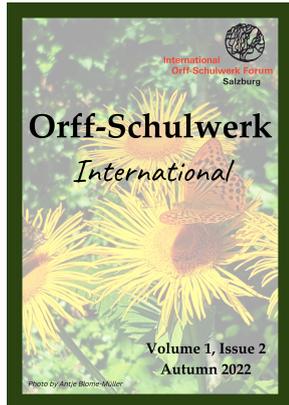




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The European Mentorship Programme in Orff-Schulwerk Pedagogy

Christa Coogan, Elin Bergdal, Aixa Toledo Benítez,
Wan Yu Goh, Xavi Manyoses Rocamora



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From Around the World

The European Mentorship Programme in Orff-Schulwerk Pedagogy

Christa Coogan, Elin Bergdal, Aixa Toledo Benítez, Wan Yu Goh, Xavi Manyoses Rocamora

While Orff-Schulwerk philosophical and pedagogical concepts offer comprehensive and meaningful training in music and movement education across the spectrum of amateur musicianship groups (in schools and after-school programs, in kindergartens, in inclusive groups, etc.), there are few initiatives that gear their attention to the needs and qualifications of those who train these teachers in their own countries as well as internationally.

The European Mentorship Programme is such an initiative. It is an intensive professional development course for younger, well-trained Orff-Schulwerk pedagogues who have a specific passion for developing their capacities to teach teachers. Distinguishing features of the programme provide a unique design and adhere to a reciprocal learning process between mentors and mentees.

This programme establishes cross-generational and international interaction. It creates a space where expert educators and younger teachers can work together modeling classes, discussing strategies, challenging assumptions, stimulating and inspiring one another. It aims to encourage innovation and creativity, to develop leadership skills for inevitable ongoing changes in educational practice, to reflect on learning and leadership approaches, and to work beyond professional and organizational boundaries in order to develop a more encompassing understanding and to apprehend the 'bigger picture'.

A team of internationally renowned, European practitioners Orff-Schulwerk teacher-trainers - Soili Perkiö, Elisa Seppänen, and Christa Coogan – designed the programme. All three teach music and movement education in universities, teach classes with babies, children, or young people, teach in Orff-Schulwerk Levels Trainings, and teach workshops and seminars internationally.

Beginning with a successful pilot project in 2019, the programme has been followed by three successive groups, the last one ending in May 2022.

- 1) From January to June 2019 four mentees joined the **pilot** programme. (*The program began in St. Petersburg, Russia and ended in Estonia*).
- 2) From March to October 2020 four mentees participated in the programme's second year. (*Due to the pandemic, this course took place entirely online*).
- 3) From August 2020 to June 2021 seven participants joined our *Singapore Satellite* mentorship programme. (*Due to the pandemic, this course took place entirely online*).
- 4) From October 9, 2021 to May 2022 we welcomed eight participants coming from Brazil, Finland, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, and the USA. (*This course took place entirely online*).

Each group and every individual in that group has distinct strengths, goals and needs which inform the content and pathways of our work together. Thus the design of each mentorship group is somewhat different. To successfully complete the programme, however, we do have certain requirements:

- Mentorship meetings occur 7 to 8 times a year, for 3 hours.
- Each mentor meets individually with mentees as situations and questions arise.
- Mentees have regular assignments throughout the year. These include:
 - planning, teaching, and analysing their own sessions with adults
 - observing and analysing teaching sequences from mentors
 - observing and analysing teaching sequences from mentee colleagues
 - reading and writing assignments
 - meetings with study groups
 - attending performances, exhibitions, and the like.

We invite you to read the four reflections below, each written by a mentee from one of the four groups.

Mentees Reflect **First Group - 2019**

Elin Bergdal



I had the privilege of participating in the first New European Mentorship Programme in Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy in 2019 together with my fellow mentees; Elina Simes (FIN), Clara Horbach (GER) and Ezgi Tatar (TUR). Being chosen for this mentorship by teachers that I admire and that have inspired me so much during my studies in Orff-Schulwerk was an honour. Their ambition to share their knowledge and encourage others to delve deeper into the process of teaching the arts is a mindset I share and carry with me every day.

The mentorship consisted of different assignments during the year that supported our development as teachers, musicians, dancers, and human beings. We had opportunities to reflect on our own teaching and on our identity as music teachers and musicians, answering the question of what the philosophy and foundation is, of why we teach the arts. We were

challenged to face our weaknesses and find our strengths. And all this while having an open dialogue with our mentors. Three years later my will to continuously become a better teacher, getting inspired by other teachers and their unique way of approaching music pedagogy, and the way of perceiving the arts as a holistic phenomenon, can be traced to my time in the Mentorship Programme.

On a personal level some parts of the mentorship program were especially meaningful and groundbreaking for my development as a teacher.

- **The discovery of co-teaching and co-planning.** During the programme we had many opportunities to co-teach and co-plan workshops together with our mentors and our fellow mentees. This offers a first-row seat for understanding how different teachers construct their lessons, seeing the underlying webs of thought and how different themes of the session are reflected during the lesson. This way of teaching has had an immense impact on developing my pedagogical thinking. Teaching together with your mentor also emphasised the mentors' mind set of equality between the mentors and mentees, seeing us as colleagues rather than "*master and apprentice*", dissolving the pyramid of hierarchy. Teaching together is a challenge and a gift, for in a good collaboration you need trust, an open mind and mutual respect. Once you have this foundation in your collaboration, planning together can be extremely rewarding: throwing in thoughts, being able to question and develop each other's ideas and together forming a process that both are satisfied with. Teaching together allows more possibilities for developing the process in the moment, two observers who can encourage the participants and give models for the quality of the exercise, and possibilities to split the group into different activities without having to 'leave' the other groups. Co-teaching is an ongoing process; Elina and I started working together during the mentorship and are still developing our way of collaborating and co-teaching.
- **To analyse a teaching session from different points of view.** One of my favourite assignments was analysing our mentors' teaching. We were given instructions to observe the lesson from different perspectives (learner's experience, pedagogue's actions and choices, development of the process), and search for answers to different questions. After the session we shared our observations and had the opportunity to discuss the session with the mentors: they could explain their choices and share thoughts about their planning process. This way of analysing and observing different aspects of teaching has helped me in my own planning process; also, it has helped to support a way of learning on a deeper level.
- **The relationship between music, movement and dance.** As a musician, I have a deep love for expressing myself in music through playing and singing. I didn't have much experience in expressing myself through dance. At several points in the programme, I had moments of clarity when completely giving my body as an instrument for expressing emotion. These kinds of experiences are imperative for me to become a better teacher for both my younger students and other teachers - to find ways of inspiring participants to emphasise the quality of the movement, to develop their

body awareness and create a safe space for having deep, meaningful moments of bodily expression.

- **International networking.** The fact that the programme is international gives it another important dimension. Connecting and collaborating with like-minded music teachers as fellow mentees widens your perspective of the world. One learns about joint values and different cultural approaches and sees one's own culture and way of thinking in a new light. Having the opportunity to teach teachers from different countries during the programme taught us skills for connecting with a group: for instance, the importance of learning the participant's names, as well as the use of body language, facial expressions, and non-verbal communication. We are a part of this big multifaceted world, and music is connecting us all.



Our Mentorship Program officially ended in autumn 2019 but our road to becoming better teachers never ends. Being a creative teacher means finding inspiration wherever we go, in places we see, in people we meet, and being just as eager to learn as to teach.

Second Group - 2020

Aixa Toledano Benitez

My mentorship program happened during a special year. We started in February 2020 and the pandemic arrived in March 2020. It was an uncertain situation that we had never experienced before, and we all needed to adjust.

The mentors had to reorganise and plan in a more suitable way, and it surely came with a



new set of challenges on how to continue without diminishing the vital components of the programme. We didn't know for certain if we could meet in live situations, as had been planned. And, in the end, those initial plans had to be cancelled and our programme was held completely online.

I still vividly remember that it was in the Mentorship Programme that I had my first ever Zoom session. Soili, always thinking ahead, arranged a Zoom meeting for all of us. Who would have imagined that two years later we would eventually be so accustomed to online meetings, and it would be for many of us a big part of our daily life and our reality! Zoom and other platforms have become now commonplace for most educators, and although it took a while to adjust, it hasn't been all negative. Many positive things came along with it. The possibilities of meeting our friends, colleagues, and the Orff community around the world allowed us to be more connected than ever before.



One unique aspect of the Mentorship Programme is how individual and specific the mentors' design is for each Mentee group, depending on the specific mentees, our necessities, and the moment itself. It is never the same, as it does not follow a rigid set of objectives. And this is, of course, how we educators need to deal with our students, and our situations. Thus, it set a good example. The mentors adjust to each of us and customise what they see to be important or needed for each one of us in diverse situations.

I would also emphasise that this programme was unique in how personal and close the mentors were, their availability and their genuine concern. I would imagine this wouldn't be the case in a regular university or any other formal study programme. For instance, speaking from personal experience, you could receive a call at night from Christa no matter the day of the week if you had some troubles to discuss; Soili was there to assist with technical issues

for a Sunday sharing; Elisa connected online to check-in on the warm-up to be presented in a couple of days.

The mentors are excellent professionals and dedicated to improving and contributing to society. Their example has impacted on me and will always be a meaningful reference point. The Mentorship Programme is still influencing my professional and personal growth. It has made me aware of things I want to develop more, and it addressed the things with which I struggled and need to work on. It was also valuable to work with my group of mentees: Ilkay, Riikka, and Sonia. They were an important part of my learning and gave me a deeper awareness of where I am.

If I were to participate in the programme once again, perhaps now, two years later, it would be different, for I have grown and the group as well. Or it would be another group of mentees. The mentors and the group would cater accordingly. I would be enriched in other ways than I was two years ago

This leads me to my final thought about the Mentorship Programme: for each of us it is a part of our path, and this path doesn't have an end. It is a continuation of the marvellous, scary, exciting, and never-ending growth as educators and human beings.

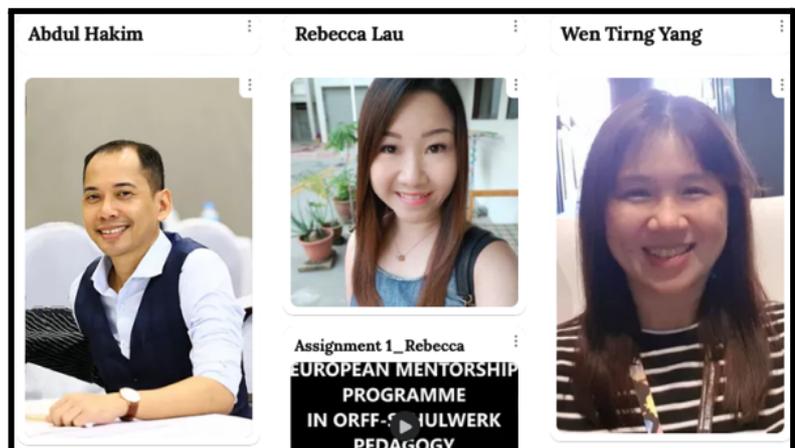
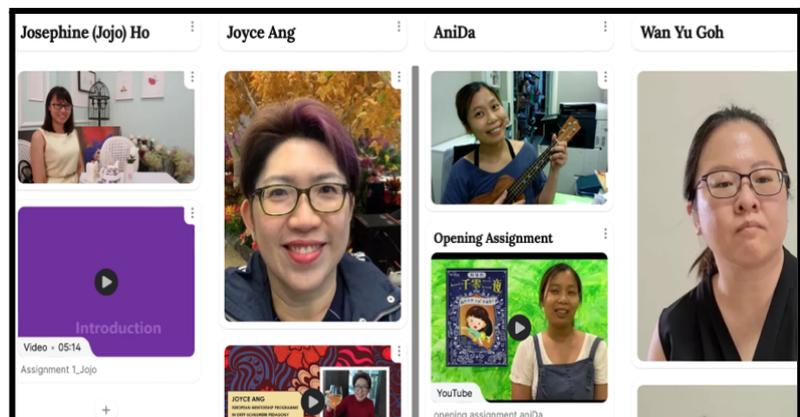
Third Group - 2021

Wan Yu Goh

Beginnings

One of my colleagues in SingOrff was very keen to let us get a feel for the European Orff-Schulwerk experience as we have had Australian and American Orff pedagogues come to Singapore to give workshops. Hence my colleague reached out to Christa and established a connection between Singapore, Hong Kong, and Europe.

The plan was to have the project take place in three phases - digital communication, face-to-face in Singapore, then finally face-to-face in Finland. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, our entire mentorship programme was held online from August 2020 to May 2021. I will not deny that the



pandemic has brought about possibilities and convenience of learning from world class experts from Europe. The challenge to teach online was entirely another skill set and I started out quite uncomfortable and uncertain.

Eventually I started on my journey on the European Mentorship Programme with my three mentors, Soili, Christa, and Elisa. Throughout the entire programme, our main form of communication was E-mail and our work was documented on Padlet.

YOUR REFLECTIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT

JOJO: PDF Jojo_Reflective_Writing_Assignment

HAKIM: The 3 Wise Teachers. REFLECTIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT - The 3 Wise Teachers. PDF Reflective Writing Assignment - The 3 Wise Teachers

WEN TIRNG: REFLECTIVE WRITING ASSIGNMENT (Nov)_3 teachers. PDF Reflective Writing Assignment (Nov)_3 teachers

REBECCA: My Reflective Writing Assignment - Rebecca. PDF Reflective Writing Assignment

Fifth Teaching Assignment
May 23 and June 5, 2021

Hakim: -Begin with the Waltz from Shostakovich – in movement and feeling the time change in the body (be clear about your movement task) -Moving leads to composing in small groups with compound time -Some kind of surprise at the end! NOTES from Critical Response Process. Statement of meaning: Elisa: meaningful on the story delivery. Soili: recording of the story-very expressive and easy to follow. Joyce: like the common thread which links the beginning to the end. How something small and insignificant becomes something unexpected.

Rebecca: Vivaldi is your starting place; discover in the musical movement that you used for your artist date 3 qualities (you used one - staccato) that can be transferred to barred instruments (you will also find 3 art paintings to support this idea of musical qualities – one you already have). NOTES from Critical Response Process. Part 1: Statement of Meaning: Anida: winter theme was much appreciated and the words helped with the movement. Christa: use of voice appropriate, that it took on the qualities that you were looking for. Wan Yu: Observant of everybody, that you gave people time to watch the others.

Wen Tirng: Connect percussion instrument and movement. Movement explorations to include locomotion/around the instrument; turning, jumping; percussion explorations to include sounds created on the body and on the instruments. The results: duets created by the participants! NOTES from Critical Response Process. Statement of meaning: WY: Felt that it was very interactive and constantly at the edge of seat looking forward to what's coming next. Clara: loves the greeting part and get to see different kinds of greetings of different countries.

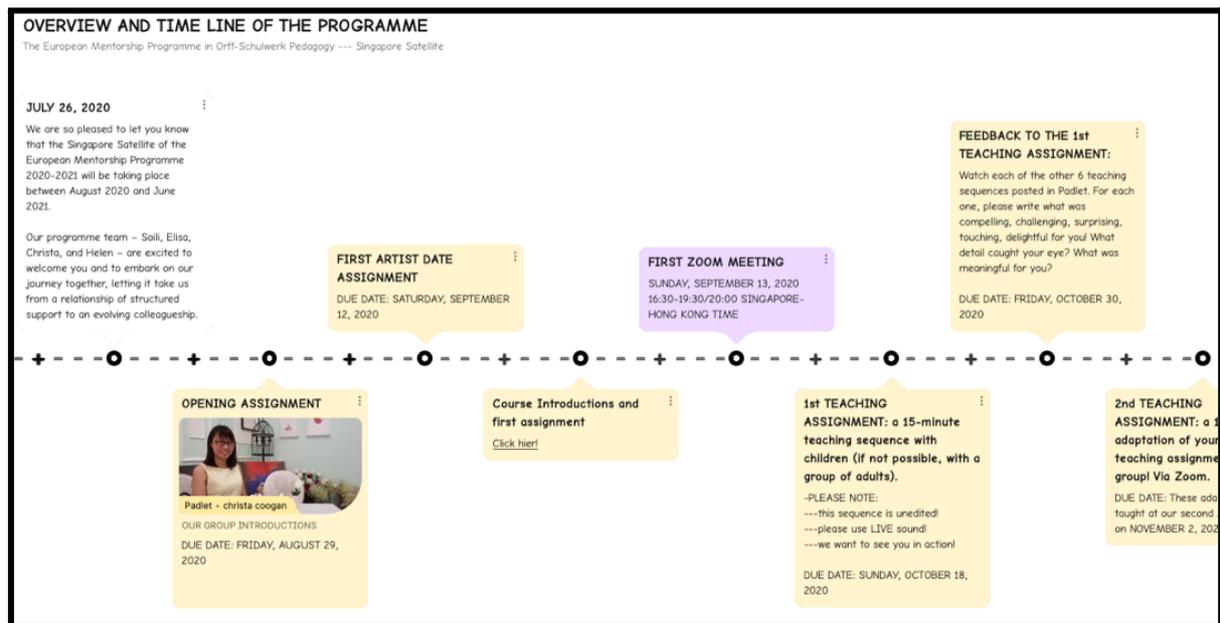
Connecting with the Artist in Me
Imagine my confusion when I first saw 'Artist Date Assignment'. It seemed abstract and I didn't understand why. The training I received in Singapore was very different. In the mentorship programme, we had three Artist Date assignments, and it was through this that I connected to my senses, practiced mindfulness about my sensations and observations.

It was awkward at first. When was the last time I sat down by myself, walked by myself with the sole purpose of connecting to my senses? Never. However, as I slowly immersed myself in the process, curiosity started to unravel in me. My first date was in a museum, and I started to wonder about the architectural design of the high ceiling and see-through roof top, the intent of having repeated patterns on the main lobby and the ferocity of the tiger in the painting. Later on, whenever I planned my small teaching excerpts, I was mindful to spark the curiosity in my fellow mentees.

The Reflective Process

In the teaching assignments segment, we were each other's critical friend. Our mentors gave us guiding questions to comment on each other's submission and we always began with affirmation. It was a very powerful and inspiring process, as this drew my attention towards my fellow mentees' work and what I could learn and use later in my future lessons.

I was also inspired by another mentee's expressivity in her sharing, and this informed the planning for my teaching assignment. After going through my lesson, she said, *"I felt inspired to do and build on the movement ideas from Wan Yu's lesson for my own lessons in the future."* This whole process of learning from each other motivates us to become better teachers.



Challenges

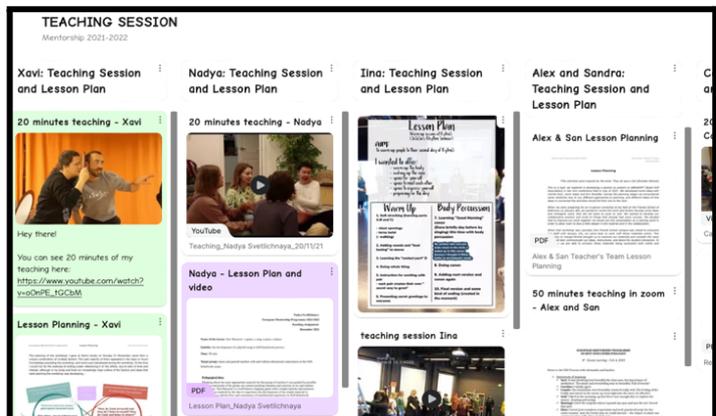
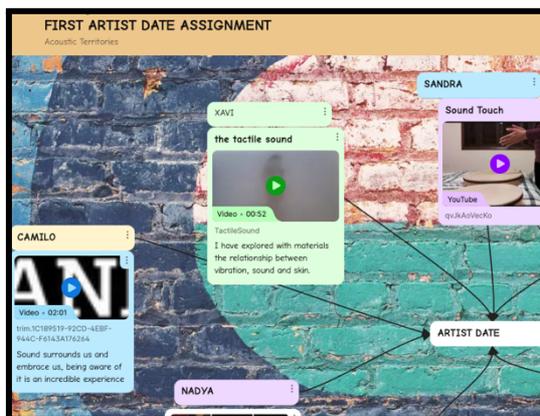
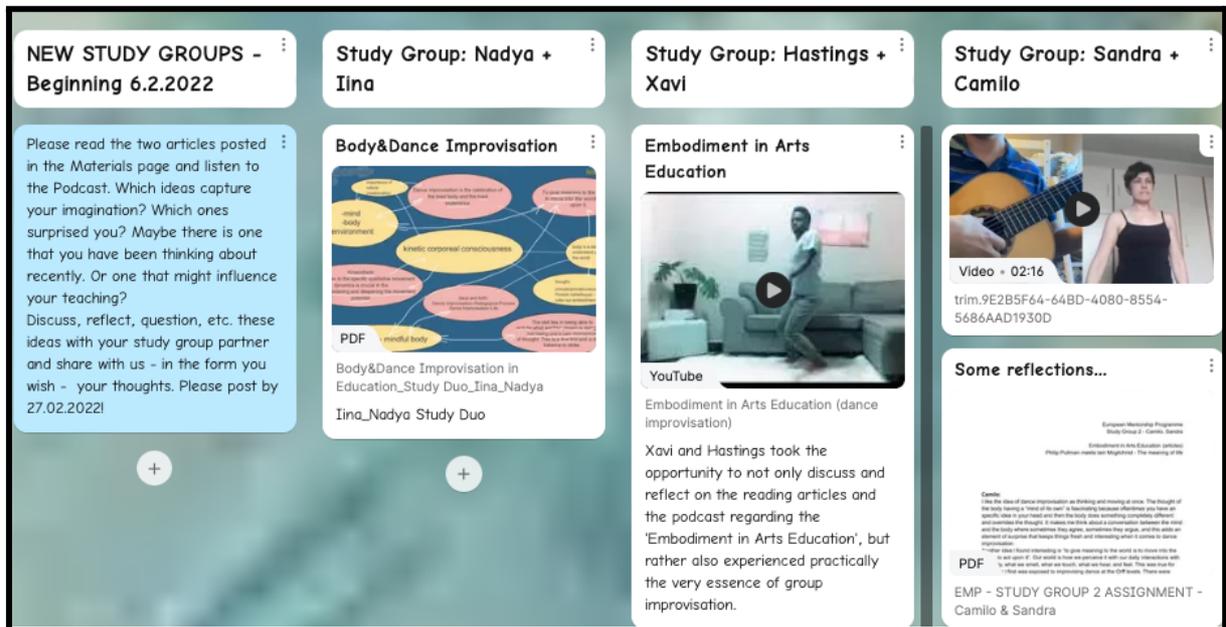
One major challenge was unlearning and relearning. I was always looking for the right answer to give and the right way to teach. However, being open was the best thing that could happen. Through my mentors' teaching, I observed how they facilitated the responses and eventually gathered everyone's ideas into a communal performance. It was beautiful. The sessions we spent discussing with the mentors and mentees gave me the insights on how I could start.

Another challenge was my capacity for bodily expression. I was not used to using movement as an entryway into artistic expression. However, through co-teaching and co-planning, this allowed me the perspective of how others organise their thoughts and processes. I was then able to understand better the intent behind using movement and the connection between movement to speech and music. Being able to realise and achieve this was one of my proudest moments.

Final Thoughts

I am very grateful and appreciative for this opportunity to work with three world class musicians, educators and mentors. I had a glimpse of their insights and I felt supported to grow both as an educator and as a human being. I also had the opportunity to network with other mentees from the previous mentorship programme, which widened my perspective of other cultures and teaching methodologies. In my final meeting with all three mentors, I shared with them that I wished to take this new sensitivity and artistry that I had discovered and bring it into my classroom.

Fourth Group - 2021-2022
Xavi Manyoses Rocamora



This past year I had the pleasure of participating in the European Mentorship Programme. Now I can say it has been - and continues to be - an experience of growth in three interlinked dimensions (artistic, professional and personal), that is still shaping and deepening my teaching and learning skills, especially focused on teaching teachers.

In the artistic field, the programme has helped me to clarify actions that are now indispensable steps in my goal to improve as an educator and as a human being: for example, to be active in inspiration, reflection and artistic expression, to expose myself to beauty and interact with it as a way of life, and to express myself through movement as a necessary warm-up for any rational action that is intended to be satisfactory. The programme has also encouraged me to use the artistic gaze for tasks such as preparing sessions or working in groups with other colleagues.

In the teaching dimension, I have delved into a learner-centred approach that has helped me to plan my actions with more awareness and thought. Since I started my mentorship experience, I have changed a lot in my practice regarding the whole planning process. Getting information about the students - their ages and culture - as well as about the space where the course will take place, has become a priority. In the same way, I have also changed practices in the development of my plan, as I listen much more consciously to the needs of the group and try to respond to them through my actions, as well as giving more weight to the discussions and reflections. Thanks to the programme, I have been able to organise my ideas based on a dynamic structure which allows a flexible and changing practice without renouncing the rigour and depth of my pedagogical actions. I have incorporated feedback as a daily work tool and have realised how important it is to read and reflect on my teaching practice. In addition, I have also lost my fear of sharing teaching practice, to the extent that it is now comfortable and very beneficial to me.

In relation to my personal growth, the programme has nourished me in many ways: it has helped me to identify what connects me emotionally, to define why this is meaningful to me, and to bring it to my teaching. It has developed my self-confidence. It has revealed to me embodiment as a philosophy and practice for spiritual reconnection and reconciliation with a full and happy existence. Finally, it has inspired me with a communicative and organisational model based on trust, built on respectful spaces and reasonable times and with a lot of thought behind it.

I would like to emphasise that the programme itself and the mentor and mentee figures are constantly developing and adapting to each participant and group, which has allowed me to explore and build my own experience through the multiple relationships that occur within the programme. I've found different mentor roles (mentor in presence, in ideas, in practice, in communication...) and experienced natural connections of ideas and practices, concrete affinities by age, style, musicality, pedagogical ideology, mutual admiration, and so on. Sharing this experience with professionals from other countries has increased my feeling of belonging to a community of teachers willing to work in a democratic, cooperative and respectful way. At the same time, it has raised new questions for the future: for example, one issue that makes me think is how to approach cultural diversity in a professional and respectful way in terms of the conception of music education around the world. In other words, teaching internationally means facing very different pedagogical and artistic cultures, and while art is a fairly universal language, education is less so. Becoming aware of the political, social, linguistic and cultural situations, as well as backgrounds of the country or place where you are going to teach (and try to figure out *How do they understand music education?*) are therefore important aspects to consider.

Of course, there are many more challenges to come: how to update content and methodologies in line with technological and social progress and the reality of our children and our education systems; how to continue to develop and integrate attention to diversity; the fight against climate change and many more.

But that is our path. Let's go for it!

Conclusion

As we can read in the reflections, the mentees engage in deep and personal learning experiences with the perspectives of each of the three mentors, are given space to develop their own ideas, have the support of their mentee colleagues, and the guidance and encouragement of the mentors in doing so.

In our mentoring experiences over the course of the four groups, the mentoring function emerges from teaching, supporting, counseling, and sponsoring each mentee to a reciprocal process of learning from each other to finally a collegial relationship of respect and trust.

We are looking towards the future!



If you are interested in getting more information about the Mentorship Programme, please visit our website. There you will find the dates for the next group, beginning in 2023.

<https://mentorship5.webnode.fi>

Aixa Toledo Benitez graduated from the University of Barcelona as a primary school teacher specialising in music, and from the Catalunya Music Conservatory with a degree in music education. Aixa has a Dalcroze Certificate, and intensive training in Spanish dance. She has participated in numerous Orff-Schulwerk training programmes and is now a teacher in Finland.

Elin Bergdal graduated from the Music Education department in the Sibelius Academy in 2018 where she specialised in classical singing, and music and movement. She is now teaching music in a secondary school in Espoo, Finland.

Wan Yu Goh is a primary school teacher who graduated from the National Institute of Education in Singapore specialising in Music Education. She has attended both the levels courses conducted by SingOrff (Singapore Orff Association).

Xavi Manyoses Rocamora is a music educator from Catalonia specialising in creative music and movement education, and percussion ensemble didactics. Certified in Orff-Schulwerk by the SFIOC.

Christa Coogan is a Lecturer at the University for Music and Theatre/Dept. of Elemental Music Pedagogy in Munich/Germany. She teaches children and youth of all ages in schools and refugee centres. She has been a teacher at the Orff Institute for 30 years in degree programs and the Special Course; and at the San Francisco International Orff Course School since 2003. Christa offers seminars and workshops internationally as a movement specialist in Orff-Schulwerk. She holds a BFA degree in Dance and an MA in Musicology and Dance Studies.