

Example of a Score Jam : Helsinki CI practice group

The following is an edited version of the email invitation to the Helsinki CI practice group which went out on the Finnish email list - the list is also used to arrange facilitators and announce sessions - the following info is included in emails and is available at the score jams.

This CI Practice Session Score is based on Nancy Stark Smith's Underscore. It is intended as a way for those familiar with the Underscore to practice together with those not familiar with it in a way the those not familiar with it don't feel disadvantaged or intimidated. This score works and the meetings continue - feel free to take it and use it

Contact Improvisation Practice Score

A supportive structure in which to practice and research contact improvisation.

The idea is to arrive with questions and observations about contact improvisation - about the form or about one's personal relationship to it - to share those with everyone else present in the opening circle and then to report back in the closing circle any insights or discoveries (whether related to opening statements or not) that arrived through the dancing phase of the practice.

Proposed Score

Arrival time 20 minutes, after which the door is closed and no entrance is allowed - time to meet, get ready to practice, begin your warm-up - talking is permitted

Opening circle 10 minutes where everyone can share their questions, intention for the practice, let others know about any injuries, etc - the structure is explained for first-timers.

Dancing time 120 minutes. You can also do solos, watch, take a nap, etc., but whatever you do you are always "in" the group structure. We each commit to not using words during the dancing time (unless there's an emergency). A signal is given by the facilitator 15 minutes before the end. We all try to find an ending together.

10 minutes on own your own to recover and cool down. We maintain the commitment not to use words.

20 minutes closing circle for checking in with each other and sharing our discoveries, after which we leave the space.

No partial participation. If you take part, you commit to being present for the whole structure (180 minutes).

NOTE ON SOUNDS: some people refer to this as a "silent jam" but it is not. The sounds of jamming are many and varied and include laughter, gasps, sighs, cries, etc - these are all part of the rich sound texture of the jam and offer important sensory information while dancing contact information. Talking tends to break the physical focus of the investigation and this is why we commit to not using words during the dancing phase of the score - to support both our own and our fellow investigators' physicality.

The function of singing and chanting is less clear. As a group we need to feel it out in any given practice session. Generally speaking, when it grows out of the practice and supports the practice of contact improvisation, it can work. But singing, and especially chanting, has a tendency to roll on endlessly with those engaged in it losing their awareness of what is

happen with the others in the space. The thing to recognise is that sounds touch everyone and dominate the whole atmosphere in the space. What I have noticed is that singing and chanting can work in this practice when those engaged in moments it are able to maintain their awareness of the effect they are having on the whole group and are willing to let go of it, or let it change, when necessary.

NOTE ABOUT FOCUS: some people refer to this as a "focused" jam but it is not. The implication is that in other more open jams we are less focused - to me that seems a pity and unnecessarily narrow. It might be interesting to have an intention to explore the practice score while being unfocused, or to play with shifting focus. I think it is less clear what we each mean by focus - it can mean many things to many people. To focus, like to concentrate, suggests a narrowing of attention/intention which might be the opposite of the awareness necessary to practice contact improvisation safely in a group

Facilitator

Each week there needs to be a facilitator whose role is to:

- 1) be responsible for keys - arrange to pick up and return the keys
- 2) open and prepare the space - clean the floor and move away any mess
- 3) keep track of time - call people together for and facilitate the opening and closing circles (NO TEACHING) - give a call 15 mins before the end of the dancing time
- 4) collect money and pay for space - whatever money is left is yours for your time-keeping, key and money duties (it's not so much fun having to keep track of of this so the loose some of the pleasure of being in this score, and if we share out the facilitator role among regular attenders then you'll end up paying back what you earn when you are not facilitating!!!)