## Playfulness in music teaching.

A question about how to implement improvisation and playfulness in music teaching was raised by a group of Danish artists, psychologists and educationalists. Among the most prominent were Bernhard Christensen (1906-2004) and Astrid Gøssel (1891-1972).
Here began Denmark's long tradition, with roots right back in the 1930s, for taking children's own musical development and creative ability as point of departure for working with children and music. To observe children and the various ways in which they express their musicality and to use this as a springboard for working with children and music is a method peculiar to Denmark and Northern Europe.

The **FRAME GAME** is a very important method to open up music and play with children. The teacher put a frame around the game and the children improvise and get the opportunity to developing their own way of expressing themselves.
The music and dance activity takes it’s starting point in every child’s knowledge and motivation.
**The Musical Frame Game Focus on:**

* **Game:** story, theme etc.
* **Music:** as an important part of the game.
* **Body**: Pulse, breathing, and motor skills
* **Mental development**: potentials for the child and the group
* **Improvisation:** how to give the personal impression an expression

A significant motivation to work with the children’s own ideas and improvisations was inspired by music from other cultures. Bernhard Christensen & Astrid Gøssel listened to lots of ethnic musicians and jazz-musicians and found important & substantial differences between European music tradition and a traditional musical tradition.

In the **European music tradition**, music and dance for children consisted in traditional songs and steps in a fixed and rhythmic form for the children to acquire. To learn songs it was essential to be able to read music. And for the children to learn how to play an instrument or a dance, specific motor skills were taught.

The group of music teachers in Bernhard Christensen´s circle listened to jazz. And in jazz they found a kind of music which was based on an **Ethnic traditional music culture.**
The focus of this music culture was on listening and not on the reading of music. A bodily, rhythmic approach was also considered essential, and this made the music different from one artist to the other. In what is today called rhythmic music, body and improvisation are important elements. These elements are learned through many years of inspiration from cultures where song, dance and play grow out of a collective and oral tradition. In original music cultures - that fix. can be experienced in Africa today - song, dance and play are connected and attached to an oral, improvising and playful tradition.

**Starting point in Music teaching:**

Bernhard Christensen worked closely with Astrid Gøssel who was also an important person in the teaching of movement and music. Her primary demand to the practice of teaching was that the starting point must be the child´s own movements, the child´s interests and the child´s motivation. In short: **The starting point must be the child**.
At the same time in the 1930ies the idea of reforming the teaching also appeared. The teacher's attention was directed towards the child´s motivation and urge to explore and learn. The approach of Astrid Gøssel and Bernhard Christensen to music teaching was in agreement with this. They wanted to emphasize the child´s own expression and movement instead of teaching specific songs and movements. At this time - in the 1930ies - it was a revolution to reform and change the starting point of music-teaching by pointing out that song and play should adapt to the child´s movements and ideas, not the opposite.

As something very important the reforming of the teaching concentrates on methods that support children’s wish for and motivation to creative development. It also supports the growth of self- confidence by helping them to find their own ways of expression with a focus on social learning and experiencing.
In order to put this idea of teaching into a pedagogical practice, Astrid Gøssel and Bernhard Christensen developed a musical work-method called The **MUSICAL FRAME GAME**. This is used in Danish music-teaching today.

The Musical Frame Game: a total approach to all potentials and possibilities of the child
The content of The Musical Frame Game stresses the possibilities of the individual child to develop its powers in music and movements. This is to be done together with others so the social competencies are strengthened in connection with the development of the music, dance and bodily expression (senses, breathing and coordination).
Movement is associated with breathing and motor skills, and they are associated with the development of music skills and concepts, language and personality: a total approach to all potentials and possibilities of the child individually and personally. **Play is the important starting point** when working with the frame game. The essence of **play is improvisation**. This means that the teacher introduces the play (the theme) which is meant to set the frame for the children's singing, playing and dancing. The instruments are chosen according to difficulty. Most often the teacher choses drums and percussion-instruments which are of a suitable degree of difficulty and can support the music element.

**Teaching sequence for music-teachers:**

The students are introduced to the **FRAME GAME** where they actively participate on the floor in the singing, moving and playing. In this introduction to the method each of the students is meant to experience their participation in a game that is framed by the instructor. But they also have to focus on their personal unique improvisation and expression in the game and the play.

It is very important that the students as a beginning have been presented to songs, dancing-movements and instruments before they can create a program for supporting children in musical activities. Otherwise they will have no knowledge of and skills on the instruments, and no proper possibility of supporting the children in singing, dancing, and musical expression.

The energy and dynamics surrounding the game are important to support the children´s concentration and involvement.