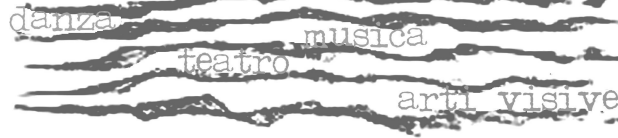


ASSOCIAZIONE PRIMA MATERIA



Discovering the Sound Universe

Project for the development of music education resources for schools

Theoretical foundations and pedagogic approach

“Music is a tonal analogy of emotional life”¹

“An education system which neglects emotional intelligence risks educating only half of the child”²

“Homo musicus”

Music, intended in its broadest sense as a means of expression and communication, accompanies us from our first months of intra-uterine existence for the rest of our lives, and represents our first sensorial link with the 'outside world' whilst still in our mothers' wombs. The journey of development and maturation from early childhood to adulthood can be described, from the point of view of music pedagogy, as a passage from being “**musically alive**” to being “**socially musical**”.³ Musical vitality in a newborn baby is a universal fact determined by primary needs; subsequently, cultural and educational environments shape social practices of music, contributing to the construction of each individual's cultural identity.

Music pedagogy, sustained by archaeological and paleo-anthropological research, proposes the concept of “**homo musicus**”, a vision of the human being who, from the origins of the species, expresses him/herself in musical forms, using **body**, **voice** and **sounding objects** of a natural or manufactured kind. It would appear that for primitive humans, music served an essential purpose during the early, non-verbal period of evolution, to guarantee the expression and sharing of emotional experience essential to the development of affective

¹ Langer S., *Feeling and Form*, Routledge & Kegan, London, TdA, 1953.

² Witkin R., *The Intelligence of Feeling*, Heinemann, London, TdA, 1974

³ Spaccacocchi M., *Musica Umana Esperienza*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2000.

relationships within the community.⁴ Indeed, music is recognised as an excellent didactic means of stimulating, developing and reinforcing emotional intelligence; our awareness of our own emotions and our capacity to modulate these, form the foundations of the affective and motivational mechanisms supporting our ability to adapt, and therefore to learn, in a serene and respectful way.

Furthermore, numerous contemporary researches within the disciplines of developmental psychology and the neuro-sciences demonstrate that a complete music education (corporal / vocal / instrumental) improves cognitive mechanisms of **attention, memory and mental organization**⁵ facilitating learning in general.

Parallel and complementary to this structuring of mental processes, the development of psychomotor mechanisms are also stimulated, improving **physical coordination and time-space orientation**.

Therefore, music education is indicated as an essential ingredient of pedagogy during the developmental period, as a **discipline influencing sensory-motor, affective and mental processes**, thus contributing to the construction of healthy framework at neural level for life-long learning.

“Teaching music” ... “teaching *through* music”.

The project's aims reflect both of the principal applications of the concept of music education within the school environment: in the first case, the focus is on the development of musical competences, whereas in the second, music serves as a means for developing general cognitive abilities (concentration, listening, memory, etc) and for improving social skills (collaboration, respect of others, turn-taking, capacity to alternate roles within the group). Music is by definition an expressive, communicative and social activity. The mere acquisition of good executive technique is not enough; of paramount importance is the awareness of music's implicit properties as a medium for non-verbal expression and communication.⁶

The act of “**musicking**”⁷ in school represents the expression of group experience (not only during music-making, but at all times within the school community), which results from the dynamic of the sum of many individuals, and manifests the multiplicity and complexity of the human condition: the educational pathway must take into account, and be accountable to, the subjects who are involved in the musicking.

4 Mithen S., *The Singing Neanderthals*, Orion, London, 2005.

5 Malloch S. e Trevarthen C., *Communicative musicality*, OUP, 2009.

6 Dogana F., *Suono e Senso*, F. Angeli, Milano, 1984; Imberty M., *Suoni Emozioni Significati*, Clueb, Bologna, 1988; Gaita D., *Il pensiero del Cuore – musica, simbolo, inconscio*, Bompiani, Milano, 1991.

7 Small C. *Musicking: the Meanings of Performing and Listening*, Wesleyan University Press, 1998.