

## What's it like being in a drumming workshop?

This is your opportunity to sit in front of a djembe and to have a place in the drum circle. You can place your hands on the drum and feel the textures on your palms. The textures interact with you as you move your hands slowly or quicker and then stop. Then you may begin to play, finding the sounds change beneath your hands as you use your eyes and ears to adjust to the sounds you are making. Are you playing the same as everyone else? Are you adding something different? Can you feel the contentment in the room as the sounds grow in meaning with hardly a word being spoken?

Some people will feel comfort in the comfortable and some will yearn to add and feel more: an urge to make the change. So we let them run loose. New rhythms, dynamics and textures are brought into the circle as others continue the unison rhythm, keeping the form intact as the new musical information moves the piece to new areas.

Then suddenly we all stop, together. The sound momentarily evaporates and disappears, leaving only the memory fading through our ears and minds. And four beats later, the rhythm returns more familiar than ever. The new sounds and ideas begin to inspire others in the circle. More ideas flow into the main rhythm, from places we didn't expect. The shy become the instigators as they add their own take on individuality and surprise themselves and others with their new ideas as they add their drum voice to the mix.

Then we can discuss how the music is making us feel, and if we can change how it makes us feel. We may not know the terminology, but we definitely know how to affect the music using our own words. We can create unity, tension, suspense, bravado and fragility by using different tempi, dynamics, textures, playing styles and rhythms.

The circle shows that whoever makes up the circle, makes the circle what it is.

**Matthew Evens** is a freelance Musical Facilitator based in Bradford, UK. He's a qualified music teacher and was Head of Music at a Performing Arts School in Leeds for 4 years. Since then he's had 10 years' experience of working with students who have a range of sensory, emotional, behavioural and cognitive challenges to overcome. Matthew has 30 years experience of performing and writing music in many different genres and has performed at Glastonbury, Womad and the Isle of Wight festivals.

