HEART OF THE DANCE

DJ

Manual

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Heart of The DJ Manual

Introduction

The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step

Laozi

Music is all around us, music moves us and touches us. Music can bring you back to your childhood, connect you to others and to your inner Self. It is a magical gate into different realms. Music can be many things at once: a medicine, an art form, some ear candy, or a sacred link to the past. If you are passionate about music and dance, you will likely feel a drive to share it. Sometimes we feel an inner calling to take this sharing one step further and play, create, and weave together a musical tapestry for others. Sometimes, also, others call to us to take that step.

If you read these lines you are ready for that first step, or have already taken it, and we welcome you to a great adventure. This manual is your roadmap and companion on the journey to becoming a Conscious and Ecstatic DJ. In our vocabulary DJ stands for one who creates a **Dance Journey.**

First Step: Intention

This manual is part of a training, or better, an initiation into the world of Ecstatic/Conscious Dance DJing. At the root of every journey, lies a deep desire, a drive or calling. To help you manifest your dreams, it is worth to reflect on these underlying intentions: what do you love and what is the deeper calling you hear?

And so, as a first step on this Ecstatic DJ learning odyssey, you start with your own heartfelt intentions. Take your time to connect to the core of your body, make space and listen to your inner wisdom in answering the following questions. Be receptive and let the words come to you. You know when you have found the right words when they resonate deep within. Make sure to write down the answers!

Reflection

1. *Why do you want to become (or grow further) as an Ecstatic/Conscious Dance DJ? Who or what put you on this track? When did the spark fly across and made you want to do this? For whom are you doing it?*
2. *What is Ecstatic or Conscious Dance for you (at this very moment)? What is the meaning of a DJ for you? Were there struggles on your path? Was there a turn-around or a 'aha' moment?*
3. *What is (the importance of) dance and music for you? How do you want to impact the world as a DJ? What is your dream?*

The answer to the first question is your core intention, it is the fuel and inspiration in times when obstacles might occur. As this will be your compass and heartfelt power source, it is important to have a clear answer and to refine your answer from time to time. The intention is the seed of it all. The seed that - with enough nourishment and support - will start to develop itself and with it so grows your artistry.

Your answers to the second and third questions will give you more information on what you wish to create, and the scope of the world that your creation can encompass. Try to reflect upon these questions from time to time and write/contemplate on them. Answering these questions every now and then will bring ore clarity. The answers should not be fixed though. As in life so in dance: it's about movement, change and growth.

A Learning Journey

Personal Leadership

Becoming a DJ for Ecstatic and Conscious Dance is a special learning journey. In terms of content, it requires skills in music and technique, and also an intimate know-how of dance, trance, and transformation. Psychospiritually, DJing asks for leadership on several levels. First, a DJ needs to be (at least) one step ahead of the dancers, otherwise selecting the next song will be hard. Secondly, as a DJ you operate under a magnifying glass, meaning that both your creative mixes as your mistakes are literally amplified through the room. You can't hide behind the DJ booth. People can see and hear what you are doing. This can feel vulnerable and in the bright lights, we can easily succumb to stress and performance pressure. Before leading people into the dance, we need to be able to lead ourselves (*personal leadership*) and know how to regulate this stress. Perhaps more than anybody else in the room, the DJ's presence or lack thereof has a large impact on the space. Stress also impacts your performance as a DJ. Under stress, we develop tunnel vision, loose contact with the dancers, and get less creative and more reactive. What is more, when we experience stress, our bodies redirects blood flow to the big muscles and limit the circulation to the ears, resulting in impaired hearing. In this chapter we will look at how we can develop our personal leadership and stay present behind the DJ deck; how we can develop a healthy relationship to learning and making mistakes; and how we can move the dance forward.

Ecstatic DJing in Perspective

DJing is a high profile profession. Some of the most well paid musicians are DJ's. Although this is not (yet) the case for the Ecstatic DJ, we do see that Ecstatic DJ's generally gain more recognition than others in the field, like Ceremony Leaders. Before we continue to talk about the special role of a DJ, it might also help to put things a bit in perspective. It might come as a surprise, but a live DJ is not required for a Dance Journey. People can have a deep and satisfying journey when dancing to a 2 hour pre-recorded playlist. It helps when the songs are well chosen, both in the sense that they fit the moment and that the songs are arranged to create a coherent journey. If those two conditions are met, it doesn't really matter if there is a brief pause between the tracks or an automatic mix. Actually, this is exactly what happened in a precursor of Ecstatic Dance. When Conscious Dance practices, like the 5Rhythms, started to flourish from the 80s onward, people developed a need to dance more. However, in those early days, there were not enough teachers to go around. People therefore started peer-practice groups where dancers came together to dance without a teacher. In preparation somebody would create a playlist (this could be the teacher), burn it on a CD, which would then be played at the venue.

It might come as a surprise, but a live DJ is not required for a Dance Journey.

Moving the Dance Forward

Knowing that people can have a Dance Journey without DJing, shows that song selection, the creation of the journey, is the most crucial part of the job. A DJ does that, of course, on the spot (*music programming*). And by doing so she attunes the music to the moment. It is a form of dialogue between the dancers, the place and the DJ, in which both move with the same question: *what serves the dance?* As a consequence, a live set has a certain freshness, something that is created in and emerges out of the present situation.

This is why it is so important for a DJ to be grounded and present in the place, and to connect heartfully with the team and the dancers. The more a DJ is grounded, present and connected, the more she can select songs that arise out of the situation. At the end of this chapter we therefore offer a grounding practice and practical tips.

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The creative challenge of playing music in the moment is that the DJ needs to be one step ahead. She needs to sense where the dance is now and what wants to emerge next. What is that next piece of music that will move the dance forward? As such, a DJ is a bit of a musical midwife or *doula* - because through her craft, she helps to give birth to something that is implied in the field. Let's explore this further with a thought experiment:

> *Imagine two DJ's present with the exact same crowd, but in parallel realities. Both might sense the same vague stirring among the dancers as if they are ready for more. One DJ opts for some African percussion that both grounds and builds up the rising energy of the dancers. The other DJ goes unconventional and plays a rock and roll song leading to a wild and playful dance. Both DJ's listened carefully to the room and responded with songs that are equally fitting. Both songs move the dance forward, but now in different trajectories.*

Moving through a Dance Journey is a transformative, and often healing, experience. We will explore the Dance Journey in more detail in a later chapter, but for now we can see that a DJ has a pivotal role to play in how that Dance Journey takes shape. As a DJ for Ecstatic and Conscious Dance you need to learn how to read the room and how to respond musically. When a DJ is able to do this, it creates magic on the dancefloor and the DJ becomes a bit of a shaman in the sense that she guides a transformative journey. The craft of DJing, thus, has the potential of lifting the veils between the seen and unseen, the known and unknown, the techniques and the mystery.

The Shadow Side

Alongside the positive intention of what you as a DJ wish to create, there is also a possible shadow side of what you create. This shadow is formed by our personal blind spots, such as emotions that you try to avoid. When we have a (personal or cultural) issue with showing anger, for example, and play only happy music, we might manifest the opposite: people getting irritated with the 'push' towards happiness. As a DJ it is therefore important to know your own pitfalls - and if needed, to work with and through them. How comfortable can we be with discomfort? Can we welcome difficult emotions and work with them, instead of against them? Mostly, a shadow side asks for light to be shed on - so the symbolism and strength that is lying underneath, can awaken again and be used as a source of inspiration. This might sound easy, yet sometimes asks for deeper (emotional or therapeutic) work. Here are some common DJ mind twists that you might recognize:

- *It is my job to make the dancers happy!*
- *If the crowd is not screaming at one point, or if there are no one in tears on the dancefloor, you have failed as a DJ.*
- *Playing a song is not enough. As a DJ you need to demonstrate your artistry by adding something to the music. ("I need to do something with all these buttons!").*
- *New is better than old. Falling back on old songs (Ecstatic hits) is a fail.*

Vulnerability Hangover

Standing behind a DJ booth can feel scary and vulnerable at times (and especially in the beginning). When dancers have a great time, the DJ gets a lot of praise. On the flipside, the DJ also receives a lot of criticism when dancers, for whatever reason, do not have a good experience. How to deal with both the praise and the criticism? Before addressing this question, it is important to acknowledge that a DJ *does* have a huge impact on the space. As we saw, a DJ plays a pivotal role in how the Dance Journey takes shape, for better or for worse. Still, it is also good to keep in mind that the dancers are not just passive receivers of the music. Dancers are active co-creators in the journey. Even if the DJ plays a totally inappropriate song by accident, the dancers can choose to go with it or to resist it. In other words, *yes*, the DJ is a midwife or a shaman, and so are the dancers! (In other words, you do not have to be perfect).

As a DJ you are in the spotlight and this can bring up triggers or blockages. The very fact of standing in front of a crowd, for example, can suddenly bring up old high-school memories of being bullied. Or it can trigger memories that you were being punished or ignored when you spoke from your heart or shared your needs as a child. We all have painful memories or trauma stored in our bodies, and especially when we take a step out of our comfort zone, we can meet places in which these old challenges might come to light again. In this context, Brené Brown talks about a 'vulnerability hangover', meaning you might wake up the next morning after your gig, thinking:

"Oh help!? why did I play that one song that nobody danced to?"

""That mistake messed up the whole evening!"

"why did that person look at me in that specific way?"

"Why didn't anyone come up to me afterwards to thank me?"

Brené Brown shares that having a 'vulnerability hangover' can actually be good for you. Her research reveals the hugely positive outcomes that emerge from stepping into the arena of vulnerability. It is precisely when we expose ourselves, that *'we have experiences that bring purpose and meaning to our lives'*. To get most out of stepping into this arena of vulnerability, we need to develop a healthy relationship to learning so we do not get overwhelmed. Learning is not something that happens by default. We all have a history of learning experiences (both success and failure), and consequently developed attitudes around learning that help or sabotage us, like: "*I am stupid, I can't do this*", or "*It is a sign of weakness to ask for help*", or "*I do not need to prepare, I'll improvise*".

Reflection

1. *Contemplate on (and write down) which emotions you have difficulty with tending to in your own life (and on the dance floor).*
2. *Feel deeper into yourself: (how) could these triggers be possibly transformed in service of the dance? Find their roots: what did you learn from your parents, at school, culturally, archetypes/mythology, …? What could be of help for you in the process of transforming your own triggers?*

Learning to Learn

The depicted model is a great tool in understanding learning processes. It shows three zones: the comfort zone, learning zone, and panic zone. These zones are based on the work of the Russian psychologist **Vygotsky**.

- *THE COMFORT ZONE* is where things are predictable and stable. We feel safe here, grounded and at home. However, staying too long in the comfort zone brings boredom, mindless routines, and rigidity. When we stay too long in our comfort zone it actually shrinks: our world gets limited to the same old patterns. Ultimately, if we do not move at all, life ceases to be. This is what the little **grey circle** symbolizes.

- *THE LEARNING ZONE* is where we encounter new things that require our dedicated attention and intention. A supporting environment where we can safely make mistakes and have support, are crucial here. Learning new things expands our comfort zone; what was new, becomes familiar.

- *THE PANIC ZONE* is when events spin out of control or we bite off more than we can chew. We feel overwhelmed and in a state of fight, flight, or freeze. In this zone we need to find our feet again, and restore some sense of order, either inside or outside.
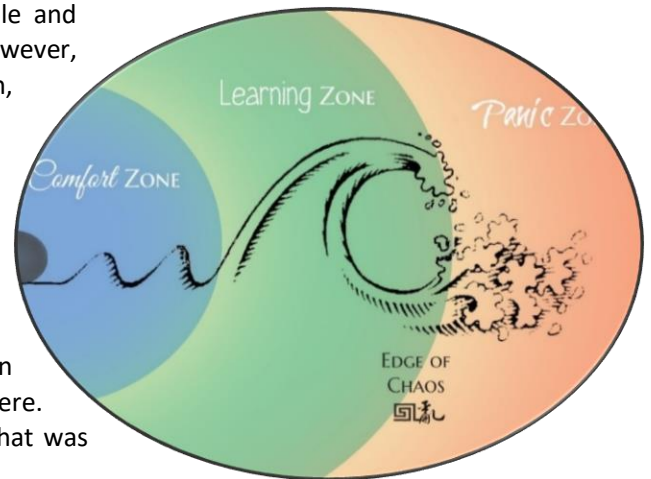
Vygotsky points to two edges in his model. The first is on the edge of the comfort and learning zone. He calls this the *actual development level*, meaning that here you can do things on your own without the help or support of others. Then there is the edge between the comfort and panic zone, the *potential development level,* which are things we can do with the help of others or a supportive environment. Our potential development level depends on our actual development level. If you can drive a car, you can also drive a big truck with the support of others, but if you cannot drive a car yet, driving a truck will be beyond your capabilities. As we spend time in the learning zone, our actual level moves. What we first could only do with help, we can now do on our own. This also means that our potential level shifts forward. What first would be a cause for panic, we can now do with help.

Knowing that we have development levels, where is your current level regarding the topics below?

IMPROVISE A 2-HOUR DANCE JOURNEY (NO MIXING)

I can do it alone   I need some help   beyond my reach

FIND SONGS IN MY LIBRARY BASED ON BPM, KEY, OR ENERGY

I can do it alone   I need some help   beyond my reach

ADAPT A SONG WITH EQ, LOOPING, BEAT JUMPS, OR CUE POINTS
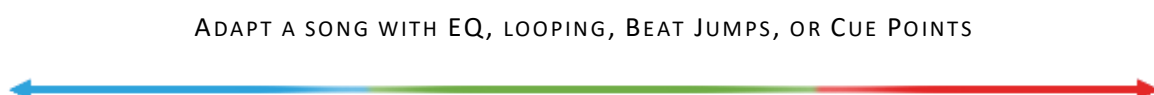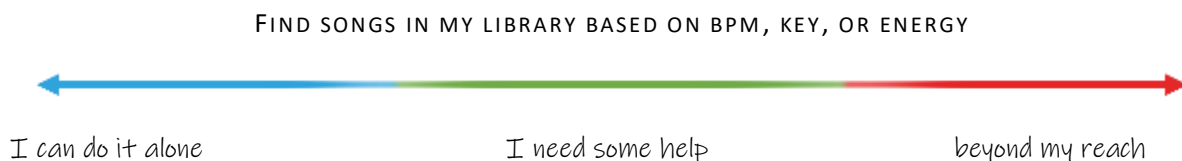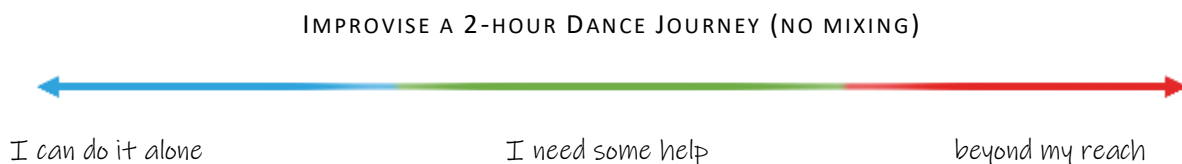
I can do it alone   I need some help   beyond my reach

MIXING TRACKS (VOLUME, EQ, KEY, ETC)

I can do it alone   I need some help   beyond my reach

CONNECT MY MUSIC TO DIFFERENT SOUND SYSTEMS

I can do it alone   I need some help   beyond my reach

Vygotsky's model offers important insights in learning. First, that you have insight in your actual development level and be honest about it. Like we mentioned before, we all have **blind spots** and need others to learn about them. To learn about your blind spots you need to be open to, and ask for feedback, or otherwise you keep on repeating the same mistakes. You also need to be realistic about your actual level.

We often have a charged history with learning. Some of us have learned to **underestimate** our actual level out of fear of failure. Taking tasks that are too easy and shying away from your spotlight, means your learning process is stuck. Others, in contrast, have learned to **overestimate** their actual level, perhaps because they feel they need to prove themselves. They bite off more than they can chew leading to stress, panic, and also a freezing of the learning process. Perhaps you recognize which tendency you have. In both cases, it is important to allow the shadow parts – like fear of failure or uncertainty - that drive under- or overestimation to come to the fore. Only then can we grow beyond our patterns of Self sabotage. The only way out is through.

Failing Successfully

When we are genuine about our actual level - knowing what we can do alone and what is still beyond our reach - we can seek or create a learning environment in which we can grow. We can rent a studio, for example, to play a set and ask for feedback. Part of this learning environment is that we are able to **fail successfully**. This term was coined by the late **Nancy Stark Smith** (one of the pioneers of Contact Improvisation). Learning to fail successfully means that you allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them. It also means that you look for environments where mistakes can be made, like practicing with friends instead of paying customers. As Vygotsky's model shows, a supportive environment is crucial for personal growth. In our training we try to create such a learning environment so we can experiment, fail successfully, get feedback and coaching.

DJing is a live happening and, as such, things might not always go as you have planned or intended them. Next to the concept of failing successfully, we would also like to share the words of the great Bob Ross: "*There are no mistakes. Just happy accidents.*" Own your choices, even if the dancers respond less enthusiastically to them, and move forward from there. If you disown a song, and try to correct your 'mistake', it becomes a mistake.

Feedback is Food for Growth

Feedback is a crucial part of DJing. We all get stuck at times and have our blind spots. Feedback accelerates our learning journeys. Feedback, however, can also be hard, especially when something is close to our heart. DJing is such a thing, because it is very personal. The music we play often has special meaning for us. If people do not appreciate our song selection, this can feel personal. Also, our musical choices do in part reflect our own emotional and musical insight – can we steer dancers through difficult parts? How do we bounce back after a mistake?. Because of the sensitive nature of DJing it is worth to pay attention to the feedback process.

We like to see feedback as the offering of food. Just like with food, we are not always ready to receive feedback (to eat) and can still be full from the experience. We can say: "Is it okay if we do this at a later moment?" As with any meal, it makes a difference whether you sit down and take the time or whether you receive the feedback on the fly. If someone does 'drop' feedback on your plate, you still have the choice to not eat it directly. You can listen, thank the other, and save the content for later. As feedback is a kind of food, we also need to taste, chew and digest. More practically this means:

- **CREATE THE RIGHT MOMENT** for feedback. Also be honest when you notice that you are not open to receive feedback (see above). If you do a structured feedback round, it is helpful to start with giving feedback to yourself.
- **LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND**. Receive the feedback mostly in silence and do not go into a discussion about it. When receiving feedback, focus first on giving space to the feedback, not on your next response. It is a practice to listen beyond the words and truly sense which message is trying to be conveyed. One of the ways could be to summarize and, if needed, to ask questions or examples to clarify.
- **GIVE THANKS.** Whether negative or positive feedback, simply give thanks to the person sharing with you. Since that person is also sharing something about his or her experience, it is a powerful practice to value that.
- **DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY**. This is oftentimes more easily said than done. Still, feedback is not about you as a person, but about your behavior - and how this is perceived by the other. Good to remember that dancers are co-creators in their dance experience. As a DJ, you often get very different feedback from the dancers. This is no surprise, as the dance experience is highly personal and the music is multi-layered.
- After you have received feedback, simply **TAKE A STEP BACK AND LET THE WORDS SINK IN**. What is the gist of the feedback? Does that resonate with you? If your answer is 'yes', reflect further and look at what you can learn. Some parts of the feedback need more digesting. Allow yourself to take the time and space to reflect, sense, integrate and listen to your intuition. It can help to talk to someone you trust to make sense of it. If needed, you can also choose to talk to the feedback giver for clarification or to share your experience.

Practice & Preparation

Under high pressure we mostly do not come up with new, creative solutions, but instead fall back on what we already know. All the knowledge in this manual is lifeless if we do not put it to practice. Dedicated and focused practice helps us build our repertoire, so we can fall back on more routines under pressure. You can focus your practice by taking one skill, like EQ mixing or Beatmatching, and practice that deliberately. It helps to bring a playful attitude to your practice by experimenting and giving yourself friendly challenges as beatmatching tracks with different rhythms. Feedback is crucial in learning, especially with DJing. You can organize your feedback, by DJing in front of friends or by making a mix that you put online. Throughout this manual you will find practical suggestions for your practice.

One tip we have here is that you record your set, and listen & dance to it yourself. Practice those transitions that did not go so well, see what other tracks you could have used, and take note of what did go well.

Practice does not only apply to the more technical aspects of DJing. It also goes for how we deal with stress and develop as a creative professional. Julia Cameron has written 'The Artist's Way', which helped millions of people tap into their deeper-lying potential. For Cameron, creativity and spirituality are dancing partners. Her own struggle to overcome a long addiction, led her to develop her ideas on creative unblocking. One of the essential exercises she offers are writing the so-called 'Morning Pages', which are 'three pages of longhand, stream of consciousness writing, done first thing in the morning'. The Morning - or 'Mourning' - Pages are one of the best ways to silence your inner critic. Another practice that Cameron recommends, is to take yourself out on an 'Artist Date', which is 'a once-weekly festive solo expedition to explore something that interests you'. The Artist Dates can support us in 'feeding our creative work by replenishing our inner well of playfulness and inspiration'

Under high pressure we mostly do not come up with new, creative solutions, but instead fall back on what we already know

Grounding Practice

As we have mentioned before, during DJing, it is of huge importance to stay grounded. You can only hold space for a collective field of individual dancers, when you are able to hold space for yourself first. Of course, the more you practice and share your art with the world, the easier it will become to tend to both the crowd and yourself at the same time. One of the many ways to do this, is to learn to 'get out of your own way'. So whatever happens on the dance floor, keep your focus on the higher goal of the dance. It might help to re-member that you are there to be in service of the dance. And that it is not as much about you as it is about the dance. At the same time, since the dancers will also come to trust your skills and knowledge, you do have the responsibility to stay present and open to the overall experience. And thus, as a DJ you are constantly playing with this balance on the dance floor. One of the ground rules in all of this is: 'you can only hold for others what you can hold for yourself'. This makes the art of Ecstatic DJing so specific, as there is no end to this inner - and collective - growth. In this way, DJing is a humbling experience, of which Ram Das also poignantly reminds us: "*We are all just walking each other home.*"

More practically, we can ground by:

- **BREATHING**: Regulating your breath, regulates your heart rate, which regulates your emotional state. Practice belly breathing and extending the outbreath (stimulating the parasympathetic).
- **BODY SCAN**: sense your body from head to toes: where are areas of comfort and discomfort, what is the overall feel? Welcome whatever is there, acknowledge it, instead of pushing it away.
- **POSTURE**: find proper alignment in your body, soften your joints, your jaw, tongue, and your gaze. Feel your feet on the ground and find a balance between left and right, front and back, up and down.
- **MOVING**: Shake out tension, stretch those tense parts, dance your anxiety. Connect to
- **CREATE A COMFORT ZONE**: make the DJ booth your home, organize it so you feel comfortable, bring objects that support you.
- **NOTICE YOUR ENVIRONMENT**: take time to notice the surroundings, the colors, sounds, smells, and how those resonate in your body. Walk around to discover different areas in the space.

The fastest way to still the mind is to move the body.

Gabrielle Roth

The Birth of the Ecstatic DJ

The minute you think you're greater than the music, you're finished

Frankie Knuckles

Prelude

When we play music we literally continue the songs of our ancestors. The rhythms we play, for example, have travelled with enslaved Africans to the new world where they morphed into the blues, jazz, rock and roll, disco, and dance music. By knowing the his/her/our-story of music and how it affects us, we can root ourselves more deeply into the work we offer - and connect it back to the heart of the dance.

Our ancestors were well aware how powerful music and dance are in making healing journeys and connecting the tribe. Some of the oldest cave paintings frequently feature dancers in some trance ritual. Ecstatic dancing and music can bring connection with Self, others, and the Anima Mundi (world soul) at an unparalleled speed and depth. When going on a holiday, for example, it often takes us several days to unwind and arrive in the moment. Dance can take us there in minutes. Moving quickly quiets the monkey mind, it enables us to release unnecessary tension, and grounds our presence in the here and now.

Music has the ability to transport us and open new dimensions. Music creates a soundscape, that is, a landscape through which dancers can travel. This landscape enables us to travel the globe in one evening - from energizing Bombay beats to a sacred Icaro of the Amazon rainforest. Music also allows us to travel through time, and take us 'way back in the days' or lead us to move with some future potential. Music can even let us travel in a timeless space. This is what ancient shamans and later ecstatic religions understood. They finetuned the art of getting into a trance state through drumming patterns or magic songs.

We live in a time where the ecstatic has been revived through practices as Conscious and Ecstatic Dance. In this chapter we will review some of its history. Even though contemporary music often is electronically produced, it still holds a certain energy and power to transport us. We will also look at how this contemporary ecstatic music came into being and how the figure of the DJ came to the fore.

Reflection

Take a moment to re-member: how did you get in touch with music, and how did music touch you? Was it one of your parents singing nursery rhymes? Was the radio always at home? Do you have vivid memories of cassettes, your first vinyl LP, or watching MTV? Or are you more of the digital generation with memories of CD's, MP3's, IPods, and Spotify?

What is Conscious Dance?

Conscious Dance is an umbrella term for a wide variety of dance forms like the **Authentic Movement**, **the 5Rhythms**, **Biodanza**, **Soul Motion**, **Continuum Movement**, **Butoh**, **Open Floor**, **Movement Medicine,** and **Ecstatic Dance** to name a few. Generally, in Conscious Dance an environment is created that allows for spontaneous movement and all kinds of feelings to be expressed. In such a 'brave space' the grip of social

conventions, like 'dancing pretty' or 'only showing safe emotions', can loosen. It is also a dance environment that is less judgmental of how people dance. There are no right or wrong moves to make as in choreography. Instead, people are encouraged to tune in and dance as they are. This makes Conscious Dance so accessible to dancers from all walks of life. Once people allow their body to speak, they connect with life as it moves through them in the here and now. This is liberating, vitalizing, and can be a meditative experience. By moving authentically, dancers soon experience that they themselves are not moving, but they are being moved. The Dance takes over. This is when we can enter an altered state of consciousness, such as trance or ecstasy.

Most Conscious Dance forms are guided by a movement facilitator, or teacher, who in most cases represents a certain method in which she is trained. Sometimes the guidance is implicit, while at other times there is more explicit, in-depth teaching about personal development through embodiment and movement. Music plays an integral part in most Conscious Dance forms (although some Conscious Dance forms use music sparsely or not at all). Most Conscious Dance facilitators take care of their own music and do some basic DJing. A teacher might play an extended loop, or repeat the same song several times, so dancers can sink in the music of their bodies, instead of being 'pulled out' by the novelty of a new song. For similar reasons, Conscious Dance practices use a lot of music previously categorized as 'world music' with sounds, scales and rhythms that 'western' ears are not accustomed to. Unfamiliar sounds help to move in new ways, instead of falling back into familiar routines. Music with lyrics are also minimized as lyrics can strongly guide an experience instead of giving space to an open ended exploration (unless the teacher wants to direct the dancers in a certain way).

Performing Arts
Contemporary Dance /
Modern Dance / Ballet / Jazz Dance
Theater / Mime / Impro
Music

Psychotherapy
Body Psychotherapy
Dance Movement Therapy
Gestalt Therapy / Psychodrama

Exercise
Yoga / Pilates
Martial Arts
Acrobatics

Somatics
Feldenkrais, Rolfing, Alexander
Technique, BMC, etc
Bodywork
Alternative Medicine

Conscious Dance

Spirituality
New Age / Personal
Development
Theosophy /
Shamanism

Festivals
Raves / Burning Man
Full Moon Parties

Ecstatic Traditions
Sufi Dancing
Yoruba Religion

Authentic Movement is arguably the first Conscious Dance practice that appeared on the scene in the 1950's. It was developed by **Mary Starks Whitehouse** (*1911–1979*), who was a student of **Martha Graham** and **Mary Wigman**, two giants of modern dance. Whitehouse had a deep interest in Jungian thought and became a psychotherapist. Later she began to integrate Jung's principles of 'active imagination' with dance and movement, a process which came to be known as Authentic Movement. While Authentic Movement has roots in modern dance and Jungian therapy, other Conscious Dance practices can trace their roots to different fields. The 5Rhythsm, for example, has its roots in the performative arts, Gestalt therapy, and spirituality. The overview above shows some of the fields that have converged into the different Conscious Dance practices.

The Disc Jockey

Now that we know a bit about the field of Conscious Dance, let's explore the birth of DJing. The term DJ - short for *'disc jockey'* - takes us back to a time when DJ's primarily worked with vinyl records. Even though most of us will work with digital music files rather than physical discs, the principles of DJing remain essentially the same: *DJs select, play, and mix recorded music.*

When we take a gentle dip into the history of DJing, we can see that the 'disc' first had to be invented before it could be handled by the 'jockey'. This happened in 1859 when Edouard-Léon Scott de Martinville invented the phonautograph. Later, in 1877, Thomas Edison came with a similar, better working design which he called the phonograph ('sound-writer'). It was closely followed by the gramophone records in 1892. Soon after, these records

The principles of DJing remain essentially the same: DJs select, play, and mix recorded music.

went into commercial production which marked the first time in which people were able to purchase music. The first radio broadcasting happened in 1906, soon thereafter people played records over the airwaves. These people were called 'record men', although there also were some early 'record women'. The earliest printed use of the term 'disc jockey' appeared in 1941. Up until this point, the DJ was in charge of selecting music, not mixing it. **Jimmy Savile** claimed to be the first DJ to mix music using twin turntables in 1947.

What brought the DJ out of the shadows and into the mainstream, however, was the growth of bars, nightclubs and discotheques, as well as the fact that turntables and DJ equipment became cheap enough to afford. Born in 1949 in Brooklyn, **Francis Grasso** is known as 'Father of the Club'. In 1969, Grasso popularized a technique called **beat-matching**. The method involves seamless transitions between records by matching beats. Beat-matching created a non-stop mix of music in nightclubs. To match beats Grasso used headphones to preview a record on one turntable while another played. He would use a technique called slip-cueing to align the speeds of the records. Keep in mind that he mixed music of live drummers and not beat machines which took great skill, and that the average length of a song was about 2 minutes and 13 seconds. The Grasso also brought the concept of **music programming**, or **song selection** to the DJ culture. Grasso was a pro at selecting songs that corresponded to the disco dancers' energy on the floor.

Back to School

Music genres often emerge out of subcultures, especially marginalized subcultures. The Blues and Rock and Roll are examples. In the 1970s Hip Hop culture and music began to take form in the Bronx in New York out of communities consisting largely of African Americans, Latino Americans and Caribbean Americans. The 11th of August 1973 is considered a special date in the emergence of Hip Hop. On this day the 18-year old Jamaican-born **Clive Campbell, aka DJ Kool Herc**, was asked by his younger sister to play in their apartment building. They hosted a 'Back to School Jam' to earn extra cash for back-to-school clothes. To quote Wikipedia:

"Campbell began playing hard funk records of the sort typified by James Brown. Campbell began to isolate the instrumental portion of the record which emphasized the drum beat—the 'break'—and switch from one break to another. Using the same two-turntable set-up of disco DJs, he used two copies of the same record to elongate the break. This breakbeat DJing, using funky drum solos, formed the basis of hip hop music.

Campbell's announcements and exhortations to dancers helped lead to the syncopated, rhythmically spoken accompaniment now known as rapping. He called the dancers 'break-boys' and 'break-girls', or simply b-boys and b-girls."

Justifiably DJ Kool Herc is regarded as the 'father of hip-hop culture.' His style was quickly taken up by figures such as **Afrika Baambaata** and **Grandmaster Flash**, who further developed turntablism, or the art of using turntables to manipulate sound and create original music. Grandmaster Flash, for example, innovated techniques as backspinning. Nowadays, the influence of Hip Hop on (dance) music is undeniable and it has given rise to new genres as Dancehall, Crunk, Rap,Technobass, and many more. Simultaneously, artists like Afrika Baambaata were influenced by experimental electronic music pioneers from Europe, like the German **Kraftwerk** with their 22 minute long song 'Autobahn'. This cross-pollination between Europe and the US also shaped the birth of **Electronic Dance Music** (EDM).

Democratizing the Dancefloor

In underground clubs marginalized people of different ethnicities and LGBTQ+ backgrounds found a refuge on the dancefloor. They gathered in clubs like the Paradise Garage (1977-1987) in New York, The Warehouse (1977-1982) in Chicago, (1982-1987) The Hacienda in Manchester, Club Amnesia (1976 - now) in Ibiza. In these clubs you could find DJs like **Frankie Knuckles, Larry Levan, Paul Oakenfold**, and **Todd Terry**. Frankie Knuckles, is also known as the 'Godfather of House Music', and is an African American DJ, record producer, and remixer. Growing up in the Bronx, Knuckles frequently went to discos in the 1970s and ended up working as a DJ. Around 1977 he was a resident DJ in the Warehouse where he mixed disco, soul, and Eurosynth music into a new sound that would later be known as House music - dancers would ask recordstores for that 'Warehouse' music, which was later shortened in House music. In 1987, he took his house music to the UK, where he worked as a DJ in London.

And even though the DJ industry was historically male-dominated, by the late 1960s, female disc jockeys became more common. **Judy Dibble Minneapolis** started as a 'sidekick' to a male DJ in the mid-1960s and later went on to host her own DJ show.

A New Music Arrives

In the 80's new technology opened another door for the ecstatic. Synthesizers, samplers, and drum machines created a new type of music: electronic dance music (EDM). Musicians could now create music from behind their computers. This new music was first heard in clubs in Ibiza, Chicago, and Manchester. The music was more a soundscape then a song. It had hypnotic layers on top of a four-to-the-floor beat: all ingredients to reach an ecstatic state. Young people all over the world danced till dawn (with a little help of the drug XTC). These raves also started to happen outdoor. The Full Moon parties in Thailand were probably the earliest in the mid 80's. These open-air dance events spread to Los Angeles, where people would gather in the desert to dance under the full moon. They attracted neo-pagans, wiccans, and eco-warriors, who started developing ceremonies, such as an opening circle. The desert was also home to another ecstatic event: **Burning Man**. Events like Burning Man experiment with building a temporary society, guided by principles as inclusion, self-reliance, communal effort, and free expression. These principles are a backbone of - what you can call - an ecstatic culture.

Thus, in the 80's and 90's, ecstatic culture manifested itself in the a intimate settings of a Conscious Dance workshop, and on a larger scale in clubs, full moon parties, and large gatherings. Although these two developments had started independently, they quickly cross-fertilized. Burning Man, for example, featured 5Rhythms and Contact Improvisation camps, and Conscious Dance teachers started DJ'ing.

The Mixed Cultures of Ecstatic Dance

As different ecstatic practices and events spread and mixed, one particular form hit the mark. It was a hybrid between a Conscious Dance workshop and a large-scale community dance event. The first took place in the year 2001 at Kalani Honua in Puna, on the big Island of Hawaii. There, Max Fathom, Dean Odysseus

Yacalis, Elizabeth Betwixt, and others created the **first Ecstatic Dance**. They blended their experiences with Full Moon parties, Burning Man, 5Rhythms, ceremony, and EDM into the viral format of an Ecstatic Dance. From Hawaii, Ecstatic Dance started spreading like a wildfire. Two early adopters were Donna Carroll and Tyler Blank who had experienced Ecstatic Dance in Hawaii. Inspired, they moved to Oakland, California to create their own Ecstatic Dance. What started small, soon turned into the largest Ecstatic Dance in the world, with around 450 dancers joining twice a week to sweat and move their bodies, minds and souls on the Sweet's Ballroom dance floor. Ecstatic Dance Oakland became an important hub for spreading Ecstatic Dance globally. Oakland's example also reached the Netherlands where the first Ecstatic Dance started in 2012 in the Club Lite. Ecstatic Dance Amsterdam became a major European hub and inspired many others to start Ecstatic Dances elsewhere in the Netherlands, in Europe, and beyond. Ecstatic Dance is now a global movement with dances taking place from the biggest cities to the smallest villages.

As we saw, Ecstatic Dance has a double heritage of Conscious Dance workshops and large scale dance events, which is reflected in its format. Like other Conscious Dance forms Ecstatic Dance also feature a form of movement and music facilitation. They are, however, organized differently. Most commonly, the movement and music facilitation are done by two different people: The Ceremony Leader (CL) and the DJ, who both have their own time slots. Typically, the CL will first guide people into movement and create a 'brave space', then the DJ plays for the majority of the time, after which the CL closes the event. In comparison to most Conscious Dance forms, the teaching part in Ecstatic Dance is minimal. The music part, on the other hand, takes center stage and gave rise to a new specialist: The Ecstatic DJ.

The Core of Conscious DJing

In the previous chapter we read how the Ecstatic DJ came into being. In this chapter we will dive into what we consider to be the core of this type of DJing. Before we get there it helps to explore the DJ field a bit more.

Different DJ's

DJing is a young and developing profession. DJing, nevertheless, knows some different traditions and styles. Before exploring Ecstatic and Conscious DJing further, it is good to know about its other siblings.

★ RADIO DJS: introduce and play music on radio.

★ DANCEHALL/REGGAE DEEJAYS. According to Wikepedia: *"a deejay (DJ) is a reggae or dancehall musician who sings and 'toasts' (raps) to an instrumental riddim. … Dancehall/reggae DJs who select riddims to play are called selectors."*

★ TURNTABLISTS or battle DJs use turntables and DJ equipment as a musical instrument with techniques such as scratching.

★ CLUB DJS: play music at parties, festivals, corporate and private events. Depending on the music genre these DJs are also called a hip hop DJ or house DJ, and so on. *"Typically, club DJs mix music recordings from two or more sources using different mixing techniques to produce non-stopping flow of music."* (Source Wikipedia). Two main skills of the Club DJ are technical skills (mixing, etc) and the ability to 'read the crowd' and select the right music. Next to the Club DJ, you might also find an MC, a Master of Ceremony, who keeps the event rolling and introduces different people, like the DJ's.

Comparing the Ecstatic DJ and the Club DJ

Conscious and Ecstatic Dances create a safe space to move in, which is exemplified by the guidelines (no shoes, no drugs, no talking, no hunting). These guidelines are in place, because this is what happens exactly in a typical club. A club has bouncers employed to enforce a minimal safety; in Conscious and Ecstatic dance safety is created by the community of dancers and the team. In Conscious and Ecstatic dance this safety is further facilitated by a teacher or Ceremony Leader. This movement facilitation enables the DJ to start with dancers who are ready to dance. A club DJ, in comparison, has to compete with everything else that is going on in the room. All these differences lead to a different style of DJing:

|	Club DJ	Ecstatic DJ
People come to dance	★★	★★★★★
Creating a dynamic dance journey	★★	★★★★★
DJ as a performer	★★★★	★★
DJ as a shaman / healer / doula	★★	★★★★
Diversity Music Library	★★	★★★★★
Importance technical skills	★★★★★	★★
Variety of technical skills	★★★★★	★★
DJ can have extra tasks (leading ceremony)	★	★★★★
Co-creating with a team	★★	★★★★

More than a club DJ, the Ecstatic DJ needs to have an in-depth understanding of what a dance journey is and how to support it. It really helps if the Ecstatic DJ knows the territory from her own experience: knowing how it is to move on the floor (and get up again), dancing through heavy resistance or a heartbreak, or moving from a still point. These are invaluable experiences. It also helps when a DJ can recognize different types of dancers and their (musical) needs. Novice dancers, for example, commonly appreciate elements in music that have a direct, clear effect and affect. These are musical elements such as a strong bass, predictable beat (four to the floor), and catchy melodies and hooks. Experienced dancers might, for the same reasons, dislike these elements in music (if overused), as it limits their own interpretation of the music. They might prefer more abstract and spacious sounds.

Where a club DJ is often a specialist in a certain genre, an Ecstatic DJ is a generalist and needs to have a big and varied library of tracks in many genres, tempo's, and emotions. This makes library management (knowing how to order and find tracks) really important for the Ecstatic DJ.

An Ecstatic Dance DJ typically plays a two- up to three-hour set, starting after the ceremony. Before the ceremony there will be music in the space while people are entering. Different Ecstatic Dance events around the world take different times for that. In Amsterdam, we play around 30 minutes of music and then gather the people in a circle for the opening ceremony. Often the Ceremony Leader will play the warm-up music, and in some cases the DJ. This ½ hour of music should help people arrive in the space, feel welcome, and set the tone. It helps to offer a variety of vibes and styles of music to accommodate the different places people come from. This smaller musical journey is a wave of its own, although less climactic (not > 110). The emphasis is on arrival and building up energy, and not emptying the gas tank at the start of the journey.

The (He)Art of Ecstatic DJing

Below is a model for how we picture DJing for Conscious and Ecstatic Dance. In our vision, the core of this DJ practice is to create a transformative dance journey. The other elements like creating a soundscape or working with live music are in service of this dance journey (which is why they also are placed within the red circle). We say this deliberately, because as a beginning DJ it is very easy to get caught up in all the technical wizardry which then takes precedence over the creation of a journey. To give an example: You might be so focused on making a smooth transition that you predominantly search for a song with the same BPM and key, and forget to ask whether that song really brings the dance forward. Sometimes the dance journey asks for a track that is less ideal in the mix. Sometimes, also, a beautiful transition can serve the journey by creating that seamless musical landscape.
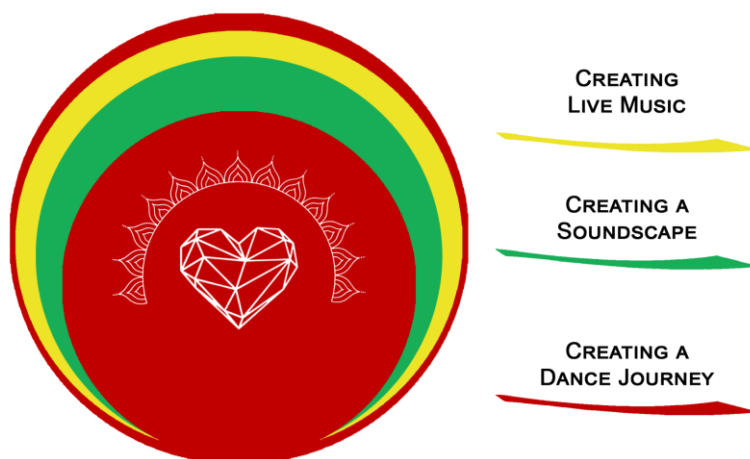
CREATING A DANCE JOURNEY

In our DJ training we focus first and foremost on creating a dance journey. The DJ is able to create and adapt a journey for dancers to disappear in. Making a playlist at home is one thing, weaving a journey on

the spot is another. In essence, a DJ carefully selects music and then lets the music do the work. This gives time to read the room and feel the dancers. Learning to create dance journeys is a lifelong study, as you can continuously explore the effects of rhythms or chords on the body, musical genres, the interplay of masculine and feminine energies, emotional landscapes, life cycles (from a nursery song to an Icaro), and so on.

Skills: Deep Listening, reading the room, sensing what is implied in the space and what wants to emerge; collecting and managing a diverse library (being able to find tracks based on key, bpm, and energy), creating dance journeys for all types of dancers, building suspension, tension, and release, knowing how to navigate through resistance, improvising.

CREATING A SOUNDSCAPE

The second layer of our model is formed by creating a coherent and fluid soundscape. Here the DJ is able to create a continuous journey in sound using technical skills to serve the dancers' journey even better. Perhaps a DJ lengthens the intro with a loop, allowing the dancers to sink in, or she removes part of the song that distracts. With the DJ controller a DJ can add or remove layers, building suspension, tension, and release. With these tools a DJ can also get more creative with mixing songs together, like using the rhythm of one song and the melody of another.

Skills: creating professional transitions using EQ, Filter, FX, looping, beat matching, tempo, sampling. Adding or removing layers in the music.

CREATING LIVE MUSIC

The last layer in our model is a bonus, and concerns creating and working with live music and/or poetry. This is certainly not a necessity for a DJ, but it can add to the experience. The most straightforward way to work with live music is to do it separately from the DJset, for example before or after a set - think of a hang drum or flute to close the set and guide people in stillness. The other extreme is when DJs completely create their own music with live instruments or share poetry over a track. By definition, they cease to be DJs and instead are live musicians. Live music can be thrilling as it is improvised on the spot for the dancers. However, there is less variety in sounds and can easily become more of a concert than a dance journey. Lastly, some DJs also use their DJ craft to play with tracks in such a way that they are beyond recognition and become new music in their own right.

Skills: Using the DJ controller to create music (pads for drumming, slicer, pitch play), and using programs like Ableton Live to work with samples and layers of music.

Dance as a Journey

Life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived.

Follow the path that is no path, follow your bliss.

Joseph Campbell

When we go through a deep dance experience it often feels like we have been on a journey. Why is that, and what makes something a journey? As it turns out, a journey is more than travelling from one place to the next. We can commute a great distance from home to work, without having the feeling that we have been on a journey. However, if our car breaks down and a mysterious stranger stops to offer us a lift …

The concept of a journey is very core to our experience of life. Life is always in motion. As we speak, our cells are growing, multiplying, and dying. Each day takes us on a journey from dusk till dawn; through the seasons; and from birth to old age. If we take a closer look at these different journeys, we can uncover some commonalities. First, we can recognize a cycle of relative balance and disbalance: the world is asleep, wakes up, gets all busy, slows down, and finally goes to sleep again. Even though we fall asleep again in the same bed, we are not the same person. Living life always changes us in some way. These changes can be minor or deeply *transformative*. Remember Vygotsky's model with the comfort zone, learning zone, and panic zone? In the picture you see that on the border of the learning and panic zone lies a spot that is called *the edge of chaos*. Transformative moments happen on the edge of chaos. On this edge our boundaries dissolve: we have a breakthrough or experience deep communion with another person. Here we can also find ecstasy (ek+stasis: moving out of our ordinary stance or consciousness). However, beyond the edge of chaos lies the panic zone. The domain of wild rage, intense confusion, and senseless chaos. Adventures do not always have a happy ending. This is why Ecstatic and Conscious Dance places such an emphasis on creating a holding environment with good facilitation.

The Hero's & Heroine's Journey

In Ecstatic and Conscious Dance, the edge of chaos is where a lot of the magic happens. We cannot, however, just 'drop' in there. The sun doesn't suddenly arrive at its high point, it rises there. Likewise, as dancers, we need a journey that prepares us for our arrival at the edge of chaos. Though tempting, we also cannot stay forever at the edge of chaos. We would burn ourselves out. At some point, we need to return and integrate all the new experiences, just like the sun sets after its midpoint. This whole journey can be described as an arc with the edge of chaos as its highpoint. Joseph Campbell, after extensively studying the world's myths and stories, recognized this arc as a universal underneath all the myths.
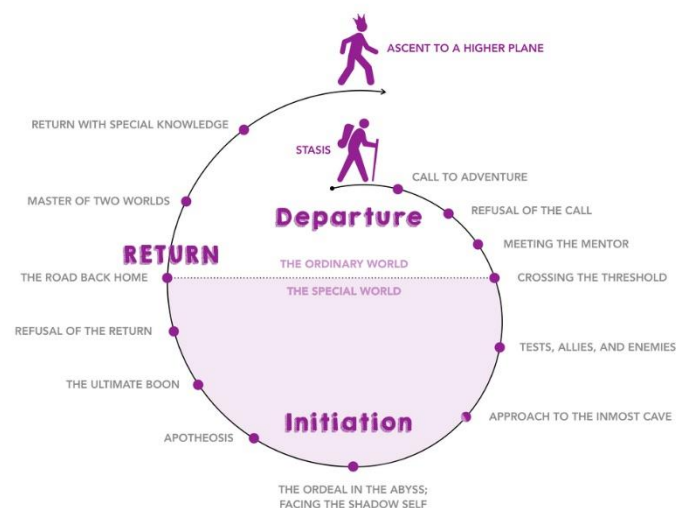

HERO'S JOURNEY BY JOSEPH CAMPBELL

He called this the monomyth or the Hero's Journey and delineated many interesting stages. The whole journey can be summarized in 3 main parts: departure, initiation, and return.

Let's see how this might be translated to the dancefloor:

1. *SUPPORTING THE DEPARTURE*: helping people wake up in their bodies, mobilizing energy, finding something that calls you out of your comfort zone (call to adventure), letting go of unnecessary baggage.
   ★ *MUSIC*: generally, everything between 60-110 bpm, beats that (gradually) energize. Also melodies that open an inquiry and are moving.
2. *SUPPORTING THE INITIATION*: the presence of a holding space, the option of moving in- and out of chaos, the freedom to express. Time to sink in.
   ★ *MUSIC*: generally, music above 110 bpm, repetitious character, and multiple layers for people to disappear in.
3. *SUPPORTING THE RETURN*: the space to make sense of the experience through play, repetition, and improvisation, space to share and to quiet down and meditate.
   ★ *MUSIC*: playful, light music with bpm's across the range. Later moving into more quiet, spacious tracks.

Each of these three stages is necessary for having a good (dance) journey. Without a proper departure, dancers might not be ready for the ecstatic music you are offering them. Without a return, people might still be very shaken and emotionally open once they leave the dancefloor.

As an addition to the Hero's Journey model, Jungian psychotherapist Maureen Murdock, who was also a student of Joseph Campbell, developed the **Heroine's Journey**. Maureen Murdock described the Heroine's Journey as the heroine diving deep within, while moving through three stages: separation, descent and integration. During a deep crisis of segregation, the heroine experiences a spiritual death. She dives deep within herself and from there, gradually (re)discovers her truth and gifts - integrating parts of herself more fully. Murdock explains: "The feminine journey is about going down deep into soul, healing and reclaiming, while the masculine journey is up and out, to spirit." In the Heroine's Journey, the cycles of life, death and rebirth are highlighted. Whether moving up and out, or down and in - or both, the journey through three stages remains present and of great importance in any dance journey.
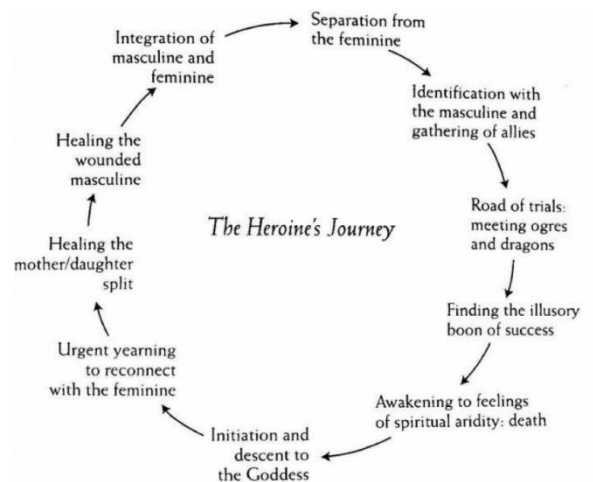
HEROINE'S JOURNEY BY MAUREEN MURDOCK

The Hero's Journey has inspired many of our contemporary myths that can be seen on the silver screen, like Star Wars and Disney's Lion King. In the last few decades, there has also been a significant increase in Heroine's Journey movies, such as the English Patient and Disney's Mulan. Many stories can be told using the same underlying template.

Soundscape and Story Structures

In Conscious and Ecstatic Dance, we also work with a general template that can host many different life stories at the same time. Music plays a crucial role in creating a template. Music creates a soundscape through which dancers can journey. There are energetic peaks and valleys, quiet places and sections where it storms. This soundscape is open enough that it allows dancers to project their personal stories unto this energetic landscape. While one person rides the quickening beats to ecstasy, another is using the same music to dance through a broken heart. The DJ can put some content or meaning in the set by using songs with lyrics, a speech, a poem, or a very familiar song. This, however, requires sensitivity as it can pull

dancers away from their own journey and into a common narrative (which is helpful when the DJ wants to bring more unity to the dancefloor).

A DJ set is more than a random collection of songs, no matter how expertly mixed together. The DJ tells a story through the songs she selects. When there is no coherent arc dancers feel lost, stuck, and increasingly frustrated. As a DJ it is therefore helpful to know something about story structures. We already discussed a 3-part story with a beginning, a middle, and an end (departure, initiation, and return). Next to this familiar three-part structure, there also is a widely used five-part story structure. The image below describes each of the five parts. The 19th-century German novelist Gustav Freytag came up with this model when he studied different dramas:
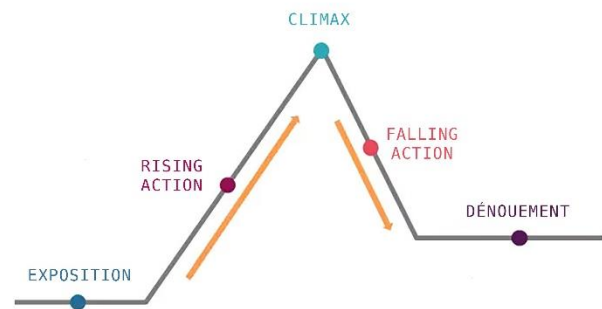
1. EXPOSITION. Arrival and setting the scene for the story to take place. On the dance floor this means arriving in the body, group and space. It also means making space and welcoming whatever wants to move. Here we set the ground tone for our journey to come. Slow, spacious, and melodic music can support to set this ground tone. If this phase is too long, it can lead to heaviness and boredom; if it is too short, dancers might be ungrounded, less sensitive.
2. RISING ACTION. In stories the second phase typically starts with an inciting incident, a trigger that unsettles the initial balance, something that pushes or pulls, a conflicting element that sets the story in motion. What follows is a rising of action, a building of momentum. While dancing, this is the phase when something starts to stir in us that seeks expression. Musically, we can support the rising action with a medium, regular beat that helps to build the energy without draining it too soon.
3. CLIMAX. In stories and movies, the tension builds up to a climactic peak. Here things finally come together, a moment of truth. Often a crucial choice must be made, and there is a dramatic shift in perspective; in any case it is a turning point in the story (edge of chaos). On the dance floor we also see the build up to a climax (there can be many). We let go of the control and surrender to the beat. Here we can move into ecstasy. Musically, we are in faster beats, like house, psytrance, trap, etc, although slower tracks can also work depending on their intensity.
4. FALLING ACTION. What goes up, must come down. After the turning point, events continue to unravel and unfold. The protagonist adapts to the new situation and can harvest the fruits or must clean up the mess. In this phase, the tension usually dissolves towards the resolution, but there can also be a suspense. In movement there often is an expansion after we just moved through inhibitions. We improvise, connect, and play, and the music can support this with more lyrical, upbeat tracks.
5. DÉNOUEMENT. The French word dénouement is derived from the word dénouer, "to untie", from nodus, Latin for "knot." (source Wikipedia). In this last phase, often named the resolution, the tensions and complexities of the plot are released. There is a sigh of relief, a sense of peace, closure, or a final acceptance of loss. On the dance floor we can often feel the stillness enter the floor. Supportive music is meditative, sacred, and/or spacious.

For those familiar, you might recognize the 5Rhythms in this 5-stage story structure. They are indeed very similar. When a young Gabrielle Roth in the 1960's started to teach her ecstatic dance on the Esalen grounds, she watched thousands of seekers dance their stories and started to recognize certain patterns. She also uncovered a 5-stage structure, which she called the 5Rhythms: Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical, Stillness.

Wave after Wave

A musical wave can take many different forms. Like the ocean, it can fluctuate between gentle or wild, soft or strong, grounded or flowing, chaotic or smooth, sensitive or playful - and all the layers in between. At times, the dance journey moves in one big wave. At other times, there will be different (and maybe even more gentle) waves within the journey (we will talk about this more thoroughly).

Ecstasy can be found in a high-pitched song, in the most subtle of sounds, in a beautiful instrumental song, or in a moment of silence. Weaving songs into one journey takes practice. Yet the magic often lies in the 'timing' of a song (and most of the time it's a wild guess!). Sometimes you can even let silence be a part of the dance journey - yet choose your silences wisely! As a DJ, it's important to keep trying new music. Even if you think you don't like a specific genre, search for something that you do like in that genre. Exchange songs with others. Dare to play music that moves you. Give new songs a few try-outs before you use them in a wave. During the journey, play a few songs that give people a break in between the more energized or magical songs.

As a *general guideline in the build-up* of an Ecstatic Dance set, it is valuable to *listen to how two songs transition into one another* - and to their contribution in the larger whole of the set. Increasing BPM can create more 'energy' on the dance floor. People move their bodies to the beat of the music. As the song's tempo increases, people will begin to move their bodies at the same rate – increasing the speed of their body movements and their heart rate. Work with different styles, different flavors and different qualities of sound. Ask yourself what the next song is adding to the mix. Surprise yourself and let yourself be surprised. For instance, an 'ice breaker' or a smooth transition into a classical or lyrical song can create an energizing or calming effect on the dancers.

Create a moment of soft landing at the end of the dance journey. The dancers will soon be making the transition back to the outside world, so make sure to close the dance in a grounded way. There's this moment of silence after the musical dance journey. You can already invite this silence in your set towards the end. After finishing your last track, there is often a release of build up energy. You just finished your set! However, the dance is not over. Dancers are dancing their last dance in silence. Be aware of this tender space that you helped to create, and stay present with the dance until the ending circle.

The Feminine holding the Masculine

Through the lens of the 5-stage story structure, we can perhaps recognize feminine and masculine energies interweaving to create the arc of the story. This interplay between receptive and active creates a transforming journey of dance. Both in the 3-stage and 5-stage structure the feminine parts hold the masculine in a sandwich-like embrace: F-M-F and F-M-F-M-F, respectively. In the 5-stage structure the journey starts with the feminine, nurturing the dancers until they are ready to go; then the masculine brings the dancers out of their place of comfort by mobilizing energy and creating tension. This tension builds up to the climax, where the feminine helps the dancers to fully surrender to whatever is there, so the dancer can enter trance or have an ecstatic moment. After the surrender, the masculine helps to unwind and unpack the released energy and energetic shifts, up till the point where the energy settles down again in the final feminine embrace into stillness and into a bigger whole.

Moving through an arc gives the dancer the feeling that they have been on a journey: from here to there and back again. DJ's can play with the number of arcs in a set or mix up the different stages to shock and surprise. However, the overall balance of the feminine and masculine, with the first holding the latter, creates a wholesome journey. Imagine a long build up without a release, or a climax without an unwinding and resolution. Although possible, it will leave the dancers hanging in an unfinished journey which they somehow have to complete, at home or elsewhere outside the safe container of the dancefloor.

Know the masculine, but keep to the feminine

Laozi

Song Structure

A DJ weaves a story using different tracks. However, the songs themselves also have a story arc woven into them. Songwriters use certain techniques, like the repetition of lyrics or use of tension and release in chord progressions, to tell a story. The story arc they create, is revered as the song structure. Just like we can recognize different parts in a story, like the exposition and climax, there are basic elements to a song structure:

★ **INTRO.** Setting the tone, attracting the attention, sensitizing / teasing / priming listeners for what is about to come.

★ **VERSE.** This is the story of the song, which can be told both lyrically and instrumentally.

★ **PRE-CHORUS.** Build anticipation for the chorus, so the impact of the main message is louder. In the pre-chorus we often find a change in the chord progression, the use of *hooks* - catchy parts of the song - and the stripping of all instruments except for one.

★ **CHORUS.** The chorus is the central message or theme in the song, and often the highest energy point, serving as the climax to the song. Choruses also have hooks and are often repeated more than once, with the last chorus often being a special, more elaborated version.

★ **BRIDGE.** The bridge creates a break away from the central theme (contrast). It reawakens the listener and offers a relief from the repetition. The bridge is often placed towards the end of the song, like before the final big crescendo, and offers a change of pace. Often, it will move from a low point with some level of build up before the next section. Sometimes it will have a bigger build followed by a complete silence before continuing.

★ **OUTRO.** This is how the songwriter wants to finish the journey. Sometimes it is a big, final chord that leaves the listener a little breathless, or it may be a smooth chord that rings out. It may be a repeating phrase that gradually fades away.

These elements can be *arranged* in different ways. A very common structure is: verse - pre-chorus - chorus - verse - chorus - bridge - chorus. There are many variations on this theme and many music genres have their own specific arrangements.

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) is not only music to listen to, but also to dance to. EDM uses some different terms for the song structure than traditional pop or rock styles. The terms intro, outro, and bridge remain the same, but instead of verses and choruses you'll often hear producers speak of breaks, drops and builds or rises.

★ **BREAK**: The EDM version of the verse. The break will in most cases be lower-energy than drops. A typical break could start with 8-16 bars of a simple beat and progression followed by 8-16 bars of a build or rise which is still part of the break.

★ **BUILD or RISE**: The build section is the 'climb' where the tension rises. It has the job of heightening the suspense and setting the listener up for the drop that follows. Music producers use various techniques to create this mounting tension. Examples include snare rolls that speed up as you get closer to the drop and risers that increase in pitch. A DJ can use the filter here to or lower the volume to accentuate the drop that follows.

★ **DROP**: Loosely corresponds to the chorus of a pop song carrying the main theme or message of the track. In most cases the drop has the highest energy or intensity (climax). It's the moment when tension is released, and the beat kicks in at full force.

★ **BREAKDOWN**: the breakdown creates a break, a breather, and/or sets the mood before the beat is re-launched in full. During the breakdown the kick & bass are muted and the song features a melody, chord progression, or some sort of white noise.

The different elements in the song's arrangement have a different kind of energy. A DJ can use these different segments to adapt a song and mix songs. For example, a DJ can choose to skip the breakdown to keep the energy going or let the build of one song follow by the drop of another.

Some DJ programs like Record Box also allow you to analyze the song's arrangement. See below:

The song structure of each individual song creates stories within stories and enables a DJ to create a multilayered, fractal-like landscape. All these subtle layers give dancers the opportunity to carve out their own unique journey. As a DJ it helps when you have a language to describe, or map out, the soundscape you create. It helps to find direction or to understand why something worked or where you went wrong. You can use the language of the hero's or heroine's journey, the 5-part story structure, or the language of a song structure to describe your set, or find something that speaks to you even more. In any case, you are developing a language to describe the energetic qualities of music.

Every dance is different

Every dance is different. Every dance floor is different. Every sound system is different. Every moment is different, and every experience of every dancer on every dance floor is different.

When you start as a DJ, it can be very inspiring to explore different dance communities. Notice the energy of the specific city or country that you are visiting. Discover its cultures and its habits. In Belgium, for instance, people enter the dance floor and wait on the side as if they are waiting for someone to guide them onto the floor. It might feel a bit uncomfortable if you are not used to this kind of behavior, but then, once the Belgian Ecstatic Dance tribe dives into the dance, they open up fully! The age differences, levels of experience and movement backgrounds of the dancers on a dance floor can also affect the intensity and variety of the dance journey. And then there are even larger cosmic influences that can affect the dance. During a full moon evening, for instance, the dancers usually become much more wild and frenzied.

The core lesson is: *build a relationship with the dancers and let yourself be surprised!* Find a way in. Let the dancers feel that you can be trusted simply by being present and by listening. Once you find that silent space within, you can let the journey guide you, and be guided from there.

So in choosing and playing with songs: What happens when you play a very gentle, yet deep and introverted song after an explosive and upbeat song? Or what happens when you play this same gentle and introverted song after another gentle yet heart-opening song? Or after a cheerful song or melancholic song? And what happens when you would play this very song during an outside Ecstatic Dance in full daylight? Or during an evening Ecstatic Dance, in which people seem a bit more 'tired' and in need of solitude? All of these questions matter. Wisdom comes with practice. So keep asking your body and keep exploring the diversity of possibilities. Creating a dance journey is a creative process, so it is important to keep connecting to your creative flow as well.

The Art of Listening

This is such a great time to be a music listener, but no one's listening.

Zach Cowie

Listening to music requires an attentive ear and a receptive body. Especially as a DJ, it is important to know your music well. Back in the days when records were a novelty, that is before TV, people put on a record and listened intently to the artist's work, many times over. How often do we sit down nowadays to repeatedly listen to an album – no distractions, no social media? And what does this actually mean, to truly listen?

Music Is Silence Interrupted

Take a moment to sit, stand or lie down, and simply listen. Become comfortable with doing nothing. You do not have to go anywhere. You do not have to achieve or prove anything. If you notice your thoughts, simply let them be. Listen, truly listen..

In any dance journey, silence is the starting point. "Music is silence interrupted" is an old African saying. The wisdom of these words are especially significant in a world in which we are flooded with manmade noise and images. To cope with such a noisy world, we automatically block out a lot of sounds. Learning to DJ, is learning to listen again to the subtle layers of sound and to become comfortable with silence. Allow yourself to listen to the wind, the rain, your own breathing, your heartbeat, a dog, a car... And notice the silences in between the sounds.

As a DJ, if you wish to let the music be in service of the dance, you need to get out of your own way - and communicate with and relate to the dancers. The more comfortable you are with the music that you use, the easier it gets to let the music choose you (instead of you choosing the songs). Playing music is not only about using good sound quality (which is important!), but also about listening to the quality of how a

The more comfortable you are with the music that you use, the easier it gets to let the music choose you

song is being produced (see 'Loudness War') - to become aware of the story that is being told within the song. Every song has a story, and every story has its right place in the composition. Some tracks will work better for the first part of the journey and other songs will be more suitable for a crescendo or for ending the journey in a more gentle way.

DJing and Technology

Without the ability to record music, DJing would simply not exist. And although we talk about 'old skool' DJ's who spin their vinyl, the art and craft itself is very young. We now take for granted that we can hear music everywhere, from the supermarket to the elevator. However, for the longest time in human history, music was a life happening. Recent technology made it possible to record music and, a bit later, to spin these records digitally. Now everyone can download DJ software, and press the 'SYNC' button and beatmatch tracks like the old skool DJs. Streaming services have given us access to an unprecedented amount and variety of music. All this available music had made DJing both easier and more difficult. You can find music easier, but so can your audience. With all this choice and overchoice, developing your own style and daring to be selective become really important. And for this we need to develop a skill that cannot be digitized: the art of listening.

Deep Listening

We hear and process sounds through our ears. The vibrations in the air or sound waves (1) are funneled into the ear canals (2), where they make the eardrum (3) vibrate. The eardrum is so sensitive it can detect even the faintest sound as well as replicating complex patterns of sound (as in music). The eardrum vibrations are then amplified by a chain of tiny bones in the middle ear (4: malleus, incus and stapes) transferring the vibrations into the cochlea of the inner ear (5). The 'hair cells' in the cochlea are tuned to respond to different sounds based on their pitch. These differently tuned hair cells, generate nerve impulses which travel along the auditory nerve (6), through the brainstem (7), to the auditory cortex (8), the hearing center of the brain. Here the streams of nerve impulses are converted into meaningful sound. All of this happens within a tiny fraction of a second... In this very biological sense, we hear with our brain: our left ear is better at decoding music (since it is connected to our right brain hemisphere), while our right ear (connected to our left brain hemisphere) is better at understanding language and lyrics. The health and structure of our inner ear also play a vital role in our ability to retain good balance.
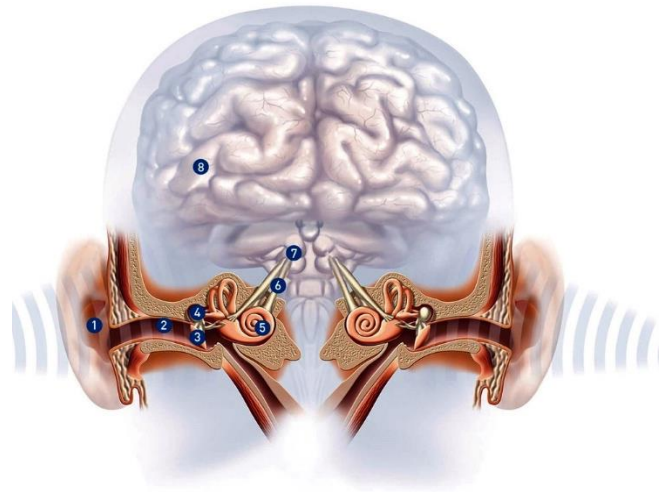
Sounds are not out there in the world. The sounds we hear are our brain's interpretation of the signals coming in. But there is more to this story. Scientists are beginning to uncover how perception is not only a process that goes from the outside to the inside, but is also a process that goes from the inside to the outside. Not only do we perceive sounds, we also predict sounds. Our brain is constantly making sense of what we hear and trying to predict what is going to happen next. This is why music that has an unfamiliar scale or time signature takes time to appreciate. It also implies we can distinguish between the involuntary nature of *hearing* and the voluntary, selective and active nature of *listening*. The late composer Pauline Oliveros coined the phrase "deep listening", defining it as a kind of "radical attentiveness". To quote Oliveros:

> *Deep Listening is a form of meditation*. *Attention is directed to the interplay of sounds and silences … . Sound is not limited to musical or speaking sounds but is inclusive of all perceptible vibrations… .*
>
> *The practice is intended to* **expand consciousness** *to the whole space/time continuum of sound/silences. Deep Listening a process that extends the listener to this continuum as well as to focus instantaneously on a single sound … or sequences of sound/silence.*
>
> *In order to get to the discipline and control that meditation develops, relaxation as well as concentration is essential. The practice of Deep Listening is intended* **to facilitate creativity** *in art and life through this form of meditation. Creativity means the formation of new patterns.*
>
> *Animals are Deep Listeners. When you enter an environment where there are birds, insects or animals, they are listening to you completely. You are received. Your presence may be the difference between life and death for the creatures of the environment. Listening is* **survival***!*

Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice, Pauline Oliveros

Although our ears are very refined, we only pick up sound frequencies ranging from 20 Hz to 20000 Hz. The ability to hear higher pitches diminishes with age and the average adult can hear sounds between 20 Hz and 16000 Hz. Hz stands for **Hertz**, which is defined as one cycle per second (see sine wave to the right). Our hearing, however, is not limited to the ears. The human body also is a medium through which sounds travel. We can actually pick up sounds lower than 20 Hz with our body. The inspiring Scottish percussionist **Evelyn Glennie** teaches
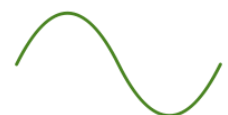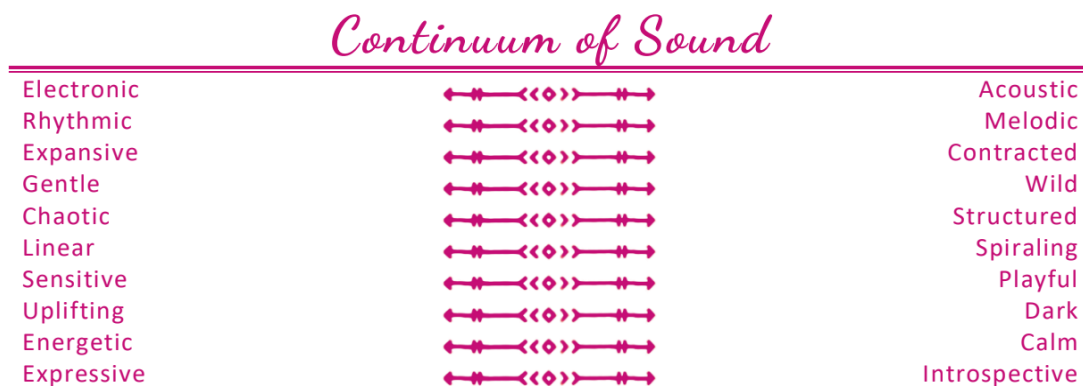
how we can physically feel sound and how to open our body as a resonant chamber. She herself learned this as she started to lose her hearing at the age of 8. Evelyn Glennie emphasizes that sound is never the same for any listener. Where we stand in space, the materials we are surrounded with, our height, these are just a few things that influence the way that the sound waves travel to our ears and body. DJ's and dance facilitators can play with this knowledge. Playing a soft, single sound, like a resonating string, or slowly building up layers of sound, can draw the dancers into a deeper listening. People can be invited by a movement facilitator to visit different spots in the space to L I S T E N.

LANGUAGE INHALE SILENCE TRANSFORM EXHALE NOW

Continuum of Sound

When we start listening with different ears, we will come to recognize many different qualities in the songs that we hear. It is important to develop a language for these qualities so we get more refined and precise in what we hear and look for. We made a 'Continuum of Sound' to help you with this.

Continuum of Sound

Electronic	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Acoustic
Rhythmic	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Melodic
Expansive	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Contracted
Gentle	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Wild
Chaotic	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Structured
Linear	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Spiraling
Sensitive	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Playful
Uplifting	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Dark
Energetic	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Calm
Expressive	←╫—‹‹◊›⟩—╫→	Introspective

Just like a forest is healthy when it has a rich biodiversity, so does the creation of a Dance journey ask diversity of sounds: from acoustic to electronic, from uplifting to dark, from expressive to introspective. This diversity of sounds creates a rich experience that appeals to a variety of dancers and emotional states. The challenge with all these sounds is that a DJ has to program and mix them in such a way that they form a coherent journey.

Listening is not only a personal experience. Once a musician or DJ plays in front of an audience, listening asks for an ever more broad perspective. Because in connection to others, we also become aware of how the song (connected to the entire sound journey) is being perceived by a larger group of people, a listening community.

Remembering Embodiment

Now take a moment to close your eyes, taking a few deep breaths. While inhaling, notice the air flowing into your nose. While exhaling, let yourself sink deeper into your body. You don't have to change anything—only notice. With every inhalation, you are bringing freshness into your body. Oxygen finds its way to every cell, making it one big celebration. Breathe into every cell. Cell-e breath. This is a miracle. Cell-e-breath. With every exhalation, you are breathing out carbon dioxide. You do not have to do anything, as it just happens naturally. Notice your breath. Simply notice.

Dance moves beyond what the eyes can see. It takes dancers inside out and outside in. It connects them to their body, breath, heart, truth and spirit. Dancing has many health benefits and brings dancers back to their tribal roots.

When you DJ, it's important to let the music move through your body in order to fully get to know a song. When you embody the music, chances are high that the dancers will feel the music as well. It also works the other way around: if you don't feel embodied, people will respond less. As a DJ, you're constantly tuning into the crowd and simultaneously following and leading them into the dance. The more space you can hold for yourself, the more space you can hold for others. An important advice to a beginning DJ is to find your own voice and your own embodiment practice. And don't forget: you are sharing your music with others, so enjoy the process of creation - alone together! It is a great practice to challenge yourself to do it differently at times, so you continue to grow into your own creative process.

Music can get people out of their heads and habits. To give a few examples: folk music can let dancers move more playfully and widely into the space, dubstep music can support dancers to connect to their sexual energy and funk can bring more swing in the hips... After you have built a level of trust, you can guide them out of their comfort zone and let them experience something new.

Mary Oliver, the American poet, beautifully says, "You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves." As an Ecstatic DJ, it is your intention to let people follow their own bodies. You want to guide them back into the deeper healing powers of dance. Play with vibrations, senses, elements, nature sounds - anything that resonates with the essence of the human body. As a DJ, you have a huge responsibility: standing in front of big groups of dancers, you show yourself in a fragile and vulnerable way, while at the same time reminding yourself it's not about you at all! During the (co)creation of the dance journey, it will be a constant practice of learning to use your presence, senses and state of emotions as a vessel for transformation.

Ask yourself what wants to be embodied in the space. If you see people staying stuck in their thinking (notice their eyes and body language), use more grounded music. If you see people moving as if they are tired, start with a gentle or ambient track (but not too gentle, you want them to stay awake), and then move into a more playful, instrumental tune. Don't force anything. Simply follow the dancers in their flow and guide them along. Music with a diversity of layers and vibrations can be a huge benefit—dancers get to decide in which layer they want to move. Also make sure to use music that creates space in the body.

Practice Deep Listening

Take time with your music. There is a difference between having music on in the background as some ear candy and listening with intention.

- What are the qualities of the song? How does it make you feel? Does it draw you in or out? Is it relaxing or energizing?
- How and where does the song impact your body? How do you move to it?
- What is the overall feel you get? Is there a development, a narrative in the music? What song would come next?
- Listen for particular sounds: what is in the foreground, what lives in the background of the track?
- What instruments can you distinguish? How do they play together?
- Can you hear if effects are applied to the song? Which ones?
- Where do you think the music is recorded? A big space, like a church, with reverb and echo, or in a bedroom?
- Are there sounds that harmonize in a pleasing way, or sounds that are dissonant. What does that do to you?

The Journey of Sound

To start with a popular Hippy slogan: *everything is vibration*. Cutting edge science now suggest that ultimately all matter is just vibrations of various underlying fields. We also know that when vibrating things come close, they tend to sync up or resonate, that is, they vibrate together at the same frequency. Shared vibrations create an easy flow of information and spontaneous self-organization. We are constantly surrounded by all kinds of vibrations, whether the drone of traffic, music playing or the energy emanating from a tree. All these vibrations influence our state: traffic can make us jittery, music can make us melancholic and a tree can make us peaceful. In this chapter we look more closer at what these vibrations actually entail, starting with the journey of sound from source to ear.

The journey starts with a sound source. The classic tuning fork is an example. When we hit the tuning fork, it starts to move in and out. This vibrating motion disturbs the surrounding air molecules. As the fork moves out, it pushes against nearby air molecules, causing them to compress. When the tines of the fork vibrate inward, the nearby air pressure decompresses (see the image below). This pattern of rising and falling pressure spreads outward like a wave, hence the term 'sound wave.'

Sound needs a medium to travel through, such as air, water, or a wooden box (sound cannot travel through a vacuum). When somebody hits a drum the soundwaves travel through the air, reaching the narrow ear channel, where they hit the eardrum which starts to vibrate. Three tiny bones attached to the eardrum amplify the vibrations, and send them to a spiral formed part of the inner ear, called the cochlea. The cochlea is filled with fluid and the sound vibrations make the fluid ripple, creating waves. Hairlike structures inside fluid ride the waves and move. These movements are then transduced into the electric-chemical signals that travel auditory nerves to our brain, which translate the signals into the experience of sound.

Good Vibrations

Sound vibrations can be described like a wave (there is no actual wave in the air, but a pattern of rising and falling of pressure). This wave has a frequency and amplitude which correspond to the pitch and loudness we experience.
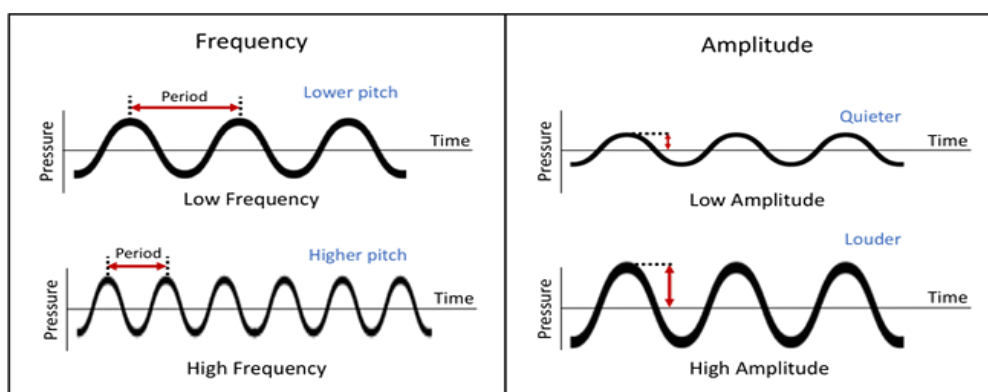
The pitch (frequency) of a sound is how high or low the sound is. Our human ears can pick up sounds between 20 and 20.000 Hz, although this diminishes with age (especially the higher tones). A musical sound has an overall loudness (amplitude), which is expressed in decibels. In general, any sound that is louder than 85dB (decibels) is capable of damaging your hearing. The sound of fireworks at 1 meter, or a gunshot, is about 140dB and it can result in hearing loss after one exposure. Other sounds like a vacuum or a lawnmower are about 90dB and only lead to serious hearing injuries after 8 hours of nonstop exposure. To measure the decibels you can use a professional decibel meter or an app, such as:

- For Apple devices: Decibel 10th, Decibel Meter Pro, dB Meter
- For Android devices: Sound Meter, Decibel Meter, Noise Meter

TIMBRE

Although a piano and a trumpet can play the same pitch, they will not sound the same. This has to do with the timbre, also known as tone color, tone quality, or texture. With each tone there will also be **overtones**. Different instruments emphasize the overtones differently. If the overtones were colors and the overtones of a middle C are blue, green, and yellow, then a piano and trumpet would use the same colors, but in different amounts. This phenomena is later explained in more detail, but the overtones of an instrument, give it its tone color, which can be described as 'bright', 'dark', 'dull', or 'piercing', and so on. Next to the overtones, the sound of an instrument is also determined by how that sound changes over time.

SOUND ENVELOPE

In sound and music, an envelope describes how a sound changes, gets louder and softer, over time. Each musical instrument has its own characteristic envelope, and this is partly how we recognize the instrument. The envelope can be described in 4 sections: Attack, Decay, Sustain, Release (ADSR).
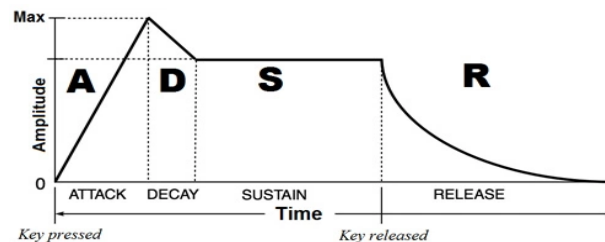
In the different DJ software programs, we see these different sections, and also the pitch and loudness, show up in the **waveforms**. The attack describes the time it takes from generating the sound to reaching its full amplitude (peak). The decay time tells how long it takes for the sound to drop from the initial peak to the sustain level, which is the level at which the sound more or less stabilizes (when you hold a note). The release finally, is the fade out, or the time it takes for the sound to return to silence. Below you see a Dubstep waveform with a kick drum and a snare. These punchy drum sounds have a typical short attack time, quick decay, short sustain, and quick release.
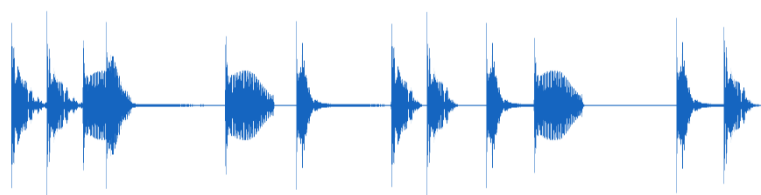

In comparison, string instruments, like the violin chords below, can have a much longer ADSR (can also be short when plucked).

The Loudness War

There was a war that raged from the 80's up until 2010. You might not have learned about this war, but you certainly heard it. We are talking about the **Loudness War.** When the large music studios switched to digital recording, producers had new powers at their disposal for editing music (**mastering**). Before, producers were limited in how loud they could make the music, as loudness meant bigger grooves in the record that could literally make the needle jump off. With digital recording this limitation was gone, and producers started to make their tracks louder. They used techniques to make the softer parts of a song louder and the louder parts softer, creating a uniform loud track. The entertainment studios thought louder is better (and sells more). Initially, this seemed to work as loud songs grabbed the attention more than softer ones. However, soon everybody made their tracks louder and louder.
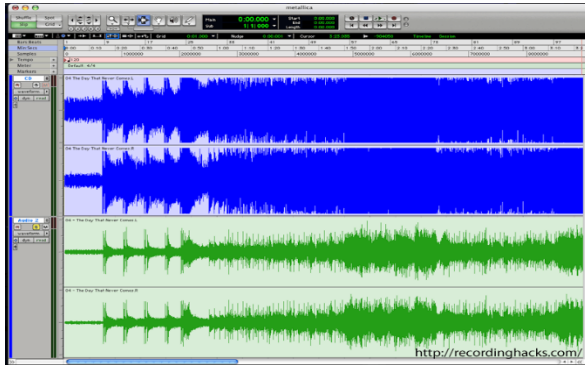
The blue waveform shows what happens if you put every sound in overdrive: the song turns into a muddied wall of sound at the expense of the subtleties (like an instrument's timbre) and the 'punch' in the music. Turning the volume down does not help as the whole dynamic range is gone.

The loudness war reached its climax with Metallica's Death Magnetic album, which apparently is the loudest album ever. Thankfully, an unexpected hero appeared to save the day: *Guitar Hero*. The guitar computer game had players play along with a song as well as they could. Metallica's guitar riffs were a popular challenge. However, with the maximized loudness (blue waveform), the songs were unsuitable for the game. Guitar Hero therefore remastered Metallica's songs, like the one above, resulting in the green waveform with much more dynamic range. Fans liked this version much better than the original one released on CD.

The loudness war is perhaps representative of the superficial and quick-fix tendencies of our western culture. The extreme loudness *desensitized* listeners and dancers alike. Dancers were forcefully pushed into motion by a wall of sound. The lack of dynamic range in the music is also likely to diminish the *internal* dynamic range of the dancers. In other words, dancers will only move along with the big, loud, and provoked feelings - often the superficial ones - and not explore the more subtle and softer voices inside. Once a dance crowd gets accustomed to this, they will ask for more and more. Making the switch to more dynamic music hard, because dancers are now used to being pushed into action. It will feel strange and uncomfortable for them to move with the quieter inner voices that ask more awareness and active embodiment. You can see this happening on the ecstatic dance floor when new dancers, with a clubbing background, come in and sit on the side, only to dance when the music peaks.

Be aware of tracks that are mastered to loudness, which will look like the blue one above, and use them wisely and sparsely.

Cymatics: Music Made Visible

Cymatics is the study of 'sound and vibration made visible'. This is typically done by putting salt on the surface of a vibrating plate, or by pouring a liquid on the membrane of turned speaker. The vibrations of the sound create all kinds of patterns in the material. Although science has a solid understanding of the properties and mechanics of sound, it is still developing ways to understand how sound affects us and how sound might even play a part in the creation of life. Cymatics shows how certain frequencies create patterns and geometric shapes that we also see in nature. Although cymatics is still a young field, we see that sound

has form and that it does shape matter into intricate patterns. Seeing these patterns emerge makes one wonder how sound and music affect the body on a cellular level. Below are some keys of the piano.
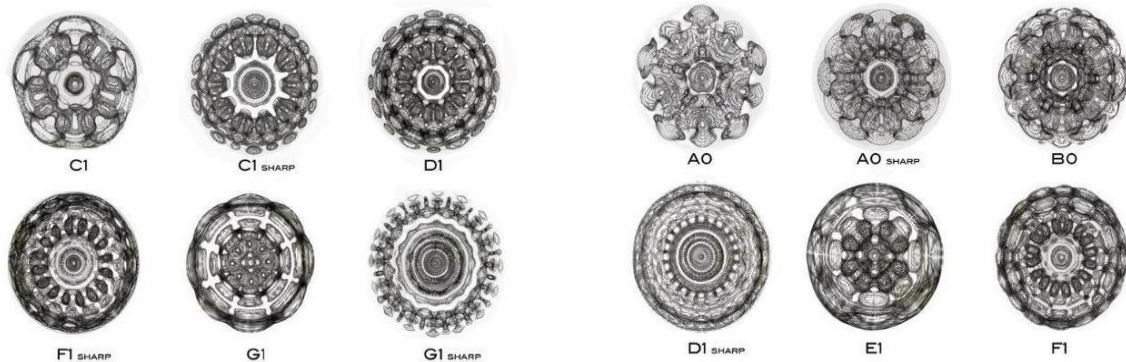

The Colors of Noise

Noise generally refers to any unwanted sound. **White Noise,** however, is the sound you get when you play all the different frequencies together in equal intensity. It sounds a bit like a constant downpour of rain. White noise is also used to concentrate better or fall asleep as it can drown out environmental noise. Oddly, white noise sounds higher pitched than expected from playing all frequencies together. This is because our hearing is more sensitive to sounds in the higher spectrum. **Pink Noise** compensates our selective sensitivity by boosting the lower range, and **Brown Noise** does that even stronger.

Natural varieties of White Noise, such as waves rolling in, a waterfall, sounds of a forest, can have a very soothing effect in a set (as a beginning, end, or even in between). Some types of music are also more 'White-Noise-like' and can be used for the same effect. Music like Gregorian Chants, or singing bowls, etc.

Music Theory

How Music Moves Us
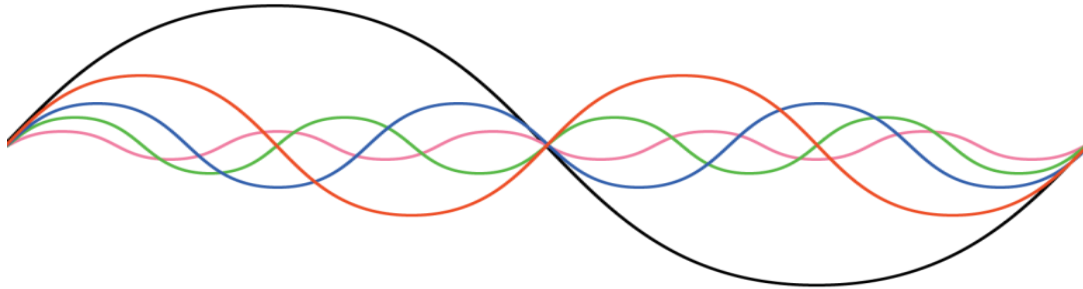
In the beginning there was silence and emptiness... Out of this silence the entire universe burst into being with a Big Bang. It was the first movement of a cosmic symphony. The idea that music is deeply intertwined with the workings of the universe has long fascinated mystics, philosophers, and scholars. The syllable *Om* from the Indian religions is associated with the concept of cosmic creation. By chanting Om, it is believed, we celebrate the creative powers of the universe. In ancient Greece, music was seen as a form of science. Pythagoras, for example, believed that the planets rang out notes based on their orbit and distance to each other. He used math to analyze music and discovered that harmonious and dissonant sounds were caused by different ratio's. His work from the 6th century BC has been crucial for many composers over the ages, and led directly to the Camelot Wheel (circle of fifths) that we use for harmonic mixing,

Composing a song requires in depth knowledge of how music works. As a listener this knowledge is not needed in order to enjoy the song. But, what about a DJ? Is a DJ more like a listener or a musician? Although this differs from one DJ to the next, some basic music knowledge can really help to understand how music is able to tell a story and why, for example, some tracks mix well together while others do not. In this chapter, we will go into some of the basics of music and learn how music moves us.

Harmonics: The Keystone for music

Melodies, chords, scales, and keys would all not be possible without harmonics. To explain harmonics, we can look at a piano. When you press a piano key, like a middle C, a hammer hits a string that vibrates at a frequency of 261.63 Hz. But there is more: the string will at the same time also vibrate at other higher frequencies. It is just like light is made up by a spectrum of colors. The lowest and loudest frequency, in this case the middle C, will be the base tone, or *fundamental*. The higher frequencies are known as the *overtones*. it does not just vibrate at one frequency. It also vibrates at higher frequencies. This is a keystone for music.

If we hit a key of the piano, it will not look like a perfect sinus, but as the red line we see in the figure of the right. This is because the string vibrates at different frequencies at the same time. The green line shows the lowest and loudest frequency, the **fundamental**. The overtones are multiples of the fundamental with whole numbers. So two times as fast we get a C an octave higher, 3 times as fast we get a G, and so on.

The overtones are important because they determine which sounds will go well together – the overtones of a C, include a G and an E, which is why these 3 notes form the major triad **Chord** of C. The 5 notes that make up the **pentatonic scale** are also found in the natural harmonics. On a piano the black keys are pentatonic. The pentatonic scale is found in music all over the world: Indian classical music, Peruvian cumbia, West African music, Celtic folk music, Chinese music, and so on. Even a 40.000 year old flute found in Southern Germany had a
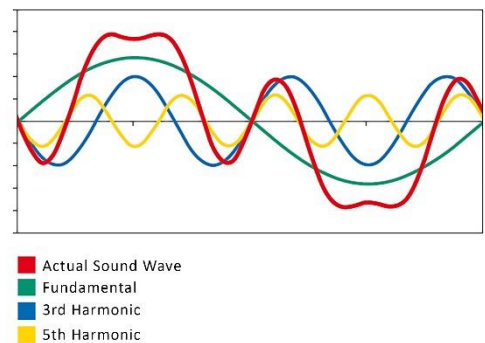
pentatonic scale. Also western pop music makes use of the pentatonic scale, especially in melodies and guitar riffs.

Different instruments emphasize the overtones differently, creating the timbre we learned about before. Instruments that stress the upper harmonics make the sound 'bright' or 'piercing'. If the lower harmonics become dominant, the sound is 'darker' or 'duller'.

Notes & Scales

Music is made up of notes. Notes are sounds with a certain duration and pitch. The duration is described by different note symbols. ♩ is a quarter note, for example, and ♪ is a 8th note. In common time (see below), this means that ♩ is one beat and ♪ is half a beat.

Most western music is tuned to an A with a pitch of 440 Hz. This choice is a cultural convention. Throughout history and in various parts of the world, different pitches have been used. At the end of the chapter, we will look at 440 Hz vs 432 Hz as examples of using a different pitch to tune the note to.

More than the pitch of a note, it is the relation with other notes that determine how we hear that note. It is a bit like words in a sentence (i.e. dog bites cat vs cat bites dog). A musical scale is then like the grammar: it tells us how notes are ordered in a sequence. Instead of talking about notes, we can also give a note a syllable (Solfege): *do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do…*. On this scale, we start with the *do* note and follow a sequence of intervals until the return to the *do*, or root note again. Now we can repeat this cycle with the same root note an octave higher. Can you hear the sound of music? Oh, let's see if I can make it easy:

Do, a deer, a female deer

Re, a drop of golden sun

Mi, a name, I call myself

Fa, a long, long way to run

So, a needle pulling thread

La, a note to follow So

Ti, a drink with jam and bread

That will bring us back to Do, oh, oh, oh

In the sequence the distance between the notes is not equal. It is tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone… You can see this on the piano. Each move to a neighboring key, whether white or black, is a half-step or semitone. Below you can see that there is no black key between C & D, and E & F, meaning the distance is a semitone. This specific order of steps and half-steps is called the 'major scale'. In the picture below, it starts with C. However, we could use this same sequence (major scale) with another note, for example a G. It will then be named G Major, or a major scale in the key of G.
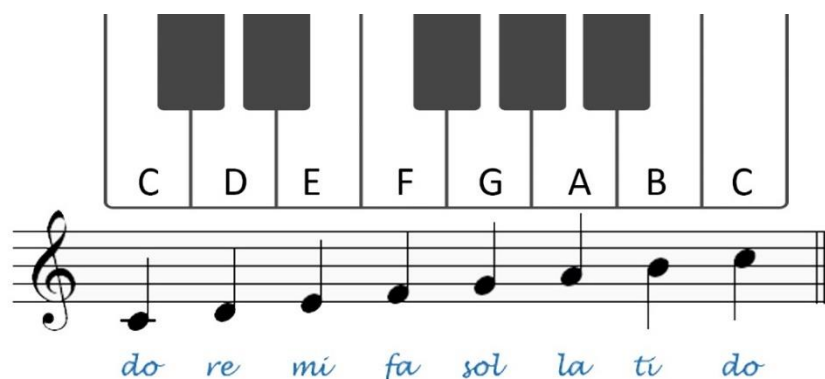
Besides the major scale, there are other scales with other sequences, like the minor scale. The A Minor scale, for example, uses the exact same notes as the C Major scale, and is shown below:
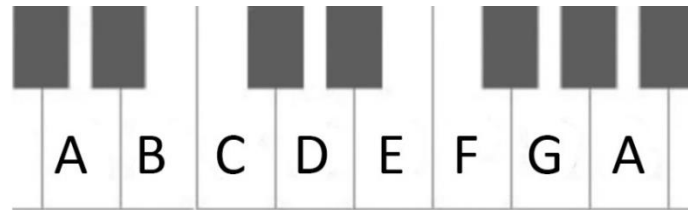
Just like the word order of a sentence ('dog bites cat'), taking the A as the root note changes the order of tones and semitones, resulting in a different feel.

For DJing this also means that some scales can be easily mixed, like the C Major and A Minor, as they use the same notes, while others cannot. We will come back to this when we discuss the Circle of Fifths.

Composers use the language of music to move us. Songs can make us cry, lift us up, or help us relax. How do composers do that? Below are some of the key ingredients that give a track its feel and energy: tonality, key, melody, harmony, tempo, and rhythm.

Tonality

Music is organized sounds. As we saw, a scale is a way to organize notes in different intervals (series of tones and semitones). These different intervals have distinct melodic and harmonic characteristics. Another way of putting this, is that scales give color to the song which can go from bright to dark. The most common scales are the **major and minor scale**. The major scale is a bright scale. 'Let it Be' by the Beatles is an example of a song in this scale (C Major). The minor scale is more dark. Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' is in this scale (F Minor). Besides scales, you can also come across *modes* which are variations on a scale, which we will not cover further here.

Perhaps you noticed that the Beatle song was described as a **C** major. This **C** is the central **key** or **tonic** around which the song is organized. Almost all music nowadays is tonal, with a central key that determines which group of notes a composer can use. In the case of C Major, the notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, B (all the white keys). The song can also be transposed to a E Major, if follow the same steps and half-steps that make up the major scale then we arrive at the following notes: E, F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#. Now we see a lot of sharps (#), which are the black keys on the piano. Will it make a lot of difference whether we play 'Let it Be' in the key of C or in the key of E?

Where the scale can make a song more dark or bright, the key is thought to add an emotional layer. Before the 20th century (and before equal temperament) composers had whole lists of keys and their associated emotions. The key of C Major, for example, was thought to be about innocence, whereas the key of F Minor was associated with 'a longing for the grave' and reserved for funeral music. We just saw that 'Let it Be' and 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' were respectively in the key of C Major and F Minor, which seems to confirm the descriptions of the keys. However, 'Rock 'n' Roll Suicide' by David Bowie is also in C Major, which is far from a happy, innocent song. Meanwhile Britney Spears' I'm a Slave 4U', written in F Minor, is not a song you would likely play at a funeral.

The key does influence the mood of the song, but it is not so straight forward. The brightness of the major scale can be experienced in many ways: as happy, exciting, outward, but also as hard, victorious, and furious. The dark minor scale can be experienced as sad, depressive, tender, seductive, or inward. In part we culturally learn to associate keys with emotions through the music we hear. And it is also depended
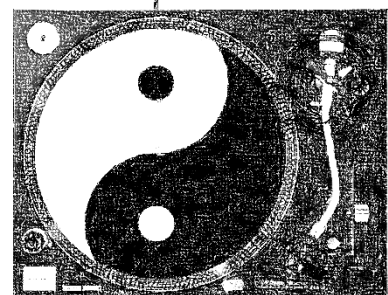
on the other elements of a song, like tempo and melody. As DJs we can play with this Yin and Yang of music. If people are very inward on the dancefloor, changing to a major key can be a subtle way to bring people outward (or the other way around).

You can experiment yourself, by listening to music in different keys and notice the diverse qualities of each key in your own body. And of course, DJing implies the importance of the whole journey - so when and where you decide to play a specific song, and how the entire journey is being built, also makes a difference in how the song will be perceived by the dancing crowd in that moment. DJ software will tell you what the key or tonic of a song is, so you can mix songs with a similar sound and feel.

– Music is organized sounds –

TRAVELING WITH TONALITY

Every major and minor scale has seven notes, and a chord can be built on each of the seven notes. Composers mostly use chords, instead of single notes, to set the tonic. Typically, a song starts and ends with the central key, giving it a feeling of leaving and returning home. Different **chord progressions** then tell a story: moving away from home (travel), creating tension by moving away from the tonic and the desire to return home by moving towards the tonic. Some songs can be sad, but with a happy ending by returning to the tonic. While others, build up tension, but do not arrive at a resolution, making them sad or eerie.

MELODY AND HARMONY

Melody is the most recognizable part of a song. Technically, they are a series of notes organized in a rhythm, which form the catchy choruses or riff that capture our attention. When we speak, our sentences have intonation and rhythm. It is thought that this is the same structures in our brain as when we hear melody. If the melody is like the sentences we speak, harmony offers us more tools to tell a story.

Harmony happens when two or more notes with a different pitch are played together. Some pitches sound very pleasing, and are said to be consonant, while other combinations are dissonant (see the Harmonics earlier this chapter). Chords are notes played together that sound consonant.

Circle of Fifths

We already saw that the C Major and A Minor scale go well together because they use the same notes. Which other keys and scales go well together? To answer this question, we have to return to the harmonics. We discussed how a vibrating string has a ground tone, or fundamental, and overtones. The overtone that sounds most harmonic with the fundamental is the one that goes twice as fast: this is the same note only an octave higher. Playing both notes together is known as *unison*. The next combination that sounds most pleasant, or consonant, is when the overtone goes 3 times as fast. This time we get a different note, namely the 5th note of a scale. This 5th note (or chord) is also called the dominant or perfect fifth, because it blends so well with the tonic. In the scale of C Major, we can see on our piano diagram that the 5th is a G Major. This means a song in C Major can be mixed harmonically with a G Major.

The circle of fifths is a visual tool that helps you find the 5ths of each key for both the major and the minor keys. It was developed by the composer Nikolay Diletsky around 1670. In the outer ring we find the major keys. Going in clockwise fashion, we indeed see the C major is followed by the G major. The inner ring shows the minor keys. Directly below the C Major lies the A minor key (same notes, but in a different order). By going counterclockwise, we get the **Circle of Fourths**. The fourth harmonic is the overtone that vibrates at four times the frequency of the fundamental, and also combines well with the tonic, or central key. Later we will see a simplified version of the circle of fifths, called the Camelot Wheel, that is used in DJ programs.
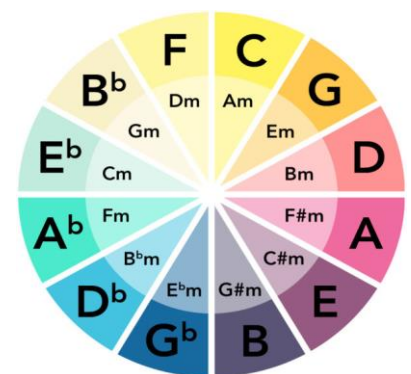
Tempo and the First Beat

Tempo also influences how we experience the emotionality of a song. Generally, a faster tempo is associated with excitement, joy, and anger, while a slower pace can bring feelings of relaxation or sadness. This is also why we say we feel 'upbeat' when we are happy. Tempo and emotion are connected because our heartbeat wants to sync with the music: faster music will make our heartbeat go faster and the other way around. **Beats per Minute** (or BPM) identifies the song's tempo by giving the number of beats during one minute of a song. Just to give you an idea of BPM, here is a list of the average ranges for some common genres:

- **AMBIENT**: 60-80 bpm
- **DUB/REGGAE**: 60-90 bpm
- **HIP HOP**: 60-100 BPM
- **DOWNTEMPO/CHILLOUT**: 90-120 bpm
- **DEEP HOUSE**: 120-125 bpm
- **HOUSE**: 120-130 bpm
- **TRANCE**: 130-135 bpm
- **DUBSTEP**: 130-145 bpm
- **TECHNO**: 130-150 bpm
- **DRUM AND BASS**: 165-185 bpm

Our first experience of a beat is actually in the womb. There, we are in the constant presence our mother's heartbeat. Our own heart starts beating around 5 weeks and is one of the first organs to develop. Research suggests that babies can sync their heartbeat with their mother, if she breaths rhythmically. Even though we might not 'remember' our time in the womb, we take this bodily memory with us throughout our lives.

As an adult, our resting heart rate is somewhere between 60 and 100 beats per minute (BPM). It is not a coincidence that a lot of music falls within this BPM range, such as Rock, R&B, Hip-hop, and Reggae. However, by looking at the most played Spotify songs, we learn that most people prefer a song with a BPM between 120-130. This corresponds with our heart rate while walking at an average speed. A lot of Dance / House music falls in this genre, but also a Tango. A baby's fetal heartbeat ranges from 110 to 160 BPM. So perhaps this tempo also brings us back in the oceanic experience of the womb. This knowledge can be of inspiration while DJing. Music influences our heartbeat. Different BPM ranges relate to different heart rate zones, energy systems (long term aerobic / short term anaerobic / immediate ATP-CP) and different types of movement. The figure below summarizes this.

This ability of music, and specific the tempo, to influence the heart is significant. Research by the HeartMath Institute shows that the heart is much more than a pump for blood circulation, it is also another 'brain', (the '*heart brain*'). This heart brain is sending more information to the brain than the other way around. Research shows that changes in heart activity, strongly influence our cognitive and emotional state. Just placing our hand over the area of our heart changes the brain waves! The heart is also the body's most powerful generator of electromagnetic energy, creating a field around you that can influence other people's heart rate and with that their psychospiritual state. Perhaps this field also plays a role in the ease with which people can get in tune with each other on the dance floor.

As a DJ, you are constantly working the emotional energy on the dance floor. Sometimes, dancers are very playful. At other times, there's a lot of tension in the room or the full moon fills the dancers with warm-blooded energy. Your own feelings also add up to the mix. As we just saw, your music choices will affect the room in many ways.
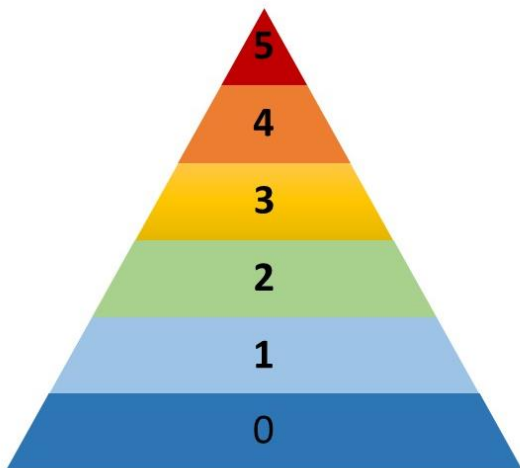
MAX ❤ RATE ≈ 220 - AGE

5 PUSHING TO THE MAX | 90-100% MAX ❤ RATE
Pushing to your limits. A peak moment.

4 HOT & INTENSE | 80-90% MAX ❤ RATE
Going all out on the dance floor. High-Energy music.

3 PICKING UP THE PACE | 70-80% MAX ❤ RATE
Working up a sweat. The beat kicks in.

2 LIGHT MOVES | 60-70% MAX ❤ RATE
Get into the groove. Soft flow.

1 SLOW MOVES | 50-60% MAX ❤ RATE
Active Recovery. Slow, gentle movements on pleasing melodies.

0 RESTING | 0-50% MAX ❤ RATE
Rest & digest. Sitting or lying. Meditative music that brings you inward.

Rhythm & The Beat

Rhythm is all around us. From our beating hearts, to the tides of the sea, to how we walk. Rhythm has to do with events that repeat over time. It is good to distinguish **the beat** or **pulse** from (musical) rhythm. With the beat we mean the steady pulse that you feel in the music. When you tap your feet, while listening music, it is probably tapping to the beat. Rhythm is created when we play with that steady pulse by putting the emphasis on one or more beats. This can be done, for example, by giving one beat a different sound (kick and a snare) or by making it longer. These accents on different beats can create:

- **Downbeat** is the strong first beat, while the **upbeat** is the weaker last beat: **1** 2 3 4 **| 1** 2 3 4. Confusingly, other people name the all the numbers downbeats and the space in between upbeats: **1** *and* **2** *and* **3** *and* **4** *and.* The 'and' is in this case the upbeat.
- **Backbeat**: stressing the 2nd and 4th beat in a 4-beat measure. **1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4**. The **1** and **3** are also called the **on-beat** and the **2** and **4** the **offbeat**.

TIME SIGNATURE

Counting the beat is one of the most important skills of a DJ. We need to know where the downbeat (the 1) is and how many beats are in a musical phrase or bar, so we can mix tracks properly. The time signature tells you how the music is to be counted. The time signature is written at the beginning of the staff after the clef and key signature. It consist of two numbers written like a fraction. The top number tells

Number of beats per measure.

Determines the *type* of note that gets the beat.

you how many beats to count. This could be any number. Most often the number of beats will fall between 2 and 12. The bottom number tells you what kind of note to count. These can be quarter notes, eighth notes, or sixteenth notes.
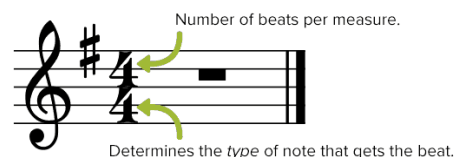
COMMON TIME

The most common time signature is 4/4 or common time. As the numbers point out, there are four beats to every measure, which should be counted as quarter notes. The Blues, Rock and Roll, Pop, Disco, Dance are almost always in common time, so 1 2 3 4 | 1 2 3 4. Still, you will every now and then encounter songs with different time signatures, like a Waltz (3/4): 1 2 3 | 1 2 3.

Healing Frequencies? 432 Hz vs 440 Hz

Instruments need to be tuned to, well… be in tune together. Back in the days musicians did this each time they played together. However, since the 18th century Western music began to use a standardized pitch, the note A4 (A above middle C). For a while the A4 ranged anywhere from 390 Hz to 480 Hz, depending on the region, orchestra, or tuning fork manufacturer. From 1939 onwards 440 Hz became the standard for western music. This was not without controversy. Some musicians and composers argued for a standard of 432 Hz, a tiny fraction lower than the 440 Hz.

The 440 Hz vs 432 Hz controversy has given rise to some heated debates and there is a very deep rabbit hole you can dive into when researching this topic. The 432 Hz proponents argue that it gives a more natural sound, that is, more in tune with the natural world. Some even say it has healing properties (healing DNA, etc). According to the 432 Hz proponents, 440 Hz causes disharmony, activates the rational left halve of the brain, which some claim is the basis of a worldwide conspiracy to control minds. On the other side, people claim that 432 Hz, like 440 Hz, is an arbitrary number. They say our brains and listening adapts to the frequency that is offered. That it is all relative is evidenced, according to this group, by the fact that there was no single preferred tuning before the standardization. Most music nowadays is tuned to the standard 440 Hz, apart from specific meditation music. Converting all your music to 432 Hz is quite a task. You can use an audio converter as Audacity, online programs, or buy a specialized program.

Music and Culture

While music is universal, there is not really such a thing as 'universal music'. As we saw, the pentatonic scale comes close to a universal, but different cultures use the same underlying principles to create very different types of music. It is a bit like food: Sushi, Nasi Goreng, Risotto, Paella, Jollof, Tahdig, Biryani, are all made of the same basic ingredient, rice, but taste very differently. Cultures take different ratios (notes) and favor them and create musical instruments that are tuned to them. The Indonesian Pelog scale and Gamelan music is an example. What is pleasant to one culture might not please the ear of a person from another culture. We are now so accustomed, for example, to 4/4 time, that other time signatures might sound very strange to our ears - like the Bulgarian dance rhythms with uneven signatures like 5/16, 7/16, 9/16, 11/16. However, the longer we listen to other music, the more we get used to it. Again, like food, it sometimes is an acquired taste. Even though a lot of non-western music is heard on the Ecstatic and Conscious dance floor, we have mainly highlighted the western musical system for reasons of simplicity.

We do, however, encourage you to find out more about other musical systems, and to enlarge your music vocabulary.

Managing Your Music

When creating a Dance Journey in front of eager dancers, you rely on your music library to find those gems that get the people moving. However, how do you find that one track between the thousands of tracks in your collection?

Collecting Music

A crucial part of being a DJ is building a music collection. Although it is now possible to use streaming services while DJing, this still requires an internet connection in most cases. Owning your own music is still a safe bet. Although, **be sure to make regular backups of your music!** We sadly write here from experience. If your laptop breaks down beyond repair, gets stolen, or you accidently delete (part of) your library, you lose years of work. Also make sure to back up the playlists you created. You can safe your music on an external hard drive or online, but either way: <u>back it up</u>.

Digitized music makes building a big collection easy in comparison to buying records at the store. However, owning a lot of music does not mean you know all the music. For the song to call out to you during a set, you need to know it intimately, and this requires hours of listening. Perhaps the Pareto principle also applies to music: we use 20% of our music collection 80% of the time. Knowing this, it also helps to sanitize your library regularly and delete those songs that you never play, that have low bpm's or that you no longer like.
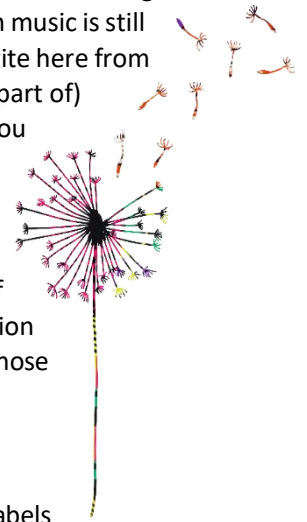
Owning music - The Big Record Labels

There are the 'Big Three' labels in the music industry, which are basically the major record labels who represent the majority of the music industry. The Big Three record labels are: Sony BMG, Universal Music Group and Warner Music Group. The Big Three control the vast majority of the music market, accounting for 75% of the total sales of recorded music in the world. Because of these market shares, these companies also have a big influence on streaming services, like Spotify. This market monopoly often does not contribute to the creativity of the music industry. Ultimately, these labels want to create profit for their shareholders and push for music that sells. The loudness war is one of these consequences, another is that pop music has gotten more homogenous, using more of the same instruments (keyboard & drum computer), similar chord schemes, more repetition, and filled with attention grabbers like hooks and a punchy bass. Hip Hop is another example. Originally, it gave marginalized communities voice and agency, but once it became popular, the music industry started pushing for a certain type of Hip Hop in the 90's. Critical and conscious rappers were neglected in favor of 'gansta' rap with its glorification of violence. An anonymous letter by a someone who claimed to be an insider went public. This letter reported about a meeting where the music industry and prison-industrial complex, having the same shareholders, decided to push for violent music in order to keep the prisons for profit full.

In an attempt to gain control over their works and careers, more and more artists sign up with independent labels or opt to self-publish. As a hopeful trend, tens of thousands of independent labels globally, have now found a home in Merlin, a trade body for independent record labels. Merlin can make good deals with digital music services, from which all benefit. Independent labels now have the collective strength in numbers to compete with the large major labels, and are getting a bigger piece of the pie every year. We encourage buying music from places that support the artists maximally. Below is an overview.

Finding and Buying Music

Think back to a time where there was no digitized music and streaming services. DJs spend hours and hours in record stores hunting for new music. We now have algorithms suggesting new music for us in our 'Discover Weekly' (Spotify). These suggestions are a great way to discover new music, but we also have to be aware that the algorithms are probably influenced by the major players of the music industry. In any case, it helps to have several sources for music and to hunt for that is not similar to the music you already listen to. So where to find those fresh new tracks?

STREAMING SERVICES

Streaming music has quickly taken over the way we consume and listen to music. We now have access to millions of songs. Spotify claims to have 82 million tracks alone. If you would listen to music 24 hours a day, you need to live up to 500 years to hear it all. As mentioned, streaming services have algorithms that help you navigate this overload of choice.
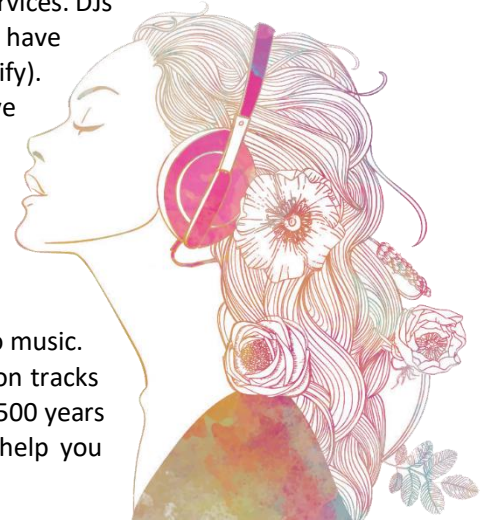
- **SPOTIFY** is currently the most popular streaming service and a very convenient way to find music – it has easy search functions, suggestions for playlists and similar artists, discover weekly, and so on. Audio quality on the highest settings is MP3 320kbps. Unfortunately, Spotify is no longer supported by DJ software. And ff the mentioned streaming services, Spotify pays the least to its artists.

- **TIDAL** is another streaming service that has a lot going for it. It has a huge collection and streams HiFi audio (1411kbps) and even has an option for 'master' quality (up to 9216 kbps). From all the streaming services Tidal pays most to the artists and now also experiments with direct artist payout. Tidal can also be integrated with Serato DJ and Virutal DJ.

- Other streaming services with comparable features are: **APPLE MUSIC, AMAZON MUSIC, DEEZER, QOBUZ, YOUTUBE.**

- **SOUNDCLOUD** is a music sharing website that enables its users to upload, promote, and share audio. Here you can find remixes and less mainstream music. **MIXCLOUD** is comparable to Soundcloud and is a place where a lot of Ecstatic DJs will put their sets and remixes.

ONLINE MUSIC STORES

While streaming services let you listen to music, you do not own the music. Here are some online stores where you can buy music.

- **BANDCAMP**. Bandcamp is an online record store and platform where artists can create their own online store. This makes it accessible for small and beginning artists to create a fan base and share music with the world. Bandcamp is therefore also a great place to find new and edgy music, which you can download in lossless quality. Bandcamp is good to its artists and pays about 82% of the revenue directly to the artist.
- **BEATPORT** is the largest online store for dance music, selling songs as well as resources that can be used for remixes. Beatport has an advanced search engine. If you wish to buy songs in WAV quality, this is one of your places to go to – although the prices for download are a bit higher than on other websites. Artists get about 50% of the profit of a sale.
- **ITUNES**. The iTunes store is another place to buy music. Compared to others services, the audio quality and options are limited to the AAC format, with 256 kbps encoding. Itunes is also a convenient media player that allows you to manage your library, make playlists, and so on. Itunes playlists can be integrated with all DJ programs. Itunes is horrible to artists and pays out less than 10% of its sales.
- **RECORD POOLS**. There are many record (or music) pools online such as BPM Supreme. A DJ record pool is a vast and fast library of promotional music that DJ's can use for everything from club gigs to radio shows. Instead of buying tracks individually, you pay a monthly (or yearly) subscription that allows you to download and use the tracks.

- **EXCHANGE**: In order to discover new music, it can be very interesting to exchange specific music or share playlists with other DJ's or dance facilitators.
- **PAY ATTENTION WHEN YOU**… walk into a store; wait at a bus or train station; eat in a restaurant or at your friend's house; listen to your favorite radio station; dance in a club or attend a workshop. Music is everywhere, you simply have to keep your ears open! **SHAZAM** is a great app to identify music playing in public. However.. Please do not Shazam while at a dance. Mobile phones distract and many DJs want a choice in whether they share their music or not. Just ask the DJ at the end for the song.

Organizing Your Music Library

A first step is to organize your favorite music by creating playlists in your DJ software or a music library program like iTunes. We recommend doing the first as things will not be lost in translation and you get to spend more time within the DJ program. Another advantage is that when you import new tracks into your DJ software's library, the DJ software can analyze the songs. In some programs this happens automatically, and in some you have to give the command. This analysis includes the tempo (BPM), the volume level and the key to each song. The library in your DJ software will then display this information in the columns, next to the name of the track, artist, etc.

CREATING PLAYLISTS

Everybody has their own way of remembering music. When organizing your library, make sure to find an easy and accessible way to structure your folders. They should fit your own memory and intuition, so you find the songs that are wanting to be played during your set. Here are some suggestions for how to categorize playlists:

- **HISTORY**: name, date, location of a specific event, like 20220603 ED Amsterdam
- **HISTORY**: month and year (for instance your favorites of that month)
- **MUSICAL GENRE**: from classic to future house..
- **SPECIFIC QUALITY OF THE TRACKS**: qualities tell you where to place a track in the dance journey. Using the names of the 5Rhythms or the story structure for your playlist is one way: Flowing / Openings; Staccato / Build up; Chaos / Climax; Lyrical / Upbeat; Stillness or Sacred.

USING THE COLUMNS

DJ software comes with a wide variety of columns that you can use to sort and organize your library: artist, album, bpm, bitrate, comments, composer, date added, genre, key, length, … When you click on a column in your DJ program, it will automatically order the library according to the column tag. You can use this as an alternative to creating a playlist. The tag 'genre' can be used in this way to find tracks in a certain genre. You can also order this tag, in this case the genre, on a second tag, like bpm. This helps you to narrow down the tracks even more that are suitable for the mix. In Serato you can do this second ordering by holding the Ctrl key and pressing on the second column.

Another great method to use the tags columns is the **STARS RATING**:

★ for beginning and ending songs

★★ for the build-up and slow-down

★★★ for the explosive dancing songs

★★★★ for the special songs and 'ice breakers'

★★★★★ for the heart and medicine songs

The stars can be added to a column that you do not use, like 'composer'. Again pressing the relevant column will then order your library on the stars, which you can then order a second time with a different tag like bpm or key. An alternative to the star system is the **ENERGY LEVEL**. Here, you give all your tracks an energy

rating of one to five: @1, @2, @3, @4, @5, where rating 1 is warm-up and rating 5 is the most energetic, banging tracks you have.

Unneeded columns can also be used to add extra information about the track, such as: *flow, piano, tempo change.* When adding more words, you cannot use the column to order tracks. In this case you cannot select the second word 'piano', because the program will order on alphabetical order. Instead, you can use the search bar and type in 'piano'. The disadvantage is that you now get all your tracks that mention piano somewhere in a description. To solve this problem, DJ Ean Golden advises to use the hashtag # when adding this extra information. Below is an example:

Awaken	5:24	Auditory Canvas	★★☆☆☆	#gentlebeat #build-up #instrumental #b…	Electronic
Zora (feat. Lisa Morgenstern) •••	3:52	Aukai	★★☆☆☆	#instrumental #heart #voice #feminine #…	Ambient acoustic
Su La (feat. Anbuley)	6:15	Auntie Flo	★★☆☆☆	#dance #build-up #voice #feminine #beat	Electronic
Running with the Wolves (Pablo Nouvelle Remix)	3:50	AURORA	★★☆☆☆	#build-up #voices #feminine #build-up #…	Pop
After Time feat. Quark (Original Mix)	5:58	Author	★★☆☆☆	#piano #build-up #beat #voice #silencei…	Piano beat
Bad Karma	6:56	Axel Thesleff	★★☆☆☆	#beat #dance #dub #flow #heart	Electronic

If you now type '#piano' in the search bar, you will only get the tracks that have #piano in the column. DJ Golden also uses this # method to create so-called **'vignettes'** - which are a cluster of 3 to 4 songs which go well together. This method works especially for songs that are difficult to mix. You do this by adding a unique code in the column with this cluster of tracks, like #rtx. If you now play one of these songs, you can find the others easily by typing #rtx in the search bar.

In the Traktor and Serato DJ software, you can also choose to **add colors** to every song (also referred to as 'color coding'), this can also help you to find songs more easily. Since every DJ will make a different choice in this, we give you an example of how to cluster your songs in different colors (here the chakra system):

Magenta for medicine or mantra songs

Violet for dreamy, ambient songs

Blue for songs with strong lyrics and spoken word

Green for heart songs

Yellow for tribal and warrior songs

Orange for songs with sensual or sexual energy

Red for grounding, earth songs

OTHER WAYS TO SEARCH & ORDER

For those who are very visual, you can also upload a COVER PHOTO in your DJ program. This, however, takes up a lot of screen.

SEARCH IN PLAYLISTS. In Traktor, you can also easily find tracks again that you have played in earlier sets. After playing a set, it is simply a matter of going into the *archive* > *finding the playlist* of the music you just played and *saving the set* to your collection. You can give it the name of the event plus add the date. Every time you play a song that you have played before, you can now *right click* > and then click 'Search in Playlists'.

SMART CRATES. Serato allows you to create so-called smart crates. A smart crate is a 'smart' folder. First you use the different column tags to tell the folder which tracks to add. You can choose a certain bpm range, dates, genre, etc. The smart crate then searches your library for the tracks that fit the description. The great thing is that the smart crate will update itself.

Let's get Physical

The Basics and Techniques of DJing

When you first start DJing, you might become a bit overwhelmed by all the knobs and switches, but this will get easier with time and practice. DJ software is virtual representation of an old-skool DJ set up.

Take a moment to look at the screenshot of Traktor Pro. What do you see? First focus on the lower halve. Here we see the library with the playlists and all the columns. Now study the top halve. Here you see 2 different decks: Deck A and Deck B. In the middle, separating the decks, is the mixer with the channel faders, EQ, Gain, Cue, Filter, and crossfader. As you can see, each deck has its own dedicated buttons. Looking at deck A, we find the play button, the cue points, looping buttons. Finally, above the deck is the FX section.

Mixing on the One

After selecting the right tracks for the moment, the next task for a DJ is to create a transition between the tracks. There are many different ways to mix and weave your songs together. For mixing it is useful to look at the (song) structure of the track. The waveform will give you clues. In the vast majority of electronic music you'll find standard 4 beat bars (common time) arranged into 4 bar sections, forming 8, 16, 32, 64, 128 bar **phrases**. For mixing, it is crucial to know the phrases and know **the 'one'** of a 'one, two, three, four' count. Since it is important to know which phrase the songs are in, practice in counting - and mix in on the downbeat. You may find your track has a 16 bar intro, a 64 bar main section followed by a 32 bar breakdown and then another 64 bar section before finishing, maybe with 32 bars of ambience. Within this song structure, most transitions usually happen at the end of predictable phrases, say at 32 or 64, 128 bar intervals. For example, you may have a long 32 bar ambient section and you're aiming to bring in your new tune subtly so you can suddenly reveal it after the phrase or section finishes. The beginning and end are also called the **mix-in and mix-out zones**. The mix-in zone is the opening part of a track where layers are added slowly, while in the mix-out zone the layers are slowly stripped away.

Alternatively, you might be chopping between tunes quickly at 8, 16 or 32 bar intervals. It really does depend on the tracks themselves, their style, tempo and key. Once you start mixing and transitioning between tracks you can often work out where things fit in naturally – experiment!

THE RULE OF FOURS

The rule of fours applies to all music in 4/4 time, and it says that you have to transition at a multiple of 4 bars. If you transition at another time, after 3 bars for examples, your tracks may not line up properly. Of course, there's nothing to say you can't transition at less predictable intervals. For example, you could suddenly cut between two tunes in the middle of a phrase to create an unexpected change. This can be pretty hard to pull off, so experiment with your music before your DJ set.

CUE POINTS

If you feel some despair at all these numbers, the software can help with cue points. Cue points are markers that you can set in a track. The cue points highlight a specific moment in the track. For example, moments where you want to mix in another track. Traktor has different cue points, like the yellow *load marker*, for the start of the track, and *Fade In/Fade out* points which are reminders for mixing in or out. Conveniently, the software will remember your cue points for a next time. Most DJ controllers will have performance pads that correlate to those cue points. The cue points can also be used to jump to a section in the song (and even for drumming).

Weaving the wave

END-TO-END TRANSITION

With this knowledge of the one, cue points, and the rule of fours, we can start our mixing adventure. A first, simple transition is to wait for one track to end and then press play to start the next. This method is simple, but not necessarily easy, because it involves counting the beat. Start your next track on the downbeat, either directly after the song ends or after a bar if you want some breath in between. This technique works best with songs that have a clear ending (also called a **cold ending**) and a clear, strong beginning. In other words, not songs that fade in or out. End-to-end transitions are good for **icebreakers**, that is, songs that bring a sudden shift in energy. This can be done by bringing in a very different style or genre of music, or a very different BPM than the song before.

DROP MIXING

The dropmix is a transition technique that abruptly goes from one song into another, while remaining on time. This transition happens at the beginning of the bar, meaning the 'one'. This technique can be used to suddenly jump to the drop or breakdown of another song.

Fading

When mixing, you will use the volume sliders to fade one track out, and the other in. There are two ways to do this: the crossfader or the channel faders. The crossfader is a good place to understand how the principle of volume mixing works. The image right shows how this works. The crossfader helps you mix the volume from one deck to the next. It is important to note that the total volume is at all times a 100%. When the crossfader is in the middle, you hear both decks equally loud (50/50).
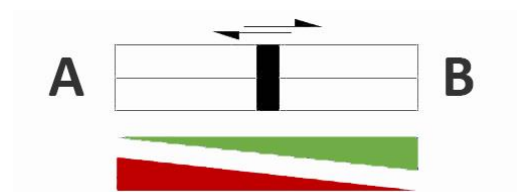
Instead of the crossfader, you can also use the channel faders to reverse the up and down. Make sure that the total volume is 100% while doing this. In Ecstatic DJing, we usually use the channel faders and disable the crossfader as it is easily touched by accident.

The volume can also be used in other ways than mixing. Explore the differences in volume while DJing. At the beginning and the end, use the volume slider to fade the song from/into silence. During the highly energetic moments, dare to raise the volume just enough (make sure to move into the space once in a while, so you can make sure the volume is not too loud!).

Equalizing

Once you learn how to use a DJ program, you will have a wide range of different effects to choose from. An **effect** is an alteration made to the sound. The most basic effect is the **EQ** (**equalizer**) which helps you adjust (by boosting or cutting) the low, mid or high frequencies of the song. Equalizing is using the EQ to mix:

- **HIGH**: **high-hats, snares, strings and cymbals**.
  You can start with a very low volume and gradually increase during the mix-in zone. Once you've reached around 80% volume you can start to decrease the highs of your master track. Letting the new track take over.
- **MID**: **vocals, melody, harmonies, riffs, stabs and percussion like bongos and tom toms**.
  The effectiveness of playing around with mid-range volumes depends entirely on the tracks you're mixing with. Much of the vocals do also but it's best to avoid vocals when mixing two tracks together and to make sure much of your mix is completed before the next vocals kick in. Slowly fading in the mid-range frequencies will take some of the punch out of your incoming track.
- **LOW**: **bass, kick drums**
  *When mixing in two songs with beat, make sure to take out the low frequency of the incoming track, as this will create a much smoother mix. Find a suitable moment in the track to perform a **bass swap**: turning the bass up from the new track, while you put the bass down of the master track. Having both lows open fully on full volume could actually blow the speakers.*

Effects / FX

There are a whole lot of FX to play with that can add or shift the sounds of a song. They can range from subtle alterations to extreme warping of the sound. The DJ software and controllers have one or more buttons where you can select FX and put them on/off. Another knob controls the amount of FX applied: the *dry/wet* mix. When set to dry, or the lowest setting, it will play the music un-effected. The more you turn the knob to wet, the more effect is applied. Below is an overview of some of common effects:

- **FILTER:** The audio filter is most used by DJs and therefore has its own dedicated button underneath the EQ. Turning the filter to the left will activate the *low pass filter* (cutting out highs) while moving it the right will activate the *high pass filter* (cutting out lows). Using the filter adds tension and drama – sounds drop away and then return in full force. The filter is easy use and overuse, so be selective.
- **DELAY/ECHO**: The delay/echo FX let a sound repeat like an … Also, just like an echo it gets gradually fades away. This effect can be used at the end of a track, for instance before going into a different rhythm. Or by letting the voice of a first song echo further into a new song - in this way creating a bridge between the two songs. You also have the option to adjust dry/wet, tempo, feedback and filter - and then freeze the echo.
- **REVERB**. Reverb's original purpose is to make a sound reflect the atmosphere in which it was recorded in – a church, drum room, bathroom, etc. Basically, what it mainly does is add space to your sound but can also make it sound 'far away'. Reverb works especially well when you wish to bring a track in an atmospheric mix. You can experiment with loops and other FXs while doing this. The reverb can clash with strong lows, so make sure to cut the bass or to use it during a breakdown with predominantly vocals/atmospheric instruments.
- **FLANGER AND PHASER** both modulate the sound. The phaser sounds a bit otherworldly, while the Flanger gives more of a panaromic effect. Both these FX can be used to increase the contrast before a breakdown.
- **GATER** rhythmically mutes parts of the audio at adjustable rates and works well when you want to take away parts of your loop (yet use it with care).

There is no shortage of FX, try them out and experiment. Still, it helps to keep it simple and stick to max 4 or 5 FX that you get to know really well.

Beatmatching

Beatmatching used to be the litmus test for any DJ. It entails matching the beats of two playing tracks. This is a difficult skill, but very rewarding since it lets tracks blend seamlessly with each other. Today, we have one button that does it all: the infamous SYNC button. Let's start, however, with explaining beatmatching without this sync button. The first requirement is that the tracks have the same tempo. Pick two tracks that are relatively close in BPM and use the tempo fader to adjust the BPM of the track you want to mix in. When you adjust the tempo of a song, be sure to have the **key lock** on, otherwise the key will change with the tempo (unless you want the key to change). It is usually better to mix on the instrumental break and not over vocals.
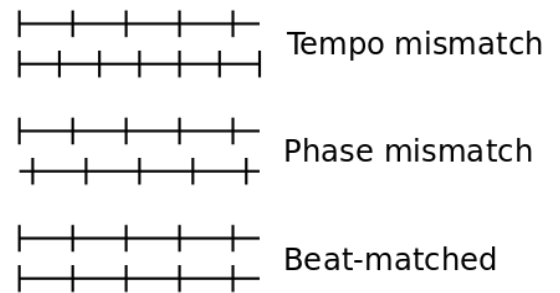
Listen to the tracks in your headphone and try to start the incoming track at the downbeat. You can use the side of the Jog wheel to nudge the incoming track (speed it up or down), until the beats have synced. Why would you learn to beat match if the software can do it for you? Well, the software does not always get it right. The software's algorithms, especially have a harder time with genres outside the EDM family. Knowing how to beatmatch trains your listening, and it can help you out when the software fails.

Beatgrids

The ease of the 'sync' can give you the freedom to be present on the dance floor, or to mix two songs with different BPM's more easily. Besides knowing how to beatmatch, it is also helpful to understand **beatgrids** and know how to change them. When you open new tracks in your DJ software, it will analyze them in terms of BPM and key. After analyzing, the program will also show a *waveform* of the track that is placed on a *beatgrid*. This grid will be layered on each beat of the track, marked by vertical lines. The first beat in a bar will usually be a thicker line or even a different color. This coincides with the structure of the song.
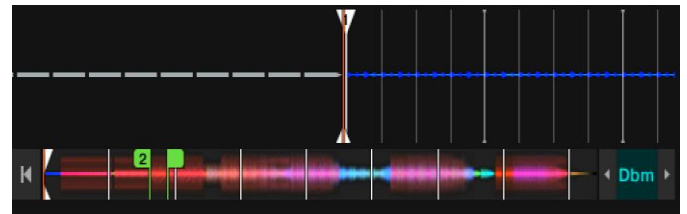
The software uses the beatgrids to match the BPM for two tracks. It will first stretch or compress the track to match the tempo and then align the beatgrids so that the beats are matched. This happens when you press sync. As with all algorithms, it sometimes gets it wrong. If your beatgrids are not placed correctly by your software, then the syncing goes wrong. ync button will not match up the two songs. We will dive deeper into the basic beatgrid issues that you may encounter and how to fix them:

- **FIRST BEAT FIX**: Some tracks have an intro which may not be a full bar. Your DJ software may recognize this section as the first beat of the song and place the marker there. As a result, this first beat is not set right. Luckily this is one of the simplest fixes you can do to a beatgrid. You will need to move the entire grid over so that the first beat of the song is properly gridded. The first beat should be the thicker line or different color to represent the start of the bar.
- **DOUBLE/HALVE BPM**: When analyzing your music your DJ software may not recognize all the beats. It may also recognize too many. A track may be analyzed as 64 BPM but has extra beats between the beatgrid markers. This is where doubling will come into effect. The Traktor and Serato software have a button to press to double or halve the BPM value. You'll then see that the beatgrid aligns and has a BPM of 128 BPM.
- **TAP METHOD**: There will be occasions that the software gets it completely wrong. If you know that the song has a consistent BPM you can use the tap method to set the beatgrid. All you do is play the song and continue tapping on the beats and the software will assign a BPM value and a beat grid based on your tapping. While not 100% accurate it will give you a base BPM that should be pretty close to the correct value. You can then stretch or shrink the beatgrid to get it more precise. You may need to zoom in on the waveform to see the exact moment the beat hits so that you can align the grid.

- **NUDGE METHOD**: In some instances, the analysis of the track will find the correct BPM but the beatgrid can still be misaligned. In these cases, the beatgrid may be a fraction off from the correct placement. In this scenario, you can adjust the beatgrid by using the nudge functions in your software. Zoom in on the waveform and find the exact spot that the beatmarker should be on. Then use the nudge buttons to move the beatgrid left or right depending on where the initial marker was placed. The more accurate your placement the better the Sync function will work. Even if you're not 100% on the right spot it should only take minor adjustments to the track when you are mixing it in.
- **BEAT JUMP** allows you to skip forward or backward through a track *on beat*, based on the beat grid, instead of having to scrub through the track. You can use beat jump for setting cue points. This speeds up the track preparation. Beat Jump can also works with mis-cued drops and be used to correct the position of the incoming track when mixing a track in. Lastly, Beat Jump helps you to learn song structure on the fly. By skipping ahead you can see how many bars each phrase has.

Infinite Loop Mixing

A loop is a section of a song that is repeated. The software makes a loop using the beatgrid. You can choose between loops that are super short (1/32) till very long (32 beats). Alternately, you can also set a loop manually. Loops are used in different ways. One is to prolong part of the track. It is also used for mixing. This is called the infinite loop mixing technique. You can loop the incoming track and play that loop underneath the master track. This loop does not necessarily have be the intro or outro, it can be a breakdown in the middle. Also, experiment with the length: 16 beats, 8, 4, 2, 1, even ½ a beat might work well as a loop. Loops can be saved in the software. When mixing in the loop, you can reduce the punch with effects (EQ, Filter, etc). You can then either slowly fade in the loop to around 50% over the course of a phrase; or you can drop it in at 50% right on the 1st beat of a phrase.

Next to looping the incoming song, you can also loop the master track and let it extend into the new track with the loop. In this way, you can prolong the energy of the first song - gently transitioning the atmosphere - while blending it into the next. You can smoothly fade this loop out with the EQ or Filter, or suddenly at the start of a new phrase.
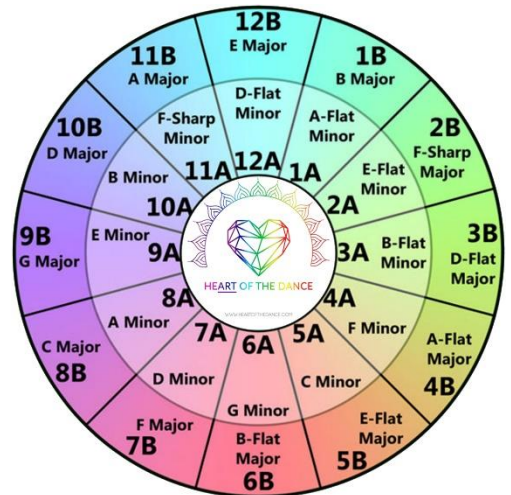
Tempo Transition Mixing

Tempo transition mixing refers to mixing two tracks of different tempos together with a transition period where you adjust the tempo of both tracks. Your master track will be playing at around its original speed, so depending on the tempo of your incoming track you'll either need to slow down or speed up the tempo of the incoming track. If your current song is at 122 bpm and the next track is 128 bpm, you can gradually and *s l o w l y* change the tempo of the current song, without your crowd noticing the change in rhythm. Make sure to only change the tempo when your songs allow for you to do so, for example during a breakdown or on the one.

Most DJ software is set up to offer a **tempo range** of 16%. This goes back to the days when vinyl turntables offered 8% pitch range each direction (8% faster and 8% slower). Thankfully with the help of digital DJ hardware and software, you can push the tempo range well beyond 8% and you'll need to in order to pull off this advanced mixing trick. Go to the settings of your software and look for settings related to 'Transport' or 'Decks'. There you'll see an option for modifying the 'tempo range'. In Serato you can do this by holding down the shift button and clicking on the 'tempo' option above the pitch fader. You'll need to adjust the pitch range to at least 50% if you want to blend tracks between something like a house / EDM tempo of 130 BPM to a drum and bass or techno tempo of 160-180 BPM. Again, make sure you have 'Key lock' enabled. Locking the key will preserve the original key of the track and make the mix much more seamless.

Mixing in Key

The Camelot Wheel is a great tool to help DJs mix tracks in key so that they work together harmonically. The Camelot Wheel is a simplified Circle of Fifths. The names of the keys have been replaced by numbers and they added colors to make it easy for those not accustomed to working with key signatures. As with the Circle of Fifths, the outer ring shows the major chords, while the inner ring has the minor chords.

One of the more popular methods to work with the wheel is known as the 'T-method'. This method consists of combining two keys that are either next to one another or above/below. These two keys are most compatible harmonically (besides the same key.) If you want to increase the energy, you can add in a +2 from whatever Camelot value you are currently at. If you pick, for example, a song with a 1B tone, the next song can be a 1B, 1A, 2B, or 12B. If you wanted to give the mix an energy boost, you would instead choose the +2 formula and arrive at 3B.

WHEN TO MIX IN KEY

Mixing in key helps to give your transitions that harmonic and professional feel. It is especially helpful when you want to mix tracks with a different tempo. Too much mixing in key, however, can make a set sound the same. As you recall, different keys bring different emotions. Sometimes it is needed to shift an emotion and blend very different keys. If you decide to mix in a new song with a very different key from the previous one, always make sure to do not mix two disharmonious melodies. You can easily wait for the melody to end and the beat of the first song to continue, and then to mix in another song without letting the two different keys (melodies) clash.

MIX IN SILENCE

If you decide to take a moment of silence in between two songs, it is best to let a fade ending play all the way. A song suddenly fades out, could otherwise decrease the energy. A gentle - or even prolonged - silence in the middle or towards the end of your set can also turn out to deepen the experience of the dancers. It can give them a moment to integrate what has already been put into motion - and to start a new wave of movement from there...

RECORD YOUR SET!

It is very helpful to record your DJ set, so you can hear it again and learn. DJ software have the ability to record the set through a built-in audio recorder. Recording a mix can help you recognize the strength and weaknesses of your set. While listening again, you can both listen to the individual mixing of the tracks plus to the whole of your mix (the overall storyline). It might also be helpful to wait for a few days - as in this way, you will have a fresher perspective when listening to your mix.

Reading the Room & Holding the Space

As an Ecstatic or Conscious Dance DJ, it is important to learn how to 'hold the space' and sense the atmosphere among the dancers. Since most Ecstatic/Conscious Dances also include a ceremony leader and a support (or space) team, you will not be alone in handling specific situations that might be challenging. Yet, it is important to know about the different ways in which you can influence and support a space, so that you can keep an eye out on what is going on - not only behind the DJ booth, but also on the dance floor.

Holding Space

A space is safe when people feel permission to play, make mistakes and allow deeper, more complex feelings to arise. When people feel the safety and freedom to express, turbulent emotions may surface. Paradoxically, this can make the space feel less safe for others. The balance between individual expression and collective care is a delicate dance. Sometimes boundaries need to be set for expressions that intrude too much and sometimes we need to stretch the empathy and holding capacity of the group.

Holding space is an elusive quality that is felt-sensed through the body in an authentic way. In general, holding space has to do with being able to be present with what is. This requires practicing loving-kindness to others and yourself. Loving-kindness does not mean making everybody happy or trying 'to fix' people. On the contrary, to hold space means that you are able to be present with people going through their stuff, while at the same time being present with the feelings that arise in you. In other words, it requires emotional maturity.

Since we can also meet triggers and challenges on the dance floor, we sometimes also refer to it as a 'safe enough' space - or a 'brave' space, as 'justice doula' Mickey ScottBey Jones beautifully describes it in her poem: *'An Invitation to Brave Space'*.

An Invitation to Brave Space

Together we will create *brave space*

Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"

We exist in the real world

We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.

In this space

We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.

We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,

We call each other to more truth and love

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.

We will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But

It will be *our brave space together,*

And

We will work on it side by side.

Micky Scottbey Jones

Safe Container: a Team Effort

Creating a safe space is a team effort, which involves different roles within the Ecstatic Dance team. Each team member of an ED can contribute to holding and containing the space in order for these expressions to be released in a constructive and secure environment:

1. *CEREMONY LEADER.* The job of the ceremony leader is supporting the dancers to arrive in the space and into their own bodies through music and movement. He/she does this by warming up the body and space, and by inviting the dancers to explore in a safe way. The next chapter will explore the ceremony leadership much further.
2. *THE COMMUNITY OF DANCERS AND SPACE TEAM.* As with any group that is slowly being created, people who regularly come to Ecstatic Dance develop a safe feeling around the people they know and can slowly allow themselves to express much more freely on the dance floor. It helps when the space team (team of people helping to setup the ED) embodies the values you hold and, where possible, represent the diversity of the community.
3. *THE ORGANIZERS.* The way a team organizes itself to host ED events translates to the dance floor. Ideally, the organizers / organization are moved by the same values as are being cherished on the dance floor. This can manifest in the marketing and how the staff / volunteers are treated.
4. *THE DJ.* The vibrations of music have the capacity to shapeshift the environment - and to guide the dancers into a diversity of experiences. An Ecstatic DJ needs to be in tune with the crowd, navigating accordingly - moving from high to low, from upbeat to slow tempo, from inner to outer expression, from a lyrical flowing state to firm direct expression. The DJ uses his/her music at times as a way to move through emotions that get 'stuck' in the space and in the body. Sometimes there is a need to break the barrier, and push through, and sometimes it is the exact opposite - where pushing the dancers too much in one direction will create resistance in the dancers' bodies.

Conscious & Ecstatic Dance Guidelines

Dancing at a club or a Conscious Dance event are (often) different experiences. In general, the difference lies in the safe (enough) container that is being created and in the intention of the dancers. In Ecstatic Dance this container and intention took shape in the guidelines. These are the basic three:

1. Talking and listening with the body rather than words. (No talking once you enter the space)
2. Dancing with a pure body, and without any intoxication. (No drugs or alcohol)
3. Dancing on bare feet. (No shoes)

The first guideline helps to get out of the analytical, judging mind, and make space for the dance. Dancing deeply while having a conversation is truly hard ("*Hey, have I seen you here before?*"). This also applies if people next to you are having a conversation. The no-talking guideline also helps people to stay with difficult feelings, instead of talking them away. The second guideline favors sensitivity and responsibility, so that dancers can experience the full range of emotions and states, and take ownership of it. The no shoes guideline, finally, helps dancers to ground and get in touch with their animal bodies.

Other guidelines that you may come across are:

- Move however you wish
- Be mindful of others' personal boundaries
- You can use a Namaste (folding hands) to respectfully signal that you want to dance on your own.
- Dress to sweat.
- Please keep the dance floor free from: talking, shoes, photos, videos, and scents.

It is important to note that these guidelines are no rules, but a reflection of underlying values. Different dances phrase the guidelines in their own way and deal with them in different ways. Within the guidelines runs a deep respect for your own body, others' space and the big body (whole space). These values also ask

for sensitivity; the ability of people to listen to self, others, and the collective space. All those involved in Ecstatic and Conscious Dance contribute to these values in their own way: the Ceremony Leader or teacher, the space team, the organization, the venue, the community of dancers, and the DJ. As a DJ, it is important that you also respect these guidelines and do not put yourself 'above the rules', by talking with some people before your set, for example. A DJ is very visible and for many dancers a role model. People will, likewise, notice how you interact with the team, especially if you are somewhere new. Taking the time and effort to connect to the team and dancers show that you care for the community. This really helps to build trust for the dancers, as you guide them through their journey.

Reading the Room

As mentioned, reading the room is not just about getting a sense of where dancers are, but also sensing what is implied in the space and what wants to emerge. It is a skill to read the whole room. In reading the room there are three levels:

- **Self**
- **Other**
- **Whole room / Big Body / Field**

Example

*DJ Dora just started her set at a new venue and feels the butterflies in her stomach (**Self**). When she looks around, she notices a friend who seems bored (**Other**). This awakens her inner critic telling her she is not good enough. DJ Dora knows this voice all to well and takes a couple of deep breaths. She decides to leave the DJ booth to feel the room. As she travels around, she actually picks up a gentleness in the space (**Big Body**). Tuning into this big body, DJ Dora senses that people need to stay with this gentle flow and opts for a gentle build up.*

As you can read in the example above, it important for a DJ to learn to distinguish between these different levels. Furthermore she needs to self-regulate. In this case, the DJ needs to deal with the butterflies and inner critic.

One way to self-regulate is by welcoming the troubling feelings and hold space for these parts in yourself. If it becomes too intense (as with the inner critic), you can try to park it, ground, re-shift your attention, and/or ask for support (if possible). This self-regulation is sometimes necessary, so you can tune into the Big Body and into the dance.

- *How does your inner critic show itself? How can you best deal with this inner critic in the spotlight?*

You cannot learn to read the room overnight if this is new to you. You can however practice as a dancer by pausing every now and then, and sense the big body. We all have different ways of getting a sense of the Big Body. It is important to know what informs you:

- *What do you need to be able to read the room? Do need to be able to move with the dancers? Do you have an overview over the room, or do you only see the dancers in the front, or are you blinded by lights?*
- *Which somatic markers, like breath, heartrate, muscle tension, etc, are your indicators?*
- *Do you pick up emotions? Do you get images, or already hear the next song calling out?*
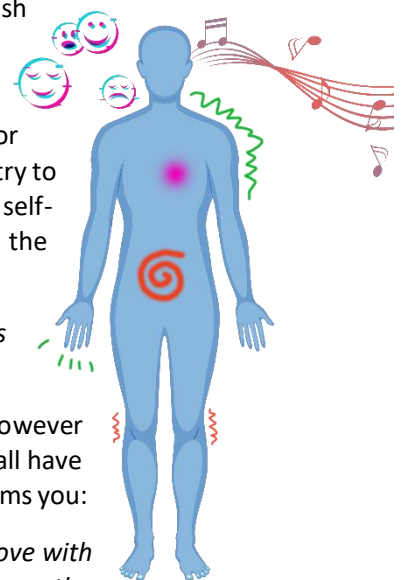
Trouble Shooting

During the last two tracks a shouting circle has claimed the center of the space with dancers encouraging each other to make louder and louder sounds. As you look at this circle from behind the DJ deck, you see other dancers visibly disturbed and moving away from the circle.

As a DJ, usually, you are right up in front of the dancers - meaning: you can see and sense a lot of what is happening on the dance floor. As we mentioned before: there is a delicate dance taking place between individual expression and collective care. Sometimes this balance is disturbed, like in the example above. What can you do as a DJ? Before you take any action, you should inquire if it only bothers you (personal trigger), or if it undermines the dance. In this example it clearly hinders the dance. In such a case something needs to happen. Normally, the Ceremony Leader and/or space team will intervene, but let's say they failed to change the groups shouting. What can you do as a DJ?

First, your choice will be informed by how you are with the disturbance: do you see it as bad and want to fight it, or can you embrace the behavior and re-direct it. Your attitude is important, because it will show in your body language. Suddenly stopping the music is an example of moving against the disturbing behavior. Such an intervention might break the friendly atmosphere, denying the people involved the opportunity to self-regulate, and giving them the message they are wrong. Not intervening when it is needed, is similar. Now instead of fight, there is flight or freeze. This also has adverse effects as it can make people feel less safe during the dance.

Embracing difficult behavior requires empathy and a shift in perspective. Perhaps the dancers experience a long lost primal energy through shouting. Perhaps they're so caught up in the act that they fail to notice the effect they have on others. In other words, it is the behavior and not the person, and it is not bad, just out of balance. This realization, might lead to a more subtle intervention like turning the volume down or changing to a more quiet song. In this way the dancers might get more aware of their surroundings. Alternately, you can also opt for some loud, cathartic music, so everyone can join in a big release. In short, whatever you do, try to do it in a way that serves the dance most.

Shaping the Space: Bubbles

In general, groups tend to arise and dissolve on the dancefloor. Some dancers can become very quiet while others go into ecstasy; some lie down while others dance sensually with a partner or are busy in a play-fight dance. We call this a 'bubbly space', meaning the group breaks down to smaller groups or 'bubbles'. Through your choice of music, you can influence these bubbles, and choose what to enhance, what to encourage, and what to slowly wind down.

As we saw above, sometimes these bubbles become disconnected from the larger whole. In most cases this concerns 'too much of a good thing'. As a DJ, it is therefore important to stay connected to the dancing crowd, so you can navigate these situations. Take a few moments to feel inside how you would react to the following situations (based on our past experience on the dance floor with different crowds and venues):

1. Someone is standing in front of the DJ booth, in the middle, not moving for over fifteen minutes and only staring at the DJ.

2. A group of dancers are creating a cuddle puddle in the middle of the dance floor, not aware of other dancers that are slowly moving to the corners of the room.

3. A strong tribal song provokes rather wild behavior among some dancers. This gets so rough that other dancers are in danger of being hurt.

Improvisation on the Fly

"Know the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist."

Pablo Picasso

Passion & Profession

The DJ learning journey can take you from 0 to 100 in no time. One moment you are comfortably DJing at home, enjoying the music and the creative process. And before you know it, you are in front of a crowd that paid to dance to your music. The move from passion to profession can come quite fast, and might take you by surprise. Especially as a beginning DJ, it is important to balance your inexperience with professionalism. This means preparing your set through and through; having a plan, and having enough tracks to deviate from that plan. It also means arriving early to soundcheck and connect to the venue and team. Check what sound system is there and bring your own equipment and cables as backup.

Degrees of Improvisation

Improvisation is the ability to feel what is needed in space and apply it at the right moment. This ability to jump into the unknown takes courage and trust. Your Groundedness, Awareness, and Presence (G.A.P) are essential ingredients for improvising. When you are connected and in tune with what happens around you, the crowd will feel it. This will take the set into higher planes - and most of the time will be even better than your 'original plan'. An improvised set might be perfect for that specific occasion. And yet, listening to it afterwards (if it was recorded) sometimes brings out the inner critic. Remember that a live set cannot be reproduced and that is part of the art of DJing. Just like a live performance of a band cannot be compared to an album.

What matters most is the interaction with both the music and the dancers that make a live DJ set alive.

Learning how to improvise is a technique and there are some guidelines that can help you. We talk about different levels of freedom: from a complete set playlist, played precisely as you had planned at home (zero level of freedom), to a complete improvised set (coming to the venue without any playlist or even idea to how you will begin the set).

Below are some different options, with different degrees of improvisation. After reading them see what you feel comfortable with, and what will help you to give the best set.

1. A set playlist for the exact amount of time that you are supposed to play in a specific order.

2. A pre-decided beginning and ending to your set, with groups of tracks that are played together. (Your playlist consists of more than the amount of tracks that you will be playing.)

3. A pre-decided beginning and ending to your set, without pre-decided groups of tracks. (Your playlist consists of more than the amount of tracks that you will be playing.)

4. No pre-decided beginning and ending to your set, with groups of tracks that you plan to play together. (Your playlist consists of more than the amount of tracks that you will be playing.)

5. No pre-decided beginning and ending to your set, no pre-decided groups of tracks that you plan to play together. (Your playlist consists of more than the amount of tracks that you will be playing.)

6. No playlist all together, you rely on your entire library of music without any prior preparation.

Reflection

While reading about these different types of levels of freedom, notice what kind of feelings arise in your body: resistance or fear, excitement or a relaxed secure feeling? When you imagine playing your set with one of the above suggestions, what are your challenges?

As a rule of thumb, *preparation will help you to be able to improvise better*. The more experience you have in your art form, the more you can let go and improvise more.

We recommend (especially in the beginning) having a pre-listened playlist that you know you wish to choose from. If the set is 2 hours, which is roughly 25-30 tracks, have at least 3 times that number of tracks on your playlist to choose from. From here you can start improvising and choosing from other playlists or from your music library.

DJ: The Art of Performing

A big difference between playing a set from Mixcloud (a recorded set) to playing live, is the performance of the DJ - which has as a main feature the live interaction between him/her and the dancers. As a DJ, you are connected with the crowd and are able to transmit your music with and to the people on the dance floor.

A DJ stands in the spotlight which can come with performance pressure. One of the classical 'mistakes' we make while under stress, is to press the accelerator pedal (either in beat or in volume). If the crowd is not ready for this high gear, it might result in an opposite reaction. Turning on a stronger volume or a higher BPM might force the dancers to move, but that will not come from their inner state. At the end of the set, they might be sweaty, but not necessarily relaxed or arriving back home.

If you are able to recognize what the crowd needs and while playing can tune into the changes in the atmosphere and to what is there in the moment, you will see an immediate reaction from the dancers and almost feel a breath of fresh air. For that to happen you need to be secure and grounded in your playing. A DJ is not only putting one track after the other or mixing them together, they are creating the sphere, they infuse the dance floor with their vision and their presence. Your body language will have a very big influence on the dance floor. If you are having fun, that will infuse the dancers, and vice versa - if you are struggling or suffering the people will feel that too.

As we wrote before: having a relation to your audience - seeing them and observing where they are - is very important. If you are only looking at your computer, you might lose contact with the dancing crowd. If you are able to dance with them, it will enhance their and your experience. This connection is very important especially in times when you are challenging your audience with a track that they are not accustomed to, or with a music genre that is not 'compatible' to their taste. In those moments of great change, you will notice that the dancers will look

It is then when your grounding as a DJ will be tested, it is then when you will be able to show that you are not only there to please the audience but also to bring them to other musical realms beyond their comfort zone.

towards the DJ booth: some with happy surprise, some with question marks on their face, and others with resistance to your musical offerings. It is then when your grounding as a DJ will be tested, it is then when you will be able to show that you are not only there to please the audience but also to bring them to other musical realms beyond their comfort zone.

Audio Geek Guide

Nuts and Bolts of Audio

It is short of a miracle that we can push play on our computer and have music vibrate through dancers' bodies. How does a mp3, or other digitized music (a bunch of 1's and 0's) transform into what we hear through the speakers? As a DJ you come across terms like Bit Depth, attack, a DAC, lossy files, or will perhaps be asked about the 432 Hz frequency. If your head starts spinning at these subjects. Don't worry, we got you covered. In this section we explore some of the very basic nuts and bolts of sound and music.

Analog, Digital, and Compressed

Why does a CD recording of a live concert sound different than the real thing? And why does an MP3 sound even worse? Is analog better than digital?

Some Club DJs and music aficionados still use vinyl records and swear the music is more refined than digitized music. Why is that? To answer this we have to go back to the 1800's when the gramophone was invented. This device could mechanically capture sound waves by a vibrating needle that would cut a groove in the surface of a rotating cylinder, called a 'record'. After recording, the needle could be placed back on the record where it ran over the groove, recreating the vibrations in the air (that listeners would recognize as the same sound). In the years that followed the process was refined, but the principle remained the same. The sound waves were recorded **analog**, that is, in a continuous fashion.

An analog recording captures every moment and detail. Analog also has some drawbacks: it requires a lot of space, it is fragile and sensitive to interference. If you grew up with cassette tapes (analog), you know that the quality degraded over time and that making a copy of a copy led to a terrible quality (same for VHS tape).

Original analog recording — CD 16 bit/44.1 kHz — High-Resolution Audio 24 bit/96kHz

In contrast, almost all the processing of sound nowadays is digital. Instead of recording everything, digital recording devices *sample* a sound wave at certain intervals (see image above). These samples are then stored as binary code (1's and 0's). Sampling requires much less space than analog recordings and it stores the information as clear binary code that you can endlessly copy without losing quality. From the samples an analog soundwave is reconstructed (this involves some serious math, such as the Fourier transform). The accuracy of the reconstruction is determined by the **sample rate** and the **bit depth.** The sample rate shows how many samples are taken per second. The bit depth tells how much information is taken in each sample. In general, the higher the numbers, the better the quality. To understand sample rate and bit depth we can make a comparison: many digital cameras and phones have burst mode which takes lots of pictures in a row. If you run through these pictures quickly, it is as if you watch a movie. In this example, the number of snapshots correspond to the sample rate, and the pixel quality of each photo is somewhat comparable

to the bit depth. To be more precise, the bit depth is responsible for the **dynamic range** - the difference between the quietest sound and the loudest one. The higher the bit depth, the more subtleties a track can present, like the crack in the voice of the singer, and the more impact a loud drum has.

CD quality has a sample rate of 44.1KHz: It takes 44.100 samples per second at a bit depth of 16 (65,536 levels). Even though this is a lot of information per second, audiophiles still claim they hear the difference between a CD and analog LP. For audio lovers there now is **Hi-Res audio** with a 96 kHz sample rate and a 24 bit depth.

*When recording your set in a DJ program, you have the choice between 16 and 24 bit. 24 Bit seems the clear choice, as it is **Hi-Res audio**. However it also takes up a lot of space and computing power, so be sure your laptop can handle this.*

The image below looks in more detail at the process converting analog to digital and back again. The microphone translates the soundwaves into electrical signals (just like our ears). These signals are then run through an **analog-to-digital converter (ADC)**. Every smartphone or laptop has one of these, because every time you record audio, physical sound waves are being digitized in binary code. When you play a song on your phone, those 1's and 0's are used to reconstruct an analog signal with the help of a **digital-to-analog converter (DAC)** which produces electrical signals that the speaker converts to sound waves that you hear.
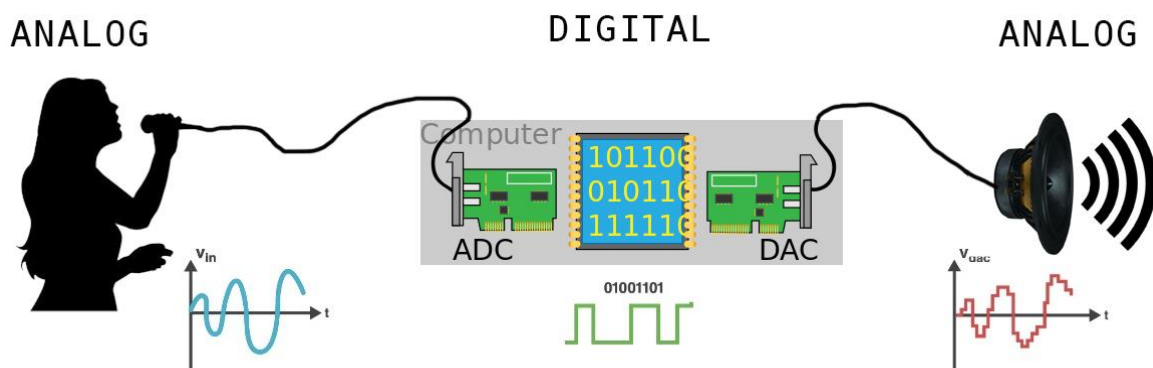
It is good to know that the quality of ADC's and DAC's differ. The soundcard on your computer includes a DAC. However, this DAC usually is not good enough for DJing. For one it lacks the necessary audio connections (2 channels), but also has a low audio quality and volume. An **external soundcard** is therefore needed. Most DJ controllers have a built in soundcard of good (enough) quality. Some smaller DJ controllers require you to buy an additional, external sound card.

Audio Format Compression (WAV, AAC, MP3)

Some of us might recognize the object to the right. Back in the days it was the envy of every young person: the walkman. Now you could take your favourite music with you, each cassette worth a whole hour of music. When music digitized, we briefly had a CD version of the walkman. However, the free spirits and pirates of the burgeoning internet found out they could easily share music digitally. CD sales plummeted and internet companies, especially Napster, were heavily sued by the music industry. But the cat was out of the bag: music was no longer tied to a physical medium as a cassette or CD. Apple saw this trend and came with the next step in portable music: the almighty IPod. At its peak, the IPod could contain up to 160gb of music. Suddenly we could walk around with more than 1700 hours of music (over two months). Of course, this is also ancient history as we now have streaming services, like Spotify, which turn our phones into walkmans with a music library that requires several lifetimes to listen to.

Although digital music took less space than an analog recording, it still resulted in big files, especially for the internet bandwidth in the early nineties. Smart algorithms (codecs) were used to shrink the digital files into a fraction of the original size (see below).

Audio files sizes compared (Source: ask.audio)

As you can see above, there are many **audio file formats.** These audio file formats can be subdivided in 3 different categories:

1. **UNCOMPRESSED AUDIO FORMAT**: WAV, AIFF

2. **LOSSLESS COMPRESSED AUDIO FORMAT**: FLAC, ALAC

3. **LOSSY COMPRESSED AUDIO FORMAT**: MP3, M4A, AAC, WMA, OGG

The **uncompressed audio format** is bit-for-bit identical with the digital recording. As a result, these uncompressed files tend to be the most accurate but take up a lot of disk space, as you can see above. Next in size is **lossless compression.** These audio formats use compression, reducing the file size (about ½ to a ⅓ of the uncompressed size), and making them easier to store and distribute. On playback, these files are decoded to the original uncompressed state, without any loss of data. It is similar to zipping and unzipping a file. **Lossy compression**, finally, reduces the file size the most drastically (11 to 15 times smaller). It does so by cutting some corners. Besides compression, lossy formats also deploy a technique called psychoacoustic analysis. Here, algorithms look for sounds that are supposedly inaudible. Sounds, for example, that lay outside the hearing range, or sounds that are overlapped by other, louder sounds. The algorithm then deletes this information. Once deleted, it cannot be restored. Lossy compression manages to shrink the file size considerably, but often at the expense of the quality of the music. Still, because of its efficiency, lossy compression, and predominantly the MP3 became, and still, is the most popular audio format.

The pros and cons of the different audio formats is the material of endless discussions among audiophiles and DJ's. Some DJ's will only use uncompressed WAV's, while others play 128 kbps MP3's. Here are some considerations:

▪ Perceived audio quality is in part subjective. It depends on how sensitive and how trained your hearing is. Keep in mind, this also goes for your audience.

- Perceived audio quality also depends on the sound system and the room. What sounds great through your laptop speakers, might sound awful through a venue's professional PA system or high quality headphones (for this reason, it is worth getting some).
- 'Blind' listening tests suggest that most people cannot distinguish between a MP3 with a bitrate higher than 160 kbps and a WAV. In our experience, the quality of a 128 kbps MP3 is audibly lower than a 320 kbps MP3. Our recommendation is to work with 320 kbps MP3's or above to be on the safe side.
- You cannot automatically compare the bitrate between different file formats. A 256 kbps AAC, for example, is equivalent to 320 kbps MP3.

Organic And Synthesized Music

Live music is different from recorded music. It is often a richer experience, especially if you are up close and the music is acoustic. You can hear the plucking of the strings, see the sweat and expression of the singer, a tremble in the voice, and so on. In the old days, the soundwaves coming from the live musicians were directly recorded on the vinyl, which could be recreated at home with a record player. This recording process became digitized. Although the process has changed from analog to digital, with good quality audio, we can still hear the tremble in the singers voice and the plucking of the strings. That is, if the musician still uses real instruments and does not modify the voice with autotune. We can refer to music that uses real instruments as *organic*. Organic music starts actually with the instrument maker creating an instrument that is played by the artist. Through their shape and material, instruments differ in sound envelope and timbre, giving them an unique sound.

More and more music, however, does not come from an instrument, but from a computer: it is synthesized. With the advent of the synthesizer, composers can now, at will, play with the sound envelope and timbre, creating sounds that have never been heard before (sound design). This technological revolution led to whole new music genres, like Electronic Dance Music (EDM). Does it make a difference whether a sound is organic or synthesized? Can our ears pick up the difference? The debate is still out, but in the end both organic and synthesized sounds come out of a speaker and create the sound waves that excite your ear drum. What does make a difference is the music production. Organic music often arises from musicians playing together. Musicians generally spend lots of hours with their instrument getting to know all its subtleties and secrets. The risk with synthesized sounds and electronic music is that it lacks this organic artistry. Instead, the music is programmed on a computer. This can make it polished, superficial and disconnected. However, just as with DJing with vinyl vs DJing with a laptop, it does not have to be this way. There are plenty of musicians that use synthesized music in a soulful, personal way. Billie Eilish and her brother Finneas, for example, use sounds in their music they encounter in their everyday lives, such as a beeping stoplight and even the sound of Billie getting her teeth drilled.

DJ Gear Guide

DJ Equipment

As a DJ, you will be needing a few basics when it comes to gear. In order to play music for an audience, you will need a basic DJ setup. As we mentioned, Ecstatic Dance arose in part out of Conscious Dance practices which led to a different DJ setup then you will find in clubs.

In comparison to the club scene, the Conscious Dance scene was quick to embrace digital DJing for several reasons: For one, Conscious Dance workshops often last several days, so a teacher needed to bring a lot of music. Having all your music on a laptop was so much easier than carrying around bags of CDs. The DJ programs also made DJing practical and intuitive, and enabled the teacher to easily combine teaching and light DJing. When clubs did transition to digital DJing, most opted to install the CDJs from Pioneer, the industry standard. Now Club DJs only needed to bring a USB stick with music and their headphones; everything else is already there. In contrast, Ecstatic DJs still DJ with their laptop, mainly because the venues lack a professional sound system. This means bringing more stuff and it also means more room for error (like a missing cable, or freezing laptop). Next to the laptop, an Ecstatic DJ needs the following things:

- Music on an internal or external hard drive
- DJ software
- DJ controller
- Headphones
- Sound system
- Cables

DJ Software

The different DJ programs are basically a virtual copy of an old school DJ setup, featuring decks, volume & pitch sliders, a mixer with EQ, and so on. DJ software has revolutionized DJing. It has made DJing accessible since you do not have to spend a fortune on equipment as mixers and turntables, and it has automated skills like beatmatching that take a long time to learn. DJ software asks a lot of computational power from your laptop and you need a laptop that can handle such a heave program. This means a fast processor, enough working memory.

Most DJ programs can be operated without a controller, simply with the mouse. However, this is not practical for DJing since a laptop only has one audio output and you cannot pre-listen to tracks. Furthermore, working on a tiny screen with even smaller knobs is hard and you cannot do two things at once, like putting the volume down and applying a filter.

Choosing DJ software is a big choice since it influences among others which equipment you can use. There are 4 big names in the field: Serato, Traktor, Virtual DJ, and Rekordbox. Serato and Rekordbox work best with hardware they officially support. Because these programs are widely used, a lot of brands like Pioneer and Numark offer hardware for these platforms. Traktor is most used within the Ecstatic scene. It also works best with dedicated hardware. This time the choice is limited to one brand: Native Instruments. Virtual DJ enables DJs to use any hardware they wish. To compare: Serato works with 61 controllers, while Traktor works with 6. Virtual DJ tops that with 215 controllers.

As a newer development, the different DJ programs also offer a connection to different streaming services. Serato has Soundcloud and Tidal; Recordbox has Soundcloud and Beatbox; Traktor has none; and Virtual DJ has Soundcloud, Beatbox, Deezer and a couple of DJ pools.

The functionality and layout of the different DJ programs overlaps largely. The jury is still out on which one is the best as this also depends on personal preferences and different uses. In this manual we will not go into detail on the different features, but recommend you do your online research. Guiding questions in this research can be: Which layout feels intuitive? What library management options do I want? Which performance features do I really want?

DJ Controller

In a way, a **DJ controller** is an elaborate mouse that allows you to hands-on control the music mixing software. The simplest (and often cheapest and most portable) DJ controllers are just that. However, most entry level DJ controllers will pack a little more punch and also feature a built-in soundcard (DAC) with a channel for pre-listening. Mid-range controllers will often also have a mini mixer built-in for hooking in a mic, monitors, and another audio source. The more expensive models add more decks, knobs and sliders, connections, drum pads, FX buttons, displays, and even take over some of the jobs of the DJ software (like the FX).

Most DJ controllers will be all-in-one solutions meaning all the features are integrated in one piece of equipment. There are also **modular setups**, where the deck control, mixer, and FX controls are separated. The Traktor Kontrol Z1 is an example and can be combined with the F1 and X1. Choosing a DJ controller can be hard, because bigger is not always better. There often is a tradeoff between: *Features vs Portability vs Price vs Ease of use*. You can spend anywhere between 60€ and 4000€ for a DJ controller. The more expensive ones will be packed with features that the cheaper ones lack. Which features do you really need? What is your budget? How portable do you want the controller to be? Ease of use can go two ways. On the one hand a lot of functions and features can make things more complex. On the other hand, the more basic a layout, the more you will have to use the mouse to control features virtually.

Turntable   Mixer   Turntable

The Basic DJ Controller Layout

Above is an image of a mid-range Pioneer SR2. It gives us a visual of the basic DJ controller layout. Like a lot of models this controller can be divided in 3 parts. The left & right parts are the decks (the 'turntables') with the prominent jog wheel, and in the middle is the mixer.

If we look closer at the middle mixer section, we see it is again subdivided in 3 parts. The most left part (made orange) features knobs for the **EQ** (hi/mid/low), **Gain/Trim**, **Filter**, the **headphone cue**, and a **channel fader**. This left part controls the left deck, while the similar right side controls the right deck. In the middle of the mixer (made blue) we see volume knobs for the master, the monitor speakers, the headphones, and the sampler. Below that are indicators, allowing you to view the volume levels of the left and right channel and the master. At the middle bottom we find the **crossfader**, which many Ecstatic DJ's disable in the settings. It is easy to touch accidently, and the volume sliders will do the same. The crossfader is often used by DJ's who scratch.

If we look at the left deck, we see a big **jog wheel** or platter. This prominent wheel can be used in two settings: *slip* or *vinyl mode*. When **slip mode** is turned on you can use the jog wheel to regulate the speed of the track playing (beatmatching), or use it to scroll in a track. The **vinyl mode** turns the jogwheel in a turntable (for scratching). The **multi-colored pads** below the jog wheel have multiple functions from showing cue points, to using samples, to more advanced features as a slicer or pitch play. Right from the pads, colored in green, are dedicated buttons for **loops**. Above the jogwheel you find knobs and buttons for the **FX** (colored pink) and a **Tempo slider** (yellow). Of course, we can't forget the play/pause button on the bottom left. As you can see, we have not covered all buttons, but these will be more than enough to play your first DJ sets.

Headphones

There are a couple of considerations when choosing your DJ Headphone. When mixing, it is especially the lows and the highs that you need. Headphone drivers that are 40mm or larger give louder lows. Also look for a model that has an impedance range from 25 to 70 ohms, which is better suited for equipment with strong amplification. DJ headphones typically have single cord design for less tangles and booth accidents (no Bluetooth for obvious reasons). Coiled and/or detachable cords also help prevent damage when you accidently pull the cord.

Headphones receive a lot of abuse while DJing and traveling, so durability is high on the list. Look at the hinges and wire connections, are they solid? For transport, a folding design helps to prevent damage. Last, but not least, is comfort. DJ headphones should be comfortable. Check for headband padding, quality of the ear pads, and adjustability.

Sound System

A PA system stands for 'Public Address System', and refers to the sound system that amplifies your music. The most common components of a PA System are the main speakers, subwoofers, monitors, amplifiers, mixing consoles, cabling, sound sources (microphone, instrument).

SPEAKERS

PA speakers come in all shapes and sizes. There are three types of PA speakers: mains ('tops'), subwoofers ('bottoms') and (stage) monitors. Below you can read how these speakers work together.

The main speakers create the bulk of the PA's sound and are the minimum for a PA system. They are either placed on speaker stands or mounted on top of the subwoofers. The main speakers are full range, covering all frequencies, which they send out from either:

★ 2 built-in speakers: a 2-way system with highs above (tweeters) and lows below (woofer)

★ 3 built-in speakers: a 3-way system which adds a dedicated speaker for the mids.

The subwoofer is a specialized, powerful speaker for the lower frequencies. When you add a subwoofer to your PA system the lows (< 100Hz) in the music will be sent to the subwoofer, enabling the main speakers to focus on the mids and highs - this splitting of the signal is done by the crossover, often built in the subwoofer. The low soundwaves spread in all directions, so one subwoofer can already fill out the room (the highs and mids, in contrast, are directional and you have to position them very well). Adding a subwoofer can improve the overall sound quality, especially if you have a large space to cover with a lot of dancers. For smaller rooms & groups it is not a real necessity.

The main speakers and subwoofer are usually pointed away from the DJ booth towards the dancefloor. This means that the DJ does not hear the music in the same way the dancers do, which creates a problem when you adjust the sound. **Monitors** solve that problem. Monitors are speakers that are positioned near the DJ. They are on a separate mix than the mains and subs, so the volume can be adjusted. Most smaller venues do not have monitors. In those situations the DJ has to choose a good spot to hear the music, or alternatively use the headphones.

Speaker Placement

There is a whole science dedicated to how sounds affect a space. DJ's are not sound engineers, yet it still helps to know some simple rules of thumb when it comes to speaker placement.

- Place the main speakers (mid/top) on a pole above crowd head height. This way the sound can spread evenly across the space and not blast the closest people with the full sound, while the ones in the back miss out.
- Most common is to place the speakers on either side of the DJ booth, pointing into the crowd slightly.
- Always leave at least 30 cm up to one meter of 'breathing room' between the speakers and any walls or the ceiling.
- The general rule of thumb is to have a 2:1 ratio between tops and subs for medium-sized venues.
- If the space is not square, aim your speakers at the short side of the room.
- Place your subwoofer(s) on the floor below or somewhere near the main speakers. Since subwoofers only transmit low-range frequencies, they can be on the floor as the long waves will 'bend' and reflect around the people, and spread through the room, using the floor for extra vibration.
- Listen. Every space is different. The room size and the materials will determine how sound waves travel and reflect back off the walls, ceiling and floor. Some frequencies (lows, mids, highs) might be amplified or dampened.
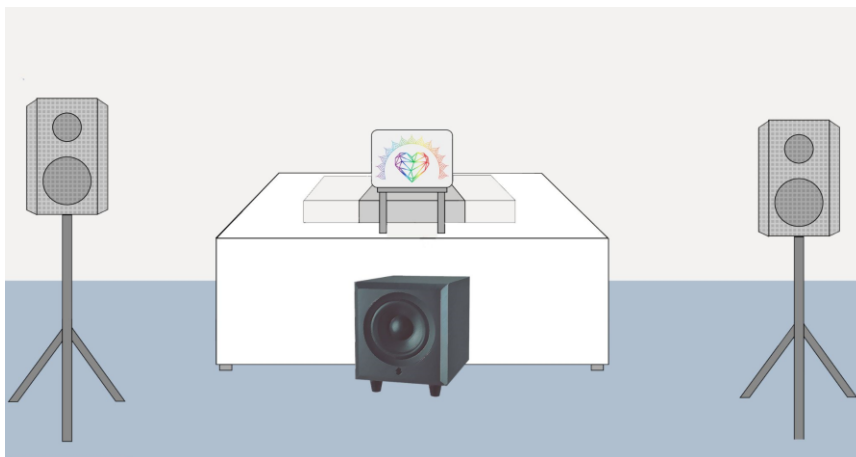
All speakers need amplification. **Active speakers** have an amplifier built into them. **Passive speakers** do not and require an external amplifier.

MIXER

Mixers come in all sizes, but basically it is a piece of hardware that allows you to combine various audio sources (channels), tweak the sound (EQ) and adjust or boost the volume. Mixers handle the signal flow, that is, the input and output (see image below).


Cable Guide

The PA system is connected by cables. This sounds obvious, but not having the right cables is a nightmare. Common DJ audio cables come in analog and digital versions. First, we look at the analog cables. Analog cables transport an electrical, analog signal. Analog cables come in balanced and unbalanced versions.

ANALOG CABLES

Unbalanced audio cables have two wires inside their plastic casing: a signal wire and a ground wire. The signal wire sits in the center of the cable and passes the audio signal through. The ground wire is wrapped around the signal wire and acts as a reference point and shields the main signal wire from external electronic interference. Unfortunately, the ground wire can also act as an antenna and can pick up unwanted noise along the way.

You recognize unbalanced audio cables by their connectors. There are two types:

1. *Standard TS (tip-sleeve) cable connectors*, here circled in red. Notice the one black ring. This is a mono cable.
2. *RCA cable connectors,* which are the red and white tulips often used in stereo setups, turntables and older audio systems.
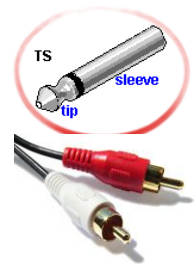
If you use unbalanced cables it is advised that they are no longer than 5 meter, this minimizes the risk of distortion. If power cables are present (which is often), do not let them run parallel with these cables. Better to let them cross perpendicular and separate them as much as possible.

Balanced cables have three wires inside the plastic casing: two signal wires and a ground wire, reducing the risk of distortion. The most common balanced cables are:

1. *TRS (tip-ring-sleeve) cable connectors,* such as those used for headphone jacks. Here circled in blue. Notice the 2 black rings. This is a stereo cable.
2. *XLR connectors* are typically used for microphones and speakers. XLR cables lock into place.
3. *SpeakON connectors* have a secure twist-lock mechanism and often used for live sound applications, connecting power amplifiers to loudspeakers

Both balanced and unbalanced cables come in varying qualities. With these analog cables the quality does matter as the signal is sensitive to interference. It is worth investing in cables that you use a lot.

DIGITAL CABLES
Digital cables transfer data (0's and 1's) rather than an analog signal, and are used between different digital devices. Digital cables do not suffer from noise or sound quality degradation (because of the clear binary signal). Cable quality is not an issue here and spending more money on your digital cable will not improve the sound quality.

1. *The digital coaxial cable* (S/PDIF) looks just like an RCA cable, because the two cables share the same connector. In fact, instead of the digital coaxial you can, in fact, use a regular RCA cable in its place.
2. *USB*. Most audio equipment, including mixers and controllers, use the USB B style connector and run at USB 2.0.
3. *Thunderbolt* is a fairly new digital connection. Found on gear that need speedy transfers, such as high-capacity hard drives.
4. *Midi*. Midi cables transport data using a language known as Midi (Musical Instrument Digital Interface). Often used with instruments like a keyboard.

As a DJ it is worth collecting a range of adaptor cables and adapters. They are small, often cheap, and can save the day (for example when a connection on a mixer is broken or a cable goes missing).

Before showing these adaptors, it is worth mentioning that all connectors come in a male and a female end. **Male connectors** fit into **female connectors**. In general, the female connection is built-in to the equipment you are plugging the cable into. Female connectors are also used as a means to extend two or more cables to create one longer one. Here are some common adaptors:

1. *2 x Male RCA to Stereo Male Mini-Jack*. Often used to plug smartphones into sound systems

2. *2 Female RCA to Male Stereo Jack.* Here shown as an adapter, but also available as a cable.

3. *XLR Female to Male Stereo TRS Adapter*. Might come in handy to connect a microphone / speaker cable to a mixer (without XLR).

4. *Female Mini Stereo Jack To 2 Male RCA.* In case you only have a jack cable and need to hook it up to a soundsystem.

5. *RCA Female to Mono Jack*. Common for plugging into a mixer.

6. *Mini Female Jack to Jack.* To connect your headphones.


How to Connect It All?

Below you see two examples of basic and common setups for an Ecstatic DJ. The first picture shows a setup where the DJ controller has the mixer, soundcard, and control buttons integrated, like the Pioneer SR2 that we saw above. Next, you see a setup with just a modular controller (NI Kontrol X1). This controller is a sophisticated mouse for the DJ program, and requires an external soundcard and/or mixer.
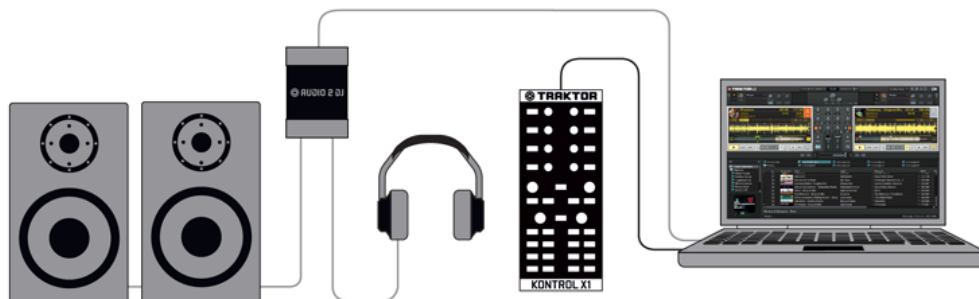
Setting Up Volume Levels (Gain Staging)

Setting up the volume levels is also known as the **gain structure or gain staging**. Gain is the process of increasing the amplitude of your signal, or 'making it louder'. When setting the gain structure, you make sure that an audio signal is at an optimum level from one stage to the next as the sound travels from your laptop to the speaker. If this is not done right, you might hear noise over the music, like a hiss or a hum, or the system 'clips' the loudest sound signals, leading to distortions.

Most DJ set-ups have four different stages where you can set the volume or gain:
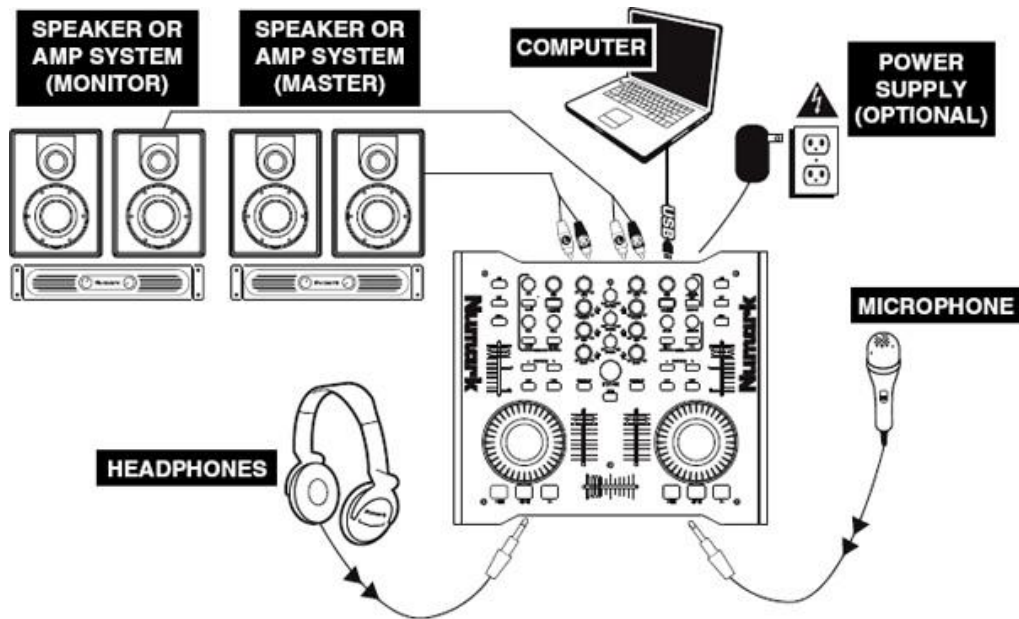
1. *Input gain:* Each channel on a DJ controller, DJ software, or mixer has a gain or trim knob which is usually found right above the EQ. This is used to compensate for any volume level differences between your tracks.

2. *Channel output fader*: Usually found below the EQ section of each channel on the DJ controller, DJ software, or mixer. The channel output fader is used to adjust the volume of each channel while mixing between tracks.

3. *Master output gain:* The master volume control on the DJ controller, DJ software or mixer. This sets the overall volume level of the DJ hardware you are using.

4. *Amplifier gain*: The volume level of the speakers (almost all speakers will have some form of volume control). You find the speaker volume control on the back of active PA speakers, or the volume control on a PA amplifier if using passive PA speakers.

In the picture above of the Pioneer SR2, you find the master level on top of the blue bar; the *fader* on the bottom of the orange bar; and the *gain/trim* on top of the orange bar. In the same picture, you see both the channel and master output meters on the bottom of the blue bar. Simpler DJ controllers lack these meters and then you have to check the DJ software.

Staging the gain gives your sounds enough room to breathe and maximizes dynamic impact (**headroom**). Setting all the gains at the max is a version of the *loudness war*, and will create a wall of sound. **Headroom** is the name for the amount of available gain you have between your current audio level and the maximum level your system can reach before distorting.

Where you want the meters to hit   Headroom   Clipping
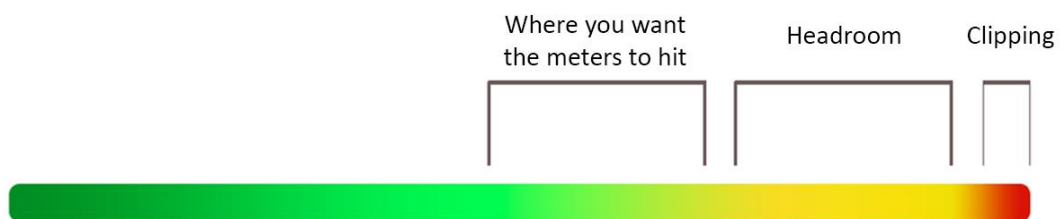
Follow these five steps to get the optimal sound.

1. Start with the gains turned all the way down. Now power everything on.

2. **Input Gain:** Play a track at a loud point and set the input gain on each channel so the volume is at 0dB, which is usually the top green LED on your channel output meters (see image below). This gives you headroom. Louder peaks like bass drums and snares will hit the yellow LEDs on your channel meter. Make sure your channel meters do not hit the red LEDs. That is when sounds are distorting.

3. Set the **channel output faders** all the way to the top

4. Set the **master output gain** also to 0dB (top green LED). Again, make sure the peaks hit the yellow and not the red LEDs on the master output meters.

5. Set the **amplifier gain** to 0dB. Some PA speakers or amplifiers have LED meters, if not slowly turn up the amplifier or volume gain until the 'clip/limit light' turns on, then slowly turn the gain down until the clip light no longer turns on. This will give you the loudest volume possible without distorting.

Now you have set the volume for the optimal sound. At this stage you can also use a decibel meter or app to measure the decibels. At the start of the set you often start softer so you can get louder later, or need some extra volume because more people come in. To adjust the overall volume throughout the set, use the control closest to the speakers. Usually, you do not have access to the amplifier gain, so next in line is the master gain.

To memorize this order more easily you basically follow the sound signal from the laptop to the speaker: channel gain > channel fader > master > amplifier. Reducing the volume happens in the opposite order.

No Sound?!

- Play a song in your headphones before raising the volume. This is to test whether the laptop and DJ controller work correctly. You should see the gain meters activate and hear the song in your headphones.
- Then follow the sound signal: is everything powered on and rightly connected with the cables? Cables and connectors can be broken, so check at each stage if you have volume.

Exercises to Practice

Beat Exercises:

- *Finding the beat* - take a few tracks (of different styles), take down the grid lines and the key/beat that your software provides, and simply listen. Count and find the first beat, see if it is a four bar beat -'Four on the floor' type of track, or if the time signature is different then 4/4.
- *Finding the backbeat*- this means (usually) the second and fourth beat in the bar, they are the 'weak' beats in the bar. While tapping see if you can count in your head, and tap with your hand the second and the fourth.
- *Doubling the beat (offbeat)* - You want to be able to count the beat and double it in your head - counting -1, 2, 3, 4 and then transforming it into 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 stating out loud the numbers and the sign & (in fasters beat this is quite challenging).
- *Creating the beat* - on your software metronome in your controller program or online, try to create different beats from easier ones such as - 60 Bpm (which is simply seconds), through 120 (doubling it) to 90, 35, 150, 180 Bpm. This will bring the rhythm into you in a more embodied way.
- *Mixing in beat (easier version)* - Taking two tracks and while watching the screen use the tempo slider to bring them both to an even and equal tempo and synced on the first beat (without the sync button).
- *Mixing in beat (harder version)* - Taking two tracks and **without** watching the screen use the tempo slider to bring them both to an even and equal tempo (without the sync button).

Key matching/Mixing

- *Make a playlist of matching keys* - choosing one key to start with going through all/most of the keys and ending again with the key you chose.
- *Key changes* - Take two tracks that are not harmonious with each other – A key difference of more than 4 degrees (for example 1m and 7d in Traktor) and find how to mix them together, or find a third track to bridge in between.
- *Change of atmosphere* - Consciously choose a track that has a different key (emotional atmosphere), to either mix, or transition into it after your previous track ended.

Creating Playlists

- If you already know very well your music library and created your 'classic' way of an Ecstatic playlist here are a few challenges/limitations to inspire creativity.
- Create a playlist that is composed of a specific Genre: House or Pop, Rock, Ambient. From only one genre, see if you could create the classic journey, and highs and lows of an Ecstatic Set.
- Creating a playlist that the BPM ranges from the slowest to the fastest one with only - 20, 15, or 10 BPM - which means if the slowest track is 60 BPM, the fastest one should not be more than 80 BPM.

In the next chapter, we will see how to serve and take care not only of the audience and dancers, but also to take care of yourself as a DJ, to notice what happens when you receive feedback, criticism and praise. How do we take care of the open and vulnerable place that we reach after finishing a set, and how do we continue to grow as an artist from here?

In Closing

The Vibe creates the Tribe

The Tribe creates the Vibe

In these chaotic times we need people that can tell a new story. A story that does not need words to convince, but that, in telling, opens a gate through which life can move forward. We are the weavers of those wordless stories. The threads we weave with are a longing for connection, a heartbreak, or a desire to let it all go. The tapestry we help to create, is never the same, even though it might look familiar. In weaving we connect past with present; connect artists with dancers; connect individuals with tribe. Our creations are always co-creations, not only with the dancers on the floor or the artist whose music we play, but also with the dance and the music of the moment.

Recently, we have seen how our dance practices are both vulnerable and resilient. The future is still unclear. However, each time we participate in an Ecstatic or Conscious Dance, we help to shape and define the movement. We do this as dancers, but especially when we take a role of leadership. A DJ is such a leader. She is a guide for those who embark on a Dance Journey. A leader, who above all, listens.

With Love,

Caroline, Tom & Leon

About Us

TOM GOLDHAND is a dancer, mover and group facilitator. In the last 15 years he shares his passion for movement with awareness, dance and Contact Improvisation in workshops, retreats and classes. He is the co-founder of Ecstatic Dance Amsterdam in 2011 together with DJ Shanto, DJ Kareem Raïhani and Dj Iradi, and was responsible for creating the ceremony leader role. He is the owner and manager of Sadhana Dance school for Dance & Improvisation. Tom holds a Master in Dance Therapy (DMT) and gives sessions for group development.
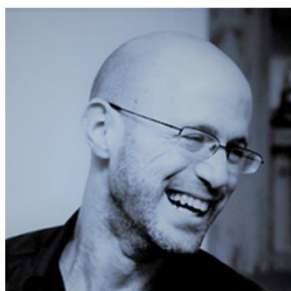
WWW.TOMGOLDHAND.COM

CAROLINE S'JEGERS is the co-founder of Ecstatic Dance Belgium. As a dancer, trainer and DJ, she uses music as poetry, while speaking the language of the body and listening to the heart's longings. The sounds of DJ CaroLine can be summarized in three words: uplifting, deep and soulful. As a psychologist (BA) and a cultural anthropologist (MSc), Caroline has absorbed herself for years in the deeper-lying healing aspects of dance across cultures. Bringing dance back to the land, Caroline envisions a future where community life flourishes and respect for Mother Earth deepens…

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LÉON BECKX Léon had his first taste of ecstasy as a teenager in the rave scene. There he found trance and tribe, which he missed once he became a psychologist (MSc). All changed in 2001 when he first danced the 5Rhythms. Captivated, he became a teacher in 2008 under the guidance of Gabrielle Roth. Besides teaching, he further trained in dance, somatics, and theater. From 2016 Léon worked as an Ecstatic Dance CL and DJ. Since 2006 Léon specialized as a lead facilitator in several community building methods and worked with marginalized groups around the world on bridging diversity and empowerment through workshops, community art, and by educating new facilitators.

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Let's Keep The Dance Going!