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COMMUNITY MUSIC
PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE
IN ITALY

1. Introduction

Community Music (henceforth, CM) has rapidly become one of the most innovative areas of music education and social practice,¹ especially abroad and, to a lesser degree, in Italy. Its strength lies in responding to special needs related to the educational sphere, the socio-cultural context at large, and the need for inclusion, integration, and social change.² The purpose of this article is to provide the reader with some perspectives on CM as a new field for music education and as a means of bringing about social change³ in Italy. First, CM and its implementation possibilities are presented as a new perspective for education and social change. In this section, reference is made to CM as a kind of social echo system in which themes of well-being,⁴ social capital generation,⁵ and social change⁶ are evident. The scope of this article is too limited to provide a detailed discussion of all subfields in which CM plays an important role. Then, the concept of ‘community’ and its importance for understanding CM is explored, followed by an exploration of the key concepts of ‘CM’, which help the reader understand the theoretical and historical background of CM. This is followed by a brief introduction to the Italian CM landscape and the efforts of

¹ K. ANDERSON - L. WILLINGHAM, “Environment, Intention and Intergenerational Music Making: Facilitating Participatory Music Making in Diverse Contexts of Community Music”, *International Journal of Community music*, 2020, XIII, n. 2, pp. 173-185.

² *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, ed. by B. L. Bartleet and L. Higgins, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018.

³ Internationally, many community music initiatives use music to address social justice issues. In this article, social change is highlighted through examples where social action occurs in a musical context - where inclusive and interactive musical activities that promote empowerment, social inclusion and justice are evident.

⁴ U. M. MACGLONE - J. VAMVARKIS - G. B. WILSON - R. A. MACDONALD, “Understanding the Wellbeing Effects of a Community Music Program for People With Disabilities: A Mixed Methods, Person-Centered Study”, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2020, n. 11, p. 3526.

⁵ T. W. LANGSTON - M. S. BARRETT, “Capitalizing on Community Music: A Case Study of the Manifestation of Social Capital in a Community Choir”, *Research Studies in Music Education*, 2008, XIII, n. 2, pp. 118-138.

⁶ T. C. RABINOWITZ, “The Potential of Music to Effect Social Change”, *Music & Science*, 2002, n. 3, pp. 1-6.

Italian scholars to introduce and embed CM in the academic landscape. Finally, the intersections, crossfield and ecologies of CM are discussed.

Veblen⁷ elaborates and highlights the different approaches of CM: Some countries or regions, such as Scandinavia, the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries (e.g. Australia and New Zealand), have a long history of promoting and supporting CM initiatives, while others, such as the United States, Canada and some European countries, host different types of CM organisations and networks. In countries such as Portugal, Japan, South Africa and China, the practice of CM is relatively new.⁸ The common element in all these experiences is the need to meet social and cultural needs through participation in musical practice in informal, non-formal and even formal contexts, developing and strengthening CM in different directions.⁹

The core aspects of *communities*, such as education and arts, cooperative learning, peer education, situated learning, intergenerational learning, place-based education, authentic and transformative learning, emerge from a similar orientation. While all of these approaches play a fundamental role in individual learning and education, they have the potential, with CM, to act as facilitators of events and activities to connect individuals and groups to the real world.¹⁰ CM encompasses very different forms depending on the context, as it manages to establish perspectives of meaning that are increasingly inclusive and open to the integration of new experiences, musical and otherwise.¹¹

Currently, activating educational pathways through CM means using music as a medium that can provide opportunities for cultural growth, individual and group empowerment, inclusion, and the reinforcement of new educational, social, and didactic orientations. In the context of CM, great importance is attached to the development of individual skills and abilities in educational contexts that are open to social change to co-construct a richer individual and social identity and enhance the relational capacity of all participants. The importance of “acting as a system” is emphasised, allowing for the action of different forces that are interconnected collaboratively.¹²

⁷ K. K. VEBLEN, “The Many Ways of Community Music”, *International Journal of Community Music*, I, n. 1, 2008, pp. 5-21.

⁸ B. L. BARTLEET - L. HIGGINS, “Introduction: an Overview of Community Music in the Twenty-first Century”, *The Oxford Handbook of Community Music* cit. pp. 1-13.

⁹ K. BOESKOV, “The Community Music Practice as Cultural Performance: Foundations for a Community Music Theory of Social Transformation”, *International Journal of Community Music*, 2017, X, n. 1, pp. 85-99.

¹⁰ A. COPPI, *Community Music: nuovi orientamenti pedagogici*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2017, pp. 138-144.

¹¹ A. KERTZ-WELZEL, “Daring to Question: A Philosophical Critique of Community Music”, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 2016, XXIV, n. 2, pp. 113-130.

¹² P. BOURDIEU, *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, p. 53.

The participation and direct involvement of families, organisers, teachers, educators, and institutions that are part of the project creates a new system that makes CM an indispensable instrument for education and integration.¹³ From this orientation comes active experimentation at the situated level, where new insights emerge both in terms of the practical applications of CM and at the theoretical level with studies aimed at identifying the intersections between the processes and outcomes of CM and other areas of educational and social knowledge.

There are many dimensions of CM, which are still new and unexplored. This article aims to capture the complexity and vibrancy that characterises CM and the diversity of perspectives. It aims to highlight experiences, contexts, studies and approaches that have made CM an innovative educational and research orientation. CM has the potential to develop social cohesion, cultural activation and the promotion of individual and community well-being through and in real musical experiences.¹⁴

2. Understanding the “community” of Community Music

The educational functions of music are closely linked to the social and cultural context in which these functions take shape: Music as a phenomenon becomes a *product* and a *process* that articulates itself in multiple forms and with different functions wherever there is human activity and communication.¹⁵ In education, *music* and *context* are rooted in the idea of community, as they are shaped by it.¹⁶ The latter is understood as a possible, concrete and positive response to the problems of the contemporary world. The concept of ‘community’ takes on different meanings depending on the place and context in which it is expressed. These meanings, in turn, deserve attention in terms of the history of the concept and its links to music and the mediating and developmental functions of CM, both in terms of sociality and the development of individual musical identity, and in terms of social cohesion and the co-construction of a network of relationships and a “sense” of *being* and *building* a *community*.¹⁷

The general reader might be familiar with the etymology of the Latin word *communitas*, which is derived from the conjunction of *cum* and *munus* and originally

¹³ L. CASTELLANO, “Collaborative Musical Experiences with Urban Families Experiencing Homelessness in the United States”, *Community Music at the Boundaries*, ed. by L. Willingham, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2021, p. 46.

¹⁴ L. DOZZA - L. CEROCCHI, *Contesti educative per il sociale*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2018.

¹⁵ A. COPPI, *Community Music: nuovi orientamenti pedagogici*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2017, p. 12.

¹⁶ R. A. NISBET, *La tradizione sociologica*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1966.

¹⁷ *La community music in Italia. Cenni storici, modelli pedagogici, contesti sociali*, ed. by J. van der Sandt, Roma, Carocci, 2019.

meant gift, which was intended as a duty or obligation and which ultimately denotes that which is not one's own, the opposite of one's own, that which begins where one's own ends.¹⁸ The *munus* which a *communitas* share is not a property or possession. It is not a possession but, on the contrary, a debt, a pledge, a gift to be given. In everyday language, 'community' is understood as a bond between persons who share experiences (including educational experiences), interests, social and cultural identities, places, spaces, and goals.¹⁹ It is against this background that the role of the socio-cultural experience of *community arts*, which emerged in the United Kingdom in the 1960s and focuses on group participation to promote group cohesion and social and artistic skills in a context that can be *formal*, *non-formal* and even *informal*,²⁰ should be understood. Within a community, it is possible to develop affective and emotional relationships, to meet and connect, where the sense of being part of a reliable and stable structure links the subjective dimension with the relational one.²¹

This *sense of community*²² is not static, as it can be subject to changes and influences, which in turn are determined by the experiences of the subjects who experience it in terms of similarity, interdependence, willingness to give to others, and sense of belonging. From the roots of community art, the first experiences of CM developed in the 1980s, giving rise to one of the most popular educational approaches in the challenging educational environment.²³ CM developed in the 1980s, first in England and later in the rest of Europe, as an approach that favours non-formal education, community education and collaborative learning, and promotes the enrichment of the lives of individuals and groups. Then, as now, this approach targeted people living in the same geographical area or sharing a common interest in developing spontaneous actions, opportunities, projects and reflections aimed at learning.²⁴ The close connection between CM and the concept of 'community' understood as a

¹⁸ A. COPPI, *Donare-Donarsi. La pedagogia della Community Music*, Lucca, LIM, 2020.

¹⁹ COPPI, *Community Music: nuovi orientamenti pedagogici* cit. p. 13.

²⁰ *Community arts* have often favoured the *non-formal* context, developing differentiated group dynamics and establishing *positive interdependence, cooperation* and *collaboration* as the basis for learning regardless of age, gender, or origin. See G. MCKAY, R. WILLIAMS, *Community Arts and Music, Community Media. Understanding community media*, London, SAGE, 2010, pp. 41-52.

²¹ COPPI, *Donare-donarsi* cit.

²² S. B. SARASON, *The psychological sense of community: prospects for a community psychology*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1974 (quoted in D. FRANCESCATO - M. TOMAI - G. GHIRELLI, *Fondamenti di psicologia di comunità. Principi, strumenti, ambiti di applicazione*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, [2002], p. 118).

²³ *Praxial Music Education: Reflections and Dialogues*, ed. by D. J. Elliot, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009.

²⁴ *La community music in Italia* cit.

“geographically situated idea of belonging”²⁵ that includes – among others – cultural, artistic, recreational, virtual, and imaginary dimensions. It encourages us to recognise how contemporary musical culture mirrors, reflects and shapes the social world and vice versa. By belonging to peer groups and non-formal groups and establishing informal relationships, participants acquire a form of *social capital* as they benefit from social and cognitive learning.

The construct of *social capital* defines the wealth of relations participants have at their disposal to achieve their goals.²⁶ It facilitates actors within the social structures they inhabit; it constitutes a resource for action, making it possible to achieve their ends. In this sense, the concept of ‘social capital’ helps to identify the strategies aimed at building stable and lasting social relationships while providing both material and symbolic support.

The last twenty-five years have seen a significant increase in interest in music education and research worldwide, involving various disciplines and perspectives, musical behaviours and practices. To date, music as an educational tool has been the subject of countless studies, as evidenced by a rich international literature that spans various fields of knowledge.²⁷ Ethnomusicology, musicology, sociology of music, pedagogy and didactics, psychology, neuropsychology, history and philosophy have all offered innovative research perspectives and opened up new and more complex functions of music.²⁸

As far as music and the arts are concerned, some crucial changes in music education in Italy must also be taken into account, with a general shift towards the teaching and learning of music for all stages of life, reflected in concepts such as ‘lifelong learning’, ‘life-wide learning’, ‘place-based education’, ‘authentic learning’ and ‘transformative learning’. These dimensions of learning consider society’s demand for flexible, broad-based and holistic educational development of individuals to enable open participation for all, regardless of their level of knowledge, ethnic background, social status or especially age.²⁹ CM identifies itself precisely in this participatory and democratic dimension, shaped and defined by specific social contexts. In this sense, as Giuseppina La Face reminds us,

²⁵ N. ANDERSON, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1923.

²⁶ N. DE PICCOLI, *Individui e contesti in psicologia di comunità*, Milano, Unicopli, 2007.

²⁷ H. WESTERLUND, “Justifying Music Education: A View from Here-and-Now Value Experience”, *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, XVI, n.1, 2008, pp.79-95.

²⁸ M. S. BARRETT - H. WESTERLUND, “Practices of Music Education and Learning across the Lifespan: An Exploration of Values and Purposes”, *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Arts Education*, ed. by G. Barton, M. Baguley, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 75-89.

²⁹ A. COPPI, “Musica e vocalità: pedagogia vocale e didattica della voce e del canto nei contesti formali, non formali ed informali”, *Didattica della musica. Fare e insegnare musica nella scuola di oggi*, ed. by S. Ferrarese, Milano, Mondadori, 2021.

It is difficult to provide an exhaustive definition of the many and complex phenomena that community music – a trend in the practice of music education implemented outside formal contexts – embraces: it can at least be said that, by stimulating participation and inclusion, it aims to play a connection role between the various formal, informal, and non-formal educational contexts.³⁰

Lee Higgins,³¹ a pioneer in the theorisation of CM, points out that:

Community music as a field of practice, pedagogy and research has come of age. Since 2012 the field has seen exponential growth in practices, courses, programs, and research as well as publications in the forms of books, chapters and journal articles [...]. This growth in practice and scholarship has also been reflected in network organisations for community music, for example, the International Society for Music Education (ISME), Community Music Activities Commission, the Asia Pacific Community Music Network and Sound Sense, the UK professional association.³²

CM proposes an active approach to music that focuses on practice from the very definition of music. The features and effects of CM on society are countless, ranging from the socio-cultural to individual and group music education and learning. The close relationship with the concept of ‘community’ plays a fundamental role in CM, as it underlines the sociological and cultural implications that characterise the approach and the novelty of this musical and pedagogical orientation in the Italian context.

3. *Community Music: Key concepts*

«Community music considers at least three dimensions: the music of a given community, the adoption of a particular musical repertoire, and a group of people who recognise themselves in the practice of that repertoire».³³ These are the words of Giuseppina La Face in the introduction to *Community Music in Italy*,

³⁰ G. LA FACE, “Introduzione”, in *La community music in Italia* cit., p.13-14; free translation by the authors.

³¹ L. HIGGINS, *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012.

³² *The Oxford handbook of Community Music*, ed. by B. L. Bartleet, L. Higgins, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018., p. 177. The UK professional association for community musicians was born in 1991, to support, promote and advocate for the many creative, highly-skilled and hardworking practitioners who make up the community music sector in the UK and abroad: <https://www.soundsense.org/>; see, among others, also *International Journal of Community Music*, <https://www.intellectbooks.com/international-journal-of-community-music>. Concerning CM in ISME, see <https://www.isme.org/our-work/commissions-forum/community-music-activity-commission-cma> (last access to these links and to the others in this contribution: 20.11.2021).

³³ LA FACE, *Introduzione* cit., p.13.

edited by Johann van der Sandt and published by FrancoAngeli in 2019. Despite the diversity of perspectives surrounding CM activities and their interpretation, it is believed that six common, interrelated aspects can be identified: (1) a careful and purposeful selection of musical repertoire; (2) the setting of goals that are shared with participants; (3) a clear and contextually appropriate approach that takes into account the characteristics of participants; (4) the promotion and development of exchanges between teaching and learning strategies, goals, and knowledge; (5) the facilitation of interaction between formal and informal educational contexts and socio-cultural contexts; and (6) the presence of a “guide” who coordinates group activities.³⁴ CM is based on active music-making - playing, creating and improvising music together. All genres and varieties of music can be used in cultural and artistic contexts, such as celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, games, education, and other occasions for social enhancement. Examples of CM can be found in various settings where there is a belief that everyone has the right and ability to make and create music.

Concerning educational planning, CM programmes typically develop a dimension of life-long learning and access for all. There is a strong awareness that all participants’ social and personal well-being are as important as (if not more important) than their musical learning in many of these programmes. Those who lead CM activities often emphasise music’s power to bring people together and nurture individual and collective identity. There are CM programmes that contribute to formal training courses in schools and universities. Other programmes focus on music and art therapy and social intervention through outreach in hospitals, childcare centres, prisons, and institutions working with people at risk or with disabilities as a limitation of their cognitive freedom.

Community music education pays thorough attention to creativity and the exploration of the self. In this regard, it should not be forgotten that CM lends itself to be applied in various contexts, targeting people of different ages, cultures, ability levels, socioeconomic status, and political or religious beliefs. Some programmes involve music practice targeted at disadvantaged or marginalised groups or individuals. Other programmes aim to provide purely aesthetic experiences, while others are directed to the well-being of ethnic minority groups as they enter a new host culture. Not surprisingly, therefore, CM is a holistic phenomenon involving a myriad of people, types of music, and contexts. Of course, we also see significant differences in how the global music community defines the role of CM professionals.

³⁴This classification by Antonella Coppi appears in the chapter “Modelli educativo musicali per il sociale. Community Music, una introduzione”, *La musica nella relazione educativa e nella relazione di aiuto*, ed. by L. Bertazzoni et. al., *Quaderni di Pedagogia e Comunicazione Musicale*, Macerata, EUM, n. 6, 2019, pp. 135-153.

CM develops competencies through planned and differentiated activities of ensemble music practice. CM is hence aimed at developing a sense of group belonging through integration and sharing; acquiring new knowledge through cooperative learning; responding to individual and social needs through self-determination and socialisation; promoting respect for individual and cultural diversity; and fostering the formation of a musical self-identity.³⁵ CM provides opportunities for music education through cooperative learning, a method based on group collaboration to achieve a common goal through in-depth work and learning processes that lead to the construction of new knowledge. Cooperative learning, therefore, refers to those situations that allow individual learning (the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or attitudes) while performing activities carried out in well-organised groups.³⁶

Another aspect that distinguishes CM programmes is professional or semi-professional musicians (facilitators) as leaders of the music-making activities. In CM programmes, the musical leaders, or community musicians, use their skills to emphasise and encourage active participation, showing sensitivity to the context, ensuring equal opportunities, and displaying commitment to diversity in their practice.³⁷

Community musicians are typically flexible as they act as a prompter, mentor, catalyst, and coach while drawing on their expertise and experience as music educators, performers, arrangers, and artists. Given these realities, it is easy to see why Lee Higgins³⁸ refers to CM practice as a continuous series of “border crossings”. According to Higgins,³⁹ the above is embodied in the concept of ‘hospitality’. CM is an *act of hospitality* concerning the participants’ actions and desires, the context, the dimensions of learning, and community musicians. Hospitality starts with an act of *welcoming*, a word whose etymology derives from the term *wilcuma* (welcome) that indicates a polite greeting to someone. *Wilcuma*, in its turn, includes the words *willa*, which means pleasure, desire, choice, and *cuma*, which means guest and is related to *cuman* (to come). Therefore, welcoming is a gesture towards the others, which in CM practices is of vital importance. It concerns all necessary arrangements for the participants to set up a favourable context of openness towards those who wish to approach

³⁵ D. W. MCMILLAN - D. M. CHAVIS, “Sense of Community: A Definition and a Theory”, *Journal of community psychology*, 1986, XIV, n. 1, pp. 6-23, quoted in COPPI, *Community Music: nuovi orientamenti pedagogici* cit., p. 42.

³⁶ G. BONAIUTI - A. CALVANI - M. RANIERI, *Fondamenti di Didattica. Teoria e Prassi dei Dispositivi formativi*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, pp. 113-114.

³⁷ L. HIGGINS, *The Community Music Facilitator and School Music Education*, Oxford Handbooks Online (September 13, 2012): <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199730810.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199730810-e-30>

³⁸ L. HIGGINS, *Community Music: In Theory and in Practice* cit., p. 67.

³⁹ *Ivi*, p.68.

CM and experience music actively and creatively. Everyone is welcome and has an equally essential and indispensable role: any kind of discrimination or prejudice is discouraged, and no one should assume the leading role or establish hierarchies.⁴⁰ Social integration, collaboration, social inclusion, participation, social and human capital are keywords for making music together. They offer a vision of a hospitable, cohesive, connected, evolving, transformative, open to diversity, and collaboratively community to build a better society.

4. Community Music in Italy

In Italy, some projects and activities use music as a tool for social development, and that meet the criteria to be considered active and successful CM fields of practice; however, they are not yet formally classified as CM projects. Some notable examples can be found in community singing or collective singing in nursing homes, prisons, convalescent communities, community and church choirs. In addition, they serve as valuable examples of regional projects that provide music-making activities in non-formal and informal contexts, reflecting the cultural life of a geographical community, a newly created community or an imagined community.⁴¹ In this context, Van der Sandt⁴² conducted a study among community choirs in Alto Adige/South Tyrol to investigate the role of singing in the well-being of the participants. His research shows that building social relationships through singing is an important area, as participants see singing in the choir as a way to enhance their opportunities to socialise and develop social skills. The study highlights some key aspects of collective singing activities - the perceived cognitive, emotional and social benefits indicate that Italian community choirs contribute significantly to participants' well-being. Coppi⁴³ conducted a qualitative study examining the changes, advantages and disadvantages for participants in choral singing in an intergenerational context in Alto Adige/ South Tyrol. Coppi's study confirms that intergenerational singing together catalyses social, educational, and psychological growth that promotes awakening, engagement, and learning

⁴⁰ *Ivi*, p.145.

⁴¹ K. VEBLEN - B. OLSSON, "Community Music: Toward an International Overview", *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, ed. by R. Colwell and C. Richardson, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 730-753.

⁴² J. T. VAN DER SANDT, *Singing your way to well-being*, [Unpublished manuscript], Bolzano, Faculty of Education, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, 2021.

⁴³ A. COPPI, *Going to the Source: an investigation on Lifelong Learning improvement through the Intergenerational choral activities in South Tyrol*, [Unpublished manuscript], Bolzano, Faculty of Education, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, 2019.

incentives. Another study by Van der Sandt⁴⁴ examined the effect of collective singing on building social capital in communities of adults. This study was a comparative study between adult community choirs in Alto Adige/South Tyrol, Italy and adult community choirs in South Africa. As in Langston and Barrett's study,⁴⁵ Van der Sandt found that the groups in each region tended to be strongly cohesive and identified with a "new" form of community. Moreover, shared history and interests linked the groups to significant collective benefits from individuals' cultural activities; these benefits contribute to strong social cohesion leading to significant social capital formation.

Van der Sandt and Coppi conducted a study on the perceived benefits of singing for members of Italian university choirs.⁴⁶ Their study shows that members of Italian university choirs perceive participation in the choir as beneficial to their health. The perceived emotional, social, and cognitive benefits were highlighted in promoting participants' health and well-being. For most participants, choral singing provides an ideal opportunity to expand their musical knowledge by participating in an environment that promotes intellectual appreciation of music, thus presenting cognitive benefits as the predominant dimension. As a prerequisite for high-quality performance, the development of singing skills also proved to be an essential aspect for the choristers.

Community activities promoted by the 'third sector'⁴⁷ are active and successful in Italy. Non-profit associations, foundations and autonomous groups offer valuable programmes that involve a wide range of participants, from early childhood to older adulthood and in some cases even on an intergenerational level. There is an awareness of the need to include disenfranchised and disadvantaged individuals or groups in such programmes. In this respect, the *Big Band Associazione culturale Opus Music & Art* (OMA)⁴⁸ in Sardinia and *Banda di via Mozart*,⁴⁹ a project of the Social Services of Bolzano, Alto Adige/South Tyrol, a project of the Social Service of Bolzano, Alto Adige/South Tyrol, are suitable examples of CM, where active music-making

⁴⁴ J. T. VAN DER SANDT, *Community Singing: a pathway to Social Capital – a cross-cultural comparative assessment of the benefits of singing communities*, [Unpublished manuscript], Bolzano, Faculty of Education, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, 2019.

⁴⁵ LANGSTON - BARRETT, "Capitalizing on Community Music cit.

⁴⁶ J. T. VAN DER SANDT - A. COPPI, *I cori e le orchestre universitarie oggi. Quando fare musica diventa un'esperienza trasformativa*, Lucca, LIM, 2021.

⁴⁷ 'Third sector' is an umbrella term covering various organisations with different structures and purposes, belonging neither to the public sector (i.e., the state) nor the private sector (profit-making private enterprise).

⁴⁸ See <https://www.ichnusa.org/italia/sud-sardegna/carbonia/opus-music-a-art-28oma-29/>

⁴⁹ F. SORDON - C. NARDI - A. PIATTE, "Community music, benessere sociale e cittadinanza culturale in un'area urbana decentralizzata: un progetto dell'Azienda Servizi di Bolzano", *La community music in Italia. Cenni storici, modelli pedagogici, contesti sociali* cit., pp. 97-125.

plays a crucial role.⁵⁰ Coppi also reported on the activities of MUS-E and Mus-e Italy Onlus.⁵¹ MUS-E (Musique Europe), founded by Yehudi Menuhin, is a European multicultural project aimed at children to combat exclusion and social discomfort in schools through artistic workshops based on different art forms. Coppi highlights the successes of Mus-e Italy Onlus⁵² in bringing arts education into the daily education of young children, especially those living in disadvantaged or challenging environments. The programme enables professional artists to share their passion and knowledge in schools, where they work with teachers to incorporate music, dance and visual arts into the curriculum. The aim is to stimulate new, creative ways of thinking in the youngest members of society and combat the development of violent, racist, or socially excluding behaviours and attitudes. Mus-e Italy offers music workshops for children, allowing them to explore the essential elements of musical language - sound and silence - and to use musical elements to create an original and meaningful musical product.

Through interactive and entertaining activities that encourage participants to make their musical contribution without having prior musical knowledge, it helps develop the ability to listen to and perceive music. Community musicians encourage all members of a group to engage in individual musical experimentation through *improvisation*. In the practices of CM, improvisation can be used in suitably adopted stages from childhood to old age. For people with disabilities, it can be a way of experimenting and a teaching method that enables social and cultural exchange (thus removing barriers and supporting equal opportunities policies for all). It brings people together and stimulates creativity, participation and collaboration among those involved. Improvisation is the art of composing texts on the spot, composing music in the act of performance, i.e. in real-time, using whatever material/instrument/object is available. Michele Biasutti defines the art of improvisation as the ability to “undress” from technique, to let yourself be drawn in by everything that surrounds you, to listen deeply to your intimate instinct. It is the art of the *tightrope act*, the ability to compose in the immediate moment. Improvisation is an essential activity for developing metacognitive strategies and offers the opportunity to break out of habitual patterns through creativity.⁵³ This is evident in the Italian homes for the elderly “Korian RSA Crocetta”,⁵⁴ where community musicians facilitate the development of adaptation processes to an unfamiliar environment, people and situations through musical creativity. Improvisation facilitated by the community

⁵⁰ VEBLEN, “The many ways of community music” cit.

⁵¹ COPPI, *Community Music: nuovi orientamenti pedagogici* cit., pp.138-144.

⁵² See <https://www.mus-e.it/>.

⁵³ M. BIASUTTI, “Improvisation in Dance Education: Teacher Views”, *Research in Dance Education*, XIV, n. 2, pp. 120-140.

⁵⁴ See <https://www.korian.it/potere-della-musica-korian-rsa-crocetta/>.

musician reduces stress and aggression, increases well-being and self-esteem, and lends itself as a tool for developing social activities based on intrinsic motivation, collaborative learning, concentration, the ability to analyse and synthesise.

CM can also be seen as an innovative paradigm for *teaching and learning music*. By teaching music in homogeneous communities composed of disadvantaged and marginalised people, community development is evident in the many ensembles that are active in this regard. There is a growing interest in CM, especially in Northern Italy, where the first “Community Music Research Platform” was recently established at the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. Moreover, since 2016, the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano has been promoting an annual international conference that focuses on a different theme each year⁵⁵ and aims to implement CM from a music education perspective, thus involving educators, teachers, musicians and professionals working in special education centres, educational institutions for children and music therapy centres.⁵⁶ Furthermore,

⁵⁵ See <https://communitymusic-italy.it/>. A notable initiative concerning networking with other professionals (educators, teachers, professors, researchers) to compare theoretical models, methods and practices is the first Italian CM website, launched in 2018. It aims to provide educators, community musicians, researchers and professionals with a virtual place to compare notes, exchange ideas and opinions, and discuss projects and research on CM-related topics in Italy. The sections “Active Research Projects” and “Projects in Action” testify to a specific study area constantly updated with new experiences such as community singing and community opera. The entire website is bilingual (Italian and English), which increases accessibility and international visibility.

⁵⁶ Many musicians and scholars have shown a great interest in the pioneering experience of the Faculty, stimulating a lively debate that began with the choice of the name for this educational model, which retains its original, untranslated form. Many Italian scholars share the original English terminology ‘community music’ to avoid changing the holistic concept of CM by translating it into Italian, which would significantly limit its scope. In order to promote CM in Italy, the Master’s programme in Musicology has included in its curriculum, starting from the academic year 2016/2017, a 60-hour course in which students can familiarise themselves with the theoretical and practical aspects of CM from an international perspective. The offer of CM in this field also includes the world of music practitioners: in 2018, CESFOR Bolzano launched a training course entitled ‘Community Music Trainer (CMT). The 120-hour course spans an entire year and includes monthly classes on weekends (nine in total). It culminates in a four-day summer school at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano with workshops and other practical activities. This training is aimed primarily at musicians, music teachers, music entertainers, theorists of music education, psychologists, psychotherapists and educational psychologists. The course, which provides theoretical and practical tools, aims at the new professional profile of the *community musician* specialised in the design, management, monitoring and review of collective music projects in educational and social contexts.

we can mention the *Sistema delle orchestre e dei cori giovanili e dei bambini in Italia*,⁵⁷ launched in 2010 on the initiative of Maestro Claudio Abbado as a Venezuelan programme inspired by El Sistema provides free music education to Italian children and young people. Choirs and orchestras work in formal, non-formal and informal contexts in different *Nuclei* (educational areas) throughout the country. The educational strategy is based on the principle of “from practice to theory” – participants learn by doing in an environment where close cooperation between musicians (participants), educators, families and institutions plays a crucial role in improving society; the local community becomes part of the educational system, bringing together people of different cultural and economic status. The musical educational outcomes are as important as the social outcomes; the subjective experiences of the participants in an interactive and creative environment are seen as critical concepts for the holistic development of the participants and the community⁵⁸. From the perspective of traditional music education, the tension between formal and informal education has much in common with the classical dichotomy between theory and practice. The relationship between theories of socially shared learning and theories of cognitive development is treated as incompatible, rather than acknowledging and making productive use of differences in focus, methods and empirical work.⁵⁹

As Karin Veblen argues,

Music teaching and learning in outreach settings of various communities have been emphasised as an alternative to music education in schools and universities. The issue of formal/informal training has its starting point in these alternatively based research perspectives. Furthermore, methodological models and techniques borrowed from ethnomusicology and related fields have influenced music education and teacher training research.⁶⁰

A final but very notable example of community music is the echoing of the voices of Italians from their windows and balconies as an expression of solidarity and perseverance during the first Covid-19 lockdown.⁶¹ This may be an

⁵⁷ See <https://www.federculture.it/sistema-delle-orchestre-e-cori-giovanili/>.

⁵⁸ A. COPPI - J. T. VAN DER SANDT, “Musica per tutti. Community Music as Meaningful, Emancipatory, and Affirming Alternatives to Formal Music Education in Italy”, *Community Music at the Boundaries*, ed. by L. Willingham, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2021, p. 206.

⁵⁹ VEBLÉN - OLSSON, “Community music: Toward an international overview” cit., p. 740.

⁶⁰ Ivi p. 741.

⁶¹ A. COPPI - J. T. VAN DER SANDT, “Andrà tutto bene! Musicking together and apart. The role of popular music and singing during the Covid-19 period in Italy”, *Journal of Popular Music Education* (in press).

unplanned, unstructured event of community singing, but a compelling one nonetheless. Social distancing has far-reaching implications for individuals, as it limits our relationships with others and our access to communal spaces where contact is typically made, such as religious, sporting or cultural activities. This sudden change in lifestyle brought social interaction to a halt, and leisure time was abundant but without the opportunity to socialise. Singing from the windows and balconies marked the determination of Italians to maintain communal ties. This can be seen as maintaining ties to one's community and as an expression of the need for a social bond to strengthen one's well-being. People experienced losses in human capital,⁶² cultural capital,⁶³ and social capital.⁶⁴ However, as Putnam reminds us that social networks in which social capital is created are constantly changing and adapting to new circumstances⁶⁵ – so singing from windows and balconies can be seen as a new network in which social capital can be created. “Balcony singing in solidarity spreads across Italy during lockdown, creating a collaborative community that makes music together”:⁶⁶ the international community sees Italians addressing feelings of loneliness and fear in this particular way as an inspiring phenomenon in response to social distancing laws. According to Greenberg and Gordon,⁶⁷ this need to socialise and connect, especially through music, is a fundamental feature of being human and can even be seen as a global social psychology experiment that provides insight into the core of our humanity.

⁶² L. YAROVAYA - N. MIRZA - J. ABAIDI - A. HASNAOUI, “Human Capital Efficiency and Equity Funds’ Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic”, *International Review of Economics and Finance*, n. 71, 2002, pp. 584-591.

⁶³ X. BONAL - S. GONZÁLEZ, “The Impact of Lockdown on the Learning Gap: Family and School Divisions in Times of Crisis”, *International Review of Education*, 2020, LXVI, n. 2, pp. 1-21.

⁶⁴ C. O. JEAN-BAPTISTE - R. P. HERRING - W. L. BEESON - H. DOS SANTOS - J. E. BANTA, “Stressful Life Events and Social Capital During the Early Phase of COVID-19 in the US”, *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 2020, II, n. 1.

⁶⁵ R. D. PUTNAM, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Renewal of American Community*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 2000.

⁶⁶ V. THORPE, “Balcony Singing in Solidarity Spreads Across Italy During Lockdown”, *The Guardian*, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/14/solidarity-balcony-singing-spreads-across-italy-during-lockdown>.

⁶⁷ D. M. GREENBERG - I. GORDON, “Lockdown Singing: the Science of Why Music Helps Us Connect in Isolation”, *The Conversation*, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/lockdown-singing-the-science-of-why-music-helps-us-connect-in-isolation-137312>.

5. Community Music: Intersections, crossfield, and ecologies

It is now widely recognised that music can act as a “bridge” between the individual and the community. It is important to emphasise how music, as a participatory force, can stimulate collective energy by fulfilling a positive and unifying and sometimes even a comforting function. Music overcomes barriers by bridging different cultural, social, economic, political and religious backgrounds: thanks to its power, music reconciles differences by promoting dialogue, evoking memories, stimulating the participant and enabling new experiences. Music lends itself as a place and time to build solid and interdependent relationships.⁶⁸ Music has the power to positively influence the lives of individuals.⁶⁹ It is, therefore, an indispensable resource for human completeness and individual and community well-being. In other words, music is not just an acoustic phenomenon but a *multimodal* experience deeply embedded in culture, the result of human creativity, which in turn is informed by other aspects of human experience, becoming an art product to be enjoyed aesthetically.

Carl Dahlhaus⁷⁰ states that music can be understood as an activity with an aesthetic nature and artistic relevance. As a phenomenon, it is closely linked to a symbolic dimension that can represent other *objects* such as character or emotion. Music enables a direct experience and knowledge of the world around us. Music is not simply something that happens to us; it is an act: it is what we do with it⁷¹ that enables us to liberate music from its artistic qualification, which would limit it to an elitist perspective, and give it back its “natural place in everyday experience”.

More than in the past, music needs to develop an *intra- and interdisciplinary dialogue* to connect the countless avenues of musical knowledge with other disciplines, hence offering current and innovative perspectives. This would stimulate a new *multidisciplinary dialogue* linking musicologists, ethnomusicologists, education scholars, music educators, experts in disciplinary didactics, psychologists, anthropologists, and musicians, to open up paths of communication and openings that are necessary to fully take advantage of the complex knowledge that music embodies and the benefits it can offer.

⁶⁸ *The Routledge Reader on the Sociology of Music*, ed. by J. Shepherd, K. Devine, London, Routledge, 2015.

⁶⁹ M. CARROZZO - C. CIMAGALLI, *Storia della musica occidentale*, Roma, Armando Editore, 2001, III, p. 81. See also *Praxial Music Education cit.* and HIGGINS, *Community Music. In Theory and Practice cit.*

⁷⁰ C. DAHLHAUS - H. H. EGGBRECHT, *Che cos'è la musica*, Italian ed. by A. Bozzo, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1988.

⁷¹ N. COOK, *Music, Performance, Meaning: Selected Essays*, London, New York, Routledge, 2017.

The debate around CM highlights the need to develop new avenues of inquiry to foster *connections* and *interdependencies* between music and other fields of knowledge. Music as a human endeavour is only possible thanks to the existence of a complex and multifaceted body of knowledge that, as Franco Cambi reminds us,⁷² offers itself as a powerful mediator and organiser, accessible from our earliest prenatal experiences to maturity thanks to the accessibility of its grammar and syntax and the rich interplay of semantics, aesthetics and culture. When we interpret *music* as an event, an experience, an inferential and asemantic language, and a creative and artistic human product, we also affirm a relational perspective that comes into play when the logic of contrast, comparison, discontinuity and asymmetry that underpins the specific identity of music emerges in the enjoyment of music itself.⁷³ This dimension shapes specific behaviours of social life and makes human artistic expression an integral part of individual and community life.

As Adorno recalls in his twelve lectures, collected in the volume *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie (Introduction to the Sociology of Music, 1968)*, dedicated to clarifying the relationship between music, ideology and social class and representing one of the first fundamental theoretical approaches to the social potential of musical language:

Music is in itself social. Society is ingrained in its meanings and categories. Aesthetic and sociological questions about music are interwoven indissolubly and constitutively. [...] Nothing that is aesthetically valid in music is also socially true [...], and no social content of music is valid if it is not aesthetically subjectivised.⁷⁴

CM reflects and updates this perspective thanks to musical experiences initiated and performed by the participants so that they can enjoy these experiences aesthetically and use them to support change in their community.⁷⁵

CM has gained influence today thanks to the development of exchanges with other fields of knowledge on an intra- and interdisciplinary level while at the same time establishing a deeper connection with the *time* and *context* in which it operates.⁷⁶ Thanks to the potential of music and the possibilities of group

⁷² F. CAMBI, “L’epistemologia pedagogica oggi”, *Studi sulla Formazione/Open Journal of Education*, 2008, pp. 157-163.

⁷³ B. OLSSON, “Social Issues in Music Education”, *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education* Dordrecht, Springer, 2007, pp. 989-1006.

⁷⁴ Translated from T. W. ADORNO, *Introduzione alla sociologia della musica* (italian version of by G. Manzoni), Torino, Einaudi. 2002. p. 240.

⁷⁵ *Community music today*, ed. by. K. K. Veblen, D. J. Elliott, S. J. Messenger, and M. Silverman, Toronto, Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2013.

⁷⁶ K. K. VEBLLEN, “The Tapestry: Introducing Community Music”, *Community music today*, ed. by. K. K. Veblen, D. J. Elliott, S. J. Messenger, and M. Silverman, Toronto, Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2013. p. 11.

interaction, CM is the manifestation of the individual and the community, offering itself as a bridge between the symbolic and evocative reach of music as art and personal experience. It is this dimension of “sharing” of CM that supports the strong web of relationships that characterises the distinction between the *I* and the *We*, and at the same time responds to the individual’s need for “enjoyment” and for an aesthetic pleasure that takes participants beyond their contingency and uncertainty and invites them to participate in something “autonomous, self-contained, and wholly self-referential” – *absolute music*.⁷⁷

6. Conclusion

Music is a powerful tool to empower citizens in a multicultural society and to overcome many challenges of the 21st century.⁷⁸ Contrary to the suggestion of Juliet’s famous quote “What is in a name...” that names in themselves have no value or meaning and merely serve as a label to distinguish one thing or person from another,⁷⁹ we firmly believe that CM is an entity worthy of social and political recognition, as well as a worthy field of musicological research and a valuable tool in the educational arena.

Efforts to define CM can be seen as early as 1916 when Dykema attempted to define the term.⁸⁰ Dykema’s brief reference to CM as socialised music, music for the people and music by the people, is an apt point of view for us. “What is in a name...” – is not so much the name of a new thing as of a new point of view. This new viewpoint is to be seen with a focus on research to determine how CM efforts can bring about social change and contribute to individuals’ well-being, social development, and integration.

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⁷⁷ M. E. BONDS, *Absolute music: The history of an idea*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁷⁸ *21st-Century Innovation in Music Education: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference of the Music Education Community (INTERCOME 2018), October 25-26, 2018*, ed. by K. S. Astuti, G. G. McPherson, B. Sugeng, N. Kurniasari, T. Herawan, T. C. Drake & A.C. Pierewan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, Leiden, The Netherlands, CRC Press/Balkema, [2020].

⁷⁹ D. LUCKING, *The Shakespearean Name: Essays on “Romeo and Juliet”, “The Tempest”, and Other Plays*, Bern - New York, Peter Lang, 2007.

⁸⁰ P. W. DYKEMA, “The Spread of the Community Music Idea”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1916, LXVII, n. 1, pp. 218-223.