

The Resonance Plan

Jonathan Dimmock, Founder & President

Thank you for your interest in using live music in conflict resolution! The Resonance Project has been working on these concepts for many years and has devised an overall scheme which we believe to be effective in helping divergent parties find common ground. This is an integral approach that bridges neuroscience, music, social science, and psychology. We believe this could become a new paradigm to aid the world in communication and the urgent need to find mutual cooperation on an increasingly “smaller” planet.

Knowing When the Resonance Plan might be effective

For this approach to be successful, there needs to be a willingness to find common ground between two different people or parties. It is natural that people approach the negotiating table wanting to bend the other party to their way of thinking. Giving people the chance to speak their story, and truly listen to the other person's story, is generally a first step toward transformation of conflict. As President Obama remarked, in an interview with Lin-Manuel Miranda, “Everyone walks into the [negotiation] room with constraints placed on them by their constituency... The only way anything ever gets accomplished is by seeing the world through the eyes of the person across the table.”

Music has many uses, the most obvious one being how it can make us *feel*. But music's real power is alchemical; it can create empathy out of chaos. Music helps us *become*. Through the shared experience of musical beauty, heartbeats synchronize and brainwaves synchronize to help listeners recognize their common humanity, being on the same wavelength together.

Look for disagreements that need to be resolved, lingering hurts that need to be healed, or arguments that need to be aired within a safe space.

What to Set in Motion Ahead of Time

- Introduce the possibility of finding resolution (actually conflict transformation, although that language may seem to challenge people's entrenched position) to two parties and get their buy-in to try this approach.
- Explain that there will be live music presented after each party has had a chance to air their grievances, and before the actual negotiating takes place.
- Find a venue where confidentiality can be honored, yet there is also space for musicians to come in and perform.

Choosing Musicians

Crucial to the success of this endeavor lies in the musicians that are engaged! Each context will likely be different, calling for different sorts of musicians, but it is

important to understand that music shouldn't be chosen because a given party happens to like or dislike a specific genre. All kinds of evidence exists to prove that music of Bach, for example, has the same impact on people from tribal regions of Africa as it does on Germans. The parties' frame of reference is not a strong factor in determining which musicians to engage.

Live music is integral to the Resonance Plan because only live music has the possibility of interplay between the musicians and the listeners. Quantum physics teaches us that the observer changes the observed. Sensitive musicians will play differently in each context, unconsciously adapting to the energy in the room. This is a crucial way that the parties in conflict can be heard and seen albeit in infinitely subtle ways.

- Engage two, three, or four musicians. This models collaboration (the sum is greater than the individual parts). More than four musicians starts to overwhelm the space and can seem intimidating.
- Instrumental music is preferable to vocal music. (Avoiding words allows the brain to enter into a different pattern, pre-verbal.)
- Musicians should be asked to avoid popular, well-known music as that can activate the people's memories (not helpful in this context)
- Musicians should avoid sentimental music as that causes an emotional connection (a first date, a first kiss, etc.)
- The musicians' age is not important, but their ability to communicate on a soulful level is. This requires a degree of sophisticated artistry beyond the run-of-the-mill player. The musicians need to understand, and be excited by, the intent of their work in this context. The musicians are functioning as ambassadors of grace.

The Implementation

- Find a date, time, and place for the event.
- The parties need to be at the "table" together.
- Give the parties time to speak their case in a safe space (no outsiders other than the conflict resolution facilitator). You may need to estimate how much time this will take so that you know when to ask the musicians to arrive.
- Invite the musicians into the room midway through the negotiation process
- The musicians should plan to play three pieces, lasting no more than 15 minutes
- The first piece should be a model of expert craftsmanship. The music of Bach is ideal for this as it engages the brain without anyone feeling like they are being manipulated. The piece should be engaging, joyous, and inspiring. This is music at the head (intellectual) level.
 - The second piece moves to the heart level. A piece of music that has emotional content to it (in the Classical realm, this would be much of the music from the 19th century) can begin to open the listeners' level of trust and humanness.
 - The third piece should have more of a cosmic quality to it. Music with an unpredictable melody, or unpredictable rhythm, or static harmony or rhythm, will pull the listener away from known expectations. Minimalist music is ideal in this context.

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- The overall goal is to move the listeners from ego-centricity (their specific agenda) to ethnocentricity (the agenda of their group), to world-centricity (being able to see the world from another person's perspective)
- After the musicians finish, they leave the room so that the confidentiality and vulnerability of the two parties can be respected.

Reflection and Feedback

The parties need to be asked how the music effected them. As they start to describe what it was like for them, and listen to the other person describing similar experiences, the facilitator can use this moment of common ground to build trust and understanding between the two parties. This is the empathy so often sought. Often a third way arises, something which everyone feels they can buy into. If so, the music served as an opening to this insight.

Final Thoughts

It is hoped that this simple procedure can serve as a new paradigm in a changing world. The old method of quantitative analysis, as a means of proving effectiveness, is being re-evaluated. But it is still helpful to build a library of stories from each of you that have implemented this procedure and found it successful. Please be in touch with me, Jonathan@music-resonance.org, through email, to ask questions or relay your adventures. The Resonance Project is a nonprofit corporation, but as such we are functioning as a think-tank, encouraging this simple process throughout the world as a means of building peace and understanding.



Mission

To offer live music as a tool benefitting conflict resolution

Vision

Bringing people together through music and science

Overview

We believe it is possible to transform conflict into empathy. Music doesn't just help us feel, it helps us become. That process of change, seeing the world from another's perspective, is the secret to overcoming conflict. Live music is one of the simplest and best catalysts to make this possible.

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