a rhythmical or musical transition point and can use help.

Based on the musical situation at a transition point, one choice you have as facilitator is to enter the circle and facilitate one of the following actions:

- Solidify the groove by marking the pulse for the group, and possibly take the tempo to the next level.
- Guide the group through that musical transition to another groove through a sequence of facilitation directions discussed in "Tools" on page 51. As an example, you can sculpt half the circle and give them a continue to play signal, before signalling the remaining players to stop. The possibilities of what to do next are endless.
- Bring the groove to a successful close.

When you have been called by a group's transition point to help get them through a rough musical moment and have achieved your goal by guiding them through the transition point into another cohesive rhythmical expression, your job is done. If a group of attentive players is fully engaged in an ongoing groove, then by standing in the middle of the circle you are an impediment to their music process. So GOOW.

To avoid unconsciously manipulating the players during drum call, I suggest you only go into the center of the circle when the group "calls" you with a rhythmical transition point. Later in the event, when the group has developed into a fully formed orchestra who trusts you as their facilitator and wants you to manipulate their musical contribution to its fullest potential, you can bend this rule. More on that subject will be discussed in Orchestration on page 173.

Sometimes the transition point develops slowly in a drum circle situation, giving you plenty of time to choose the proper moment to go into the orchestrational spot and facilitate the group to its next solid rhythm. Other times the transition point develops so quickly that you barely have time to go in and facilitate the resulting rhythm chaos into a successful closing rumble. This type of surprise rhythmical train wreck can happen even among the most sophisticated veteran drummers.

Surprise

By the midpoint in an event I facilitated with a circle of advanced veteran players, the transition points were appearing in the music less and less often. The players were well attuned to each other as they supported the ever-changing rhythm. I was standing outside the circle relaxing and enjoying the music between transition points. The groove was so solid that it did not need a facilitator. In fact, it was enticing me to walk to my seat and pick up my drum and join the group as a player.

When all of a sudden there arose such a clatter that I raised up my head to see what was the matter. And what to my radar senses did appear, a horrible transition point is what I did hear. It was bumping and bouncing, what a terrible sound, and I couldn't run to the center before it hit the ground. Nobody knew where it came from, or why, but boy did that rhythm crash, burn and die.

By the time I made it to the center of the circle it was all over. The rhythm had come to a complete but sloppy stop. I lifted my shoulders and arms up into the air in a questioning gesture to the circle with a dumfounded look on my face. We all burst out in uproarious laughter. A clear happy voice could be heard singing, "SURPRISE, SURPRISE" above the roar. As we began to control our laughter, we each in turn chimed in to the developing song. Singing the word surprise at different pitches we created an interactive rhythm pattern that emerged as dynamic and exciting vocal "scat." Although no one had touched their drum since the rhythmical train wreck, the new surprise vocal groove was so solid that it was time for me to GOOW. I sat down in my seat and got my drum ready to play. Before long someone started playing their instrument along with the vocal groove. Soon everybody, including me, joined in and off we went into the new surprise rhythm. Sometimes a train wreck can birth beautiful music.

Platform

A platform is something upon which you stand, that holds and supports you.

A drum circle platform happens when some of the people in the group are playing a groove, while others are not playing. As facilitator you can choose to use the playing part of the circle as a groove platform to support your work with the non-playing members of the circle. As a simple example, you can sculpt half of the circle to continue playing and then give a stop cut to the other half of the circle. You can then use the playing half as a rhythm support group as you do call-and-response signals or rumbles with the non-playing half of the circle.

Consider your platform players as a safety net that supports you as you facilitate the other players. If your facilitation piece does not work out, your platform players will be there to catch you with their solid ongoing groove. If you facilitate the non-platform part of your drum circle for longer than a minute, be sure to turn around, encourage and thank your platform players with eye contact, a smile and supportive body language.

Platform for Taiko

I facilitated a drum circle at the Skywalker Ranch, which is part of the movie studio complex for George Lucas. A group of us came together to celebrate the retirement of a seven-time Oscar winner, for his sound design contributions to George Lucas's movie production company.

Mickey Hart's band was the headliner group on the Lucas Sound Stage and my job was to hold a drum circle to close the event, just after Mickey completed his set. Earlier during the event, performing artists had entertained throughout the party: jugglers, stilt walkers, magicians, and a mobile five-person Taiko group whose drums were on stands with wheels.

Since I was sitting in with Mickey's band, we decided to do a segue from the band to the drum circle. The band's last number was an old Bo Diddley piece that uses the clave rhythm as its musical foundation. As the band started the song, my assistants rolled boxes of equipment out onto the dance floor and started handing out drums and percussion instruments. During the song, I facilitated the audience into a half circle of players facing the band and playing with them.

As the band finished their last song, Mickey introduced me as the drum circle facilitator and I directed the players into a proper drum circle as they continued to play.

This crowd of about two hundred people, including George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, had poor visibility because they were all standing, so they were a little rhythmically unruly. I was desperately searching the crowd to find all the people who had chosen the large dununs and frame drums to play. I placed each one I found close to the center of the circle, in an attempt to solidify the rhythm—their low notes emanating out from the center.

I was not being very successful when I began to hear what was unmistakably Taiko drums in the back of the circle. The Taiko drum performers had packed their drums away and were enjoying the band before we started passing out percussion toys and forming the drum circle. They got all excited when they realized the performance was transitioning into a drum circle. They ran out to their truck, unpacked their Taiko drums and wheeled them into the circle. Taiko drums are some of the best bass bottom drums in the world and I was glad to have them. The moment I heard them on the outside perimeter I opened a pathway through the standing crowd and invited them into the center of the circle. Their drums were on stands with wheels, so in moments the Taiko drummers were playing in the center of the circle, locking the group rhythm together with their all-encompassing bottom vibration.

I realized that I had a well-practiced professional percussion ensemble snuggled in the center of my drum circle, all playing bottom drums. While they continued to play, I told them that we were going to do some call-and-response sequences. I then stood up on one of my two-foot-tall facilitation cases so all the drummers in the room could see me and gave everyone a continue-to-play signal. This encouraged the circle of players to be a rhythm platform so I could showcase the Taiko drummers.

When I hopped off the box and stopped the Taiko players, I let the other two hundred drummers settle into a groove. Before starting a sequence of call-and-response signals with the Taiko drummers, I invited them to roll their drums to the orchestrational spot, so I could call patterns to only them and the other drummers would not be confused. Each time I did my two-measure call-and-response pattern they responded with two measures played on their drums. Then we would wait a few cycles to let the circle enjoy their groove platform before doing another

call-and-response sequence.

As a musical result, every few rhythm cycles a big boomy bass pattern exploded for two measures and then the volume melted back to the drum circle groove.

To integrate the Taiko drummers back into the drum circle groove, I sang a rhythm of continuous quarter notes, which they played, slowly increasing their volume until I did a call to groove, and we all rejoined the rhythm platform: boom boom Boom Boom BOom BOom BOOm BOOM BOOM TO THE GROOVE... YEA!

Exercise: Sculpt a Platform for Rumble or Call and Response

You can sculpt half of the circle to continue playing and then give a stop cut to the other half of the circle. You can then use the playing half as a rhythm support group as you do call-and-response signals or rumbles with the non-playing half of the circle.

This exercise provides an opportunity to sculpt a platform and facilitate rumbles and calls and responses. Each player takes a turn, one at a time.

With the circle in full groove, walk into the orchestrational spot.

Sculpt one half of the circle and give them a continue to play signal, making them your platform players.

Sculpt the other half of the circle and give them a series of calls and responses or rumble waves.

When you have finished with your call and response or rumble wave sequence, bring all your players into full rhythmical expression with a call to groove.

GOOW Walk off the orchestrational spot, and return to your place in the circle.

Pacing and Leading

You as facilitator can use pacing and leading as a technique to lead the group from where they are currently playing to where they want to go—shifting the group's tempo, volume or dynamics. You will want to pace the group before you lead them to a faster or slower speed. When you give them a speed-up attention call as a warning and then pace their speed by marking the pulse of their tempo, you will more likely have a smooth speed-up as you lead them to the next faster tempo by marking the pulse just a little faster than they are playing. This will help you avoid rhythm confusion, student crisis mode, and the possibility of making all your participants wrong. If you signal for them to speed up by simply playing your cow bell at a faster speed, without pacing the group, you will likely experience a messy group speed-up as they try to catch up to your new faster pace.

Similarly, when you want the whole circle to come to a stop, instead of running to the middle of the circle and surprising them with a stop cut, causing a train wreck, you can pace the circle. You can then even choose to lead them to go a bit faster, so that you get everyone's attention before taking them to a finish.

When you use pacing and leading in conjunction with some of the more sophisticated facilitation concepts explored later in this book, you will progress from the level of beginner facilitator technician toward the mastery of facilitation as an art form.

The essence of pacing and leading is to be where they are in order to best lead them where they want to go.

Layering In or Out

Layering happens when you add or subtract individual players, instruments or sections of the circle in an ongoing musical piece. You can use this simple technique to create many different types of musical and emotional dynamics in your rhythm-based event.

An example of how to start a drum circle groove, by layering instrument sounds:

- Layer all your low drums into the groove first.
- Once they are “locked in,” layer in the medium drums.
- Then add the high drums.
- Lastly, layer in your hand percussion instruments such as bells, wood blocks and shakers.

Alternatively, start with the wood blocks first, then the bells, then the shakers. Add one of the three drum pitches, then the next drum pitch and the next.

A dynamic way to create a sensitive ending to a group groove would be to layer out different instruments, making the groove spacier and softer until there are no instruments playing. Experiment.

Teeter-Totter

Teeter-totter is a fun and versatile technique you can use to facilitate excitement and awareness of group cooperation in many different musical situations. To teeter-totter means to facilitate two different parts of a circle where the two groups take turns being showcased. In England, and some other places too, they call this technique the seesaw.

As an example, you can facilitate volume changes between the two sides of the circle. You signal to one side of your circle to play loudly while the other group plays softly. Then you pass the volume back and forth between the two sides like a shifting teeter-totter.

This technique can be used by a facilitator to direct players toward group consciousness, by making them more aware of the people playing across the circle from them, in addition to those beside them.

Modulated Sequences

A modulated sequence happens when you, as facilitator, signal for some series of musical sound bites to be repeated. The sequence modulates up when it repeats in shorter and shorter intervals. When the series repeats in longer and longer intervals we call it modulating down.

As an example, using the teeter-totter volume example above, you can modulate the volume teeter-totter up by having the first teeter-totter volume sequence between the sides of the circle happen over four measures, or rhythm cycles. Then you can pass the volume back and forth between each side of the circle in shorter intervals, such as two measures, then one measure, then a half measure for each side. The changes in volume between the two sides of your circle happen faster and faster, reaching a rhythmical climax that can transition into a new groove, a closing rumble or another musical event.

Another example of a modulated sequence uses a series of full group rumbles and stops that are modulated shorter each time until they become accents to the pulse of the next groove. Nicknamed the “bunny hop,” this technique is a great way to segue from one groove to another. You as facilitator can bring the groove to a close by initiating a full group rumble, and then jumping into the air and landing to make a stop cut. Then you immediately initiate another rumble with another stop cut, and another and another, making each one shorter until you are hopping up and down, like a bunny, on the pulse of what will be the next groove. The players, following

your bunny hop, will mark the pulse on their instrument each time you land on the ground. They will use the rumble pulse as a foundation for their new groove.

Modulated sequences require a group of players who are fully attuned to each other and the facilitator. As a facilitator you want to use modulated sequences after the group has reached percussion consciousness and are moving toward orchestrational consciousness.

A key to successful modulation is to listen and follow the group as they follow you, instead of using arbitrary intervals or pushing the group beyond their playing ability. Modulating up creates excitement in the circle. Modulating down creates depth in the circle's music.

Passing Out Parts

When you as facilitator offer participants one or more universal rhythm parts as the playing platform for improvisation we call it passing out parts.

When you pass out parts it is important to emphasize to the participants that any rhythmical part that is being shown is a guideline for rhythmical exploration, expression and improvisation. Before you start to pass out parts, you will want to explain your intention that players need not learn or reproduce any part on their instruments exactly as you show it. This will help you avoid turning your drum circle into a drum class, causing student crisis mode in your participants.

Remind your circle participants to continually improvise and experiment with any part provided to avoid locking themselves into the parts, leaving no room for their rhythmical exploration, improvisation or personal expression. You want your players to feel free to express themselves.

Using accessible universal rhythms in an event allows the music to be based on patterns other than the standard quarter-note pulse. Variety in the foundational rhythm is the spice of drum circle events.

If you are careful you can pass out parts as a teaching-without-teaching way to guide your players toward percussion consciousness. I recommend caution and KISS—Keep It Stupidly Simple.

Showcasing

Any time that you sculpt a single person, or any part of your circle and give them a continue-to-play signal and then stop cut the rest of the circle, the part of the circle that is still playing is being showcased.

You can also showcase a player, group timbre, drum type, etc., by signaling for them to raise their volume and play on top, while signaling the remaining players to lower their volume.

Creating Musical Dialogue

Musical dialogue is an exchange of melodic and rhythmical phrases between players or groups of players in an ongoing groove. Creating musical dialogue is an advanced technique that encourages more listening and a deeper musical interaction. You can use the following options after your circle has jelled rhythmically into a cohesive unit ready to add musical dynamics to its interaction.

Passing out different interactive parts in your circle is an easy way to set up musical dialogue. Another way to create musical dialogue is to showcase different timbre groups, drum types or drum pitches. You can create dialogue by facilitating listening spaces in an ongoing groove where different players have an opportunity to stop and listen to a particular timbre song. When you bring the listeners back into the groove they will have a tendency

to musically dialogue with the timbre song that you have just showcased.

By waiting until your group has attained percussion consciousness before facilitating musical dialogue, you facilitate them more readily toward orchestrational consciousness because they are ready to respond to this level of interaction.

Intention

Your intention is your plan for facilitating rhythm-based events. Your intentions are hopefully based on your mission: the goal or task which you feel destined to accomplish in life.

Your personal philosophy and passion are the fuels that drive your mission. Your philosophy is the platform on which you stand while you use facilitation tools and techniques to meet the needs and goals of the participants in your rhythm-based event.

Your mission guides your intentions, based on your philosophy. Reflecting on your mission will reveal to you new insights about your true purpose in life and how to achieve it.

Create Your Own Mission Statement

Prior to Village Music Circle Facilitators' Playshop trainings, I give each participant reading and writing assignments to help them prepare for the program. One of these assignments is to meditate on their personal mission in relationship to the training in which they are about to immerse themselves. I ask participants to reflect on who they are, why they are taking the training and what their intended use is for the knowledge they are about to receive. I give a one-page writing assignment called the Mission Statement and request that they focus on three basic questions about their intention in relationship to facilitating rhythm-based events:

- Who are you?
- Why are you reading this book?
- What is your intended use of the knowledge you are about to receive?

At the beginning of the Facilitators' Playshop, participants share their resulting Mission Statements with each other.

Writing Assignment

After reading this section, and before completing this chapter, I suggest that you put down this book and contemplate your intended use of the information that you are receiving from it. Also think about the philosophical foundations that motivate you to read this book.

If you sit somewhere quietly and think about your mission, intention and philosophy relative to the knowledge, tools and wisdom you might glean from reading this book, I know that you will get much more out of it.

Write a simple one-page mission statement for yourself. When you finish, put your statement away and forget about it until you have completed the book. Then re-read your mission statement. Notice any changes in your mission, intention and philosophy that might have developed after you completed your mission statement, as you finished reading the book.

If you are planning on doing this assignment then do not read any further, as what comes next may influence the outcome. Do the writing assignment and then continue reading. You may be in for a surprise.
Philosophy to Mission to Intention

Even though every mission statement written by participants before the beginning of a facilitators' training program is unique and special, they all express a general intention that focuses on three basic elements. Although one of the elements might be emphasized more than the other two, all three typically appear in each individual's mission statement in different forms and levels of intensity.

The three general intentions:

- Create rhythmical empowerment.
- Create community.
- Create health and wellness.

These three elements make up the Intention Triplexity. As we investigate the Intention Triplexity below, you can read quotes from mission statements that specifically apply to each element in the triplexity. These quotes are taken from the writing assignments of some of the participants of the annual Northern California VMC Facilitators' Playshop.

The many returnees to the VMC facilitators' trainings write a mission statement each time they participate in a program. It is interesting to note that their statements change. Each time a person attends a training, then goes out into the world and facilitates rhythm-based events, and then returns for another training, their next mission statement evolves and matures much like they do. Some facilitation training graduates have written many mission statements. Yet no matter how different each new mission statement is from the last one, the three basic elements are still typically represented.

Facilitators' Playshop trainees want rhythmical empowerment, community and wellness for themselves, as well as for the population they wish to serve through facilitating rhythm-based events.

My friend and fellow facilitator Sunray has a good outlook on the difference between having plans and having intention, so I have asked him to share it with you.

Facilitating with Intention

For me, facilitation begins with developing a clear understanding of my intention for the event. It begins with answering questions like: What do I want to happen? What do I want people to experience? What do I want people to learn? I usually express the answers in writing. For example, "My intention for this rhythm circle is for people to experience connection with each other, with themselves, and with Spirit." Another example might be, "My intention is for people to become musically empowered through their success at playing rhythms together."

I will state this intention in any advance publicity and again near the beginning of the session. This becomes my contract with the people I'm facilitating and opens them to the possibility that it will happen. Why? I believe that intention is the second most powerful force in the Universe. I believe that when one holds a clear, pure intention, the unseen forces of the Universe align with us to make it happen. I'm sure we all have different beliefs about this, and the explanation of "why" it works is less important to me than my reality that "it does work."

However, it doesn't work all by itself. I always make a plan for the event based on my intention. Sometimes I make a detailed plan and sometimes my plan is as simple as knowing the first thing I'm going to do, doing it, reading the group, and making the rest up as I go. Arthur teaches us to work with what the group gives us. To me, this means continually using my three-point radar (seeing, hearing, feeling) to observe what's happening, comparing what I observe with my intention, and asking if it's working.

Someone once observed, "Our plans are for the amusement of the Gods." Frankly, I've never been smart enough

to make a plan I didn't change, or maybe I've been smart enough to change every plan I ever made. I know I will never be smart enough to predict exactly where a group will want to go and what doorway will open that possibility for them. If I insisted on following my plan, it would squeeze the life out of the event. When I remain alert for the unexpected appearance of that doorway and open it, the event can become truly magical. And, yes, sometimes that doorway comes disguised as something else, so, for me, trusting my instincts is essential to good facilitation.

That is why I remind myself each time I facilitate to not be invested in my plan and to be heavily invested in my intention.

Intention Triplicity

Rhythmical empowerment, community building, and fostering health and wellness are the three elements that define the Intention Triplicity. We shall now examine each of these elements, seeing how they empower on both a personal level and at a community level.

Pay attention to your personal facilitation intentions as we take this journey. Understanding your intentions and connecting them to those of the group enables you to create the most positive and successful event possible for everyone involved.

Rhythmical Empowerment

Sharing your rhythmical spirit while making rhythm expression accessible to others is rhythmical empowerment. My personal mission, as well as the big picture mission of our growing community of drum circle facilitators, is to help create a rhythmically enabled society. In this empowered society, spontaneous expression of spirit and life through movement, rhythm and sound is encouraged regardless of age, social stature, rhythmical experience or musical expertise.

Since rhythm is the universal foundation of all language, dance, music and song, this empowerment naturally helps create a rhythmically enabled society. In a facilitated rhythm empowerment community drum circle, our intention is to offer a safe, supportive environment for exploration by giving every man, woman and child the opportunity to express their rhythmical spirit.

Everyone has rhythmical spirit and has the right to explore and express it in any form that works for them. Unfortunately not everyone believes they have this right. In fact, most Westerners believe the big lie. That big lie is that all people of European descent are rhythmically challenged. This belief seems to be true for most people who have grown up in societies dominated by contemporary Western culture, regardless of race.

The roots of this big lie can be uncovered by studying the systematic annihilation of many European rhythmacultures during the 1400s to the 1600s in an era of religious repression called the Inquisition.

During this era, anyone not following a very narrow social and religious viewpoint was persecuted, jailed, burned at the stake or drowned as a witch. Any rhythmical, musical or vocal expression that was deemed pagan or gypsy-like was suspect. What emerged from this cultural, musical and social genocide was a Victorian culture where drums were only used for wars and funerals.

These constraints of growing up in a Victorian-influenced social structure with oppressive Western musical teaching styles directly influence many people to feel rhythmically awkward.

As colonists conquered the new world territories, they suppressed the rhythmaculture of the heathens as devil worship. The big lie, "We are rhythmically challenged," continues from that era and is based on repression of

expression in fear of judgment and embarrassment. Now the predominant cultural belief is that you must be a professional musician to express your rhythmical and musical spirit. I say that this is a big lie and that it is not true.

The recreational drum circle can be an entry level experience for someone who believes that they are rhythmically challenged and incapable of keeping a beat. If this beginning-beginner player is curious, intrigued and enticed enough to participate in an in-the-moment rhythmical expression event, then they will tend to have a fun, rhythmically empowering experience.

As a drum circle facilitator, I call the process of guiding a person toward experiencing and expressing their own natural rhythmical spirit rhythmical evangelism. You need not be an evangelist to facilitate rhythmical empowerment into a drum circle process, but it helps.

Rhythmical Empowerment Mission Statement Examples

Some examples of participants' mission statements, as they relate to rhythmical empowerment:

- "I am an ambassador of the eternal pulse."—Kenya Masala
- "My personal mission is to continue to share my love for rhythm and drumming with as many individuals and groups as I can, and continue to expand my own knowledge of and connection to rhythm."—Kip Hubbard
- "Through rhythm, I assist others to their own discovery of their own personal rhythm."—Barb Pitcher
- "My intention is to nurture the new rhythmaculture in my community."—Robin Cardell
- "My desire is to let out the skilled, confident, caring and highly intuitive drummer within."—Heather Pentz
- "Use both motion and thought to stimulate the growth of new neurological pathways, creating a good and ever-improving sense of rhythm."—Rex Golston
- "I want to experience, understand and share my knowledge of this form of communication with people from all over the world."—Tomoko Yokota

Community Building

During a rhythm-based event, community consciousness is built among the participants and it carries into their daily life. A facilitated drum circle event is a natural community builder. With community metaphors delivered during the windows of communication, a good facilitator can reinforce the natural community-building experience.

Comparing differences is a separation trap. Sharing differences is a community celebration. People call it "team building" in the business environment, or "synergizing" in the personal growth world, but the bottom line is that a rhythm-based event, in its most basic form, is a powerful tool for community building.

At the end of a facilitated drum circle, strangers seem less strange to each other. There is more camaraderie in the population as they have created a group consciousness together. The players have been in constant collaboration for one or two hours, cooperating with each other to create beautiful rhythms and music together. In the process of playing together, participants put into action the basic elements that make a community or team function successfully to achieve any goal.

As Babatunde Olatunji always said, "Drumming is the simplest thing that we can do to bring us together."

Melting the Physiology of Separation

We sometimes take on mental, emotional and physical postures that separate us from each other. It can be very subtle, but a person in a conservative business environment will relate to his or her boss differently than they would relate to their assistant or the janitor.

I love to get everybody in a small company in the same room to participate in a drum circle team-building program, including the president. During the course of the event I get to watch the physiology of the business hierarchy that separates the president of the company from the janitor drumming next to him melt away and disappear. The simple act of drumming together “melts” their corporate physiology, and they begin to see and relate to each other more as people and less as job descriptions.

This melting of the “physiology of separateness” is a phenomena that happens in every drum circle event regardless of the group’s age, culture or intention. Where the body goes, the mind and heart soon follow. Once this melting happens, the concept of separateness in the minds of the players also melts and dissolves. Instead of looking for and thinking about the things that separate them, they look for and think about the things that connect them. In a drum circle those connecting elements are easy to find. They are in the music and rhythm.

Community building is a very good and very important intention to have in your personal mission as a drum circle facilitator.

Community-building Mission Statement Examples

Some examples of participants’ mission statements, as they relate to creating community:

- “Everything comes down to relationships. When I facilitate, teach and drum, the deep art of relating is at the core.”—Kenya Masala
- “Music performance, specifically drum ensemble, is a powerful means of creating a model environment where all participants have a ‘voice,’ where no one person is more important than the whole, and where everyone must actively participate in order to experience the fruits of their labor.”—Kip Hubbard
- “In this journey I have learned that we are all connected. I am here to share this experience of connectedness.”—Linda Van Voorhis
- “My mission is to promote wellness in the community through interactive music-making.”—Robin Cardell
- “I seek to weave a healing craft for bringing more peace, love and joy to the world.”—Heather Pentz
- “I want to feel, share and express the collaborative vibrations and wordless communication of the drum circle.”—Tomoko Yokota
- “I want to know how drum circles make some wonderful miracles happen without words.”—Fumiko Hayama

Peacemaking with Drums

Northern Ireland is well known for the ongoing struggle between the Protestants and Catholics. Sha, a spirited Irish drummer, started a drum circle community in Belfast after returning from his travels in California. He had been inspired by seeing drumming used as a tool for unifying communities. He created an ongoing email dialogue with me as he started the process of birthing this drumming community, and became an active member of the drum circle facilitators Internet dialogue list.

Sha was hosting an ongoing community drum circle on neutral territory, in Belfast City Centre, so that both Catholics and Protestants could come together and play without feeling so intimidated. After only a couple of weeks of community drum circles, the Workers’ Education Association, an adult education organization, hired him to teach drum classes.

Sha learned that I would be doing a REMO European tour and helped organize my visit to Belfast as part of that tour. Just before my scheduled visit, the famous annual Orange Order marches were happening. They were accompanied by the usual riots, protests and shootings. As a result of trouble in Drumcree, the main road from the airport had been blocked and barricaded more than once. We were very close to canceling that part of the tour. Everything quieted down two days before I was scheduled to facilitate, so I went.

Our first drum circle was held at the Stormont buildings, next to the Parliament, which houses the Northern Ireland



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Assembly. Everyone attending the drum circle passed through heavy security to arrive at the circle, which we facilitated outside the building on government grounds. Mr. Howarth, Minister of Political Development, attended the event along with six other political executives and ministers. Both Catholic and Protestant community and youth group leaders who had been drumming with Sha also participated.

I made a short opening speech to the group of thirty players, saying that we, as the Belfast drumming community, leave our political and religious affiliations outside the circle and use the circle as a place of meeting in rhythmical spirit to create peaceful dialogue. After the first rhythm, Mr. Howarth reflected on the use of drumming as a way to bring community together and celebrate the basic elements that make us human. Staff members stood outside the circle, watching us play, until I tossed them frame drums and mallets. Given the history of Northern Ireland, a group of both Catholics and Protestants drumming together to celebrate community was a powerful message to present to a divided city.

That night a Belfast community drum circle was held on the streets of the city center, in downtown Belfast. Only forty players joined in the drumming due to the limited number of instruments available, but up to a hundred spectators joined us during the circle. Sha and I co-facilitated the event, including the spectators in the circle, by using vocals and hand claps.

These drum circles were a prelude to country-wide drum circle programs that Sha developed in Northern Ireland. He facilitated drum circles with the youth in Drumcree, using drumming as a metaphor for peace and understanding. Sha has brought community drum circles to some hard-core parts of Belfast, playing with both the Protestant and Catholic communities, bringing them together through rhythm.

Health & Wellness

Drumming is a lifestyle enhancement activity. Concerns about their health and wellness motivate players to drum both privately and in groups.

In some Facilitators' Playshops I ask the question "How many of you have had, or know of someone who has had a successful acupuncture treatment?" About a third of the participants raise their hands. As recently as 30 years ago, Western medical culture called acupuncture Chinese quackery. Over the years, studies have confirmed that acupuncture is a viable form of treatment in specific situations, and it is now an accepted medical practice in the U.S. and Europe.

Additional ancient practices that may be effective in certain situations have yet to be tested and confirmed by modern medical science and accepted.

Music therapists know the power of music, but as members of the medical profession they are very careful about using the word healing. While I do not want to appear as a charlatan by making a broad statement that drumming heals, in my 40 years of drumming in community, I have seen some amazing positive changes in people's lives while they were drumming.

Those involved in this grass-roots rhythmical expression movement can testify to the power of drumming and its ability to relieve stress and anxiety, calm the mind and create an expressive channel to release pent-up emotions. The exercise aspects of drumming alone make it a healthy activity. Drumming is one of many disciplines that can enhance the wellness factor in your life.

Health and Wellness Mission Statement Examples

Some examples of participants' mission statements, as they relate to health and wellness:

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- “It is my mission to be in reciprocity with this abundant universe; to serve the great mystery of life and share the goodness in any way that I am called to do so.”—Kenya Masala
- “I am here to open myself to the possibilities of how my unique assets might influence the world for the better. I am here to continue healing myself, thereby helping to facilitate healing all around me.”—Kip Hubbard
- “I am here for healing and growth in drumming with others. We create a spiritual energy that opens us up to one another, that allows us to experience the connectedness that we share.”—Linda Van Voorhis
- “I facilitate to help people fill the void, left in our lives by a typically ‘spiritually shallow’ lifestyle”—Robin Cardell

Music Enters Where Words Cannot Pass

Barry Bittman, MD, a researcher and neurologist, is head of the Mind-Body Wellness Center, in Meadville, Pennsylvania. His research has shown that certain group drumming protocols can positively affect the immune system in your body. He has broken the AMA “sound barrier” by proving that drumming can have a measurable, reproducible, positive impact on many aspects of biology, psychology and social interaction. He shares a story about mind over matter.

Perhaps it wasn’t a good idea after all. They smiled and he didn’t. They played and he didn’t. The group jelled through a synchronized beat that resounded their strength and commitment to living life fully, without him. The young man with cancer just sat with them, obviously detached. The group understood. They knew him well. Each was facing cancer in one way or another, either as a patient or a support person in our Cancer Program.

His stillness touched us that June afternoon with an emptiness out of sync with the rhythmical energy our leader magically imparted to us.

It wasn’t an ordinary day at the Mind-Body Wellness Center, and our facilitator wasn’t an ordinary drumming leader. On the surface, he was a guest presenter at a conference to be held the next day. Little did we know he was far more than that, for what we were about to learn changed each of us. Our drummer didn’t appear coincidentally either, nor was he scheduled. On a whim, our counselor called him at his hotel and invited him to join us. Without hesitation and within minutes, he literally bounced through the door with bubbling exuberance that immediately broke the serenity of the Center.

I suppose he was glad someone called. He claimed to have been writing an article for a national magazine all morning. Yet I had difficulty believing he could ever sit still for more than a few minutes. For after announcing his presence (does a whirlwind ever need an announcement?), he literally stormed into the meeting room—an open, airy setting where our group was arranged in a circle. A heartfelt discussion of rediscovering meaning and purpose in life was abruptly cut short by a man who couldn’t contain his enthusiasm to get started. Without the slightest hesitation, he ran over to a collection of colorful REMO hand drums stacked neatly in the corner of the room. Frantically, he set to task placing then rearranging them chaotically in front of each person. He continued scurrying about without a break until all drums were in place, obviously according to some order he had in mind. We stared at each other and wondered what he would do next. After finally collapsing in a chair, he took a deep breath, sighed loudly and looked up at us. After adjusting his strange little hat and rearranging his fisherman’s vest, the drummer smiled ear to ear and nonchalantly asked, “What is the problem you people have anyway?” “Cancer,” our counselor responded in a subdued tone. “Have you all recovered?” he interjected. “No,” I replied. “We are in the midst of a coordinated, whole-person treatment approach.” While that answer didn’t seem to phase him for more than a fraction of a second, there was a noticeable pause and a gasp before he began a supercharged explanation of the history of drumming. Our group didn’t seem to mind. In fact, we were all wondering what would happen next.

It didn’t take long to find out. Within minutes, there was an upbeat resonance emanating from a group that he might have described as rhythmically challenged individuals. We were all beginners and everyone seemed to



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delight in participating, except for the young man whose cancer paralyzed his painful right arm which was held close to his body in a makeshift sling. Despite a bit of lighthearted coaxing by our earnest drumming guru, a nod followed by a telltale stare at the floor revealed the young man's sentiment and it was understood and accepted by everyone in the room. While the group played on, deep inside, I wished he'd join in.

I offered him a shaker, a wooden gourd with beads inside, from an assortment of oddly-shaped tools in our arsenal of percussion instruments. He gently waved me off as his young wife continued tapping her drum and nodded thanks with a bittersweet smile—one that fully conveyed their melancholy plight without a single word.

Within minutes, our ragtag group of former pencil tappers and knee slappers actually sounded like we'd done this before. And as our leader, bigger than life, rose from his chair and signaled us for an intensive drum roll finale, our hearts, souls and enthusiasm energized each other and connected us. That crescendo boomed throughout the Center, shaking the walls and the windows. We had become one sound at one moment in time resounding past challenge, past adversity and past cancer.

Yet it didn't seem to connect with the spirit of a young man who perhaps needed it the most. More than ever, I wished he'd play with us. As our drum beats were replaced with smiles and applause for our collective accomplishment, my eyes connected with his and the pain of his suffering. I knew the seriousness of his condition and recognized the despair he felt, as well as the courage it took just to sit with us.

Before I could say a word, there was an unexpected metamorphosis in our drumming facilitator. Unpredictably and out of character, he began to speak calmly and deliberately in a soothing tone that contrasted so abruptly with the wild exhilaration we had just experienced. He seemed to know something we didn't, something hidden in a story about the first drum beat each of us had ever heard, the lub-dub of a mother's heart. He taught us to re-create it with those amazing instruments that minutes before brought us together with incredible resolve and camaraderie. As we played in unison, his gentle words took us back generations to our grand-mother's and great-grandmother's heartbeat. He guided us back through time to a place where that sound was first heard, a place where true balance and harmony existed within each one of us. It was a place where even the threat of cancer could not exist.

And as his words progressively faded and the only sounds that filled the room were the lub-dubs of our hands and hearts, something wonderful happened. As we glanced at our teacher, we sensed it, we felt it and we heard it. There was a new drum beat amongst ours, and it was perfectly attuned to the lub-dub of our hands and our hearts. Each of us nodded, sighed and welcomed back the young man whose left hand tapped in synchrony with ours, an acceptance of the healing connection each one of us extended. That June day the young man taught us something never to be forgotten: music enters where words cannot pass.

While our rhythmical alchemist, as he sometimes refers to himself, doesn't like to admit it, he is really a talented therapist simply disguised as a drummer. Arthur Hull's real magic is in the energy of the music he teaches us to express: a symphony of souls that draws us together in mind, body and spirit.

As for the young man, I'm confident he will never have to drum again with just one hand. For every time a new group of rhythmically challenged individuals seeks to synergize their souls at our Center, I sense the vibrations of both his hands leading us: Mind Over Matter!

Epilogue: Upon completing this article, I pondered placing it in my weekly newspaper column. With respect for issues of confidentiality, I called the young man's wife to present the story, and ask for permission before proceeding.

Just as each drum circle illuminates new and valuable insights, her poignant response revealed the true nature of what actually existed beneath the tip of the iceberg. She expressed gratitude for the article, yet clearly articulated

that I had not been aware of what actually occurred. While we had witnessed the young man's transformation on one level, transcendence had actually evolved on another.

The couple had been married less than a year. Advanced metastatic malignant melanoma and its inevitability came with the wedding ring. And while this young woman had been able to cope with the terminal nature of her husband's illness initially, the detachment he manifested after just a few months of marriage pierced her soul.

He literally shut everyone out of his life including his young bride. His silence was unbearable. It was extraordinarily painful beyond her expectations.

The drum beat that signaled emergence from isolation to deep communication, sharing and mutual support fostered a sense of closeness between husband and wife that endured until his death three months later.

Her story reflects an expression of love that transcends even the inevitability of incurable disease. It demonstrates the true potential of active musicmaking as a powerful catalyst for human support. In the hands of a beanie-clad facilitator who instinctively knows when to get out of the way, practically anything is possible!

Chairman of the "Bored"

Heather MacTavish is considered an elder in our community, not only because of her age but because of her knowledge, maturity and wisdom. She has pioneered new ways to deliver rhythm-based events to the elderly, both those who are well and those who are physically and mentally challenged. She shares a story.

How does one support the restoration, maintenance and enhancement of health, well-being and personal dignity? How does one discover, initiate and maintain an attitude of energy, empowerment and acceptance?

At a senior day center, Peter rocks in a chair, in obvious distress. He is disruptive and demanding, constantly complaining, unaware that he has cancer. Maria slumps in her wheelchair, frowning and unresponsive. A series of strokes have shriveled and tightened her world. Eleanor sits immobile, staring, her face frozen in a Parkinsonian mask. John projects agitation and confrontation. Arms akimbo, he paces constantly, his actions and emotions shaped by schizophrenia. Stripped of personally defining roles, these individuals share the right to thrive, not merely survive.

There is a stirring—tools of change and choice appear. Nesting drums grab interest as they emerge, much like Russian dolls. Hoop drums, each with a compelling design and spirit, are placed on stands. Boomwhackers and frogs add to the mix. All are tuned to the key of C—communication and compassion.

The facilitator now sits on her rolling chair encouraging eye contact and connection. Bright shoes, outlandish socks and dancing daisies grab attention and promote involvement. Instruments of enrichment are being unleashed. Individuals join in partnership, exploring expression through rhythm, bodies moving to the beat. Using songs from the past, the facilitator summons dormant emotions. Memories emerge, wrapped in old songs and familiar melodies. Neurons are firing and brains are rewiring.

The Tip of the Iceberg

When you see an iceberg floating in the ocean you are seeing less than a quarter of its mass. Over seventy-five percent of it is submerged: an invisible platform supporting the visible tip above the water line.

I use the tip of the iceberg as a metaphor for understanding the relationship of the Intention Triplicity to the Arthurian Facilitation Triplicity. Tools and techniques are the visible parts of the Arthurian Facilitation triplicity. Together, they are the tip of the iceberg. The tools are easy to model and learn, by watching other people

facilitate. Most of the facilitation techniques are also visible, but the intentions behind them are sometimes unseen.

Your intention, powered by your mission and the philosophies that support it, is the engine that drives the tools and techniques. Your intentions steer your tools and techniques as you facilitate a cohesive and congruent drum circle event. It is your philosophy, and thereby your mission and intentions, that form the invisible platform holding up the tools and techniques.

No matter how good you are at using these basic tools and techniques, you must also have a clear intention, to avoid creating an empty, directionless drum circle that is not even entertaining. Without a well-developed philosophy of why you are standing in the middle of a circle of players and directing them, your facilitation will lack substance. Without a well-developed intention, the tip of your iceberg may not be very visible.

While having experience as a professional percussionist, performer or drum teacher can give you an advantage as a drum circle facilitator, simply having that background and the tools and techniques of facilitation are not enough to make you a good facilitator. Your ability to entertain, your playing ability and body language skills are only tools. To be a successful facilitator you need to listen to the group to know when, how and why to use those tools.

Facilitating with full attention to your circle comes from an intention to serve the group. This intention both supports and directs the use of facilitation tools. When you understand your intentions, your past experience will not unconsciously steer your actions toward a manipulation that gets in the way of a successful experience.

Modeling the Tip of the Iceberg

Bill (an alias), is a well-known professional player, entertainer and performer extraordinaire. After seeing me facilitate a drum circle at a music industry show in the early 1990s, Bill rightly deduced that recreational drumming would be the next big paradigm shift in what was then mostly a professionally dominated, culturally specific drum circle movement. When he told me of his plans to facilitate rhythm-based events, I offered to help him with feedback and suggestions. His response to my offer was to let me know, in no uncertain terms, that he wanted to create his own facilitation style without my influence. Bill's attitude was that he was a veteran entertainer and professional drummer who had all the tools and experience he needed to facilitate. It looked like a simple job to him.

Respecting his wishes, I watched him facilitate at subsequent music industry events and quietly cringed at the lack of depth of his facilitation skills and the resultant lack of depth of experience he created for the drum circle players. It was obvious that he was modeling the tip of the iceberg of facilitators he had observed. He had picked up some of the standard facilitation moves, but not the invisible supporting elements that make them successful. He was using them at the wrong time, in the wrong sequence, for the wrong reason or maybe for no reason at all. I call this type of facilitation "facilitainment." I watched Bill many times give a performance as a facilitator while manifesting little real relationship with his players. In these performances, he used the tip of the facilitator's iceberg, with his only visible intention being to entertain.

Several years after he started facilitating, Bill asked me how he could improve his facilitation technique, due to having received critical feedback from members of the drum circle community. Due to the limited time we had together, I decided to focus on one specific facilitation technique with which he was struggling. I told him that understanding that problem and its solution would hopefully reveal the answer to his big-picture facilitation question.

We discussed Bill's bunny hop facilitation sequence, one of the techniques described in "Modulated Sequences" on page 74. From a "tip of the iceberg" viewpoint, the bunny hop looks easy enough. On the surface it appears

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that the facilitator need only create shorter and shorter rumble stops until the group locks onto the pulse.

So why did Bill create a train wreck rumble closing or else force his players into crisis mode as they tried to “catch up” to his hopping pulse whenever he facilitated this sequence? The reason was that Bill thought the players were supposed to listen and follow him. It was only when I described the bunny hop technique to him in detail that he realized that he needed to listen and follow the players to be successful.

Here is a secret that nearly every Arthurian rhythm event facilitator learns. Only when you work with a group of professional drummers can you create arbitrary modulated pulse rumbles successfully. If you initiate a rumble and listen for the group crescendo to tell you when to do the stop cut, then each time you initiate the next rumble in the bunny hop sequence, you will be able to gently push the group crescendo. You will be able to stop a little faster each time, until eventually you are not sure whether they are following you or you are following them.

One of the secrets to facilitation success is to do it in a way so that you are not sure who is following whom. When you listen to the group to determine how fast to do the next rumble stop, then by the time the group has turned the bunny hop into a new rhythm groove, most players won't be sure whether that last sequence was your idea or theirs.