



Education, community and inclusivity: from university big band to community of practice

Tom Sykes

Liverpool Hope University



Communities of Practice



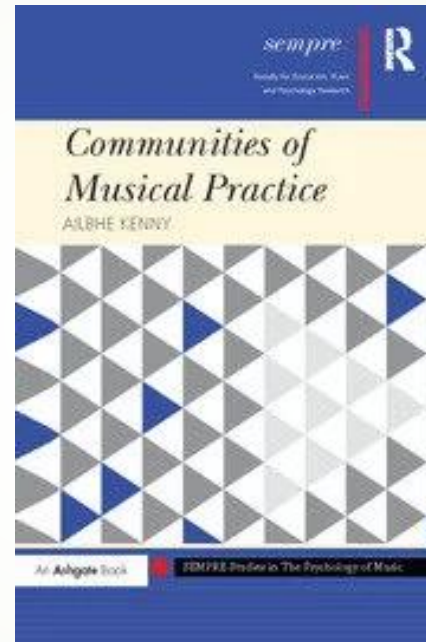
- ▶ Definition: “groups of people who share a common concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Traynor and Wenger-Traynor, 2015)
- ▶ Required elements:
 - ▶ Domain
 - ▶ Community
 - ▶ Practice

Liverpool Hope University music department

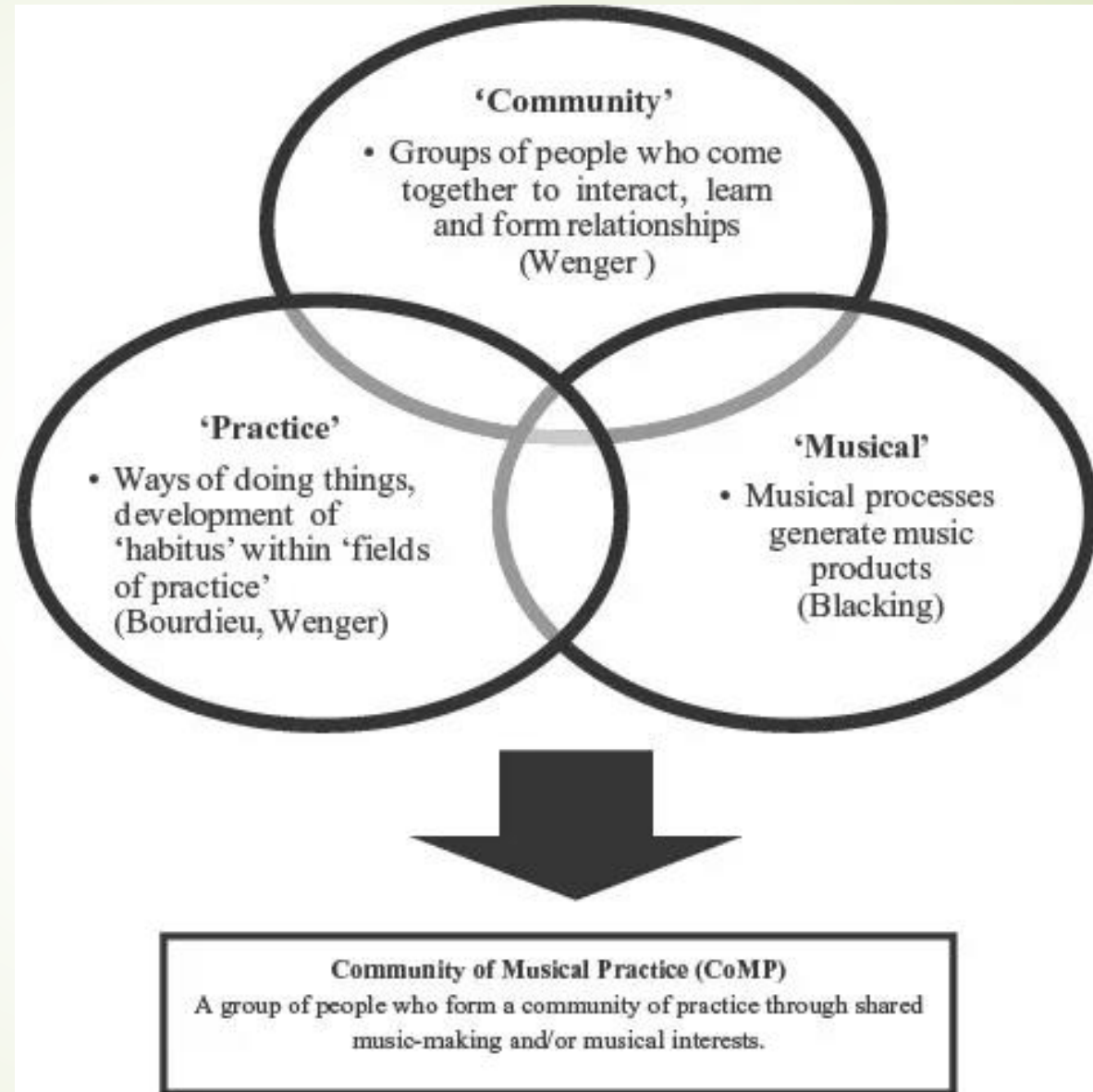
- A long-established music department, relocating to the Creative Campus in the early 2000s, since when there have been extra-curricular jazz/funk ensembles and big bands
- The Capstone Theatre (pictured) has hosted the Liverpool International Jazz Festival annually since 2013




Kenny (2016)



Communities of Musical Practice (CoMP) model (Kenny, 2016: 16)





Sawyer (2006): 3 characteristics of group creativity

- ▶ Improvisation
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ “Emergence”: “collective phenomena in which, as it is said, ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’” (Sawyer, 2006: 148)



A community jazz ensemble as a CoMP: Limerick Jazz Workshop

- Diversity of ability and musical background
- Some issues regarding inclusivity
- The use of “jazz lore” as a shared resource
- Creativity as a significant distinctive practice within this CoMP. the creative practices “privileging improvisation in performance, maintaining challenges in playing and building knowledge through leadership and collaboration. These practices were both formal and informal in approach, and involved a balance between musical and social processes” (Kenny, 2014: 7)



The Hope Big Band project

- ▶ I composed music for Hope Big Band designed to challenge performers in their practice while working towards a recorded performance. At the end of the process musicians were asked to reflect on the development of their creativity and identity as musicians and what they had gained from the experience.
- ▶ Students and band members from the community were also asked about their experience of working collaboratively, both in terms of the musical experience and their interactions with one another. The intention was to gain an understanding of the way in which a university ensemble is perceived by musicians from outside Hope, and the place of a university music department in the context of amateur music-making in Liverpool.



Comparison of responses

Limerick Jazz Workshop	Hope Big Band
It was just good to be with similar-minded people and play music together.	I have met some great people.
Playing is on balance improving – that means I can make more of a contribution musically.	I am consciously and unconsciously learning from other band members.
I wanted the opportunity to play with other musicians and just have that kind of live contact and I suppose in terms of for me it was a learning curve, it generates a very real and a positive pressure that you have to learn the stuff because you can be doing it at home and you can let stuff slide, so it's a good discipline.	Technically I found the pieces straightforward to play, my main concern was trying to produce a reasonable improvised solo!
I am also much more friendly with the rest of the band, and feel more as an equal to them now: when I started, I felt more like the intruder!	It has been a pleasure to work with student musicians and I think students and non-students can benefit from one another – youthful energy and older experience!

Promoting inclusivity through collaborative projects: Jazz Camp for Girls





References

- Jazz Camp for Girls. (2024). <https://www.jazznorth.org/jazz-camp-for-girls>
- Kenny, A. (2014a). Practice through partnership: Examining the theoretical framework and development of a 'community of musical practice'. *International Journal of Music Education* 32(4), 396-48.
- Kenny, A. (2014b). 'Collaborative creativity' within a jazz ensemble as a musical and social practice. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* (13), 1-8.
- Kenny, A. (2016). *Communities of Musical Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Sawyer, R. K. (2006). Group creativity: Musical performance and collaboration. *Psychology of Music*, 34(2), 148-165.
- Sykes, T. (2023). 'Learning music for fun, not credit: the value of popular music practice in the extra-curricular university jazz ensemble'. *IASPM Journal* (13)1, 99-121, [https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871\(2023\)v13i3.6en](https://doi.org/10.5429/2079-3871(2023)v13i3.6en)
- Wenger-Trayner, E. & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Introduction to communities of practice: a brief overview of the concept and its uses. <https://www.wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>



Thanks for listening – any questions?

sykest@hope.ac.uk



LIVERPOOL
HOPE
UNIVERSITY

1844