

# "Presencing" in teaching pop and rock ensemble playing at high level

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## Introduction:

When teaching ensemble playing within rock and pop music, it could be considered a paradox that we often end up reproducing originals instead of teaching how to create an original expression and sound, when at the same time it is essential for the genre as an art form. When finally we succeed in doing so, we don't quite know how we did it.

There seems to be a lack of codified knowledge and methodology for working with these to rock and pop music as an art form crucial parameters. How can we teach and train the students to become authentic and creative?

## Aim of the research project:

The focus in Christensen's former research project *"The blind spot" in teaching ensemble playing within rock and pop music* was on the theoretical foundation for developing new teaching methods, incorporating Otto Scharmer's Theory U-model in ensemble playing within pop and rock music at music conservatory level.

The aim of this research project is to involve student experience to include this knowledge in an empirical foundation.

The general aim of both research projects is to:

- Qualify teaching ensemble playing to a high level within pop and rock music focusing on the creative and original/authentic expression.
- Develop language and methods for the as yet unarticulated transfer and tacit knowledge in this field.

## What is presencing?

The concept presencing (the blending of sensing and presence) is central to the Theory U-model. Presencing means to connect to the source of inspiration and common will, to allow the inner knowing to emerge.

Fig 1: The U-model as one process with 5 movements:



According to Scharmer individuals or groups come to a threshold at the bottom of the U journey that requires:

- A "letting go" of everything that is not essential.
- They open themselves to new aspects of their highest possible future self ("letting come").

The essence of presencing is the experience of the coming in of the new and the transformation of the old. Once crossing this threshold, the group begins to operate with a heightened level of energy and sense of future possibility.

Fig.. 1 illustration from: Scharmer, C. Otto: *Addressing the Blind Spot of Our Time - An executive summary of the new book by Otto Scharmer Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, Cambridge, MA: Society for Organizational Learning, 2007



## Focus of the research project:

Using as a starting point the results of Christensen's former research project *"The blind spot" in teaching ensemble playing within rock and pop music*, the author wishes to discuss and analyse gathered empirical data in the form of qualitative interviews with students from her ensemble playing classes to examine:

- Does presencing happen during the ensemble playing classes based on the Theory U-model?
- Is the demand of a personal engagement in ensemble playing classes based on the U-model handled ethically correct?
- How do the students experience the Theory U-model is developing their work?

## Presencing and personal engagement:

Scharmer emphasises the necessity of personal engagement and personal development for presencing to occur. Traditionally that is not demanded of the students in ensemble playing classes. Working through the U-model the students go from being the focus of attention in the event to become the servant of it. This demands a change of attitude and new competences for both the teacher and the students. To ensure that the introduction of the personal emotional engagement in the ensemble playing classes is being instigated and handled ethically correct, further research in the subject is being undertaken.

## The Theory U-model's impact on the students work:

The students participating in the Theory U-model based ensemble playing classes are referring to the developed teaching methods as an eye opener and a liberating experience, having a profound impact on their work. This research study aims to explore further through qualitative interviews:

- How the students perceives the U-model ensemble playing classes has affected them
- Which areas of their work it has impacted upon

## Research method and output:

Students who have participated in the Theory U-model based ensemble playing classes are being interviewed. Qualitative research methods in the form of analysis and interpretation of the collected data are applied.

The results of this research project will later contribute to further research projects within the field, focusing on actual teaching method descriptions. This in turn can be based on both theoretical and empiric research. End product: Research and development paper.

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