

Harmonizing music memories as a part of life story

Kimmo Lehtonen,
Anti Juvonen
Heikki Ruismaki

Abstract

When the meanings of music education are explored, the clear significance of music as a part of civilization and culture is often mentioned. Indeed, music also has a strong instrumental meaning as it offers harmonizing cultural experiences through the memories and imaginings that remain throughout life, reminding the listener of important interactions, people, and experiences. These experiences are interwoven in many ways with identity and its construction. Important music experiences follow everyone from childhood to old age. Songs from childhood can even have an impact on old people's memories and strengthen their quality of life and feelings of coherence, especially if they are affected by dementia or other memory illnesses. This article is based on 217 stories that respondents wrote about music experiences connected to important experiences in life. The themes of the stories were handled through content analysis and they focus on changes in human life phases and the problems of growing up. These changes are characterized by smooth periods interspersed with traumatic periods where music has significantly helped in the processing of the life problems. From the music education point of view, the results stress the special meaning of experimental music listening as a promoter of pupils' personality and emotional life.

Key words: music education, musical memories, mental images, diary techniques, crystallizing experiences, psychic harmony and emancipation.

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In the beginning

According to John Dewey (1929/2012), remembrance is an experience that includes all the emotional values of a true experience, but does not have any of its stressfulness, fluctuations, or problems. Memories build our lives and shape our identities because they do not occur in our minds independently, but because they add something essential to our identity. Remembrance is an emotional process rather than an intellectual one because, for example, music loaded with emotions lifts up important events in our life (see Dewey, 1929/2012, pp. 51-52). Many of us have also experienced a situation where a certain composition automatically brings up memories and emotions connected to a certain experience.

The nature of imagination, its ability to build syntheses, which is closely connected to remembrance, helps individuals to collect together both good moments as well as reversals in the form of a narrative. It is not important whether the memories are true. What is important is how they synchronize to our life story (Kallio, 2005, pp. 71-72; Taneli, 2012, pp. 146-149). The possibilities of harmonization carry a special value in our fragmentary world. In the field of music education, this highlights the empathizing and experiential listening education as a part of pupils' developing music relationship.

An experience belongs to private matters, it escapes from determinations, and words cannot transfer the unique atmosphere that was connected to the birth of an experience. Myllyniemi (2004) classified emotional experiences according to their functions: 1) safety, 2) competence, and 3) acceptance of the society. Still, experiences do have common features. These are as follows: memories are unforgettable, they are unique, they are irreplaceable, they cannot be repeated, and they are separate from everyday experiences (Löfblom, 2013, pp. 23-31). These elements give experiences a special emotional load, which remains the same throughout one's whole life.

While writing the book, *From metaphors to mental images* (Lehtonen & Niemelä, 1997), the writers collected a list of pieces of music that had a connection to turning points in the respondents' (patients of mental health care) lives. The data offered little information about what kinds of turning points were involved, although the questions were open-ended. Therefore, the research was continued by asking the respondents to tell about important musical experiences and to name the compositions or songs connected to them.

The research frame was based on diary techniques developed by psychoanalyst Ira Progoff (1973a, 1973b, 1975, 1980) where writing a diary helps to break habitual models of thinking and turn the direction of life through a reflexive process of remembering (see also Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Thiele, Laireiter, & Baumann, 2002). While writing the diary, the writer goes back to important experiences through connecting the original emotions and thoughts in a new way that also changes the original perspectives (Lukinsky, 1995). Writing the diary is a process that includes different starting points and aims for reflection.

There were 217 respondents aged between 20-60 years in this research. The data was not selected by any factors, because the respondents were both music students as well as those who had not done any music studies. Lehtonen collected the data during his lectures at Turku University, and participants came from those who were present there. In fact, there were many respondents who studied music education or music therapy, although the majority of respondents were from mass lectures in

education and adult education by Lehtonen. In the instructions, the students were asked to write their own life story and mark only their gender and age on the paper (Lehtonen, & Niemela, 1997).

The method developed by Progoff is based on the concept of the collective subconscious, originally presented by Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology (Jung, 1964, 1991).

This concept refers to archetypes that show up in dreams, myths, and fantasies, and also occur in song lyrics (see Lehtonen & Niemelä, 1997). The archetypes are organs which live in the dim unconscious of human beings, and occur in mental images that are loaded with emotions. These are the target of this research.

In the first section of the process, the diary writer opens his/her memoirs and in the second section of the process these are processed through dialogues. The third section of the process offers an opportunity to deepen the data and harmonize it in the “deep dimension” where dreams, metaphors, and images are connected taking notice of the similarities in the storylines. Although here we present the life path technique as a whole, our exploration focuses mainly on the first level constructions, which in the raw brought up surprisingly rich data.

The notes are written in the diary from today’s point of view, when they are “re-experienced” on the conscious level. This is also done to the dreams and images connected to the event and the themes of the stories are remolded and supplemented with the associations that arise (Progoff, 1975, 1980). The molding process does not happen merely through a conscious analysis, but is also guided by free associative work. Writing down the memories, dreams, and images activates the “psychic work” (primary process), which the writing process brings to consciousness (secondary process) (Lukinsky, 1995).

Diary writing is an intensive process in which memoir data is processed during a long period of time. This experiment could be a start for an intensive music memoir working process that encourages the subject to find new musical memories, associations, and images. Furthermore, it also offers a new point of view for listening and experiencing music in groups or alone (see also North, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2004; Juslin, Lijestrom, & Vastfjall, 2008; Vieillard, Roy, & Peretz, 2012; Vuoskoski & Eerola, 2012; Schäfer, Tipandjan, & Sedlmeier, 2012; Thoma, 2011; Thoma, Ryf, Mohiyeddini, Ehlert, & Nater, 2012; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011; Sloboda, 2008, 2010; Saarikallio, 2008).

Another starting point for this research was based on *meaningful moments* in music therapy as described by professor Dorit Amir (1996) where some of the central structural elements of life are changing. According to Amir (1996), the meaningful moments are the knot points of the inner process aiming for a change. The task of the music therapist is to create prerequisites for experiencing these unexpected insights. The experiences Amir described belong as a part of the music therapy process, but in this experiment, they are combined as a part of the lifeline described in the diary (see also Lin et al., 2010; Airaksinen, Wahlin, Larsson, & Forsell, 2006; Orr, 2007; Lamont & Webb, 2010).

Freeman (1999) uses the concept of the “crystallizing experience”, which refers to insights that strongly affect life, changing the concepts of one’s own abilities, responsibilities, and choices. “Crystallizing experiences” may often be connected to

childhood, but they may also occur in crises of youth or early adulthood when the identity deepens, and the mission in life changes (see Pickard & Bailey, 2009).

About the method

Our method has its connections to the empathizing method, but it is not the same as the purest, because the respondents wrote about their real-life experiences. The stories are narrative by nature. Narrative research has been conducted in many fields of science from the study of literature to social sciences (see Hyvärinen, 2004; Bruner, 1987, 1991; Czarniawska, 1998; Burr, 1995). The term narrative comes from the Latin word *narration* meaning a story and *narrare* meaning telling.

The exploration of stories like tales, memoirs, features, or anecdotes has become more popular during the last decades especially in social sciences, but today it is also widely used in the research of Arts and Art pedagogy (see Huhtanen, 2004). The majority of narrative research is done on memoirs and personal stories, as is the case with this research too.

The narrative measure of research forms a loose structure with many different research methods, data collection, and analysis methods. They are connected by the narrative point of view, which helps build structured entities from single significances and interpretations both at the individual as well as communal levels. From an epistemological point of view, narrative research can be classified as belonging to the theories of social constructivism (Riessman, 1993). There are several models of narrative stories and storytelling exploration (e.g. Labov, 1972). Any data based on storytelling that requires interpretation can be counted as narratives. Narrative data is not useful for being numerically quantified as short vocal answers may be used for this (Heikkinen, 2001, pp. 121-122).

The narrative method may be seen as a constructivistic research method or as a practical working tool (see e.g. Heikkinen, 2001). There are many similar and familiar elements in narrative research compared to discourse analysis, and in some regards, these means of examination overlap each other. In a story, the teller defends him/herself, takes part, criticizes, explains, and tries to make things understandable, thus positioning his/her own status and relationship to other people. At the same time, survival in, for example, changes of life are being worked on (Hänninen, 1999); or on the other hand, personal experiences, social and communal needs, hopes, demands, and aims or attitudes are described in the form of words.

The narrative exploration may be used to form classifications or stories of characteristics, which may be called, for example, content descriptions, reports, or storyline synopses (e.g. Hänninen, 1999, p. 33). According to Hatch and Wisniewski (1995), the subjectivity of knowledge is the biggest difference between qualitative and narrative research. The truth of narrative research is always subjective, and it is built in a social process where subjective construction takes place (Abma, 2002). For example, memories of an individual are usually combinations of several experiences. Also, the point of view of exploration affects certain recollections because for example, an adult and a child remember the same events quite differently. Narrative research does not aim for objective information that could be generalized; instead, it aims toward local, personal, and subjective knowledge. According to Gubrium and Holstein (1997), narrative research offers either implicit or explicit schemes that help the readers organize and understand the relations between events or phenomena.

The ontological starting points of narrative research see each human being as an active, historical, and significance seeking entity, whose life is built from process-like time and culture-bound essentials. A human being builds his/her conception of reality in interaction with others, which means that the experience of reality is molded through the surrounding people's actions and conceptions. When an individual tells his/her own story, he/she lives through it again simultaneously improving it (MacIntyre, 1981; Mishler, 1986; Poirier & Ayres, 1997). Every time a story is told, it includes not only certain events, but also the way it is told and interpreted. In a narrative way of looking, these elements of a story build a logical entity (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

When we are analyzing narrative data, the focus should be on two important things. The researcher must know what questions he/she is asking the data, but also how he/she is asking them (Hyvärinen, 1998). If the original story can be transmitted as precisely as possible, the reader him/herself is able to consider the interpretations and their reliability (Arvilommi, 1998; Hänninen, 1999). This requires theoretical analysis, which means that the validity of the interpretations is considered in relationship with earlier research and theories. Using a reflexive reading and interpretation of data requires critical analysis when we start drawing conclusions from it.

In the assignment for the task in this research, the basic idea of the life path method was introduced to the respondents: brief instructions for writing were given, and after that, it was confirmed that everyone understood them. In the beginning, it was emphasized that participation was voluntary and free, and that any material would be valuable and should not be selected or filtered in any way. After this, all respondents listened to a piece of music meant to tune the emotions, which lasted for about four minutes.

The instructions were:

1. Close your eyes and direct your thoughts toward your own life. Breathe peacefully and let your thoughts flow along with the music.
2. Listen to the music and think about the major turning points of your life where the direction of it has strongly changed.
3. Write down on paper the images about the turning points and listen quietly to what music begins to play inside your mind.
4. Write down the name of the piece of music, the performer and the lyrics that you remember. Write down also the environment and the situation of the experience you remembered. Were you alone or with company? Think about what changed in yourself and how it influenced your life later.

We used music from the Finnish group, Apocalyptica, who played a violoncello version of Metallica's *Nothing Else Matters*, which is melancholic instrumental music. The reasons for the choice of the piece of music were, 1) the name of the song and lyrics – *Nothing Else Matters* – which leads listeners to significant experiences; 2) the exceptional stylistic solutions where a heavy rock song is performed using classical musical instruments and style. This was also done because most of the writers said that they knew the original Metallica group's version of the song, and so they kind of met "an old friend" in new clothing. 3) According to Lehtonen's 30-year-long experience of providing music therapy, the song excellently represents "healing sorrow" as it was described by Melanie Klein in its purest form (see Klein, 1936).

Essential in the healing sorrow is that it creates a “symbolic distance” from the traumatic experiences and makes it possible to handle sad and painful memories without anxiety. We also tested other songs, like the third part of Gustav Mahler’s third symphony (*Titan*), Miles Davis’ version of Joaquin Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez (Adagio)*, and Johnny Cash’s version of the song *Hurt*, which was originally performed by Nine Inch Nails. *Apocalyptica* produced the most powerful memories.

The respondents listened to the piece of music reflecting on their life’s most important turning points. Many of them built a mind map of their images and wrote their memories in the form of a story. The respondents were seemingly moved by the task and highly engaged. In the reflection afterwards, the task was characterized as comfortable although it had brought up negative memories and images, which were easy to develop into a story. Many respondents said that although they “(defensively) in advance” had decided to write about everyday events, the idea had changed as the music had riveted them with its course. Some respondents commented that the music had aroused memories of events that they had totally forgotten and which would never have occurred in their minds without the music. The saturation point was easy to find, as after about 20 stories the themes and their variations remained mostly the same. In spite of this, the collected data is rich as it contains interesting details and touching literary descriptions. The data consists of 217 narratives. Most of the writers (82%) were women. The uneven variation can be explained by the fact that most of the participants in Professor Lehtonen’s lectures are women.

We analyzed the stories without theoretical preconceptions. In the beginning, the data was read through many times and the central themes were identified. The results were condensed into four main themes, which were as follows: 1) “The idyll which disappeared” – birth and the world of childhood which has disappeared; 2) “Being on the edge” – starting one’s own life – leaving the familiar and safe – the anxiety of leaving home; 3) “In the bottom of the ravine” – death of a close person, bereavements, and belonging to have-nots; 4) “The theme of emancipation” – major change and independence. These themes were told in the manner of survival stories, which started from early childhood and ended in independence, finding oneself, and emancipation through difficulties.

From the childhood idyll to independence

The most important of the themes was leaving a familiar and safe place and struggling for independence. Many stories described the fatal kind of “bases-loaded” situation in which it is compulsory to move from one stage of life to another without the required maturity and preparation. The experiences were prevalent in the life paths where unavoidable stages and control (or lack of control) of difficulties were repeated in new situations.

The central themes were:

1. The idyll that disappeared – birth and the ever lost world of childhood: Home, childhood, parents, grandparents, motherhood, births of the children, spouse, family, love, safety, and the happy and innocent moments of childhood.

The events of childhood were also repeated in the stories because the events were connected to the birth of the respondents’ own children. Important central themes were memories of the births of one’s own children and happy moments in one’s own childhood: Christmas church, performances at school celebrations, family expeditions and holidays, memories of car trips to the countryside and to visit grandparents, and the happy days of childhood. The happy experiences of childhood often contrasted

dramatically with the difficulties and problems of adulthood. The theme is nostalgic and that is why we named it “The idyll that disappeared” – a longing for the time long gone – when everything in life was still untainted.

2. “Being on the edge” – starting one’s own life – leaving the familiar and safe – the anxiety of leaving the childhood home. This theme underlined the ambivalence of leaving and staying, leaving parents and friends, and the end of important relationships. The stories repeated feelings of helplessness and feelings of being an outsider as well as feelings of hope and longing.

The theme was characterized by anxiety and fear of losing control. The respondents wrote about experiences far from home, their jobs, their marriages, their years as au pairs or exchange students abroad, about starting work or studies in a new town, and about breaking relationships. Older respondents underlined the fear of being left alone; they worried about their children and the changing of familiar fields of life. We named the theme “Being on the edge”, which was connected to unawareness, anxious waiting, and the fatal ambivalence of leaving and staying.

3. “In the bottom of the ravine” – death of a close person, bereavement, and belonging to have-nots. The themes included death, losing a sense of safety, losing hope, and feelings of missing oneself. The stories represented paralyzing sorrow, depression, loneliness, emptiness, and feelings of breaking down which were connected to the death of a close person, the end of a (first) love affair, being left alone, divorce, breaking up of the home, being deceived by a spouse or friend, infertility, serious illness, or being a target for bullying.

4. “The theme of emancipation” – major change and independence: The last theme focused on responsibility for oneself, one’s own life and others, freedom to make one’s own decisions, taking care of others accepting oneself, getting rid of dependence, realizing one’s ability to handle problems; and loneliness. Accepting one’s own insufficiencies, imperfections, and traumatic events as a part of normal life. The themes tell about leaving the childhood home for good, beginning an independent life, entering a tender marriage, or escaping from dependencies. The theme also includes forgiving injustices, consolidation, taking care of oneself, and opening up to new opportunities through one’s own growth. Turning points are without exception connected to psychological “binding” where music experience has meant a sudden insight or solution to difficult life situations; it also represents the realization that extreme pain and anxiety are a part of life (see Lehtonen, 1993). The theme is interwoven with earlier ones by bringing the story to an end, and this is why we called it “The theme of emancipation”.

All of the stories are often combinations of several separate themes; stories with only one theme did not exist. The data includes survival stories with a central message: although the troubles were incredible, the individual survived. At the turning point, the music helped the respondents to become conscious of the problems and handle them. Some also said that they had made their own songs about their own life and memories.

The references that are included in the text were chosen so that they could be used in both Finnish and English articles. The content of the songs was not dependent on the language. We used only one reference from each of the respondents.

The reader can listen to pieces of music and try to find them on YouTube Internet pages (www.youtube.com) and use the singer's name, or the name of the songs as tags.

The idyll that disappeared

The theme of nostalgia was connected to songs familiar from one's childhood home and songs sung to one's own children, creating moments filled with basic safety. These songs transferred the family's musical tradition to the next generations. The songs reminded the listeners of childhood interactions that had created the base for building the identity. Memories were not merely positive, but rather reflected the eternal ambivalence of life – dialectics of light and shade. They seem to follow people from childhood to old age.

The stories took place in “psychic time” where the events were located according to meaningfulness not by chronological order. Processing the turning points minimized the time perspective – the time from childhood to adulthood was very short (see Lehtonen, 1988). The memories gave a “face” to the unavoidable occurrence of good and bad in the life of a human being. In the network-like structure of the memory, past experiences co-exist with current time offering a frame for the interceptions of new events.

The piece of music brought to my mind the fiddle of my grandfather, which he used to play when I was young and spent time with my grandparents. The smell of hay, sunny days and grandfather's fiddle. I don't remember any exact piece of music he played, but I remember the happy days from childhood. (Woman 35 years)

All of a sudden, Grieg's “Morning” came to my mind although it is quite different. In my image, there is a sunny garden of a summer cottage bathing in the morning dew. The rain from the night still smells in the flora, the moist warmth is steaming and the environment invites us children outside to play. (Woman 26 years)

The song by Miliza Korjus Warum was often played on the radio when I was a child, and it carries an image of me being a three- or four-year-old boy walking on a path in a forest holding hands with my mother between big pine trees on a sunny summer's day. It reminds me of the death of my little sister when I was eight years old. She died when she was one year old. After the funeral, we children started to play and my daddy came home drunk although he had promised not to drink ... That was kind of an end to my childhood. (Man 57 years)

God please take care of me through the night ... evening prayer, evening song. When my little sister was born, my mother did not have any more time for me. I comforted myself in the evenings. I felt so lonely. The same aloneness has followed me through my life. “The March of Narva” was played from the gramophone at the funeral of my little brother. In the church, I realized that in that piece of music there is all the sorrow connected to the history of my family. (Woman 35 years)

Being on the edge

Being on the edge may be connected to the unavoidable dialectics of growing up. A human being is forced to move from one life stage to another, although he/she may not be ready for the change. The theme can be called the “Transcendence theme”.

Anxiety, pain, fear and shame, and a deep, black wound, hatred and rage. The music reminded me of very negative memories from my teenage years. Immediately as I saw the instructions, Metallica started to play in my ears ... ugly memories that I wouldn't want to go back to, rather forget them. In my mind, Queen's "The Show Must Go On" starts to play. (Woman 35 years)

*Empty spaces, what are we living for
Abandoned places
I guess we know the score
On and on
Does anybody know
What we are looking for ...*

*The show must go on
The show must go on, yeah
Inside my heart is breaking
My makeup is flaking
But my smile still stays on ...*

*The piece of music brought to my mind Johnny Cash's song "Hurt", where there is the same sort of feeling ... I have remained quite the same inside from my early school years. I have always been lonely, and probably will always stay that way. I have a family and friends, but I have never met anybody quite like me. I believe I am alone in the world ... I believe that there is no soul mate for me in the whole world. My life's biggest turning point was when I realized my loneliness. (Woman 42 years)
I hurt myself today, to see if I still feel
I focus on the pain
The only thing that's real ...*

*The needle tears a thorn
The old familiar sting
Try to kill it all away
But I remember everything*

*What I have become
My sweetest friend
Everyone I know
Goes away in the end ...*

*Alone in a room in the darkening evening in a strange city where I am studying. I feel myself empty. The direction where to go or what to do is lost. The silence frightens and makes me stop. The feeling of not having strength to care about anything. Longing, sorrow of tomorrow and fear of the future gets a form in the end. With a guitar and music I play it improvising and play the piece of music: Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here". (Man 48 years)
Oh, how I wish, how I wish you were here
We're like two lost souls swimming in a fishbowl
Year after year ...*

In the bottom of the ravine – "from the depths I call for you my Lord"

The theme was connected to a loss occurring or a chain of events that badly shook the foundations of life:

My mother committed suicide when I was a teenager. I listened then to the Rolling Stones' song, "Mother's Little Helper" ... and understood the (connection with the barbiturates of the) words much later. (Woman 27 years)

*Things are different today
I heard every mother say
Mother needs something to calm her down
Though she's not really ill, there's a little yellow pill ...*

*Doctor please, some more of these ...
Outside the door, she took four more*

What a drag is getting old ...

A divorce at 30 years old when I suddenly was left alone with three children under three years of age. At that difficult time, I often listened to Albinoni's "Adagio" or Bach's "Air", which helped me process my sorrow. (Woman 38 years)

Moving to the USA after my husband's studies. Strong anxiety and thoughts of divorce. Our second child was conceived there and it forced me to pull down these thoughts ... contradictory feelings for my husband, whom I cannot say I love with all my heart ... I would love to love, but why is it so difficult? My problem is too much adjustment and weakness of my own will. It brings to my mind Rod Stewart's song, "Sailing". (Woman 40 years)

*I am sailing, I am sailing, home again, across the sea
I am sailing, stormy waters to be near you, to be free ...*

*Can you hear me, can you hear me,
Through the dark night, far way
I am dying, forever trying
To be with you, who can say ...*

The theme of emancipation – major change and independence

A revolutionary musical experience meant a quick change in emotional feeling. It is a cathartic experience where anxiety often changes to the opening up of new possibilities. The references tell the essential details of the event:

I am totally broken, as my greatest love has ended. It was a great love of which hatred, dependence and jealousy made a hell. In spite of that, I feel chilling disappointment and rage. Somewhere in the background, there still is a thought of maybe being able to go on. The thoughts go through a circle when on the radio starts Cream's song, "I Feel Free". I begin to listen as the old song strikes directly at my situation:

*Pap, pap, pap, pa, pap, paa, I feel free (8 x)
... I can walk down the street; there is no one there
Though the pavements are one huge crowd
I can drive down the road, my eyes don't see
Though my mind wants to cry out loud ...
I feel free, I feel free ...*

Getting free from a destructive relationship, leaving the old and starting new. Suddenly I noticed that the dependence of my childhood had poisoned my relationship, and I do not have to make the same mistakes again. (Man 58 years)

Joan Baez's song "A Hundred Miles" ("500 Hundred Miles"). I don't remember the words, only the melody. I heard it on the radio when I went to study 650 kilometers from home. The song took away all my restless and tense feelings and made me feel peaceful and easy as I made my life's biggest and best decision. I still feel shivers down my spine when I hear the song ... I learned that sometimes you must actually stop and think about who you are, what you want and why or when to really move forward. I also learned that sometimes you have to go far to be able to look inside yourself. (Woman 26 years)

*If you miss the train I'm on
You will know that I am gone
You can hear the whistle blow
A hundred miles,
A hundred miles (4 x)*

*Lord, I'm one, Lord, I'm two, Lord, I'm three, Lord, I'm four
Lord, I'm 500 miles away from home
500 hundred miles (4 x)
Lord, I'm 500 miles from my home.*

According to analytical psychology, it is the matter of a "synchronous experience" where the traumatic problems find their solutions more through a coincidence (a song playing on the radio) than through a conscious process of thinking. It is about "subconscious tuning" where a human being is strongly tuned in to finding a solution to his/her anxiety or a problem and then a seemingly coincidental stimulus opens the whole situation, which is felt as a relieving experience of identifying with the song that has been made almost about the listener and describes his or her situation so well (see Lehtonen & Niemelä, 1997).

This phenomenon can also be interpreted through psychic binding where a strong instinct or energy (shows itself as restlessness or anxiety) is trying to find an object to which it can be bound. Behind binding in connection to music there are actors called "the cathex" who energize traumatic parts of the mind with psychic energy and enable them to be integrated first into preconsciousness after which they can be processed to a form where conscious processes may occur. This is actually the basis of the Progoff method. In musical binding, traumatic experiences can be handled and integrated in the same way as non-traumatic experiences. Successful binding processes give birth to sudden experiences (crystallizing experiences) of insights as described earlier, which form a chain of the narrative structures of our life story.

According to Rechartd and Ikonen (1990), two essential metapsychological events are part of binding processes:

1. *Making things float* (facilitation), which means making psychological events, contents, and processes easier to repeat as the catexation which has occurred once makes the resistance lower to a later catexation process.
2. *Energy immobilization*, the ability to store energy in psychic contents. Facilitation promotes catexation and adds usable psychic contents that have the binding abilities. The binding event is a process that starts from almost perfect bindlessness and continues to more integrated forms. Early childhood primitive binding forms are both repeated and replaced with new, layered structures, which make every successful binding help new binding events. Essential in the process is the music that makes the symbolic processing possible through disguising the traumatic contents of the mind outside the psychic defense mechanisms. Lehtonen (1993) has earlier explored

binding from the creativity point of view, but the process also belongs to music listening.

Landscape pictures of the psyche

The changing process of the stories took place without exception in solidarity, in situations where the individual had to stop in front of the problems and try to find a release from the anxiety. The mind's landscape of the stories was filled with images of depression and melancholy:

Darkness, emptiness, a thick fog where you cannot see forward at all ... not until afterwards did I notice that that music disappeared from my life for almost two years ...

The sound of a fountain in the park of city hall on a dark September evening. I am totally lonely and separate. I drink wine and look at how waterdrops shimmer in the dim light of a street lamp ...

... it's cold outside, cool spring weather, there are not yet even leaves on the trees ... First, I think about a cold September morning: it's windy and dead leaves are flying in the wind ...

An image of a lightless and cold winter day occurs. The time is lightless, grey and full of pain ...

I am standing on a bridge by the church and look through the steam of my breath at how the black water eddies and flows in the half-frozen river ...

In images, the emotions were replaced with metaphors about nature, the seasons, trees, plants, light, and temperature. Many stories are themselves like song lyrics as they also tell about the same kind of experiences. In this way, songwriters produce musical objects that listeners can use in processing their emotions.

Music offers an endless collection of binding targets because it is difficult to find a problem or a phenomenon about which there has not been a song written. The listener needs the right attitude and an "ear for listening" to the storytelling of music. This ability is not self-evident because the defenses (psychic defense mechanisms) do not favor spontaneous musical experiences. The resistance occurs in the form of intellectualizing music, which prevents the listener from reaching the deepest emotional significance of music. Unfortunately, music education has also been based on rationalism, which has flattened the emotions connected to music through underlining the meaning of music theory and musicianship. Music education has not seen the meaning of its creative irrationality. The stories we have collected clearly pointed to the idea that music's new creative irrationality is capable of freeing the psychic energy needed to solve problems.

Binding usually happens in a situation of emergency when the psychic defense networks do not work properly and subconscious thinking gets to master the control. The primal process masked by music integrates first into the preconscious level and after that to the consciousness when the chaotic anxiety erupts to recognizing and accepting situations. The existentialist Søren Kierkegaard has described this phenomenon well: *only at the moment of greatest emergency can a human being change from the bases* (see Wethington, Cooper, & Holmes, 1997).

Synchronizing and binding connect music and the life path

Synchronizing means events that seem only coincidental are connected in a new way forming unexpected chains of events that strongly influence the life of an individual. Synchronizing is connected to archetypes that occur in our minds in moments of psychic emergency helping and easing the pain (Jung, 1964/1991). Music acts simultaneously as an expression of anxiety and a channel for processing it (see Torvinen, 2007).

Music offers an artistic erupting channel to unbound, chaotic psychic energy. It expresses strong emotions, which bring new significance to a life "stuck" in one place. They renew identity and open new possibilities which were not possible earlier. Music strengthens psychic structures through helping people to process traumatic experiences without too much pain and anxiety. While reading the memoirs of composers, it is easy to notice how many composers have worked under an inner force while trying to find musical solutions to difficult life situations.

Concerning the listener, the process is totally the opposite as an individual who is in crisis gets a relaxing experience from music through which the mixed contents of the mind can be organized into a controlled order. When successful, binding produces relaxing empathetic experiences. Music psychology speaks about "regression serving the self". In these cases, although it would be clearer to speak about music's ability to bind chaotic psychic energy that is freed during the process to serve harmonizing aims.

Experiences repeat themselves; what is left behind will be found ahead

In the stories collected, the problems form chains where the crisis of the adult age activates the traumatic experiences from youth. The thought of meaningful experiences or crystallizing experiences means that our life floats from one knot to another and the time between the knots may feel unmeaningful. On the other hand, the strongly experienced life moments are born because of the positive or negative energy that is loaded inside the events.

The subjects reported that, "The birth of my own child brought up memories from my own childhood", for example. Although the events were different, the emotions connected in them were quite similar. For this reason, we have *déjà vu* – experiences that make us feel that we have experienced the same situation earlier. The same themes go round through life (just as in music also) as the crises and stages that are more balanced ripple in the inconsistent tide of life. Then it is most important to have the ability to control problems, and the skill to live life significantly despite them.

The breaking of most important human relationships brings to mind similar experiences from childhood and youth – loneliness and being let down. A divorce has connections to the troubles of one's own parents, or the death of a close person reminds someone of earlier losses. The most difficult problems seem to be situated in the tenderest situations of life – childhood and youth – where problems are usually experienced for the first time. The experiences are strong because children or youngsters do not have enough maturity to recognize and work out their problems.

The most difficult period of crises is connected to young adulthood (years 19-29), which is ruled by problems connected to the direction of life, selections, identity, independence, and relationships. It is unfortunate that young adulthood has been left outside of the research and in the shadow of puberty research. Of course, puberty is

characterized by strong emotions, but they do not have similar final significance as do the selections of young adults that strongly influence later life. Landmarks for adulthood are the birth of children, divorce and marriage problems, together with the illnesses and deaths of close people or parents.

In addition, loneliness and unavoidable instability are highlighted in the stories. In spite of human relationships and friendships, everyone is alone in the end. The eternal ambivalence of life was present in the stories as loving means in addition to feelings of happiness also a threat of losing everything and possibilities of dependence, possession, and jealousy. The essential aspect seemed to be only uncertainty about the luck not lasting forever.

Music compressed time so that music that offered comfort in childhood might still offer it later. It is a question of successful binding repeating itself and music's transitional meanings (Winnicott, 1966). The music used in earlier binding required a lot of psychic energy that could be mobilized later. Familiar pieces of music came back to mind later in new situations where they offered comfort in a similar way as before.

This music consisted of such songs as old spirituals, the music of J.S. Bach, and Albinoni's *Adagio* which have brought comfort to the lives of many people. These pieces of music were connected to different ceremonial situations (funerals, anniversaries, etc.), and in close relationships at home and in the inner circle of the family.

Music education as a provider of cultural experiences

From a music educational point of view, this research focuses on music binding itself inside our life path (see Willis, 1978), when the imagination activated by music offers tools for a creative handling of the crises and problems. According to Lehtonen (2007, p. 21), the special value of music education comes from its ability to develop a balanced emotional life, and the ability to offer good starting points for handling problems psychologically. Important music experiences strengthen our existence and carry us through the crises in life. Music operates in the fields of imagination, which is placed in the crossing of metaphors of discoveries, memories, ideas, and emotions (Taneli, 2012, p. 147).

The unique characteristic of music is that it acts not only as a manifestor of anxiety, but also as a cure for it. Music offers human beings psychic means to break free from oppressive experiences and deal with them through harmonizing non-verbal emotions, memories, and imagines. This is the reason to see music education more and more as a therapeutic school subject that should aim to develop a lifelong harmonizing music-relationship that could balance life from childhood to old age.

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About the Author (s)

Kimmo Lehtonen is a Professor at Turku University in the Teacher Education Department and he can be reached at:
kimleh@utu.fi

Antti Juvonen is a Professor at the University of Eastern Finland, in the Philosophical Faculty in the School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education on the Savonlinna Campus. He can be reached at ;
antti.juvonen@uef.fi

Heikki Ruismäki is a Professor at Helsinki University in the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences in Helsinki, Finland He can be reached at :
heikki.ruismaki@helsinki.fi

