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PEDAGOGICAL-DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS IN THE WRITINGS OF FEDELE D'AMICO

Fedele d'Amico wrote music criticism and taught Music history at La Sapienza University in Rome for a quarter of a century (1963-1988) in both the Humanities and Pedagogical faculties. Both of these occupations presuppose an interest for the transmission of knowledge – yet this in turn does not entail, in and of itself, an awareness about didactics as a discipline that is part of the science of education system, having its own content, language and methods. We find no evidence of this in the thousands of pages d'Amico left us. In many of his articles, however, we can identify topics and hints that refer to the transposition of musical knowledge. As I will show, in many of his statements we can glimpse allusions to the domains of pedagogy and didactics, although these reflections are not formalized within a coherent disciplinary framework.

D'Amico begins by commenting on the current situation. Music education in Italy, he says, is the Cinderella of school subjects: if at all, it is taught very poorly. The result is that students are musically illiterate when they first enter university, and possibly come across a course on a single author or topic without ever having tackled a survey course. Music education should instead be taught to everyone, even as early as in pre-school. With his characteristic punch, d'Amico discusses the relationship between musical instruction for everybody and the professional training provided by Conservatories.¹ In his review of a conference held in Fiesole on “La musica nella società e nella scuola italiana” (1969) he hints at the “Schema di riforma globale dell'insegnamento della musica in Italia” [Overall reform draft for music teaching in Italy] developed by Andrea

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¹ D'Amico talks about Conservatories in terms that are far from benevolent. For example, he describes them as “troppo spesso custodi di metodi didattici cadaverici” [all too frequent keepers of defunct didactic methods]; F. D'AMICO, “Quel clandestino di Sebastiano Bach” (August 13th, 1972), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali*. “L'Espresso” 1967-1989, Rome, Bulzoni, 2000, I, pp. 787-790: 789.

Mascagni, expressing his hope that the two unions involved, which are competing with each other even as they are both interested in the future of music culture, will eventually stand together for this cause.²

D'Amico is perfectly aware that music plays specific functions in education, even though he does not explicitly name them. He has an inkling of them, but does not clearly spell them out. He starts to outline some of them, but does not go on to discuss them.³ One representative example is the following: when listening to music with other people, he says that he feels compelled to slip into the ears of others, as it were, to teach others and learn from them at the same time.⁴ Music has to do with inner time, and it works by suspending clock time and creating another time, which is objectively valid for all. In the presence of music, we find ourselves “a constatare direttamente, in un'altra persona, le nostre stesse reazioni” [directly observing our exact same reactions in another person]. And we realize that what appeals to us is “il rapporto umano che essa ci ha portato alla luce, come in un lampo: la scoperta della segreta comunanza che lega noi all'altro” [the human relationship that music brings to light, as in a flash – the revelation of the secret affinity that links us to the ‘other’].⁵ With these words, d'Amico highlights what educationalists refer to as the ‘relational function’ of music, which comes to fruition both at the moment of performance, and in the simple act of listening.⁶ There is another idea that recurs in all of his pages –

² The “Reform draft” can be read in the proceedings of the above-mentioned conference: A. MASCAGNI, “Linee di una riforma dell'istruzione musicale”, in Città di Fiesole, Comitato permanente musica e cultura, *La musica nella società e nella scuola italiana. Convegno nazionale 9-11 maggio 1969, relazioni e conclusioni*, Bozen, Presel, 1970, pp. 19-36. The two unions referenced are Sindacato musicisti italiani and Sindacato nazionale musicisti. See also: A. MASCAGNI, “L'insegnamento della musica in Italia”, in *Nuova Rivista musicale italiana*, II, 1968, pp. 673-700 and 1105-1134; III, 1969, pp. 55-78; F. D'AMICO, “Boccherini nella cartella” (May 25th, 1969), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 275-278.

³ In reaffirming the need to fight musical illiteracy, d'Amico emphasizes that “dotare l'uomo della capacità di far musica, fosse questa musica la più semplice e modesta, ha di per sé un valore formativo insostituibile” [providing man with the ability to make music, even the simplest, most basic music, has an inestimable educational value in and of itself]; see “Mozart e Beethoven nel sillabario” (September 15th, 1968), in D'AMICO, *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 161-164: 163. The educational function of music is also mentioned by Senator Mascagni in his “L'insegnamento della musica in Italia” cit., p. 678.

⁴ F. D'AMICO, “Prestami il tuo orecchio” (February 1st, 1981), in ID. *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., III, pp. 1821-1823: 1821.

⁵ ID., “Il concerto in casa” (December 9th, 1960), in ID., *I casi della musica*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1962, pp. 426-430: 427.

⁶ On the educational functions of music, see G. LA FACE BIANCONI, “Il cammino dell'educazione musicale: vicoli chiusi e strade maestre”, in *Educazione musicale e formazione*, edited by G. La Face Bianconi and F. Frabboni, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2008,

music has to be processed through the intellect, and this should not be taken for granted, given that not everybody is able to listen to it “con le orecchie in comunicazione costante col cervello” [with their ears constantly communicating with their brain].⁷ Music therefore promotes the ability to think, in other words, it performs a cognitive-cultural function. It is precisely in this intellectual sphere of the musical experience that certain controversial stances of d'Amico are best understood: the “mediating” function he attributes to criticism;⁸ his plea in favour of translating foreign operas into our own language;⁹ his contempt for television which, in his view, is at odds with culture.¹⁰

If Italians are a musically ignorant people, then they need to be instructed.¹¹ D'Amico is optimistic: musical illiteracy can be defeated. How? He has no doubts: we need to “make music”, to encourage young children in the practice of what Germans call “Musizieren”, make them sing and play from a score.¹² It would also be convenient if all concert societies promoted two choirs, one for adults and one for children, in order to make them acquainted with the experience of music practice, and the reading of scores, complemented by an

pp. 13-25; G. PAGANNONE, “Le funzioni formative della musica”, in *Musica, Ricerca e Didattica*, edited by A. Nuzzaci and G. Pagannone, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia, 2008, pp. 113-156.

⁷ F. D'AMICO, “Il vostro aff.mo critico” (October 16th, 1977), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., II, pp. 1496-1498: 1498.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ ID., “Suoni italiani per un tedesco” (June 27th, 1982), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., III, pp. 1933-1935. Cfr. also “L'italiano in tedesco” (June 11th, 1955), in ID., *I casi della musica* cit., pp. 88 sg.

¹⁰ For d'Amico, television “mystifies” the musical experience, so that “chi vince non è un'idea per sé ma quella che il personaggio più attraente ha incarnato” [the winner is not an idea in itself, but the idea embodied by the most attractive character]. Or again: “la trasposizione televisiva è prevaricazione iconica, tale da rendere la percezione musicale intermittente e comunque relegarla in secondo piano” [television adaptations is a visual abuse, causing music perception to become intermittent, and ultimately relegating it to a secondary role” (F. D'AMICO, “Da quell'occhio non ci video”, September 24th, 1978, in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., II, pp. 1623-1626: 1625; ID., “La Traviata a domicilio”, March 16th, 1975, in *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., II, pp. 1146-1148). D'Amico also does not like recordings and portable radios, which to him, among their many flaws, have the ability to make us forget the noble band tradition (ID., “Musica in piazza,” in ID., *I casi della musica* cit., pp. 354-358: 355).

¹¹ Mascagni discusses the rift between culture and music in detail, exposing the ignorance of certain ‘qualified’ Italian intellectuals in the field. Cf. A. MASCAGNI, “L'insegnamento della musica in Italia” cit., p. 676 sg.

¹² F. D'AMICO, “Un'opera di Lutero sul leggio” (July 12th, 1970), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 453-456: 455. The optimism of d'Amico about the growing interest for music instruction in Italy also emerges in ID., “Una cura per l'appetito musicale” (May 31st, 1970), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 431-435.

‘aural’ (not purely theoretical) knowledge of the rudiments of musical theory, harmony and morphology.¹³ The musical alphabet is ignored by children, but also by intellectuals – but since we can read words, why not teach people to read notes?¹⁴ A contribution to the spread of music could also come from organizing chamber music concerts in schools: why not ask orchestra musicians to play before students?¹⁵

D’Amico often stresses the importance of “knowing how to play”; sometimes it almost seems as if he wanted to contrast it with “knowing how to listen”. Some of his statements even sound bewildering: “Fra una nazione di gente ignara dell’esistenza di Beethoven ma capace di ‘Musizieren’, e un’altra di abbonati alla locale società di concerti ma musicalmente analfabeta e passiva, io opterei per la prima senza esitare” [If I had to choose between a nation of people who do not know about Beethoven but are able to ‘Musizieren’, and a nation who subscribes to the local concert society but is musically illiterate and passive, I would choose the first without hesitation].¹⁶ This is a provocative statement, and has to be put in some perspective, or we might misinterpret its meaning. The ‘music making’ to which d’Amico refers has to do with his interest in German culture, and his admiration for Germans, who used to be fully literate, and frequently practiced ensemble music, within their four walls. The ‘Musizieren’ d’Amico is thinking of is completely different from the rudimentary musical training provided by Italian schools at his time (and at ours as well!).

D’Amico is obviously not against listening: on the contrary, he praises it in each page. To him, music education should take place on three levels: music-making (singing and playing from a score); listening; developing historical

¹³ ID., “Quel clandestino di Sebastiano Bach” cit., p. 790.

¹⁴ ID., “La musica e l’alfabeto” (February 12th, 1960), in ID., *I casi della musica* cit., pp. 333-336. In the article, which addresses a request from some Italian musicians to replace choir singing by reinforcement learning (used in schools) with sung solfège, namely with the reading of notes, d’Amico lashes out against Giuseppe Medici, then Minister of Education (February 15th, 1959 - July 26th, 1960), who had decided to cancel the Music subject from the junior secondary school curriculum. (The “school development plan” of Medici, initially approved, was then taken out of the 1962 financial law; the two bills concerning junior high school also did not see the light of day; see N. D’AMICO, *Storia e storie della scuola italiana*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 2010, p. 472 sg.).

About the usefulness and advantages of an early learning of notation in schools see B. VERTECCHI - R. POZZI, “L’apporto della lettura e della scrittura musicale alla costruzione del repertorio dei simboli”, in *Educazione musicale e formazione* cit. (here fn. 6), pp. 289-301.

¹⁵ F. D’AMICO, “Sulla cattedra c’è un solista” (December 8th, 1974), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., III, pp. 1108-1110. The appeal of live music, and the pleasure of making music together, among friends, in a private, home setting, also appears in *Il concerto in casa* cit., pp. 429.

¹⁶ ID., “Mozart e Beethoven nel sillabario” cit., p. 163.

awareness about music facts.¹⁷ In several pages he stresses the importance of an attentive, critical way of listening, linking his considerations to the discussion on repertory, the so-called 'contents', in the didactic meaning of the term. D'Amico makes a clear distinction between art music and pop song. Listening to a pop song is not difficult, because it only contains a few melodic ideas, and has an elementary symmetrical structure.¹⁸ It is a different story when the musical discourse becomes complex, and themes appear, disappear and reappear, in more or less varied form, "in una gittata compositiva ampia" [in a broad compositional arch]. In these cases "l'appercezione si pone come un problema" [apperception becomes a problem]. When we have a whole painting or monument in front of our eyes, in looking at it we can go from the overall picture to details and vice versa, as we please, but this is not possible with music, which therefore has to rely on memory and attention. Art music, with its complex structure, is not always easy to grasp after a first listen: it is made to "be listened to again", and it is only when memory has taken hold of it that "noi possiamo veramente seguirla, introiettarla, goderla" [we can really follow, absorb, enjoy it].¹⁹

The idea of a scientifically organized listening didactics eluded d'Amico, as it did all Italian musicologists at that time – yet his words point to a fundamental process of musical, and also non-musical, learning.²⁰ We know that the construction of knowledge is linear and reticular at the same time. In order to acquire it, we need to go forward and then come back, make interconnections among the various sectors and levels; sometimes we need to widen, other times to deepen, our scope. From the initial piece chosen as our starting point, we have to throw 'baits' that guide listeners towards historical contextualization and semantic signification, by constantly making references between one level and the other, so as to allow for continuous building and restructuring of the types of learning. This is why, as d'Amico suggests, it helps to listen to a piece over and over again, and hence to observe, compare, discuss and develop – otherwise it will be impossible to build a structured, solid and durable knowledge.

Taking the distinction between art music and commercial music as a given, and drawing from a conference of the Società italiana di Educazione musicale, d'Amico wonders whether commercial music, so craved by young people, can be employed as a didactic tool. He answers this question immediately, by

¹⁷ As stated by d'Amico in an interview carried out by Tullio Savi in *Educazione e musica*, Turin, Loescher, 1968, p. 57.

¹⁸ F. d'Amico, "Prestami il tuo orecchio" cit. See also Id., "Bach andrebbe usato come un sillabario" (August 23rd, 1970), in Id., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 466-470.

¹⁹ ID., "Prestami il tuo orecchio" cit., p. 1822.

²⁰ See G. LA FACE BIANCONI, "La linea e la rete. La costruzione della conoscenza in un Quartetto di Haydn", in *"Finché non splende in ciel notturna face": studi in memoria di Francesco Degrada*, edited by C. Fertoni, E. Sala and C. Toscani, Milan, LED, 2009, pp. 225-250.

reversing the reasoning. It is not the pop song that can lead to art music: because it usually coincides with the Sanremo ritual, or the use of the juke-box, it is “nata per lasciarsi succhiare come una caramella” [born to be sucked like a sweet], it is easy to consume. If, however, we want to ‘understand’ the way it is built, then we have to study art music first, which is described as “l’altra musica” [the other music]: Bach is the preliminary to Gianni Morandi, not the other way around. We need to first train our ear on art music in order to understand the structure of commercial music.²¹ Pop adaptations of classical music are also not useful for didactic purposes, because essential factors of the composition are lost in the process, and therefore the artistic object is falsified. Instead of bringing us closer to art, this kind of manipulation drives us away from it for good.²² In a letter to Rudolf Arnheim, d’Amico hints at the permanence of classic works, which are indispensable for us, since the civilization in which they lived “sopravvive interiorizzata in ciascuno di noi in opposizione a quella oggi vigente” [has been interiorized and survives inside of us, in opposition to the current one]: this gives them a “forza obiettiva” [objective force],²³ which we need in order to preserve our connection to history and to the very idea of ‘culture’.²⁴

²¹ F. D’AMICO, “Bach andrebbe usato come un sillabario” cit., p. 469. On the notion of ‘altra musica’ (albeit in the opposite meaning of ‘music(s) other than art music’) it is now mandatory now to refer to R. LEYDI, *L’altra musica: etnomusicologia – come abbiamo incontrato e creduto di conoscere le musiche delle tradizioni popolari ed etniche*, Milan-Florence, Ricordi-Giunti, 1991, reprint Milan-Lucca, Ricordi-LIM, 2008.

²² F. D’AMICO, “Una canzone firmata Bach” (September 7th, 1975), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., II, pp. 1212-1215. In this article, d’Amico alludes to pop reworks of classical pieces, drawing from Gino Stefani’s analysis of two adaptations of the first movement of Mozart’s K 550 Symphony: an instrumental one by Waldo de los Rios, and the other one in song form (*Caro Mozart*), by Dossena-Valgrande-Greco (“*Caro Mozart*”, in *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*, VI, 1972, pp. 182-199). D’Amico finds the argument of Stefani “clever”, but he does not share his evaluation categories. *Caro Mozart* omits both the second theme of the first Symphony movement and its development section. Such strategies should be discouraged: it would be like rewriting Manzoni’s *The Betrothed* leaving out the character of Don Rodrigo. Of course, even when we listen to a work of musical art our memory selects its most salient qualities, but in this case the selection is the result of an active tension on the part of the listener. The pop adaptation of a classical composition, on the other hand, demands to perform this action in place of the listener, who ends up experiencing the music piece in a condition of laziness and passiveness. On this topic see also, F. D’AMICO, “I chirurghi del belcanto” (October 11th, 1970), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., I, pp. 487-490.

²³ Letter to Rudolf Arnheim of December 31st, 1983, in R. ARNHEIM - F. D’AMICO, *Eppure, forse, domani. Carteggio 1983-1990*, Milan, Archinto, 2000, pp. 135-141: 136.

²⁴ F. D’AMICO, “Quel rumore poco fa” (July 15th, 1979), in ID. *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., III, pp. 1744-1747. In this article, a harsh critique of Gino Stefani’s essay *Capire la musica* (Milan, L’Espresso, 1978), d’Amico analyses the notion of music expounded in the book.

In these assertions d'Amico touches, although unwittingly and in passing, on crucial issues in pedagogy and didactics. Drawing on classical music, he links back to the so-called 'principle of axiology', which – in the domain of didactics – dictates the choice of content in relation to its educational value (and its ethical and social relevance). In formal instruction, or better in the organization of curricula, priority should be given to 'strong' contents, those that are more relevant from an epistemological, historical-aesthetic and ethical-social point of view, so as to promote the development of the mind and of the individual. It is indeed essential that significant cultural and aesthetic items gradually come to form the horizon, or the reference standard, on the basis of which the learner will later be able to compare, evaluate and choose other 'products'. On the level of individual education – and this pertains to the domain of pedagogy– the contents of art music, as conceived of by d'Amico, train learners to discern and form qualitative judgements, promoting the ability to think and analyse. As such, they activate two functions that are essential in the development of the citizen – the critical-aesthetic and the cognitive-cultural function.

The relationship between listening and contents was the object of a lively debate around 1970. A book by Tullio Savi, *Educazione e musica* (1968), reviewed by d'Amico, contains interviews with prominent musical figures. Besides d'Amico himself, composers (Franco Donatoni, Giacomo Manzoni, Antonio Veretti), musicologists and critics (Riccardo Allorto, Roberto Leydi, Luigi Pestalozza), performers (Bruno Canino, Gianandrea Gavazzeni) answer a series of questions. In particular: what they mean by music education; whether music education can be based solely on listening, without teaching the grammar and syntax of music; what are the stages of a gradual music education; and which repertoires should be selected. Some of the interviewees make the case for a technical-practical education, but in general listening is viewed as a privileged activity for an effective music education:²⁵ through listening, learners can identify the formal structures that allow them to master the musical work of art in its entirety (this opinion is shared in particular by Manzoni, Pestalozza and Gavazzeni).²⁶ Music education should contribute to complement the 'cognitive' education of the individual, because music is integral to the development of humanity.²⁷ In arguing their position, the interviewees do not, of course, intend to downplay the importance of musical grammar and syntax – their aim is to expose the inappropriate way in which notation and solfege are used in Italian schools. The primary way to educate young people in music is therefore to let them listen to musical works of art. This allows them to grasp both the formal

²⁵ SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., pp. 44-84. Among the interviewees, only Riccardo Allorto claims that listening is a predominantly passive activity (pp. 45-52). D'Amico presents Savi's book in "Mozart e Beethoven nel sillabario" cit., pp. 161-164.

²⁶ SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., pp. 65-67, 70-76 and 76-81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71 f. (Manzoni).

structures, the true ‘crutches’ of knowledge, as it were, and the technical elements.²⁸ Somewhat peculiar is the fact that d’Amico argues with those authors who are interested in formal structures. In his view, one cannot describe the form of a sonata allegro without knowing the meaning of such notions as ‘major’ and ‘minor’, ‘modulation’, ‘theme’, ‘duple rhythm’ and ‘triple rhythm’. It is as if we wanted to describe the façade of a palace without knowing the meaning of the terms ‘window’, ‘arch’, ‘architrave’, ‘doorway’, ‘pilaster’, ‘column’. Nor will it be possible to acquire any “historical-critical knowledge of music” without making use of a specific terminology.²⁹ In reality, both positions are right.

A brief aside on the mechanisms of didactics will help elucidate this point. We should make a distinction. In order to guide students in their comprehension of the artwork, we need to provide them with ‘crutches’ (in the words of Manzoni), a support on which they can lean, and which can guide them in building a mind map of the piece: even the elementary principle of repetition-variation, just to name an example, can be helpful for this purpose.³⁰ We start from simple pieces, and then move on to more complex ones – according to the principle of graduality, a basic tenet of didactics. For example, the ABA form can be shown with the help of a short piece by Schumann (for instance the first and sixth piece from *Kinderszenen*), and then in increasingly complex pieces.³¹ Along the way, students gradually learn the technical terminology to which d’Amico rightly attaches great importance, and this acquisition enhances and

²⁸ The term ‘gruccia’ (crutch) is used by Manzoni (*ibid.*, p. 72). – An aside is necessary for Senator Mascagni’s position, as it can be inferred from the survey published in *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana*. He does not address the listening of musical pieces as an educational activity per se, but relates it to the “active musical practice”, namely to the moment of performance (A. MASCAGNI, “L’insegnamento della musica in Italia” cit., p. 1132). See also Mascagni’s statements on junior high school: “Impiego, per l’educazione dell’orecchio e la formazione di una sensibilità musicale, di un vasto repertorio di canto popolare italiano e straniero e di forme melodiche abbraccianti vari periodi ed aspetti espressivi della creazione musicale” [For the purpose of training the ear and developing a musical sensibility, a vast repertory of popular song, both Italian and foreign, should be employed, with melodic forms that span different periods and expressive aspects of musical creation] (p. 70). Incidentally, in another passage Mascagni identifies the “foreign popular song” with the German-speaking “popular Lied” (p. 1130).

²⁹ D’AMICO, “Mozart e Beethoven nel sillabario” cit., p. 164.

³⁰ See G. LA FACE BIANCONI, “Le pedate di Pierrot: comprensione musicale e didattica dell’ascolto”, in *Musikalische Bildung: Erfahrungen und Reflexionen*, edited by F. Comploi, Brixen-Bressanone, Weger, 2005, pp. 40-60; EAD., “La didattica dell’ascolto”, in *Musica e Storia*, XIV, 2006, pp. 511-544 (as well as the whole issue of the journal, pp. 489-731).

³¹ In the interview released to Savi, Manzoni considers it helpful, and possible, “individuare pagine di ascolto strutturalmente facili e quindi adatte a una graduale propedeutica” [to identify pages that are structurally easy to listen to, and hence suited to a gradual propaedeutical activity] (*Educazione e musica* cit., p. 71).

consolidates their formal comprehension. As I have already mentioned, the building of knowledge is not exclusively linear, it is at the same time reticular. Interaction between the various domains is necessary, as notions need to be constantly organized and reorganized and, once learned in a given context, they should be transposed to other contexts. If, while listening to a certain piece, a student learns to recognize the 'major/minor' relationship, he will then have to verify its presence in other compositions. At the same time, in order to express this new item of knowledge, he has to master the relevant language, by building on the conceptual and linguistic premises he has already acquired.³² This means that there is no contradiction between the comprehension of forms and the acquisition of technical language – provided we define the didactic and educational *goals* to be achieved, the *prerequisites* to start from, the *gradual* approach of the process, and the *transversality* of connections.

Coming back to Savi's 1968 survey, and to the stances expressed by the interviewees, we must be aware of the fact that they all lack the basic theoretical tools which form the conceptual toolkit of didactics. Therefore, while expressing perfectly reasonable opinions, they formulate them apodictically, being unable to substantiate them with specific theoretical references – nor do they elaborate on them. As a result, their positions appear isolated from each other and contradictory, even antithetical, when in reality they each embody one aspect of a much more complex set of problems.

As for the repertory to select for listening, nearly all interviewees express the same wish, namely that students be taught to adopt a critically open attitude towards different types of music. As Roberto Leydi put it, it helps to cultivate “personalità in grado di accogliere (criticamente) qualunque manifestazione musicale, anche estranea (musica non europea, musica popolare, musica nuova), cioè personalità prive di pregiudizi e anzi aperte a quell'impegno di relativismo culturale che è ormai alla base della cultura più avanzata” [a type of personality that is able to (critically) accept any form of musical expression, however foreign (non-European, popular, or New Music), that is, a personality that holds no prejudices and, on the contrary, is open to the engagement of cultural relativism, which is now at the root of the most advanced culture].³³ All of them express a

³² D'Amico actually claims that “nessuna nozione teorica [debba] essere mai somministrata solo in astratto, sempre dovrà essere sperimentata e goduta in un fatto musicale concreto” [no theoretical notion should be imparted in the abstract, but should always be tested, and experienced, in a concrete musical event]. According to him, however, this testing occurs in musical practice more than in listening: music education should be first of all 'practical'; listening comes second, followed by 'historical conscience' (F. d'Amico in SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., p. 57 sg.).

³³ Leydi in SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., p. 68. Rudolf Arnheim, on the other hand, conveyed to d'Amico his strong “reazione al relativismo distruttivo che sembrava tanto di moda fra gli intellettuali italiani” [reaction to the destructive relativism that seemed so fashionable among Italian intellectuals] (letter dated November 26th, 1978, in

concern – that we might end up studying and listening only the music of the past, the so-called “classical” music, neglecting the New Music or, as we would describe it today, contemporary art music (which in 1968 meant Nono, Manzoni, Donatoni, etc.). In the eyes of these intellectuals, cultivating art music from the past might pose a risk, namely that we come to think of it as the only “true” music, that it become our only concern, thus interfering with, or impeding, our experience of New Music. It is therefore advisable to listen to all sorts of music at school, so that critical listening habits can be formed. But the reality of schools at that time was, as it is now, quite different: “classical” music was little known, or altogether unknown, to students, and hence was certainly not a ‘threat’, or a competitor, to New Music. Both were, quite simply, absent. Savi himself, who knew this very well, says: “a me sembra che l’indicazione del repertorio classico sia, pedagogicamente, limitante e impropria e, quindi, non accettabile” [it seems to me that the prescription of a classical repertory is, from a pedagogical standpoint, limiting and inappropriate, and hence not acceptable], only to suggest, soon after: “anche se, data la situazione dell’incultura musicale italiana, la conoscenza di un tal repertorio sarebbe già un risultato sensazionale” [although, given the sorry state of musical culture in Italy, the knowledge of this repertory would already be an exceptional result].³⁴

In short, there was, if only one had eyes to see it, a gap between the culture of intellectuals and the illiteracy of young people, which was already visible in 1968. The former are at home in the classical repertoire, know it by heart and are therefore (rightly so from their point of view) concerned about the risk that it may hold a predominant attraction, ultimately having a crippling effect on other aspects. The younger generations, on the contrary, know nothing about either Bach or Stockhausen – and school, which should give them reference points, or directions, fails to do this.³⁵ We should also consider that this was a

ARNHEIM - D’AMICO, *Eppure, forse* cit., pp. 124-126: 124). Even d’Amico’s review of Gino Stefani’s *Capire la musica* can be read as a formal departure from a widespread relativistic attitude (“Quel rumore poco fa” cit.). For a discussion of the notions of ‘relativism’ and ‘pluralism’ in the musical domain see L. BIANCONI, “La musica al plurale”, in *Musica, ricerca e didattica* cit. (here fn. 6), pp. 23-32.

³⁴ SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., p. 134.

³⁵ A few words about the school curricula in effect at the time. Law no. 1859 of December 31st, 1962 had instituted the unified junior high school. Music was included as a mandatory subject in the first year (one hour a week), and as an optional one in the remaining two (later, with the curricula of 1979, following the 1977 reform of the school system, it became mandatory for the whole three-year school term). In the curricula issued with the Ministerial decree of April 24th, 1963, the specific guidelines for Music Education contain some positive points. Singing still plays an important role, but there is also room for other aspects of the discipline: listening activities, historical-cultural contextualization, rhythmic exercises, and notions of theory. For the listening activities, classical music is recommended, in particular “composizioni religiose, teatrali,

period in which mass culture had just started to unleash its full potential for media domination. But our interviewees have not yet recognized the massive, global predominance of commercial music (rock, pop, techno, etc.) in all sectors of social and individual life. To them, the connections play out on two levels, classical and contemporary, not on the triangle 'classical – contemporary – commercial'.³⁶ They do not see classical as a discouragement, or a potential obstacle to the knowledge of contemporary music; yet at the same time they fail to foresee that it will be commercial music that will take the place of both classical and New music in youth culture.

What is the position of d'Amico? In his interview with Savi he addresses the issue in rather generic, elusive terms.³⁷ Some of his articles, on the other hand, contain interesting suggestions. D'Amico reviews an essay in which Giampiero Cane deplores what he calls "regressive listening", by which he means the

sinfoniche e da camera, la cui validità sia consacrata dal tempo" [sacred, theatrical, symphonic and chamber compositions whose value has been honoured by time]. Although the terms are very generic, the idea being outlined here is that of a canon, a set of compositions that are regarded as significant and possess a formative value, because they have been validated by time. However, the question arises as how it would be possible to do all this in just 28 hours a year – the number of hours assigned to music in the first year, the only one in which the subject was mandatory (see Ministerial Decree, April 24th, 1963, "Orari e programmi d'insegnamento della scuola media statale", in *Gazzetta ufficiale*, May 11st, 1963, no. 124, ordinary supplement no. 1). A reconstruction of the history of music teaching in Italian schools, and a discussion of the respective legislative texts, is now in A. SCALFARO, *Storia dell'educazione musicale nella scuola italiana: dall'Unità ai giorni nostri*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2014. An updated reflection on the notion of 'school' is provided by M. BALDACCI, *Per un'idea di scuola: istruzione, lavoro e democrazia*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2014.

³⁶ In this case, too, Manzoni turns out to be the more perceptive interviewee from a pedagogical point of view: "ben venga il repertorio popolare 'consacrato dal tempo', ma affiancato da una informazione seria e completa sulla musica attuale" [I welcome the 'time honoured' popular repertory, as long as it is complemented by accurate, complete information about current music] (in SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., p. 75). The expression 'time-honoured' is a reference to the 1963 formulation of music education curricula for junior high school (see previous note).

³⁷ D'Amico believes that there has to be some reason why we would rather listen to Beethoven's Fifth symphony than to Webern's Symphony op. 21. But the reason has nothing to do with school, because the same is true of those countries in which music education in schools is successful (in SAVI, *Educazione e musica* cit., p. 58). For an in-depth discussion of the presence and influence of music in the school systems of other countries in the 1950s-60s see the long series of articles published on the journal *Musica d'oggi* between 1958 and 1960, in particular W. Elkin (England, December 1958), R. Malipiero (USA, January 1960), H. Kralik (Austria, February 1960), S. Alwrod (France, March 1960), E. Rebling (German Democratic Republic, April 1960), E. Kraus and W. Kaupert (German Federal Republic, May 1960) and M. Rumer (URSS, June 1960).

public's tendency to privilege expected, well-known input, and hence always turn to the same kind of music. The reviewer argues that this behaviour is inherent in the nature of music itself – the moment you listen to music, it vanishes, and a first listening is actually nothing but a short rite of initiation, or a first, tentative approach. Therefore, it would be much more sensible to “consolidate” five or six pieces rather than dive into a sea of premiere performances. Again, this is a provocative statement, which nonetheless contains a deep reflection: approaching contemporary music requires first of all focusing our attention on a limited number of pieces, which should be listened to over and over again. In this way, they become part of our conscience, cease to sound foreign to us, and provide a basis from which to undertake further explorations.³⁸ Although d’Amico is talking about the general public, not about school, his “five pieces” suggestion captures an essential question of didactics. In the learning/teaching relationship, formalized knowledge is effectively built on basic cores, which over time promote “[competenze] significative, sistematiche, stabili, di base, capitalizzabili e orientative” [significant, systematic, stable, basic competences, which can be capitalized upon and used as reference points].³⁹ As they are gradually built, unbuilt and rebuilt, these cores, which refer to constitutive aspects of music (formal, structural and cultural), become the basis for further learning. Seen through a didactic lens, the “five pieces” therefore cease to be a provocation, and turn out to be a sensible, essential step in the complex process of learning and knowledge-building. They appear significant in that they offer themselves as contexts of signification and problematization of essential elements. They translate, as it were, the notion of essentialization in that they provide a methodological response to the need for an intensional, rather than extensional, learning.⁴⁰

³⁸ F. D’AMICO, “L’avanguardia perché no?” (January 11st, 1976), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., II, pp. 1265-1268. In reviewing an essay by Giampiero Cane (*Il consumo della musica*, Rome, Armando, 1975) d’Amico insists on the need to listen to a piece over and over again in order to fully understand it – in this way one can master Webern as well as Brahms.

³⁹ G. DOMENICI, *Manuale dell’orientamento della didattica modulare*, Bari, Laterza, 1998, p. 121. On the notion of ‘essentialization’ see B. MARTINI, “La dimensione progettuale del curricolo: saperi, competenze, pratiche”, in *Pedagogia più didattica*, II, no. 1, January 2009 pp. 117-122; EAD., “La programmazione didattica delle discipline”, in *Riforma e didattica: tra formazione e ricerca*, X, n. 4, September-October 2006, pp. 21-26; EAD., “La didattica dell’ascolto: una lettura didattico-disciplinare”, in *La Musica tra conoscere e fare*, edited by G. La Face Bianconi and A. Scalfaro, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011, pp. 157-166.

⁴⁰ The notion I am referring to is that of cyclical teaching or ‘spiral curriculum’, which forms the body of Jerome S. Bruner’s educational structuralism. The US psychologist maintains that the stages of cognitive development defined by Jean Piaget are not “fixed” once and for all, but can be influenced by an external educational

The listening relativism advocated by various interviewees in 1968 was therefore appropriate, even necessary for those who already possessed a stable reference framework, an extensive, solid cultural background. If indiscriminately applied in schools (and this is, alas, exactly what happened), this kind of relativism leads to a flattening out, and lowering in the quality, of contents, which are all regarded as equal and utilizable, following a reductive, simplistic version of political correctness, anxious to attribute “equal dignity” to any artistic expression whatsoever, certainly not on the basis of the tenets of pedagogy and didactics. Invoked with the best intentions, in the name of cultural enrichment, the application in school and non-school settings of the relativistic approach ultimately discouraged the definition of essential competences, on which to build organized, extensive knowledge that can be capitalized. In the musical domain, it affected the intellectual development and the cultural development of our students, and hence of citizens, exposing them indiscriminately to the effects of commercial music alone.⁴¹ Forget about “critical listening”!

A peripheral notion, which contrasts with the “relativistic” stance, is expressed by d'Amico about the didactics of composition. In the conference on “Il comporre musicale nello spazio educativo e nella dimensione artistica” [Music composition in an educational setting and in the artistic dimension] Azio Corghi, Armando Gentilucci, Gaetano Giani Luporini, Giacomo Manzoni and Alvis Vidolin signed a document on the education of composers.⁴² It was an attack on the didactics of composition in the Western world, from the 18th century onwards. The authors accused it of being static and dogmatic [“immobilismo e dogmatismo”], that is, of following a few atemporal, immutable rules of thumb. D'Amico made a sharp retort: it is with these rules of thumb that great composers were trained; they are “regole del gioco ai fini dell'addestramento” [rules of the game for training purposes], they compel students to learn, ensuring that “l'istinto divenga libertà” [instinct becomes

intervention. Given that the development stages can be anticipated, sped up and guided through the teaching/learning process, it is beneficial to make children acquainted to relevant notions and forms that will help them become educated individuals. The spiral curriculum therefore begins at a very early age, with essential forms, and then spins on itself repeatedly, in increasingly complex forms, in the course of the school curriculum. The following are just a few of Bruner's major works relevant for our current discussion: *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, Cambridge, Ma., Belknap, 1966; *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand*, Cambridge, Ma., Belknap, 1962; *The Relevance of Education*, New York, Norton, 1971; *The Culture of Education*, Cambridge, Ma., Harvard University Press, 1996.

⁴¹ BIANCONI, “La musica al plurale” cit. Which side d'Amico would take was already clear in the texts mentioned here in notes 21 and 22.

⁴² The conference was held in Florence and Fiesole on June 3rd-5th, 1981, and was organized by Centro di ricerca e sperimentazione per la Didattica musicale. The proceedings were published by the Center itself (Fiesole 1982).

freedom].⁴³ His stance is not distant from the one taken by the great educational psychologist, Jerome Bruner, expounded in his fascinating book *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand*. Creativity is not a flash of inspiration, but a process whereby acquired data is reworked. It is strongly influenced by the models handed down by tradition, and entails an intensive combinatory activity characterized by discernment, selection and technique.⁴⁴

In this article I will not express any judgement on the didactics of composition for the purpose of training composers. I shall limit my examination to music education in schools, where it would have been very useful and productive to introduce an approach to musical creativity as a constructive ability, in a constant dialectical relationship with the models of tradition. What we have witnessed instead, since the 1970s, is a lapse into a sort of naïve educational spontaneism, completely divorced from the historical models, but also from culture as such. The learning/teaching process has been progressively eroded in the name of the so-called “common competence”.⁴⁵ By disdaining to confront these models, ‘experimentation’ lost the high status that had been acknowledged to it in the writings of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev S. Vygotsky and of Bruner himself, turning into a game that eludes any historical and cultural references. The relationship with the historical dimension has evaporated. It was simply said that one has to make do with what the subject already knows and is able to do at the outset, without setting any goal to strive for. The results of this kind of music education, from primary to secondary school, are for all to see – it is useless to spend even one more word on the average level of musical culture in our young generations. Had there been more critics like d’Amico, and had they been equipped with the conceptual tools and epistemological categories of pedagogy and didactics, then we would have, in good time, found an antidote to counter the most overindulgent trends.⁴⁶

⁴³ F. D’AMICO, “Bach si siede al primo banco” (September 27th, 1981), in ID., *Tutte le cronache musicali* cit., III, pp. 1883-86: 1884 sg.

⁴⁴ See BRUNER, *On Knowing* cit. D’Amico expresses his interest in the experiments in composition didactics carried out by Boris Porena at the Accademia Filarmonica Romana, and in general shows appreciation for the achievements of this institution in the domain of education. D’AMICO, “Quel clandestino di Sebastiano Bach” cit. – On the notion of ‘creativity’ in music see my article “Creativity and Images in Two Schubert Lieder: a Didactic Approach”, this Journal, IV, 2014, pp.75-92.

⁴⁵ On this distorted notion of ‘musical creativity’, which has become established in Italian schools (and has some of its roots in an excessive emphasis placed solely on the linguistic-communicative function of music education) and on the popularization of the pedagogical-didactic model of ‘common competence’ proposed by Gino Stefani see LA FACE BIANCONI, “Il cammino dell’Educazione musicale: vicoli chiusi e strade maestre” cit., pp. 13-25.

⁴⁶ A need for “assimilazione di orientamenti pedagogici” [assimilation of pedagogical positions] emerges from the reflection of Senator Mascagni

The picture I have painted suggests a reflection. The lively mind and solid cultural background of the intellectuals of the time, especially of d'Amico, could have given a remarkable contribution to the musical evolution of Italian citizens and, in general, to the development of music education. But their general lack of pedagogical-didactic awareness, and their inadequate relationship with education science, prevented them from pinning down the nature of the educational challenges (which they, however, intuitively glimpsed), both on an epistemological-methodological and on a political level. Conversely, the widespread musical ignorance of educationalists and didactics experts, and in general of the Italian intelligentsia, did not encourage openings in the opposite direction, from education science to the world of musicology and music criticism. This exchange simply did not take place, and the issue was not raised. Given the failure to acknowledge the problem, there were no proposals for adequate solutions based on solid scientific evidence and long-term political-institutional interventions. A connection between musicologists, educationalists and didactics scholars would have been indispensable to connect the issues of music to those of the other disciplines, within the overall framework of the learning/teaching relationship – but this connection was never established. The distance, which intellectuals put between them and education science and school, had a detrimental effect on the development of musical culture in our country.

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(“L’insegnamento della musica in Italia” cit., p. 1122 f.), who addresses essential issues such as music education for children, the selection of repertory, performance and listening. Some of his intuitions are insightful, but his lack of the basics of pedagogy and general didactics invalidates the scholarly coherence of his discourse, exposing it to occasional contradictions.