

INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF DRUM CIRCLE FACILITATION, PART 3

DIRECTING THE GROUP TOWARDS MUSICALITY

BY ARTHUR HULL

This is the third article of a continuing series based on the Village Music Circle [VCM] video *The Art of Drum Circle Facilitation*. The one-hour video is based on a four-step protocol of how to successfully facilitate a family-friendly contemporary rhythm-based event. The [introductory article](#) appeared in the April 2017 issue of *Rhythm! Scene*. The second article, "[Facilitation Signals for a Drum Circle](#)," appeared in the June 2017 issue. By using this VMC protocol, you will be able to take a circle of drummers from a group playing consciousness, to an ensemble playing consciousness, and finally into orchestrational consciousness, where drum rhythm grooves are turned into music.

Once you use the facilitation techniques in the video to facilitate a community drum circle, you then can adapt these techniques to facilitate almost any kind of rhythm-based event with any kind of population—from school kids to well elderly to corporate team-building events.

The first step in the Village Music Circle drum circle facilitation protocol is called "Dictator" (explained in Part 2 of this series). At the beginning of a drum circle event, you are dictating to the players in the circle the basic body language signals that you will be using throughout your drum circle event. Through this facilitation process you educate the players about the facilitator's body language. In doing so, you set up a basic platform from which you can go into the "Director" mode of the drum circle facilitator protocol and begin to direct the players' attention to the music that they are making but are not yet aware of.

As the "director," you are using your facilitation skills to direct your group's attention towards the elements that make "musicality" happen in a drum circle event. You do this through a facilitation process called "teaching without teaching." In actuality, you are doing "experiential training." You are creating experiences of the different kinds of musical elements by sculpting out and showcasing those elements.

Here are some of the elements being sculpted and showcased by a number of different facilitators in this video.

- Low, medium, or high pitched drums. Mary Tolena sculpted and showcased all the low drummers in the circle and stopped everyone else for listening.
- Drum types. In the video, you see me sculpting and showcasing all the djembes in the circle, and then I do accent notes

with the rest of the players in the circle for listening, before bringing the whole group back into the groove.

- Percussion timbre. You can sculpt out all the all hand percussion players, and then stop all the drummers to revel the "percussion song." Or you can sculpt out and showcase individual timbres, such as all the bells, all the woodblock instruments, or all the shakers to unveil that particular "timbre song."

Sculpting out one side of the circle for showcasing, while stopping the other side of the circle for listening and appreciation, is a form of "directing." It educates the non-playing side that there are other people playing on the other side of the circle with whom they can do "rhythm dialogue."



▶ Tap to play Video



Directing the group towards Musicality through Experiential Training

As the “director” in the VMC drum circle facilitator protocol, you are directing the group’s attention to the musical elements that help the music sound good by sculpting and highlighting various sub-groups. By creating more awareness in your players of the elements that make music in a drum circle, you help them make more and better music.

A reminder: Softer volume means more listening, and more listening means more music.

Throughout the video you will see me, and other VMC facilitator graduates, demonstrate different facilitation tech-

niques based on simple body language signals. But what you *won’t* see is that, most of the time, good drum circle facilitators stay out of the center of the circle. This allows the players to connect with each other to explore and express their collaborative rhythm and their musical spirit. We call this action of leaving the center of the circle “GOOW”: Get Out Of the Way. And sometimes we say “STOOW”: Stay Out Of the Way. Let the rhythm go until they need your help.

Until the next installment in this series, Share Your Spirit!

The full one-hour video of *The Art of Drum Circle Facilitation* can be viewed at <https://villagemusiccircles.com/the-art-of-drum-circle-facilitation/>.

Arthur Hull travels the world inspiring community-building through the metaphor of music. His pioneering rhythm facilitation work has touched the lives of thousands of people world-wide, instigating the new and growing profession of the community drum circle facilitator. In 1980 Arthur founded Village Music Circles to bring rhythm-based experiences to communities and organizations worldwide. Arthur has inspired a grass-roots movement of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds who have learned to use the impact of rhythm to improve human interaction—from corporate executives to kids at risk. **RIS**

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