

PAOLO SOMIGLI
Bozen-Bolzano

MUSIC DIDACTICS AT THE FREE UNIVERSITY OF BOZEN-BOLZANO

In this paper I will introduce some aspects of the teaching programs in music pedagogy and music didactics for school teaching (Kindergarten and primary school) at the Faculty of Education Science of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (henceforth Unibz). Although linked to a specific setting, these programs can provide food for thought and working suggestions that can be useful when tackling the rather complicated issue of music training for teachers who lack a specific musical education, as is generally the case with pre-school teachers and primary school teachers.

Unibz is a non-state university in Trentino – Alto Adige/Südtirol (South-Tyrol), an Italian region where three different cultural and linguistic groups (German-, Italian- and Ladin-speaking) coexist. The institution is financed by the “Autonomous Province of Bozen” and has deep connections with the South-Tyrolean territory. This connection has an impact on many aspects of academic life. Among them, we should mention the designing of the teaching programs at the Education Faculty, which have to respond to the needs of the schools in the area. The South-Tyrolean school system is very peculiar indeed: on the one hand, the three linguistic communities have different school administrations within the common framework of the Italian educational system; on the other hand, the different cultural and educational traditions deeply influence school programs, which are actually quite different from each other.¹

In this context, the Education Faculty has to provide teaching programs consistent with the general Italian school legislation and the peculiar demands of the territory, as well as the local guidelines for school programs. Furthermore, it has to periodically check, and eventually revise its didactic proposal, in order to be adequate to them.

As I mentioned, Unibz has to reconcile national and local demands. It will therefore be useful to bring to mind some aspect of the training, which teachers are required to do in Italian universities. In general terms, since 2011

¹ The implications of the territorial status, which I have briefly sketched here, for the musical, and pedagogical-musical, domain are the subject of a three-year research project, which I have carried out in collaboration with sociologist Ilaria Riccioni (2011-14), and which was financed by the Education Science Faculty, entitled *Music Culture and Social Function of Music in South-Tyrol*. The results have been published in the volume *Sociology of Music and Its Cultural Implications*, ed. by I. Riccioni and P. Somigli, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2015.

the education, which Italian students have pursued in order to prepare for pre-school and primary school teaching, has been condensed into one five-year, single-cycle master's degree. In order to obtain the title, which qualifies students to teach, each student has to earn 300 credits. Credit computation is standard all over Europe, and is based on the relation between classroom hours and study hours. In theoretical courses, the latter are the vast majority; in practical courses (workshops/laboratories), however, the ratio may be inverted. As far as music is concerned, the Ministry's tables indicate 9 compulsory credits, to be divided into two theory courses and one workshop. This looks like a convenient, economic solution: thus distributed, 9 credits correspond to 70-80 classroom hours and require only one teacher. However, this amount of hours is utterly inadequate: most students start out with poor music training and will not come to master the discipline to such a degree as to be able to teach it.

Given this situation, in 2011 the Faculty of Education, in particular the group of music lecturers and teachers I belong to (supervised by Franz Comploi), compiled a curriculum that met the Ministry's requirements in terms of credits, and at the same time drastically increased the number of teaching hours. In fact, it included one theory course and three laboratories. This was made possible by the special status of the University as a non-state institution. However, following extensive debate in the media and institutions, in 2015 the Faculty launched a major overhaul of its programs, involving in this process not only its academic staff, but also representatives of institutions such as the Provincial Commission for Education, South-Tyrolean teachers, and school administrations, in order to upgrade its didactical offer in 2017. The first results of this rethinking were presented in a public press conference early in October 2016.

Both in the old and in the new system, music courses are introduced in the second and third year, and involve both theoretical and practical activities, both listening and production. During the second year, students attend a general course and a workshop. The purpose of both these activities is to make students acquainted with the basic aspects of music and its didactics. The general course is essentially based on a combination of musicological research, music theory and didactics: students address key issues in music education for schools (characters, functions, methods, etc.) and they get to know an essential core of art music works, which can also be employed in a school setting. In the workshop, alongside the theoretical course and as an integration of it, we aim at imparting domain-specific knowledge, to be acquired directly through didactic training. In the "old" system, students used to learn the rudiments of music (sound parameters, bar, tempo, scales and keys, etc.) through instrumental and vocal training activities, which, according to state and provincial guidelines, have to be carried out in school classrooms (a model that is rooted in well-established historical methodologies, primarily those of Orff and Kodály). In the new system, the laboratory aims at preparing students for the teaching activity in Kindergarten. During the third year of the old system, two more

workshops expanded and consolidated the literacy process. One of them addressed production, with the help of the “Orff Instrumentarium”; the other focused on music and motion, and was based on the use of the body as a means of communication and comprehension in music performance and listening (Jaques-Dalcroze etc.). In the new course system, third-year students will have to take a follow-up theoretical course and attend a new laboratory workshop on primary school work. The courses also exploit interdisciplinary/cross-curricular connections, for the purpose of expanding the role of music in schools, both as a discipline and as a cross-disciplinary cultural factor. In the redesigned degree course, this interdisciplinary approach is particularly evident in the fifth year, when students have to attend an activity based on the intersection of music, art and movement. In addition, our students can join optional music activities such as, for example, the Faculty and University Choirs: the Faculty’s professors have recently been joined by a choir conduction specialist, who works on developing music making abilities in students through singing.²

The system I have concisely outlined seems to me an effective combination to meet different requirements: the connection between musicology, research and didactic practice (readers can find a couple of examples here, in footnotes 2 and 3); the alliance between music theory and practice; and finally, disciplinary training. The latter, in particular, aims at providing future teachers with tools for building a

² Alongside didactics, our research projects address issues related to music pedagogy, sociology of music and music history. At the New York panel I had the opportunity to introduce the scientific community to a project I am directing, on the Italian reception of Schönberg’s writings (*Tra didattica, divulgazione e pubblicistica: le traduzioni parziali degli scritti di Schönberg in Italia tra gli anni '10 e gli anni '50 e la loro incidenza sull'educazione e la formazione musicale*). Moving from the analysis of the earliest Italian translations of Schönberg’s texts, the project investigates the influence of the, sometimes distorted, reception of this author on the practice and ideology of Italian music education, also in schools. In this article, which addresses specific aspects of strictly pedagogic or didactic issues, I will deliberately confine myself to a short mention, and refer those interested to the volume that collects the results of the research project, to be published in 2017 (Lucca, LIM). Again in regard to our research activities, I think this is the appropriate context to mention another project, entitled *Musizieren vom Anfang an – Musik für alle* and supervised by Franz Comploi. It is concerned with the education of children in a multilingual context through ensemble music making, and relies on direct work in a primary school of the Bressanone district. A significant part of the activities involved consists in singing accompanied by group violin and cello playing. In the activities, which are currently assigned to Irene Troi, a teacher and violinist, children in groups are introduced to, among other things, the basics of instrumental violin training, such as the right way to hold the instrument, paying attention to sound quality, identifying pitches and playing them correctly. Our students have the possibility of actively participating in these lessons, in order to get to know and practice new methodologies and didactic possibilities linked with the specific research project or emerging from it.

solid *savoir savant*, the kind of knowledge that can live up to the challenge of education as well as to the demands of the National guidelines and the curricular requirements of the two autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano-Bozen, which are legally entitled to formulate their own school guidelines.

However, a couple of points call for further reflection. The old course system clearly showed that the musical training needs of students requires a higher number of hours than those effectively available, so when the course was redesigned the number of hours was increased. This does not seem to have solved the problem completely, given the preliminary competence of students in regard to music and music education. However, the increase in music education hours will allow to work more extensively on introducing students to the fundamentals of the discipline, and of the didactics of the discipline. In this context, a possible constraint could be the fact that courses are crammed into just two years. This led us to think about distributing courses over the whole 5-year period. Unfortunately, due to a series of complicated organizational issues, this was not possible, not even as part of the course overhaul. The addition of several optional courses and of an interdisciplinary laboratory on art and motion is an attempt at mitigating the issue. Finally, while the credit system was effective in extending the offer, it can also turn out to be an obstacle. In workshops, students have to do most of their work during the lessons and are only required to do a few hours of independent study. Students are perfectly aware of this, and teachers who move too far from the prescribed ratio run a serious risk in terms of evaluation.

Nonetheless, even considering the limitations described above, even with the former regulations we are starting to see some results. During training courses, the more motivated students apply the knowledge and procedures, which they have practiced in the classroom. Students often report, at least in the Italian section in which I teach, an initial feeling of distrust on the part of teachers, who are used to other methods. However, eventually they mostly come to recognize the value and soundness of our proposal. And as work shifts from trainees to teachers we are starting to glimpse unexpected, fruitful links between musicology and music didactics in universities, on the one hand, and in the life of schools, on the other.³

psomigli@unibz.it

³ About the interaction and exchange between school and university, I would like to mention a conference, which has recently taken place at the Education Science Faculty, entitled *La musica del Novecento: una risorsa per la scuola* (Brixen-Bressanone, 10-11 Nov. 2016; <https://www.unibz.it/it/events/117110-convegno-su-la-musica-del-novecento-come-risorsa-per-la-scuola>). It comprised theoretical sessions and workshops addressed to musicologists, students of the Faculty and teachers who, as part of an agreement with the South-Tyrol school offices, were allowed to attend it as an on-duty training and refresher course, given that one of its purposes was to create connections between academic musicology and the real world of education.