

Note regarding the English version of this guide

Although I am from the U.S. and my mother tongue is English, Swedish has been my primary language in teaching and working life. Thus, this guide was originally written in Swedish and published (2021) as **Lillicittran som pedagogiskt verktyg – praktisk handledning för lärare och gruppleddare**. Most of the songs included and referred to are also in Swedish, and the idea of translating it to English seemed to make little sense.

On the other hand, it seemed clear there is a real need for such a guide in English, since none is available for any diatonic zither using songcards (sheet music) under the strings, though such instruments have been in use for over a hundred years, and various 15-string diatonic zithers are currently available. There have been a few attempts (The Netherlands, Colorado) to use such instruments in pedagogical ways, but always from a very limited perspective, seeing the instruments merely as stepping stones on the way to learning to read and play “real” music in the form of traditional classical piano lessons. In my view that is both unenlightened and sad, since this type of instrument has much more to offer.

I decided to translate my Swedish-language guide to English, adding some context where needed, and counting on readers to see my experiences and suggestions as examples of what can be done, and use your imagination to develop your own approach and repertoire. The impetus for going ahead at the present time and finishing this guide was in part due to the interest and encouragement of Ari Poutiainen in the education department at Helsinki University. Even if Ari’s students would have more use for a Finnish-language guide, now they will at least have guides in both Swedish and English to choose from.

Jonathan Lutz

PREFACE

First, I would like to thank all fellow music makers who have shown me the zitheroo's possibilities and helped me understand that this unassuming instrument can open new exciting worlds!

I have to admit that I usually do not like "methodologies". For the most part it seems that "idea breeds methodology – methodology kills idea". In presenting this guide, I hope that you as a user view it more as a possible source of ideas, one person's experiences, a kind of zitheroo-cookbook of recipes among which you can choose what speaks and means something to you. And, in the same spirit, I hope that you are not "overly pedagogical" toward your students but leave room, a sense of space, so that students feel that they are out on an adventure and not just following a marked path.

The guide is written with primary school teachers in mind, but includes suggestions suitable for preschool as well as music playschools and music schools. Zitheroos are also used by special education teachers and in health care, and much could be written about their use in pre/postnatal care and family centers, delivery and pediatric wards in hospitals, mental health and music therapy, stroke rehabilitation, dementia care, and with people with functional variations or impaired vision or hearing.

As far as I know, no similar guide exists – the zitheroo has lived a rather secluded life and rarely interested music educators. Apart from my own, I have not found research on the zitheroo or similar instruments in music education, music therapy etc., and my presentations at music education conferences have aroused little interest – which continues to amaze me since this type of small diatonic instrument with sheet music under the strings has unique properties ("affordances") and great potential.

Although I started using zitheroos in 1998 and wrote most of this guide in 2009, it is only now in 2021 that it was completed. The guide is actually part two of a larger whole. Part one addresses not only the history of the instrument (this type of instrument was very common even in the Nordic countries in the early 20th century), but also background issues and scientific research that can be seen as contributing to a foundational view of zitheroos' potential role and place in music education and related areas. Here below, I give a brief presentation of my own research focus.

However! Before you read any further, I would like to contend that you will be successful in your work with the zitheroo if you do two things: 1) *hone your skills so that you can quickly and effectively tune the instruments*, and 2) *learn to use and explain to others how to use the "transposer"*. (I often wish I could be a kind of Santa Claus who, each and every night, goes around to every zitheroo, tunes it and places a new exciting song under the strings ...)

In encountering a musical instrument, why do we play - or not play?

From 2007–2009 I worked full-time on research toward a doctoral dissertation in musicology at Åbo Akademi University. My main interest was in the dynamic between people and instruments: What is it that determines whether or not we take up an instrument? Here I am not thinking so much about access to instruments and possible encouragement (or coercion) from parents, etc., but about the actual experience of encountering an instrument - what happens, what dynamics are at work? My research focused and collected materials on encounters with the zitheroo.

I first took a deep dive into studies of agency and related areas such as empowerment, self-esteem, self-concept, and narrative psychology. Since our music culture emphasizes performance and a division into performers and audience, one soon arrives at issues related to the body and the political, in part thanks to gender studies (such as I.M. Young's "Throwing like a girl") but also to embodiment (Lakoff et al.) and "the lived body" (Merleau-Ponty) in general, self-handicapping (getting in our own way) and disability studies. The connection to pedagogy and education is obvious and led on to music-pedagogical analyses such as D.J. Elliott's praxial music education, and also the Nordic countries' own Bertil Sundin and Jon-Roar Bjørkvold (whose depiction of the schism between children's culture and school culture is jolting). There would seem to be good reason to start a "pedagogy of the musically oppressed" à la Paulo Freire. Music therapy is also partly based on the same foundations and has much to offer when it does not get caught up in quantitative studies and the pathogenic but instead adopts a resource-oriented approach.

Here are big and exciting questions and thoughts – ones that really should be coupled to our daily pedagogical reality. My experience of academic conferences, however, is that those who address major philosophical issues tend to stay in the clouds, while others research – and seem to care most about – areas conveniently confined to small gardens outside their own doors. And it is clear that changing directions is as difficult for national school systems as for large tankers. There is thus a built-in resistance, and courage and stubbornness are demanded if one is to follow a different path.

Flow and Sense of coherence

For my part, I decided on two in my view complementary ways of analyzing the dynamic between individual and musical instrument: Antonovsky's *Sense of Coherence (SOC)* and Csikszentmihalyi's *flow*. Both concepts were developed about 30 years ago and became widespread as "resource-oriented approaches" in health (Antonovsky) and psychology (Csikszentmihalyi). Both focus on "the dynamics of engagement": *flow* looks at the individual's level of engagement in the present, i.e. in the moment, while *SOC* looks at level of engagement over time. In "Flow and sense of coherence: two aspects of the same dynamic?" ([Global Health Promotion](#), 2009) I suggested that these concepts are actually different aspects (x and y coordinates) of the same dynamic. Japanese researchers (Iida & Oguma, [Holistic Nursing Practice](#) 2013, 2014) have continued work on my hypothesis.

Antonovsky's *SOC* (part of the theory of salutogenesis) assumes that health is linked to one's sense of coherence, and sense of coherence in turn is dependent on one's experience of 1) *comprehensibility*, 2) *manageability*, and 3) *meaningfulness*. It is easy to transfer these concepts to the world of the piano teacher: if a piano student is expected, but unable, to understand sheet music notation (comprehensibility), the student may quit even though dexterity (manageability) is not an issue and learning to play the piano is of great interest (meaningfulness). In the same way, a student may lose interest and stop playing if her or his fingers do not obey, even if there is interest and reading music is not a problem. And, even under the best conditions, those who lack interest will eventually stop (or never start).

I believe that "***Musical Sense of Coherence (MSOC)***" could prove to be a useful research concept in music, especially music education. For many, the encounter with zitheroos has led to transformative experiences and increased musical self-esteem, i.e. to *MSOC*: they understand how the zitheroo works, are able to play familiar melodies, and gain a sense of satisfaction.

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