BJØRN STEINMO & TOM NÆSS

Pop and Rock with Colours

Easy ways of building a pop-rock band using special tuning and colours

Norsk Noteservice
Dear Reader,

You are holding the most practical book designed to help people with learning difficulties to play popular styles of music that I’ve ever seen. In my twenty-five years as a music therapist who uses guitar (especially electric guitar) as the primary instrument, I’ve encountered numerous challenges while facilitating experiences with popular music styles for psychiatric patients and pediatric medical patients who have various illnesses and disabilities. Pop and Rock with Colours is a ground-breaking work by the music therapists Tom Naess and Bjorn Steinmo that comprehensively addresses those challenges.

The authors share the extensive expertise they developed empirically during a lifetime of professional experience. This comprehensive approach addresses the unique difficulties of forming a rock band for people with disabilities. Work with people who have special needs requires building skills progressively in an orderly, systematic fashion. Similarly, this book progresses in a logical format providing creative methods tailored to optimize musical experiences for those who have varied abilities and needs.

I particularly enjoyed the information regarding the individualized adaptation of instruments according to differing ability levels. Creating a satisfying band experience for people with disabilities presents a wide range of obstacles. Ingenious strategies that facilitate playing rock band instruments are presented. Many people who want to play guitar or keyboard are thwarted by the difficulties of mastering those instruments. The authors provide clear approaches that make those instruments more accessible to people who would otherwise be hampered by limited strength, coordination, attention, or frustration tolerance. This book provides solutions to enable the formation of successful musical ensembles.

At the heart of the authors’ clinical work is their intention to empower people through music. Everything about their approach is aimed at enabling people to make music that is expressive and satisfying. Consistent with that intent, this book is a tool, carefully designed to empower other music therapists and special teachers to provide similar types of gratifying experiences for their own band members. A fine example of this is the marvelous, hand-written color scores. Therapists only need magic markers, a ruler, dedication, and ingenuity to produce similar scores for their own band members. The authors demonstrate that the technology is available to all.

This book offers clear, concise ways to enable participants to experience the thrill of playing pop-rock music in a band. These musical interactions between band members provide opportunities to have essential human experiences. Self-expression and self-esteem develop through mastery. The successful teamwork required to play music with other people in real-time is based upon moment to moment attention, impulse control, and a very finely tuned use of the person’s neuromuscular system. The personal growth facilitated by this process requires work on the part of the individual. The band members develop and expand these essential human qualities in themselves (and each other) because they want to make aesthetically pleasing music that grooves. The motivation to do the work comes primarily from their innate needs to be creative, to enjoy aesthetic experiences, and to relate to fellow human beings through collaborative interaction.
This book is a comprehensive manual that teaches music therapists and special teachers how to work through the concrete challenges of forming a pop-rock band with people who have disabilities. It is based on many years of clinical experience by Tom Naess and Bjorn Steinmo working with people who have developmental disabilities. The methods outlined here are also applicable to helping other populations with special needs as well: e.g. psychiatric patients and pediatric medical patients will be well served by the methods presented. The thoroughness and practicality of the solutions that are shared in these pages is impressive.

My understanding is that this work is based upon respect and love for the people who are served by the therapist through creative musical collaboration. It is apparent that this book is born out of a professional lifetime devoted to helping humanity. A love of music and the desire to empower other music therapists and special teachers to share similar experiences with their own clients/patients/pupils has generated this important contribution to our profession.

Dan Gormley
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Introduction

This book is meant to be a help for special teachers, music therapist or others to build a band with members that have some kind of disabilities that are preventing them from using traditional ways of learning to play in a band.

“Pop and Rock with Colours” is a crystallisation of the knowledge we have gathered and the experiences we have had with ensemble methods since the end of the sixties, mainly within our music therapy field.

One thing which characterises this book is the emphasis on slow progression, including a number of compositions where it is not necessary to hold down guitar strings at all, or perhaps where only one or two holds are used, as well as open strings. We have also ensured that there is plenty of opportunity to play in parallel keys, which easily makes it possible to use more chords. With the special way we have of tuning where we exclude the third on the guitar, we also make it possible to play entire songs in minor.

A careful assessment of the use of colours also means that we have concluded with giving the tonic chord the colour green, the subdominant chord the colour yellow and the dominant chord the colour red. You will find the reasons for this in the chapter: “Use of colour codes”.

After many years experience of this work we can certainly declare that it has brought us enormous pleasure. We have had a lot of fun with the exercises, but more especially from performances and tours. So we can give you this piece of advice: get out and play for others as soon as you have got the ensemble to hang together! We hope you enjoy this book and the pleasure of playing together in your pop-rock group!

With very best wishes from

Bjørn Steinmo and Tom Næss
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Bjørn Steinmo & Tom Næss

This book is based on Music Therapy and Special Music Teaching traditions continuously built up from the 1960s until current experiences in the Second Millennium. The book is also based on the author’s extensive experience since early 1980s with “RagnaRock”, the legendary, flourishing band from Ragna Ringdals day centre/Aasen Adult Training Centre, Oslo, Norway.

The first part of Pop and Rock with Colours consists of colour scores and simple arrangements of well known songs. These first arrangements do not need any special rock instruments.

The section intended for the pop-rock band follows a steady progression beginning with single chord songs, followed by 2 chord and finally 3 chord songs. All the songs are accompanied by suggestions for accompaniment by bass, percussion, guitars and piano. These suggested accompaniments have also been organised into a progression, from easy to a bit less easy.

There are also specific instructions for how playing may be simplified by retuning guitar strings, using coloured lights as signals for chord changes and so on.

Pop and Rock with Colours is aimed at everyone who wishes to learn to play pop and rock in an easy way.