

Playing for Integration



The Handbook

**How to Run Effective
Songwriting Workshops**

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1. Introduction

a. Background

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide guidance to those who are setting up or are running regular songwriting workshops in a non-professional setting.

It has been prepared by the members of a Grundtvig Song-writing partnership known as “Playing for Integration” which is part of a European Lifelong Learning Programme. The members of this partnership include songwriters from eight different European countries: Austria, Ireland, Slovenia, Germany, Romania, Denmark, UK and Poland.

One of the tasks, which we set ourselves for the Partnership, was to create a Handbook for conducting songwriting workshops to be held in arts or educational institutions without professional support. However, it is important that the organisers are motivated by a love the art and craft of songwriting and of its many different facets.

During the course of the partnership we visited each other’s countries, examined the folk tradition of each country, conducted workshops and put on gigs and concerts. We have pooled our knowledge and experience of songwriting and of running workshops to come up with this Handbook.

Songwriting is a popular activity but also tends to be a solitary activity and some writers become far more productive when they join a community of other songwriters. This is why regular workshops have an important role to play in the development of songwriting. However, in our experience, it can be extremely difficult to get a songwriting workshop off the ground and then to sustain it. We hope that the contents of this Handbook will help to make this task easier.

The people, who we believe, will find this Handbook particularly useful are existing songwriters who do not have access to professional tuition but who wish to come together to develop their songwriting skills and to get feedback on the songs that they are writing.

b. Focus

The main focus of this Handbook will be on the running of regular workshops. We will also take a look at the running of the weekend workshops and longer periods of up to a week. The focus on the longer workshops tends to be different and those that are participating may be doing so on a one

off basis and they will have greater expectation of formal tuition. So there will be a different skill and competence requirement for the running of these types of workshops.

c. Challenge

We hope that many of the readers of this Handbook will take up the challenge of setting up their own workshop. You will be embarking on what we consider to be a worthwhile and ultimately rewarding journey and we wish you all the very the best in your endeavours.

We would like to thank all the members of “Playing for Integration”, who contributed to the Handbook and we hope that you too will continue to have fulfilment in your songwriting activities.



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2. The Role of Workshops in Songwriting

We believe that workshops are the most effective way for songwriter's to develop their talents. However, before coming to a workshop it is desirable that a songwriter would have some basic skills either in writing melodies or lyrics. We do not believe that a workshop is a suitable learning environment for someone who wants to learn to be a songwriter from scratch. Who you tend to get coming to a songwriting workshop is the classic singer songwriter / guitarist who has all the skills, or someone who only writes melodies and someone who only writes lyrics. You may also attract poets who are interested in branching out to becoming lyric writers and even melody writers if they have such latent gifts.

Songwriting workshops can take a number of different formats. The most popular format is probably the regular weekly, fortnightly, monthly session. In addition, workshops can be held on a one-off basis over a weekend or over a five-day or weeklong period.

Each of the different formats has a different role to play. The regular workshops enable the songwriter to focus on perfecting their craft. By continuing to focus on a regular basis they become more proficient. When pilots are learning to fly, they have to complete a certain amount of flying hours before they can get a commercial license. Songwriters will undoubtedly improve if they have the equivalent of flying hours spent exploring different aspects of songwriting.

In the regular workshops, the emphasis is on participants learning from each other with some input every now and then by professional teachers or performers.

The weekend or five-day or longer workshops tend to have a different focus and as a result are likely to attract a different type of participant. Many people come to these types of workshops to find out whether or not they have the capacity to become a songwriter. In the larger timeframe, it is possible for the organisers to evaluate the existing and potential talent of the participants and to provide an element of guidance and mentoring.

3. Menu of Workshop Activities

Introduction

Our aim is to provide a series of exercises, which will help organisers to sustain momentum during the workshop, however long that might be. We have included both songwriting and non-songwriting exercises. Songwriting exercises tend to be quite long and sometimes it is better to have some short exercises to facilitate bonding and to sustain energy levels in the workroom.

I. Non-Songwriting Exercises

1. Short Exercises

Short exercises are essential for larger groups and for less experienced writers as the result-sharing session is shorter. They are less intensive than longer ones and give immediate feedback to the organiser about relative ability levels and therefore who will need more support. Some participants may get good results that will lead them into a longer writing session.

1.1. Icebreakers

An icebreaker is a short activity designed to encourage participants to talk to one another and to share some limited information about them and ideally should be carried out at the beginning of the programme.

Workshop participants can range between those who are garrulous and open and others who are quiet and nervous. Icebreakers help structure a 'soft landing' into the workshop for everyone.

Short and simple, or longer and more complex, ideally there ought to be a fun aspect involved and perhaps of some relevance to the focus of workshop itself. Either way, by the end of the first exercise everybody should have spoken to and told someone else in the room something about themselves other than their name.

When choosing exercises, bear in mind that kinaesthetic exercises are more likely to create or maintain energy levels in the room and music/singing-related exercises can help 'warm-up' the group.

1.2. Line Outs

Good for international participants

Time: 10 minutes

Suggested max. **Participants:** 25 – 30

Activity level: People will need to be able to move around and sort themselves into a line.

Explanation:

The group will form themselves into a continuous line based upon criteria you set.

Examples include

- First name – Andrew to Zoë
- Height – Shortest to tallest
- Shoe size – Smallest to largest
- Birthday (probably best not to use age)
- Hand size
- Zodiac Signs
- The furthest they've ever travelled

Participants are then asked to sing a verse from their favourite song or if they don't sing to briefly name their favourite song and say why.

1.3. Juggling - Learning Names

Time: 5 – 10 Minutes

Suggested max. **Participants:** 25 – 30

Equipment: 3 juggling balls and name badges

Activity level: Participants will be throwing and catching, and need to be able speak and hear one another's names

Explanation:

This icebreaker generates a lot of energy and usually plenty of laughs.

Get the participants into a circle; ask them put on name badges.

Explain that they will be passing the juggling ball around the group by making eye contact with another person calling their name and then throwing the ball to them. (You might want to emphasise underarm only).

Pass the ball around the group from one person to the next and ask each person to say their name aloud and one fact about themselves.

When the ball comes back to you, pick someone else out, make eye contact, call their name and then throw them the juggling ball.

Once they start to get the hang of it introduce the second juggling ball and then the third. As facilitator, watch to make sure that everyone gets a go.

2. Longer Exercises

2.1. Listening Exercise

Time: 20 minutes – up to 20 participants, the more the better.

Equipment:

- Two A1 flipchart sheets with line drawings of a simple scene
- Mini-whiteboards and marker pens for half the participants

Activity level: excitement but no movement

Explanation:

Participants are paired and seated in a long line back-to-back with their partners.

One side can see the line drawing and all simultaneously describe it to their partner; anybody using the names of the things depicted (e.g. “it’s a boat and there’s a sun in the upper right corner”) is disqualified.

Partners create their own line drawing based on the information provided.

2.2. Exploring Common Interests

Time: 10 minutes

Suggested max **Participants:** 10 + (works better with larger groups)

Equipment: participants will need pen and paper, two prizes

Activity level: participants will need to be able to move around and talk to one Another.

Explanation:

Explain to the group that they must find three different people in the room that they share something in common. These factors must not be:

- Something visible – e.g. both men, both have heads
- Connected to their songwriting

The first person back to the front with all three things written down wins a prize.

Give one out for the most unusual thing that two people have in common.

II. Songwriting Exercises

1. Songwriting Circles

a. Introduction

The essence of a songwriting circle is to provide an opportunity for participants to present a song that they have written and for the other participants to then provide them with constructive feedback.

One person should be in charge of the process deciding how much time should be given to each song and regulating and summarising the feedback.

A songwriting circle can be as simple as someone singing a song and the others in the circle commenting. This in itself is worthwhile and can be a good vehicle for feedback. The emphasis should always be on constructive criticism and care should be taken not to be negative especially when providing feedback to relative beginners.

There can be many variations on this theme. We are setting out below a more sophisticated approach, which is likely to be more beneficial.

The person presenting the song provides each of the participants a copy of the lyrics of the song. While the song is being presented the listeners write down their initial impressions and these form the basis for discussion of the song.

The discussion can be extended to include a detailed analysis of the text, the musical content and the structure of the song. Comments and suggestions can be made on the back of the lyric sheet. Any final thoughts can also be added. The lyric sheets are then collected and given to the presenter of the song.

We wish to stress that the participant's opinions and suggestions are only individual suggestions and opinions and that ultimately it is the songwriter who is responsible for their own song.

If you wish to carry out a more detailed analysis of a song you can use the schedule below

b. Factors to consider in analysing a song in detail**Hook / Title / Idea**

1. Does your title instantly grab a listener's attention because it is fresh and interesting?
2. Is the hook free of cliché?
3. Is the hook placed in a power position?
4. Is your hook repeated?
5. Does your hook sum up the story or feeling of your song?

Melody

1. Is the melody catchy and easy to remember and sing even without lyrics?
2. Does the melody employ repetition?
3. Is there prosody between the melody and lyric? Does the feel of the melody and the tempo of the music match the meaning of the words?
4. Does the melodic rhythm change in each part of the song structure? (Verse/chorus/bridge)
5. Are the important words in the lyric placed in the power positions of the measure (beat 1 or 3) or on longer note durations?

Lyric

1. Does the verse lyric lead the listener directly to the chorus?
2. Is the lyric detailed and full of fresh imagery?
3. Does the lyric sound natural and conversational?
4. Does the lyric effectively employ rhymes?
5. Does the lyric draw the listener into the story, by showing instead of telling how the singer feels?
6. Does the lyric have one focused idea?
7. Is the lyric concise and not too wordy or have too many syllables to be melodic?
8. Does the lyric make the singer look good and not cause him or her to look bad?
9. Are the lyrics easily relatable and not too personal?
10. Does the lyric employ metaphors or similes and carry the imagery through the song?

Structure

1. Is the melody the same but the lyrics different on each verse?
2. Is the rhyme structure consistent from verse to verse?
3. Is the meter of the lyric consistent from verse to verse?
4. Does meter of the lyric change from verse to chorus or bridge?
5. Are the chord changes the same in each verse?
6. Is the song form that of a standard popular song?
7. Does the verse lyric tell the story and advance the idea?
8. Additional points to check depending on the song form:
 - A. Verse, Verse, Verse
 - Is the title/hook in the first or last line (power positions) in each verse?
 - B. Verse, Verse, Bridge, Verse
 - Is the title/hook in the first or last line (power positions) in each verse?

- Is the bridge a departure from the verse musically?
- Is the bridge a departure from the verse lyrically?
- Is the bridge a departure from the verse rhythmically?
- Are the chord changes different in the bridge?

C. Verse, Chorus, Verse Chorus

- Is the chorus the catchiest part of the song?
- Does the chorus contain the title/hook?
- Is the chorus the same musically and lyrically each time?
- Is the chorus a summation of the idea?
- Is the chorus a departure from the verse musically?
- Is the chorus a departure from the verse lyrically?
- Is the chorus a departure from the verse rhythmically?
- Are the chord changes different in the chorus?
- Does the rhyme structure change in the chorus?

D. Verse, Chorus, Verse Chorus, Bridge, Chorus

- Is the chorus the catchiest part of the song?
- Does the chorus contain the title/hook?
- Is the chorus the same musically and lyrically each time?
- Is the chorus a summation of the idea?
- Is the chorus and bridge a departure from the verse musically?
- Is the chorus and bridge a departure from the verse lyrically?
- Is the chorus and bridge a departure from the verse rhythmically?
- Are the chord changes different in the chorus and bridge?
- Does the rhyme structure change in the chorus and bridge?
- Is the bridge the climax of the song?

Originality

1. Is the story original?
2. Is the melody fresh and doesn't sound like another song?
3. Is the hook or title fresh and does not sound cliché?

Truth

1. Did the song make you laugh or cry?
2. Is the story and are characters believable?
3. Is there enough contrast between the sections to build to an emotional climax?
4. Does the lyric allow the listener to empathize with the singer?

2. Co – writing - See also the explanations in our Co-Writing-Book

(www.sommercamp.at/p4i2/p4i/Product_files/CoWrites.pdf)

a. Introduction

Co-writing in this context is the task of two or more people writing a song together. There are two different types of co-writes:

- A co-write, which is initiated because the participants need a new song for their repertoire or write it for another artist.
- A co-write, which is initiated as an exercise to allow sharing of knowledge, experimentation or training.

The first is often commercial in nature and the duration of the co-write often longer than the latter. The above distinction is naturally fluid and the second can evolve into the first.

Co-writing as a workshop exercise is what we will describe in-depth in this handbook. The first thing to consider when co-writing at a workshop is how many should be on the individual co-writing teams, two is normally the best number, but three or even four is doable. With more than two people extra care is needed to make sure that all participants feel included and contribute to the co-write.

b. Selecting the teams

In team selection, some form of random process is often the best way to do it, this ensures that no-one feel rejected and it can create unexpected synergies between song-writers who would not normally write a song together. Sometimes, it is beneficial to divide the workshop attendees into a couple of groups, for example depending on which language they wish to co-write in, or genre of music.

Of course random selection of teams is not always possible, and in some cases not desirable, but when in doubt, go for the random team selection.

c. Duration

The ideal time for a co-writing exercise for a regular workshop is about an hour. This will depend upon the nature of the workshop and it will also depend upon other time constraints. Weekend and longer workshops can allow more time.

For a workshop co-write, a limitation on time is essential for several reasons. First of all, the workshop naturally needs boundaries secondly if the workshop is not an afternoon dedicated to co-writing then time will need to be allocated to other sessions. Also limiting the time for a co-write can act as a catalyst for enhancing inspiration. Finally, if the workshop allows for more than one co-write session, then having the individual co-writing sessions that are not too lengthy can offset impact of random selected teams that are not really working because of personality or other issues. For a workshop having more than one co-write we suggest duration somewhere in the range of 2 to 4 hours.

d. Getting Started

Here are a few different ways to starting a co-write session:

- The participants write a number of words on small pieces of paper and put them in a jar. The words are shuffled and each team draw two or three words. The drawn words should then be in the final song of the team. A slight variation of this method is the rule where only two of three words have to be in the song. Another variation is to write concepts, sentences or other short descriptions of ideas on the pieces of paper.
- Another way to give the starting inspiration for a co-write session is to send the teams out into the surrounding area to find words for their song. It is also an option to define a topic that all songs should be, for example a Christmas song or a song about love, childhood memories or any other subject imaginable.

e. Ending the co-write session

When the time is allocated for the co-write, it is a good idea to have a presentation at the end so that all participants get a chance to present their songs and to hear the results from the other teams. This also helps keep spirits up during the co-write.

f. Further considerations

One of the risks of looking for topics for workshop is that some of the song topics produced may be only suited for the specific occasion. Try and avoid topics such as a song about how drunk we got yesterday, how measly the weather is, how difficult it is to find a topic to write a song about or something of this sort. One thing that can help minimize this is to make sure by direction or intervention that the words in the jar are of a good quality.

Another consideration is that not all co-writes will be finished when the allotted time has passed and most participants will want to finish their song. So it is a good idea to have free time during the workshop where these unfinished songs can be progressed.

g. Challenges

If the participants of the workshop have very different experience/skill levels, the random selection of teams might not be the best solution. Having a very skilled songwriter co-write with a newcomer makes sense when the goal of the workshop is getting new song-writers trained, and actually the trainee songwriter often gains inspiration. However, the skilled songwriter will most likely want to co-write with another skilled songwriter. However, a newcomer only team will most likely struggle and not get the benefit of a co-write.

Sometimes a team that is selected simply does not work. If the co-write is short it is not a major problem but if there is only one co-write it can make sense to try to fix it some way or another.

h. Royalties

As a general rule, when two people come together to write a song they agree to share any royalties that may accrue 50/50, **unless they agree otherwise**. If one person writes the melody and another writes the lyrics, then 50/50 is a fair split. If one person writes the melody and they share the writing of the lyrics, then 75/25 may be an appropriate split. If they both share in the writing of the lyrics and the melody then we are back to 50/50.

If you wish to delve deeper into the formalities and legalities of co-writing you can out the links below

Musicians Union Specimen co-writing agreement:

- www.aortas.org.uk/AORTAS/Resources_and_links_files/1.-Co-Writing-Agreement.pdf

Notes to co-writing agreement:

- www.aortas.org.uk/AORTAS/Resources_and_links_files/1a.-Notes-to-Co-Writing-Agreement.pdf

See also

- www.janisian.com/reading/cowriting.php
- www.wixenmusic.com/cowriters.htm

i. Case Study: How I approach Co-writing (Example of Tony BARDON, Ireland)

“Even though the essentials are the same, co-writing can be a totally different experience to writing a song on your own. And just as people are different co-writing is as different as the number of different people with whom you co-write.

My approach is to keep an open mind. A lot will depend on the framework in which the co-write exercise is carried out. Whether you are given a specific topic or specific words, which must be included in the song you are to produce. However, sometimes two people get together with a blank sheet of paper and decide that that they want to write a song.

One of the benefits of co writing is that it enables you to write songs that you would never write on your own. Either, because you would never have addressed a particular topic or you do not have the music skills or the lyric writing skills that your partner has.

I think it is important that as far as possible you play to your relative strengths. If I am writing with a gifted musician then I tend to let them focus on the music and I focus on the lyrics. If I’m writing with someone who has limited musical ability then I tend to focus on the melody.

In my experience co-writing is about compromise. Because people are different they will have different ideas as to what will work in a song. Then role of co-writers should be to challenge each other so that they can bring out the best in each other. I find that I need to be flexible and at the same time I need to be strong if I feel that I have a good melody or a good line that should be incorporated in the song.

Not all co-writes will end up in the production of an acceptable song and this is to be expected. Some people just can’t work well together. I believe that one of the main benefits of co-writing is that it brings you outside your comfort zone that it stretches you in your songwriting activities. Then, when you get back to writing your own songs you have new insights and new experiences which can only enhance your songwriting abilities.”

3. Songwriting Case Study: My heart is ?? - Exercise (Slovenia, May 2012)

Below is a case study in which a visiting female poet, Cvetka Bevc, invited a large circle of songwriters to complete a short phrase into full sentences of prose or poetry:

Having discussed rhythm, each person in the circle completed the sentence with two syllables, the focus being to maintain a set rhythm, rather than come up with beautiful poetry. Afterwards, we each sat down to complete the phrase in our own languages.

Here is an example of what came from this five-to-ten-minute exercise and the song that resulted.

Ideas:

“My heart’s a worn-out sleeve; stuffed and stitched from disparate bits
Patched up tightly so it fits and locked so nothing leaves
My lungs are like a sieve; Swiss cheese airbags, full, they sift
And sort the bad from the good bits, without them I can’t breathe.”

Later in the workshop this developed into a litany of body parts:

“My guts march to my arse / Pied-piping, lagged with lipin
Skin-bound with tiger striping / It lets the bad stuff past

Which brings me to my skin / The membrane that I’m living in
It keeps things out and holds things in / Keeps me from being thin
Without it I’d never last.

My brain’s a car boot sale / An old guitar with three sound holes
A TV set with no controls / Pulp fiction and Dead Sea scrolls
Love letters and junk mail.

It’s true I guess that it’s a mess / But nobody’s perfect except you
But you’re the somebody this body adores / The one it worships and applauds
So if you’re not put off by all that stuff / Then I hope one day, I hope and pray this body will
be yours.” (“Heart’s a worn-out sleeve” © Dan Plews 2012)

In this exercise it’s important to keep the stimulus phrase short, and open to allow as much interpretation as possible.

4. Body and Vocal Warm-ups

a. Introduction

Many songwriters like to sing and present their own material. It is important that they present it in the best possible manner. In order to get the most out of your voice you should do body and vocal warm-ups before performing. We suggest that from time to time a specific amount of time, perhaps 20 minutes to half an hour, be set aside to familiarise those attending the workshop with these routines. It would be wonderful to complete all of the exercise outlined below but even if only part of them were carried out this would be most helpful for the voice and make for an improved presentation of songs. It is particularly helpful for weekend or longer workshops as it is a very effective for the participants to wake up their body and connect with their breathing. It also creates a relaxed and carefree atmosphere in the group when all the people attending engage in some playful bodywork early on in the programme.

b. Body Warm-Up Exercises

As in Yoga and Qigong it is important to stretch your muscles first, waking them up softly before using them excessively. The same goes for the voice.

- Stretch your arms upwards, lift hands and fingers towards the sky, get on your toes and breathe in deeply.
- Then roll downwards slowly vertebrae by vertebrae with the upper body, feeling your stomach intensively, while exhaling.
- Make sure the head, arms and shoulders are relaxed. Breathe out three times while hanging downwards.
- Swing your arms and shoulders back and forth while standing and bounce with your knees using the same in the rhythm that a child would do playfully. Close your eyes, if you like, and feel how the body relaxes.

After some minutes doing this exercise, take a few moments to stand in silence and feel your body.

This helps raising the awareness of your body sensation. Try and let go of thoughts.

- Start shaking your head. Then shake your shoulders and hips.
- Clap your hands and then keep them folded while shaking your arms back and forth like you want to shake a coin in your palms. Remember to release your jaw!
- If you make an "ah"-sound it will support the relaxation.
- Then shake your knees and kick your legs. Lastly shake your hands and arms.

You might want to give some attention to your face because it often gets tense, especially the jaw.

- So start by giving yourself a little head massage. Your fingertips massaging the skull, then your forehead down to the eyebrows. Stroke over your eyelids and cheek. Softly bite on your lips

from the inside like you want to shut your mouth without the lips to be seen.

- Then bite heavily on your teeth and clench your fists. Then let go with a big relieved exhale on "ah".
- Afterwards massage the jaw muscles.
- Push out the tongue like you want to imitate a tiger. Participants love it when you introduce it playfully.
- Make your hips turn in circles first clockwise then counter clockwise while starting to make some breathing sound on "F" and "Sh".
- Put your hands on your knees and make quick circles; first clockwise, then counter clockwise.

The following **Qigong exercise** helps to deepen the breathing and get grounded:

- Stand in a relaxed position, knees are a little bit bent, arms hang loosely next to your body.
- Start moving your arms forwards in front of you, lifting them very slowly with the hands hanging down like you want to draw a circle.
- Inhale through your nose. At the same time bend your knees slowly downwards.
- Make sure your abdomen and pelvis are straight or even bended backwards like you want to empty it like a bowl so you don't provoke a "hollow cross".
- Then slowly move the arms towards you still drawing the circle and bend your arms a little while you move your arms downwards again exhaling through your open mouth on "F" as if you want to push something away from you.
- Repeat this exercise eight times.
- You'll feel the effect right afterwards cause it centres and relaxes you to be prepared for more excessive exercises.
- Put your hands on your stomach and lean backwards while inhaling and then bend forward at a slow pace while exhaling supporting your breathing. Nose in-, mouth out on "F".
- Finally, rest for a moment of peace and awareness, feeling your toes, calves, knees, thighs, hips, bottom, back, stomach, chest, neck, shoulders, upper arms, elbows, lower arms, hands, fingers, throat, face and scalp.
- Wake up the body by clapping with your left hand from the right shoulder downwards to the hand, turn the arms and clap inside upwards. Do it several times and then do the same on the left side.
- Then clap with both hands downwards from your hips to the feet and inside upwards. Repeat three times.
- Shake your whole body, make some sound with your lips, jump up and down and get ready for the vocal warm-ups!

c. Vocal-Warm-Up Exercises

Body and voice warm-ups help us to let go of our critical mind. The more relaxed and friendly the teacher comes across the easier people will open up to the energy that prepares them for the creative process.

It is best to stand in a circle.

Remind the participants constantly that arms, hands and fingers should be relaxed. It is an indication of stress if people feel uncomfortable when hands and fingers are bended or

overstretched. It will help them to loosen up because the body language expresses the emotional sensations that go through our minds.

Bend your knees a little while exercising to relax your lower body.

- Start by breathing out strongly on "fff" so that your lips shake sounding like a horse. First without tone then start to make sounds sliding up- and downwards.
- The same works on the Italian "rrr" which makes your tongue flatter and helps to strengthen your diaphragm.
- Create a "wave" by moving your arms forward up into the air while exhaling on "shhhh" and downwards again by sucking the air through round lips. Try and produce stronger and stronger waves with your mouth until the biggest one clashes on to the shore.
- It can create a meditative state by imitating the ocean while you train your breathing.

Then put your hands on your chest and start humming on any tone that feels comfortable. Each person chooses his or her own tones which creates a beautiful "sound cloud".

- Soon you can move on to vowels like "aah" and "uuh", inspired by the "wave-exercise" you might rise to crescendos and descend to decrescendos with the group.
- It is important to wake up your voice gently. Make sure you drink a lot of water before and during the session! It will prevent people from damaging the vocal chords while doing the exercises.
- Do "slidings" on "youuuu" upwards to the fifth (quint) and backwards to the tonic. Continue by singing it a half tone higher and so forth.

Next, you sing a simple vocal technique exercise on "bla" to loosen your jar.

- Start on the fifth and go down five tones to the tonic: bla, bla, bla, bla, bla.
- Then half a tone higher. Eventually switch over to bli, blo, blu and blau.
- It is more effective when you keep a steady rhythm and tempo so people have to stay alert.
- Move to the exercise by shaking hips and shoulders.

Sing a major chord up- and downwards starting on the tonic, go to the third, fifth, and back to third and tonic by using the words "Non, non, non, non, non".

Start low and see how high you can train the voices up into the soprano/ tenor register. If it gets too high for one person he/she can drop out for some sequences.

Now we want to train our diaphragm with the following simple exercise using "milili" by pushing the "sing muscle" in or out which is located down between your lower ribs at the costal arch.

Try to find your natural impulse by pretending to cough. It will either push in- or outwards and this is what you exaggerate during the exercise.

- Start on the fifth, and then go to the major third and down to the tonic again while singing "milili".

- Each time you produce an impulse on the first tone.
- Then shake and wake up your body again and make the "horse sound" as described in the beginning of this chapter.

Lastly you can integrate the whole octave by singing the shortest opera in the world: "Hello, I love you, good-bye"!

- Start on the fifth: "hello, I" in three 8th notes, go up to the high tonic by singing "love", down to fifth with "you", sing "good" on the major third and "bye" on the low tonic.
- It is good fun to let the participants walk around and greet each other while performing this little opera to each other using arms and body expressions.

d. Vocal improvisation: Call and Response

To finish the vocal warm-up session you can do a little "call and response" which will challenge the participants to perform solo and be creative with their voice.

- The workshop leader starts moving from right foot to left foot in a slow tempo to emphasize the rhythm and sings some simple short melody easy to be repeated such as "yeah", "whoo", "dabada" or in gibberish.
- The group will repeat the same line, and then the next person to the right invents some new simple melody to be repeated.
- Very often some people suddenly feel blocked and cannot think of any "brilliant" melody.
- Let them shout their name or "yes, I do" or "beautiful day" as long as the positive vibe continues and everyone gets to try it out.

e. Vocal improvisation: Song Circle

Stand in a circle and start moving as described in the previous exercise.

- The vocal instructor presents this improvisation game by explaining that he will sing a simple "groove" for everybody to sing along. Then the next person to his right is then asked to add another "colour".
- Find something easy and repetitive to add to the groove. Then the next person to right continues putting some little melody or rhythm to it and so forth until you reach the last person to the left of the workshop leader.
- This person will have the special role to improvise over this "sound salad".
- Do a test round to try it out.
- The circle should never stop because the "improviser" –is always the last person in the circle standing to the left of the "groove starter" – He/She will find a new groove after taking some time to improvise over the old one to improvise over the old one.

This exercise can become quite exciting when participants dare to let their voice speak a new, unfamiliar language and can be a wonderful experience of letting go of boundaries. Have fun!

5. Intuitive Singing

Intuitive Singing is a systematic way of releasing stress in the body, the voice and the breathing, thereby inducing a meditative state, inner peace and an increased sense of self. Participants are encouraged to find their own voice by a series of group vocal exercises where the emphasis is on expressing yourself in your own unique way while at the same time merging into the symphony of sound being produced by the group as a whole. This allows participants to give birth to a new voice, which is uniquely theirs and not an imitation of someone else's voice. Sometimes the path is long and difficult but sometimes such gifts fall directly from heaven.

Our intuitive voice is not influenced by reason. It does not have predetermined melodies or words. It originates and terminates freely; it is projected out into the group where it influences the quality of participation of others and in turn responds to the expression of others in a symphonic dialogue. It is full of emotion, which comes from the heart and is strongly focussed in the now.

The benefit of Intuitive Singing to Songwriters is that helps us to develop our own unique style, it improves the tone of our voice, it encourages us to improvise and it helps us to overcome performance inhibitions.

If you are interested learning more about Intuitive Singing please visit www.intuitivesinging.com and download the booklet "The Gate to your Inner Music"

a. Extracts

The following extracts from this booklet are reflections, which were made after a seminar on intuitive singing, which was held in Wroclaw, Poland in 2012. They help us get a better idea of what the process is about.

From Bergerne Wilk Halina, Hungary:

For many years, I have been professionally engaged in nature therapy. Particularly I'm interested in fields that help people to find balance between the physical body, the soul and the mind. The times that we are living right now proceed at a particularly fast pace. Our bodies, which are encoded by old patterns, are simply not able to follow...

About 6 years ago I came across a gong – which is the supreme instrument. I felt its vibration in my body very strongly. The same happened with Tibetan singing bowls. Both of them gave me the

impression of time disappearing and a feeling of particular lightness of the body. This state lasts long after the treatment, massage and so called, bath sound'. Achieving this state makes it much easier to bring out our own voice. In the sound of those instruments is a kind of encouragement to sing together. All the pre-existing boundaries disappear. Many people are unwilling to sing. When you close down the voice inside of you, you close down your own feelings. Staying among the sounds and vibrations of those instruments helps to achieve a state of relaxation. It is a great opportunity to emerge reborn with a new quality of voice or singing. Many people can't sing. I can see that their voices, according to aesthetic standards, are judged low by the listeners. But I know that for the person performing it's a deep experience. In many cases, it can mean entering the new way of life.

To sing in front of a group you need to find courage. You need to learn how to get the strength and how to gain control over your breath. You need to learn how to keep your body at ease. You need to find immediately and spontaneously the concept of what sound you want to sing and find its suitable power and pureness. Practise helps. It's worth practising. As a result of practice, the practitioners achieve higher levels of satisfaction. They are able to get back on their feet faster- I would call this time, a time of growth and development of the voice. I notice that singing people make changes in their lives much faster.

Apart from gongs and singing bowls there are many other different instruments that can help you to get your inner voice out.

The Shruti box, which is Indian origin, gives you the basic tone and creates a kind of wave that you can easily sit with. Its sound reminds us of something ancient and earthy-natural- singing with it, we get the feeling that we actually are this sound We also feel safe.. The participants of this exercise very often say that they heard and felt the voice of the Earth.

Another very interesting intuitive instrument is Kalimba. This beautiful, angelic sound has an impact on our feelings. It opens the path to getting out our feeling. Singing together with this instrument we sense that we are singing out our feelings, which give a special sense of lightness and pureness.

Completely different feelings wake up inside of us while listening to the shamanic drum. We get the impression that we are returning to our ancestors. Rhythm given by a player can easily take us to the world of the elements

I'm sure that each of us can find the most suitable instrument for ourselves. It is worth playing those instruments just for your own pleasure. It is worth creating your own intimate contact with them. A few years ago, I came across a zither. Listening to the sound of its strings I realised that I

would like to play that instrument in my own way. I found some beautiful poems and then the music for them came into being. . A year later a CD with my improvised songs was released. I have been giving concerts for many years. The listeners who share their impressions say that those songs get deep inside them.

From Levai Borbála (Poland):

Singing from my heart has always accompanied my life. Whatever I've been doing- I've always been humming-and making up my own lyrics. I'm a great music lover, singing and music improvisation gives me lot of freedom. The International workshops and their exercises have helped me to find my voice, without feeling nervous. At the meetings I found many people who were searching in the same way and this left a great impression on me. We learned from one another how to express our feeling freely using your own voice. I did not need notes or lyrics either-I sang whatever came to my mind at that moment.. As a nature therapist I know, that when I strengthen the quality and power of my voice-my spleen become more effective and this strengthens my belief in myself and my life powers become stronger. I am able to pass this on to the people that I am working with. As a result of participating in intuitive singing, I experienced the beneficial influence of the sound and singing on my physical body, my psyche and my soul.

b. Intuitive Singing compared with the standard approach to singing

Standard education through learning, understood as the acquisition of knowledge and practice, is widely used in music schools, workshops and trainings. However, being a professional musician doesn't lead to the skill of improvisation on the stage or in intuitive singing.

The main differences between learning to be a professional musician and learning intuitive singing can be seen in the comparison table.

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING – PROFESSIONAL SINGING	THE PROCESS OF SELF-OPENING – INTUITIVE SINGING
The goal is to achieve perfection; public performance on the stage	The goal is usually to find 'something' lost during childhood which in turn leads to a change in the individual's life or at least a change in music-making
Musical exercises are a chore; even if you are comfortable at the beginning, later they become generally tedious and tiring.	Exercises initially seems quite meaningless but later they are very pleasant
We learn according to particular style, a particular school. The closer we are this style, the better we feel we are doing in learning.	The fact we can sing is ideally suited to us, because it is a part of us, it comes from within us.
The result is the ability to perfectly perform more difficult and more complex musical works of other composers.	The result is a creative self-expression: sometimes simple, sometimes more complicated, depending on the inspiration
Ability to improvise is the last rung on the ladder of achievements. Only greatest masters can freely improvise on stage	Improvisation is from the beginning, this ability comes quickly and naturally, but you may have problems with an exact repetition of songs and memorizing
If you like to sing - it gives you a great pleasure and improves mood	Singing is an integral part of our life, which affects all areas
Mainly we sing someone else's songs, usually masters' songs or well-known hits	Mainly we sing what we feel at the moment. Then we create our own songs

c. Presentation and sharing

Part of the 'workshop dynamic' is that participants become their own audience and this helps create an expectant and productive atmosphere, with new work and ideas being shared. Creating an expectation can put people on the spot, so it's important to establish a supportive atmosphere. By the same token, if someone is not ready or otherwise unwilling to share their work it would be a mistake to pressure them into doing so.

While presentation is essential to the dynamic, it is secondary to the creative process, meaning a large group can present challenges. In this context, it may be a good idea to break into smaller presentation-circles (note the word 'circle') to save time and maximise creative time and feedback opportunities.

It is desirable that basic recordings are made of presentations at least on the voice recorder on a mobile phone. This ensures that there is a record of the song available, which then can be worked upon in the future. The organisers may record all of the presentations and distribute them later alternatively they may ask participants to take responsibility for their own recordings.

6. Guest speakers and formal teaching

Leading a workshop is more facilitation than teaching; formal teaching sessions help equip participants with a framework of rules or create a starting point from which more participant-led activities can follow.

However, in order for participants to relax, they also need to know that they are in safe, experienced hands; as with any presenting situation, the mood in the room is set by the cues from the presenter, so it's important that that person feels comfortable in the role.

Inviting a guest speaker can introduce novelty and energise an established workshop group. Whether 'invited' or 'in-house', however, formal teaching sessions are useful, maybe essential, for some participants, while other participants may be less interested.

With larger groups it may be advisable to schedule an alternative speaker/ activity to cater to both groups. The discussion that results can include peer teaching/sharing and the Q&A section may be the most useful section of the workshop.

In the course of the Playing for Integration partnership workshops, teaching sessions included the learning of traditional songs the philosophy of co-writing, structure, melody, harmony, rights and royalties and guitar technique.



7. Evaluations

Evaluation has an important role to play in the conduct of evening workshops and more particularly in the conduct of longer workshops.

For evening workshops, we consider it best practice to appoint one person as the formal evaluator for the evening. The role of the evaluator will be to comment in a constructive manner on how well the workshop was conducted. Did the workshop follow a predefined structure, which facilitated the growth of the participants? Did the person in charge keep control of activities and finish in a timely manner. Or did the workshop drift without a sense of purpose. This feedback can be helpful for improving the quality of future workshops

On workshops that take place over a longer period such as a weekend or a five-day session and it is important that all participants are asked to provide feedback and that there is a formal evaluation session. This will provide the participants with an opportunity to highlight any deficiencies in organisation, which can be rectified in the future. However credit should be given where credit is due and it is also an opportunity for indicating the positive aspects of the workshops, which can be built upon in the future

Best Practice Example: Evaluation-Co-Writing (held in Slovenia 2012)

Instructions for the group work

- Give the group a specific time for the exercise
- Each participant in the group addresses the following questions:
 - a) What learning's will you take will you take-home with you?
 - b) How will you describe your experience to your friends?
 - c) What were events/moments that inspired you or disappointed you?
 - d) What are the next steps you are proposing to take after this meeting?
 - e) Are there any new goals you now wish to achieve?

- Brainstorming

After everyone has expressed their views commence brainstorming with the purpose of finding a song, which has a connection with your experiences during the visit

- Presentation

- a) Each group presents the results of their discussions to all of the participants
- b) Each group presents their song.

4. Suggested Workshop Formats

In the previous section we provide an outline of the range of activities that might be carried out in workshop sessions. However, it will not be possible to carry out all these activities in an evening workshop session or even over a number of evenings and some of them are only appropriate for weekend or longer workshops. What we are seeking to do, is provide you with the range of activities from which you can choose to construct a programme for a workshop. We are setting out below what a selection of these items might look like in an evening meeting setting.

4.1. Format for an Evening Meeting

Some workshops will be organised by one individual who is responsible for the running of all the workshops. However, others may be organised on a club like basis. Where this is the case we are of the opinion that a different person should be responsible for each workshop session. This gives the members of the workshop an opportunity to conduct a meeting and to build confidence. The person responsible should plan the meeting and contact members in advance with regard to any tasks they may have to carry out during the course of the session.

Specimen Programme 2 Hrs 30 Mins:

- Check- In: 10 Minutes

In our experience, it is a good idea to open a workshop session by checking in what's been happening to the participants musically since the last session. When there are new people attending the session they should be asked to introduce themselves and the regular members should also introduce themselves for the benefit of the newcomer.

- Songwriting Circle: 35 Minutes, This provides participants to present and receive feedback on their songs

- Break: 10 Minutes

- Co-Writing Exercise: 60 Minutes

- Presentation of Co-written songs: 20 Minutes

- Evaluation and Wrap-up: 15 Minutes

The timing need not be adhered to rigidly but it is important that it is broadly adhered to and that the session finishes on time.

On succeeding evenings the content of the meeting can be varied by choosing from some of the following activities:

- Body and Vocal Warm-up
- Intuitive Singing
- Song Analysis: Take a popular song and have a discussion on what makes it a hit
- Song Doctor Session: Get advice on problems with structure, lyrics or melodies
- Guest speaker
- Teaching session
- Music Technique
- Performance Tips
- Short non-songwriting exercises
- Other songwriting exercises

4.2. Format for a Weekend

The structure of a weekend workshop will depend on a number of issues such as the number of participants, the number and experience of the organisers and the experience level of the participants. Accordingly, you can get significant variations in the programme.

a. Best Practice from UK

The programme below is from a workshop run in the UK by one of our members Dan Plews. This gives a flavour of what you might expect to include in a weekend workshop

Friday Afternoon/Evening

- Arrival/ Registration
- Individual Tutorials
- Discussion on Royalties
- Co-writing exercise
- Results sharing

Saturday

- Song circle
- Discussions on structure of songs
- Writing exercise

- Melody/harmony/structure discussion
- Session

Sunday

- Song circle
- Co-writing
- Performance workshop
- Open mic

b. Best Practice from Denmark

Wednesday 16-? :We will make spaghetti with meat sauce, eat, get acquainted, play music, and pick up people from the airport and bus stop.

Thursday 10-12: Workshop

Thursday 12-13: Lunch team prepares lunch

Thursday 13-14: Lunch

Thursday 14-17: Co-write or song circle

Thursday 17-18: Dinner team makes soup

Thursday 18-19: Dinner

Thursday 19:30-? Free time

Friday 10-12: Voice workshop with Charlotte Larsen

Friday 12-13: Lunch team prepares lunch, dinner team prepares pizza dough

Friday 13-14: Lunch

Friday 14-17: Co-write or song circle

Friday 17-18: Dinner team prepares pizza

Friday 18-19: Dinner

Friday 19-? Presentation round (everybody should have arrived by now)

Saturday 10-12/13: Co-write or song circle

Saturday 12-13: Lunch team prepares lunch

Saturday 13-14: Lunch

Saturday 14-17: Co-write or song circle

Saturday 17-18: Dinner team prepares chilli con carne

Saturday 18-19: Dinner

Saturday 19-? Party & hanging out

Sunday 10-12/13: Co-write or song circle

Sunday 12-13: Lunch team prepares lunch

Sunday 13-14: Lunch

Sunday 14-16: Tidying up, packing, farewells

4.3. Format for a Weeklong Workshop

With a weeklong workshop it is possible to include virtually all of the activities outlined in our menu earlier. We are setting up below a record of activities, which took place outside Innsbruck, Austria in April 2010. It is in German but it will give you an idea of just how much activity you can cram into a week. Many of the participants in the Playing for Integration Grundtvig project were also involved in this workshop. We were fortunate in having experienced songwriters and musicians among the participants, which meant that we were able to learn from one another and the participants led all of the workshop sessions.

We were also fortunate in that the European Lifelong Learning Grundtvig Programme, which meant that it was possible to attract a wide range of experienced songwriters and put on an extensive programme, provided the funding for the workshop.



**24. 04. – 01. 05.
2010
Innsbruck, Austria**

GUFL, Tulferberg 60
6075 Tulfes

Programm: 24.04 – 01.05.2010

Samstag, 24.4.2010

ab 9.00 Ankunft der ersten Teilnehmer in München Airport



15.00 Treffpunkt am Frachtenbahnhof

17.00 Ankunft GUFL
Treffen mit anderen Teilnehmern

18.30 Abendessen auf der Terrasse



20.00 Eröffnung

- Erklärung der Vision
- Kennen lernen: Visitenkarte, Teamübungen
- Klärung von organisatorischen Belangen

22.00 Kennenlern- und EröffnungsParty & Freies Musizieren



Sonntag, 25.4.2010

9.00 - 10.00 Frühstück

10.15 Bildung von 4 Gruppen, eine weitere bildet sich nach dem Mittagessen

GruppenAuftrag:

- „Musikalisches“ Kennen lernen
- Songwriter-Circle
- Song schreiben: für Anita (= Köchin) bzw. für Menschen, die im Hintergrund arbeiten und deren Arbeit für „uns“ so wichtig ist!

12.30 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback

13.15 – 17.00 Weiterführung der Gruppenarbeiten

17.00 Präsentationen der Songs (= die ersten 5 Songs des Workshops)

18.30 Abendessen

19.00 Erstellung des **Programms**

- Eckpunkte: Lifemöglichkeiten, Sightseeing, Monitoring,
- Teilnehmer stellen ihre Workshops vor, Thema, Inhalt, Dauer und legen fest, wann sie ihn machen wollen
- Koordination der Workshops mit Pinnwand und PC

21.00 **1. Workshop:** Vokal Group Improvisation, Harmonen, danach

- Erste **Recordings**
- **Song Circles:** Teilnehmer spielen sich ihre eigenen Songs vor und diese werden von den anderen kommentiert, analysiert, kritisiert.



Montag, 26.4.2010

9.00 - 10.00 Frühstück

10.00 – 10.30 **2. Workshop:** Bodywork for Singing, Karin Rabansl

10.30 – 11.30 **3. Workshop:** Co-Writing, Jonas

11.30 – 13.00 **4. Workshop:** Soundchecking & „What a Songwriter needs“, Dan & Herwig

Heta & Katharina, Songwriting

13.30 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback

15.00 **Co-Writing-Session**, Jonas

- 9x 2er Gruppen
- 3 Begriffe ziehen
- Überbegriff „Ocean“



17.30 Präsentationen

18.45 Abendessen

20.15 – 22.00 **5. Workshop:** Improvisation, Harmen

20.45 – 22.00 **Songwriter-Circle**

- Analyse von eigenen Songs
- Dan und ca. 5 Teilnehmer

22.00 – 23.30 **6. Workshop:** Bossa Nova, Karin Haslinger

ab 23.30 Freies Musizieren



Dienstag, 27.4.2010

Bis 9.30 Frühstück

10.00 – 11.00 **7. Workshop:** Vocal Improvisation & Warming up, Katharina

11.00 – 12.30 Hiking

Geführte Wanderung durch den Tourismusverband Hall

8. Workshop: Lernen eines norwegischen Volksliedes



13.15 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback

15.00 Abfahrt nach Innsbruck

- Individuelles Sightseeing
- **Co-Writing** im Cafe Galerie und am Innsbrucker Dom-Platz



22.00 **Konzert im La Cabana:** Einzel- und Gruppenperformances

1.00 – 1.30 Heimreise, Busfahrt: Non-Stop – Acapella – Singing

1.30 -2.30 **9. Workshop:** Irish Dancing, Dan



Mittwoch, 28.4.2010

Bis 9.30 Frühstück

9.45 – 11.00 **9. Workshop:** Vokal Training, Katarina

11.00 – 13.00 **10. Integration-Workshop,** Christof

- 6 Gruppen: (Österreich), (Deutschland), (Westeuropa), (Irland und England), (Nordeuropa), (Süd- und Osteuropa)
- Text zum Beatles-Song „Hey Jude“
- Thema: Integration bzw. Umgang MITEINANDER in schwierigen Situationen
- Verdichtung der Gruppen: aus 6 Gruppen werden 3, die sich einigen müssen

13.00 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback

14.00 – 15.00 Präsentationen

- Bildung von Delegiertengruppe



15.00 – 18.30 Co-Writing

18.30 Abendessen

19.30 – 22.00 **12. Workshop:** Logic Pro, Introduction, John gleichzeitig:

- Aufnahmen
- Proben
- Freies Musizieren



Donnerstag, 29.4.2010

Bis 9.30 Frühstück

10.00 – 11.00 **13. Workshop:** Music Marketing Enrico

11.00 - 12.30 **14. Workshop:** Publishing Royalties, Dan

- Besuch Edi Ruetz (Tiroler Musiker)

13.30 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback
- Ausgabe der Feedback-Bögen
- Ausgabe der Abrechnungsbögen

14.30 – 16.00 **15. Workshop:** Learning Partnership, Christof

18.00 – 20.00 **16. Workshop:** How to use a Loop: Heta & David



20.00 Barbecue

- Besuch Siegfried Walch (Tiroler Musiker)
- Party & Playing



23.00 Recordings

2.00 -2.30 **Workshop:** What is Love?, Valentin



Freitag, 30.4.2010

Bis 9.30 Frühstück

- Recordings
- Co-Writing & Proben
- **Sammeln und Zusammenstellung der Songtexte & Workshop-Inhalte**

13.00 Mittagessen

- Programmplanung, Besprechung offener Fragen, Feedback

14.00 – 15.00 Rückzahlung der Reisekosten zugleich

- Aufnahmen
- Proben
- Recordings

15.00 – 18.00 **17. Workshop:** Networking & Booking Gigs, Shane

- Jeder erzählt seinen Zugang zur Musik und was er für weitere Projekte beitragen möchte



18.15 Abendessen

- Packen & Aufräumen

20.00 Abfahrt nach Innsbruck, **Poolcafe**



22.00 **Präsentation** der Workshop-Ergebnisse:

- 22 Songs, die nicht alle gespielt werden können...

3.30 **Heimfahrt**



Samstag, 1.5.2010

6.00 Abreise Valentin & Bogdan

10.00 Auto-Abreise Alveric & Heta

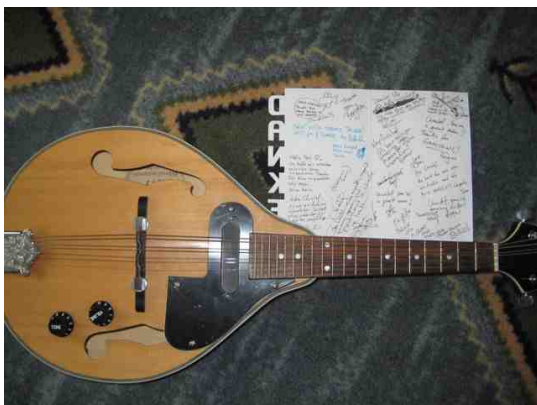
10.00 Fahrt zum Bahnhof: Fergus & Karin R.

12.00 Auto-Abreise Peter & Herwig

12.00 Flughafentaxi: Tony & Dan & Karin & Harmen & Shane

13.00 Flughafentaxi: Katharina & Jonas & John & Vibeke & David & Ana

15.30 Abreise Christof Fink



5. Performance Opportunities

Performance and Concerts

While some people may shrink from presenting their newly-written songs, others may be excited at the prospect, so although it is important to have a private space without interruption from ‘non-participants’, an opportunity to share work publicly can be built in to the workshop. If there is a supportive, regularly run local event, such as an open mic, it is worth ‘piggy-backing’ on it for a public showcase.

Running your own event

If the organisers decide to promote a concert themselves, they should be aware of the greater time, effort and expertise (technical, publicity, set-up, logistics, etc.) involved in doing so.

Some considerations include:

- Small-scale events run less financial risk, require less time and expertise and usually result in a better atmosphere
- With larger groups it’s important to establish a running order in advance; to do this, you should share the protocols and criteria for performance with participants well in advance;
- Set a total performance length with regular breaks
- If necessary, limit the number of songs an individual writer can make; this may involve compromises on their part, particularly if they have co-written with different people
- Ensure that non-performing writers and those who need a musician to present their song are considered in the above (individual musicians may not do so)
- Set a time limit for each performance
- Delegate responsibility to participants or volunteers for stage management; comparing; sound engineering
- Inviting a ‘guest artist’ can increase expectation and audience size, but care should be taken not to jeopardise the financial success of the workshop

6. Technical and Logistical Issues

a. What equipment do you need?

You can start a songwriting workshop and make very good progress with limited resources. In many cases all you need is a guitar and a notepad and the voice memo application on your mobile phone in order to write songs. However, we would recommend that you consider including some or all of the following in order to maximise the output of your workshop.

- Generally, songwriters are also guitarists, who bring along their instrument to the workshop and that is the way it should be.
- If some of your participants play Keyboards it is helpful if you have one at the venue
- A computer with access to Wi-Fi
- There are many fine tutorials and talks available on YouTube which you can use as part of your programme
- Notepaper / Printer
- A reasonable quality recording device

b. Recommended Equipment for Organisers

Essential: first aid kit; writing equipment;

Recommended: computer with printer, wireless connection, workshop-appropriate reading materials, projector, refreshments and name badges. Welcome pack including: Floor plan of location – toilets, exits, teaching rooms, planned schedule, blank schedule (+ space for amendments and additions), organiser and concierge contact numbers.

c. Recommended Equipment for Participants

Earplugs; notebook and pen; memory stick; phone with camera and voice record function; reading material, including songwriting-related; works-in-progress; small amount of cash

d. Preparation – communication with participants

Clear communication with participants, preferably by email, in advance of a weekend or longer workshop is important and might share the following information:

- What they should bring

- Nature of accommodation/bedding if provided
- Public transport links and local accommodation if appropriate
- Dietary requirements
- Start and end times
- Emergency contacts
- Parking
- House-keeping: Curfew/quiet areas/late night areas/smoking areas

e. Differentiation

Organisers should be conscious of the way that differences in (for example) age, ethnicity, disability, language acquisition and experience will affect participants' engagement and achievement in the workshop. You can establish what these differences are before the workshop begins – an easy way is to set up an online questionnaire. See www.surveymonkey.com

What provision is available for people with disabilities should be made clear at or before the commencement of the workshop?

f. Choosing and configuring spaces and locations

Some activities suit circles: if so, these should be as tight as possible while still allowing each person to make eye contact with others. Bear in mind that a room with parquet flooring high ceilings may be an impressive space, but echoes and reverb can make it more difficult for participants to hear and understand each other, particularly if they are communicating in a language other than their native tongue.

g. How often should you hold regular workshop sessions?

We are of the opinion that initially you should meet every two weeks and see how good a fit this is for those attending. How you proceed will depend upon the degree of dedication of the organisers and the enthusiasm of the participants.

We also believe that it is important that songwriters have an opportunity to perform the songs to a wider audience. With this in mind, it may be appropriate alternate between workshop sessions and performance opportunities. These can be by way of events, which the organisers run themselves or else you could piggyback on an open mic session as indicated elsewhere in this handbook

h. Insurance etc.

Public Liability Insurance – members of the Musicians Union in the UK have £10m Public Liability Insurance, and venue insurance should be checked; failure to take out public liability insurance can bankrupt any organisation or individual.

Any electrical equipment (e.g. PA/Amps, Recording equipment, printers) should be PAT-tested by a qualified electrician.

In addition to the venue's own risk assessment, a risk assessment should be carried out by the organiser.

A fire list with emergency contacts should be shared and updated on a daily basis.

7. Organisational Structures

7.1. Setting up a song writing organisation

The first steps involve getting a group of well motivated individuals together who have a basic knowledge of songwriting and have a commitment to create a space where are their own and others' songwriting skills may be nurtured and developed.

Our experience is that getting a regular songwriting workshop off the ground is a slow process and it requires patience on the part of those who are promoting it. It is very difficult for one person to do it on his or her own and we recommend that there should be at least two committed songwriters who are prepared to undertake such a project. The main reason we say this is that in the initial phase there may be very few attending and in those circumstances it is quite easy to get discouraged. However if there are two or more dedicated people involved then they can hold the space until word gets out that a workshop is up and running on a regular basis.

7.2. Location

When they are starting out songwriter's generally do not have a great deal of money available to them so it is important that you get access to an inexpensive location Initially, this may be in somebody's home, but this can be unsatisfactory so you should consider approaching local educational institutions or arts institutions who may be able to provide you with accommodation on a discounted basis. When looking for accommodation, ideally you should have one room where the main activity takes place with access to other rooms for co-writing activities, as it is difficult for a number of groups to write songs in the one room. You should also ensure that Public Liability Insurance covers your activities.

7.3. First Steps

In the initial phase we expect that the administrative structures will be informal because it is unlikely that there will be sufficient people attending the workshops in order to have a full committee structure.

So what you are likely to have is a founder and co-founder, who will look after administration until such time as the organisation is ready for more formal structures. The progress to formal structures will depend on the success in attracting members.

The administration team will set the direction for the activities of the workshop and is important that they meet independently of the workshop activities in order to ensure that there is effective planning.

7.4. Aims and Objectives

One of the earlier tasks, which the founders of a songwriting workshop should decide upon is the aims and objectives of the organisation. This will clarify the nature of activities that they intend to be involved in and also give them a source of purpose.

The aims and objectives of the **Tallaght Songwriting Collective**, which is run by the members of our Irish Partner is set out below.



Tallaght Songwriting Collective (TSC) is a group of individuals dedicated to the development of songwriters in the South Dublin Area. It is associated with Tallaght Community Arts and meets fortnightly in the Rua Red Building in Tallaght. It is also associated with Playing for Integration which is a European Songwriting Collective which promotes greater integration in Europe through cross border visits to write songs and explore each other's traditional music and cultural heritage.

TSC aims to develop the songwriting skills of its members by engaging in a range of activities which include co-writing, lectures, teaching, exploration of different songwriting genres and songwriting circles. Songwriting circles enable members to receive feedback on songs that they have written. We also provide opportunities for our members to record their songs and to perform them in public.

TSC is also developing and maintaining contacts with other songwriting groups both in Ireland and abroad and we seek funding to these activities..

We expect our members to have some musical skills or a facility with verse. Members should be 18 years or over.

7.4. Administrative Structures

In time the administration team can be expanded to comprise a formal committee made up of a Chairperson, a Secretary, a Treasurer and a number of ordinary members. At the early stages these members will be selected and as the organisation matures proper election procedures can take place.

Example: Committee Responsibilities

Chairperson

- The overall direction of the organisation
- Representing the organisation in its dealings with other bodies
- The calling of meetings
- Overseeing all activities

Secretary

- The keeping of minutes of meetings
- Dealing with correspondence

Treasurer

- All financial matters

Ordinary Members

- Supporting the officers in the discharge of their duties

7.5. Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will depend upon the amount of activity that the organisation chooses to become involved in. In any event, we recommend that the committee should meet on a monthly basis and on a more regular basis if this is considered appropriate. The purpose of the meetings is to give focus to the activities of the organisation. Formal minutes should be kept and a financial report issued from time to time.

7.6. Communications

Email and text are the preferred method of communications with participants.

7.7. Legal Entities

The legal status of the songwriting organisation will depend on how it originated and where it is going. In its earliest stages it will probably be an unincorporated body. It may be part of a larger arts organisation or teaching organisation. As it evolves it may be appropriate incorporate itself as a club or as a private company limited by guarantee. One of the most critical issues is that its activities are under an umbrella of public liability insurance.

Example 1: Aortas is our UK Partner and is a private company limited by guarantee

In the UK setting up such a company costs less than £25, but the accounting and auditing costs and commitment should not be underestimated.

The company operates a website, email-and sms-list, and a Facebook page, as well as advertising on Facebook. **Aortas'** founder, Dan Plews, does most of the work and decision-making. Volunteer-participants help publicise events, taking photos and video at the events themselves and helping with catering and logistics. Workshop prices are determined on a "cost-plus" basis, with any profits being retained and invested in future events.



Example 2: An experience of setting up a regular workshop

FUN&LEARN is our Austrian Partner in the Project. This is their experience in setting up a workshop.

**a. Background**

In the April 2010 FUN&LEARN organised the Grundtvig-Workshop “Playing for Integration” in Austria. 23 participants from 17 different countries attended this workshop and made wonderful experiences with song writing, learning about song writing and music and adult education.

In 2011 another workshop was organised – the “Acoustic Strings Workshop” and again more than 20 participants made great experiences with learning from each other.

The concept in both workshops was the same: All participants are learners, but they are also teachers and they have competences. They should prepare a lesson and try to teach their competences to the other participants. In both workshops more than 15 workshops were held within one week.

In the 2nd workshop we learnt another lesson that influenced our local “Playing 4 Integration” workshop: improvising and jamming – it’s like playing and talking together, but with the instruments. In the “Acoustic Strings Workshop” the participants started in the morning and the music didn't stop till 4 o'clock in the morning.

Having been down the funded route, FUN&LEARN decided that it was not necessary to be funded from Europe in order to make this positive experience work. So we have been holding local meetings and workshops since 2012. We called them: **Playing 4 Innsbruck – Playing 4 Tirol**”.

b. Experiences: Different Cultures

We also wanted to mix musicians/songwriters from different cultures. If you take a deeper look into every city you find a lot of different nationalities: Austrians – from different areas, Germans, Turkish people, Slovenians, Croatians, Greeks, French and Spanish people.

But we found out that it was harder than we thought to bring “interested” songwriters/ musicians together. Everybody was busy and nobody really had time. They had to work or spend time with their family. They did not have time for our ideas. Others only wanted to “play” with us if they were paid.

c. Content of the Workshops

So we started with a very small group and tried to keep up the 2 ideas we got from our European workshops:

- Invite participants to teach us what they can do best
- Improvisation and jamming

This worked very well and in the last 2 workshops we integrated co-writing as a tool to bring people together and listen and to learn from each other.

d. Frequency: So since 2012 we had 5 workshops. We then decided that a workshop day every 4 months would be enough. More did not seem to be possible.

e. Location: We are happy that we have a great location now. It is a room in a house in the countryside where we can do what we like.

8. Writing Songs

The purpose of this handbook is not to teach you how to write songs. There are many fine books, Internet sites and YouTube Videos, which you can explore. However, it was important to include a selection of pieces from some of our members, which shows their approach to songwriting and some aspects songwriting.

8.1. Reflection Christof Fink (Austria)

I wrote round about 40 songs in my life. I think that the day on which I write/finish a song is a very good day. I think like every writer I use different approaches. I will try to describe them.

a. Intuitive Song Writing: At the beginning, I played the guitar and an idea came into my head: the melody and the words. I wrote it down and worked on it. So very quickly I had a verse and a chorus. For a long time, I was convinced that a good song should not have more than 4 chords and so I kept the structure (no intro, no bridge, no progression), the melody and the chords very simple.

b. Personal Copying: I would call one of my favourite techniques “cloudy copying”. I hear a song and I like it. Now I let myself be inspired by this song and play it “my way”. The combination of the new element mixed with my knowledge/technical skills brings forth a new song. Very often I was lucky and the lyrics came at the same time.

c. Lyrics before Music: After some songwriter workshops I was taught that the lyrics have to be at the beginning. So I sat down and wrote different lyrics. Funny enough it really worked for me. When I had the lyrics, it is very fast/simple to find a melody. In a way you hear it...

d. Love and Disappointment: Strong feelings provide a very good impulse to write songs. So I wrote a couple of love songs in the first 2 weeks I was in love with a new partner.

When the relationship was over, I had again strong feelings. I used them to write different “Good bye” Songs.

e. Songwriters Block: In the last 2 years I didn’t write a lot of songs. The reasons differ:

- a) With my 30-40 songs I covered a lot of topics (love, friendship, being a manager, death, strong feelings,) and it is not so easy to find a new topic/ to bring a new opinion
- b) I write in German and I want to express myself. But I don’t want to put my finger in the air and tell other people what to do. I am also not the joke maker and so on.

c) I tried to get in contact with writers and motivate them to write lyrics for me. But I had to find out that these co-operations are also not so easy. Since now no cooperation was really successful.

f. Sophisticated Song writing: My cover band colleagues called my first songs “songs for children”, because they were so simple and predictable. So I learned to understand and to play (and this is a big difference) a lot of theoretical stuff:

- a) Modes: Ionian, dorian, mixolydian, ...
- b) Jazz – Chords and jazz cadences
- c) Special Chords – Tensions
- d) Different kinds of rhythms

Now I write some songs with some Jazz-chord, or the bridge is in a different key. Today the problem is that I can easily create a melody, but I still have no lyrics...

8.2. Reflection Katharina Gade (Germany)

I seriously started writing in my mother tongue at Music University in 2002 and soon discovered that it was very thrilling to also compose in English especially being able to communicate through music when performing aboard.

At a co-writing workshop on the Danish Island of Samsø, I first came in contact with co-writing and immediately got hooked on it. I attended several workshops over the years and got to know many brilliant and inspiring songwriters.

I normally do not intend to write a song but let it come to me mostly in a moment when I am not expecting it. I might be playing around on the guitar or piano.

As soon as I hear a clear melody line I will follow it and try to find some chords to it.

Words normally will come intuitively first singing in „gibberish“ until I feel a clear intention and content of the song.

I have developed a habit of writing a morning diary and sometimes I blurt out some little poem I want to put music to. I find co-writing is very challenging for me because it pushes me to my limits when I have to have a song finished within a fixed period of time.

It is really helpful have some guidelines such as a given title or some topic to write about.

8.3. Reflection Tony Bardon (Ireland)

I have been writing songs for over 40 years and I tick many of the boxes in the far as I write both lyrics and melodies. I write parodies which involves mean putting new words to existing songs and I also music to popular poems...

I approach songwriting in a number of different ways. When I am looking for a melody, I tend to play around with chord progressions on the guitar until such time as a melody suggests itself that I feel will be suitable for the particular topic that I am writing about. Sometimes I get an idea for a verse first and sometimes I get an idea for a chorus there is no fixed pattern. Sometimes I get an idea for a hook and the words and the music arrive together.

Generally speaking, when I am writing lyrics I find that first couples of verses are difficult to write and the chorus can also be difficult. However, I find if I go away from the song and come back to it later that my unconscious mind has been working on it in the meantime and it will have come up with all sorts of new ideas for me to work with. So much so that the last verse is probably the easiest and it almost writes itself.

I then go to a process of editing and this can take place over a number of weeks. Tweaking things here and there are coming up with better rhyming schemes than I started out with. I also find that when I start out writing a song that the melody and the rhythm are very shaky and not that well defined. But as result of playing around with the song over a number of weeks it matures is quite significantly.

8.4. Psychological Dimensions of Songwriting

On the face of it, the writing of songs can appear to be a very simple activity underneath the like can be going on that we are not even aware of.

Because we are human beings we bring many of the different dimensions of our lives to whatever activities become involved in and this includes Songwriting. One way of classifying these dimensions are body mind heart spirit and shadow. In this article I want to explore these dimensions and how they pertain to the activity of songwriting.

It is the body gives us our rhythms and our pulses and it is the most natural thing in the world for us to tune into the rhythm of our hearts and the pulsations of blood coursing through our bodies. These rhythms in time were transferred to drums and other percussion instruments and in turn came to be reflected in our songwriting.

We rely on our mind to give structure to our songs. To give meaning to what we want to express. To find the intricate or the simple rhyming schemes that goes to make up a good song. We also rely on mind to learn our instruments and to retain a reservoir of knowledge, which we will draw on when we are writing. On the other hand when we write only with our minds our songs can be one dimension and clever and may not succeed in touch in the hearts of others.

We need to bring our hearts into play in order to achieve this. It is the heart dimension, which brings emotion and empathy into our songs and into our singing of our songs. So songs written from the heart and performed from the heart are likely to have a more powerful impact us than songs that have been only written with the power of the mind.

Under the heading of the heart, we also have relationships. It is important that a songwriter gets on well with his or her co- writers, with musicians and recording engineers who may be working on their songs. It's not an absolute rule but a person gets on well with other people is likely to be more successful songwriter than those who do not.

The highest level of songwriting is achieved when we become inspired, when we can tune into our source, which is also source of our music. Many songwriters will say to you that they do not know where they get their ideas come from and this can apply to both the melodies and the lyrics. They are not unlike other artists, be they painters, actors writers or poets in that respect. Good songwriter's recognise that sometimes they are in the flow and it is as if they are being asked to channel the music to channel the song. This is a privileged position to be in and if it happens to you

treasure it. This is not something that can necessarily be learned although it is something that can be encouraged. Sometimes the playing of music is sufficient to bring you to an altered state of consciousness where capacities or gifts that are not normally available to come into play.

The final dimension, which can creep into our songwriting, is shadow. Shadow in the that I use it here, is a psychological term which relates to that part of our personality which we do not acknowledge and wish to suppress and which can then express itself in inappropriate ways. So for instance, a songwriter may be repressing anger and not acknowledging that there is anger in his make-up may end up writing angry songs. This may or may not be a good thing. But do not be surprised if themes torn up in your songs that you would normally not think about or address.

This is a brief introduction to certain psychological aspects of songwriting. Our songwriting will be more vital the more dimensions of our personalities are brought into play.

8.5. Poetry and Songwriting

A Songwriting workshop is going to attract poets as part of its list of possible participants. It is necessary to have a strategy for dealing with them in the initial phase of their involvement. For example when pairing off individuals for a co-writing exercise make sure that two poets are not paired together.

The typical profile of a songwriter is the singer-songwriter with a guitar who has the capacity to write his own music and compose his/her own lyrics sometimes the words coming first sometimes the music coming first and sometimes both together. But there are a number of variations on this profile. Many of the classic songs were written by combinations of lyricists and musicians. Many of the great musicals were written by these combinations.

What is the relationship between poetry and songwriting? On the face of it there appears to be significant similarities. But there are a lot of differences as well. Many great songs could double as great poems and many great poems are also capable of being put successfully to music. While most great poems also look great on the page the same cannot be said for many popular songs and it is only when it is combined with music, which supports and embraces it, that it becomes a great song. Most songs operated to a predefined structure whereas there is a huge variation in the different types of poetry that are written today. While there are many poems that operate within predefined structures, there are other poems that could be termed stream of consciousness, where freedom of expression is the primary consideration and little attention is given to a formal structure or to rhyming.

If poets are to make the transition and become a successful songwriter then he/she must become familiar with the different types of structures that are used in popular songs. They then need to craft their poems to match these structures.

This process can be speeded up by working with experienced songwriters on co-writes. Another approach is to ask an established songwriter to put music to pre-existing poem.

9. Funding

Groups that are organising songwriting workshops should check out what extent they can avail of funding. This will vary from country to country. The members of Playing for Integration were fortunate to receive funding from the European Lifelong Learning Grundtvig programme. You may also be able to qualify for funding from a sister programme, which operates under the name of Leonardo da Vinci.



You should also check out your local county council or your national arts organisation. A little bit of research in this area can pay significant dividends. Where funding is available, you can find that there are quite detailed application forms to be completed and then quite comprehensive reports showing how the funds were dispersed. This will require a certain amount of administrative input, but you should not allow yourself to be put off by this, as it can be very worthwhile.

10. Conclusions

If you have read this Handbook as far as here, we believe that you will have learned a great deal about running songwriting workshops. You will not have learned everything as there is always something new to learn. Our hope is that you will benefit from the cumulative experience we have obtained over the last two years as we fulfilled the requirements of our Lifelong Learning Grundtvig Project. We hope that have a better idea how to structure your workshops and so avoid some of the mistakes we have made in the past. We also hope that you have a better idea of what organisational structure will work for you and how often you should run your workshops. We hope we have brought home to you the wealth of different activities you can include in a workshop and the importance of performance opportunities. At the end of the day songwriting workshops are like songs. There are a great many different genres around and you have to design one that meets your needs. This is a worthy cause; songs are not going to go out of fashion anytime soon. We wish you well in your endeavours.

