

SIMM-POSIUM 2 — SOCIAL IMPACT OF MAKING MUSIC

London, Milton Court — Guildhall School of Music and Drama, 7–8 July 2017¹

The second symposium about social impact of making music was organized by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London (and took place in its well equipped theatre), with the support of the Ghent University,² the Institute of Musical Research from London and the Society for Education, Music and Psychology Research. The platform of SIMM-posia was developed by Lukas Pairon (the director of several music organizations) in 2015 in Belgium; it is generally concerned with the potential impact of the act of learning and making music and it gathers international interdisciplinary scholars, practitioners of diversified music projects in social work and policymakers. Their plan is to establish the SIMM research center with seminars in 2017 and the next conference is announced to be in Porto in 2019. A huge role in organization of this successful event was played by John Sloboda, a distinguished professor and researcher in psychology of music, dealing with the effects of war on civilian populations of today. Almost one hundred participants from around twenty countries (although the majority of them from the United Kingdom) discussed very directly and bravely the crucial topics – who and how uses music to impact the world, and can music be an effective tool at all? All of them were strongly motivated to attend the symposium; furthermore, many participants have already had impressive results in numerous types of socially engaged music making and performing. From students to directors, they were all devoted to areas such as social work, psychology, politics, (classical) music performing, and active in aspects such as research, education, organization of cultural life etc. Their projects are devoted to the problems such as: the use of music in prisons, or with sensitive communities, including children, elderly people, the homeless and the ailing. Discussions were inspired by presentations in a format unusual for academic

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2 Within this university there exists a research center dedicated to this interest; the first SIMMPOSIUM was held there.

conferences, but very effective – ten minute papers without visual slides and with talks after each session (and almost all sessions were plenary).

The introduction by Geoffrey Baker announced the topics and questions dealt with during the symposium. The first two sessions and the concluding keynote lecture were dedicated to the issues of the global south – South America, Palestine, Australasia and Africa. Related to the first mentioned area, Ian Middleton did field research of *tambora* music in an anti-violent project in Northern Columbia, with Peircean theoretical interpretation. Natalia Puerta presented National Plan of Music for Living Together of the Ministry of Culture of Columbia. The multicultural environment of Sao Paulo provided the context of Juliano Ambrovay's "artistic research" – he presented a case study in which one piano was used for playing in one of the poorest neighbourhoods with a generalized aim: "to provoke artists and non-artists to develop their own expressions and identities". The next bloc started with a presentation by a Norwegian musician-researcher Kim Boeskov about music and dance for children and adolescents in a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon. Carol Frierson-Campbell presented her research about becoming a musician in Palestine based on her residency at the Palestine National Music Conservatory.

In the following session, Mia Nakamura presented the case of a socially engaged music-making project – the Ensemble Asia Orchestra, which offered a very illustrative articulation of problems such as: the measurability of procedures and results (such as field research or musical improvisation), and what is the actual range of musical action. Catherine Milliken presented "participatory compositions" written and performed in different geographical and social contexts (Germany, South Africa, Japan), which she carried out with other participants. With a passionate decolonizing endeavour, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet spoke about her long cooperation with Australian First People – musicians, arts workers and community arts organizations – and about possibilities for social engagement in the curricula at the Australian Conservatoire. She reflected on the benefits, challenges, ambiguities, contradictions, and double binds that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians face in Australia. Gillian Howell from Australia presented research conducted in a conflict-affected country; namely, her case study was the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. Music therapist Chris Nicholson talked about "umuziki-making" and the health situation in Rwanda.

The session devoted to "El Sistema" was very interesting. Alix Didier Sarrouy gave a sociological analysis of the functioning and the importance of roles in social ecosystems around *núcleos*, based on his ethnographic research in Venezuela and Brazil, within the interpretation of concepts of continuity, discontinuity and contrast. Marta Amico described her ethnographic research among families of children from French suburbs who perform classical music within the project of "Démos – Paris Philharmonic", and she assessed classical music as a tool for social integration. Marc Sarazin provided an opposite perspective by using the example of disadvantaged students in France, arguing that collective music making leads to negative interdependence, i.e. to inequality and competition. The Portuguese version of a Venezuelan phenomenon, "Orquestra Geração", was explained by Pedro Santos Boia, who

emphasized the politics of music making during orchestral rehearsals, with a focus on the production of order, organization, discipline, and socio-musical interactions and practices. Stephen Fairbanks presented a school orchestra programme in a community near the California-Mexican border, where he was interested in the students' self-reported increase of social justice. A provocative discussion ensued, and one of the questions raised was on the use and the meaning of classical music in a cultural system which does not share that aesthetic canon; this, in turn, opened the debate about universality of/in music.

The session about music in the metropolises provided interesting examples of intervention on urban soundscapes executed by vulnerable social groups. Hannah Dunster and Gail Macleod showed a practical example of their work for the organization "Soundcastle" – namely, they teach simple canon songs to the community which faces poverty and the reduction of affordable housing. Jenny Beer and Rhia Parker presented the work of the organization "Drum Works," which aims towards social cohesion via drumming, with the groups including young and senior people, people experiencing financial hardship, but also people with hearing loss and young people with a diagnosis of autism. The distinguished applied ethnomusicologist Klisala Harrison talked about the initiatives (NGOs, governments and theatre companies) for women in Vancouver who are affected by poverty, and their measurable social benefits (such as the development of musical skills or positive psychological outcomes) in participatory music projects. She explained the collective training which encompasses music theory, piano and songwriting. Shelly Coyne explored participating in community singing of homeless people in the United Kingdom and Rio de Janeiro. Jane Davidson (in absence) and Samantha Dieckmann gave a paper about two cases of applied ethnomusicology projects devoted to multiculturalism, at the initiative of the University of Melbourne – the choir "Lullabies of Our Lives" and the event "My Melbourne." This session was continued with discussion about serious ethical problems in dealing with vulnerable people, such as coming in and stepping out from those relationships, the right to intervene, and last but not least, the agendas of sponsorships in projects such as these. One of the very challenging questions for panelists was: if music can improve people, why are musicians not better people?

The fifth session (John Speyer, Sarah Nussbaum and Áine Mangaoang) was devoted to music in prison and detention. The parallel sixth session was dealing with music in healthcare. Krista Prykonen's and Rineke Smilde's presentation was concerned with the project "Meaningful Music in Health Care" about live music in hospitals; Alexandra Lamont reflected on the social and health impact of music activities, and Gwawr Ifan described young people's musicianship for people with dementia. There was a discussion after this panel among experienced music therapists.

The next session was devoted to higher education. Geir Johansen advocated for social responsibility of the conservatoire. A presentation by Kathryn Marsh (in absence) and Catherine Ingram was about the "collaborative musical engagement" between students from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and South Sudanese Australian youth in Sidney. Paolo Paolantonio conducted a project in which conservatoire students performed music for the elderly in nursing homes; in addition, he

did interviews with members of both groups. Silke Kruse-Weber and Andrea Gande showed a recent project of the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz “Meet4Music,” whose aim is to give an additional experience and career possibility to students, as well as to collaborate with participants from different socio-cultural backgrounds at weekly workshops on percussion, choir, theatre and *gamelan*. Brian Kaufman talked about preparing teachers for social impact through music making. Jan Hendrickse reflected on the ethics, with the question of whether “the works, artists and participants could be said to have been instrumentalised by agendas beyond their control.” One part of the discussion after this session was about challenging the need for a systematic adaptability of education towards the aforementioned social needs.

The session about the evaluation and funding of social impact projects with music started with Nick Wilsdon’s (and Carol Reid’s) presentation about the National Foundation for Youth Music from England, where multiple purposes of research and evaluation exist: e.g. informing policies, being accountable, learning and improving, measuring impact, advocating. Martin Fautley (in absence) and Victoria Kinsella from the Birmingham City University received funding from the previously mentioned organization for the project “Exchanging Notes,” in which “young people (in schools, M. D.) who are at risk of low attainment, disengagement, or educational exclusion” participate in “regular music-making activities,” which “can enable an achievement of musical, educational and other wider outcomes.” Ian Thomas from the British Council presented the new “Results and Evidence Framework” and their approaches to the evaluation of arts programs. Solveig Korum presented her experience as a project-manager and her ongoing comparative doctoral research of “music development” in Palestine and Sri Lanka, funded by Norway. Susan Hallam based her work about musical engagement on the psychological concept of “flourishing”. During the discussion there were questions about tensions between research and evaluation and the “unsuccessful” stories.

The keynote lecture delivered by a renowned Brazilian ethnomusicologist Samuel Araújo was devoted to advocating for social justice, with the example of his project “Musicultura” which has existed since 2003 in the violent favela of Rio de Janeiro. Starting from social inequality as a result of worldwide “growth of resource privatization, commodification of social life and a structural job crisis,” and “a bottom-up collective action in defense of public interests in both local and global arenas,” he and his partners have worked in the domains of dialogical anthropology/ethnomusicology, critical pedagogy and participatory action-research. On this occasion, Araújo emphasized political struggles around the public-private continuum and the contexts of knowledge production beyond the academic/extra-academic dichotomy. A panel discussion by Angela Impey, Graça Mota and Jonathan Govia (followed by numerous questions and comments from the audience) contributed to the themes of the symposium.

To conclude, this symposium demonstrated the benefits of real interdisciplinary team cooperations and proved that participative music making does have an inclusive potential (in opposition to performance *for* someone). As mentioned in one of the discussions, the strength of changing the world does not lay upon the music, but

the musicians. One of the impressions that this Serbian ethnomusicologist has taken from this symposium was that there are remains of a colonial worldview in some of those music research-activist projects. Aside from that, in stark contrast to a heritage-oriented comprehensions of social activism related to music, the general platform of these researchers was an impact on social community with music – not (necessary) social or professional interventions on the music phenomenon. And as it was highlighted in the final discussion: there are no general instructions for an ideal social activism in music; it is always a product of a dialogue among professionals with musical knowledge and collaborators in particular social contexts.

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