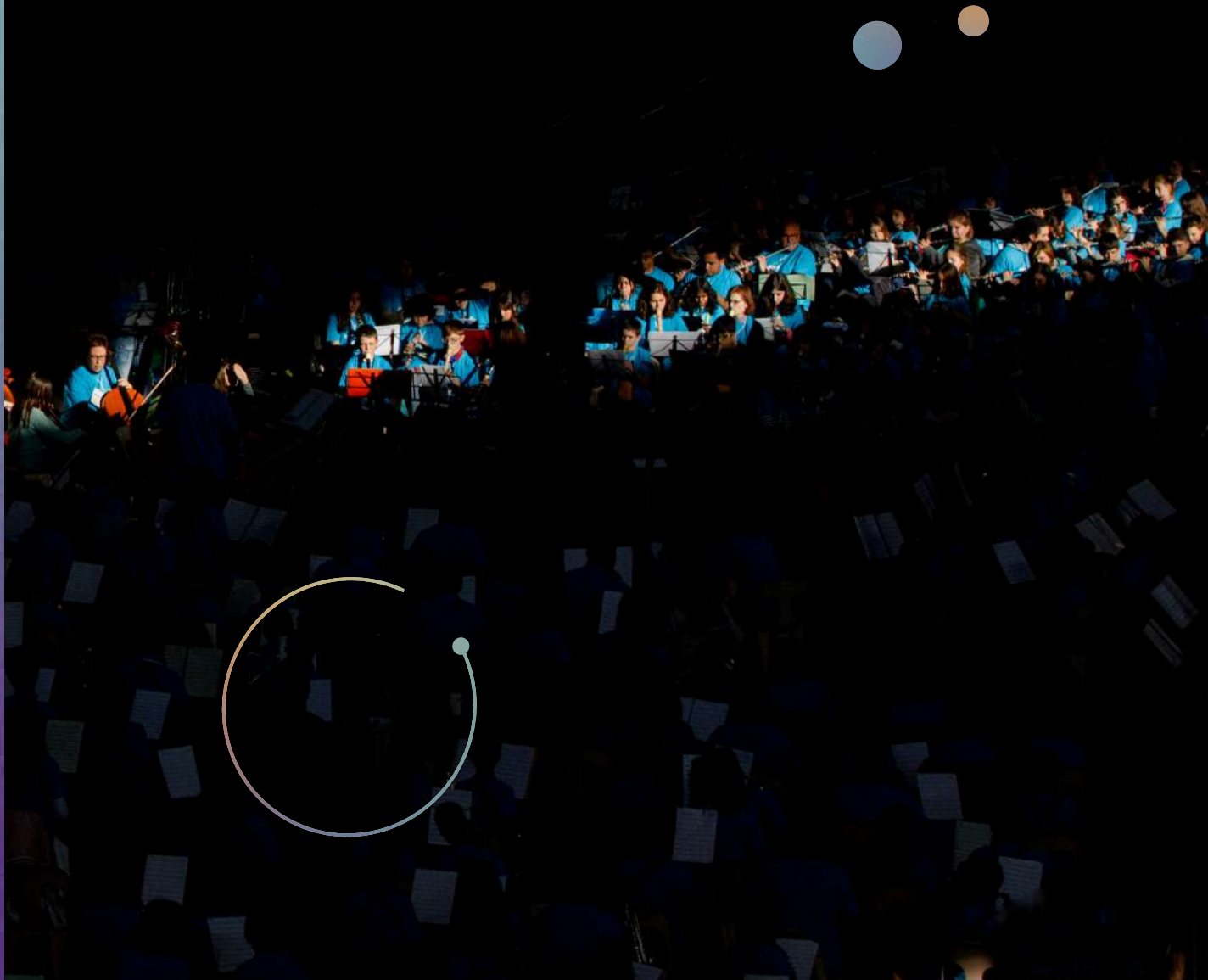


COUNTERPOINT(ERS)

ACEM at 30: Conversations, reflections and future prospects for music education







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ACEM at 30: Conversations,
Reflections and Future Prospects for
Music Education

November 2023

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1993
2023

acem 
associació catalana d'escoles de música

PHILIPPE DALARUN

PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN MUSIC SCHOOL UNION



On behalf of the European Music School Union, I would like to congratulate the Catalan Association of Music Schools (ACEM) on its thirtieth anniversary.

In Europe, music education thrives on the power of networks, whether European, national, regional or local, and for three decades ACEM has proven its ability to create links, innovate and serve the general interest across the artistic, cultural, educational and social fields.

The celebration of this anniversary takes place in the context of an intense evolution in European music schools. In a large number of countries, social, economic and technical changes have challenged the traditional model originally posited on the formation of a musical elite destined to become professionals in higher conservatories.

Slowly but surely, the need to democratise culture, the delicate issue of music school financing, studies that demonstrate the positive impact of music practice, the development of communication tools and adoption of new audiences and new musical aesthetics have forced music schools to open up, pivot their pedagogical methods and redefine their mission ... In a word: to reinvent themselves.

While still guiding future professionals, teaching amateurs – who make up the largest percentage of the public in music schools – has also become a priority, allowing millions of Europeans, young and old, to share the pleasure of playing or singing together.

The result of a remarkable democratic and supportive impetus is that a great many music schools now have links with schools, hospitals and care homes, serve both adults and very young children, propose pathways adapted to people with disabilities and develop educational programmes for migrants and people in need.

Rock, pop and electronic music, as well as traditional and world music, composition and improvisation enjoy a place alongside classical music. Collaboration with other forms of artistic expression, such as dance, theatre or the visual arts, is also in place across many institutions.

Finally, the development of the Internet and digital technologies offer new and exciting prospects to people who know how to harness them, not to the detriment of human relationships (which are our schools' greatest resource) but as a supplementary creative tool at the service of music education.

In a constantly evolving world, music schools must step up to new challenges and get involved in major contemporary issues such as education for the general public, child protection, gender equality and defence of the environment.

Public policies in most European countries today no longer support music schools for just a limited, privileged number of students. Instead, institutions that in addition to their main mission in the artistic and pedagogical field develop actions across civic, educational and social areas and contribute to health and well-being are considered more interesting.

The challenge for our schools is therefore to find a new legitimacy in light of these new undertakings.

Networks such as ACEM or, at the European level, the European Music School Union, make it possible to pool these problems at a large scale and suggest ways of evolving that will give rise to solutions going forwards. Engaging in such exchanges means supporting a collective intelligence that constitutes a considerable force for building the music and art education of tomorrow that our European society badly needs. Because transmitting and sharing music or any other form of artistic expression also means reaffirming the values of listening, harmony, respect, tolerance and solidarity.

I wish ACEM all the best on its anniversary!

Philippe Dalarun
President, European Music
School Union

CARLES FARRÀS

PRESIDENT, ACEM



Celebrating thirty years is a reason for joy and congratulations, but it should also be used to pause and have a look at where we are, where we have come from and, above all, where we are heading.

ACEM was established thirty years ago in response to a lack of recognition of music schools in education at the time. What matters from my point of view is that the burgeoning vision of impacting the territory, of educating in a way that focused not solely on producing professional musicians but with a fresh view of schools, gave way to the creation of many more organisations across Catalonia, and the number of music schools doubled in a few short years.

Today there is no doubt that music schools in Catalonia are flourishing like never before. Despite having much less funding from the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Education than would be desirable, we have come through both an economic crisis that played havoc with local councils around the country and, lately, the pandemic that hit us hard, since music is very much a face-to-face activity.

Yet despite all these problems, music schools are continually increasing in number, as are students, community projects, classroom hours and teachers in the 180-plus public music schools in Catalonia.

Together we have successfully adapted to the changes taking place in society without losing sight of our teaching principles and have stepped up to new challenges in each

specific case – sometimes by expanding the artistic disciplines that lead us to art centres, and other times through social projects in our local area, in some cases forging a community with other educational services in the town or city where we operate.

This is the strength of our schools and their union is the strength of ACEM, which without the centres that form part of it would have no reason to exist: with their differences and characteristics that make them unique in their area, but with a noble and valid objective. I would like to end by congratulating the families and students for their constancy and enthusiasm, the municipalities for their ongoing support for an arts education and, above all, the teaching and non-teaching staff for their proven commitment over the years and for, very often with limited means, delivering on the work that is our passion.

Happy anniversary!

Carles Farràs
President, ACEM

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TIMELINE

FOR THREE VOICES

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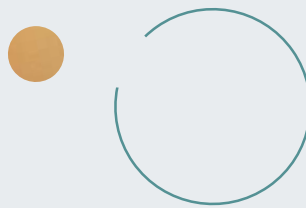
LIDIA MORA,
PALMIRA DUAL AND
ANDREA DE LA HOZ

NOEMÍ DURAN

FRANCESC IMBERNON

BIOGRAPHIES

EDITORIAL



When we were wondering how to celebrate the Association's thirtieth anniversary, the idea of transcending links and surmounting formats came to mind. ACEM has tended to celebrate anniversaries with impactful large-scale displays and concerts, mass gatherings and short-lived events that are visually and aurally pleasing, becoming engraved in the individual and collective minds of those who participate in or witness them. Many of us remember the feeling of being a small part of a large, complex crowd vibrating at the same frequency. What we are left with after forming part of an event of this type is precisely that: a bodily memory that is hard to put into words.

This time, however, we wanted to do something that would disrupt the unconscious inertia that often hobbles us and pause, taking time to consider what we do and from where we do it. In this sense, the meetings held between April and November 2023 in the framework of the organisation's thirtieth anniversary were not so much aimed at showcasing this dramatic dimension but rather at crafting new connections within the network, bringing together schools and people from different parts of the territory, stimulating exchange and producing new affinities.

This book arises from the same idea. It is a compendium of loosely related articles which speak more or less explicitly about music schools, music education and educational transformation, in a more or less clear sequence.

In contrast to a fleeting large-scale show, a book is everlasting. It is a tool that can be used now or a few months down the line. It can be read one way or the reverse; it may be handled, consulted, rewritten, subtitled, shared, left to rest or consumed in one sitting.

That was the pretext with which we began this editorial project, intending for it to have not only a self-celebratory nature but also to provide external views in order to develop an outreach document of knowledge-creation around music education in Catalonia for school

directors, students, teachers, local government officials and policy makers.

The Association has always operated in a fine tension between past and future: bringing together common practices, models and visions, but also moving the dial on new ones, setting out towards new horizons and taking risks to test new possibilities. This book is the result of this exercise, a set of polyphonic notes of an academic nature written by people with different profiles, backgrounds and experiences that can help us think about music education from different viewpoints: cultural rights, the rural world, critical pedagogies, decolonisation, community cultural development and artificial intelligence.

This project has a dual purpose. On the one hand, we want to look inwards to review the Association's lived experiences over these thirty years. And on the other, we aim to scan outwards to ascertain what is there and what the debates around music education are in a second level of impact. Here we will not look strictly at group education nor the role of musical language in music schools. However, if we wanted to, we could reflect on these matters based on the views of a retired director who now takes her granddaughters to music school, a professor of Didactics and Educational Organisation, a flamenco *cantaora* (singer) or the director of an ethnographic museum.

If there is one thing the contemporary world forces us to do it is to recognise that we cannot have a global vision of almost anything. The paradox of the digital age and its information overload is that we can only have fragmented and situated visions of reality. That is why the book is constructed in a diagrammatic way, to be able to consider one element via another. From the idea of a constellation, or counterpoint, we commissioned a number of people not directly related to the world of music schools to provide different points of view in order to consider what we do and, more importantly, what we can do from now on.

Taking pointers is a more complex learning procedure than simply

transcribing the information provided by the person who supplies it. Except in some specific cases, we cannot become copyists or typists; we must listen–interpret–take notes. To do so we have invited different voices committed to transforming education. Voices that speak from a place of expertise, reflection, lived experience, theory and practice.

Pepita Jorba opens the book by recalling a number of key moments for the Association and asking the same questions we did when, in spring 2012, in the midst of an economic downturn, schools were mobilised through associations which, like ACEM, raised their voice before political leaders. While new social movements aimed at delivering change to the country's economic, political and educational model took to the streets, the downturn made many schools redesign their programmes and rethink their operations. Eleven years on, a groundbreaking educational transformation with regard to music education in Catalonia asks us to continue imagining utopias.

Continuing in the line of historical memory, the next section is a timeline of acts and events from the Association's thirty years. ACEM has not only been witness to debates, transformations and innovations in the field of music education but has also been a key stakeholder in defining, expanding and consolidating the different public service models currently in place in Catalonia. The timeline works as a whiteboard for performing this exercise of looking back.

The interview with Montse Faura, Carles Farràs and Núria Sempere, three key people who have influenced crucial moments in the Association's history, opens up a conversation that takes us back to the start and reviews the agreements, disagreements and future challenges the organisation is facing from the perspective of three styles of multifaceted leadership. The organisation's professionalisation, the sector's visibility, the tension between different educational models, the culture/education dichotomy and the link with public authorities are thematic motifs that appear throughout the conversation. This section ends the first part of the book, before leaning into new territories and viewpoints to help us consider what the centre looks like from the edges.

Oriol Cendra opens the external view with a detailed analysis of the state of affairs in Catalonia around cultural rights and asks us to connect formal education with the artistic sphere through various examples of teaching dynamics.

Gemma Carbó leverages rurality and cultural management to encourage us to consider models of educational and cultural development beyond the big cities and to remind us that rural schools were, and continue to be, one of the most silenced agents of transformation and innovation in the history of education.

From a careful reading of the work of French philosopher Jacques Rancière, Cristina Cubells analyses the relationship between art, politics and education in the production of performing arts shows aimed at children, in a direct appeal to the tendency to domesticate art that many

educational environments have.

In this external view we invited a singer, formerly a student of one of the country's premier community projects, to participate in the book. Lidia Mora, with the aid of Andrea de la Hoz and Palmira Dual, takes a polyphonic look at decolonial studies, an essential and little-known toolbox in the field of music education, to focus on historically ignored fields of study and ask: is it possible to decolonise music schools? What space do other types of music, other cultures and other traditions have in our programmes? What space do we give to otherness? Drawing on oral methodologies, the decolonial gaze involves orientations of class, gender, race, ethnicity ... and directly and sharply signals the close link between imperialism and human sciences.

The article by Noemí Duran combines the interview, the field diary and the essay with a poetic and evocative language that places the body at the epicentre of the relationship between art and social transformation. Connect, take root and transcend are the verbs that structure a text also written in polyphony and which gives us concrete questions and reflections that continue to resonate.

Finally, the book ends with a conversation between an education professor and an artificial intelligence chatbot about the challenges of being a teacher in the modern world. Francesc Imbernon discusses public policies, teacher training and teaching skills with the AI device to table the challenges we face in the uncertain and changing present that is here to stay.

As we said before, the narrative thread of this book starts inside the Association and moves outwards to an external view. It can therefore be read in order, from start to end, but also out of order. If you prefer, you can also read it in parts, one part now and another later. Ultimately, we want it to act like a set of notes we can either keep in a drawer and dip into now and then, write up neatly or work on more deeply to try to apply to different dimensions of life. As with any archive, a text is meaningful if it is used, handled and put into play with other texts.

We cannot end this introduction without thanking everyone who generously and quietly stepped up to the challenge of making the book.

We would also like to thank everyone who has engaged with the Association and done their bit to enable us to be here today, celebrating thirty years of existence: thank you all very much. Happy anniversary!

PEPITA JORBA

MOVING FORWARDS WHILE NEVER LEAVING UTOPIA



COUNTERPOINT(ERS)



The Catalan Association of Music Schools (ACEM) takes up the core objective of the European Music School Union (EMU): A school for all ages, all types of music and all needs. We strive to achieve this and to have a country with a wide and high-quality network of music schools¹.

It is an honour to write a few words for ACEM on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary. It has been many years of tireless work for municipal music schools, of supporting the schools and their staff, of organising a wealth of platforms so students could hold meetings and share music, of organising training sessions and, of course, of advocating before the authorities to support centres for music and dance.

My good fortune in working closely with many people from the ACEM team has allowed me to grow personally and professionally and to become more critical and reflective in my teaching and managerial work. That is why I would like to take the opportunity to express a number of reflections that have come to mind over the years around the role of music schools, and also to consider and reconsider the responsibility given to those of us who work for music education.

ACEM'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT OF CATALUNYA

I would like to begin by discussing ACEM's appearance before the Parliament of Catalonia on 19 April 2012, a session I had the opportunity in which to engage. Representatives from all the political parties in parliament at the time were present. The aim of the session was to provide qualitative and quantitative data on municipal music and dance schools and to show that, despite the progressive reduction in financial contributions by the Catalan Ministry of Education, there was a similarly progressive increase in the number of schools and, consequently, a growing evolution of their educational role across different social settings.

We explained to the parliamentary groups that we were achieving important milestones that contributed to the democratisation of music practice and that this had been done thanks to the drive and work over the previous twenty years, the development of a network of municipal music and dance schools and, of course, the involvement of the Government and the network of municipalities of Catalonia. We also pointed out that music and dance schools were building a cultural heritage for the country, that their impact should be consolidated and that it was very important they be decoupled from partisan trends and ideas.

We spoke of the value of a musical education and of how our music and dance schools contributed to the objectives of the 2011-2014 Government Plan in the field of education. We highlighted the endeavours of the music and dance schools where, as public services,

we worked and supported the community, promoting social cohesion.

We emphasised the importance of the involvement and collaboration of the government, stressing that it was fundamental for delivering the arts education that was vital to transform society and make it more democratic. We explained that a better society was capable of producing fewer economic outgoings.

We set out data on the slowdown in financial contributions, since spending had halved between the 2007–2008 school year and the 2011–2012 year. Although some centres had been forced to close for financial reasons, the number of music schools had grown from 109 to 165 in the same period. The number of dance schools had climbed from four to nine. And with regard to students, the numbers had risen from 17,549 to 43,026 in municipal music schools and from 757 to 1,415 in municipal dance schools².

Obviously the data reflected a strong impetus regarding the intention to promote this democratisation of music that the sector wanted, despite the economic vicissitudes we were experiencing.

Speaking in front of the political institutions at that time was an opportunity to showcase the will of professionals and also of local councils, since the growth of schools and students was evident and meant we were optimally placed in relation to promoting music and dance education and that the Government and different political groups could not remain indifferent.

It was noted, however, that the economic downturn that occurred from 2008 onwards had led governments to implement austerity plans which had significantly impacted financial contributions to different social sectors and programmes.

As a consequence of the decrease in financial aid from the administration, teaching staffs had to be readjusted and the sector went through situations of considerable uncertainty. Despite that, the feeling then that we were *riding the crest of a wave* was no doubt thanks to the drive of the professionals and the music and dance schools. The rise in the number of students and schools was possible thanks to the will of local administrations and the schools themselves. Various educational initiatives proliferated in order to reach more users despite the economic difficulties. Community projects were also established and a clear predisposition to continue along these lines of growth and to develop as global an education service as possible consequently emerged, with the intention of contributing to the democratisation of music and dance by the public at large.

A LOOK AT THE PRESENT

The current figures reflect a very diverse picture. Slowing birth rates have led to a fall in the number of students in some schools and the effect of the pandemic and financial difficulties among families have

¹ <http://www.acem.cat/associacio-catalana-escoles-musica/> ² Data presented at the appearance before the Parliament of Catalonia on 19 April 2012

further contributed to this decline.

Many schools have put in place a wide variety of educational offerings that aim to extend music practice to all age groups in order to reach a broader swathe of the community. There has been a significant proliferation and standardisation of educational offerings, with the presence of different musical styles and a significant uptick in community projects in general schools which have made music practice available to a large number of children.

Schools have also been created that promote educational projects which choose to develop art programmes where different artistic disciplines converge: music, dance, plastic arts and so on.

DECREE 354/2021 OF 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

Let us take a look at Catalan Government Decree 354/2021 of 14 September 2021 on schools that provide unofficial music and dance education and which regulates these educational centres. It is interesting to analyse some of its content³:

"A new model for music and dance schools is established with a broad mission: the initiation, cultivation, practice and intensification of these classes for children, young people and adults, and the coaching of people who have discovered an artistic vocation with the aim of helping them turn professional".

Initiation, cultivation, practice and intensification. The degree expands on this broad mission. Schools must reflect and examine whether our programmes are designed with this comprehensive perspective.

Children, young people and adults. We must analyse whether our current designs cover these age groups in significant proportions.

"They must also contribute to social cohesion, inclusion and awareness and deliver social and cultural value to the place where they are located".

Contribute to social cohesion, inclusion and awareness. The work done in music and dance schools is powerful and very ambitious; the challenge is also exciting. The analysis we must perform is essential: which students do we have in our schools and how can we ensure a significant diversity? How do students interact inside and outside the school? And what impact do our activities have on the different social settings closest to us?

"Music and dance school programmes must include different levels of depth and dedication for students and must respond to different interests, which can range from the initial contact to the coaching

required to become a professional artist".

Programmes must include different levels of depth and dedication for students. This is one of the major challenges we face. We must analyse whether the dedication of the educational programmes respond to our students' different needs and the types of families that make up our educational community.

The Decree also establishes five educational programmes:

- a) Initial contact with music.
- b) Basic education.
- c) More in-depth education.
- d) Expertise.
- e) Dedicated programmes.

From this establishment of programmes we can discern the desire to offer a diverse and extensive public service, but the approach becomes contradictory when it says: "music and dance schools must offer at least one of the aforementioned programmes". While it is true that this may favour the creation of new schools in small towns, in general it seems unambitious and contradicts the aforementioned desire to offer a broad service to society, since schools could choose to offer only one of the established programmes and develop educational projects that would favour just one type of user.

The content of article 24 is important as it foresees the existence of schools with different physical locations, broadening the possibility of providing and growing the service to different populations.

This is a very good opportunity to form a network of municipalities and impact their respective social environments, obtaining tools to achieve a greater democratisation of culture.

ARE WE RIDING THE CREST OF A WAVE?

Eleven years on from appearing before parliament to raise awareness among all political groups to commit to consolidating the network of music and dance schools, after recognising that 2012 was a perfect opportunity to grow these services and expand them into different social environments, I wonder how we should approach the future of our schools and how a utopia becomes necessary to move the dial on imagining educational scenarios that respond to society when we do not yet know what it will look like.

It is true that when we think about the design of music education programmes, we often link the service to the economic endowment available to us, and that means being judicious, consistent and acting prudently. In other words, creating facilities that are possible and sustainable. But, as I said, I believe this may deprive us of envisaging a

³ Catalan Government DECREE 354/2021 of 14 September 2021 on schools that provide unofficial music and dance education. <https://portaljuridic.gencat.cat/eli/es-ct/d/2021/09/14/354>

more utopian future. We have to imagine how we will move forwards.

I am not currently teaching and this allows me to look at things with a certain perspective, to consider how I would do it all over again and to imagine how I would like arts education centres to develop.

In order to rethink where it is important to go in the field of music education and also in other artistic disciplines, it is essential we try to imagine our students in the future and how they will be included in society decades from now. This enables us to ask questions around what we would like our culture in general to be like in the short, medium and long terms and how the design of education programmes must be fundamental to achieving this.

I have no doubt that we want a fairer, more democratic and inclusive society, one that respects diversity. We seek a resilient society, one able to adapt to a wide range of challenges with all their complexities, understanding we live in a changing world and that one of the skillsets our students need to possess going forwards is the ability to adapt and create. All this involves thinking and rethinking education from a standpoint that embraces all sectors of the education community.

On this point, I find it interesting to include in this article some reflections from different authors on culture, which I believe should be taken into account when designing new schools or providing continuity to the ones already operating. We should also consider the impact they have on our society.

In an article in *Ara* newspaper, Salvador Sunyer says: "Access to culture is fundamental. The only way to promote it is to encourage cultural education in schools and thus allow access to all the arts from an early age. Measures must be applied across all levels of education. This also involves facilitating access to everyone. Then each person can choose the art form that interests them most, whether it be theatre, film, books, music or art. But it is very important to provide the background education"⁴.

In the same article, he says: "Producing culture is much more than creating, showing and consuming it. Producing culture implies there is a society that participates in it, which understands that culture in all its breadth is necessary and not dispensable. Culture is therefore not made by some while others watch, but by the general public as a whole. Or that is how it should be, appropriately valuing the economic, material, educational, social and political aspects of the cultural phenomenon."⁵.

Gemma Carbó, a doctor in Education Sciences, says: "We are talking, therefore, of artistic languages as tools that generate opportunities to learn and develop creative skills fundamental for the twenty-first century. Yet talking about culture means talking about cultural practices that are not only individual but also community-based and that offer great possibilities of inclusion in society and the ability to improve vastly

complex situations"⁶.

Regional and local governments have to do the heavy lifting of managing the different educational scenarios and promoting and developing policies in the field of education and culture. Regardless of the different political orientations, the fact that electoral cycles have a four-year validity limits the possibility of extending such an approach into the medium- and long-term future. Despite this premise of a four-year electoral term, education and culture policies should always help ensure that teacher training and student education be aimed at developing attitudes that predispose us to build a society open to change and with significant skills to adapt and move forward creatively to improve our communities.

We therefore need governments and professionals to be aware of the repercussion of education and culture in the broadest sense of the word.

ARTS EDUCATION CENTRES

When considering the future of arts education centres, music and dance schools, or centres where different artistic disciplines converge, we must take an in-depth look that embraces and analyses the diversity of educational settings in each context, i.e., general schools (when municipalities offer them with general interest and cultural objectives), centres of art education and so on.

With regards music education and also other artistic disciplines, it is important to take into account the rapid social and technological changes that are taking place. We must ask what is being learnt in general schools and what is being learnt outside of them. It is evident that what is learnt outside of general schools marks a division of opportunities in our community, and for this reason the most important thing should be what is learnt inside general schools if we want a fairer, more inclusive society.

With regard to learning music and probably other artistic disciplines too, it is necessary to take different ways of learning into account. How much music learning is self-taught and how much is learnt from others? What role do music schools, conservatories, universities and community organisations currently play in learning music?

It is essential that, when we consider and reconsider schools, we do so from the perspective that educational offerings must be aimed at people of all ages, indiscriminately, from the early stages through to older age groups. It is necessary to take this approach with all ages since it will lead to a fairer offering and provide the possibility of enjoying music at all stages of life.

⁴ Salvador Sunyer. https://www.ara.cat/cultura/incentivar-consum-practica-cultural_1_1253871.html ⁵ https://www.ara.cat/cultura/incentivar-consum-practica-cultural_1_1253871.html ⁶ <https://www.educacio360.cat/les-arts-la-cultura-un-gran-recurs-educatiu/>

We must reach out to the public at large, whether through hands-on programmes in general schools or in other areas of our municipalities, always bearing in mind that the service offered by municipal music and dance schools must be truly meaningful for the community and for people who wish to take their study and practice of music further.

THE EDUCATIONAL OFFERING

It is vital that not just educational but also informational programmes are highly versatile. Each user must be able to find different ways to approach music or dance, both people who want more sporadic dedication and those who opt for continuous, intense dedication. Students must be able to take different pathways through the programmes offered by a school according to their interests and without depending on their families' purchasing power. This is the only way we will make a significant contribution and enable our service to be an educational offering within the reach of all.

And with regard to the diversity of the education programmes that schools offer, I believe it is essential to consider the content. In terms of music schools specifically, we must look at how we approach theory and practice and what learning music means and what we can take from it.

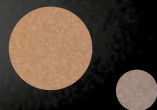
Learning music covers a broad spectrum of elements. The composer Claude Debussy said music was a totality of different forces expressed in a sound process that included the instrument, the instrumentalist, the creator and his work, a propagating medium and a receiving system. By this definition, approaching music in any of these aspects represents gaining a musical education.

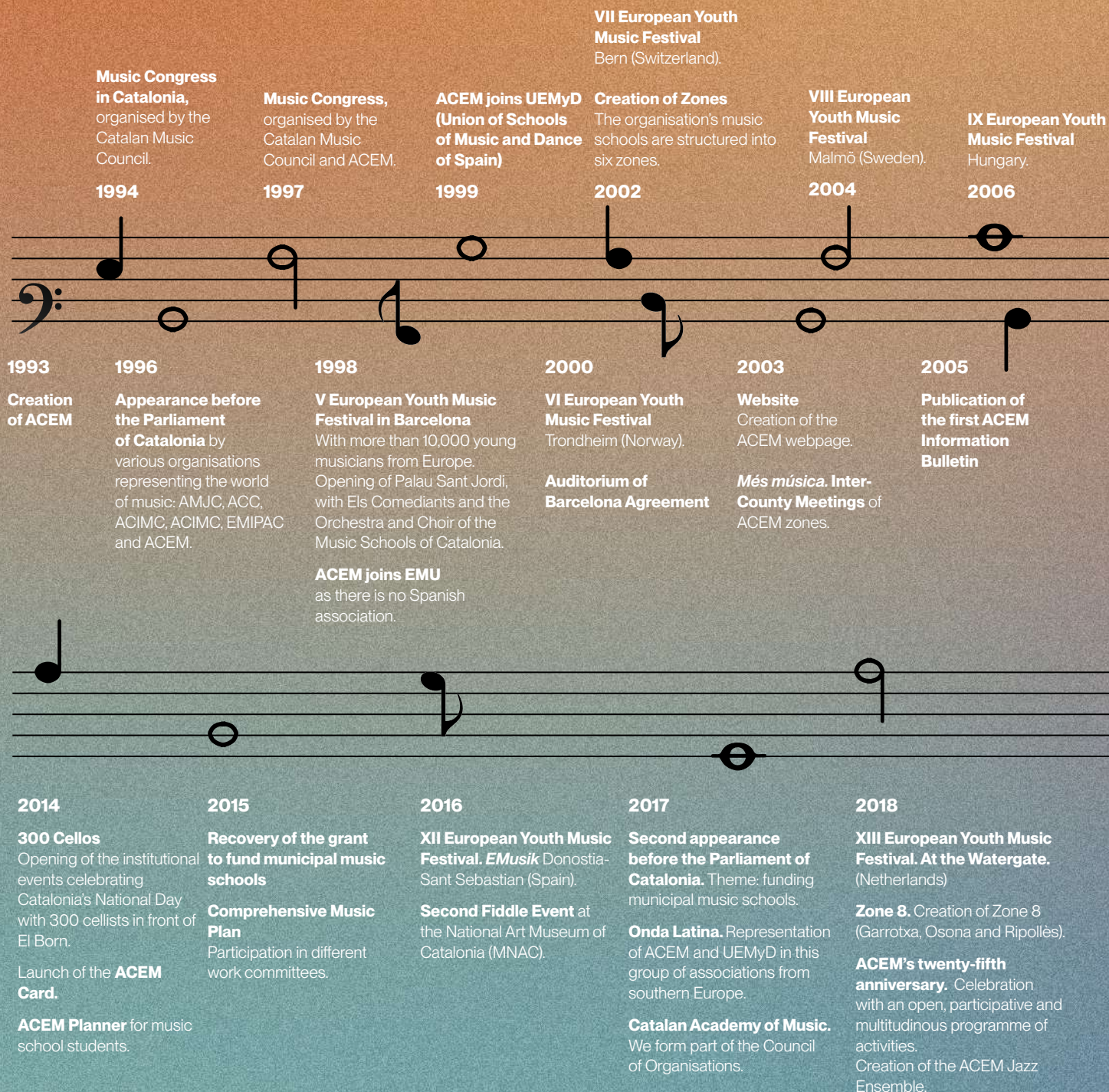
From this perspective, our education programmes, aimed at all ages, must take into account this approach towards music in a very broad sense. It is true that our users have very diverse expectations: they may want to learn the history of music – all kinds of music – or the history of composers and performers from different periods and styles, or instruments. They may want to listen to music, practise it with instruments or with the body, theorise it, or engage with it in other ways. And do so across differing levels of intensity and depth. Only from this perspective can we ensure our educational offerings are balanced and meaningful for society.

Doing so is no easy task. Changing the present is a challenge, but we can never stop working on the education and culture of the artistic phenomenon with a strongly utopian bent. Professionals' minds should never entertain the concept of conformism, of teaching and acting from the perspective of what we have learnt. Instead, we ought always to think and drill down on what we need to learn to move forwards and improve in the new society of this as-yet unknown future.

Anything is possible!

TIMELINE





Collaboration agreement with ESMUC

ACEM's fifteenth anniversary *Els quatre elements* concert at Palau Sant Jordi. Directed by: Salvador Brotons. Composed by: Albert Guinovart.

First CantaXics children's cantata for Zone 6.

La Bruixa Maduixa i el Bruixot Pebrot.

2008

Guide to Municipal Music Schools

With the collaboration of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces and the Spanish Ministry of Education.

2010

XI European Youth Music Festival.

Emilia-Romagna region (Italy).

Appearance before the Parliament of Catalonia to discuss the situation of municipal music and dance schools.

Zone 7. New zone in the Penedès counties.

First edition of the book *Llibre de la CantaXics*.

Publication of a story CD *Florinda la vaca pallasa*.

Creation of Freeangle. Free, non-profit portal to share resources in the field of art education.

2012

2007

Creation of Standing Committees: training and production.

2009

X European Youth Music Festival. Linz (Austria).

Agreement with the Polytechnic University and ICEC - Mans Petites research project.

Organisation of the Festival of Water with the Catalan Water Agency.

Musicircus for Children, at MACBA Barcelona.

2011

Website

Launch of the new website.

2013

ACEM's twentieth anniversary

Organisation of the children's cantata *El nen enamorat de la lluna* at Parc del Fòrum, Barcelona.

First Fiddle Event in Martorell.

Creation of Gwido. Pilot test of this school management programme.

2019

Collaboration agreement with the Jam Session School of Music

II Stage ACEM Jazz Ensemble at Roda de Ter and L'Esquirol.

2020

Pandemic management

2021

Zone 9. New ACEM zone: Terres de l'Ebre.

New decree on music and dance schools. We strive to produce a text in keeping with the reality and requirements of music schools. Main new developments: programmes and qualifications.

2022

XIV European Youth Music Festival. REMIX'22 in Luxembourg. Creation of the Jazz Ensemble, Cor i Cobla.

Cultural Collaboration Agreement with Centre Artesà Tradicionàrius (CAT)

Creation of the Protocol for Detection, Prevention and Action in Situations of Sexual or Gender-based Violence. with Barcelona Provincial Council.

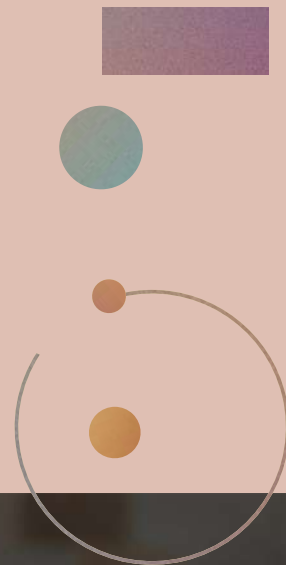
2023

ACEM's thirtieth anniversary. 15 Instrumental Meetings, +Dance and CantaXics children's cantata *Marcel Contaire* at the Tarraco Arena.

DANI MEDINA

FOR THREE VOICES

INTERVIEW WITH CARLES FARRÀS, MONTSE FAURA AND NÚRIA SEMPÈRE



COUNTERPOINT(ERS)



If we were to quickly relate these three people to the archetypes often used as a tool for considering leadership patterns and trends¹, we would probably not repeat any of them.

Carles Farràs is the archetype of the good king: order, structure, analysis and finances. Director of the Escola Itinerant de Música i Dansa del Pallars, he comes from the world of management and planning and has been working for ACEM for more than fifteen years, combining his managerial work with consulting and advice to local organisations.

The second archetype, the magician, is characterised by ideas, change, infinite possibilities, enthusiasm and creativity. **Montse Faura**, founder of the Escola Municipal de Música i Dansa Miquel Pongiluppi del Papiol, represents the alchemy of knowing how to expand the Association in a context of crises and cuts. A musician and cultural activist since the start of her career, she currently works on the artistic management and curatorship of the Torroella de Montgrí Music Festival. She is also the Secretary General of the Federació de Joventuts Musicals de Catalunya, among other projects of an international scope.

Núria Sempere evokes the archetype of the warrior: movement, action, strategy and persuasion. The founder of ACEM in 1993 and currently director of the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC), she was one of the architects of the creation of a new model of education centres that appeared in Catalonia in the year 2000 with the launch of the Centre de les Arts de l'Hospitalet de Llobregat (EMCA). Núria has devoted her career to making access to art practice more democratic and the generation of participation spaces from different managerial responsibilities in the field of music schools.

I have organised the interview into different sections with the idea of encouraging a conversation among you. The first section looks back to 1993 and where we came from. Why form an association of school owners rather than music school directors? What has happened to the objective promoted by the European Music School Union (EMU), which the Association made its own? "A school for all ages, all types of music and all needs". Does that still hold true?

¹ Moore, R. and Gillette, D. (1991). "King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine". San Francisco: Harper One.

CATALAN-STYLE

NÚRIA SEMPERE: The establishment of ACEM was inspired by the EMU. In late 1992, Elisa Roche,² who was working at the Ministry at the time, organised a congress on music schools and brought in international associations of music schools and the president of the EMU.

For all us Catalans who met in Madrid, that congress marked the discovery of a world we didn't know before then. We saw that the music school movement was not just about teachers committed to educational renewal but was actually a much larger and more organised movement made up of associations from across EU member states. And when we began to realise that it was very sound, well-organised, had a long-standing tradition and that it would allow us to generate a momentum in Catalonia that went beyond us, we decided, in a bar in Madrid after the congress, to create the Catalan Association of Music Schools as part of the Catalan Music Council.

The European associations were not associations of professional musicians. They were associations of institutions. And that struck us as the most appropriate form, especially because the most important thing at the time was for these ideas to gain a foothold in political structures. So the aim of creating the Association was to form a kind of lobby group to get across to the whole spectrum of political parties, especially the governing party, the same ideas that were being promoted in the rest of Europe, so they could be rolled out in Catalonia. Catalonia wasn't like the rest of Spain, with its state-run conservatories. At the time, Catalonia was a place of municipal music schools and also a series of private organisations with a clear public service vocation.

I think it was the following January we decided to create the Catalan Association of Music Schools.

CARLES FARRÀS: We could say it was done 'Catalan-style', right, Núria? I mean, the same as in Europe but with the difference that it included private owners. That was the Catalan difference.

NÚRIA SEMPERE: Exactly. The fact is there were a number of committed local councils but there were also many privately owned schools. And they had, as I said, a clearly public vocation. They were being run by female directors (more than by men) who had spent time abroad and knew there was a need for specialised music education outside of school but that would be open to all, not aimed solely at producing professional musicians.

So in January we met at the Barcelona Conservatory on carrer Bruc and I remember saying, "Okay, we have to create a board out of this". We asked for volunteers. And I remember saying, "Right, I'll throw my hat in the ring. Let's do this!" I remember a very short list of a dozen or so founding schools. Most were private – public ones were in the minority. In other words, the spirit of educational renewal at the time was more in the hands of the private sector than the public one. But it was a non-profit private sector made up mainly of dissidents committed to a people-focused musical education. That was the big difference.

TURBULENT TIMES

Núria, you represent that early period of promotion, action and movement by the Association, and Montse, after what we could call dark times, you embody the expansion, change and transformation of ACEM, the creation of new public services and a certain institutionalisation of the organisation.

MONTSE FAURA: That's right. I remember when the dominant feeling was that we had to put our house in order. After the first foundational board there were a further two presidencies before I took on the role with a noticeably unmotivated board and a constant drip-drip of outgoing member schools. I don't want to say it was "neglected" but there was some uncertainty ...

² Asturian pianist and educator Elisa María Roche Márquez (1943–2009) was technical advisor to the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Science for the reform of art education from 1990 to 1996, when she promoted substantial changes introduced by the LOGSE law on the education system to music, performing arts and dance, which had until then been on the fringes of general education regulations.

CARLES FARRÀS: It was neglected. You've hit the nail on the head there, Montse. No-one was taking care of it.

MONTSE FAURA: I was at Papiol at the time and although it was a small school, we really embraced the idea that we could leverage our resources to get to the standard of the more attractive and universal approaches some schools were considering. Most of us shared a deep desire to work towards that. During those years, we dedicated ourselves intensively to the professionalisation of the organisation's structure and to forging its presence in a wider territorial scope: we would establish different zones on the map beyond the Barcelona metropolitan area and set up work committees with specific actions, clearly defining attributions and functions, all under a shared leadership. In addition to the annual meetings, we promoted training, reflection, debate, activities and the creation of new teaching materials.

I also remember putting on a large production to celebrate the organisation's fifteenth anniversary to bring this change up to date and make it visible. Núria, how long were you in charge at ACEM?

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: I was there until ... the year 2000, perhaps?

MONTSE FAURA: I was involved between 2006 and 2014. The six years before that had been marked by a certain degree of conformism, quite a lot of apathy and the lack of a roadmap. Despite that, and with the arrival of Carles later on, a strengthened board emerged that took a new approach focused on professionalisation, strategic planning and designing projects for the organisation.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Of course, there was a six-year gap. Because the initial momentum was very strong. We set up the Association and started to organise training courses and invite international teachers: in 1997, the congress of Music at the School and Music Schools, in 1998 the European Youth Music Festival, with the entire EMU Assembly of Barcelona. So it was a time of helping these ideas take hold across the network of Catalan music schools. And then, after the Festival, a lot of bilateral contacts were established between the schools and the foreign partners who had been housed by the Festival's schools. In other words, that really created a whole movement.

Montse, you were saying that unlike other European associations, ACEM never really turned professional. For me that is something we still need to tackle. I remember *Verband deutscher Musikschulen*, the German association that founded the EMU, the Norwegian association, the Danish association ... They were all highly professional groups, with management structures, regular activities, a strong capacity to influence political power ...

Actually, following on from what Dani was saying about owners not directors, we wondered at some point whether, like the Swedes, it was worth becoming a branch of the Federació de Municipis, the organisation responsible for music schools. That's how the Swedes were organised at the time – the Swedish association was a branch of the association of Swedish municipalities. But it never got off the ground. We never managed to transcend this idea of owners, but one where (and Dani was on the right track) school management lies at the heart of it all, relying on internal and international benchmarking to generate continuous improvement.

And at the end of the day, Barcelona Provincial Council's Intermunicipal Comparison Round Tables later gave a boost that certainly did not come officially from ACEM. But, on the other hand, the centres promoted the criteria, the indicators, the debate, the *thinking-out-of-the-box* of our centres, which were the schools involved in the Association. Schools that were involved in the transformation from a nineteenth-century model of Spanish, French and Italian conservatory into a more Central and Northern European model of a music school for all ages, all intensities and all kinds of music to really generate a musical and artistic practice that could be a driving force for social transformation.



CARLES FARRÀS: I don't know whether it was 1996 or 1997 when the private schools, or many private schools, felt they were not being represented and created their own association because they wanted funding, which I suppose is another issue we will touch on, and which ACEM considered was not one of the Association's objectives. Montse, there were around fifty schools when you joined, weren't there?

MONTSE FAURA: After the previous period of isolation it was crucial that we revitalised the Association and re-established trust. The foundational board was the spark that lit the flame after the congress in Madrid. We were a new generation of directors, undoubtedly inspired by that first group, who faced the challenge with renewed motivation, dedicating countless hours and offering support, even personal endorsements. Certainly, if ACEM had been a professional body comparable to its European counterparts, many of the actions we implemented could have been avoided and we probably wouldn't have found ourselves in the situation we did.

At the time, it was necessary to get involved, and together with the confidence of our member schools, we took the decision to face it and move forwards. We reflected on what was happening in the area, exploring and detecting existing needs and differences. During this period, various issues of strategic importance were raised, such as the ongoing debate around group classes.

CARLES FARRÀS: And that was associated with ACEM, right? That was when we had to put the brake on people, because they were pointing to us as if we were defending a specific model.

MONTSE FAURA: Also, we then started promoting the ongoing education of teachers and the specialisation of managers. We paid special attention to the development of training programmes to guarantee a constant improvement of teacher and manager skills, something that was important in order to make changes without them being perceived as a threat. Having qualified, well-trained teachers was key at that time of transformation.

Education policies and the financing of music schools, in the run-up to a crisis we could see coming, had a significant influence on our scope of action. We were caught up in defending approaches that pursued access to a quality arts education and to different lifelong itineraries and programmes of arts education. They were also the years when some schools began to incorporate additional artistic disciplines into their programmes, an initiative that was fully aligned with the vision of transforming music schools into multidisciplinary spaces that would foster a broader and more inclusive artistic practice.

PUSH AND PULL

I would like to start the third chapter here, which considers the models of music schools in ACEM and the transformative function Núria was speaking about. I imagine there has always been a fine line between push and pull, or a tug of war. Because ACEM is an organisation that represents its members and therefore embodies a number of models and traditions, but it has a transformative function that consists of pushing forwards. What has been your experience of this tension between past and future?

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: There's a line in a Woody Allen film³ that says, *"If it bends it's funny, if it breaks it's not"*. We've always taken the approach of trying to bend things without breaking them.

CARLES FARRÀS: The thing you said about our function has happened often. Pushing, breathing new life into things, inviting teachers from across the Atlantic. And then there might have been schools that thought, "These folks are heading in a direction I don't want to go, so I don't want to be part of the Association". It could happen – and over the years it has happened – that there is a school that drops out of the organisation because of that, because they want to do things in, let's say, a particular order, they want something the others aren't as interested in. At the time, they saw themselves as being overwhelmed; they weren't interested in doing so many activities because it made teachers, pupils and families anxious and the many meetings, according to them, caused a loss of quality, because it was highly participative but of little quality. At the end of the day, it is management which positively "impacts" the way ACEM is perceived. And sometimes, when you make a wrong call, there is someone who, when you explain it, straight away says, "If that had been the case there wouldn't have been a problem", but there are other people who push back. It's true that around 2005–2006, Montse, we did something very cool, which was use the fifteenth anniversary to find new schools to take part in the mass event we held at Palau Sant Jordi. That took us from fifty or sixty schools to nearly ninety.

MONTSE FAURA: Yes, the aim of the fifteenth anniversary, which isn't a round number usually deemed worthy of celebration, was to showcase the change and transformation taking place at the time.

CARLES FARRÀS: To go back to the roots, right?

MONTSE FAURA: At the time, we were aware of the importance of highlighting the work being done in schools through a common project. It was 2008, a year that was an interesting turning point, since a diversity of instruments, formations and musical genres was already integrated into the curricular programmes of some schools. Plus, the decision to incorporate other disciplines such as dance was probably influenced by the funding agreement that ensured financial support for municipal music and dance schools.

This initiative reflected the desire to showcase the coexistence of different forms of artistic expression and the cultural wealth of the country, with the aim of expressing itself from different perspectives in the midst of its own diversity. The event took place with the active participation of a number of schools and the main objective of collaborating closely with educational communities and well-known artists from Catalonia. It was a rewarding experience that not only brought significant renown but gave us a prominent media presence.

³ Woody Allen (1992). *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

Personally, I feel that the fifteenth anniversary symbolised the transition from the founding board to the present day, consolidating the continuity of our purpose.

CARLES FARRÀS: And this visibility part, Montse, happened with a certain amount of incredulity, even from your board.

MONTSE FAURA: There have always been doubts, misgivings and lack of trust and there will continue to be, especially in a context of change and transformation. I remember the financial challenges we had to overcome, a number of members dropping out and a lack of general understanding regarding ACEM's functions and objectives, while all the time there was fast and sustained growth. This caused concern within the board and forced us to reassess our identity as an organisation. However, this period was a turning point, a time of amazing growth from my point of view.

Today, when I check the website to keep up to date with how the organisation is going, I am genuinely pleased to see that all the areas have experienced noticeable growth and a significant expansion.

CARLES FARRÀS: I remember the arguments around creating Zone 6. There weren't any schools at the time ...

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Hang on, where's Zone 6?

CARLES FARRÀS: Zone 6 is enormous: it crosses the Llobregat, covers a bit of Solsonès, a bit of Lleida and until recently a bit of Osona, too ... It was split up a while ago and Zone 8 created, containing Osona, Ripollès and Garrotxa ... But at the start Zone 6 only had three schools: Berga, at the top, Olesa de Montserrat, at the bottom, and Sallent, in the middle. There were no other ACEM schools. The others were guest schools from the area. Now they are all members, there are fourteen or fifteen schools, loads of them. But at the time there were three. And I remember the momentum to do things in the zones, to have our own budget. Do you remember that, Montse?

MONTSE FAURA: Different schools were implementing big changes at the time, despite some reticence from a number of staff. That was when integrated, multidisciplinary programmes appeared, along with new formats and renewed methodologies, both within and outside the mainstream. One notable example at the time was the Hospitalet school, which spearheaded a disruptive model with the creation of the Centre de les Arts, simultaneously generating interest and rejection across various parts of the sector. We were going through a period of change and reconsideration, with some schools following the established models and others evolving beyond the confines of the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1990s.

We had to reconcile all this, since they represented a wide diversity of schools, each with its own dimensions and resources and its own approach within its particular context. At the time, we were experiencing accelerated growth and had more than a hundred member schools. From my point of view, this diversity was extremely useful; observing, questioning and shaking up the different models that coexisted was interesting in itself.

I also remember the case of a board member who joined a few years later and who represented the dual model of school-plus-conservatory urging us to take a clear position and establish a single definition of what a music school should be like. We resisted going down that path, despite the pressure. We were clear that it was not up to us to determine the sole model of music school; rather, our function at that time was to facilitate dialogue and provide spaces for reflection and knowledge-transfer in order to understand the different existing realities and provide the appropriate tools for those who wanted to promote change.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: In the end, this duality, I wouldn't say Catalan but Spanish, of music schools versus conservatories, is a duality that has done a lot of harm. Fear on one hand, but above all not thinking about what lies ahead and just looking in the rearview mirror has encouraged an approach that could have been brutal and that had to be taken either by local councils directly or by directors and teachers with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of confidence in what they were doing and a commitment that the music school had to include everyone. And that circles back to why the Association has aimed for lobbying capacity, and its wanting to look like the rest of Europe, which hasn't fully taken hold. I think we have to be more self-critical.

I think you two have entered into more conversations with the spectrum as a whole than I have, perhaps. Also, in my case, it was an initial period where we had to define where we were going. But it makes me kind of mad to see that thirty years later we're still asking whether nine-year-olds should do a musical language class or not.



MONTSE FAURA: That we're still questioning something so obvious?

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: That's right. Or what Carles said, that quality and engagement are considered opposing issues when really they're two sides of the same coin. If people still have an idea of quality without context, we're doing something wrong. The people in higher education centres are thinking about how we can transform to include people with more racial diversity, more socioeconomic diversity, how to work for gender equality ... and it turns out that there are still music schools that select or discourage students according to whether they fit a certain profile. How is that possible?

MONTSE FAURA: With this broad perspective, it is obvious that over time there has been an overlapping of layers with different registers and problems, lacking a clear and updated policy idea around objectives and the country's project. Despite the growth of music schools, there are still unresolved questions and an accumulated shortfall in history. It is still possible to identify pending issues, as well as obsolete or distant approaches to contemporary social demands.

This is why there is still a need for art education to recover the everyday spaces of our lives, with the aim of making it visible, revaluing it and giving it the recognition it deserves. Stepping up to this challenge requires active collaboration, mainly between the administrations and communities involved.

THE MODELS

Before moving onto the institutional question, I was wondering whether you would say there is a model of Catalan music schools within this amalgam?



NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Yes, I think there is a model of Catalan music schools. A very diverse model, if you like, but there is a model. If you look closely at the schools, they all talk about putting students at the heart. And there's no large-scale refusal to make musical language an accompaniment to instrument practice, but there is a musical language that draws on many traditions of educational renewal in the twentieth century. The vocal ensemble is conceived as the backbone of activities overall; instrument practice is approached in a very functional way integrated into instrumental ensembles ... In short, I think these questions very much relate to a Catalan model. Each school deploys these questions as they see fit, but I believe you can recognise a music school in Catalonia because of these qualities. I don't identify with them completely. I haven't put them all into practice at the same time, but I recognise this way of doing things. Don't you think?

MONTSE FAURA: Perhaps. It's like a current that flows because of osmosis, more or less implicit but present.

CARLES FARRÀS: I don't know. I don't see any model. I understand what you're saying, Núria, but that happens in half the music schools. We have 184 schools in Catalonia at present: 184 authorised public schools and a further seventy authorised private ones. Of those 184 public schools I recognise what you're saying in around a hundred, but there are eighty more where I don't.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: And how many of those schools are ACEM members?

CARLES FARRÀS: I'd say that most ACEM members are part of this model. But we shouldn't underestimate the eighty that aren't. Most non-ACEM schools aren't members because they don't fully identify with this movement of renewal. They don't feel heard for some reason.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: I'd like to go back to what we said before. This duality between music schools and conservatories, legitimised by the education administration, has done a lot of harm. The fact that Catalonia has 27 conservatories and Germany has six tells you something. There are eighty million Germans. There are just eight million of us. Eight,

not eighty! And I think this has made the situation worse, because these European music schools we're talking about (most are now arts schools or cultural schools) all contain an educational programme to prepare students for higher education. The fact that we have adopted some things from this European model but have meanwhile maintained part of a nineteenth-century education system sends out contradictory messages.

MONTSE FAURA: And somehow that has filtered through into the organisation. The Association has ended up leading something that the public authorities should be leading.

CARLES FARRÀS: But we shouldn't demonise conservatories, either. They're like music schools' first cousins.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: They're the same thing! These 27 centres are music schools too, and most are probably in ACEM as well.

CARLES FARRÀS: Yes, it's true that most are both things at the same time but in any case the party responsible for addressing this is the government.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: The fate of these 27 centres would be to become integrated centres, to plan a system of integrated secondary and senior high-school centres. Right now it makes no sense to authorise centres without any planning or any real commitment to quality.

CARLES FARRÀS: True. There are seven or eight conservatories in Vallès, yes.

FANTASTIC DICHOTOMIES: PUBLIC/PRIVATE AND CULTURE/EDUCATION

Let's address the thorny topic of institutions. How does this fairly schizophrenic issue of being a group of representatives of public owners, not politicians, who meet with the political leaders of the Parliament work? What has your relationship with institutions been like? Given that the new Decree 354/2021 was approved recently, what relationship did ACEM have with the old one, the one from 1994?

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: 1993 was the first time we took part in an assembly of the European Music School Union (EMU). It was held in Arvika (Sweden) and we asked the Catalan Ministry of Education to help cover the cost of the trip. They didn't fund both flights, only one, and we were accompanied by a person from the Ministry who was drafting the new decree 179/1993. But our ability to influence this decree was very limited because we had very different views on music education. Perhaps during my time as president, so much drive and commitment to a specific vision got a lot of things done but at the same time it may also have led to a low level of identification with the Association among people who did not feel a need to shake the sector up.

CARLES FARRÀS: And what it also probably did was identify ACEM with a certain political content, perhaps. Now I don't think anyone can clearly say that ACEM leans more towards Esquerra or the Socialists or more towards Comuns or Junts (political parties). I think the initial impetus was highly innovative and groundbreaking and was fundamental to its birth. The Association wouldn't have come about otherwise. Now that it's made a name for itself it has to try to take as many feelings into account as possible.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Yes, I personally remember a meeting that discussed an initiative to allow private schools to be part of the assembly but not give them a vote. And I said that no-one should be left out, because the private schools that were part of the Association were private by chance, not vocationally.

I myself, on the public-private question, never took the view of excluding people who were giving it their all and committing their assets to the development of a very specific model of music school.

Now, in the area of pedagogical transformation and social spectrum, I do. In this I have been as belligerent as I could be.

CARLES FARRÀS: In fact, Montse, you and I did the opposite. On the public-private question we were tough to the point of having very difficult meetings three or four years in a row in which private schools felt pressured to step back from ACEM. Today the Association has a very clear statement in the articles of association saying that only public schools and private ones validated by their local council as having a public vocation, a convention or other type of agreement can be full ACEM members.

MONTSE FAURA: In the context of public-private school partnerships, this duality of aims has been a constant and often confrontational struggle. At the administrative level, policy design has failed to adequately assume the strategic role of fostering public-private partnerships, lacking a coherent project, a well-defined strategy and the necessary funding. This lack of planning has contributed to the disorganisation of the system still in place today, in contrast to practices observed in other European countries where public-private partnerships in education have been integrated successfully.



NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: It's probably time to apply pressure to professionalise the organisation. But when I say professionalise, I don't mean set up a superstructure, I mean have sufficient funding to have two people, one with a more managerial profile and the other with a more administrative one, who would really work full time in the organisation and be able to take on all the processes and get more funding so that the activities would be more regular, more competitive... It's not just ACEM. There are many other associations that tend to have voluntary board members and it's just not sustainable.

CARLES FARRÀS: The thing is it will come to an end one day. That's the problem.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: It's not that much money either, but that's what should be done from the outset: have a professional manager and an admin person. From that point on, the two could work as they can and get other people on board voluntarily. But as long as it has to be the board that does everything, it's impossible.

CARLES FARRÀS: Yes, we're quite boxed in; it's a question of funding. The budget only stretches so far.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: What is the current territorial position of the provincial councils?

CARLES FARRÀS: For ad-hoc things the provincial councils might give you a bit more, but at the funding level we can assume it to be very little.

THOSE AT THE TOP

Exactly, let's talk about funding. You said that in 2008 you put a lot of effort into raising the profile of the music schools, but this was happening in the midst of the financial crisis and with cuts in funding for them. How did you work your magic?

MONTSE FAURA: By 2005 we had consolidated our presence and got the sector behind us. Then just a few years later we were hit by the financial crisis, which brought a new set of problems. The schools experienced a significant deterioration during this time.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Yes, but remember – even though there was a crisis, no music school closed, unlike in other European countries. This capacity for resistance on the part of the sector, if you want to call it that, is not to be scoffed at. Music schools closed across the Netherlands. I had been greatly inspired by *Utrecht Centrum voor de Kunsten* when founding the Centre de les Arts de l'Hospitalet, and it closed down when the crisis hit. A school with seven or eight thousand students closed. It was at the start of the municipal term. People complained, but they still closed it down. Whoever could keep on paying did so and for the others it was, "Okay, bye!"

I say this because it's true there was a drop in funding from the Government of Catalonia, but we should acknowledge the fortitude shown by the local councils to sustain music schools. And in the case of private schools, which were coughing up 100% of the cost, the families had to feel the pinch financially. But the sector held on. I don't know whether you agree with me on that.

CARLES FARRÀS: I would add something else. The local councils made an effort at the time, but they also squeezed the teaching staff. In more than 50% of cases, teachers were affected by salary cuts, reduced working hours ...

MONTSE FAURA: Probably even though no schools closed down, more than a few suffered consequences in the form of reduced working hours, workforces and salaries. And some families were unable to cope with the rise in fees that some schools opted for.

CARLES FARRÀS: Even so, neither the number of schools nor the number of pupils fell. You're right about that, Núria. Despite it all, neither the number of schools nor the number of pupils fell. There is a figure that shows the reality: in 2008 there were 30,000 pupils between the ages of four and eighteen, and eight years later, in the midst of the financial crisis, in 2016 the number of pupils was 40,000. It's true that they were much more poorly funded (in 2008 they were allocated €18 million and in 2016, €5 million).

I remember an appearance in Parliament when they said, 'What do you want exactly, you're ...' I don't remember the exact words, do you, Núria?

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Yes! They said we were gladiators! (She laughs).

CARLES FARRÀS: Exactly! At the time, with the downturn, many schools reinvented themselves and began to think about what formulas they could play with. And that initial momentum meant that we reinvented ourselves because of financial pressures, there's no denying it. There were many centre managers who redefined the ideal they had in mind in order to scrape by as a music school, and that is what has happened from 2008 through to now.

Let's be clear that we are talking among ourselves. We music school directors know each other more or less from friendship or communication circles, we see each other and we talk to each other. But the mayors meet up too, as do the Provincial Council, the parties' culture managers, the party assemblies ... The mayors and local councillors responsible for education or culture also have their forums and all of that has been gaining ground. My feeling is that we have had more of an impact on educational transformation precisely because we went through such a tough time that we were forced to think: "If we formed a group, what would happen?" And what about if we ran language classes for one day instead of three?"

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Did you know that when I had been working at ESMUC for a month, a professor from the Classical and Contemporary Music Department told me I had lifted a weight from his shoulders? "In what way?" I asked. And he said: "Because we all thought you would make us run classes of three students per class!" (She laughs).

CARLES FARRÀS: There might have been a clichéd idea that seeing as we'd done it that way in our centres we should do it everywhere and for always. The Catalan Ministry of Education put a decree out for public scrutiny in 2012 that didn't end up having legs because ACEM amended it and the secretary-general at the time withdrew it. The decree said that music schools had to include expertise within their programmes, with individual instrument classes for children aged twelve to sixteen, while children aged seven to eleven had to do the basic programme and group instrument classes had to be mandatory. And of course that didn't make any sense. You can't lay down the law when the owners of the centres are local councils – and remember, we are unofficial centres of learning. So we presented an amendment and luckily the people at the top realised that what had been done further down the line wasn't right. We defended the ability of each owner to choose the pedagogical and organisational model. By the way, are we doing okay for time? We're really getting into some detailed stories here ...

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

Actually, now that you mention it, we should start to wind things up. Let's look now at what you think the Association will look like over the coming thirty years, okay?

CARLES FARRÀS: I hope my next thirty will be as an ex-president, too.

MONTSE FAURA: Keen to get off the board, are you?

CARLES FARRÀS: Yes, actually ... Well, maybe 'keen' isn't the right word. I just think it's time; I've been on the board many years. I was on it with you for a long time, too, Montse. I've been there ten years without you, but I was on it with you for five or six very intense years, too. And I mean very intense. I've been there fifteen years. It will be twenty when the term ends in 2026 and I think that's more than enough. We have to step aside and let other people take over, right? So it's not that I'm keen to get out, I just think I should.

But there's still a lot to do. The country is in a state of disrepair. We have many schools that haven't yet found their way and are replicating old models because they haven't found anything else. I think there's a lot of work to be done in the countryside, because it's not all about the metropolitan area. I think that if the Ministry doesn't really get stuck in and ensure funding like it should, the schools will continue to suffer. It shouldn't be the case that we had a subsidy of €600 per year per student in 2008 and now we're getting an average of €130.

It's also true that it wouldn't be fair to go after €600 per student again because the average per-student cost has fallen. It has dropped from €1,800 in 2008 to €1,300 in 2023.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: Yes, but that's not only because we've introduced more group classes. It's also because teachers' salaries haven't gone up like they should.

CARLES FARRÀS: They've gone down because we have put more effort into awareness-raising. We have multiplied the number of students in awareness-raising drives, community projects, adults in gospel groups, etc. by eight. Our awareness drives have increased greatly so it's not just a problem of wages.

MONTSE FAURA: And the cost of living is going up, as is the need to keep teachers' qualifications up to date.

NÚRIA SEMPÈRE: To circle back to the issue at hand, what I do think is that the professionalisation of the Association over the next thirty years will be fundamental. It is fundamental to have support from the Association itself to transform the institutions and with a transformation which I think has to stop

focusing so much on educational renewal, because there are already organisations dedicated to ongoing teacher training and with a good organisation of the centre it is possible to continue to train teachers. Above all, the organisation has to make the schools pivot towards covering the needs of today's world. Especially regarding diversity, equality and inclusion policies. I think that has to get through to all the schools, but it needs support because we aren't talking about individual initiatives inspired by each centre but making it a more global policy. And in terms of financing, we need to have advocates within the public authorities. I think ACEM should continue doing what it does.

Carles spoke about twenty-five years' pulling a load. I think ACEM has the capacity for it. In other words, if 135 of the 184 public schools are part of ACEM, it means that the legitimacy of sector representativeness is very high and therefore, since we are able to represent the sector, we must be able to establish more one-on-one conversations with the Catalan public administration. Because let's not forget – the owners are local councils, that's true, but it is the government that has the remit for education so I think the weight of public contribution must continue to be held by the Government of Catalonia. The centre owners have to support and sustain it, have the bulk of the staff and facilities, but what they really need is this support for a competence that at the end of day is not exclusive to them. That's where ACEM can come in.

MONTSE FAURA: Taking up this idea of 'the plural stems from the singular' as the philosopher and my friend Lali Bosch says, this principle takes on a critical dimension in an increasingly individualised and upside-down world. We should not only encourage integral growth from the collective but also preserve the wealth of our cultural heritage for the coming generations.

In this context, it is important that the public administration, local authorities and schools take up the gauntlet in transforming arts education. ACEM, which speaks for 70% of the music schools in the country, can play a key role as a principal stakeholder, providing its expertise on schools' real and tangible needs. Its influence is substantial and failure to recognise or take advantage of this would mean the loss of a unique opportunity. At this critical juncture, we are called on to play in the premier league in all aspects, as society is demanding profound and immediate changes.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the past thirty years, celebrate the contributions shared over this time and wish ACEM much future success. May its work continue!

LEADERSHIP

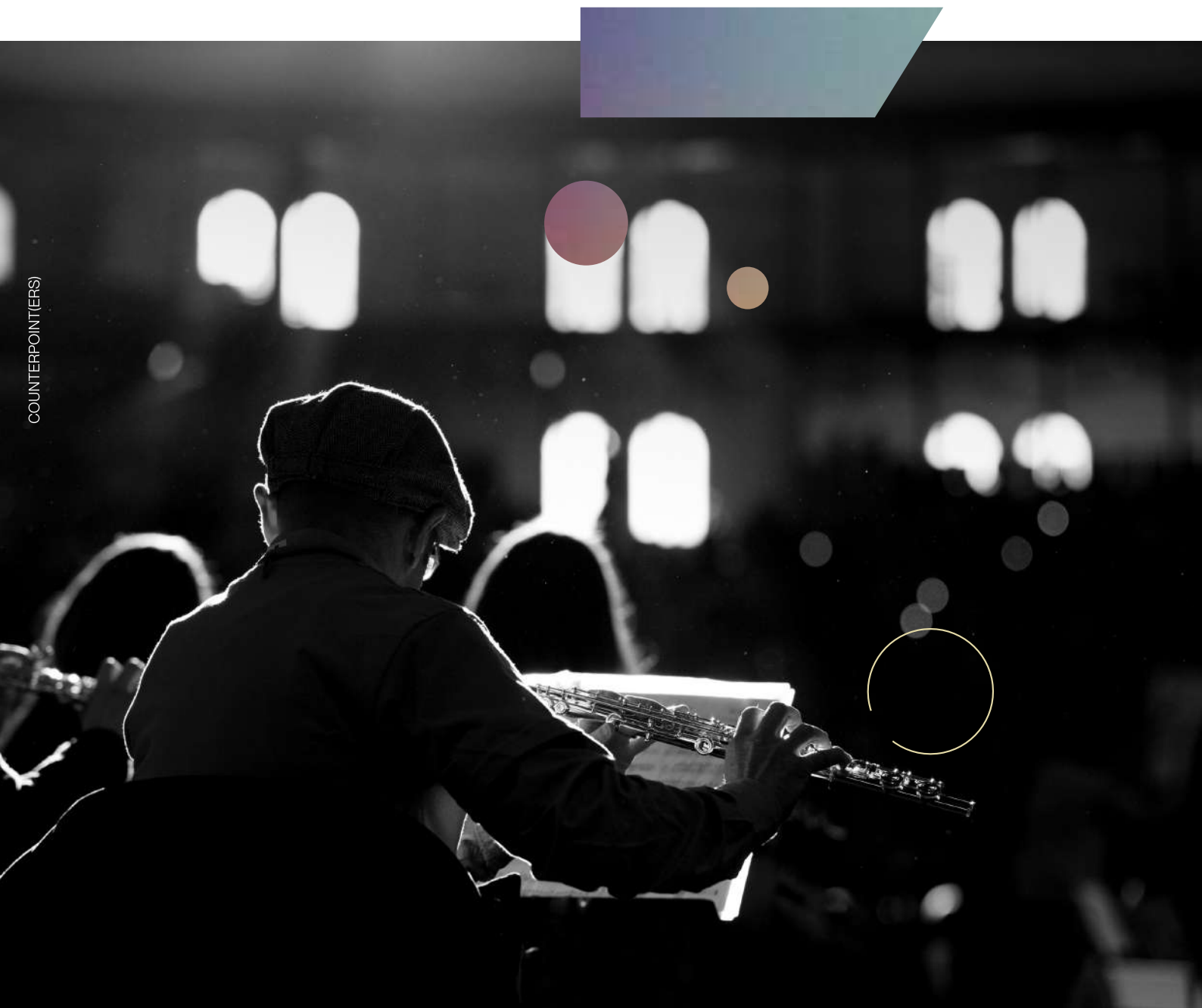
The classic definition of leadership is the ability or power to influence, to have an impact on others or on the environment in order to achieve an objective. But from a more mature point of view, we could say that the leader expresses his or her vision of the world and leaves space for other people to situate themselves in it, reformulating and transforming it. It is true that not all voices bring something useful to the table: some annoy, cause anguish or obstruct. But it is necessary to be able to take them into account and lead a process that must be permanently validated by the group, that is the essence. Each new member of the group, school, family, classroom or assembly is a new voice.

ORIOI CENDRA PLANAS

CULTURAL RIGHTS: AN OPPORTUNITY
TO RECONSIDER OURSELVES BY
PRODUCING CULTURE

'There is something deeper seated than culture, namely the material conditions which make it both possible and necessary'

— TERRY EAGLETON, 2016.



Talking about cultural rights is never easy. The notion of cultural rights has advanced since its inclusion in articles 22 and 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), producing a somewhat complex picture. We can refer to its evolution through successive phases: the rights of freedom of creation and the exercise of artistic and scientific freedom (first-generation rights); the rights of equal access (second generation) and the rights of cultural diversity and heritage preservation (third generation).

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and its interpretation (UN, 2009), as well as its systematisation in the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights (2007), are significant milestones in this development. Nor should the incorporation of cultural diversity as a common heritage of humanity, the development of cultural policies linked to sustainable development commitments (Baltà, 2017) or the idea of global justice linked to *collective rights and the rights of minorities* (Lladonosa-Günes, 2021) be alien to the reflection on cultural rights.

However, beyond the normative and conceptual deployment of cultural rights, it seems appropriate to begin this reflection by asking ourselves what the material and symbolic barriers are that condition our understanding of culture and limit people's participation in a society's cultural life. In other words: what is culture? And who makes it?

We read books, listen to music, go to concerts, the theatre and exhibitions. These are certainly cultural practices, but culture is more than that. We have got used to understanding culture as an output that we measure, manage and consume, but we sometimes forget that 'the people who need to invest most of their energy in the business of staying alive have neither the time nor resources to throw sherry parties or dash off epic poems. A professional caste of artists and intellectuals, as Marx recognises, becomes possible only when not everyone needs to labour for most of the time. Only then can one establish a full-scale division of labour, as a number of privileged individuals are released from the necessity to toil to become bards, shamans, chieftains, philosophers, supervisors, archbishops, disc jockeys, duchesses and so on.' (EAGLETON, 2016: 57). Culture, at least as I understand it, is not just a leisure option, nor a sector of industry. It cannot (only) be explained by its contribution to GDP nor is it the result of the division of labour. My idea of culture is closer to that of Raymond Williams (1958) when he thought of education and culture as everyday, ordinary resources shaped by the common meanings of a way of life as a whole, as well as by creative and innovative processes, the arts and the knowledge with which new meanings are generated.

I will not dwell on this reflection, but I would like to point out two ideas that can help us – at least I find them useful – when rethinking the design of our cultural and educational actions and programmes: the idea of cultural citizenship and the notion of the ability to aspire as an essential cultural action so that the most disadvantaged social sectors

can build a better future.

Firstly, Marta Rovira-Martínez (2021) formulates the concept of cultural citizenship as 'the ability to participate legitimately as part of the country's culture, both because there is the incorporation of new people into traditional Catalan cultural practices and because new groups, associations and diverse cultural practices are onboarded into a shared framework of popular culture'. Rovira-Martínez takes the idea of cultural citizenship from the concept of social citizenship formulated by Thomas Humphrey Marshall, who said that citizenship was not only a question of political rights, but also social ones such as access to education and the health system. (Rovira, 2021:99)

In parallel, Indian anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2013) formulates the concept of aspiration as a key element of cultural action. His idea stems from the desire to introduce the future into the cultural discourse, and he is concerned that the future is present in the economic sphere (which incorporates concepts such as desire, need, expectations and calculation into its narrative), while culture constructs a discourse built on concepts linked to the past (habit, custom, inheritance, tradition and so on). The ability to aspire is essential for people and groups to actively engage in designing a better future. The grounds for promoting this are cultural and involve acknowledgement (a concept embodied by Charles Taylor in the debate on the ethical foundations of multiculturalism), whereby understanding otherness ceases to be an option and becomes an obligation. It also involves strengthening the capacity of groups, especially the subalternised, to have and to cultivate their own voice (a voice that is more cultural than democratic) with the aim of conquering the possibility of debating, questioning and opposing vital directives for social life as the group wishes.

CULTURAL RIGHTS AND THE EXERCISE THEREOF

The rights to education and culture, fundamental human rights recognised equally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) have been implemented unevenly. Educational rights, on the one hand, have been established, protected and provided with budgetary resources, while economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR, recognised in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966) have been less recognised, both legally and in terms of their enforceability and mechanisms of guarantee and fulfilment.

At the same time, the way we understand education and culture has changed over the years. UNESCO has shifted from an educational model prioritising the transmission of scientific and technical know-how to models that value the ethical and cultural aspects of education. The concept of culture has also evolved from a space for creative freedom to being a tool for sustainable development and the defence of human rights and diversity. I would like to highlight two important concepts that have been introduced into these debates around the notion of culture:

1. An interpretation of culture as a vital, historical, dynamic and evolutionary process is preferable to a static and essentialist vision of culture. In this regard, the expression *cultural life* has become more popular than the concept of *culture* (ICESCR, 1966: Art. 15).
2. The right to participate in cultural life is articulated by emphasising the role of citizens as active agents of culture. Participation is understood in a broad sense: 'There are, among others, three interrelated main components of the right to participate or take part in cultural life: a) participation in, b) access to, and c) contribution to cultural life.' (UN, 2009: Art. 15 and seq.).

This summary introduction includes a reference to the working group led by Patrice Meyer-Bisch, which in 2007 gave shape to the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights. The Declaration describes six rights: identity and cultural heritage; reference to cultural communities; access to and participation in cultural life; education and training; information and communication; cultural cooperation. I will not go into its content in detail. To give you an idea, I would point out that until the drafting of the Declaration, the Fribourg group operated by grouping the cultural rights recognised in the different international instruments into three large blocks:

- Rights recognised as cultural rights (participation in the cultural life of the community; protection of intellectual property over creations and authorship rights; education and linguistic freedoms recognised for persons belonging to minorities;).
- Rights recognised to people who work in the field of culture (academic freedom and the exercise of teaching and information).
- Civil and political rights in their cultural dimension: to dignity and non-discrimination; to cultural identity; to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and freedom of information and association (the right to belong or not to a cultural community).

CULTURE AND EDUCATION: BY WAY OF DIAGNOSIS

Emphasis must be placed on designing effective policies based on fostering the ability of its inhabitants to discover their cultural backgrounds, to recognise their heritage, their identities and their place in the city, to understand other people's contexts and, at the same time, to foster the ability to share cultures and creativity so that social and democratic life advances with the impulse of creative exchange and the enjoyment and protection of common cultural resources. — 2020 ROME CHARTER.

I do not wish to be original in the diagnosis. My expertise lies not in the field of education: my viewpoint is biased both by my professional dedication and the environments I work in. However, I think we have a number of good portraits of the situation. I have based this article on the reports on the development of cultural learning for inclusion and cohesion among young people in Europe (CHIEF 2019 and 2020),

the Study of the Non-formal Educational Offering in the Artistic Field in Catalonia (Obiols, 2019), the Government Measure on Culture and Education: the Right to Cultural Participation and Art Education and Practice Throughout Life (Barcelona City Council, 2021) and my collaboration with Nicolás Barbieri (Barbieri-Cendra, 2021).

Ultimately, I am aware that we all have this diagnosis more or less in mind. What we need to do is to act and, if necessary, to change public dynamics and policies.

1. The Potential of Non-formal Education: Obiols (2019) takes a snapshot of a total of 2,295 organisations in the non-formal education sector and 1,227 informal ones with an educational offering in the artistic field in Catalonia. The snapshot shows:

- a. The complementary nature of non-formal and informal education.
- b. The prevalence of theatre and music activities, where music (23%), dance (37%) and drama (15%) make up 75% of the offering. They are followed by the plastic and visual arts, audiovisual arts and design (24%) and circus arts (1%).
- c. The offering is characterised mainly (83%) as educational (learning to dance, sing, paint...) and professionalising (32%). Then come summer schools (11%), after-school activities (6%), supplementary training to formal education (6%), holiday camps (3%), courses, seminars and/or conferences (14%) and teacher training and/or counselling (4%).
- d. Private organisations predominate among the types of organisations that run non-formal education initiatives in Catalonia. Three-quarters of the analysed organisations are private.

2. Lack of recognition of the public value of cultural education: most documents and public policies **describe cultural education as an instrumental fact rather than a value in itself.**

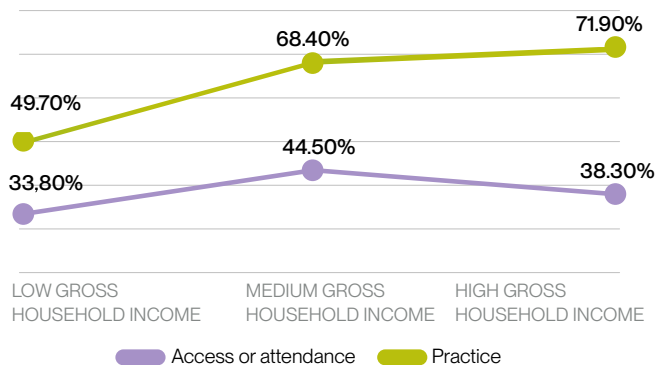
3. With regard to practical classes,

- a. People over the age of eighteen and under the age of three are given less priority. The non-formal educational offering in the artistic field aimed at children aged twelve to eighteen (31%) and six to twelve (29%) is of note. Early childhood (between zero and six years of age) represents 15%, and seniors, 1%. (Obiols, 2019:161). Cendra, 2021:351).
- b. In children, significant changes are observed in the practice of cultural activities and decreases in the rates of practice by age and school year. In the transition from primary to high school, with an increase in after-school activities to bolster academic studies, music schools linked to musical societies lose 65.23% of their intermediate or advanced level pupils (Barbieri-Cendra, 2021:351).

4. Inequalities and social, structural and symbolic barriers:

the right to education in artistic and cultural expressions is conditioned by important inequalities. Income levels,

Attendance and practice of cultural activities. Summary by disposable household income. Barcelona.

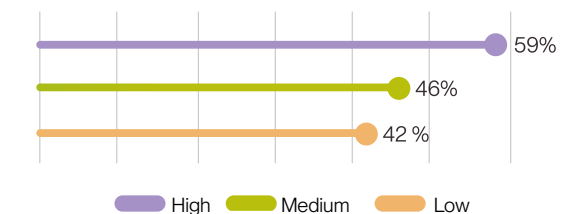


Source: Barcelona City Council 2020

the level of studies, an intense maternal cultural practice, having been born in the rest of the European Union and being younger provide greater opportunities.

With regard to children's participation in artistic and cultural after-school activities, including music, theatre, dance, 'human towers' and others, there are significant inequalities, conditioned by the level of study and, above all, by family income, with a percentage difference of seven points (42% low income; 59% high income). (Barbieri-Cendra, 2021:341).

Children and engagement in artistic and cultural after-school activities



Source: Barbieri-Cendra, 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

The demand for an arts education is widespread throughout Catalonia, no matter how small the municipality, yet 'arts education is not, by any stretch of the imagination, considered a priority in people's lives.'
— OBIOLS, 2019

Culture is ambivalent: it can provide a space for engagement and recognition from which to share, create and exchange world views, but it can also be exploited to generate exclusionary identities or to exercise standardisation and/or the dominance of minorities. I hold that, beyond artistic practice, strengthening the educational action of culture should involve acknowledging its public interest and crafting stable frameworks of interrelationships between educational and cultural agents:

1. Consolidate a shared project between educational and cultural institutions and mutual recognition between the cultural and educational systems with the aim of promoting shared strategies, the management of educational activities and strengthening of interdisciplinary work processes, and the borrowing of reference persons between fields (cultural, leisure, education, social work and so on).

2. Acknowledge the public value of educational activities, including non-formal and informal ones. A lack of recognition and public support generates difficulties of access because the activities are considered 'dispensable' and not fundamental to people's education (unlike formal education). In this regard, I would make a few suggestions:

a. Call on public administrations to explore and promote alternatives to annual subsidies for social and cultural teaching organisations and businesses, such as **pluri-annual agreements or grants linked to pluri-annual projects** in order to favour medium- and long-term projects.

b. Categorise **a list of non-economic general interest services that could be provided by cultural third-sector organisations and/or businesses.** Yves Blein (2014) proposes defining 'non-economic general interest services' (in the fields of social action, popular education and other associative sectors), on the basis of which it would be possible to establish reduced or differentiated taxes according to activities, fiscal incentives, etc. It is a formula designed to counteract the weakening of long-standing associative actors in the face of the tendency towards the progressive commercialisation of certain activities and competition from new players, some of whom have legitimate profit-making aims.

3. Strengthen links between formal, non-formal and informal education to power their complementary and interrelated nature.

4. Onboard **heritage education** as an instrument for the recognition of diversity with the aim of unearthing cultural roots, renewing them, encouraging creation and sharing cultures and creativity to enrich social and democratic life through exchange (Rome Charter, 2020; Faro Convention, 2005).

5. Promote public policies to tackle income inequalities in access to cultural and educational activities (after-school and non-formal in general): social charges, scholarships, etc.

6. Territorial outlook, to strengthen specific identities and alleviate inequalities of opportunity:

a. Ensure the continuity of local education plans and ones to boost educational leisure, especially in socially disadvantaged municipalities (or neighbourhoods), and schedule coordinated actions to tackle territorial inequalities.

b. Certain neighbourhoods (and towns) have their own capabilities and identities: it is not a question of 'bringing culture' to the territory but of recognising and providing specific support to popular and community practices linked to learning processes. (See the case of musical societies in the previous section).

7. Reach past legitimised culture to **assume cultural mutations from the world of education**, breaking the trend towards standardising cultural expressions:

a. Move the dial on managing diversity beyond inclusion by promoting recognition and participation: incorporate 'bottom-up' dynamics to democratise educational content and decision-making based also on the expectations and demands of diverse stakeholders in terms of age, culture, functional diversity or identity and/or gender expression.

b. Bring education out of the classrooms:

i. boost sociocultural spaces of learning.

ii. **onboard new educators.** Society is changing and so are the expressions we consider cultural. We can see this in urban dance, graffiti and other artistic languages and technologies. Creativity is alive outside the classroom and it is necessary to identify it and educate its artists in order to incorporate them into new directories of resources and training processes, especially those implemented through learning by direct experience, where the learner is in contact with the learning objective in an environment of applicability and usability.

8. Boost **data-gathering instruments** that make it possible to pinpoint imbalances in resources and educational and cultural opportunities in line with family income and territorial contexts, understanding that they are determining factors in educational opportunities.

DYNAMIC EDUCATORS

Barbieri-Cendra (2021:346–349) has described a number of educational initiatives. I would supplement this list, with the caveat that it involves examples chosen because of their proximity to my area of knowledge. I do not claim to present an exhaustive list but rather initiatives I believe could be replicated with the aim of delivering new action lines.

• **Raval km0**, a project focused on designing and creating Christmas lights in the Raval neighbourhood of Barcelona with a social/occupational side that sees local unemployed persons gain occupational training in areas related to events production, such as screen printing and the assembly of lighting and design.

• **Prollema**, a programme aimed at unaccompanied young migrants in a situation of severe social exclusion which harnesses training to help them teach their mother tongue. The aim is to produce alternatives to their involuntary unemployment, giving them a feeling of personal usefulness and allowing them to enjoy a pre-work experience that will provide some income outside of aid and generate and expand their personal network.

• **Improvised song**, whether chanting or rapping, is an interdisciplinary tool for the integration of different types of knowledge and is proposed especially as an innovative linguistic-musical resource and also as a resource for the cultural integration of people from other cultures and in non-formal education settings. Such would be the case, for example, of Eduglosa, an activity sponsored by Cor de Carxofa; Versembrant, conceived as a travelling school that seeks to foster critical awareness among young people via urban art and hip hop; or the Llobregat Block Party project that promotes hip hop as a tool for personal and community growth.

• **Folk in School**, an initiative that was held for the sixteenth time in the 2022–2023 year. The school takes traditional music to over 400 students from Berguedà, Cerdanya, Alt Urgell, Pallars Sobirà and Alta Ribagorça. The value of the activity, beyond the creation of a small industry from which an important number of teachers specialised in traditional music and dance make a living, lies in creating networks of coexistence across small rural towns with high rates of depopulation.

• **La Xixa Teatre**, an organisation whose aim is to research, develop and multiply educational and theatrical tools as a means for social transformation. Among different initiatives, in 2022 it engaged in the 'Rabelah' project for the creation of inclusive learning environments and for reimagining the elements we have received in order to redefine our identity, the spaces we occupy and the relationships we establish there. It also promoted 'Raela'T';

Among different initiatives, in 2022 it engaged in the 'Rabelah' project for the creation of inclusive learning environments and for reimagining the elements we have received in order to redefine our identity, the spaces we occupy and the relationships we establish there. It also promoted 'RaelaT'; Culture and Community in Alta Ribagorça' with the aim of promoting and contributing to the expansion, diversification and consolidation of the cultural offering in this province.

• **Actua't**, by Reflexes, a cooperative that works on community values through theatrical techniques involving body language, loss of shyness, group listening and commitment to theatre. by Reflexes, a cooperative that works on community values through theatrical techniques involving body language, loss of shyness, group listening and commitment to theatre.

• **Festa**, a tool for cultural production. This is an initiative to investigate parties as a safe space where identities, expressions, dance and feelings come together and are enjoyed collectively. It reflects on partying in different contexts and ages through contemporary artistic practices that use the party as a tool for cultural production. It reflects on partying in different contexts and ages through contemporary artistic practices that use the party as a tool for cultural production. It is an initiative of the Valencian Consortium of Museums organised as part of the Education and Mediation Programme of the CCCC Centre del Carne.

• **Cosidores de Salt**, which leverages a plan for the recovery of the traditional textile industry to promote a pilot professional training course aimed at people with sewing skills. The idea was recently linked to local economic networks based on the Social and Solidarity Economy, proximity and sustainability.

• Promote local cultural identities: in music schools linked to music bands, 45.9% of students have a family member linked to the band. If the school belongs to a musical society with a recognised trajectory or is in a small town – where the musical society is the only or most important cultural reference – this figure can be as high as 90% (IRMU, 2016:69).

• The Caixa d'Eines project brings culture and artistic expression to 51 primary and high schools in the Barcelona Neighbourhoods Plan.

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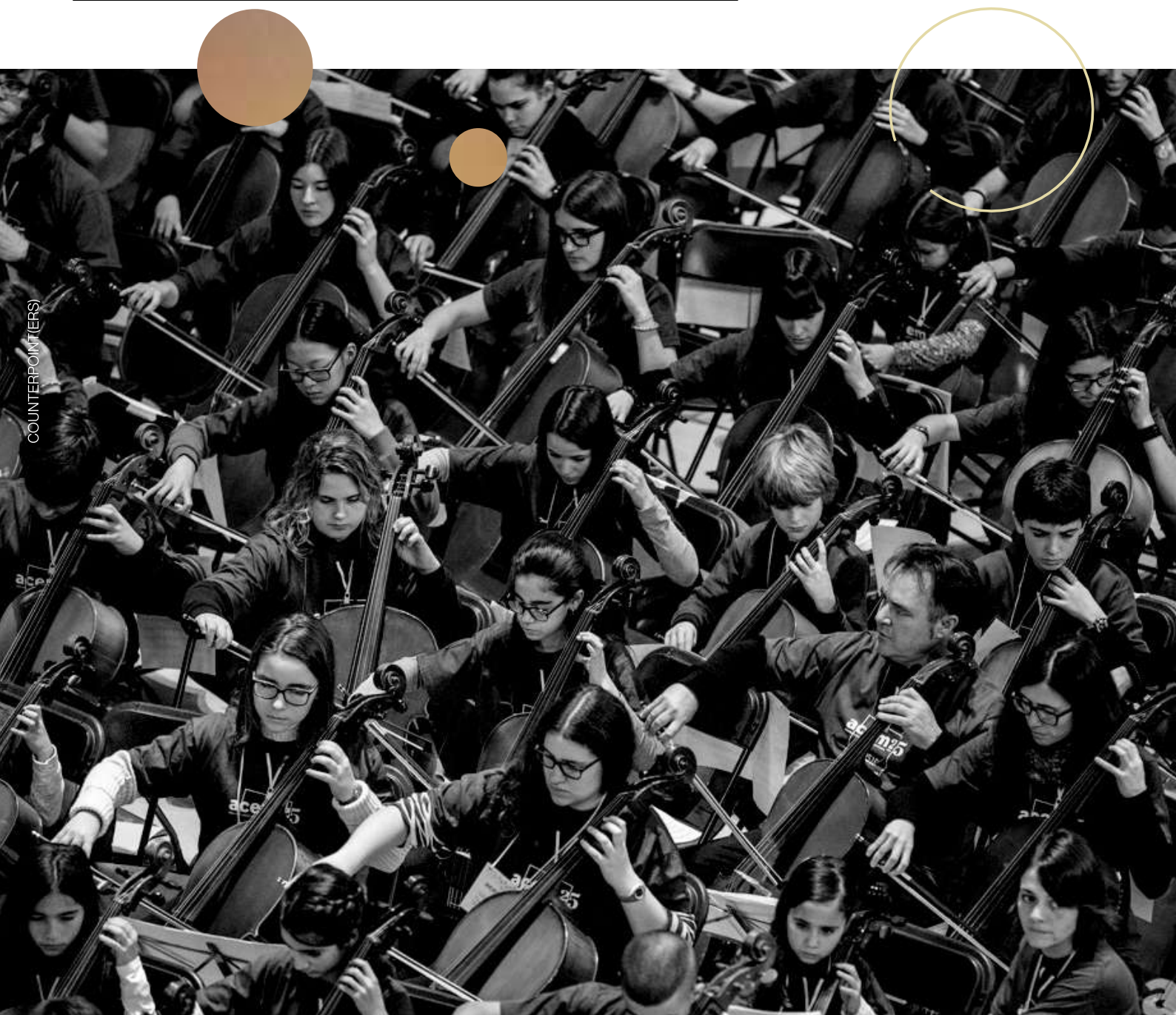
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GEMMA CARBÓ RIBUGENT

EDUCATION, MUSIC AND CULTURE IN
THE RURAL WORLD.

*Rural: in, relating to,
or characteristic of
the countryside rather
than the town.*



The celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of music schools in Catalonia is a symbolic and important date and a good opportunity to think about the consideration we as a society have had of artistic languages and forms of cultural expression and to discuss what their role should be in our lives and in the education of the critical and participative citizenry that we want. This article wishes to make special mention of the evolution this issue has had in one specific sphere of Catalonia: the rural world.

Delimiting and defining the scope of the rural world is not easy, but we can refer to the more administrative and functional definitions. The European Commission, for example, establishes that rural areas are thinly populated areas with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. In accordance with this definition, 85% of the Spanish territory is considered rural. Nearly half its towns have a dozen or fewer inhabitants per square kilometre.

Catalonia has 947 municipalities, but a small rural population because most people (about 95%) are concentrated in some 300 municipalities with more than 2,000 inhabitants and are considered urban populations by the Catalan government. Among the 'other' municipalities, there are 486 micro-towns, almost all far from the sea and none within the Barcelona metropolitan area. Perhaps it is precisely this remoteness from the cities that we need to bear in mind in order to understand rural life, a reality we all have some not-too-distant link with.

Modernisation in Catalonia, derived from the industrial revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was the generator of large-scale processes of urbanisation and the period in which, by contrast, a negative image of rurality was consolidated, associated with the traditional, conservative and non-cosmopolitan world with limited possibilities.

The new social class, the bourgeoisie, very quickly became a strong defender of the urban reality and of the culture, knowledge and progress concentrated in cities, and to a certain extent forgot the rural origins of the first spirit industries, distilleries and textile factories. Historians such as Andreu Mayayo describe it in these terms:

'The Catalan countryside has been plundered demographically, economically, socially and culturally. (...) Urban culture has spread everywhere, overthrowing the invented frontier between rural Catalonia and urban Catalonia. Catalonia today is, with the pertinent nuances, economically, socially and culturally a single unit: "Catalonia-city"'. (Mayayo 1997)

It seems that this historical trend is now beginning to turn around and that, as a result of the financial downturn and the pandemic, there is a change in outlook and a return to small towns seen as new opportunities:

'The year-on-year increase in the rural population between 2020 and

2021 (figures as of 1 January) was 1.1%, while the population in urban areas fell by 0.4%. Moreover, the increase was also observed for the first time in smaller municipalities, with fewer than 500 inhabitants. Micro-towns across Cerdanya, Alta Ribagorça and Pallars Sobirà, for example, recorded a significant increase in census registrations.' (Món Rural Observatory 2022).

The contemporary rural world is therefore slowly recovering from this ancestral oblivion and appearing more and more frequently in the news in cities, proving, with its presence in political spaces, to be more empowered to claim its future. Around the country, headway is being made in identifying specific problems that often arise from the rural world's opposition to the urban world, and in order to maintain accelerated growth, towns and natural environments have been assigned the role of waste containers, alternative energy producers, the increasingly difficult function of food producers, or simply places of well-being for tourist and consumer use, or artistic and cultural backdrops in summer.

From the towns and the voices of the people who live there, but also from the cities that depend on and use them, within the framework of global agendas for sustainability, we will have to think together about these futures on an equal footing. The future of the rural world is to disappear, not in the literal sense, but as a cultural narrative that places it in opposition to the urban world. Culture plays a fundamental role in this challenge.

THE TOUGH JOB OF CULTURE

Arts and culture are the expression of the values, priorities and views of our societies. These views are changing slowly but steadily as a result of economic, social and political circumstances, but increasingly as a result of environmental pressures, too. With regards sustainability, cultural ecology speaks of humankind's ability to adapt to changing environments like the one we live in now.

The view of rural areas in Catalan literature, painting, theatre and research in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries built a pejorative narrative of shadowy, illiterate characters, rurality as drama and village life as a paradigm of failure or, as Joan Lluís Marfany (1990) said, a stereotyped image, like a Nativity scene, representing an idyllic world of local festivals and festivities far removed from everyday reality.

The pushback on this is shown by the fact that the number of different studies and publications that speak from the rural world has been growing steadily in recent years. The new rurality is increasingly comprised of women and young people committed to a free and purposeful life who defend its values without being naively romantic about it. '(...) I had to move far away to see the uniqueness of ruralism



through the eyes of others and then through my own lived experience' (Freixa V. 2023).

The impetus of all these newcomers and those who have always lived there has enabled very rich participatory processes and spaces for debate throughout small towns, identifying common demands for the guarantee of fundamental rights, which are also essential for people who live far from the city and include the right to education and the right to take part in cultural life. '(...) It was a question of reflecting on what kind of cultural consumption the rural environment is responsible for and to what extent it can be (or continues to be) a population that produces cultural content and products, of debating the way that innovative cultural avant-gardes in our rurality are embodied' (New Rurality forum 2018/2019).

In the field of education, Catalan rural schools have always been an

example of resilience and imagination, with an exceptional level of quality and excellence and a teaching community deeply committed to the people and the territory. Currently, more than 16,600 students study in one of the 332 rural schools around the country, benchmarks in active pedagogies and innovative projects.

School is, without a doubt, the best and most democratic way to guarantee an arts education and the right to engage in cultural life. Over these thirty years, music and the plastic arts have been present, theoretically, in the classroom. The approval of the LOGSE law on the education system in 1990 led to their inclusion in school curricula, but unfortunately their impetus has slowed during the various periods of political change, with new laws and ministerial orders that have questioned the importance of culture, art and creativity in a manner that is concerning.



The current situation seems to be a return to the initial approach in education, but that is not enough. As stated in the Charter for the Arts in Education, resulting from the congress promoted by the CoNCA (National Council for Culture and the Arts) two years ago: 'Cultural policies, with their basic aims of democratisation and citizen empowerment with respect to the arts, have repeatedly come up against two basic obstacles that are hard to overcome: low public support for culture and low support for culturally active citizens capable of expressing themselves artistically' (Charter for the Arts in Education 2022).

Reversing this requires schooling and compulsory education, but it also means being able to continue this basic training. The LOGSE was also the first law to address the extensive organisation of music education, understanding that although schools can open the gates to initial literacy in artistic languages, cultural policies must continue to guarantee lifelong learning in the community. According to a study carried out by Núria Sempere, Catalonia had 159 municipalities with music schools authorised by the Catalan Ministry of Education under Decree 179/1993 in 2005, but they had little impact in rural areas.

'(...) In Catalonia as a whole, 10.99% of municipalities have a municipal music school, which in demographic terms represents 63.4% of the population, a figure that can be considered a hypothetical population served by this public service offering. The percentage of population

served increases in a proportionally inverse manner to the size of the municipality, with the exception of the twenty-eight municipalities with under 5000 inhabitants, which serve only 0.2% of their population'. (Núria Sempere, 2005).

In the study commissioned by CoNCA some years later, in 2016, explicit reference was made to the fact that outside of music schools, especially in country towns, bands and small orchestras have long made it possible to guarantee an arts education and cultural engagement for many people.

This stereotyped image of the rural world has often led, as we say, to the dismissal of its own artistic and cultural reality. In the nineteenth century, before the widespread growth of factories and migration to the cities, the Romantic movement and the recovery of its associated folklore meant that local identities, traditional music, dances and forms of relationships in small rural towns were promoted across Europe. In Catalonia, this movement found specific expression in advances into ethnological and ethnographic research, especially through local study centres and the excursionist groups that continue to carry out their essential work today, together with athenaeums and cooperative movements.

In building the stereotyped image of the rural world that Romanticism sought to counteract, objective factors such as an illiteracy rate

generally much higher than in cities played a role. The first public policies to concern themselves with this issue were precisely those linked to the emergence of the new industrial and urban social class, the enlightened bourgeoisie open to the world which, in the first half of the twentieth century and especially during the government of the Second Republic, set in motion a series of measures to address this reality.

The best known reference is the Pedagogical Missions and the artistic and cultural movements generated around them. Projects such as those by the La Barraca and El Buho university theatre troupes and experimental theatre in general saw the arrival of new ways of making theatre and music in small towns. They were well-intentioned initiatives that had a considerable impact, but they often ignored the fact that a musical and cultural phenomenon already existed in these communities, such as the bands and orchestras mentioned above.

This was a cultural reality of the rural world that was exploited by the Franco regime in a clearly improper and warped appropriation of popular tradition that made traditional culture a model product of Spanish identity, firstly for ideological consumption and then for tourism during the 1960s and 1970s.

'It took the arrival of the Women's Section, with all the vigour of their youth and Falangist will, to dust off, town by town, the songs and dances that in many places had been preserved only in the minds of the old people and, by dint of competitions and encouragement, bring back to life the incomparable treasure of our popular art, with all its variety of religious and warrior, courtly and pastoral, peasant and lovers' dances' (Suárez 1993: 209).

Intercultural relations, as we could call them, have been a challenge ever since. Until now we do not seem to have found an interesting hybridisation formula represented by initiatives that go far beyond music, such as that of Rodrigo Cuevas and his excellent project of recovering traditional song and poetry with a contemporary outlook. Other interesting examples are those proposed each year by the Fira Mediterrània at its traditional workshop, with initiatives such as Les Eines, a production by the youth choir of Granollers in collaboration with the Museum of Rural Life, and the Càntut project, which highlights folk legacies and popular songs, to name but a few of the most important.

Even so, in conversations with these creators and artists or with the older people in these towns, there is still a clear consideration of always being in an inferior situation regarding the offering and quality of public services, be they health, educational or, above all, artistic and cultural. The perception is spot-on. None of the above musical references would have been possible without people having gone to cities to study music and arts at post-secondary schools. They are pioneers leading the way and with whom music schools and traditional bands must join forces, but they require the support of a policy that organises the coverage of this fundamental right across the Catalan territory.

ARTS AND CULTURE EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS

In order to support the educational and cultural offering that must be guaranteed in rural areas too, it is necessary to return to the Charter of Human Rights as a large-scale universal agenda. One of its features is that all the rights included in it have the same consideration and importance because the aim is to ensure not only people's survival but also the minimum conditions necessary for a decent life. As Helen Todd said in her speech during the textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1912, we want 'bread for all, and roses too' (Reig M., Tena, T. 2021).

It is from this perspective that it is necessary to understand the need to go further than good practices and draw up policies and programmes for rural areas that guarantee what we now know these rights to entail: to be able to decide, to be able to access and to be able to contribute to culture through continuous and quality artistic and creative literacy. We are not talking about or calling for large infrastructures, conservatories or higher schools everywhere, but for imaginative formulas such as those that the municipal arts schools have produced to great success.

After thirty years of music schools in Catalonia and with the change in the cultural relationship referred to in the previous point, the cultural and educational stakeholders in rural areas are running very interesting trials in hybridisation initiatives that cannot allow themselves the luxury of continuing to work in isolation. Many of the music schools in country towns provide personalised attention inside and outside school and act as cultural centres that bring music and artistic languages to all residents through exhibitions, participation in projects, new encouragements for bands and orchestras or the organisation of shows and concerts.

Initiatives such as 360-degree education defend this close link between in- and out-of-school as a way to overcome educational differences based on family circumstances and are making progress in their implementation in towns, taking into account previous experiences and the substratum present in all rural realities. Culture and education are two public policy systems that need to be reconnected and considered in a coordinated fashion if we really want them to respond to people's vital needs.

A new era is dawning and perhaps the time has come, following the trend of the new ruralities movement, for recovering the dream of rolling out an arts and culture education for everyone, for proposing the facilities we need and for thinking about how we want to manage them. Consensus seems to lie in the fact that, beyond space and infrastructure – an essential starting point – what we have to do is produce cross-cutting territorial projects that enable ongoing education in the artistic and cultural field in general, hybridising formats but ensuring essential literacy in aesthetic and creative codes.

And here we find the few municipal music schools, the small museums,

the libraries, the multipurpose performance venues in towns where theatre, cinema, dances and local festivals have always been held, but also festivals, fairs, outdoor artistic initiatives, creative residencies and, above all, professionals in education, creation and cultural management. Music and the arts need each and every one of us to grow, and the Catalonia of the twenty-first century cannot afford to discriminate for reasons of the geographic location of its citizens.

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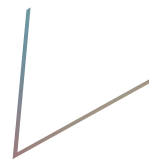
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CRISTINA CUBELLS

“JE SUIS UNE ÉCOLE!”: ARTISTIC CREATION
AS CRITICAL EDUCATION



EDUCATING IS ALWAYS A POLITICAL ACT

One of the most important characteristics of critical pedagogy is, without a doubt, the impossibility of decoupling teaching and learning from any social, ethical or political consideration. Critical pedagogy understands that any teaching process is always a decisive process: in other words, there is no such thing as neutrality and all educational action is political and, therefore, impactful on life and reality, whether reproducing or challenging it in its hegemonic order. Talking about a feminist perspective in education implies, among other considerations, reconsidering who speaks and who listens inside and outside the classrooms. It involves questioning the way in which the dynamics of participation, hegemonic roles, forms of authority and relational power are established, as well as the agency of those who participate in the experience.

An ancient Chinese definition held that politics was *the art of governing*, while for the Greeks it was *the art of coexisting*. Two definitions that, despite their distant origins, underline the importance of making the term art coexist with and become closer to reality, to life.

So what does art have to do with educational action? Is it possible to think of artistic creation as a space from which to critically review these hegemonic orders? What roles, attitudes, beliefs or values do we reproduce without sufficiently questioning their validity? Can artistic creation, through its own mechanisms and procedures, constitute a space of emancipation and revision of these logics? Throughout this reflection, we will delve into the possible crossovers that emerge between art and education from its more critical side.

What Does Teaching Critically Entail?

The school, the family and educational and cultural spaces are contexts in which different human potentials are developed and a personal and collective conscience is built. Educational action supported by critical pedagogy is capable of placing each individual in a position to critically read reality in the face of a specific social change. 'The world isn't. The world becomes. My role in the world as a curious, intelligent subjectivity that intervenes in the objectivity with which I relate dialectically is not only that of someone who observes what happens, but also someone who intervenes as a subject of events' (Freire, 2012).

Similarly, we must take into account the new social conditions resulting from the transformation of our social systems. We cannot ignore the phenomenon of market globalisation or the migratory movements resulting from the concentration of social wealth in Western countries, among other considerations. To be able to formulate a real initiative that addresses the social problems around us, it is necessary to integrate all education into the reality of our days and contexts. For example, if the main objective is to achieve autonomy and a capacity for determination on the part of students, it is essential to review the means that bind

individuals to a hypothetical social organisation contrary to their aspirations. We have to understand how sociohistorical, political and cultural constraints are transferred to the interior of the subject and make them visible.

Teaching critically implies understanding ourselves not as objects of history but as social subjects of change, and it is in this realisation that we are capable of intervening in reality: a task that is undoubtedly much more complex and capable of producing new knowledge beyond mere adaptation to the order of things. Yet if the world is constantly changing, we must be aware that even the theory resulting from critical pedagogy needs to be critiqued and analysed anew so that it can provide answers to the emerging contexts.

Who Has a Voice in This Distribution?

In this production of knowledge, it is important to ask ourselves who are the subjects at the forefront of this possibility? Who are the individuals who have hegemonically been the legitimate producers of knowledge? Which voices have been sidelined, undervalued and de-legitimised in an unfair social, political and economic distribution? Teaching critically also involves questioning the margins, their construction and consolidation in the present day. As Gayatri Spivak (2009) says, the problem is not the lack of a voice to express oneself, but whether this voice has a space of recognition to be heard in. In other words, whether it is suitable for forming part of the epistemic production of a society; an approach that also questions the structures of knowledge transmission: do we learn in a hierarchical, cross-cutting or bidirectional way? What types of learning are valid in capitalist societies? Critical pedagogy implies reviewing not only the logics of knowledge production and agents involved but also the value attributable to knowledge in a market society in order to restore it.

The aim, therefore, is to create an education that breathes life into new reflections capable of questioning themselves, that do not allow themselves to be swept aside by educational formulas steeped in market models. To tackle a troubled, inadvertent and unpredictable education, an education that favours method (how) over questions (what and why) or that leaves no possibility of developing one's learning, we need a dialogic education that allows us to build solid foundations that can always be reviewed. This dialogue is possible when the stakeholders involved are recognised as producers of meaning. In other words, when we recognise the infinite and multiple potentials of the agents capable of constructing a critical subjectivity in continuous dialogue with society. In this sense, emancipation is always a process involving a collective. A type of learning where we are all narrators and translators of experience and where we need to understand ourselves as vulnerable and interdependent subjects: no one can do it on their own (García, 2016).

Distribution of the Sensible: Reconfiguring the Gaze

Much of philosopher Jacques Rancière's work is devoted to the ways in which politics and aesthetics interlace so as to converge in a single fertile territory. From this point of view, the author has placed great importance on the role that literature, cinema and the arts in general play in being able to modify specifically that which he calls the distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2002). This distribution is more closely related to the original concept of the French word *partition* than to division. With this expression, Rancière proposes the constitution of a conflictual common space from which voices not commonly acknowledged in the hegemonic space emerge. For Rancière, politics, as well as aesthetics and education, are recognised in conflict and in the possibility of unearthing what usually remains buried in the common, shared space. The idea, therefore, is to suggest new ways of constituting and creating unprecedented places of conflict within a sensible experience.

In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (2003), for example, the schoolmaster is asked to question his own power structures and knowledge production in order to impact on the possibility of a spontaneous desire for learning on the part of the student. Spontaneity is understood as a desire resulting from the dismantling of the ideological constraints that limit the student-teacher relationship. Creating an equal relationship in the name of intellectual emancipation does not run the risk of discrediting the teacher's authority, but serves to subvert intellectual hierarchies and, above all, hegemonic models of educational transmission in terms of power relations. For Rancière, the "ignorant" schoolmaster accompanies the student in his discovery of wisdom and actively participates in finding and forming young people's knowledge. From this point of view, the schoolmaster reconciles authority and emancipation but at the same time boosts rather than shames the student's intelligence.

However, is it really possible to introduce into practice everything that is thoroughly explained in theory? Before venturing into concrete examples and analysing the hypothetical pedagogical possibilities around emancipation, it is essential not to forget the limitations imposed by reality on any practice of collective invention.

Bocal (Charmatz, 2003): Pedagogic Research and Creation Centre

In 2003, the choreographer Boris Charmatz and the Edna association created a centre for research and pedagogical creation called Bocal. The idea for this temporary travelling project was to test schools in terms of aesthetics and politics, bringing together some fifteen people between the ages of twenty and thirty from different professions: dancers, doctors, designers, writers, circus artists and musicians.

Despite the participants' different backgrounds, they decided to embark on a unique adventure together. It did not involve a methodological design nor an improvement in terms of skills acquisition, but rather a revision of the idea of school from different suggested experiences and by leveraging its emancipatory potential.

The project examined the institution without, however, seeking the foundation of a new school model: *Bocal* covered a broad repertoire of ideas, debates and projects that ranged from action to utopia via creation and teaching. Telling the adventure of the *Bocal* experience, the group later published a text entitled *Je suis une école*, which allowed a better understanding of how the search for collective education, taking on board the starting points of each of its members, made it possible to generate sensitive educational experiences without losing sight of the multiple questions of its construction.

What can artistic creation do in this new configuration? What role does it play in shaking up the profound social and psychological dimension of cultural hegemony? How do we tap artistic creation to construct other learning spaces linked to sensitivity, expressive consciousness and capacity for resistance? How do we stand up to forms of socialisation that are the upshot of individualised, method-centric or results-driven education?

If there is something unique about this choreographer, the project's ideologist, it is his ability to introduce into creative practice some of the considerations we mentioned earlier with the *Ignorant Schoolmaster*. In the same way that the author is committed to a reinvention of the boundaries in relation to power and knowledge dynamics, Charmatz's artistic experiences encourage us to relocate the limits between the supposed capacities of different individuals. Specifically, his work involves professional and non-professional dancers who, with an eminently performative purpose, actively participate in the production of sensitive material within his choreographies. Character, bodily gestures and the hybridisation of types of movement form the conceptual basis of his practice, a practice that makes sense insofar as it assumes a radical equality in access to the artistic experience (Rancière, 2011).

By analysing one of Charmatz's most remarkable choreographies, in which children and adults take part, we can better understand how this approach works.

Enfant, 2011: Where Does the Child End and the Adult Begin?

In 2011, when staging the show *Enfant*¹, Charmatz placed the figure of the child in a new scenario, presenting it as a malleable, fragile and uncontrollable material. It was a work straddling dance, installation art and conceptual play, in which the author asked us to reflect on the logic of movement and its presentation through the combined action of children and adults.

¹ Teaser *Enfant* (2011): https://vimeo.com/66306726?login=true#_=_

At the start of the show, lights shine on the stage, revealing an inert body. A crane gives the sensation that it is demolishing the remains of an abandoned set. There is an atmosphere of desolation that becomes even more disturbing when the crane focuses its attention on two more apparently lifeless bodies. The crane drags the bodies around the stage and plays with them by raising and lowering them on a platform, as if it hadn't decided where to unload them. The crane's contact with the bodies produces a curious aerial dance: while the bodies spin around and are lowered, hanging from the machine at its whim, the dancers' skills maintain the passive illusion of a dead body.

Enfant is a work about the transformation of energy and the limits of power: when the three initial dancers emerge from this predicament, they are joined by six dancers who turn into puppeteers. Progressively, children aged between five and nine make their appearance, and for a long time they seem completely defenceless and asleep next to the adults, who dance and play with the children's bodies as if they were puppets.

Watching from the audience, we don't quite know what to think: the power of the adults over the children is as sinister as it is protective. The angelic, sleeping faces of the children make the first part of the show a terribly vulnerable scene. However, in the middle part, the children wake up and, with an increasingly unrestrained soundscape, start to have a physical impact on the action, forcing the adults into a vortex of rigid activity, becoming shiny, bright, happy and carefree beings. This choreography *for inert bodies* produces a friction and physical exertion without the need to use almost any muscular power. It all stems from the desire to stage what Jean-François Lyotard refers to in his preface to *L'Inhumain (The Inhuman)*, (2014) as: 'Shorn of speech, incapable of standing upright, hesitating over the objects of its interest, not able to calculate its advantages, not sensitive to common reason, the child is eminently human because its distress heralds and promises things possible.'

In *Enfant*, a team of nine adult dancers and twenty-six children with almost no experience in the world of dance perform a strange ballet of inert bodies through which unstable encounters, hybrid morphologies and images suspended between reality and dream are established. From these reciprocal relationships between the adult and child bodies comes a play of tension and distension that combines inertia with a gradual process of transformation: from an inert body to an energetic, plastic one on the part of the children, and from an energetic body to an inert one on the part of the adults. Trying to combine the plastic forms with the body's movements, the result leads us to construct a burden of reality that alters the balance of the scene: transported, knocked down, manoeuvred by the professional dancers, the children's bodies invade the space, enlarging and sculpting it.

The show locates the spectator in a continuous questioning of the stage energy that oscillates between acts of invasion and creation as a

means of restoring, if not returning, the child's aesthetic and political role within the choreography.

What Are We Putting into Play on the Stage?

The work opens up various questions around the relationships we establish between the participants of an artistic event, be it theatrical, musical or performative. Artistic creation, from this point of view, is constituted as a space of fiction where, in Rancière's words, a different distribution of the sensible experience is possible: professionals and non-professionals, adults and children participate as subjects of conflict, as producers of knowledge in the performance space without distinction in terms of abilities. And this is where the possibility of a critical education from artistic creation opens up: when relationships of power and subjection, the power dynamics existing between teacher and pupil, are completely altered, since the real experience of each party is necessary for the artistic whole. Similarly, this consideration also questions the concept of participation as an act that goes beyond the formative experience. In this work, the children's participation is essential for the work to acquire meaning and coherence. In other words, participation lies in the need to explain, to reflect on something on stage and with the audience present.

The dynamics that emerge from *Enfant* propose pushing the boundaries between education and artistic creation as a political experience of change, where the most important value comes not from a difference in age or experience, but from the desire for common discovery. Making inexperienced children of different ages engage with professional dancers empowers the children to prove their responsibility, their autonomy, their involvement with the group. The children have dramatic heft in a story told through adults' eyes. They become on-stage teachers. The adult watching from the audience does so from a completely distanced relationship with the child, understanding them as a body capable of expressing artistic ideas in the same way as an adult would. It is, in short, just another part of the very precise set of decisions that is the theatrical act.

CONCLUSIONS

Having reached this point, it remains to ask ourselves how we can transfer these dynamics to educational contexts related to artistic processes. What can we take from all this and what other questions allow us to work on artistic creation in these contexts?

Franco Lorenzoni, a primary school teacher in a small Italian town, has always worked to enrich the imagination of his pupils, avoiding separating the learning of reading from the love of reading, the learning of music from the love of music, and so on with all the other subjects. He says: 'When teachers encounter a learning difficulty, even if they don't want to, they find themselves repeating explanations, exercises or

questions almost impatiently, waiting for the blessed conceptual crux to finally sink into the children's minds. [...] To learn is to venture along the longest path, because paradoxically, sometimes the more obvious it is, the more people get lost and don't manage to meet others' (2014, p.11).

Lorenzoni has always found in the theatre within classrooms the concentration and intimacy possible with the space, the objects and the characters that populate children's imaginations. Children, he says, have an extraordinary capacity to ask questions that always go beyond limits: they can philosophise about anything and do so freely without fear of being wrong. Once again, the author asks us to relocate the relationship between art and education from a critical perspective: he invites us to ask ourselves what art can do for education and what education can do for art. And so the performances he gives with his students at the end of the school year are an invitation to immerse ourselves carefully in a fragile world from which emerge not only the most profound and essential questions, but also the most unfathomable conclusions.

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LIDIA MORA, PALMIRA DUAL AND ANDREA DE LA HOZ

THE DECOLONISATION OF EDUCATION IN MUSIC SCHOOLS:
THREE PERSPECTIVES WITH A SINGLE PURPOSE



The history of the world can be told in many ways. However, we spend a great deal of time learning just one. This article arises from the desire to question music education from a decolonial perspective, as we find it necessary to review the production and conveyance of knowledge so that it no longer continues to reproduce the invisibilisation of references, historical facts and knowledge located in non-Western and/or racialised cultures and people.

When talking about decolonisation, we must first acknowledge that there was colonisation at the end of the fifteenth century: what was explained at school as the discovery of America. It should then be noted that this 'discovery' is told from a European perspective. Nothing was discovered – the American continent already existed and it was conquered and colonised with all the violence this entailed. And within this history, non-European perspectives were marginalised in the classroom and no-one explained that it was from these perspectives where plundering and massacre, the exploitation of slaves, the system of racial classification and the psychological, historical, ethical, theoretical and epistemic consequences that are still present today were considered.

To ignore this part of history is to perpetuate colonial, Eurocentric thinking.

What follows is a brief overview of a number of concepts and personal experiences that can serve as an introduction to the decolonisation of teaching thought. It is an invitation to reflect on our position in the social structure, our beliefs and the symbolic universe we share culturally.

THE PLACE WE OCCUPY

— LIDIA MORA GARCÍA DE BLAS

Introducing the issue of decolonisation in this article as a white, European, privileged woman only makes sense if I start from an honest premise: I have reproduced many discriminatory biases and for many years didn't question my place in society or the reasons for the privileges I enjoy.

I understand that from the time I was born, I have come into contact with prejudices, stereotypes, classes and characteristics forged in my social and cultural context. I live in a patriarchal, heteronormative, chauvinist and racist system that legitimises these types of abuse and systematically reproduces them. I grew up surrounded by beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes around women, LGBTIQ+ people and communities and groups considered alien, 'other', the different people who do not belong. Even today I can see the way the social legitimisation of these discriminatory biases has left me with subtle, almost fleeting thoughts. But they exist, and when they pop up I can recognise and address them. These lessons are forged through the

imposition of dominant subjective structures within cognitive and socialisation processes. And no, it doesn't matter if you belong to one of these groups. The biases are just the same for you because you grew up in this framework and you may have internalised discrimination. I think the first step towards an honest approach to the reflection that this issue requires is to accept this fact.

As a student, I have the right and the duty to denounce that I was never educated on this topic. As a professional I repeat it, seeing the danger it entails. I was in my third year at university when I read a book by Miriam Hatibi, *Mira'm als ulls*, that made me reflect deeply on racism. I also had the good fortune of having a supervising professor for my final year dissertation who helped me become aware of the importance of the gaze: from where we white people position ourselves. But that was just the first step. Previously, no educational space had asked me to review my place in society, nor had the privileges and oppressions that exist been explained to me. Institutions of higher education and vocational training courses should not allow professionals with no social awareness or commitment to emerge from their classrooms. Although becoming aware is an achievement in itself, it does not guarantee the commitment that the constant application and reviewing (and self-criticism) of ourselves with respect to others and with respect to our work does.

On Coloniality, Eurocentrism and Epistemic Violence

Learning about decoloniality and understanding all that it entails is a long and sometimes rocky road. I began to learn about it thanks to activists, in the form of authors, mainly from the global South, who began to share and disseminate their own knowledge, reflections and experiences over social networks. They helped me see the need to question practically the entire belief system by which I act and relate and to question all the knowledge, authors and viewpoints I had taken as read. I became aware that there was a whole side to history I had never known before and which completely changed the way I understood the world. And I began to realise what Eurocentrism and epistemic violence meant.

It was through the Peruvian sociologist and philosopher Aníbal Quijano that I discovered the terms *coloniality* and *colonialism*. I would quote a highly illustrative fragment from his work:

With the conquest of the societies and cultures that inhabited what is now known as Latin America, the formation of a world order began, culminating 500 years later in a global power that rules the planet. This process involved, on the one hand, the brutish concentration of the world's resources under the control of and for the benefit of a small European minority of the species and, above all, its ruling classes. [...]. 'Western' European rulers and their Euro-American descendants are still the principal beneficiaries, along

with the non-European part of the world that was not formerly a European colony, mainly Japan. And in each case, their ruling classes especially. The exploited and dominated of Latin America and Africa are the main victims. On the other hand, a relationship of direct political, social and cultural domination of Europeans over the conquered on all continents was established. This domination is called colonialism¹ (Quijano, 1992, p. 11).

A colonial structure of this type has two fundamental consequences:

1) the racialisation of certain groups, such as Africans and indigenous peoples, which gave rise to social classifications between superior/dominant/European and inferior/dominated/non-European; and 2) the naturalisation of the Eurocentric control of territories and their resources, giving rise to a coloniality of political and geographical articulation; a colonial relationship based on capital-labour that gave rise to differentiated, racialised and distributed social classes across the planet (Curiel, 2007).

Colonisation always involves asymmetry and hegemony. The colonising power occupies foreign territory, 'colonises' it and imposes its culture and civilisation, including its language, religion and laws. Although there were many other waves of colonisation before the Spanish conquest of the American continent, this modern colonisation from the sixteenth century onwards shaped the paradigm of Westcentrism and the persistent asymmetry between the colonising world, also known as the First World, and the colonised world, known as the Third World (Estermann, 2014).

Westcentrism, or Eurocentrism, is the cognitive perspective produced in the time of the Eurocentric world of colonial/modern capitalism and which naturalises the experience of people in this pattern of power. Naturalising it leads to it being perceived as a given, something unquestionable (Quijano, 2007). European knowledge, its culture and lore are therefore imposed as if they were the only valid ones, establishing a relationship of direct, political, social and cultural domination of the European over the conquered (Quijano, 1992) that produces another type of abuse: epistemic violence. Pulido (2009) defines it as our desire for knowledge and the parallel desire to impose our own way of understanding and formulating knowledge on others. Paradoxically, our ignorance stems from this framework.

Decolonising to (Un)Learn

Having reached this point, a question comes to mind: should it be left up to chance or is it in students' interests to learn information that directly impacts their perception of the world in which they live, their coexistence and their development as individuals in society? I think the answer is clear. Educational institutions must provide this

content across the board, in the same way that they teach the basis for socialising by explaining how to share, ask for help or empathise with other people's feelings. Such an educational approach includes raising awareness of colonisation and what it entailed later on, as well as the underlying interests, because the privileges of some and the oppression of others are not arbitrary or given circumstances, and knowing this can change the way we perceive reality and interact with others. Or, at the very least, it can make us understand that what today seems to be natural, such as poverty in certain areas of the planet, wars over natural resources or Europe's privileged position in the world, is the result of an imposition through domination and colonial violence that persists today; a violence that, in some contexts, is taking on new forms that are increasingly hard to pin down.

However, it should be pointed out that decolonisation in education is not only about teaching content related to historical events; it goes further than that. It means considering new world views, explaining things in other ways; it entails considering ways of learning from a different perspective such as, for example, by giving more importance to emotional and bodily issues or encouraging collective learning rather than individual learning, among other alternatives that modify the structures of the teaching-learning process and open up a different path full of new possibilities for students and teachers.

In view of the relationship of domination described by Quijano, and locating it in the educational context, it is no coincidence that, in general and by default, our educational, scientific, artistic and literary references are European and white. It should be noted that within this spectrum, the historical sexism perpetuated by patriarchal societies means we are generally talking about an enormous majority of white men. This not only means that the reference points included in education have been mostly white, but also that subjectivities, life experiences and know-how have been biased in a Eurocentric way. For this reason, decolonial knowledge emerges as an alternative to the hegemonic knowledge that is endemic to our current context. The production of decolonial knowledge seeks to decentralise the dominant colonial knowledge, creating plural and diverse alternatives to hegemonic ways of thinking, doing and feeling, erroneously considered universal for all existing cultures but based solely on Western parameters that have become the only valid place from which to view the world (Bridges project, 2020) and which have produced an epistemic violence that has affected global knowledge.

For this reason, a review of the reading matter, music and materials used as compulsory and supplementary subjects in the curriculum should begin to be considered in order to add non-European and/or racialised author and academic perspectives to teaching-learning processes. This is not just a question of including them as reading material – special mention should also be made of the fact that they

¹ It is important to bear in mind that colonialism refers to 'specific historical periods and geographical points of imperial domination', while coloniality 'denotes the logical structure of colonial domination' (Mignolo, 2005).

should not be optional but onboarded into classroom discussions, theories and curricular content. They must be given the same value as Western knowledge. If not, any attempt would end up becoming a kind of instrumental symbolic inclusion² of content. Decolonisation embodies a commitment to the daily transformation of historical reality (Martínez, 2022) and one of the objectives of educational institutions is social transformation to contribute to the society they influence and in which they also participate. Another point to consider is diversity in the classroom, which makes it necessary to promote the participation of all students in knowledge construction. In his book *Democràcia i Educació (Democracy and Education, 1916)*, John Dewey explains that the social context shapes the mental and emotional disposition of individuals' behaviour, introducing them to activities that awaken and reinforce certain impulses which have particular purposes and trigger certain consequences. Therefore, each student's voice, subjectivities and perceptions are vital for a counter-hegemonic and decolonial pedagogy, since they are forged in the cultural and everyday context of each student and warrant representation and space.

The special feature of music, and of the arts in general, is that it provides a perspective on how people communicate their perceptions, responses and understanding of the world to themselves and to others (Rebernak and Muhammad, 2009). Placing value on the music that each pupil listens to or knows can therefore become an ideal vehicle, together with other theoretical content and ways of proposing teaching-learning processes, to get to know realities and build intersubjectivities based on a diversity of experiences. The *Road Map for Arts Education* (UNESCO, 2006) document establishes that each culture develops resources through which it shares and communicates in order to understand the world and has elements common to all of them, so that any artistic process can be conceived as a means of emotional and cognitive communication between the composer and his or her cultural environment (Bernabé, 2012). Music can therefore be considered a tool for changing the reality not only of artists but also of the people who receive art (Rebernak and Muhammad, 2009), and this change can be an important step in putting an end to the effect of the coloniality of power that surrounds and permeates our societies.

THE ROMA PEOPLE, ROOT OF MUSIC AND HISTORY

— PALMIRA DUAL

A music education must, as per general education, be a safe place where synergies are provided for inclusion, progress and social transformation. My duty as a Roma woman, as an activist for the human rights of my people and for Roma women and as a musician is

to talk about what I was not taught, either in the classroom or outside it. Because I was also a pupil, yet I was not represented. I did not learn about my culture at school, or about the Roma artists who have contributed to the musical legacy of this country. Since it was forged in the nineteenth century, flamenco has been the artistic expression *par excellence* of my people. Although it is now known all over the world and even considered Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2010), its history is not so well-known and is intrinsically linked to the history of our persecution. My people have had a great influence on flamenco.

'Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it', the famous quote goes. Historical events such as the Samudaripen ('mass killing'), the Gran Batuda ('Great Gypsy Round-up'), the Medina del Campo law or the specific mentions against gypsies in Francoist laws during the dictatorship are still not known. Consequently, this has had three harmful effects on education: 1) my people are not well known because they are not represented in educational contexts, leaving their existence at the mercy of stereotypes and prejudices, as well as of the collective imagination, which perpetuates ignorance, anti-Gypsyism and, consequently, exclusion; 2) the result of making my people and their culture invisible means that Roma students neither recognise themselves in it nor recognise it as part of society, making it difficult for them to feel a sense of belonging (a key aspect for academic continuity); and 3) flamenco is not known, because it is a music that has been related to poverty and all things gypsy – and all things gypsy, from a Eurocentric and racist point of view, are not liked.

That is why I work to ensure that music education has a decolonial gaze, a pro-social and transformative impact that allows us to see beyond the Western world.

Origin of the Roma People

According to existing studies, Spain's Roma community is thought to have come from the Indian subcontinent, specifically from Punjab, and that its origin dates back to the Middle Kingdoms of India before the tenth century (Macias, 2017).

Two theories propose different reasons why the community began a diaspora to Europe: the first involves the social and economic impact of the Hindu caste division, together with the invasion of the Mughal Empire around 1302 (Heredia, 2000); the second is the Muslim incursion in the Indian subcontinent, with the invasion by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, which led to the enslavement of most of the population in the region (Macias, 2017). Therefore, the first starting point I would stress is that the Roma people's need to migrate was rooted in their search for peace, security and freedom.

² Instrumental symbolic inclusion is a concept coined by bell hooks in her book *Teaching to Transgress*, which involves including people of different ethnicities, social classes or other communities in institutions or social structures but without questioning the norms, practices and values that generate inequality.

They reached Spain in the fifteenth century. There is a document dated 26 November 1415 proving the arrival of the Roma population in Catalan lands in a letter from King Alfonso V of Aragon (Alfonso the Magnanimous) and signed in Perpignan, in which he authorises the gypsies who came with 'Tomás, son of Duke Bartolomé de Sanno, from the Indie Majoris Ethiopie', to travel around the kingdom. However, their entry was officially recognised on 12 January 1425 in Saragossa, when the king himself gave Don Juan, a gypsy and Duke of Egipto Menor, and his companions a letter of insurance, bestowing on them the status of pilgrims and allowing them to move freely throughout the kingdom (Macías, 2017). At this time, the cultural diversity that Spain was acquiring was enriching and new trades, artistic expressions and customs were valued throughout the kingdom. But the story doesn't end well: in 1469, the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile were united through the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, who would go down in history as the Catholic Monarchs. On 3 March 1499, they fired the first shot in the Romas' decline by dictating the Medina del Campo law, the first real anti-Gypsy proclamation, a law of expulsion and persecution which preached that the Roma had to stop living the way they lived, dressing the way they dressed and speaking their own language ... all under penalty of punishment, perpetual slavery and even death. In short, the aim was to extinguish the Roma people. Since then, more than 200 anti-Gypsy laws have been issued, some as recently as those that existed during Franco's dictatorship, once again prohibiting the use of Caló, the gypsy language, considered criminal argot, and the mentions in articles four, five and six of the second part of the Civil Guard regulations until 1978. It was after the drafting of the Constitution and the denunciation and activism of Roma people who fought the discrimination that affected us that we were granted equal rights as Spanish citizens, something which is still not effective due to the historical legacy of anti-Gypsyism, prejudice and discrimination that remains.

Flamenco – a Sign of the Resilience and Resistance of the Roma People

If we talk about music, about the artistic expression that has accompanied us from the first moment we began the diaspora: what can a teacher do on this subject? How can a teacher introduce the Roma people and their history into the classroom? The first answer that came to my mind was Juan Peña, known as 'El Lebrijano'. This gypsy cantaor – in flamenco there are no singers but rather 'cantaor'es' and 'cantaoras', just as there are no dancers but rather 'bailaores' and 'bailaoras' – has an album of paramount value, entitled *Persecución* (1976), based on the literary work of Félix Grande and with lyrics that reference the period of slavery and persecution of the Roma population in Spain, with historical data. A harrowing and moving album that can undoubtedly be considered essential pedagogical material to make known the feelings of my people and, in turn, the social and ideological context of Spain at the time. It was also from the mid-nineteenth century

that the different music styles which converged between America and Europe (Steingress, 1993), together with elements of Roma music, resulted in a different and unique expression in the world: this is how flamenco got its character.

Flamenco was used to express emotions that arose during persecution and marginalisation and to depict daily life in the trades to which Roma and poorer people were relegated; flamenco *pals* (styles) arose from these contexts: forced trades such as labour for boat building, the punishment of being sent to galleys to row, living in constant persecution, the forge, the mines and so on. But as well as showing anguish and sadness, flamenco also depicted more everyday joys, such as a birth or marriage. That is why the division between *cante jondo* and *cante festero* exists in flamenco, with *jondo* being intenser, more heart-rending melodies and *festero* being brighter and more danceable. If all this is not taught, the history of the Roma people and their influence on flamenco, as well as a large niche of emotions attached to artistic expression, will remain invisible. Furthermore, acknowledging the expressive forms of flamenco as a set of knowledge and vernacular know-how, the immaterial heritage of subalternised groups from and with which meaning is constructed, means producing an 'epistemological shift' (Barriendos, 2007; Mignolo, 2010) outside of the contemplative passive logics of the work in its modern conception (Periáñez, 2016).

Finally, we are talking about the decolonisation of flamenco, and in order to achieve this it is important to distinguish two concepts: appropriation and cultural appreciation. We understand appropriation as the use of typical elements of a collective stripped of their meaning and used for a purpose unrelated to the original (Triglia, 2019); this 'theft' is exercised by a dominant culture over another that has been historically rejected and socially excluded. Cultural appreciation, on the other hand, concerns recognition of the culture from which the cultural manifestation or expression is taken and the ability to contextualise and understand it within its historical, social and political context, also acknowledging the influence of various factors such as tradition, identity or power relations in the production and reception of culture. As mentioned above, it is a return to the struggle with dominant Western thinking. That is why it is so necessary for music schools to promote information, interaction and knowledge from Roma supporters or Roma people themselves who, like me, work to facilitate this synergy and break down ignorance and prejudice.

2025 marks 600 years of the Roma people's arrival in Spain. More than half a millennium of enriching Spanish culture, a culture that makes money from it yet does not value the people and artists who have contributed to and disseminated flamenco. Cultural appreciation is much more beneficial for both parties, as it educates in the historical and cultural reality that shaped a music which does not exist anywhere

else in the world and allows it to be valued. We are relying on the great artists we have to promote flamenco and its evolution. Because flamenco, like society, is constantly evolving.

We need to unlearn in order to know, respect and accept.

DECOLONISING FOR THE FUTURE

— ANDREA DE LA HOZ

Decolonising musical knowledge enriches the educational experience and broadens one's perception of the world. I speak from my own experience, but I ask anyone who reads this to try to approach and understand everything that, through the coloniality of power, was erased and remained hidden under the dominant discourse. Coming from a Latin American country and being an Afro-Colombian woman, I can say that I have experienced the consequences of post-colonialism and I understand coloniality as a series of cultural lesions in a society that rejects all that is special and ancestral in the quest to adapt to a new way of life that is legitimised as correct and that appears as a direct consequence, of course, of a process of colonisation.

Coloniality in the Classrooms in which I Grew Up

Colonial thinking is introduced into the minds of Latin American youth through the educational experience from an early age, as their experiences are often touched by these dynamics. Paraphrasing Enrique Dussell (as presented in the video by Carlos Ometochtzin, 2018), it is worth remembering that as part of the curricula of all subjects, the cultures and knowledge of the global North are studied and analysed much more than local cultures and knowledge, thus encouraging the perpetuation of these colonialist structures, not to mention the imposition of Eurocentric traditions as part of the supposed civilisation of thought. This transcends cultural development from the grassroots level, since it is hard for a student who has had no contact with other cultures to create original works in the midst of the high sensitivity in which this profession immerses us. Through the cultural exchange of wisdoms, a person arrives at academic or empirical insights that enrich their own experience and allows them to broaden their spectrum of knowledge. The interpretation of the student's world changes when the creative exercise begins to be dominant or at least more present in musical execution. This is when imitation is cast aside and exploration, experimentation and creation begin through linking one's own elements with components assimilated from other musical cultures. In my case, my interest in new sonorities and finding sounds that would awaken unknown sensations or express hitherto unexplored emotions was nurtured by teachers sensitive enough to recognise that creativity in the classroom is fuelled by new experiences.

Cumbia as a Decolonial Example

My first approximation to music was through the traditional percussion instruments of the Colombian Caribbean, which I think is important, since drums arrived in Colombia mainly from West Africa and coincided with other instruments played by the indigenous people who lived there. With the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, a new language was also introduced, which would later be used to sing what are now the anthems of our local music.

Cumbia has become a musical banner of many countries, a rhythm that fields and embraces African, indigenous and European traditions, and it perfectly sums up what the convergence of different cultures can do in music: enrich and expand, being a rhythm recognised across Latin America and the world. Although the cultures of the global North have vast knowledge, they do not contain its totality and cannot be the only measure of knowledge acquired in the practice of a person's own, local music. By contrast, knowledge must be assumed as a cross-cutting and enriching element in cultural exchange that represents the nourishment of creative capacity. My way of understanding new cultures through music is represented in a window onto other worlds, to the sensibility of people who live miles from where I was born, with whom sometimes there is a lot in common and other times not so much. It was this approximation that motivated my exploration of new sonorities and my experimentation with my own and other musical elements. Then came rhythms from the Caribbean islands, West Africa and Europe, where I recently found the sardana as a representation of freedom and Catalan identity, a fact that reaffirmed in me the belief that through rhythms originating in distant geographical areas it is possible to cultivate values that praise and preserve local cultures.

Educating for the Future

Music is a connecting factor for humanity, an expression of the sensibility of the being. Through music, we can gain a deep recognition of an individual or an entire community, its culture, perception and interpretation of the universe that surrounds it, the values and principles it traditionally believes in and the areas it emphasises and seeks to maintain over time. Music has rituals for life, death, birth; songs about war and peace, love and hate; nature, suffering and anguish; challenges to be faced and life to be lived. I think it is harmful for sectors of society to praise the experience of one group while ignoring that of others and at the same time deprive themselves of a broad swathe of learning that can only elevate and complement their own knowledge.

Finally, music education should be comprehensive, impartial, inclusive, accessible and intercultural in order to ensure that the range of knowledge available to students is broad within the spectrum of musical know-how. It is an almost mandatory undertaking for

educators to rethink cultures from the point of view of interrelations with people and the artistic knowledge inherent in their idiosyncrasies and personal experiences, since music is a distinctive factor in the cultural construction of each individual. Music teaching is decolonised when the artistic knowledge that each student carries with them is taken into account, regardless of whether it was obtained empirically, academically or through their own experience in their social, family or cultural context. There is no inferior or superior knowledge and it should be stressed that pedagogy is not limited to institutions (Walsh, 2017), but that cultural movements also develop from their own educational dynamics.

Knowledge is becoming increasingly accessible with new technologies that allow real-time hyperconnectivity and which mean that the decolonisation of knowledge will be the consequence of its evolution. So the question I would put to teachers is: why not move forwards in this process?

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, we would like to leave you with some conclusions that can be understood as common suggestions for music education. These pointers have been decided on together, after a conversation among all three of us on what we consider most relevant from each personal experience.

- **The approximation to music** each student has had matters. This approximation includes family ties, cultural environments and different contexts that can be harnessed and which must be given prominence. Not everyone sings or has instruments at home, in the same way that not everyone has access to music outside school, to instruments or to spaces for artistic creation. Music classes must be a space where the life of each student matters and where they can share it with the rest of their friends and classmates.

- **Lyrics.** Songs can explain essential sociohistorical realities or fictitious stories based on things that have been experienced or legitimised, from the aforementioned album by El Lebrijano to the well-known tune *La Rebelión* by Joe Arroyo, Mercedes Sosa's *Canción para mi América* or *Ana Caona* by Fania All-Stars. Indeed, searching for artists from around the world and reading their lyrics is in itself a good exercise that puts the focus on what has been created by people from specific ethnic groups or countries from the global South.

- **Introduction to decoloniality.** As an exercise in self-perception and empathy, it is important to get each pupil to understand what reality they are starting from, what their context is and what differences exist. They must be located so that they can reflect

from the place they occupy and thus encourage responsibility and critical thinking. This involves speaking about meritocracy, comfort zones and more.

- **Explain music from the context in which it was made.**

Facilitating knowledge around the context in which artistic expressions were made can have a dual impact, since through knowledge of the sociohistorical context of others I can reinforce my identity in my own context and recognise synergies with other cultures that have been part of the history of my region or country. It is also possible to create exercises and comparisons between cultural events in order to strengthen struggles, meeting points and sister or brotherhoods, always in a two-way fashion.

- **Diversity and decolonisation.** Another important point is that the word 'diversity' appears to be very popular in all educational institutions, but the word 'decolonisation' is still largely unknown, or is not taken with the gravitas it deserves. Through decolonisation we also learn to identify stereotypes that encourage diversity to be possible within a safe reality for students.

Finally, it is worth recalling that education must be inclusive and strive for excellence and equity for all students. As professionals in contact with teaching practice, we must determine what is included (or what we want to include) in this excellence and equity. Whether in formal or non-formal education, there is always room for students to reflect on what they are reading, playing, singing or listening to, and it can facilitate a whole pathway of knowledge.

For the three of us, there can never be a step backwards in our educational, pedagogical or discursive exercise, because when a process of deconstruction begins, there are 'pieces', i.e., mindsets and beliefs, that will never be the same again. As we said at the start, the history of the world can be told in many ways; we are working to broaden our vision and that of those around us in order to build a fairer and more aware society together.

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NOEMÍ DURAN SALVADÓ

RESONATING BODY: WHEN MUSIC REACHES ALL AROUND



In this article I link different reflections and pedagogical questions arising from conversations with art teachers. I hope that as readers you will also join in the stories and ask your own questions about the area you live in.

Converse stems from the Latin *con-versare*, or turn over in the mind.

On this occasion, I am dividing the article into three parts: *connect*, *take root*, *transcend* – three verbs around which we have opened up listening and the word.

The aim is to ensure a music education that is always the fruit of succulent conversations.

CONNECT

'The other day I was at the Neptú Awards, which recognise the most outstanding sportsmen and women in Igualada, and at the end the mother of one of the winners came up to me and said, "You were my son's form teacher at the beginning of art school. Do you remember the meetings we used to have, when we would worry over whether he would turn out okay? As you can see, he's done just fine!" He was a shy boy, with some interpersonal difficulties, but his self-esteem improved after he took up art and he starting doing what he really wanted – he devoted himself to sport and became a Spanish champion!'

I was told this story by Jordi Enrich, a visual and plastic education teacher at Escola Anoia and a professor at the Escola Municipal d'Art i Disseny Gaspar Camps, both schools in Igualada. Jordi had also been my high school teacher and I think it's safe to say he is one of those people who makes their mark – his classes always brought out the most genuine part of each person and he knew how to let the other person breathe. The first lesson from this story is the importance of having good teachers, people who know how to tap the virtues and personal situations of each student to strengthen the human being. And for the second lesson, I'll quote Jordi again: 'It is above all the quality of the artistic material, the creative challenges posed; you become the lead character who has to resolve certain questions in an original way. You have to dig inside yourself, believe that you can and from there, work on your own capacity'.

How can artistic languages make personal relationships a fertile ground for education? This was the question of my doctoral thesis (Duran, 2012) and I still feel it is valid. I return to it repeatedly to address contemporary situations. In Jordi's story we find an example of how art enables an intimate, meaningful connection with oneself, with others and with the world; this three-way connection that Bernard Charlot (2000) uses to describe learning. Identity, as a more predetermined social role, comes into play when we have the courage to explore ourselves creatively, and thus a fleeting subjectivity emerges as a shifting account of our

experience, aware of becoming. Learning takes place, therefore, in the sense that Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) speaks of: the starting point from which we observe a fact is displaced and in this displacement we realise that we have acquired new understandings and we situate ourselves in other ways with respect to our relationship with ourselves, with others and with the world: a young man gains personal strength from art and discovers that he wants to devote himself to sport.

The disciplined, fragmentary view is a human invention. Multiple connections exist and each experience can lead us down new paths. What do we know about the potential of the artistic experience to generate a connection with desire and our own strength? Do we in art schools leverage this connection enough? What methodological implications are entailed?

There is no social transformation without individual transformation. That is why I think it is important that when we stop and ask ourselves about art's potential for social transformation, we also observe how the artistic experience acts on each of us: by listening to ourselves, collecting polyphonic and contextualised stories, by reflectively documenting the experiences that we teachers encourage and by fostering in students an awareness of their own learning. It is from this rich tapestry that we can explore together new paths in the links between art and education to meet the contemporary challenges that society poses.

However, it is not always easy to choose flexibility, openness to pluriversity, the generation of spaces for quality listening, etc. In this sense, Guillem Martí¹, with longstanding experience in the world of music teaching, argues that music schools are basically characterised by teaching how to read and write music and that the part of improvisation and interdisciplinary contact is only seen later, when one has already mastered the language: 'Improvisation also occurs at the start of teaching an instrument, when imitating is easier than reading and playing is more palatable because we do not yet demand the achievement of measurable targets, but reading-based work rapidly goes on to take up nearly all our attention and improvisation is left for later on.' He also raises the following question about music education institutions: 'To what point can a structure that is not sufficiently versatile adapt to changes in society?' Here Martí stresses ACEM's importance in its endeavour to encourage municipal music schools to become an instrument of social transformation: 'ACEM takes care of liaising, mainly with the authorities, and suggests ways to address contemporary challenges.' Similarly, Griselda Muntadas, head of studies at the Escola de Música de l'Alt Penedès, gives the example of when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out: 'thanks to the training course in digital tools we received from ACEM, the teaching staff in our group were able to continue working virtually from the very first moment.'

And what about interdisciplinary teamwork to explore the hybridisation between languages and worlds? What is the current thinking in music

¹A teacher at the Escola Municipal de Música d'Igualada for more than thirty years, in some seasons he has been the conductor. He has also worked as an academic secretary of ESMUC.

schools? Jordi Enrich and Guillem Martí tell me that, as teachers, one in art and design education and the other in music, they have together devised ad-hoc seminars open to the public and put on by the Escola Municipal de Música d'Igualada. Enrich also points to the experience of the *Sentits* programme, which he founded when he was head of studies at the Escola Municipal d'Art i Disseny Gaspar Camps, in dialogue with the Escola Municipal de Música, and which has since been renamed *Musicart*, where the teaching of both artistic languages for children converge: 'After a few years I realised that the students who had taken this pathway and who also had some knowledge of music showed a more holistic and creative outlook in the processes they experienced in art and design classes.'

'Going forwards it will be necessary for the art school, music school and theatre school to do something about aesthetics together, because what we want is for each of them to build up a pathway nourished by different points of view,' he says. In the case of Igualada, a project of this kind was planned, taking advantage of an old abattoir building, but in the end it couldn't go ahead because of urban planning problems. The difficulties of each context in making this type of integrated arts centre a reality are diverse. Griselda Muntadas says that in the case of the Escola de Música del Penedès, the challenge of interdisciplinarity is complex given the dynamics of the teachers who travel to the different towns to give classes: 'Not having a dedicated space makes the work of coordinating all the cases very hard. We haven't yet got to the point of being able to create meetings between different arts professionals.'

We then turn to an experience where significant steps have been taken towards dialogue between different artistic practices:

'The Escola Municipal de Música i Arts del Lluçanès is six years old. Previously there was only one music school in the capital, Prats de Lluçanès, and we had the idea of uniting the service between different municipalities and creating a new school that would do more than just music. The idea behind the current school is to reach everyone. It is a small area with a few villages with elderly populations. From September to June we run regular music and theatre classes (where the students choose which subjects to take) and dedicated projects that cover both disciplines. For example, a series of workshops where the students meet and have interdisciplinary experiences, or the Dones Artistes (Women Artists) project, which allows us, first, to showcase the work of women artists and, second, to mix different disciplines and work on improvisation,' explains Rosa Rodríguez².

It is very interesting to listen to Rosa and find out more about the unusual case of Lluçanès. When I ask how the idea was greeted by students and teachers, she says the students said it was gratifying and that, among the teachers, at the start some were apprehensive due to a lack of experience, but soon training strategies were created to develop their confidence and skillsets: 'the teachers taught themselves new

skills, plus Barcelona Provincial Council has the XEMMA network of municipal schools of music and art and a task force on Comprehensive Arts Centres. The directors of some of these centres joined us to generate reflections and last year we created a training area with the respective staff members.'

Do you think music students doing theatre helps nourish the 'stage body'?

Of course it does! Together with the theatre teachers, we hold production workshops for musicians which include emotional management, what it means to get up on stage, etc. Having two theatre teachers on staff is fantastic! They provide many resources.

What can art mediation approaches contribute to the community projects promoted by music schools?

Throughout the year we run regular community projects in collaboration with primary schools (this is done in many music schools) where classes are basically focused on learning an instrument. We've also created the Art en Connexió project, where work committees are coordinated between different primary schools and each school does something (some do the decoration, others the graphic design, etc.) towards staging a cantata together. We also try to run free initiatives for specific groups: the elderly, young people with learning difficulties ... We work with the Centre Obert and immigrants who are learning Catalan and we organise choir and theatre workshops to promote learning the language and so on.

On a practical level, what advice can you suggest as an inspiration for other contexts, based on your experience? How do you make it all happen?

First of all, it is key that all the different members of the consortium (which brings together the twelve municipalities of Lluçanès) meet in a single space without walls. This facilitates communication and teamwork. Secondly, the fact that the teaching staff have non-teaching hours allocated to them allows them to spend time devising, preparing and working on the free initiatives I mentioned before. Thirdly, it is essential to know the territory well: to know each town and its characteristics, to be in contact with all the organisations ... This lets us establish partnerships based on cultural democracy: often it is the people themselves who come to us with ideas.

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Each territory has its own particular characteristics – there are no specific formulas for the dream of a meeting place where different artistic practices converge and become a means of cultural mediation regarding the contemporary challenges of the communities. The reward lies in listening to and inspiring each other, knowing what we want to do,

² Teacher at the Escola Municipal de Música i Arts del Lluçanès. ACEM board member.

rehearsing, going out on a limb and persevering.

At this point I can't help remembering a book that had a great impact on me when I began my academic career in the world of art and education: *Liberar la imaginación: Ensayos sobre educación, arte y cambio social* (*Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*)(2005), by Maxine Green, a philosopher who assessed many art education processes related to the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education in New York. Despite the obvious geopolitical distance between this experience and our immediate context, I think that reading it can inspire us and provide ideas on how to stage the confluence of artistic languages in the light of cultural diversity, a feature that is becoming increasingly evident in the areas we live in.

TAKE ROOT

'The Escola de Música de l'Alt Penedès project came about seventeen years ago from the Provincial Council, which owns and manages it, and establishes agreements with different local councils interested in offering music education in their municipalities. Today we work in twenty-one municipalities without their own music school. It also came about because the head of the Provincial Council (Jordi Cuyàs) was keen to offer this service in the Penedès area. The project was then developed with interested families from one of the municipalities in particular. When I joined, in 2007, there were sixty students and we now have 554 enrolments and eighty participants in the community projects ... There are twenty teachers and three of us on the management team: a director (Silvia Romera), myself as head of studies and, since last year, a coordinator (Neus Carles).'

The first thing I feel about this backstory provided by Griselda Muntadas is the importance of how the initiative came about. It allows us to highlight a difference that is key in cultural policies: when initiatives are developed from a need and desire expressed by the population itself (i.e., *cultural democracy*) or when they are the upshot of a process of *cultural democratisation* (when the governing institutions decide on the initiative in an attempt to diversify the offering). If these two processes take place separately, it is hard to make progress; by contrast, when they are two-way dialogic and co-creative practices, with sincere communicative vessels and a commitment to diversity, the seed that is planted takes hold and bears fruit.

What is the secret to expanding from sixty to 500 students?

Chipping away at it [she smiles], always insisting. The motivation of the teaching team to want to create a music culture is also key. At first we took a more regulated approach, but we realised that it's important to give more freedom. If the student only wants to play an instrument, then let them only play an instrument. Ensuring they have an experience based on the ability to enjoy is important, since the emotional state

conditions learning. And you can't do everything in every town: you have to adjust the specific needs and demands according to each context. We take into account each child's timetable and the school they attend in order to coordinate where they can go to do music after school so that spaces and times fit together.

We also think the return we get from the municipalities participating as a music school in parties and celebrations is key. For example, we recently organised a jam session and a brass band for the Mediona Beer Festival. The brass band is an intermunicipal group that rehearses when it can, more or less every month, when a particular local council asks us to put on a concert. These projects allow students from different towns to meet and share experiences.

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Griselda speaks to the importance of linking artistic practices with culture and helping community-based artistic expression take root. As we can see, this requires working in a network and the ability to enter into dialogue and manage chaos and diversity, a characteristic that is different from the patriarchal logics with which institutionalised systems often operate. The work of these professionals is therefore of great value, and from a feminist perspective we could consider them to be a *pedagogy of care*, where weaving bonds with love is fundamental. One of the effects is the sense of cooperation among the participating children and young people, which then spreads to their families and the people who enjoy the music as an audience. Another effect of the type of work of the Escola de Música de l'Alt Penedès is the esteem for the territory that the students travel across and get to know every time they have a concert. In short, learning music from its artistic and cultural value.

Speaking of the wealth of territorial exchanges, Griselda also mentions the dynamics that ACEM proposes along these lines: 'every year we meet in a different zone to run training sessions. We organise each zone ourselves and create events for students. We work hard all day to share the results. Ultimately, we also try to organise training days for teachers; it is important we learn to share teaching strategies.'

From this specific and inspiring account, we turn to the question that drives this section, asking everyone to reflect from their own context: how do municipal music schools fit into the territory in which they are located? How do they engage in community culture? Why is it important that they do so?

TRANSCEND

*'Man is God when he dreams,
a beggar when he reflects'* — HÖLDERLIN

About nine years ago I ran into Laia Serra³ in Medellín. I remember her enthusiastic explanation of how the moving body could come into play in the teaching of musical language. We tapped scores we painted on the ground in large letters, we made rhythms percussing with the body, we stared into each others' eyes at length ... We made ourselves present. On that occasion, Musicop, the cooperative that Laia promoted, had been invited by the Medellín Network of Music Schools, an admirable association long-committed to improving teaching strategies with the aim of reaching people and achieving real social transformation in vulnerable communities.

Laia, how can we work in arts education spaces without domesticating art?

Many of us grew up with a very rigid and disciplined approach to music education that groomed us to be good performers, but over the last few decades some of us have moved towards an understanding of the arts based on the creative experience and open processes in order to bring out everything we have inside us and be able to impact our environment in different ways. That is the approach I bring to my work in music education. It is a trajectory in the world of community cultural development from where music schools have opened up new ways of connecting with the community.

I often have the feeling that music teachers are the most advanced sector in terms of contemporary pedagogical approaches if we look at all the areas of artistic education in our current context. I share this reflection with Laia and she says she feels the same way.

What has had to happen to move forward and incorporate this change of perspective?

It has been necessary to create many partnerships; you can't do it alone. There are several of us who believe that this has potential. We need the world of primary and secondary schools in order to open doors, as well as the understanding of the councils for older people to offer other methodologies, etc. For musical education to transcend it is necessary that people from different contexts have the common certainty that music gives us values beyond music learning itself. Nowadays, we could ask which music school does not consider doing community projects beyond the walls of the school itself.

What is needed to explain the music education methodologies that you propose?

Firstly, personal and political will, because these projects cost money. And in order for a project to have the features you mention of connecting, taking root and transcending, we need programmes that are sustainable in time. That doesn't mean they have to last ten years, it just means they can be used across different institutions in order to

guarantee social returns and personal and community development.

It is also important to focus on personal development as one of the cornerstones; to take music as a tool for listening, attention, sensitive and emotional education. This calls for methodologies with approaches that cover these aspects of the human being.

On the other hand, we need to work on artistic skills. Many of the groups we work with need to have a voice, and to have a voice we have to make ourselves visible. To stand on a stage and be the advocates of a public creative space where we can express ourselves is a key challenge.

Furthermore, we need to work with the community, get out of the classroom and develop an active on-the-ground presence. We must become a modular part of the centres where we work, generating understanding and influencing the methodological parts of the people we work with. We must be an active part, participating in concerts, for example, but also in demonstrations, if necessary.

Finally, and more specifically, thinking about the pedagogical area itself: we must recover the experience of the body as a driving force; promote learning among equals by fostering a sense of cooperation; be very clear that we occupy a role and privileges and that we need to know how to step away from this role in order to learn from all the different positions. We also need to open ourselves to the pedagogy of the unexpected, to learn to live with chaos and to play in favour of creativity.

HORIZONS: CONNECT, TAKE ROOT, TRANSCEND

In the previous sections I used three verbs by way of suggestion to indicate real contemporary needs converted into action-challenges: to *connect* to alleviate the fragility of social ties in the face of the isolating individualism that predominates today; to *take root* to recover esteem, the value of places of relevance, the link between art and popular culture, often undervalued in the face of the prevailing idea of 'innovation'; to *transcend* by focusing on the ability to overcome situations that stagnate us and to know how to expand our criteria by leveraging our creative and reflective capacity based on what we experience. These three verbs were used in relation to the potential of music education and we were able to glimpse a number of specific scenarios that led to questions and pedagogical reflections to continue investigating further.

Finally, I propose some reflections on the body, a landscape of personal and social experiences in which, as Laia Serra says in the previous section, the bodily experience is a starting point when rethinking the methodologies of music education; and I would add, of education in general. For this reason, I will end by sharing three questions that seem

³ An expert in community cultural development, the driving force behind Musicop and Comunitària.

fundamental to me:

How to go from a *saturated body*, deaf to hyperstimulation, to a *sensitive body*, open to infinite perceptive possibilities?

How to go from a *paralysed body*, plagued by fear, to a *roving body*, capable of getting lost, rehearsing, making mistakes without feeling guilt and able to dare?

How to go from a *silenced body* that doesn't believe in its own voice, to a *resonating body* that is all presence and expansive trust and which encourages and inspires others?

These three questions guide the methodology of *Reescriure entre cossos camins po(e)sibles* (Duran, 2017), where I invite you to recover the power of the body as a place of memory and wisdom. I share them here because I feel that their contemporary relevance is transversal to all contexts dedicated to education: they point to the reflection on the aesthetic dimension of existence, proposing the exploration of the sensitive capacity of the human being, something that has ethical and political consequences.

If we consider the etymological origin of the word aesthetic (from the Greek *aisthetiké*) we can see it had a double meaning: to perceive and to express. I say 'had' because at present the emphasis is only on 'expressing' (in accordance with a society that prioritises production and externality) rather than 'perceiving' (which requires concentrated attention). I think it is time to reclaim aesthetic education in its perceptive dimension, too: human sensibility is increasingly atrophied; without the capacity to feel and reflect on what we feel (finding a point of serenity where instinct and intuition come together) it will be increasingly difficult for us as human beings to develop our own criteria, enter into dialogue and build common values.

Hopefully we can add our grain of salt from music education so that the vibrational power of sound opens all the windows of the human being, acknowledging the importance of becoming resonating, erotic bodies open to life without boundaries between heart and mind or between individual and collective. A conscious opening to continue enjoying music and life to the full, with an increasingly fairer, more loving and respectful coexistence.

*Resonating body,
when music reaches everywhere.*

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FRANCESC IMBERNON

BEING A MUSIC TEACHER IN A DIGITAL AGE OF CHANGES,
COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY



1. THE CHATBOT

When I started writing this text, the debate on artificial intelligence in general and ChatGPT in particular was a hot topic in the media and on social networks. This was quite besides questions of ethics, data, government policies and talk show discussions, etc. I thought about the extent to which it would change the way we teach and learn nowadays, an ongoing discussion in education. In order to check whether everything that those who defend it for the importance of education say is true, I asked ChatGPT what it had to say about music teacher training. It answered in a millisecond:

'Music teacher training is an important issue in music education. Music is a complex discipline requiring technical skills, theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills to teach it effectively. Music teacher training can be offered at different levels, such as undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education development programmes.

Some key aspects of music teacher training include:

- Technical skills. Music teachers need technical skills in their instrument or voice, as well as in the handling of software and recording equipment. Training in technical skills includes the development of skills such as tuning, reading sheet music and playing music.
- Theoretical knowledge. Music teachers need theoretical knowledge of music, including music theory, harmony, musical form and the history of music. This knowledge enables them to teach music more effectively, as well as to contextualise music in a broader historical and cultural framework.
- Pedagogical skills. Music teachers also need pedagogical skills to teach music effectively. These skills include lesson planning, classroom management, assessment and feedback. They also need skills to adapt their teaching to students' individual needs.
- Continuing education development. Music teacher training must be an ongoing process. Music teachers need to keep up to date with developments in music teaching, as well as changes in technology and the music industry. This may include attending workshops, conferences and refresher courses.
- Integration of technology. Technology is playing an increasingly important role in music education, and music teachers need to know how to integrate technology into their teaching. This includes the use of music notation software, audio recording and editing, and online tools for teaching and learning music.

In short, music teacher training must be comprehensive and must include technical skills, theoretical knowledge, pedagogical skills, continuing education development and the integration of technology. This allows music teachers to teach music in an effective and enriching way for their students.'

So, not bad. It's true that because it is an intelligence based on language models, it provides a good summary of what the manuals and networks say. It is right regarding the list of competencies or skills teachers must have and it does not establish a professional profile for music teachers. (I agree with it: I have always been against pigeonholing teachers into a certain profile that is the same for everyone, as if it were a monolithic profession with predetermined profiles when each teacher is unique. I believe that the profile of a teacher who teaches music lies in his or her specific and instrumental work.) Furthermore, profiles and skillsets have been published which, on closer analysis, are impossible to fulfil as they are based on theory and decoupled from the real context. They are made for an ideal teaching staff, in an ideal environment, which does not exist. I have always believed that there is no standard profile, no defining traits for a teacher. There are ways of working and good (and also bad) professional practices in each context, whatever some pedagogical manuals may say, made more for students who do not yet know the practice or for permanent training courses where, through presentations, they are exposed to learner teachers. And we know they don't work for everyone.

2. PUBLIC POLICIES

Before talking about the educational components of teaching staff, I would like to reflect on public policies.

We live in a predominantly digital era – as is shown, for example, by artificial intelligence – of fast-moving changes, of gurus who only appeal to the uncertainty of emotions as a new religion, or people with a way of seeing the world from a neoliberal and neoconservative point of view which enraptures and spreads like measles, as if this were normal. And if to all this we add the search for the skills of a good teacher (in a music school, for example), of excellence and talent, of entrepreneurship (often ambiguous but very fashionable concepts), we end up with an explosive combination that only makes staff anxious and disoriented. Or it makes people think that some of the blame for what is happening lies with the individual, not with the system.

The result is an era of deregulation and privatisation, sometimes in a very cryptic way, as if this were necessary for the progress of humanity. It is an advanced neoliberal blueprint, even if it is defended by some 'progressive' forces. Public policy across many fields (possibly music, too) produces a lack of trust in the service provided by institutions that work in the public sector (possibly music schools, too). And we find a market model increasingly entrenched in the collective mentality. We must avoid sustaining this model and making training an instrument for the generation of human capital based on competitive struggle and the superiority of the winners or 'best'. It is the culture of success, segregation and merit instead of promoting inclusive democratic and participatory policies, of bringing art and culture closer to everyone, through educational and social tools, to make the population more

educated and free. And this is what education must focus on today in any field.

3. TRAINING AND LEARNING

Perhaps we need a calmer environment in which to think about what we teach; about how to learn to exchange practices among teachers; to reflect on the relationship with students, a fundamental aspect for them to learn and acquire the desire to continue learning. As the Framework for Improvement and Innovation at Municipal Music and Arts Schools puts it, 'the student-teacher relationship must become even closer and more personalised than in other educational contexts.' (2020)¹. And not only the students but teachers, too, because teachers are not worth their salt if they don't learn from their students. We must learn how to boost teachers' self-esteem and social skills beyond their specific subject; how to develop assertive behaviour to communicate effectively and practice tolerance and professional coexistence with our colleagues; to reflect on our own behaviour and attitude, on the mistakes we make or that others make and which we pretend we do not see. In short, on what they do and why they do it. For me, the personal and attitudinal side of teaching is fundamental, but it is not just that. The relationship with students conditions the content to be learnt. We fondly remember teachers who were good to us when we were at school and who, of course, helped us learn. On the other hand, there are teachers we forget and who are not part of this example to follow.

And if we look at students, we see that they try to put effort into their learning, they value interaction with teachers, the individualisation of learning, equality and recognition of the way they work. In other words, it is crucial to concern yourself with them. We work with people with feelings and emotions. The academic culture that came from the Enlightenment has always valued the instructional part and minimised or neglected the more emotional or attitudinal part with respect to students, as if dealing with these subjects was inadequate for the task of educating (of outdated romanticism, they say). That is now changing. Teachers, including music teachers, must know what they teach, but they must also be committed to their work, and that includes knowing how to treat their students. How you teach matters just as much as what you teach. Because how conditions the content of what is learnt, as I said before. Much more is learnt when learning is accompanied by a good relationship, attitude, 'normal' behaviour by the teacher with regard to the students. And this is where emotions, attitudes, an understanding of the facts and the way of motivating and acting come in. Not being overbearing, authoritarian, arrogant, demeaning, mocking or sarcastic in the relationship with students. No-one, even if they are a child or young person, likes to be put on the spot, belittled or insulted. Teachers are a good example for them and vicarious learning is very important in the

transmission of any kind of knowledge.

In short, and leaving aside the rhetoric of teaching skills mentioned earlier, teachers must leverage three major and important skills: knowledge of what they teach, a commitment to improvement and the relationship with the context (presence and importance of the context in which the teaching takes place). This allows teachers to perform the educational function incumbent upon them. And this means that being a teacher is not easy, it is a job that, although rewarding, is complex and full of nuances.

Adapting Shulman (2005), if we were to delve into the three skills of the teacher (knowledge, commitment and context) in a manual, an encyclopaedia or some other type of format for organising knowledge, what else could it tell us? Knowledge has to be about the content, of course. To teach a subject, you first have to know it well, although that alone is not enough. You must know how to provide security.

Knowledge could also be called 'teaching thought', invoking what the teacher wants to do. Thought is always heterodox, autonomous and heteronomous in teaching practice and 'thinking' is integrated with thought based on knowledge. Thinking is always reflexive, hence the importance of thinking about what we are doing. To know what we do and reflect on why we do it. The more we know, the more we will be able to reflect on this fact. There is nothing worse than teachers without knowledge, without thought, without culture, without interpersonal learning ... This is what leads to a lack of reflection and to routine. Such a person will be a teacher who reproduces knowledge but does little to create it.

Then comes the didactic knowledge of the content, known as pedagogy or didactics because it focuses on how to teach. It especially takes into account general principles and strategies for the management and organisation of education that transcend the field of knowledge and is a special amalgam between subject matter and didactics, constituting an exclusive sphere of teaching staff with their own way of understanding certain topics and problems, thinking about how to present and adapt them to the different interests and abilities of the students. It is also important to know the students and the attitude taken towards them, their characteristics and backgrounds, the nature of their communities and cultures.

A complementary commitment to the context is also needed. Commitment is a professional requirement of teachers. It is linked to finding meaning in what is done and understanding why it is done (moral purposes). To commit is to feel that you are doing something to change reality (also read culture, music, art) and that you are a fundamental part of improving the future. Educating always involves a commitment to others. Hence the importance of influencing social change. Committing to what we do, to the obligations we assume,

¹ Barcelona Provincial Council (2020). Framework for Improvement and Innovation at Municipal Music and Arts Schools. Area of Education, Sport and Youth. Municipal Schools Network.

to student learning, to our colleagues in common projects, to the school and to developing a spirit of ongoing improvement are some of the characteristics of the struggle for a better education. Without commitment there is no teacher, just an instructor. There are six commitments in teaching: as a passion, as a time investment; as a concern for students; as a responsibility towards continuing training and as engagement with the learning environment² to reach everyone, prepare citizens and participate in community projects.

This community context means acting on everything around training. That which today is called ecological *learning*, interpersonal learning or expanded education. In other words, there is a lot to be learnt beyond and outside of the educational institution. Training and students can only be understood from the context. It is a core part of the teaching profession. We need to know what is happening on the ground in order to understand the world and its circumstances. Devoting yourself to teaching means working with children and young people and knowing what happens to them and what they feel regarding their world, mostly a different world to the one the teacher grew up in. That is to say, 'adapt each of the music centres to the local social and cultural context' (Law 12, 2009 on music teaching).

From my point of view, we could summarise that knowing what to teach and learning from colleagues, students, the context and the reflection on experience would be enough to create this individual and collective teaching identity that would allow the profession to overcome all the political, didactic, organisational and social problems that the reality is introducing, and help everyone to create a new way of looking at³ music education.

Learning this culture in the field of music requires forms of teaching that are different to the historical ones and a new organisation at the service of learning (flexibility, adaptability, openness, new resources and so on), in a more global way in which the usefulness and interest for the students makes sense, starting from their needs and interests and the context in which the education takes place. This is in line with the Catalan legal framework (Law 12/2009), which states that the objective of unofficial music studies is to 'foster an interest in music, respond to the social demand for artistic culture and offer educational programmes adapted to the contexts they serve'. And I would add that many of the aspects dealt with can also be present in official studies.

Teacher training must involve the construction of knowledge in order to modify and change the way we look at its frameworks, structures and concepts. It is no longer a matter of controlling nature with content, but controlling information and knowledge with new learning so

that it becomes an instrument for improving our social and cultural coexistence.

We must continue to fight against a professional framework adapted and prostrated before a competitive society, where cost-benefit and the individualist ideology come before any other purposes. And music education is an essential tool in that fight.

4. GOING BACK TO CHATGPT

To circle back to where I began, I asked ChatGPT what it thought of what I had written and it said:

'The author highlights that making a commitment to the obligations assumed, to student learning and common projects with colleagues, as well as developing a spirit of ongoing improvement are basic characteristics of a committed teacher. Commitment is understood as a passion, a time investment, concern for students, a responsibility to continue learning and engagement in the learning environment.

I generally agree with the message transmitted in this text. It stresses the importance of adapting teaching methods and resources in the music area to satisfy student needs and interests and emphasises the importance of fostering interest in music and artistic culture in general. It also mentions the need to change the way music is taught and how its function in society is understood in order to make it a tool to improve social and cultural coexistence.

With regard to educational approach, it stresses the importance of flexibility, adaptability and openness to address music teaching in a more global and meaningful way. It also references the need to develop a new educational approach that allows students to build their own knowledge and understand music as a form of art that can be tapped to transform society.

Finally, it poses a critique in a professional framework adapted to a competitive society and underscores the importance of music education as a fundamental tool for fighting this trend and promoting a more inclusive and collaborative society.'

² A learning environment is not a 'space' or 'facility': it comprises the physical setting, psychological factors and pedagogical relations in the framework of which teaching/learning initiatives are produced (Barcelona Provincial Council, 2020). Framework for Improvement and Innovation at Municipal Music and Arts Schools. Area of Education, Sport and Youth. Municipal Schools Network.) ³ Plato quotes Socrates as saying that he who does not change his student's view is not a good teacher (Republic, Book VII, section 'The allegory of the cave'. ChatGPT tells me: 'In short, Plato's quote highlights the importance of a teacher who not only conveys knowledge but also has the ability to influence the way his students see the world').

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ChatGPT <https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt>

BIOGRAPHIES



CARLES FARRÀS

Carles began his music studies at the Escolania de Montserrat and later obtained an advanced degree in Musicology and Musical Pedagogy. He has been the head of the EMM Olesa de Montserrat (1996–2012) and worked on more than thirty projects around Catalonia. He is currently the director of the Escola Itinerant de Música i Dansa del Pallars and manager of the EMM Sant Feliu de Guíxols.

He is also president of ACEM and a member of the board of directors of the Catalan Academy of Music, positions he combines with classes in the master's degree in Centre Management at ESMUC and being the co-director of the Mixolidia SL consulting firm.



MONTSE FAURA

With a degree in music and specialising in humanities, cultural management and leadership, Montse is known as a cultural activist and has held a number of positions in different sector organisations and institutions.

She is currently the director of the Torroella de Montgrí Festival and secretary-general of the Federació de Joventuts Musicals de Catalunya, among other significant projects. Internationally, she is a principal member of EEEmerging, a large-scale Creative Europe project promoting early music.

She has lived in the Empordà area for the past decade and finds inspiration in Berlin whenever she can get there. She combines her professional activity with her passion for sailing and commitment to matters related to the marine biosphere.



NÚRIA SEMPÈRE

Núria Sempere has devoted her career to democratising art practice and generating participation spaces from different managerial responsibilities in the field of music schools.

She has been the director of the Escola Municipal de Música – Centre de les Arts de L'Hospitalet (EMMCA), a professor in the Department of Production and Management at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC) and a member of the board of directors of ACEM, of which she was the founding president.

She is currently the general director of ESMUC.



PEPITA JORBA PLANELL

Pepita is a professor in the Department of Pedagogy at ESMUC and the Escola Municipal de Música d'Igualada. She has teaching experience in the area of music schools and conservatories; in teacher training courses and as an associate professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She has collaborated on a master's in Music Therapy and advised music education centres. In the management area she has been the academic secretary and assistant director of ESMUC and director of the Escola/Conservatori Municipal de Música d'Igualada.



FRANCESC IMBERNON

A professor in Didactics and Educational Organisation at the University of Barcelona, Francesc has been a director of the University School of Teacher Training at the University of Barcelona and vice-chancellor, head of department and director of the International Observatory on the Teaching Profession at the University of Barcelona. A teacher with a degree and doctorate in Philosophy and Educational Sciences, he carries out initial and ongoing training for teachers across all levels of education, from primary school to university, and trains the trainers and professionals from different sectors. He has received several awards for innovation and research and published many books and numerous articles on pedagogical alternatives, educational policies and teacher training.



ORIOI CENDRA PLANAS

An expert in cultural management and public administration, Oriol has developed his professional career in the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Culture, where he is chief internal communication officer (2005). Since 2011 he has been working in the field of popular culture and cultural associations.



NOEMÍ DURAN SALVADÓ

Noemí has a PhD in Arts and Education (UB, 2012), has worked as a primary school teacher (URL, 2005) and audiovisual communicator (UPF, 2005) and has a postgraduate degree in Sensory Languages and Poetics of Play (UdG-Teatre dels Sentits, 2011). She currently works as a professor at the Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona and at the Open University of Catalonia, doing research at the former and at the University of Antioquia, Colombia. Founder of Casa Voladora. Espai per a la recerca i la creació col·lectiva, in Sant Joan de Mediona, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, and La In.Quieta. Companyia Artística (www.inquieta.cat). The focus of her research is the aesthetic dimension of education: the devices and rituals for listening, the body as a place of knowledge, the crossovers between languages and the creative exploration of otherness, among other areas. She sets out her methodological process in the book *Reescribir entre cuerpos caminos po(e)sibles. Transformar la educación* (Duran, N. 2017, Editorial UOC).



LIDIA MORA GARCÍA DE BLAS

Lidia is a psychologist with a major in social work and a flamenco cantaora. She started university in 2016, where she discovered her interest in teaching, groups at risk of exclusion and social justice. At the same time, she has been singing professionally since 2015. She has always had one foot in the artistic world and the other in academia. Currently, in addition to singing, she is working as an occupational guidance officer and studying a university speciality in Emotional Intelligence while she finishes a master's degree in Psychopedagogy.



CRISTINA CUBELLS

Cristina is a psychologist with an undergraduate degree from the University of Barcelona, a music teaching qualification from the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya (ESMUC) and a master's in Theory and Criticism of Culture from the University Carlos III of Madrid (UC3M). She is currently doing her PhD research on theatre, newly created music and childhood at the Department of Humanities at UC3M, where she also teaches. She is also a playwright and stage director of projects that combine theatre, opera and newly created music.



GEMMA CARBÓ RIBUGENT

Director of the Museum of Rural Life at the Carulla Foundation. Gemma is a cultural manager and has a PhD in Educational Sciences, as well as a specialisation in Cultural Law. She works in and studies the relationship between education, culture and sustainability. She was director of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policies and Cooperation at the University of Girona between 2013 and 2018. She is president of the ConArte Internacional Association and the Interarts Foundation.



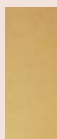
ANDREA DE LA HOZ

A singer-songwriter and percussionist from Barranquilla, Colombia, Andrea began her artistic career at the age of eight at the El Rey del Río school. She was a founding member of the musical group Fondo Natural. Andrea graduated from the Escola Distrital d'Arts i Tradicions Culturals – EDA in 2016. She collaborates as a percussionist in the projects Afrocolombia BCN, La Revolución Guapachosa, Performance El Circuito Femenino de Vitruvio in Madrid and is a mentor for the La Ruta Alegre project in Barcelona.

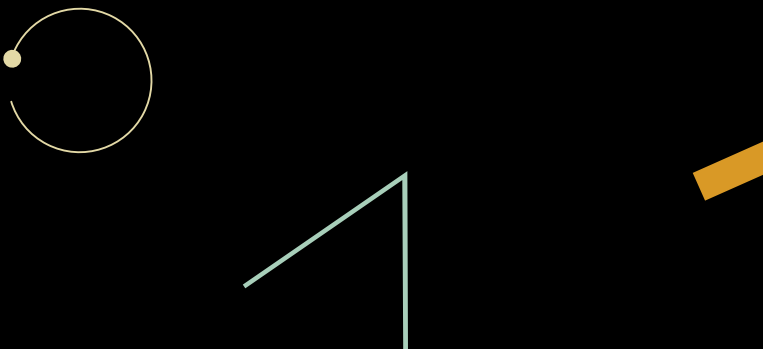


PALMIRA JIMÉNEZ DUAL

Born on the Basque coast in Donostia-Sant Sebastian, Palmira is a marketing officer and percussionist with a clear social vocation. She comes from a modest Roma family and is the fourth of five siblings. With a profile of social mediator, she began to work in the pro-Romani association of which she was a beneficiary. She currently coordinates the KERA Association of Roma Women, located in Irún, and also works with EXPRESIÓN DUAL, her brand of digital designs for social-driven associations.







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