

INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF DRUM CIRCLE FACILITATION, PART 4

FACILITATING THE DRUM ENSEMBLE TOWARDS ORCHESTRATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

BY ARTHUR HULL

This is the fourth in a series of five articles and video installments that describe and demonstrate the four stages of the Village Music Circles Drum Circle Facilitation Protocol. 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 orchestration-consciousness, where drum rhythm grooves are turned into music.

If you have been following this series of articles, you have gone through the basic Village Music Circle protocol that will help you get a drum circle started through facilitating interactive experiential rhythmical playing activities. I have introduced to you the process of facilitating a “Drum Call” experience that will educate your drum circle playing group about itself and the collaborative musical potential that exists in any group rhythm event.

By completing the Drum Call process, you have also completed the job descriptions of (1) the Dictator, dictating to the players in the circle the basic body-language signals that you will be using throughout your whole drum circle event, and (2) the Director, directing the group towards ensemble consciousness and musicality through experiential activities.

The key to knowing when to stop being the Director and start being the Facilitator (the third job description in the Village Music Circle facilitation protocol) is when the players in your drum circle are turning their drum rhythm grooves into interactive music expressions. Now that your rhythm ensemble is offering you some musical elements to facilitate, the real drum circle facilitation experience begins.

The basic elements that make a musical rhythm ensemble are “platformed” in the following order:

1. Rhythm Connection. This must be in place before any other musical element can appear in any rhythm groove. If you don’t have rhythm connection, you won’t have a group rhythm groove to work with.

2. Interactive Dialogue. A connected group rhythm groove becomes the foundational platform for interactive dialogue to occur between your drum circle players and their different instruments. There are many ways to facilitate interactive dialogue amongst your players, but the fundamental role of the fa-

ilitator is to help the players use their notes to make space for other people’s creativity.

3. Melody Line. Once you have your players listening and talking to each other in their interactive rhythmical dialogue, you have set the foundation for a particular melody line, or Rhythm Song, to appear in the totality of the group’s interactive playing. These melody lines in your drum circle group’s playing will constantly evolve and change throughout the event. Sculpting and showcasing the particular players who are the fundamental contributors of any “dialogue melody line” is the key to facilitating your playing group into higher and more sophisticated forms of musicality.



▶ Tap to play Video



4. Harmonics. Once a melody line appears in your interactive drum circle music, then many different types of harmonics will manifest itself in between the activities of different timbral contributions offered by your players. We call this “Angels In the Music.” You will swear that you can hear chorus voices or a flute or saxophone in the sound mix when there isn’t anyone singing or playing a wind instrument in the circle. Angels In the Music is a manifestation of the harmonies created in your drum circle.

These are the musical elements in your drum circle ensemble that you can facilitate, select, and showcase, which will allow you to raise the group’s level of musicality. This style of facilitation will help you to guide the players in your group towards “orchestrational consciousness.”

My experience is that the best facilitators who follow the Village Music Circle facilitator drum circle protocol, do two things:

- Follow the people who are following you!
- Work with what they give you!

This means that while facilitating a drum circle group, you’re listening deeply to what contributions the players are offering to the music, and then you facilitate and showcase those contributions and connections in such a way that you are guiding the players in the direction they want to go—towards spirited music making while creating the Angels In the Music.

Sculpting and showcasing rhythm “songs” of mixed timbers and drum pitches and then stop-cutting the rest of the players will educate those non-playing people in the circle about “orchestrational consciousness” while they are listening to that particular sculpted “song.” Sculpting these elements in the circle as a platform for more sophisticated musical interaction is your intention as a facilitator.

In the accompanying 12-minute segment of the one-hour VMC Facilitation video, you will find examples of song sculpting as a music platform for inviting deeper listening and more sophisticated music interaction. Throughout this video you will see me, and many other Village Music Circle facilitator graduates, demonstrate facilitation techniques 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 as much as possible. This allows the players to connect with each other to explore and express their collab-

orative 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 “STOW”: Stay Out Of the Way. Let the rhythm go until the drummers 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**