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CHANGING LIFE: HISTORICAL MUSICOLOGY AS A STRATEGIC TOOL IN THE ITALIAN COMMUNITY MUSIC PERSPECTIVE. A CASE STUDY

1. Introduction

In 2021, this journal published an article on Community Music (CM) in Italy, exploring its origins as a practical musical approach designed to address educational needs.¹ Rooted in the cultural context and driven by the need for social change, Community Music has proven to be an important tool for promoting cultural enrichment and social change. Indeed, the CM approach has recently experienced a significant upswing based on four fundamental concepts:² Community, Context, Participation and Pedagogy. These pillars form the theoretical framework that characterises ongoing discussions both globally and in Italy. This increased focus has opened new dimensions for theoretical-scientific reflection and linked CM to other fields of knowledge. Musicology, in particular, has turned its attention to CM, especially concerning the theoretical aspects of ensemble music practice.

While our previous article aimed to provide some perspectives on CM as an emerging field in music education and a potential catalyst for social change in Italy,³ this paper explores recent developments. Specifically, it focuses on the progress made in research over the last ten years, emphasising new tools for historical musicology⁴ research and the new possibilities of research that have

Antonella Coppi is the author by the paragraphs: “1. Introduction”; “2. Community Music: Interconnections, Relationships and Interdependencies”; “3. Community Music and Art Music: Historical Musicology as a Strategic Tool of CM”. Johann van der Sandt is the author by the paragraphs: “4. The Benefits of Singing: A Survey of South Tyrolean Community Choirs”; “5. Research Design”; “6. Results and Discussion”. The Authors have shared the Conclusion.

¹ For more details see J. VAN DER SANDT - A. COPPI, “Community Music: Perspectives on a New Model for Music Education and Social Change in Italy”, this journal, 2021, XI, pp. 23-39, <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2039-9715/13971> (last access to this link and to the others in this essay 11.10.2024).

² G. LA FACE, “Prefazione”, in *La Community Music in Italia. Cenni storici, modelli pedagogici, contesti sociali*, ed. by J. van der Sandt, Rome, Carocci, 2019, pp. 13-17.

³ J. VAN DER SANDT - A. COPPI, “Community Music” cit., p. 23.

⁴ D. BEARD - K. GLOAN, *Musicology. The Key Concepts*, New York, Routledge, 2005. In this publication the role of historical musicology, which focuses on the study of cultivated music through historical methods, is emphasised. These include the use of

opened up in CM over the last three years, especially on the topic of singing and choirs on which we are going to concentrate. However, these developments can include new aspects such as Community Opera, which is gradually becoming a focus of musicological study and is reinforcing the notion of places as geo-cultural entities.⁵

Community Singing and Community Music Therapy have emerged as fascinating areas of research, with studies continuing uninterrupted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These investigations have increasingly drawn attention to community music's various functions and intersections, especially in philosophical, musicological, ethnomusicological and philological fields; the latter focuses on the repertoires used in CM, while the sociology, pedagogy and psychology of music help shape this new, less-researched knowledge.⁶ Due to its versatility, CM can be connected to musicological positions such as, for instance, those formulated by Enrico Fubini and even earlier by Claude V. Palisca in 1990:⁷ these scholars emphasised an integrative approach in musicology, highlighting its ability to connect various areas of knowledge in order to reconstruct, illuminate, and explain the complex, multifaceted nature of music.⁸ This approach aimed to reconstruct, illuminate and develop a broader and more complete understanding of music. In particular, it argued that musicology, at the end of the 20th century, should use its ability to connect and integrate multi-layered musical knowledge to explain the prismatic and complex phenomenon of music itself.⁹

primary sources such as musical scores, textual documents, archival materials, and visual records. Rather than limiting itself to the history of musical compositions alone, historical musicology also examines the individuals (like composers, patrons, and publishers), groups (such as audiences), and institutions (courts, churches, academies, and concert organizations) that have shaped the ongoing evolution of cultivated music.

⁵ P. BESUTTI, "Il contributo della musicologia alla definizione dell'Abruzzo come entità geo-culturale", in *La storiografia musicale meridionale nei secoli XVIII-XX. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi (Avellino, 24-26 ottobre 2019)*, ed. by A. Carocchia, Avellino, Il Cimarosa, 2020, pp. 293-312.

⁶ For more details see: A. COPPI, *Community Music. Nuovi orientamenti pedagogici*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2017; *La Community Music in Italia* cit.; L. HIGGINS, *Community music. In Theory and in Practice*, Oxford - New York, Oxford University Press, 2012; L. HIGGINS - L. WILLINGHAM, *Engaging in Community Music: An introduction*, Milton Park, Taylor & Francis, 2017; *Community Music Today*, ed. by K. K. Veblen, S. J. Messenger, M. Silverman, and D. J. Elliott, New York, Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

⁷ C. V. PALISCA, "Interdisciplinary Trends in American Musicology" in *Tendenze e metodi della ricerca musicologica. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Latina 27-29 settembre 1990)*, ed. by R. Pozzi, Florence, Olschki, 1995, pp. 1-10.

⁸ E. FUBINI, "Introduzione/Introduction", in *Le discipline musicologiche: prospettive di fine secolo, Rivista Italiana di Musicologia*, 2000, XXXV, n.1-2, pp. 3-19.

⁹ *Ivi*, p. 4

This article aims to contribute to this topic through an organisation in two parts. Firstly, it examines the importance of historical musicology in the context of CM, and secondly, it provides discernments from a recent research project at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. The latter calls attention to the foundational elements of Community Singing to foster music education, particularly from a dissemination perspective and emphasises the role of singing in promoting social change, growth, and the overall well-being of individuals and communities.

2. *Community Music: Interconnections, Relationships and Interdependencies*

As Paola Besutti reminds us:

The capacity of historical musicology to promote its own interpretative strategies is vital if we expect any dialogue with the disciplines that collaborate in the production of human knowledge. [...] Serious reflection on music is needed, but also important that historical musicology should give specific answers on a range of subjects (contemporary musical creativity, aesthetic judgement, amateurism and professionalism, the cultural formation of musicians and others, the stratification of repertoires, political commitment and music, humanistic *otium* and commercial disengagement), also in view of the fact that the statistics show an increase in the consumption of 'classical' music (concerts and operas), despite competition from television, cinema and other forms of entertainment.¹⁰

In this context, two *basic themes* stand out. Both focus on the connections and the mutual roles shared by CM and historical musicology. On the one hand, they emphasise the unique characteristics and convergences in the Italian context; on the other hand, they present historical musicology and CM as complementary instruments in shaping music education to promote citizenship and belonging to the cultural and social identity.

In this framework, our reflection on CM has developed into an independent and multifaceted field of research, sited especially at the Universities of Bozen-Bolzano and Potenza. Due to its adaptable nature, characterised by different cultural and social factors, the definition of the fields of study and application of CM remains challenging. As Giuseppina La Face¹¹ observes, CM, emphasising participation and inclusivity, seeks to unite formal, non-formal, and informal educational settings.¹² CM focuses on three core elements: the music practised

¹⁰ P. BESUTTI, "Storia della Musica e Musicologia in Italia nell'età della 'rivoluzione' storiografica/History, Music and Musicology in Italy in the Age of the Historiographical 'Revolution'", in *Le discipline musicologiche* cit., pp. 21-106: 103-104.

¹¹ LA FACE, "Prefazione" cit.

¹² *Engaging in Community Music* cit. The term 'educational' is used here to refer to an approach aimed at the growth of the individual, as a future citizen.

within a given community, the various repertoires employed, and the group's collective identity that connects with these repertoires.

As Dinko Fabris notes, it is a challenge to catalogue all areas of musicology, as the discipline has spent almost two centuries adapting its principles and methods to changing worldviews and moving from a Eurocentric focus to a more global perspective. About five years ago, Daniel K. L. Chua, former president of the International Musicological Society (IMS), initiated a movement known as *Global Musicology*, which he first introduced during his presentation at the International Conference *Global Musicology - Global Music History*, titled *Global Musicology Has No Key*. Chua's forward-looking approach, which promotes open dialogue and discussion within the international musicological community, finds a platform in the journal *Musicological Brainfood*, where, from the very first issue, he has stimulated discussions about different global perspectives in musicology rooted in the personal identities of musicologists around the world.

This broader global discourse overlaps significantly between musicology and CM. The two fields may be separated by their chronological development, but they share a common rationale: an open, unrestricted discussion of music, its role and its functions. CM is not isolated but closely linked to other academic fields, as it addresses different facets of human life and reflects cultural, political and social contexts.

By referring to the outcomes of CM as “cultural artefacts” and its processes as catalysts for social change, we also recognise its educational and transformative function as defined by Mezirow.¹³ Based on a historical-aesthetic understanding, this transformative potential can only be fully realised through the reconstruction of meanings and values – a task in which historical musicology plays an essential role.

3. *Community Music and Art Music: Historical Musicology as a Strategic Tool of CM*

Using the ‘art music’ repertoire in educational and didactic contexts is becoming increasingly common in active CM initiatives. This is particularly evident in intergenerational contexts, where such repertoires represent a strong reminder of the historical musical heritage that characterises communities and continues to evolve. This is further illustrated in a later paragraph discussing the results of a study on community singing in South Tyrol. These CM practises are embedded in an open, shared, inclusive and democratic perspective based on

¹³ J. MEZIROW, “A Critical Theory of Adult Learning and Education”, *Adult Education*, 1981, XXXII, pp. 3-23.

egalitarian approaches to music-making and participation. They reflect the culture and context in which they are realised, as Veblen¹⁴ noted in 2002.

CM's pedagogical guidance (educational counselling) aims to promote individual growth. As La Face reminds us, music's cognitive-cultural, affective and aesthetic functions are powerful tools for promoting the personal development of young citizens, and only by encouraging increasingly complex and intellectually fruitful repertoires of 'art music' can they promote historical knowledge and cultural development.

In line with Franco Cambi's and David Elliot's perceptions, this approach cultivates a historical and cultural awareness that educates and empowers younger generations¹⁵ to develop a strong sense of identity by engaging with the rich, intellectually stimulating repertoire of the past and present.

Music education is closely linked to the general education system and suffers from outdated teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches. In this context, the CM approach, with its diverse and customised interventions, has the potential to be an effective tool. However, its effectiveness requires exceptional didactic expertise, remarkable adaptability and a deep understanding of the tools and the materials, especially the nuances of the 'art' repertoire.

Higgins illustrates how the CM approach, which did not initially focus on formal music education, has changed over the past decade. Today, it combines the rigour of quality music education and professional music-making with the democratic and creative spirit inherent in CM. This development has paid particular attention to blended teaching and learning methods. Initially influenced by Freire's ideals emphasising socially oriented educational goals, CM has integrated constructivist and pedagogical activism to develop educational models in synergy with the social environment.¹⁶ The educational aim of CM is to remove barriers to participation and engage individuals in rigorous but stimulating musical learning activities. These endeavours are underpinned by situated pedagogical philosophies that draw on the skills of Sen and the psychological understandings of Csikszentmihalyi,¹⁷ providing a solid theoretical foundation consistent with the principles of lifelong learning.¹⁸

¹⁴ K. VEBLLEN, "Apples and Oranges, Solar Systems and Galaxies: Comparing Systems of Community Music", in *Proceedings of the 2002 ISME Commission on Community Music Activity*, Rotterdam, NK, 2002.

¹⁵ F. CAMBI, review of C. Di Bari, *La neo-Bildung negli Usa. Autori e modelli di pedagogia critica*, *Studi sulla Formazione*, 2019, XXII, n. 2, pp. 521-522.

¹⁶ *Donare-donarsi. Relazioni, interdipendenze e inclusione nella pedagogia della Community Music*, ed. by A. Coppi, Lucca, LIM, 2020.

¹⁷ M. CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, "Creativity and Genius: A Systems Perspective", in ID., *The Systems Model of Creativity: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*, Berlin, Springer, 2014, pp. 99-125.

¹⁸ The topic applied to 'art music' and music education is developed by Lori A. Custodero, Professor of Music, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York,

To ensure their effectiveness, community musicians must undergo professional training that equips them with a wide range of high-level competencies. These competencies should begin with a solid grounding in pedagogically orientated historical musicology and extend to related fields such as sociology, ethnomusicology, anthropology and philosophy. A recent 2020 study¹⁹ in England shows a growing trend: students enrolled in CM programmes at colleges, conservatoires, and universities demand the inclusion of music history, classical repertoire, ethnomusicology and music sociology in their curricula. This underscores an undeniable educational need that historical musicology must meet.

These demands represent only a fraction of the challenges that historical musicology presents CM. In turn, CM offers significant enrichment to musicology as a discipline, primarily based on music as a shared cultural good practised and enjoyed within a community.

4. *The Benefits of Singing: A Survey of South Tyrolean Community Choirs*

Community choirs are important in South Tyrol, Italy, as they bring together people from different language groups. With more than 900 choirs, the activities of the German South Tyrolean Choir Association and the Italian South Tyrolean Choir Association testify that these choirs unite people from different linguistic backgrounds in the province. In this paragraph and the following ones, we present the results of a 2020 study that examined the vital role of these choirs and the positive effects of singing on the well-being of their members. This emphasises the importance of preserving and celebrating South Tyrol's rich cultural and linguistic diversity.

Reimer,²⁰ Koelsch and Siebel²¹ and others have explored the unique nature of singing as a form of human expression. Koelsch and Siebel suggest that music and language share common developmental pathways in the brain, particularly in early childhood. They suggest that language might be a specialised form of music. While our knowledge of prehistoric music is limited, the universality of singing across traditional societies suggests it is one of humanity's oldest forms

USA. For further studies: L. A. CUSTODERO, "Perspectives on Challenge: A Longitudinal Investigation of Challenge in Children's Music Learning", *Arts and Learning Research*, 2003, XIX, pp. 25-53.

¹⁹J. J. PORTON, *Contemporary British Conservatoires and Their Practices: Experiences From Alumni perspectives*, Doctoral dissertation, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2020.

²⁰ B. REIMER, "The Experience of Profundity in Music", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 1995, XXIX, n. 4, pp. 1-21.

²¹ S. KOELSCH - W. A. SIEBEL, "Toward a Neural Basis for Music Perception", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 2005, IX, n. 12, pp. 578-84.

of expression. Nardi²² emphasises the power of music to bring people together by expressing emotions and beliefs, while Reimer²³ accentuates the connection between humans and their existence in a world that both includes and transcends them. Hallam's research²⁴ focuses on the health benefits of singing, including enhanced non-musical skills, social development, literacy, self-esteem, creativity, and health. She identifies six key benefits: well-being, relaxation, improved breathing, emotional uplift, and boosts to heart and immune health. Scientific research increasingly supports these health benefits. Thoma et al. (2013),²⁵ Sanal and Gorsev,²⁶ Clift and Hancox have all contributed to understanding the arts' role in health promotion.²⁷ Clift and Hancox argue that the arts significantly improve health and life strategies, with singing particularly beneficial. Sanal and Gorsev found that choral singing reduces anxiety and enhances emotional states.²⁸ Thoma et al. demonstrated singing's positive effects on stress responses.²⁹ Van der Sandt and Bocchi emphasise the importance of group singing in early education for developing soft skills.³⁰ Bailey and Davidson's studies³¹ on homeless and marginalised groups show that singing boosts physical

²² C. NARDI, “‘Non è più la mia canzone’: dalla musica per ascensori alla tortura”, in *Pratiche, prodotti, eventi musicali e analisi sociologiche*, ed. by L. Del Grosso Destretri et al., Trento, Sedico, 2009, pp. 299-324.

²³ B. REIMER, *The Experience of Profundity in Music* cit.

²⁴ S. HALLAM, “The Power of Music: Its Impact on the Intellectual, Personal and Social Development of Children and Young People”, *International Journal of Music Education*, 2010, XXXVIII, n. 3, pp. 269-289.

²⁵ M. V. THOMA - R. LA MARCA - R. BRÖNNIMANN - L. FINKEL - U. EHLERT - U. M. NATER, “The Effect of Music on the Human Stress Response”, *PLoS One*, 2013, VIII, n. 8, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0070156>.

²⁶ A. M. SANAL - S. GORSEV, “Psychological and Physiological Effects of Singing in a Choir”, *Psychology of Music*, 2014, XLII, n. 3, pp. 420-429.

²⁷ S. M. CLIFT - G. HANCOX, “The Significance of Choral Singing for Sustaining Psychological Well-Being: Findings From a Survey of Choristers in England, Australia and Germany”, *Music Performance Research*, 2010, III, n. 1, pp. 79-96; IID., “The Perceived Benefits of Singing: Findings from Preliminary Surveys of a University College Choral Society”, *The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 2001, CXXI, n. 4, pp. 248-256.

²⁸ SANAL - GORSEV, “Psychological and Physiological Effects of Singing in a Choir” cit.

²⁹ THOMA - LA MARCA - BRÖNNIMANN - FINKEL - EHLERT - NATER, “The Effect of Music on the Human Stress Response” cit.

³⁰ J. VAN DER SANDT - B. BOCCHI, *Il canto nella scuola dell'infanzia. Una ricerca in Alto Adige*, Lucca, LIM, 2021.

³¹ B. A. BAILEY - J. W. DAVIDSON, “Adaptive Characteristics of Group Singing: Perceptions from Members of a Choir for Homeless Men”, *Musicae Scientiae*, 2002, VI, n. 2, pp. 221-256; EAED., “Amateur Group Singing as a Therapeutic Instrument”, *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 2003, XII, pp. 18-32; EAED., “Effects of Group Singing

energy, well-being, and self-esteem, fostering social bonds and cognitive stimulation. Byrd and Levy³² exemplify the role of music in teaching social justice. As investigated by Dore et al., community arts programs promote inclusivity and social capital.³³

5. Research Design (methodology and sample)

A survey was conducted within South Tyrolean community choirs to explore the impact of choral singing on the well-being of its participants. The survey gathered quantitative and qualitative data, including socio-demographic details and singers' perceived cognitive, social, and emotional benefits from their choral activities. Additionally, the survey explored aspects of social capital among the participants. To allow for a more personal expression of views, open-ended questions were included, enabling respondents to share their opinions. Additional qualitative understandings were gained through semi-structured personal interviews and focus groups, which enabled a deeper understanding of the singers' experiences and perceptions. These discussions, guided by a mind map, centred on three key themes: the perceived musical benefits of singing, its social benefits, and its impact on personal well-being.

The study investigated the perceived benefits of participation in community choirs among 806 individuals, including 553 women (66.2%) and 253 men (33.8%). Using a phenomenological approach, the study allowed participants to share their experiences in a detailed and personal way. This design allowed them to express themselves beyond the constraints of the researcher's framework, resulting in more affluent, narrative comprehension.

6. Results and Discussion

The study underlines the critical role that choir participation plays in the South Tyrolean community and spotlights its significant contribution to the general well-being of its members. Participants see the cognitive, social and emotional benefits of choral singing as essential to their daily lives.

and Performance for Marginalized and Middle-Class Singers”, *Psychology of Music*, 2005, XXXIII, pp. 269-303.

³² D. C. BYRD - D. L. LEVY, “Exploring Social Justice Through Music”, *APS Observer*, 2013, XXVI, n. 4, <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/exploring-social-justice-through-music>.

³³ C. DORE - S. GILLET - J. PASCAL, “Community Singing and Social Work: A New Partnership”, *UNESCO Observatory for Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts*, 2010, II, n. 1, pp. 1-22.

Cognitive Benefits – Several authors³⁴ have already studied the cognitive benefits of choral singing and hypothesise that the cognitive demands of singing distract from daily worries. This distraction helps singers focus, learn and take a mental break from routine tasks. Our study supports this hypothesis, as it shows that participants view participation in a choir as a valuable opportunity to expand their musical knowledge. Other authors have underlined the crucial role of improving singing skills in cultivating positive attitudes towards music and encouraging choral participation:³⁵ they claim that a positive self-concept, reinforced by membership in a choir, contributes directly to a more positive attitude towards music. The skills acquired through singing strengthen this self-concept and promote a positive attitude towards music and musical independence. The study by Livesey et al.³⁶ shows that choral singing increases mental and social well-being. The participants described it as both mentally stimulating and a helpful escape from everyday stress, and they emphasised the cognitive benefits of singing. As previously referred to in this article, La Face's remarks on the cognitive-cultural, affective and aesthetic functions of music are also reflected in the results of our study, which show that the use of the art music heritage of Italian music is a powerful tool to promote the personal development of citizens. Participants expressed a preference for singing 'art music' repertoire because it makes them feel connected to their culture and heritage, and they experience cognitive growth through singing such music.

³⁴ *Choral Singing, Well-being and Health: Findings from a Cross-national Survey*, ed. by S. M. Clift, G. Hancox, I. Morrison, B. Hess, D. Stewart, G. Kreutz, Canterbury, Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, 2008; *Singing and Health: A Systematic Mapping and Review of Research on Singing and Health*, ed. by S. Clift, G. Hancox, R. Staricoff, C. Whitmore, Canterbury, Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, 2008. CLIFT - HANCOX, "The Significance of Choral Singing for Sustaining Psychological Well-Being" cit.; IID., "The Perceived Benefits of Singing: Findings from Preliminary Surveys of a University College Choral Society", *J R Soc Promot Health*, 2001, CXXI, n. 4, pp. 248-256, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11811096/>.

³⁵ See: C. P. MIZINER, "Attitudes of Children toward Singing and Choir Participation and Assessed Singing Skill", *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 1993, XLI, n. 3, pp. 233-245; D. J. SIEBENALER, "Factors that Predict Participation in Choral Music for High-School Students", *Research and Issues in Music Education*, 2006, IV, n. 1, pp. 1-8; J. N. SVENGALIS, *Music Attitude and the Preadolescent Male*, Doctoral dissertation, The University of Iowa, 1978, *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A. Humanities and Social Sciences*, XXXIX, 8, 1978, p. 78.

³⁶ L. LIVESEY - I. MORRISON - S. CLIFT - P. CAMIC, "Benefits of Choral Singing for Social and Mental Well-being: Qualitative Findings from a Cross-national Survey of Choir Members", *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 2012, XI, n. 1, pp. 10-26.

Finally, scholars such as Vanderbeck, Worth,³⁷ and Bostrom³⁸ emphasise the importance of intergenerational learning in choirs. They argue that singing in a community setting promotes understanding and respect between different generations, thus strengthening community cohesion. They also call attention to the importance of an environment that enables effective communication between generations, enhancing trust and relationships. Our data show that choir members value singing with different generations as it promotes dialogue, shared learning and mutual understanding. In choirs where at least two generations are represented, most members see the choir as a unique space to learn how to communicate effectively with younger and older people.

Emotional benefits – Sloboda and Juslin have underlined the profound influence of music on emotions, noting its uplifting effect on mood and self-esteem.³⁹ Emotions are a cornerstone of human existence and play a crucial role in our actions, perception, memory, learning and decision-making processes. Research conducted by Hou and Chen, Eerola and Vuoskoski has also shown that music can convey and evoke a wide range of emotions, with these emotional reactions being closely linked to the aesthetic value, impact and content of the music.⁴⁰ Although the exact mechanisms behind the transmission of emotions through music remain complex and are not fully understood, the link between music and our emotional experiences is undeniable.

Singing, in particular, triggers emotional responses through various channels. For example, it can release negative emotional energy⁴¹ or express positive emotional energy.⁴² The majority of participants in this study described

³⁷ R. VANDERBECK - N. WORTH, *Intergenerational Space*, London, Routledge, 2015.

³⁸ A.-K. BOSTROM, “Intergenerational Learning in Stockholm County in Sweden: A Practical Example of Elderly Men Working in Compulsory Schools as a Benefit for Children”, *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 2003, I, n. 4, pp. 7-24.

³⁹ A. SLOBODA - P. N. JUSLIN, “Psychological Perspectives on Music and Emotion”, in *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research*, ed. by P. N. Juslin, J. A. Sloboda, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 71-104.

⁴⁰ Y. HOU - S. CHEN, “Distinguishing Different Emotions Evoked by Music via Electroencephalographic Signals”, *Computational Intelligence and Neuroscience*, 2019, II, pp. 1-18; T. EEROLA - J. K. VUOSKOSKI, “A Comparison of the Discrete and Dimensional Models of Emotion in Music”, *Psychology of Music*, 2001, XXXIX, n. 1, pp. 18-49.

⁴¹ M. BENSIMON - D. AMIR - Y. WOLF, “Drumming through Trauma: Music Therapy with Post-traumatic Soldiers”, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 2008, XXXV, pp. 34-48.

⁴² J. MAKSIMAINEN - J. WIKGREN - T. EEROLA - S. SAARIKALLIO, “The Effect of Memory in Inducing Pleasant Emotions with Musical and Pictorial Stimuli”, *Scientific Reports*, 2018, VIII, n. 1, pp. 1-12.

their experience of choral singing not only as an enjoyable artistic activity but also as a vital emotional outlet.⁴³

Synchronised singing offers notable psychological benefits, particularly its ability to blur the boundaries between the individual and the group, fostering a sense of unity and connectedness.⁴⁴ Singers often report that they experience intense emotions during choral activities such as rehearsals and performances. Bailey and Davidson's study also underlines the positive effects of group singing on emotional and social processes.⁴⁵ Many participants in our study reported feeling invigorated and in a more positive state of mind after their time in the choir.

Social Benefits – We have already pointed out the profound effects that music can have on the intellectual, social and personal development of children, according to the Hallam report of 2010.⁴⁶ As a communal art form, music, mainly through choirs, facilitates situated learning via shared musical activities. The inherently social nature of choirs, often rooted in local contexts and occurring in participants' homes, exemplifies social participation. This environment nurtures learning through social interaction even before cognitive processes and conceptual understanding come into play. Regelski and Gates argue that a critical approach to music education must account for socio-musical contexts, stressing the significance of social engagement in the learning process.⁴⁷

Similarly, other researchers⁴⁸ give prominence to the crucial role of community involvement in enhancing social well-being. Our study reveals that most choristers highly value the sense of belonging and social life associated with being part of a choir, emphasising the pivotal role of community participation in fostering a sense of belonging.

⁴³ B. EHRENREICH, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, New York, Metropolitan Books - Henry Holt and Company, 2006.

⁴⁴ BAILEY - DAVIDSON, "Adaptive Characteristics of Group Singing" cit.; EAED., "Amateur Group Singing as a Therapeutic Instrument" cit.; EAED., "Effects of Group Singing and Performance" cit.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ HALLAM, "The Power of Music" cit.

⁴⁷ *Music Education for Changing Times: Guiding Visions for Practice*, ed. by T. A. Regelski - J. T. Gates, Dordrecht - Heidelberg - London - New York, Springer Science - Business Media, 2009.

⁴⁸ B. M. NEWMAN - B. J. LOHMAN - P. R. NEWMAN, "Peer Group Membership and a Sense of Belonging: Their Relationship to Adolescent Behavior Problems", *Adolescence*, 2007, XLII, pp. 241-263. A. H. BALSNES, "Hospitality in Multicultural Choral Singing", *International Journal of Community Music*, 2016, IX, n. 2, pp. 171-189; EAED., "Singing for a Better Life: Choral Singing and Public Health", in *Music and Public Health: A Nordic Perspective*, ed. by L. O. Bonde, T. Theorell, Cham, Springer, 2018, pp. 167-186.

A study by Duay and Bryan⁴⁹ further underscores the importance of social connections in group musical activities, noting how these activities help participants forge close relationships with friends and acquaintances. They suggest that musical ensembles like choirs can effectively address the need for social connection by creating networks that mitigate social isolation. The findings of this study align with these observations, with participants expressing that the relationships they develop within the choir are invaluable to them.

Choirs have the potential to significantly enhance both the social capital and personal development of their members. The social network within a choir, along with shared goals and mutual trust, creates a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing personal challenges and family matters. The results of this study underline the critical importance of trust and personal growth in cultivating a positive and nurturing environment.

One interesting research showcases the social benefits of synchronisation in music-making, suggesting that shared goals and a focus on collective outcomes foster a strong sense of belonging.⁵⁰ This synchronisation of movements is linked to an increased propensity to share and assist one another, reflecting a prosocial attitude.

Finally, Higgins and Willingham⁵¹ have emphasised the importance of inclusion in understanding CM, particularly in choral settings. Inclusion thrives in participatory cultures where individuals feel their contributions are valued and experience a deep sense of social connectedness. The results of our study indicate that choirs provide an environment of unconditional acceptance, where individuals are valued without judgment, regardless of their background.

7. Conclusion

The relationship between historical musicology and community music is a rich and complex field of research, showcasing how grassroots musical engagement has significantly influenced academic musicological thought. In recent years, contemporary musicology has developed from the dominance of historical musicology of the early 20th century into a broader, more diverse field. One of the most notable trends in international contemporary musicology is the increasing use of interdisciplinary approach. Musicologists are drawing on theories and methodologies from a range of fields, approaching music studies as a vibrant, dynamic, and evolving cultural practice, ever-evolving that interacts with social, political, technological, and global factors. These developments have

⁴⁹ D. L. DUAY - V. C. BRYAN, "Senior Adults' Perceptions of Successful Ageing", *Educational Gerontology*, 2006, XXXII, n. 3, pp. 423-445.

⁵⁰ E. PEARCE - J. LAUNAY - A. MACHIN - R. I. DUNBAR, "Is Group Singing Special? Health, Well-being and Social Bonds in Community-based Adult Education Classes", *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 2016, XXVI, n. 6, pp. 518-533.

⁵¹ *Engaging in Community Music* cit.

enriched the discipline, allowing it to speak more directly to contemporary issues and engage with the full breadth of musical expression across time and context.

Over the last thirty years, we have seen the rise of related disciplines such as the sociology of music, music theory, psychology of music, and ethnomusicology, each flourishing alongside and often intersecting with historical musicology. This expansion, including more systematic and scientific studies of music from different cultures and civilisations, has prompted scholars to re-evaluate their ethnocentric views and biases.

Community music has become a key focus in this broader approach to musicological study. Bringing to the fore inclusivity, accessibility, and social impact, it challenges many traditional views of historical musicology. Research, such as the studies on community singing in South Tyrol, illustrates how these initiatives enhance individual and collective well-being by fostering social bonds, self-confidence, and personal expression. This intersection of social engagement and music is essential for historical musicologists, particularly those who see the value in placing musical practices within a larger cultural and socio-political context.

As CM grows as both theory and practice, it has also fuelled the expansion of historical musicological research. Scholars are now keen to understand the intricate dynamics of grassroots musical activities. Beyond promoting individual and communal well-being, community music plays a vital role in music education and the preservation of cultural heritage. These programs encourage active participation and foster a deeper appreciation for the arts, inspiring future generations of musicians and music lovers alike.

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