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The Pentatonic Scale Gives Everyone a Chance to Create Music: Creating, Sharing, and Developing Music with Participants from Young Children to the Elderly to Special Needs Students.

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Abstract

When we are involved in the activity of creating music, we can enjoy music even if we do not have the skills to read music or play instruments. We can use all the sounds around us as materials, and the elements included in all musical styles. In other words, the idea “no one left behind”, which the SDGs advocate, is exactly what creating music has been aiming at. For instance, one of the authors of this paper, Tsubonou, who has conducted many workshops on creating music, usually gives them the title “Everyone can Create Music”. This research focuses on the pentatonic scale consisting of “do re mi sol la”, which is easy to play and to improvise on even for young children. Besides, it is possible to ensemble with others without making dissonance using this scale. Therefore, we call it an “error-free scale”.

The purpose of this study is to clarify how the participants “create”, “share”, and “develop” music by using this pentatonic scale. We recorded and analyzed both the processes of the workshop and the pieces created by the students. The targets of this study are diverse. Although we suppose participants to include those from young children to elderly people to special needs students, we would like to show here the case of secondary school students who were not necessarily good at music or had never experienced creating music. It should be noted however, some can play instruments, like the cello or piano. The workshop was conducted by one of the authors of this study and supported by three musicians. At first, the musicians (a pianist, violinist and bassist) gave them short examples of “Do re mi sol la” pentatonic music, including folk songs from Asian and Western cultures, classical music, and Japanese pop music. After listening them, the students improvised with the musicians using various instruments, then created short pieces with their friends and the musicians using the pentatonic scale.

The workshop was characterized not only by the pentatonic scale, but also by the musician’s support, and thus the following three points became clear.

- 1 All the participants included willingly joined the activity and created music.
- 2 Beginners, the experienced, as well as musicians listened to each other and shared each other's individual sounds.
- 3 Taking what they had acquired in each of the activities, they developed their music at each stage.