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IOSFS Convention 2026

The IOSFS Convention July 14-17, 2026
Storytelling: Finding and Making Meaning through Orff-Schulwerk

Christa Coogan

The 2026 IOSFS Convention, themed around storytelling, took place in Athens, Greece—the European birthplace of myth and story, and the culture they created, illuminated, and guided.

These four intriguing and inspiring days were attended by approximately 140 on-site participants (and another 110 registered online) from 35 countries.

The programme included keynotes, discussion groups, presentations, practical sessions, Come Togethers and evening performances, all of which engaged with fundamental questions of who we are, where we come from, and what holds us together, bringing the past into conversation with the present. Additionally, a tribute to Polyxene Mathéy, two different Research Committee sessions, two presidents' meetings (to accommodate different time zones from online participants), and special interest group discussions were offered. The convention was further enriched by a raffle, an art exhibition featuring work by students of the hosting National and Kapodistrian University, and an exhibition of children's books from around the world.

Our two convention partners - the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) of the National and Kapodistrian University Athens (NKUA), and ESMA, the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association - and their representatives, especially Dr Olympia Agalianou from DECE and Maria Saplaoura and her team from ESMA - set an awe-inspiring example of cooperation, artistic attention to detail and quality, professionalism and generosity.

INTRODUCTIONS from the National and Kapodistrian University (NKUA)

Professor Vasileios Tsafos, Dean of the School of Education, warmly welcomed the convention to Athens. He highlighted the city as a meaningful place to reflect on storytelling with its rich history of rhythm, poetry, theatre, and democratic dialogue. Stories explore fundamental questions of community, memory and identity, helping us to understand the human condition and connecting ancient knowledge with contemporary life. He reflected on how imagination, play, dance, and storytelling are not only what we teach, but ways of becoming human and are integral to learning. By fostering empathy rather than uniformity, and dialogue rather than monologue, stories deepen our understanding of ethical dilemmas and our shared humanity. He concluded with a potent reminder: **education is not just about what you know, but who you become.**

Professor Eudoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou, Chair of the Department of Early Childhood Education, welcomed the Forum members and guests to Athens, noting that her department has been a member of the Forum network of Associated Schools and Institutions (ASI) since 2024. She discussed the role of music and dance in education, highlighting the

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interdisciplinary challenges they present to existing dominant practices, and raising questions of values and purpose. She highlighted how Orff-Schulwerk prioritises pleasure and participation over prescribed notions of professionalism. To conclude, she emphasised storytelling's emancipatory potential, the importance of social and overlooked narratives, and the need for political courage.

For the IOSFS convention, **an exhibition featuring work by students from the Visual Arts Lab** of DECE/NKUA was set up on the ground floor of the university building.

KEYNOTES

Dr Theocharis Raptis opened his keynote lecture with an introduction to music education according to Aristotle. Discussing emotional competence and the role of music in emotional development, Raptis distinguished between *perceiving emotions* in music and *experiencing emotions* through music. He argued that this distinction can support music and movement educators to design curricula and plan their lessons. Furthermore, the Orff approach, which values both the perception of music and engagement in musical activities such as storytelling, drawing, dancing and theatre, offers myriad opportunities to develop both musical and emotional competencies.

In her keynote, **Dr Manuela Widmer,** a researcher and lecturer, drew on her decades of experience as a practitioner as well as a lecturer and researcher, to engage the audience with thought-provoking questions and playful voice and movement activities. She revisited key characteristics of Orff-Schulwerk, then introduced the subject of elemental music drama. First, she distinguished between the criteria of simple and complex stories for children of different ages. Next came the all-important questions with examples: how can a story become a play? Where can the musical impulses and the dance possibilities be found? How can texts be amended, highlighted, simplified or expanded? What are the inherent dramatic possibilities? To demonstrate this in practice, two short videos were shown: one featuring children and the other featuring students from the Orff Institute Special Course.

PRESENTATIONS

Angeliki Agalianou and Eleana Chatzaki discussed "the great tree of folk oral tradition", which is rooted in humanity's deep psychic material. They explored themes such as exile, homecoming, identity, justice, and hope. They noted that myths and epics have no borders, "neither in time nor space", spreading across literary genres, countries, languages, and cultures. Narratives, they argue, organise inner and outer worlds. In workshops with teenagers, the narrative functions of the hero's journey are identified, and used to create their own stories. In their moving conclusion, we listened to the story of Odysseus' return home, as he reveals himself to his Penelope amid her suspicions and his assurances. The story is not on a wide screen; just two women recite Homer's text in English and in Greek, singing the poetry with a drum accompaniment. We are enthralled, the images come alive before our eyes.

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Dr Thomas Rösch, Director of the Orff Centre Munich, presented his research on Carl Orff's artistic work, with a special focus this year on his Greek tragedies. Dr Rösch highlighted Orff's profound understanding of Richard Wagner's music, especially *The Ring of the Nibelung,* which in many respects comes closest to Greek tragedy. He also discussed Richard Strauss's modernist opera *Elektra*, which is based on a Sophocles tragedy. Against this background, Dr Rösch argued that Orff's approach to composing operas based on Greek antiquity required a radical reimagining of the relationship between choir and orchestra, undoubtedly influenced by the devastation of the two world wars. In these works, the musical poetry of the chorus drives the dramatic action. Although inspired by ancient drama, Orff's reimagining was nevertheless firmly rooted in the contemporary aesthetics of the mid-to-late 20th century.

This year's two practical sessions, led by **Ezgi Tatar** from Turkey and **George Charonitis** from Greece, epitomised the very best of Orff-Schulwerk teaching practice. Magic and surprise unfolded through rich landscapes of stories, songs, rhythms, movement improvisations and dances. The dynamic interplay between folklore, cultural tradition and contemporary communal experience was brought vividly to life—made visible, embodied and joyfully celebrated.

Polyxene Mathéy is the figure most closely associated with the Orff-Schulwerk approach in Greece. This moving tribute, moderated by **Dr Carolee Stewart**, celebrated her remarkable life, personality and lasting legacy. Her granddaughter, **Anna Matey**, shared heartfelt memories of her "unusual grandmother", while a 1994 film by **Coloman Kallós** and **Manuela Widmer** highlighted Mathey's friendship with Carl Orff, which inspired her pedagogical vision and her efforts to establish an Orff-Schulwerk community in Greece. **Dr Nikolas Tsaftaridis**, former professor at the NKUA and founding member of the Greek Hellenic Orff Association, reflected on their close professional relationship. He recalled her authenticity, curiosity, and conviction that learning never ends. Encouraged by Orff, Mathéy chose not to translate the German publications but to embrace the distinctive cultural elements of Greek music, including mixed meter and modal scales, and the particularities of the Greek language. The result was two original Greek volumes, rooted in the spirit of Orff-Schulwerk pedagogy. Dr Tsaftaridis concluded that Mathéy understood that a living pedagogy must always remain in dialogue with the world. **Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik** spoke next. Having come to Greece as a young woman, shortly after completing her studies at the Orff Institute, she worked alongside Mathéy for many years and shared personal memories of their time together. The session concluded with Panagopoulos-Slavik's dynamic, practical musical tribute to Polyxene Mathéy.

Mathéy was also at the centre of the presentation by **Dr Maria Filianou and Katerina Sarropoulou**. Using photos and video material, they traced the history of the first generation of Greek and non-Greek Schulwerk pioneers including the following significant organisations: the Orff Institute Salzburg, the Mathéy School and the Moraitis School (both in Athens), and the IOSFS.

Here are some further remarks about other presentations:

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Bethany Elsworth shared a performative presentation, activating the audience engagement with body rhythms, movement improvisation, and song, skillfully building up to a group experience of singing and dancing.

Dafne Michellepis presented her research, demonstrating how stories can facilitate dance processes that enhance presence, strengthen embodiment, and foster community. Her work teaching Brazilian children their own cultural stories through rhythm, dance, and song highlights the relevance of the Orff-Schulwerk approach in the digital age, reaffirming dance education as means of humanisation and the cultivation of embodied memory.

Riikka Rauhala and Sari Mutanen beautifully demonstrated how to share stories about the natural world with young children — an integral part of Finnish culture.

Virginia Longo's presentation focused on two Italian national initiatives, one from 1999. The first, Born to Read, promotes reading aloud in families with children aged 0-6, and the second, Born to Music, was launched in 2006. These two programmes often collaborate in their daily work with children and families.

Farzan Farnia introduced a traditional Iranian story over 400 years old, which was brought to life through music, movement, creative writing, and collective dramatic decisions. In a wonderful video, we see this story being performed by a large group of children, from 1st to 8th grade.

Dr Evrim Onay began her presentation with a Turkish dance, after which she involved the audience in listening tasks and questions about beginnings. Her premise was that there is no single pathway to musical experience.

Xu Mai and **Dr Sarah Brooke**, hailing from China and Australia respectively, presented their intergenerational project involving Chinese schoolchildren and 'third-aged' Australians. The initiative involved the creation of interdisciplinary artworks incorporating art, story writing, and music. We were treated to several charming videos showcasing the results.

Dr Panagiota Giannouli introduced the concept of participatory theatre. This approach sees stories as a learning journey through theatre, grounded in community and collective exploration. It aims, through personal narratives, to create a collaborative dramatic performance.

In her lecture, *Songs of Earth and Sky,* **Charnell Ontong King** explored the challenges of cultural awareness, respect, and appropriation. She discussed the complexity of deconstructing *insider* and *outsider* perspectives to avoid stereotypes and judgement. She introduced a conceptual storytelling framework - a relational model for culturally sensitive storytelling and creative pedagogy - designed for teachers, students, and artists.

Manju Durairaj introduced poetry and a stick dance from India to underscore how storytelling builds rapport, community, and cultural awareness among students. Through Indian fables and folktales, students discover shared themes and cultural differences across traditions.

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We also enjoyed additional presentations from Dr Manuela Widmer, Virginia Longo, Dr Sarah Brooke, and Tiffany English with Virgina Longo of the ASI committee who introduced us to this network.

This year, the **Research Committee** of the Forum held two sessions in different formats. The first featured two researchers, Dr Raquel Pastor Prada and Dr Olympia Agalianou, who each presented their work. The second session was a roundtable event featuring 11 short academic presentations, hosted by Research Committee members Manju Durairaj and Werner Rohrer.

In addition to the 60-minute presentations, several representatives from the **Associated Schools and Institutions (ASIs)** shared examples of their work:

- **China**/IMMEA: Li Shengkai, Fei Wei, Hu Ting, Zhao Liang
- **Italy**/CDMT: Marta Gilmore and Ersilia Prosperi
- **Czech Rep.**/Primary School for German Czech Understanding: Ramona Schulz
- **Australia**/Eton Farm School: Jane Nicholas
- **South Korea**/Notre Dame Kindergarten: Sr. Caritas Maria
- **Thailand**/Jittamett Kindergarten: Krongtong Boonprakong
- **Germany/Carl-Orff-Schule Diessen:** Barbara Kling
- **USA**/The San Francisco School: Sofía López-Ibor and James Harding

The **Come Togethers,** short music and dance sessions, offered lovely insights into the music and dance traditions of five countries:

- **Greece:** Antigoni Zachari & Maria Karyki, Sonia Kouma, and Ermioni Ntetsika
- **Brazil:** Diego Lourenço
- **Italy:** Emanuela De Bellis, Federica Galletti & Marzia Mencarelli, and Sandra Bonizzato
- **Japan:** Dr Wakako Nagaoka
- **Spain:** Carmen Domínguez
- **Finland:** Soili Perkiö and Liisa Kallio

***The Vocal Epic of Kaveh and Ajdahak* – A production of Adamak**

Close your eyes and listen to the *Shahnameh*, a medieval Persian epic poem written by the poet Ferdowsi. It recounts the mythical and historical past of Iran from the creation of the world until the fall of the ancient Persian Empire. Then open your eyes and enjoy a stunning film adaptation that brings the poem to life through shadow theatre, stick puppets, drawings, colour, fabrics, and choreographed lighting. Onstage and behind the scenes, performers sing, gesture, and play Western and traditional Iranian instruments. The vivid musical arrangement, composed by Farzan Farnia, flows throughout the story, creating a rich accompaniment to the narration. The 60 performers in this brilliant production are members of the Iranian Orff-Schulwerk Association, Adamak.

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Exhibition: Children's Literature from Around the World
The IOSFS invited participants attending the 2026 Convention in Athens to donate a children's book in their native language from their home country. The collected books were displayed in an exhibition celebrating children's literature from around the world. Participants had the opportunity to explore the exhibition throughout the convention, and on the final day, each received a souvenir book, chosen by chance. The exhibition was organised by Ilkay Nişancı, Anida Chan and Virginia Longo.

EVENINGS

It is *Tuesday* evening, July 14. Close your eyes for a moment, then open them again. Imagine listening to music being played on a replica of an ancient Greek lyre. The wind, heavy with the scent of bay leaves and thyme, whispers tales of times gone by and is picked up by ancient, folk, and contemporary Greek music. The Acropolis stands confidently above you, shielding you from the setting sun. The musicians of the group *Library Lyrists* are recreating and expanding an ancient musical heritage.

It is *Wednesday* evening, July 15. Close your eyes for a moment, then open them again. Open your ears as well. Listen to music from Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean, played on traditional instruments such as the Greek lute, the Turkish lavta, the zither-like qanun, and the richly resonant tanbur. As we immerse ourselves in the music, three men dressed in traditional attire take to the stage and perform a Greek dance with complex stamp rhythms, while their wrists, shoulders and heads remain soft and malleable. Audience members lean forward in their seats, eager not to miss a moment, as they feel the interplay of dance and music in their bones and breath. No sooner have they relaxed back into their seats when two couples emerge and begin to dance fluidly with one another. When the men embark on solo improvisations, the women join the musicians, underscoring the rhythmic power and intention with their clapping.

The lights go out. When they come back on, the *Idiofono Performing Arts Group* appears on stage. This group comprises students and alumni from the Department of Early Childhood Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. With the support of Olympia Agalianou, these formidable performers transport us through time with a captivating blend of song, dance, spoken word, and instrumental music, all tied together with compelling rhythm and expressiveness.

Close your eyes and relax. When you open them again, the stage will be empty. The *Blip Ensemble*, an inclusive group of body musicians, enters the space. A new story begins. The build-up is slow and sustained until the rhythm and the positioning of the performers change. What was the cue? Once again, the audience leans forward towards the performers. Are there leaders or followers? Are the cues acoustic or movement-based? The *Blip Ensemble* surprises us with claps, stamps and all kinds of breath-generated sounds. They move with the utmost clarity around and through the space. Repetition becomes trancelike. The pace is steady, not frantic, yet riveting. The applause must have been audible outside the Goethe Institute, echoing through the surrounding streets.

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This mesmerising evening concludes with a performance by the ESMA Orff Ensemble. Created by George Charonitis in collaboration with the ensemble members, it vividly depicts historical Greek storytelling accompanied by musical gems by Orff and Keetman. The culmination is a moving tribute to Polyxene Mathéy, whose vision and dedication established the Orff-Schulwerk approach in Greece. Those who have led and now lead the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association continue along her path, building on her legacy. The performance ends with a reverberating silence followed by a storm of applause.

It is *Thursday evening*, July 16. Take a walk up the Hill of the Nymphs within the National Observatory of Athens, and discover a landscape of rocks, monuments, pathways, and fragrant bushes and trees. Find somewhere to sit - a chair or rock - for this performance of *Odysseus Suppliant*, directed by Katerina Sarropoulou and featuring students, alumni, and faculty members of the Moraitis School. Close your eyes. Open them again and let the sounds of the Greek language transport you to the most ancient European civilisation. Follow the journey of Odysseus and immerse yourself in a story of hospitality, gratitude, and homecoming, as told through the polyphony of instruments, poetry, songs, and dance presented by these wonderful performers.

Take out your calendars…next year's convention takes place at the Orff-Institute in Salzburg, Austria, from July 12-15. We hope to see you there!

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Convention Keynotes

Eine Geschichte – das Herz unserer kreativen Unterrichtsarbeit mit Musik, Tanz, Sprache und Drama

Manuela Widmer

Einleitung

Wenn wir mit Sprache im Unterricht der Elementaren Musik- und Tanzerziehung arbeiten wollen, geht es in erster Linie um die Frage, wie wir uns unseren Kindern, Jugendlichen, Erwachsenen – jünger oder älter – verständlich machen können. Oder anders gesagt: verstehen wir, was unser Gegenüber versteht? Erst dann können wir entscheiden, welche Art von Sprachkunstwerk (Vers, Gedicht, Geschichte) wir für die jeweilige Gruppe auswählen und wie wir damit kreativ umgehen können. Inwieweit können die Gruppenmitglieder in den kreativen Prozess mit einbezogen werden, aus einem Prosatext einen Liedtext oder ein rhythmisches Sprachspiel zu entwickeln? In welchem Umfang werden Lehrende selbst aktiv werden? In diesem Artikel beziehen sich die Vorschläge auf das Kindesalter, wenn genauer untersucht wird, wie die Sprachentwicklung mit der Denkentwicklung einhergeht und was das für die Auswahl von Sprachmaterial bedeutet.

Manchmal sind wir sprachlos

Sind wir nicht alle schon einmal in einer Situation gewesen, in der uns vor Kindern die Worte fehlten, in der wir uns ihnen nicht verständlich machen konnten oder sie nicht verstanden haben? Verstehen wir, was Kinder verstehen? Können wir nachvollziehen, wie sie die Welt sehen, worüber sie nachdenken und wie sie sich fühlen? Verstehen wir den Unterschied zwischen unserem erwachsenen Sprachverständnis und dem der Kinder? Wie können wir unser Verständnis und unser Einfühlungsvermögen verbessern? Antworten auf diese Fragen zu finden, wird uns helfen, geeignete Texte, Geschichten oder Märchen auszuwählen, die bei Kindern Anklang finden und ihre Erfahrungen und Gefühle widerspiegeln.

Verschiedenes Sprachverständnis

Wir können uns ein sehr gutes Bild davon machen, was Kinder verstehen, wenn sie versuchen, uns etwas zu erklären: Anhand der Art und Weise, wie sie Dinge beschreiben, können wir Rückschlüsse auf ihren Sprachgebrauch, den Umfang ihres Wortschatzes und ihre kognitiven Fähigkeiten ziehen – und damit auch auf ihre Fähigkeit, von konkreten Eindrücken zu abstrahieren. Sie präsentieren uns ihr Wissen, ihre Vorstellungen und Eindrücke von der Welt der Erwachsenen sowie ihre Weltanschauung. Sie sind großzügig mit Zusammenhängen, die sie noch nicht ganz erfasst haben, und füllen die Lücken fantasievoll aus (wenn ihr Wissen nicht mehr ausreicht), geben aber auch bereitwillig zu: *„Da bin ich mir nicht ganz sicher.“* Die Logik ihres Denkens ist manchmal verblüffend, manchmal haarsträubend! Kinder suchen oft nach Vergleichen, die sie aus ihren Alltagserfahrungen ziehen. Manchmal bieten sie uns Assoziationen an, die für uns Erwachsene schwer zu begreifen sind.

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Die Art und Weise, wie Kinder kommunizieren
Wenn wir Kinder in einen kreativen Prozess einbeziehen wollen, bei dem Sprache, Texte, Geschichten und einzelne Wörter zum Einsatz kommen, müssen wir uns zunächst fragen: Wenn wir Sprache in all ihren Formen wahrnehmen, verstehen und kommunizieren wir sie dann auf dieselbe Weise wie Kinder? Die Gedanken, Gefühle, Intuitionen, Wünsche und das Verständnis von Kindern spiegeln sich in dem wider, was sie uns mitteilen: in ihren eigenen Worten, durch Bewegung, mit Gesten und Mimik. Hören wir ihnen geduldig zu und beobachten wir sie genau!

Die Pioniere der Kindersprachforschung, Clara und William Stern, schrieben: „Ursprünglich drückt sich das Verhalten eines Menschen in einer bestimmten Situation durch eine ganzheitliche Handlung des Organismus aus, in der Gesten, Mimik und Handlungen zusammen mit den begleitenden Lauten ein untrennbares Ganzes bilden“ (1907/1987, S. 123). Diese Aussage dient uns als klare Leitlinie, wenn wir im Unterricht mit Sprachformen arbeiten. Sie beeinflusst sowohl unsere Textauswahl als auch unseren methodischen Ansatz.

Wie können wir Kindern nun helfen, Texte, die wir ihnen anbieten, nicht nur zu verstehen, sondern sie sich auch zu eigen zu machen? Wenn wir eine Geschichte erzählen oder ein Gedicht vortragen, möchten wir den Kindern von Anfang an die Möglichkeit geben, mit ganzem Herzen und ganzer Seele in den Text einzutauchen. Nur so werden die Konzentration und die Motivation gefördert, die sie benötigen, um sich später durch Spiel, Stimme, Sprache, Bewegung und Tanz mit dem Inhalt und den Figuren der Geschichte auseinanderzusetzen.

Dafür müssen wir unsere Denk- und Handlungsweise ändern und versuchen, uns in die Lage der Kinder zu versetzen, um die Welt der Sprache aus ihrer Perspektive zu betrachten, damit wir uns dann so verhalten können, dass sie uns von ganzem Herzen folgen können. Konkret kann das bedeuten: frei zu sprechen (nicht nur vorzulesen), Augenkontakt zu suchen, den Kindern Zeit zum Verstehen zu geben, zum Reagieren und zum (Nach-)Fragen. Auch unsere Hände können „sprechen“ und wir sollten jedem Wort innerlich „voraus horchen“, bevor wir es aussprechen: mal leise, mal lauter, mal laut; mal langsam, mal müde, mal explosiv; mal fröhlich, mal schelmisch oder entsetzt; mal traurig, mal weinerlich, mal jubelnd – und auf tausend andere Arten!

Der Umgang mit Sprache aus der Sicht von Fachkolleginnen und -kollegen
Einige Ausgaben der „Orff-Schulwerk-Information“ (OSI Nr. 66/Sommer 2001 und OSI Nr. 76/Winter 2006/2007) widmeten sich schwerpunktmäßig dem Thema „Sprache in der Musik- und Tanzerziehung“. Dort habe ich einige interessante und zum Nachdenken anregende Perspektiven von Werner Thomas, Ernst Wieblitz, Ulrike Schrott und Christine Schönherr gefunden. Werner Thomas, lebenslanger führender Experte für das Orff-Schulwerk (auch als „Musica poetica“ benannt) schreibt:

> Die Texte der ‚Musica poetica‘ sind voll von sinnenstarken Bildern, die in der realen Welt gründen, aber zugleich auf eine urbildliche Welt verweisen. Blume und Baum, Vogel und Fisch, Sonne und Mond, Haus und Weg, Flamme und Welle, Gott und Teufel: mit allen diesen Dingen lebt das Kind in vertrautem Umgang. Sie zeugen von der geheimnisvollen Gegenwart des Kreatürlichen und der Schöpfung, und sie erzeugen zeitlose und

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> raumentrückte Bilder in der Seele. […] Bilder dieser Art sind Humus der Seele, Nährboden der Fantasie (OSI Nr. 66, S. 7).

Heute müssen wir allerdings offen sein für andere Texte und Geschichten aus unterschiedlichen Epochen – alte wie neue und natürlich auch mit dem Blick auf viele weitere Sprachanregungen aus anderen Kulturen, wie auch aus der Welt der Technik und des Internets.
Mein Kollege Ernst Wieblitz hat gemeinsam mit dem Kinderchor seiner Frau Christiane Wieblitz zahlreiche unvergessliche Theateraufführungen mit Musik, Tanz und Gesang inszeniert. Nach seinem Verständnis bewirkt ein gutes Bilderbuch

> […] das Auf-eine-innere-Reise-Mitnehmen und dabei andere, neue Außen- wie Innenwelten entdecken. Ist es nicht so, dass das Wesen einer Menschen-Individualität aus ungezählten Facetten, also auch Möglichkeiten besteht, deren jede entwickelt werden und zutage treten kann, wenn sie durch das richtige Medium berührt wurde? (OSI Nr. 76, p. 21).

Kinder, aber auch Jugendliche und Erwachsene versammeln sich in Gruppen an Kindergärten, Schulen und Musikschulen, um gemeinsam Musik zu machen, zu tanzen und Theaterstücke aufzuführen. Meine langjährige Kollegin am Orff-Institut, Ulrike Schrott, hat stets kritisiert, dass

> […] wir in einer Gesellschaft leben, in der Musik und Tanz zu Lernfächern heruntergewirtschaftet wurden'. – Sie aber möchte die Kinder zu einem ‚jubelnden Fest' einladen! – Sie betrachtet Bilderbücher als ‚hilfreiche Retter' im Unterricht, denn ‚[…] sie beflügeln die Fantasie und führen alle Beteiligten wieder zu tieferen Sinnzusammenhängen […] sodass die ursprüngliche Funktion von Musik und Tanz wieder erfahrbar wird' (OSI Nr. 76, S. 15).

Meine Kollegin Christine Schönherr – zuständig für den Bereich „Sprecherziehung und Sprachgestaltung" am Orff-Institut – betont den engen Zusammenhang zwischen Sprecharbeit und Bewegung:

> Der Sprecher steht hinter dem, was er spricht. Der körpersprachliche Ausdruck ist es, der die Sprache zu einem ‚ganzkörperlichen Akt werden lässt, der auch dem geistig-seelischen Ausdruck des Sprechenden eine Tür öffnet (OSI Nr. 66, S. 37). Sie erinnert uns zudem im weiteren Verlauf ihres Beitrags erneut an einen von Carl Orffs Grundgedanken (s. Zitat im nächsten Absatz), wenn sie ausführt: ‚Sprechübung ist verbunden mit Geste, Klanggeste, Pantomime und dramatischem Ausdruck und je nach textlicher Vorlage auch mit dem Instrument' (ebd. S. 38).

Unterrichten als Kunstwerk – ein ganzheitlicher Ansatz
Musik und Tanz, Spielen und Lernen, Kunst und Pädagogik – all diese Paare sind eng miteinander verwandt. Nehmen wir einige klassische Quellen in Augenschein. Es lohnt sich immer, sie von Zeit zu Zeit wieder aufzugreifen: „Elementare Musik ist nie Musik allein, sie ist mit Bewegung, Tanz und Sprache verbunden […]" (Orff 1963/2011, S. 147). Barbara Haselbach führt diesen Gedankengang weiter: „Neben der Erarbeitung tänzerischer und musikalischer Grundbegriffe steht das eigene schöpferische Tun im Vordergrund" (Haselbach

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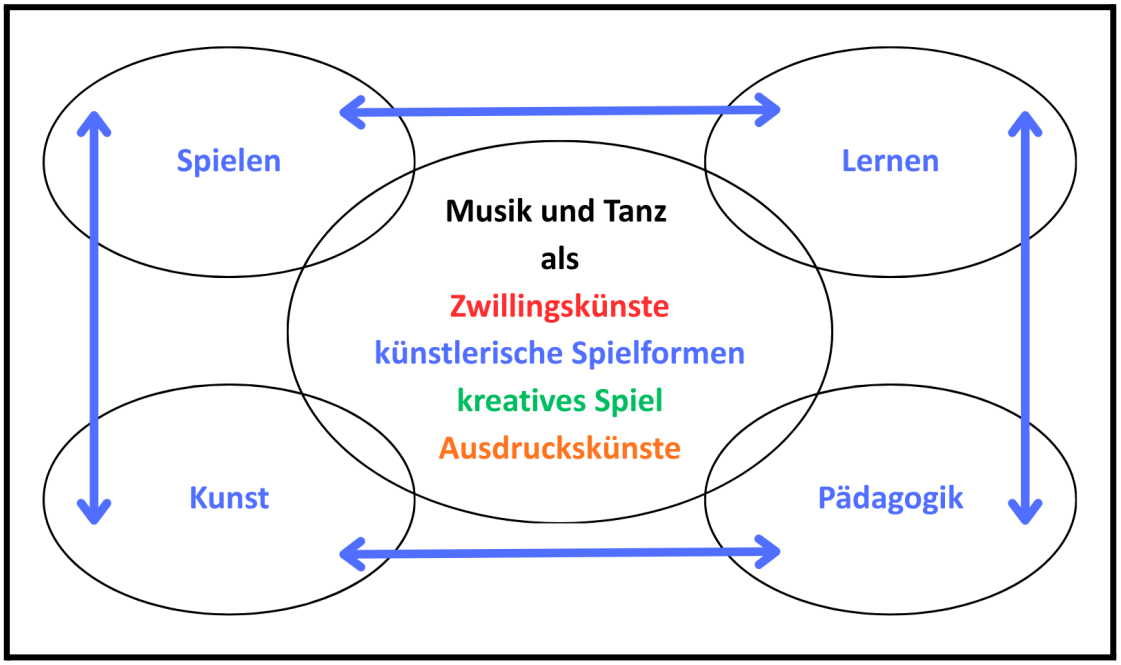
1971, S. 17). Und Josef Derbolav, ein Erziehungswissenschaftler, hat über die Beziehung zwischen Orffs pädagogischer Absicht und seinen künstlerischen Bestrebungen nachgedacht. „Hier hat sich nicht ein Pädagoge zur Welt des Kindes herabgeneigt […] Hier hat ein Meister ohne Preisgabe seines reifen Herzens seine eigene Handschrift geschrieben, gewiss in pädagogischer Absicht, aber doch unter dem vollen Anspruch der Kunst, der er dient“ (Derbolav 1963, S. 36). Ein letzter Gedanke führt uns noch weiter zurück in die Vergangenheit: Im Jahr 1938 schrieb Johan Huizinga in seinem kulturanthropologischen Werk „Homo Ludens – Vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel“ folgendes über die Beziehung zwischen Musik, Tanz und Spiel: „Wenn man sich mit allem, was Musik heißt, eigentlich dauernd innerhalb der Grenzen des Spiels befindet, so gilt dies in noch weit höherem Maße von der von ihr nicht zu trennenden Zwillingskunst, dem Tanz“ (Huizinga 1938/1987, S. 180). Deshalb wollen wir auch den ganzheitlichen Aspekt unserer Arbeit zwischen Musik, Tanz, Sprache und Theater genauer unter die Lupe nehmen. Zusammenfassend habe ich alle oben erwähnten Begriffspaare in einer Tabelle aufgeführt:

Identität im Wesen – Verwandte ersten Grades



Texte unter der Lupe

Schauen wir uns nun genauer an, wie wir Texte anhand verschiedener Kriterien auswählen können. Eine Geschichte kann schon mit einem einzigen Satz erzählt werden oder in einem Vers mit nur vier Zeilen. Und natürlich bedienen wir uns am reichen Sprachschatz von Strophengedichten, Kurzgeschichten, alten und neuen Märchen und Bilderbuchgeschichten. Ich arbeite am liebsten mit Geschichten aus Bilderbüchern, denn gerade die Kombination aus Worten und Bildern ist für unseren Beruf sowie unsere Klientel besonders inspirierend! Eine grundlegende Einteilung des Spielmaterials hilft mir dabei, gezielt nach einer Geschichte zu suchen, die zu meiner Gruppe passt und meinen eigenen Fähigkeiten und Zielen entspricht. Wir können unterscheiden zwischen einfachen und komplexen Geschichten:

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Schwierigkeitsgrad 1
Rondo-Spiele oder Rondo-Texte: z. B. Reiseberichte (um die Welt), Tiergeschichten (z. B. „Die kleine Raupe Nimmersatt“). Für Spieler ab 3 Jahren.

Schwierigkeitsgrad 2
Geschichten über Verwandlungen (Metamorphosen) und Collagen dramatischer Momente. z. B. Geschichten über die Jahreszeiten, die vier Elemente, Fantasiegeschichten, einige neue Geschichten und Bilderbücher (z. B. „Wo die wilden Kerle wohnen“). Für Spieler ab 5 Jahren.

Schwierigkeitsgrad 3
Geschichten mit dramatischen Handlungssträngen und komplexeren Szenenstrukturen. Zum Beispiel fast alle alten und neuen Märchen („Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten“, „König Hupf I“, „Ferdinand, der Stier“). Für Spieler ab 7 Jahren.

Nachdem ich mich in den letzten Jahren intensiv mit dem Genre „Bilderbücher“ aus der Perspektive ihrer Autorinnen und Autoren beschäftigt habe, konnte ich immer mehr Kriterien identifizieren, die ein gutes Bilderbuch ausmachen. Diese Kriterien beziehen sich jedoch nicht unbedingt auf die ästhetischen Aspekte der künstlerischen Qualität der Geschichte, ihres Textes oder der begleitenden Bilder (Illustrationen), denn das ist oft Geschmackssache. Es ist riskant und unseriös, hier allgemeingültige Aussagen darüber zu treffen, was gut oder schlecht ist. Andererseits gehen die Kriterien, die ich im Folgenden vorstelle, meiner persönlichen Erfahrung nach oft Hand in Hand mit Qualitätskriterien – einschließlich ästhetischer! Es gilt jedoch immer die Regel: Jede Gruppenleitung soll selbst entscheiden, was ihr gefällt, was sie persönlich anspricht und ob sie den Einsatz einer bestimmten Geschichte in ihren Unterrichtsgruppen voll und ganz befürworten kann.

Hier eine kleine Auswahl von Hilfestellung, unsere Sprachmaterialien sollten…
…direkt und natürlich sein
…präzise und locker
…einfach und unmittelbar
…authentisch und aufrichtig
…elegant, witzig, kunstvoll
…fröhlich, lustig, schrullig
…frech, ausgefallen
…ernst, nachdenklich, berührend...

Kann der ausgewählte Text (Reim, Gedicht, Geschichte) …
… theatralisch dargestellt werden?
… musikalisch interpretiert werden?
… getanzt werden?
… mit Stimmklängen „gemalt“ werden?
… als Inspiration für das Verfassen eigener Liedtexte oder Sprechstücke dienen?

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Einige Kriterien im Detail

Das Sprachmaterial sollte visuell und klangvoll sein. Das bedeutet, es sollte Wörter oder Begriffe enthalten, die starke visuelle und akustische Assoziationen hervorrufen können. Einerseits sollte das Sprachmaterial konkrete Situationen und Umstände beschreiben, aber andererseits lassen sich auch Gemütszustände und Gegenstände kreativ tänzerisch ausdrücken und/oder musikalisch vertonen. Hier ein paar Beispiele:

- die behagliche Wärme in einem gemütlichen Raum, die – sichtbar und hautnah – den Menschen Trost spendet!
- oder der Brunnen (von zwei Kindern hockend dargestellt, die sich an den Händen fassen), in den etwas hineinfällt und der erschrocken hinein- und zurückschaut.
- Und Bäume in einem Park oder einer Allee, die sich einem traurigen König zuwenden und ihm aufmunternde Worte zuflüstern!

Das Sprachmaterial sollte die Gruppenmitglieder sowohl innerlich als auch äußerlich „bewegen", das heißt, einerseits ein Gefühl der Anteilnahme und andererseits den Wunsch auslösen, sich selbst auszudrücken. Das Sprachmaterial sollte unmittelbar und unterhaltsam sein und zur Improvisation sowohl mit dem Körper als auch beim Spielen eines Instruments anregen.

Es gibt jedoch einen Ansatz, vor dem ich ausdrücklich warnen möchte: Darstellerinnen und Darsteller dürfen niemals bloß als Requisiten eingesetzt werden! Wenn Blumen, Bäume, Häuser oder ein Gartenzaun gebraucht werden, kann man gemeinsam mit den Kindern diese Objekte basteln und die Eltern helfen vielleicht dabei mit. In meinen Inszenierungen verkörpern die Mitwirkenden ein Objekt nur dann, wenn es Teil des Geschehens wird – das heißt, wenn es, wie oben beschrieben, eine menschliche Note erhält und sich gestisch, mimisch und ggf. mit Worten ins Geschehen „einmischt".

Einige – bewährte – Lösungen

Bieten die Rollen in einer Geschichte genügend Spielraum für die unterschiedlichen Fähigkeiten, Fertigkeiten und Wünsche meiner Gruppenmitglieder? Ich werde auf Probleme stoßen, wenn ich eine Geschichte mit nur zwei oder drei Hauptrollen und vielen – eher unbedeutenden – Nebenrollen auswähle! Auf jeden Fall ist es unerlässlich, dass der Inhalt der Geschichte dem geistigen und emotionalen Entwicklungsstand der Teilnehmenden entspricht.

Einige Lösungen aus meiner eigenen Erfahrung, die sich als wirksam erwiesen haben:

„Rollenausschmückung"

Einer Prinzessin werden drei Hofdamen (oder Schwestern) zur Seite gestellt. Dies entlastet auch die Hauptdarstellerin, da Sprechtext oder ein Lied auf eine Gruppe von Schauspielerinnen aufgeteilt werden können und das Schauspiel – und vielleicht sogar ein Tanz – in einer kleinen Gruppe viel mehr Spaß macht!

„Rollenverdopplung"

Jedes Tier in „Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten" wird von zwei Kindern gespielt: Es gibt zwei Esel, zwei Hunde, zwei Katzen, zwei Hähne und so viele Räuber und Räuberinnen, wie sich für die Rolle melden – und schon ist eine ganze Schulklasse beschäftigt!

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„Rollensplitting“
Während des Stücks wechseln die Darsteller einer bestimmten Rolle ein- bis dreimal. So gibt es mehrere Könige, Prinzessinnen oder den Stier Ferdinand. Das macht Sinn, da einige der Hauptfiguren im Verlauf der Geschichte älter werden. Der Rollenwechsel findet offen auf der Bühne statt, zum Beispiel durch die Übergabe der Krone oder der Stierhörner von einem zum anderen Spieler.

Zum Ende findet sich hier eine Grafik, die Raum bietet, um viele angesprochene Aspekte meines Themas auf einem Blick zu erfassen (das Original der „MUWOTA-Baum“ findet sich in meinem Buch „Spring ins Spiel“, 2004/S. 10):

Die MUsik-WOrt-TAnz-DRAma-Palme
(© Manuela Widmer 2026/2004 – MU-WO-TA-DRA-Palme)

Die **Wurzeln** stehen für die Fragen und Herausforderungen, denen wir bei der Arbeit mit Geschichten begegnen:

- Verstehen wir, was Kinder verstehen?
- Welche Art von Geschichten gibt es? Geschichten können auch in einem Satz stecken!
- Welche Kriterien können uns helfen, passende Geschichten zu identifizieren?
- Unser Sprachmaterial sollte visuelles Sprachmaterial sein!
- Einerseits soll der Text konkrete Situationen beschreiben…
- …andererseits können auch Zustände und Objekte kreativ ausgedrückt werden!
- Bist du wahrhaftig spielbereit?

Die **Äste** stehen für das reichhaltige Sprachmaterial, das uns zur Verfügung steht:

- Ein einzelnes Wort
- Ein Satz
- Ein Vierzeiler
- Ein Strophengedicht
- Eine Kurzgeschichte
- Ein (altes oder neues) Märchen
- Eine Bilderbuchgeschichte
- Eine selbsterfundene Geschichte

Die **Früchte** stehen für einige erstrebenswerte pädagogische Ziele, die die Kinder durch unsere Arbeit im besten Fall erreichen können...

- Konzentration
- Selbständigkeit
- Verantwortlichkeit
- Selbstbewusstsein
- Raum für persönlichen Ausdruck

Und nun bleibt mir nur noch die Aufforderung an alle Leserinnen und Leser, nach gewissenhafter Vorbereitung und mit Lust und guter Laune mit den eigenen Gruppen ins Spiel zu springen – viel Vergnügen!

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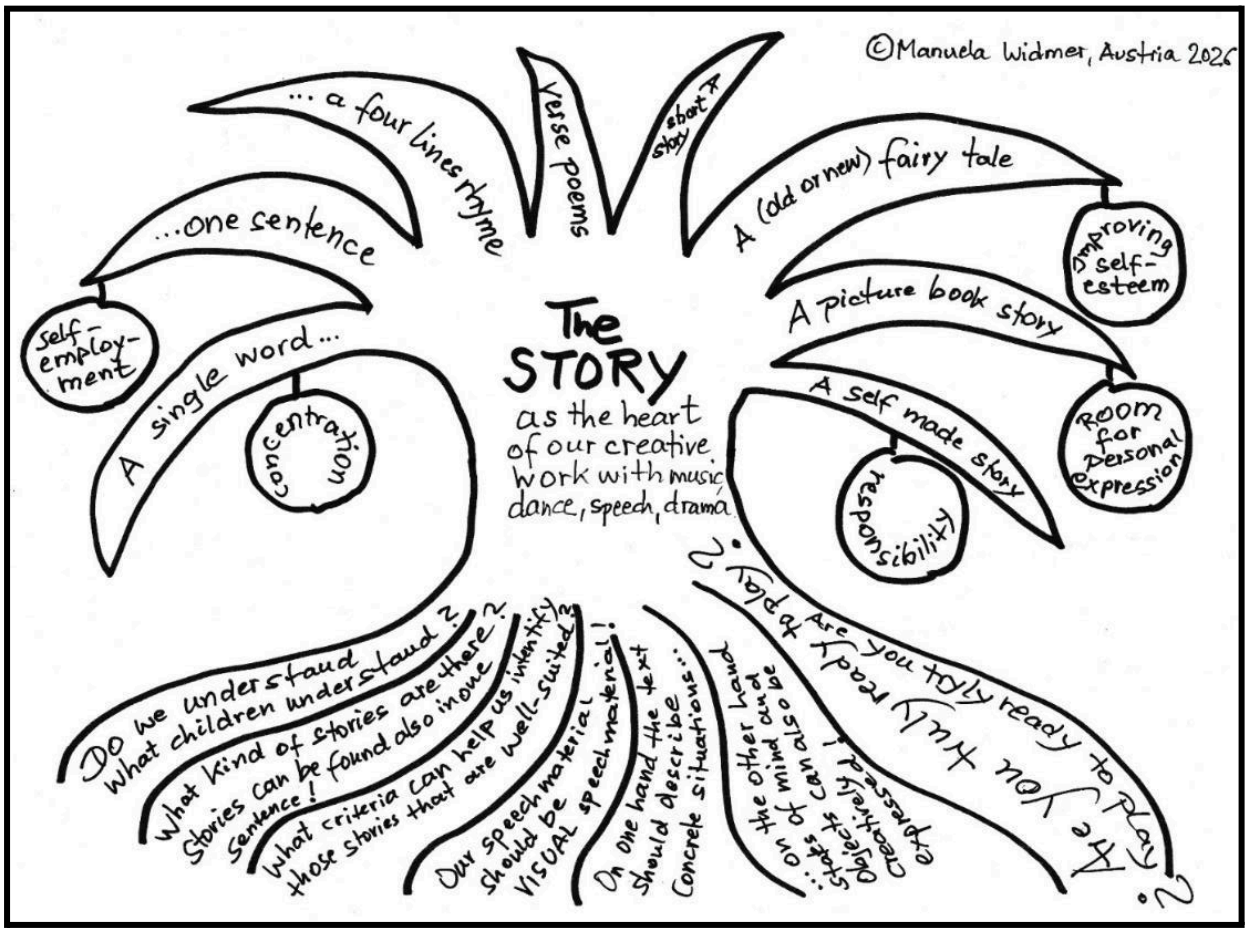

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Websites

Widmer, Manuela & Michel: https://www.theaterausdemkoffer.at/
Blausteiner, S. & Kriss, M.: https://elementares-musiktheater.com/



Manuela Widmer ist Musik- und Tanzpädagogin und hat bis 2012 mit Kindern im Alter von vier bis zehn Jahren sowie mit Studierenden am Orff-Institut gearbeitet. Darüber hinaus ist Manuela Widmer weiterhin in der Ausbildung von Lehrern und Erziehern im In- und Ausland tätig. Sie ist Autorin verschiedener Fachbücher für Musikalische Früherziehung, Grundausbildung und Elementares Musiktheater.

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A story – the heart of our creative teaching using music, dance, speech and drama

Manuela Widmer

Introduction

When we wish to work with speech in Elemental Music and Dance Education, the primary concern is how we can make ourselves understood by our children, young people and adults – whether younger or older. Or to put it another way: do we understand what our audience understands? Only then can we decide what kind of linguistic artwork (verse, poem, story) to select for the group in question and how we can engage with it creatively. To what extent can group members be involved in the creative process of developing a song text or a rhythmic speech game from a prose text? To what extent will teachers take the initiative themselves? In this article, the suggestions relate to childhood when examined more closely how language development goes hand in hand with cognitive development and what this means for the selection of language material.

Sometimes we are lost for words

Haven't we all been in a situation at some point where, in the presence of children, we were at a loss for words, where we couldn't make ourselves understood to them or didn't understand them? Do we understand what children understand? Can we grasp how they see the world, what they think about and how they feel? Do we understand the difference between our adult understanding of language and that of children? How can we improve our understanding and empathy? Finding answers to these questions will help us to select suitable texts, stories or fairy tales that appeal to children and reflect their experiences and feelings.

Different levels of language comprehension

We can gain a very good insight into what children understand when they try to explain something to us: from the way they describe things, we can draw conclusions about their use of language, the extent of their vocabulary and their cognitive abilities – and thus also about their ability to think in abstract terms based on concrete impressions. They present us with their knowledge, their ideas and impressions of the adult world, as well as their world view. They are generous with connections they have not yet fully grasped, and fill in the gaps imaginatively (when their knowledge is no longer sufficient), but they also readily admit: *'I'm not quite sure about that.'* The logic of their thinking is sometimes astonishing, sometimes ludicrous! Children often look for comparisons drawn from their everyday experiences. Sometimes they offer us associations that are difficult for us adults to grasp.

The way children communicate

If we want to involve children in a creative process that makes use of language, texts, stories and individual words, we must first ask ourselves: when we perceive language in all its forms, do we understand and communicate it in the same way as children do? Children's thoughts, feelings, intuitions, desires and understanding are reflected in what they convey to us: in their own words, through movement, gestures and facial expressions. Let us listen to them patiently and observe them closely!

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The pioneers of child language research, Clara and William Stern, wrote: 'Originally, a person's behaviour in a given situation is expressed through a holistic action of the organism, in which gestures, facial expressions and actions, together with the accompanying sounds, form an inseparable whole' (1907/1987, p. 123). This statement serves as a clear guideline for us when we work with forms of language in the classroom. It influences both our choice of texts and our methodological approach.

How, then, can we help children not only to understand the texts we offer them, but also to make them their own? When we tell a story or recite a poem, we want to give the children the opportunity, right from the start, to immerse themselves in the text with all their heart and soul. Only in this way can we foster the concentration and motivation they need to later engage with the story's content and characters through play, voice, speech, movement and dance.

To achieve this, we must change the way we think and act and try to put ourselves in the children's shoes, viewing the world of language from their perspective, so that we can then behave in such a way that they can follow us wholeheartedly.
In practical terms, this can mean: speaking freely (not just reading aloud), making eye contact, and giving the children time to understand, to react and to ask questions.
Our hands, too, can 'speak', and we should 'listen in' to every word internally before we utter it: sometimes softly, sometimes louder, sometimes loudly; sometimes slowly, sometimes wearily, sometimes explosively; sometimes cheerfully, sometimes mischievously or in horror; sometimes sadly, sometimes tearfully, sometimes jubilantly – and in a thousand other ways!

The use of language from the perspective of fellow professionals
Several issues of *Orff-Schulwerk-Informationen* (OSI No. 66/Summer 2001, and OSI No. 76/Winter 2006/2007) focused on the topic of 'Language in Music and Dance Education'. There I found some interesting and thought-provoking perspectives from Werner Thomas, Ernst Wieblitz, Ulrike Schrott and Christine Schönherr. Werner Thomas, a leading expert on the Orff-Schulwerk (also known as *Musica poetica*) throughout his career, writes:

> The texts of *Musica poetica* are full of vivid imagery rooted in the real world, yet at the same time pointing to an archetypal world. Flowers and trees, birds and fish, the sun and the moon, houses and paths, flames and waves, God and the devil: children are intimately familiar with all these things. They bear witness to the mysterious presence of the natural world and of creation, and they evoke timeless and spatially transcendent images in the soul. […] Images of this kind are the humus of the soul, the breeding ground of the imagination (OSI No. 66, p. 7).

Today, however, we must be open to other texts and stories from different eras – both old and new – and, of course, with an eye to many further linguistic stimuli from other cultures, as well as from the world of technology and the internet.

My colleague Ernst Wieblitz, together with his wife Christiane Wieblitz's children's choir, has staged numerous unforgettable theatre performances featuring music, dance and song. In his view, a good picture book

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> […] taking people on an inner journey and, in the process, discovering other, new external and internal worlds. Is it not the case that the essence of a person's individuality consists of countless facets – including possibilities – each of which can be developed and brought to light when touched by the right medium? (OSI No. 76, p. 21).

Children, as well as young people and adults, gather in groups at nurseries, schools and music schools to make music, dance and perform plays together. My long-standing colleague at the Orff Institute, Ulrike Schrott, has always criticised the fact that

> […] we live in a society in which music and dance have been reduced to mere school subjects'. – But she would like to invite the children to a 'joyful celebration'! – She regards picture books as 'helpful saviours' in the classroom, because '[…] they spark the imagination and lead everyone involved back to deeper contexts of meaning […] so that the original function of music and dance can be experienced once more (OSI No. 76, p. 15).

My colleague Christine Schönherr – who is responsible for the subject *Speech Education and Creative Interpretation* at the Orff Institute – emphasises the close connection between speech work and movement: 'The speaker stands behind what they say. It is the expression through body language that 'transforms speech into a whole-body act, which also opens a door to the speaker's mental and emotional expression' (OSI No. 66, p. 37). Later in her article, she also reminds us once again of one of Carl Orff's fundamental ideas (see quote in the next paragraph) when she explains: 'Speech exercises are linked to gesture, sound gestures, pantomime and dramatic expression, and, depending on the text, also to the instrument' (ibid., p. 38).

Teaching as a work of art – a holistic approach

Music and dance, play and learning, art and pedagogy – all these pairs are closely interlinked. Let us take a look at some classic sources. It is always worthwhile to revisit them from time to time: 'Elemental music is never music alone but forms a unity with movement, dance and speech […]' (Orff 1963/2011, p.144). Barbara Haselbach takes this line of thought further: 'Alongside the development of basic concepts of dance and music, the focus is on the child's own creative activity' (Haselbach 1971, p. 17). And Josef Derbolav, an educationalist, has reflected on the relationship between Orff's pedagogical intent and his artistic aspirations. 'Here, it is not a pedagogue who has stooped down to the child's world […] Here, a master has left his own mark without compromising his mature sensibility, certainly with pedagogical intent, but nonetheless in full accordance with the demands of the art he serves' (Derbolav 1963, p. 36). One final thought takes us even further back into the past: in 1938, Johan Huizinga wrote the following about the relationship between music, dance and play in his work on cultural anthropology *Homo Ludens – The Origin of Culture in Play*: 'Whilst everything that is called music is, in fact, constantly situated within the bounds of play, this applies to an even greater extent to its inseparable twin art, dance' (Huizinga 1938/1987, p. 180).

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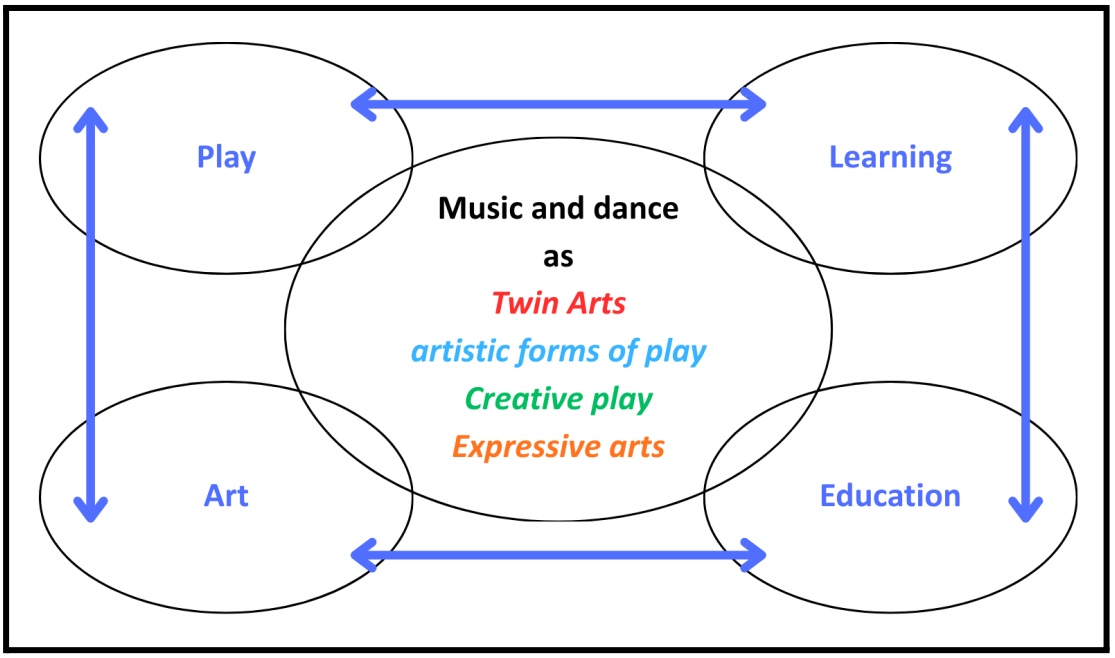
That is why we also wish to examine the holistic aspect of our work—spanning music, dance, language and theatre. To summarise, I have listed all the pairs of concepts mentioned above in a table:

Identity in essence – First-degree relatives



Texts under the microscope

Let's now take a closer look at how we can select texts based on various criteria. A story can be told in a single sentence or in a verse of just four lines. And, of course, we draw on the rich repertoire of verse poetry, short stories, old and new fairy tales, and picture book stories. I prefer to work with stories from picture books, because the combination of words and pictures is particularly inspiring for our profession and our clients! A basic categorisation of the play materials helps me to search specifically for a story that suits my group and matches my own abilities and objectives. We can distinguish between simple and complex stories:

Difficulty level 1

Rondo games or Rondo texts: e.g. travelogues (around the world), animal stories (e.g. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*). For players aged three and over.

Difficulty level 2

Stories about transformations (metamorphoses) and collages of dramatic moments, e.g. stories about the seasons, the four elements, fantasy stories, some new stories and picture books (e.g. *Where the Wild Things Are*). For players aged five and over.

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Difficulty level 3
Stories with dramatic plotlines and more complex scene structures, e.g. most old and new fairy tales such as '*The Bremen Town Musicians*' or *'The Story of Ferdinand'*. For players aged seven and over.

Having engaged intensively with the 'picture book' genre over the last few years from the perspective of its authors, I have been able to identify an increasing number of criteria that define a good picture book. However, these criteria do not necessarily relate to the aesthetic aspects of the artistic quality of the story, its text or the accompanying illustrations, as this is often a matter of taste. It is risky and irresponsible to make universal statements here about what is good or bad. On the other hand, in my personal experience, the criteria I present below often go hand in hand with quality criteria – including aesthetic ones! However, the following rule always applies: each group leader should decide for themselves what they like, what appeals to them personally, and whether they can wholeheartedly endorse the use of a particular story in their teaching groups.

Here is a small selection of guidelines: our language materials should
- be direct and natural
- precise and relaxed
- simple and immediate
- authentic and sincere
- elegant, witty and artful
- cheerful, funny, quirky
- cheeky, quirky
- serious, thoughtful, touching.

Can the chosen text (rhyme, poem, story)
- be performed theatrically?
- be set to music?
- be danced to?
- be 'painted' with vocal sounds?
- serve as inspiration for writing your own song lyrics or speech pieces?

Some criteria in detail
The spoken material should be visually evocative and rich in sound. This means it should contain words or terms that can evoke strong visual and auditory associations.
On the one hand, the spoken material should describe specific situations and circumstances, but on the other hand, states of mind and objects can also be creatively expressed through dance and/or set to music. Here are a few examples:
- the cosy warmth in a comfortable room, which – visible and tangible – brings comfort to people;
- the well (represented by two children crouching and holding hands), into which something falls and which looks in and back in alarm;
- trees in a park or along an avenue, turning towards a sad king and whispering words of encouragement to him.

The language material should 'move' the group members both internally and externally; that is to say, on the one hand, it should evoke a sense of empathy and, on the other, trigger the

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desire to express oneself. The language material should be immediate and entertaining, and encourage improvisation both physically and through playing an instrument.

There is, however, one approach against which I would like to issue a specific warning: performers must never be used merely as props! If flowers, trees, houses or a garden fence are needed, these objects can be made together with the children, and the parents might help with this. In my productions, the performers only embody an object when it becomes part of the action – that is, when, as described above, it is given a human touch and 'intervenes' in the action through gestures, facial expressions and, where appropriate, words.

Some – tried-and-tested – solutions
Do the roles in a story offer enough scope for the different abilities, skills and wishes of my group members? I'll run into problems if I choose a story with only two or three main roles and lots of – rather insignificant – supporting roles! In any case, it's essential that the story's content matches the participants' intellectual and emotional level of development.

Here are some solutions from my own experience that have proved effective:
'Role embellishment'
A princess is accompanied by three ladies-in-waiting (or sisters). This also takes some of the pressure off the lead actress, as spoken lines or a song can be shared amongst a group of actresses, and acting – and perhaps even a dance – is much more fun in a small group!
'Role doubling'
Each animal in *The Bremen Town Musicians* is played by two children: there are two donkeys, two dogs, two cats, two roosters and as many robbers (both boys and girls) as volunteer for the role – and just like that, a whole school class is kept busy!
"Role splitting"

During the play, the performers in a particular role change one to three times. So there are several kings, princesses or Ferdinand the bull. This makes sense, as some of the main characters grow older as the story progresses. The role change takes place openly on stage, for example by passing the crown or the bull's horns from one performer to another.

To conclude, here is a diagram that provides a way of grasping many of the aspects of my topic at a glance (the original 'MUWOTA Tree' can be found in my book *Spring ins Spiel*, 2004, p. 10):

The Music-Word-Dance-Drama Palm
(© Manuela Widmer 2026/2004 – MU-WO-TA-DRA Palm)

The **roots** represent the questions and challenges we encounter when working with stories:

- Do we understand what children understand?
- What kinds of stories are there? Stories can even be contained in a single sentence!
- What criteria can help us identify suitable stories?
- Our language material should be visual language material!
- On the one hand, the text should describe specific situations…
- …on the other hand, states and objects can also be expressed creatively!

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- Are you really ready to play?

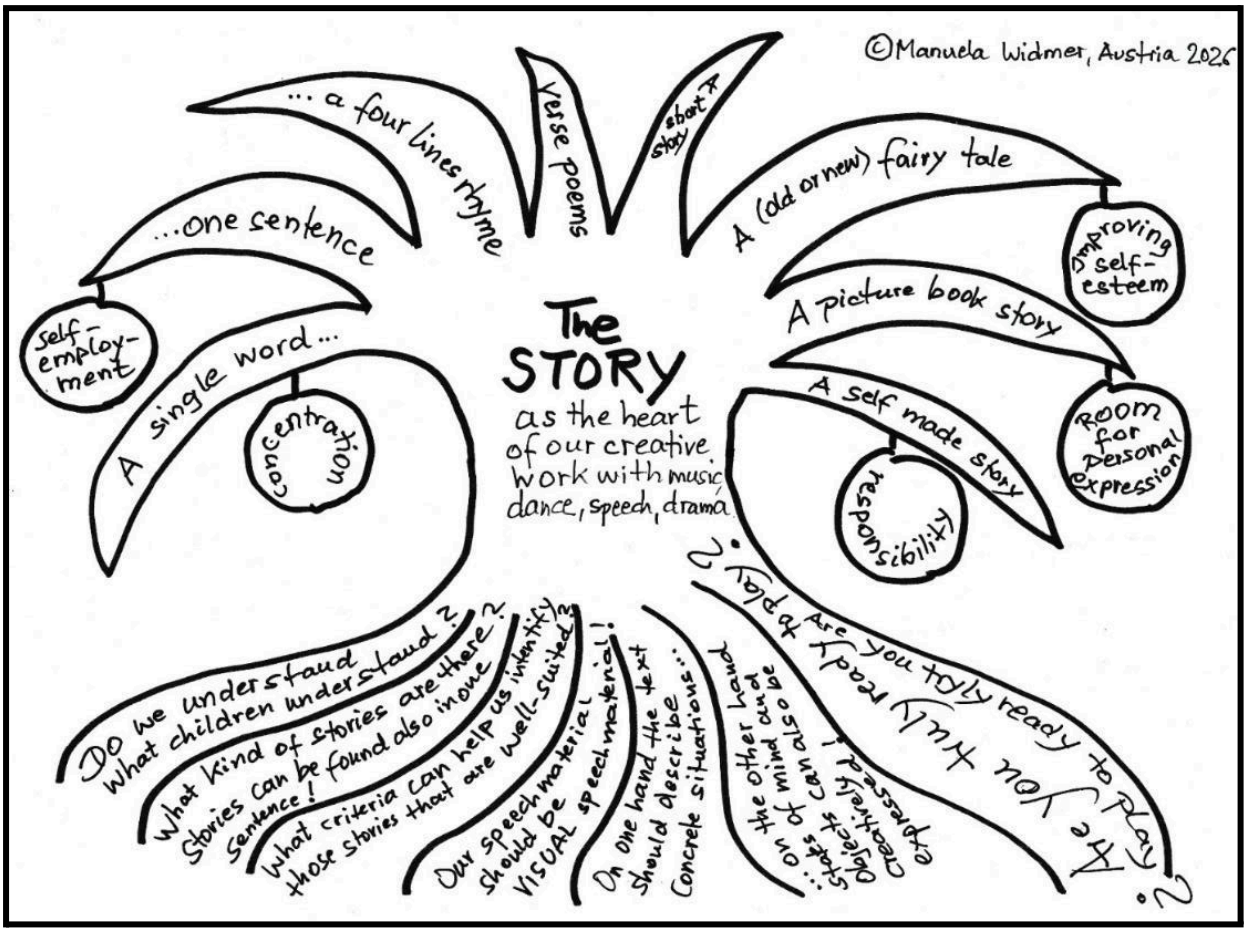
The **branches** represent the wealth of language material available to us:

- A single word
- A sentence
- A quatrain
- A stanza
- A short story
- A (traditional or modern) fairy tale
- A picture book story
- A story of their own invention.

For some, the **fruits** represent desirable educational goals which, ideally, the children can achieve through our work:

- Concentration
- Independence
- Responsibility
- Self-confidence
- Space for personal expression.

And now, all that remains is for me to encourage all readers, after careful preparation and with enthusiasm and a positive attitude, to join in the fun with their own groups – enjoy!



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"Once Upon … *in* Time"
Time in Music and Storytelling as Foundation for Music Education

Theocharis Raptis

Introduction

Storytelling is present in our everyday lives. On social media, for example, we say that we post "stories," even when it may simply be a photo or a short video. Perhaps this is because we believe that storytelling gives meaning and continuity to our lives; it is a way of structuring our experiences and making them more interesting to others. These stories are usually presented in nonverbal ways—through photos or reels—distancing themselves from language and storytelling. But we keep using the term "story" because it somehow makes us seem more attractive. Or because in this way, we seek the unity of the self. As MacIntyre notes, the unity of the self is found in the unity of narrative, 'which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end.' (MacIntyre, 1981, as cited in McDonald, 2026, p. 68).

At the same time, in other fields — including science — narratives and stories can bring abstract concepts closer to us and help us understand them better. In the humanities, this "narrative turn" has taken momentum since the end of the twentieth century, marking an important epistemological shift (Kreiswirth, 1995). There may be many reasons for this development. It became increasingly clear how important it is to allow the emergence of different voices, especially voices that could not previously be heard within a dominant discourse. Listening to many different voices can shed light on events from different perspectives; creating ruptures and discontinuities within dominant historical narratives; bringing to the surface events, lives, people, and situations that had been silenced or suppressed (Spivak, 1988). As a result, there has been a significant shift in our methodological and research practices (Barusch, 2012). In recent years, this narrative turn has expanded beyond the humanities and has also been applied in fields such as medicine and physics.

In this paper I explore some thoughts about the links between storytelling and music education. Naturally, then, I would like to begin with two short "pink" stories.

The first happened in the early 2000s, when I was studying in Munich. The building of the Institute of Music Education in Munich was pink, which is why we all called it the "piggy-building". So, this is my first pink story. At that time, Professor Michael Kugler constantly tried to convey to us — his students — his enthusiasm for movement in music education, for the relationship between words and music, and for the revolution that Dalcroze and Orff had brought to music education many years earlier. He encouraged us to move, to engage in practical activities in the classroom, especially in the context of teaching music to young children in kindergarten. When classes took place in the morning, however, I did not always feel very enthusiastic about moving around. That may not always have to do with not having enough coffee; perhaps it was an unreflective reaction that betrayed a tendency to underestimate the work we do with very young children in kindergarten. More generally, our society still underestimates kindergarten itself, as well as the people within it

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— children and their teachers, most of whom are, not accidentally, women — and everything that takes place there (Young, 2021). One morning I was in class, feeling very tired because I had gone to bed very late. Then we all acted out a simple story together, bringing together music and narration. Immersing myself with the others in a shared time, in a shared experience through musical storytelling, had a profound impact on me, and I thought I'd like to do something like that in my work in the future.

And so I come to the second "pink" story, a much more recent one. I teach at the University of Ioannina, at the Department of Early Childhood. Over the last few years, I have tried to make music together with my students and with children in kindergarten. One of my main goals has been to enhance children's emotional competence. What always strikes me in the course of this work is that whenever children want to speak about something more abstract — for example, about their emotions — they always begin by telling a story. Three years ago, for example, we were in a kindergarten classroom during springtime. We were playing music and talking about emotions when a little girl began telling her story: "*Once, my godmother came to visit me at Easter, and she gave me a pair of pink shoes as a gift. The shoes were very shiny. And then…*"

Children love telling and listening to stories. They enjoy storytelling, even though they often struggle with correct verb tenses. They use temporal expressions and try to place events in sequence along a timeline. Their narratives often begin with "Once upon a time…" and continue with repeated phrases such as "and then" or "after that." It seems that children have a deep need to organize the sense of the world through time and narrative. So, in that moment, in a moment when playing "in time" was our focus, the child's "once upon a time" came in, connecting musical time and narrative time. I have thus arrived at the title of my speech today. Time almost automatically emerged as the constitutive element connecting storytelling and music.

My effort to think through both those stories eventually led me back to Aristotle. First, I will share some thoughts on antiquity, and then I will try to connect them to the present.

Ancient times

According to Aristotle, the connection between music and emotions seems to have been one of the main reasons why he included music in his proposed educational system. Aristotle considers time and movement as fundamental for understanding the relationship between music and emotions.

The key term for the arts in antiquity is *mimesis*. Musical *mimesis* can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, there is *mimesis* in terms of content, where something concrete may be represented or imitated through language, dance, or a form of programme elements of music in the narrower sense — namely rhythm and melodies — as these "imitate" emotions or character traits (Raptis, 2007).

In his work *Politics*, Aristotle (1994b) considers the forms and colours of the visual arts to be *sēmeia tōn ēthōn*, ("signs" of characters), elements that do not possess a direct or perfect resemblance to character and mental dispositions. In contrast, melodies and rhythms are described as *homoiōmata* or *mimēmata tōn ēthōn* (likenesses or imitations of character and

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mental dispositions). If we wish to understand the nature of musical mimesis, we must therefore examine the distinction between *sēmeion* (sign) and *homoiōma* or *mimēma* (likeness or imitation). The text refers to *schemata* (forms), *chrōmata* (colours), *rhythmoi* (rhythms), and *melē* (melodies). The first two terms clearly relate to painting and sculpture (*Politics*, 1340a-b).

For most interpreters, the term *sēmeion* suggests that colours and forms function merely as "signs." In other words, they can refer to character or emotional dispositions only indirectly, since they require the mediation of something else: they are indications of character that occur in the body under the influence of emotions. The resemblance of a character is in this case *epi mikron* (only a little). However, the term *sēmeion* was also used with a different meaning, namely, as a "point in time." Aristotle himself employed the term with this temporal emphasis at least twice in his works, in *De Caelo* 283a 11 und *Physics* 262b 2 (Liddell & Scott, 1996, as cited in Raptis, 2007, p. 256). In the relevant passage of the *Politics*, emphasizing this temporal dimension of *sēmeion* may lead us to a deeper understanding of Aristotelian *mimesis*. The absence of movement and time appears to be a crucial factor. Even if the soul of the depicted person is in motion, since *pathē* (passions) and *praxeis* (actions) are themselves forms of movement, the colours and forms of the visual arts, which possess no movement of their own, can only present fragments, isolated moments, instantaneous appearances of these movements. Of course, it is possible to recognize an angry person in a painting. But because anger itself is a movement of the soul, a painting cannot provide a complete imitation of anger, precisely because it lacks movement and time duration. Moreover, one cannot know whether this anger is justified and therefore cannot draw secure conclusions about the *ēthos*, the character of the person depicted. Now we can better understand this *epi mikron* (only a little), which was mentioned above.

By contrast, melody and rhythm can represent more fully the dispositions of the soul, of human *praxeis* (actions) and consequently of human character. Time is understood as the constituent element of every manifestation of *ēthos*, namely *praxis* (action) and *pathos* (passion), since it has a special relationship to movement. And, since time is to be understood as a constituent element of music, music is closely related to the actions and passions of the human soul (*Politics,* 1340b 17).

Aristotle has also given us one of the most profound studies of the nature of time. In this respect, we are lucky that his ideas were later studied by the musicologist Thrasyboulos Georgiades (1985), who was a student and friend of Carl Orff. It is worth noting that, according to Michael Kugler, Georgiades' Text "*Das Orff-Schulwerk in Griechenland (1936)"* (the title comes from the editor) is the first document on the intercultural reception of the Orff-Schulwerk (Georgiades, 2002p. 228).

Aristotle (1994a) defines time as 'the number of motion according to before and after' (*Physics*, 219b 1–2). He explains that the term *arithmos* (number) may signify:
a) that which is countable (*arithmēton*),
b) that which is counted (*arithmoumenon*), or
c) that with which we count (*hō arithmoumen*).

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In this context, Aristotle argues that number should be understood as (b) *arithmoumenon* — namely, "that which is counted" (*Physics* 219b 8). Georgiades' interpretation (1985) of this passage is helpful. Aristotle uses a present passive participle, whereas the English translation "counted" tends to suggest the completed action expressed by a perfect participle. Yet *arithmoumenon* refers to something that "is being counted now," in the present moment — something "that I count now and now again," the ever-recurring present. In this sense, counting is not primarily directed toward establishing a final numerical result. Rather, time appears as something that is continuously being counted.

For Aristotle's theory of time, the *nyn* (now) is fundamental. The "now" has no extension and no duration; it is the boundary between before and after. And I can perceive it only insofar as I count. From this perspective, time is number — that is, the reflection of time through the act of counting. I understand time when I count: "one, two, three, four…" In German, there is a profound connection between the verb *zählen* (to count) and *erzählen* (to tell or to narrate). And in English the root of the word "tell" is *tellan*, which originally also meant "to count" or "to enumerate." From the same root comes the word "bank teller." This linguistic connection is fascinating, because it suggests that narration and counting may be much more closely related than we usually think. And the basis for this connection is time.

The relationship between time and movement is also crucial for the present discussion. As Thrasyboulos Georgiades writes, 'movement is merely that by which I perceive time' (Georgiades, 1985, p. 35). From this perspective, it becomes easier to understand why the static forms and colours of the visual arts can only function as *sēmeia of ēthos*, and not as *homoiōmata (*imitations*)*. They cannot represent movement unfolding through before and after, because they are merely *sēmeia* — depictions of a single "now," isolated from temporal continuity.

And one last argument drawn from etymological considerations: In the visual arts, we speak of *schēma*, meaning form or shape, whereas in musical representation we speak of *rhythmos*, meaning rhythm. Originally, however, these two terms had closely related meanings: both referred to the visible forms of movement in dance. The fact that only the term *rhythmos* continued to be used in the field of music — and is still used today — whereas *schēma* did not, may be explained by the different endings of the two words. A term ending in *-ma* refers to something completed, fixed, or accomplished, while a term ending in *-thmos* or *-smos* refers to something involving action, process, or activity. This distinction between two constitutive and formative elements of the visual arts and music helps clarify why only music — and not sculpture or painting — is capable of representing movement within a temporal sequence.

Music can therefore function as *homoiōma tōn ēthōn* (likeness or imitation) because time and movement are constitutive elements of music itself. Music possesses a profound affinity with every form of movement, including the movements of the soul. As Aristotle writes: 'There also seems to be a *syggeneia* (kinship) between the soul and *harmoniai* and *rhythmoi'* (*Politics* 1340b 17–18). This relationship between music and the human soul ultimately rests upon their shared structure: the structure of movement and time.

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Modern Times

Aristotle provides a philosophical foundation for understanding the connection between music and emotions. Building on this foundation, we can transform the music classroom into a space where emotions can be freely experienced and expressed. But toward what direction should this transformation lead? I have attempted to address this question several times through the concept of "emotional competence." Carolyn Saarni (1999) developed a systematic theoretical framework for emotional competence, which includes, among other elements, awareness of one's own emotional state, the ability to discern the emotions of others, the capacity to express emotions and discuss them appropriately according to context, empathic and sympathetic engagement with others' emotional experiences, and recognition of the importance of emotions in human relationships. We can therefore see that the two main fields of emotional competence are the recognition and management of both our own emotions and those of others within a particular context.

Emotional education in music lessons can be grounded in a crucial distinction between the perception of emotions in music and the induction and experience of emotions through music. For example, someone may recognize the sadness expressed in a musical piece without necessarily feeling sad themselves at that moment (Juslin, 2019; Gabrielsson, 2002). This distinction between the perception and the induction of emotions can be valuable when implementing music activities in the classroom aimed at fostering emotional competence. Certain activities—such as spontaneous body movement to music, singing, instrumental performance, or listening to live music—encourage a more immediate and direct emotional experience. In contrast, activities that combine music with storytelling, short theatrical performances, pantomime, or drawing may promote the perception and understanding of emotions, encouraging a more reflective engagement with them. In this second category of activities, the narrative element plays a central role (Raptis, 2020). A specific story gives emotions a more concrete and meaningful context, functioning as a reflective dimension within the educational process. At the same time, we do not wish to reduce children's relationship with emotions in the classroom to mere discussion or purely intellectual analysis. The central idea behind our music activities in kindergarten is that the profound experiences children gain through music can become the foundation for reflection on their emotional lives. Such reflection is neither abstract nor detached; rather, it is embodied and experiential, enriched by the many ways in which emotions interact with reason.

These processes support children in becoming aware of their emotional changes, understanding why they experience different emotions and how these emotions change over periods of time, and recognizing the significance of these experiences in their lives. The main argument in this paper is that storytelling is closely associated with the capacity for thought and reflection. To better understand this relationship, it is useful to examine how storytelling shapes human thinking. Certainly, the first name that comes to mind in this context is Paul Ricoeur, who, in his work *Time and Narrative* (1984-1988), makes it clear that time becomes human time and gains meaning through narrative. We will, however, examine here, authors who explore the relationship between time, narrative, and art in general, and who emphasize emotions. In his work, Jerome Bruner (1990; 1996) focuses on the ways children think narratively. He argues that storytelling is essential for children, both as storytellers and as listeners. According to Bruner, there are two modes of thought: the

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paradigmatic mode, which is abstract and characteristic of scientific reasoning, and the narrative mode, which is concerned with stories, intentions, and human actions. Bruner suggests, however, that narrative thinking may actually underlie scientific thinking. His exploration of the narrative mode highlights its inherent sequentiality, the organization of events in a meaningful sequence, as its principal characteristic (Bruner, 1990).

There are three more points in Bruner's theory that seem to be relevant to our investigation: a crucial characteristic of narrative is that 'it specializes in the forging of links between the exceptional and the ordinary' (Bruner, 1990, p. 47). The second point is that *c*hildren are also ready to mark the unusual and to leave the usual unmarked, to concentrate attention and information processing on the offbeat. The last point is that emotions play a crucial role in how we make sense of things, and that whatever is associated with strong emotions remains imprinted much more deeply in our memory (Bruner, 1990). Bruner's theory explains, on the one hand, how children engage with culture and how our stories help them integrate into a cultural context and a society, and on the other, why stories hold such a strong appeal for children and what this might mean in any educational context. Storytelling is also one of the most appropriate ways for a child to engage with the cultural norms and to find meaning in the world around her or him. At the same time music can arouse emotions and the stories can remain imprinted more deeply in children's memory.

Emotional education in every classroom and the development of emotional competence should not remain merely at the level of acquiring skills; rather, they should lead to something akin to what Gert Biesta (2018) calls "subjectification". Emotional education can be understood as a process through which individuals develop the capacity to make right judgments and responsible decisions under particular situations. Consequently, the cultivation of emotional competence also entails an ethical dimension. Several works of Martha Nussbaum explore the ethical significance of emotions in education. Nussbaum brings together profound reflections on emotions, storytelling, and the arts, demonstrating how these domains contribute to human development and moral understanding. As a distinguished interpreter of Aristotle's philosophy, she draws extensively on Aristotelian insights into emotions, ethics, and practical judgment.

In her book *Not for Profit* (2010), Nussbaum emphasizes the importance of play and the arts in both human life and education. She argues that storytelling and narrative play are essential for the development of children's imagination, as they enable them to envision and understand the experiences of others. Through imaginative engagement with stories, children learn to adopt perspectives beyond their own and to cultivate empathy. According to Nussbaum, play provides a safe environment in which children can explore relationships, emotions, and social interactions without fear of real-world consequences. Because these experiences remain within the imaginative realm, children are able to experiment with different roles, actions, and responses while maintaining a sense of security. Within this space of "safe risk," they can engage with complex human relationships and emotional sequences, thereby developing both emotional understanding and moral imagination.

Through play and storytelling, children learn to empathize with others, become interested in lives different from their own, and understand how people navigate relationships. Drawing on Winnicott (1971), Nussbaum describes play as taking place in a "potential space"

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between individuals, also a space in which children (and later adults) can explore otherness in ways that feel less threatening than direct encounters (2010). Within this space, the presence of others becomes a source of curiosity and delight rather than anxiety or defensiveness. Nussbaum argues that artistic activities in adulthood have a similar function, cultivating the capacities needed for friendship as well as ethical and political life. Even simple forms of imaginative engagement, such as nursery rhymes, can foster a sense of wonder by encouraging children to imagine the perspectives of others.

Also, children tend to remember stories and events associated with strong emotions more vividly. At the same time, a story's chronological structure—the sequence of events unfolding over time—helps them make sense of what they are feeling, why they are feeling it, and which actions or events have given rise to those emotions.

The times of Orff

So far, I have discussed time as a connecting element between storytelling, music, and the arts more broadly, and have linked these to both education and emotion. I' d like to explore these themes within the context of the *Orff-Schulwerk Forum*. Since my student years, and later through my collaboration with the Moraitis School in Athens, I have had the impression that the Orff approach provides a remarkably open framework for a wide range of creative and educational activities. The wide range of possibilities suggested by the Orff approach using diverse musical media and practices is one of its greatest strengths. This openness stems from the very roots of the project, which has been a long-term creative process dating back to the *Günther-Schule* era and was shaped through the collaboration of colleagues, each of whom contributed their own perspective and expertise. Combined with Carl Orff's own artistic explorations, this collaborative development gave rise to the close integration of music, movement, and language that characterises the approach. The rich opportunities it provides for combining music with movement, speech, singing, theatrical performance, body percussion, and accessible musical instruments make it an ideal pedagogical framework for designing and implementing activities that engage with children's emotions.

To understand the openness of the Orff approach more fully, however, it may be necessary to look back to some of Orff's earliest experiences. Hermann Regner writes about Orff's childhood: 'What he loved best of all, as he remembers today, was to tell stories, and from the very beginning with him this always included music' (Regner, 1975/2011, pp. 170-172). And Regner continues:

> When he was ten, he was given a puppet theatre—his first means of experimenting in the field of music/ drama. Plot, dialogue, music, production and performance did it all himself. The family encouraged him by listening attentively. At thirteen he was taken for the first time to an opera – Richard Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* [...] When Orff describes this today one can feel vibrations of the seriousness and intensity of emotion that made the thirteen-year-old boy oblivious to his real life (Regner, 1975/2011, p. 172).

These memories suggest that, from an early age, Orff experienced both the emotional power and the creative freedom of storytelling through music and other artistic media. His engagement with narrative was never confined to a single art form; rather, it emerged through the integration of music, drama, dance and movement. It is therefore not surprising

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that his pedagogical approach developed as one that remains open to dialogue with any art form capable of providing a framework for narrative expression.

Coda

Music and storytelling, as artforms that unfold entirely through time, have a special role to play in our world today, increasingly shaped by immediacy. 'Music […] commands us—to remain in its own time' writes Biesta (2025, p. 21). In the age of the "on demand," both children and adults are becoming less accustomed to waiting. We want everything now, instantly; power seems to live in the remote control and in digital platforms that offer an endless collection of choices at the touch of a button. This virtual reality often obscures one of the most fundamental realities of human life: the reality of time itself.

I think that, more than anything else, we need to be in the flow of time, not just in the "now". Aristotle told us this many years ago. Only in this way can we understand and express our emotions and communicate with others and with ourselves; only in this way can we improve ourselves as subjects capable of making decisions. And as the philosopher Byung-Chul Han writes only in this way we can hope (2024). Narrative is directly linked to hope. Narrative gives meaning not only to our past, but also to our future. Hope requires narrative imagination to make room for something that does not yet exist. This line of thought is very close to both Nussbaum's ideas and theories and, also, those of Maxine Greene (1995), who places imagination at the centre of education. Perhaps the biggest problem of our time is that more and more people do not see a place for themselves in the common narrative imaginations of the future. This is what erodes hope and fuels fear; this is what is feeding the rise of fascism around the world.

As teachers, we should give children the time to tell their stories and play their music. And we should make time to listen to them, to let them become shared, and to find their way into music. We should also make time for our stories and our music. In this age of quantification, assessments, and metrics, we should not think of these as a waste of time. In this sense, the role of storytelling and music today may be more important than ever. These thoughts could also serve as a reminder in our classes with our students, in any context, to share our music, share our stories, hope for something better that may come, and make the most of the time we spend with them.

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He pursued his degree at the University of Ioannina and at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, Germany. He obtained his Magister degree in Music Education from the University of Munich and completed his doctoral thesis there as well. He was a fellow of the Panagiotis Effie Michelis Foundation.

Dr. Raptis currently serves as the Director of the Laboratory of Arts and Teaching Applications at the Department of Early Childhood Education (UoI). Additionally, he holds the position of Deputy Director of the Postgraduate Studies Programme and co-edits the scientific journal Musical Pedagogics in Greece.

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Convention 2026 Presentations

A Tribute to Polyxene Mathéy (1902-1999)

Carolee Stewart with Anna Mathéy, Nikolas Tsaftaridis, and Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik



Polyxene Mathéy teaching during a course in Toronto, 1963
University of Toronto Archives, Jack Marshall Photography fonds, B2019-0041/631207
Photographer: Jack Marshall Photography
(Carl-Orff-Foundation/Archive: Orff-Zentrum München)

While we were in Athens, it seemed only right that we should pay tribute to the woman who was responsible for introducing Orff-Schulwerk in Greece: Polyxene Mathéy.

Carolee Stewart moderated a session about this exceptional woman, and this article is based on the content of that session. Anna Mathéy, the granddaughter of Polyxene Mathéy, shared a personal portrait of her grandmother, and her presentation was followed by a short film with interviews of Mathéy. Nikolas Tsaftaridis and Angelika Slavik shared some of their first-hand experiences with Mathéy. The three presentations are the content of this article.

Introduction

In 1990 Polyxene Mathéy was the first individual to be honoured with the Carl Orff Foundation's *Pro Merito* award. Hermann Regner's remarks during that occasion began with these statements:

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strong temperament and virtuoso technique,
agile and poised, full of an innate joy in shaping the music,
warm feeling and great spirit,
a capricious, captivating musician,
musical energy, intelligent disposition,
profound artistic seriousness and charm,
a distinctive, highly interesting musical personality.

Dr. Regner did not invent these descriptors. They came from newspaper reviews written of Mathéy during her career as a concert pianist in Berlin. He goes on to say that these qualities also distinguish her as an educator (Regner, 1990, p. 52).

Following are reports from Anna Mathéy, Nikolas Tsaftaridis, and Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik, who knew Mathéy and her work.

My grandmother
Anna Mathéy

My grandmother, Polyxene Mathéy, was not the typical grandmother we have in mind. She was, even to me, a teacher.

She was interested in everything – except football. Her memory was incredible. She could recite Ancient Greek, Latin, Modern Greek, and German texts she had learned in school, so she never stopped wanting to learn. For example, when I was in high school, she asked for my biology books to read chapters that did not exist in her student years.

She used to say that if she were born again, she would do the same things again... Who knows? She was a prolific writer; even today, we look to her texts for inspiration.

She belonged to the so-called "Generation of the 30s", the intellectuals who marked modern Greek civilisation.

Her father was Othon Roussopoulos, a chemist and pioneer in the conservation of antiquities, including the famous 'Antikythera Mechanism'. He also founded the 'Roussopoulos Academy', the first technical school in Greece. Her mother was Eleni Naoum-Roussopoulou, one of the pioneers of the women's movement in Greece and co-founder with Kallirhoe Paren of the Lyceum of Greek Women.

My grandmother was born in Athens in 1902, lived through the entire 20th century and passed away just before its end in 1999. As she said, "*I grew up and grew old in this century, which dazzled us with amazing technical discoveries but also reserved unimaginable horrors for us… I hope that, in the coming century, humanity will find a way out of today's impasses and be able to live up to the name of its species: Homo Sapiens* [Wise Man]".

While still a high school student, Polyxeni met Manolis Triantafyllidis, a Greek linguist, educator, and leading advocate for the movement that sought to modernise spoken Greek in

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education and public life. His influence shaped her approach to linguistic and cultural pursuits throughout her life.

Music was her life. She began playing the piano at age six and, after receiving a piano diploma from the Athens Conservatory, continued her piano studies in Leipzig, Germany.

In 1926, she married the painter Georg Alexander Mathéy, of Greek and Romanian descent. Two years later they moved to Berlin, where Polyxeni pursued a career as a piano soloist. There, she often met the conductor Dimitris Mitropoulos, the composer Nikos Skalkotas, the soprano Alexandra Trianti, and many others. Notably, in 1929, she performed the world premiere of Nikos Skalkotas' Concerto for Violin and Piano.

In 1931, she and her husband moved to Greece. Because she could not continue her career as a piano soloist in Greece, she became involved in music and movement education, collaborating with her cousin, Koula Pratsika until she went to Munich in 1935 to attend classes at the *Günther-Schule*, where she met Carl Orff. She walked past a room where strange sounds could be heard from a piano being used as percussion and simultaneous singing by a male voice. It was the very moment *Carmina Burana* was created.

When the pianist who was causing these sounds noticed her, he said, "*Orff",* and she replied, *"Mathéy". "Ah! You are the musician from Greece whom we have been waiting for".*

Going back to Greece in 1938, she founded her school: The School of Gymnastics and Rhythmics Polyxene Mathéy-Roussopoulou.



Polyxene Mathéy teaching in her school, 1963
Photo: Carl-Orff-Foundation/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München

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In 1962, because she was Orff's collaborator on the Orff-Schulwerk, she was also the first to introduce ORFF MUSIC AND MOVEMENT EDUCATION in Greece. The booklets she published featuring Greek folk songs adapted for the Orff children's orchestra constitute an invaluable legacy (Mathéy, 1963; 1968).

At 95 years old, she complained that she didn't *"remember as well as she used to"* because she had forgotten the librettist's name for Mozart's *Magic Flute*. After a while, she remembered him: Emanuel Schickaneder, and added that he had played Papageno in the first performance of *The Magic Flute* in 1791.

The Matey Dance School continues its work to this day, completing 87 years now!

I remember my grandmother playing the piano, even when she had difficulty walking. Her energy made you think she could get up and dance.

I could easily imagine her among us today because she will always be here through her work.

Eyewitness account

A film that features Mathéy speaking about her work with Orff-Schulwerk can be found at this *link.* It is part of a project undertaken by Coloman Kallós and Manuela Widmer in which they depict individuals who have played a decisive role in the history and development of the Orff-Schulwerk through "eyewitness accounts" (Widmer & Kallós, 2000, p. 88). This first film in the series shows Mathéy at age 92 being interviewed by Manuela Widmer at her home in Athens (Kallós & Widmer, 1994).

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Polyxene Mathéy: When Orff-Schulwerk found a Greek voice
Nikolas Tsaftaridis



Polyxene Mathéy and Carl Orff, 1968
Photo: Monika Brill/Carl-Orff-Foundation/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München

There are people who we first come to know through their books. And then there are people who, once we have met them, help us to understand their books in an entirely different way. For me, Polyxene Mathéy was one of those people. During the academic year 1993-1994, while I was preparing my master's thesis at the University of Reading, I had the privilege of conducting an extensive interview with her about the Greek edition of the two Orff-Schulwerk volumes.

At that time, she was more than ninety years old. She was no longer teaching regularly, yet she remained intellectually active, deeply engaged with music education and with the continuing development of Orff-Schulwerk.

Those who had the good fortune to see her at seminars remember something very characteristic about her. She listened with the concentration of a good student. Not to supervise younger teachers, but to learn herself, to listen to new approaches, and to see how a new generation was carrying the work forward.

I remember in particular a seminar I taught on minimalist music. Mathéy was present. She was there not as an authority who expected to be confirmed. She followed the work with genuine interest and with the rare alertness of someone who never believed that learning had come to an end.

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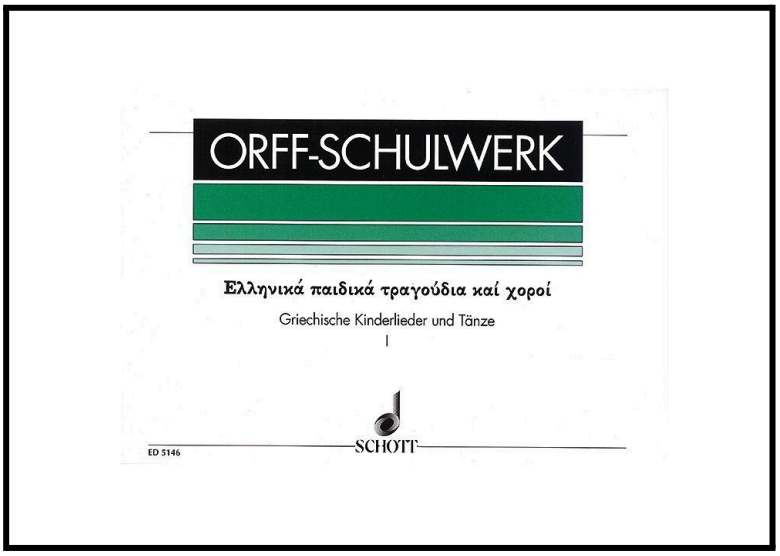
What stayed with me was not simply the breadth of her knowledge. It was her openness: the conviction that a living pedagogy must remain in dialogue with new ideas, new teachers, and new generations.

I believe that this attitude leads us directly to the essence of Orff-Schulwerk. Orff-Schulwerk is not a closed system, nor a method to be applied mechanically. It is a living educational experience, developed each time in the classroom – with children, with speech, sound, movement, the body, imagination, and the particular cultural material of each place.

My interview with Mathéy began with a simple question: Why was the Greek edition of Orff-Schulwerk so different from the German and English editions?

The German edition appeared between 1950 and 1954, the English edition between 1957 and 1966, while the Greek edition was published by Schott in two volumes, in 1963 and 1968.

The answer led back to Carl Orff himself.





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Mathéy's relationship with Orff had begun much earlier, in 1935–1936, when she went to Germany and studied at the *Günther-Schule*. There she encountered Orff and his educational ideas first-hand – ideas that would shape the course of her entire life. In 1961, Orff himself encouraged her to prepare a Greek edition, but not as an adaptation or translation of the five German volumes.

As Mathéy told me:

> Orff would not allow me to make the five volumes. He told me that those Bavarian materials could not simply be translated. Murray and others had done it. There is a closer musical relationship among Western countries, but the Greek language and music are entirely different. (Tsaftaridis, 1997, p. 43)

For me, this last sentence is the key. Orff did not want his work to become an export product. He did not want it to be transferred unchanged from one country to another, like a ready-made formula. He recognised that the Greek language, the Greek musical tradition, its dances, modes, mixed metres, and rhythmic sensibility required a different and organic approach. The Greek edition, therefore, was not an appendix to the German one. It was an authentically Greek response to the spirit of Orff.

Mathéy worked with traditional songs and dances from all over Greece. She drew on their melodic lines, their rhythmic character, their asymmetrical metres – such as 5/8 and 7/8 – and on musical forms that lay outside the usual Western European experience. Yet she did not aim at a strictly ethnomusicological transcription of this material. Such a transcription would have had to preserve – with complete precision – natural intervals, vocal ornamentation, and the individual rhythmic nuances of each singer. It would have been extremely valuable as a scholarly record, but often difficult to use as educational material for children.

Mathéy did something different. She placed Greek traditional material within the framework of elemental music. She did not simplify it into something poorer. She gave it educational life. The songs of the Greek edition do not function as folklore specimens *(σπέσιμεντς)*. They become starting points for voice, movement, rhythm, improvisation, and collaboration. Their melodic shape, their arrangements, and their rhythmic organisation serve the children's active and embodied participation.

Through seminars, this material did not remain only in Greece. It became part of the international dialogue of Orff-Schulwerk, showing how a local musical idiom can speak with authenticity within a global community.

The two Greek volumes were intended for children from the age of ten onwards. This choice was not accidental. Mathéy had behind her many years of teaching experience. She knew that the material should not merely be musically interesting. It had to be able to live within the child.

This is why her books do not function as recipes. They offer texts, movements, and rhythmic explorations, and at the same time they invite teachers to develop their own creativity. The material is presented as a point of departure, not as a limit.

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In this way, the teacher is not an executor of instructions. The teacher is a creator of conditions. The teacher listens to the class, sees the children, and adapts the material to their abilities, needs, and musical imagination.

Mathéy believed deeply that Orff-Schulwerk was not intended simply to teach music in the conventional sense, i.e., notation, intervals, and scales. Its purpose is aesthetic education. She expressed this in a memorable way:

> Sound, speech, and movement are aesthetic education – forms of aesthetic education in a broader sense. For the ancient Greeks, beauty was not like mustard that we add to food. It was food itself. Aesthetic education is paideia – a word that is difficult to translate into another language. (Tsaftaridis, 1997, p. 45)

Beauty, then, not as decoration. Not as something added afterwards. But as nourishment. As the substance of education.

Here, I believe, Mathéy and Orff meet most deeply: in the conviction that music education begins with experience. With the body. With the voice. With rhythm. With relationship. With the child who does not simply learn music but enters a world of aesthetic awareness.

I would like to conclude with a phrase by the late Avon Gillespie: 'Each stage of development within the Schulwerk constitutes a part of the whole which has as its ultimate goal the complete musical experience' (Choksy et al, 1986, p. 108).

More than thirty years after that interview, I realise that Polyxene Mathéy was not speaking to me only about two books. She was also speaking about the way an idea can travel from one generation to another without losing its soul. Tradition is not preserved because it is repeated. It is preserved because it continues to create. And as long as there are teachers and children creating together the work of Carl Orff – and the work of Polyxene Mathéy – will remain alive.

A key person in my life
Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik

Polyxene Mathey is a key person in my life! I got to know her when she was 78 years old and nearly deaf! She was the reason I came to Greece in the winter of 1980-81 and I spent my first two years there in her house.

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The photo shows us together in 1982, after the passing of Carl Orff. Mathéy spoke about him at her school in Athens, and afterwards, we played a piece from the Orff-Schulwerk.
Photo: Private collection of Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik

This time of daily cohabitation, her excellent understanding of the German language and culture, as well as her expertise on the Orff-Schulwerk gave me fundamental assistance for my Greek learning and for teaching Greek children. They formed the basis for learning to understand a new and unknown culture for me – the Greek culture!

From the beginning, she let me participate in lectures on music and movement education for music educators, preschool educators, and dance pedagogues. Sometimes I took on the task of carrying out some practical exercises.

It must be emphasized that, at this time in Greece, music and movement education was primarily integrated into – mostly private – dance schools and had its origins in the eurhythmics shaped by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze.

We discussed a lot about the applicability of Orff-Schulwerk especially in the music education in Greece, which is strongly influenced by Eastern traditions in its folk music. In contrast, classical music training at music schools and conservatories is predominantly Western-oriented!

And what about the unity of MUSIC – DANCE – SPEECH according to the ancient Greek model? Does it still exist in our time?

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Sometimes we had opposing opinions, but she loved it when one engaged in debate and brought in different viewpoints.

Later, the small study *Rythmos* (Mathéy, 2026/1992) emerged, in which she sought an anthroposophical clarification of the concept of rhythm. In it, she explains, '*Meter* divides time into mathematically equal intervals with which man can *count, calculate*. Meter is governed by mathematical rules and is apprehended intellectually. By contrast, *rhythm* is not accessible to purely cognitive processes: it is not calculated, but *experienced* ' (Mathéy, 2026/1992, p. 56).

Further, she writes, 'Every rhythmic phenomenon is *unique*; it can never be repeated with absolute precision, and this is consistent with nature and with life' (Mathéy, 2026/1992, pp. 56-57).

And also, 'This technical civilization, with its astonishing achievements, has enslaved us. *We orient our lives primarily toward what can be measured, calculated, and judged as useful'* (Mathéy, 2026/1992, p. 57).



Polyxene Mathéy reading her book, *Rythmos*
Photo: Private collection of Anna Mathéy, with kind permission

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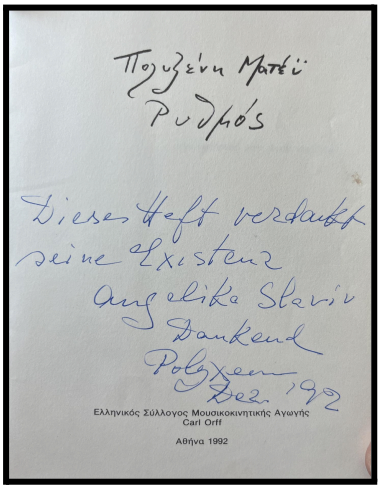
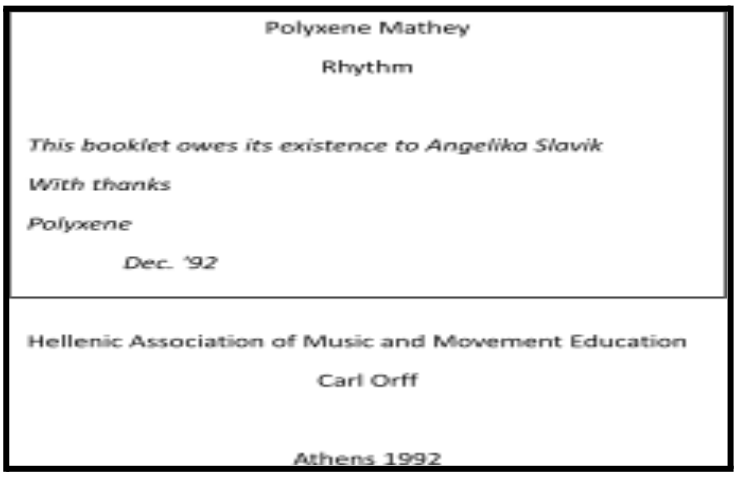
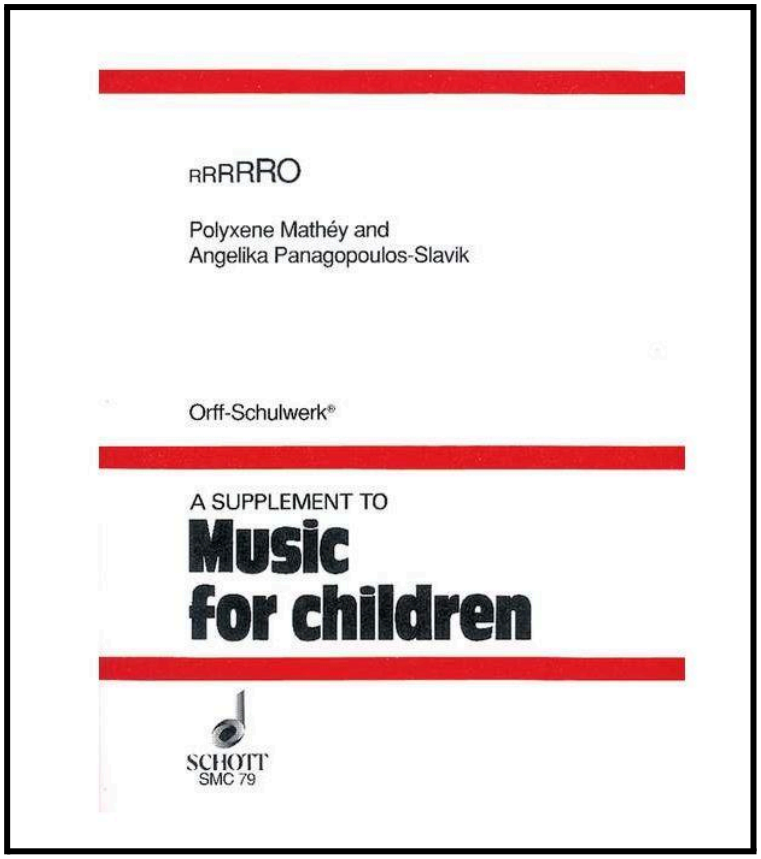
Her loving dedication in my personal copy reminds me of this time:





Around this time, I assisted in the publication of the Greek/English booklet *RRRRRO* (Mathéy & Panagopoulos-Slavik, 1993), which was created following a request from Schott Music. It was intended to represent the Greek language in the American edition supplements of the Orff-Schulwerk. Polyxene selected texts from antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modern times (folk and literary), and the target audience was children and teenagers from about 12 years of age.



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In the introduction you can read:

> We believe that these texts can be used as examples to illustrate the dimension a text can assume when recited by groups in accord with its internal rhythm and content, accompanied by various means of making sound. These adaptations, however, are only one suggestion. Each teacher can and should work creatively with the students to find other solutions of movement and sound. In the spirit of the Orff-Schulwerk children from all countries are encouraged to come in contact with music and dance from foreign cultures. (Mathéy & Panagopoulos-Slavik, 1993, p. 3)

When we spoke a little later about the published book, I mentioned that I would change a few pieces. She was indignant: *'No! The piece is fine as it is!'*
But a few days later she came up to me and said, '*You're right – it could be done differently, too!'*

She held firm opinions but was always open to others – to new ideas.

Conclusion
Carolee Stewart

Mathéy's presence was felt many times during the 2026 convention, including performances of pieces from her Orff-Schulwerk publications. Her book, *Ρυθμός/Rhythm/Rhythmus* – recently translated into English and German – was available in a trilingual format for purchase.

During the years after her first encounter with Carl Orff, Polyxene Mathéy reported several times about Orff-Schulwerk in Greece. Information about some of those reports along with other published information about Mathéy is included in the 'additional resources' at the end of this article.

Hermann Regner's final words during the *Pro Merito* presentation in 1990 offer a wonderful and personal portrayal of Mathéy:

> Anyone who has seen Polyxene Mathéy teach will never forget the experience. She is not the sort of workshop star who whips up wild euphoria only to leave participants feeling let down afterward; rather, she is a woman who knows how to inspire enthusiasm while maintaining a sense of balance and moderation.
>
> She has friends all over the world. Through her work and her example, people have come to know and love the Orff-Schulwerk. (Regner, 1990, p. 53)

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Polyxene Mathéy teaching at the Orff Institute, 1963
Photo: Private collection of Anna Mathéy, with kind permission

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Anna Mathéy, Angelika Slavik, Carolee Stewart, and Nikolas Tsaftaridis
Photo: Private collection of Carolee Stewart

Anna Mathéy has taught music and movement education at various adult seminars; and since 1991 she has been the Artistic Director of the Mathéy School, where she teaches dance, gymnastics, and Orff-Schulwerk to children, as well as dance gymnastics to adults. Her roots at the school run very deep because she grew up in the building that housed the school until 1993, a building that holds the family's legacy. There she was immersed in its teaching from an early age, attending classes alongside her peers and even older students. She is a graduate of the State School of Dance, has attended seminars at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, and has studied jazz freestyle dancing in France under Matt Mattox.

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Angelika Panagopoulos-Slavik graduated from the 4-year course at the Orff Institute in 1990. She has studied Greek rhythmology and Greek folk instruments so she can integrate this knowledge into courses for children and adults. In Greece, she taught at the Mathéy School, State Dance School, and music schools, as well as continuing education courses organized by the Ministry of Culture and Education, the Greek Society for Music Education in Thessaloniki, and the German School in Athens. 1986-1990, she developed and directed the two-year advanced training course for music and movement education at the Moraitis School. She is a founding member of ESMA and has several publications, including one with Polyxene Mathéy.

Carolee Stewart is retired Dean of the Peabody Preparatory of The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA), a former faculty member in Music Education at the Peabody Conservatory, a former choral and general music teacher in grades 5-12, a former Orff-Schulwerk level course teacher of recorder, a past IOSFS board member, a Special Course graduate. As a member of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association, she served as national conference chair, editorial board member, vice-president, and president. She is a former editor for supplements to the American Edition of Orff-Schulwerk (Schott) and an editor of the series Texts on Theory and Practice of Orff-Schulwerk, Volumes 2 and 3.

Nikolas Tsaftaridis is a former professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. He holds a Ph.D. in teacher education from NKUA, an MA in music education, and a BA in ethnomusicology. He has taken seminars at the Orff Institute and holds a diploma from the Kodály Institute in Kecskemét, Hungary. He is the author of books and articles on music and movement education and a founding member of the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association (ESMA) and the Greek Society for Music Education. His work has focused on music and movement education, music pedagogy, creativity, children's songs and compositions, and the cultural dimension of musical instruments.

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Stories through Space and Time. The Hero's Journey from Rhapsodies and Folktales to Storytelling in Art and Education

Angeliki Agalianou & Eleana Chatzaki

This article presents an exploration of the hero's journey across cultures, centuries and traditions, and through myths, folktales and storytelling practices from around the world, shedding light on the applications this exploration can have in Art and Education. The article further discusses how Homer's traces can be found within contemporary oral traditions. From Homeric episodes included within folktales from the Arab world to Homeric images and metaphors traced within Greek folk songs, oral traditions constitute evidence of the common and nuclear properties of human existence. Therefore, the purpose of the present essay is to illustrate the surprising connections that unite human stories across time and space, allowing epics and folktales to be relevant in any cultural context and used as an essential part of cross-cultural education.

Introduction

"Sometimes words, too, grow roots". So says one Greek folktale (Megas, 2014). Words grow roots: they sink their roots deep into the earth, spread them across the land for miles, raise trunks, branch out, blossom, and bear fruit. These are the words of oral tradition. Words whose roots are buried deep within the inner realm—the collective soul, the collective unconscious. Roots that stretch across the outer world, across places extending from one's homeland to lands miles away, to the ends of the earth. Words with trunks, branches, flowers and fruits that ripen over time, forming the great tree of folk oral tradition. A tree whose fruits sometimes speak in the voice of folktales, sometimes sing like traditional songs do, and sometimes whisper like a lullaby does.

One of the common roots of humankind is our impulse to create and tell stories. Stories that draw from the shared core of human experience, from common archetypes, from the common substance of dreams. Even peoples who have never come into contact with one another give birth to remarkably similar stories. The following sections explore these similarities in further detail, drawing from examples from the oral traditions of the world.

Common themes, episodes and motifs in stories from around the world

One of the most widely told stories from ancient Greek mythology is the story of Orpheus, who descended into the Underworld in search of Eurydice and lost her forever when he turned his gaze backward. Moving many miles away to Japan, the exact same motif of descending to the underworld and losing the beloved forever due to a forbidden gaze backwards can be found in the story of Izanagi and Izanami (Hearn, 1904).

Likewise, common themes and episodes can be found not only within mythological traditions but also within folktales from around the world. An indicative example is the tale of Cinderella, which appears in hundreds of variants throughout the Greek-speaking tradition and can be found in almost every storytelling tradition in the world. Each people dress the story in its own imagery and symbols. In Greek variants, Cinderella loses her golden slipper or golden shoe, which often sticks to the church steps that are smeared with honey (Angelopoulou, Kaplanoglou, Katrinaki, 2004). The Egyptian Cinderella loses her

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golden sandal while in France she loses her glass—or, in some versions, fur-lined—shoe (Ntoulia, 2010).

An indicative example of a story the traits of which can be found in oral traditions worldwide is the Odyssey, the epic traditionally attributed to Homer in the eighth century BCE. Yet we know that it was probably not the creation of a single individual. Rather, it might have been a synthesis of even older stories that had long been performed orally by rhapsodists in multiple variations. For at least two centuries before they were written down—and quite possibly for much longer—the Homeric epics traveled from mouth to mouth without ever being committed to paper. The Homeric epics had grown deep roots indeed. And like roots, they knew no borders, neither in time nor in space. They spread from one literary genre to another, from language to language, from country to country, from culture to culture.
It is no wonder then how the famous episode of Polyphemus, the one-eyed Cyclops, can be found within a folktale from Palestine. In this tale, a Bedouin of the desert battles the one-eyed Ghoul, the man-eating monster that imprisons him in its cave. The hero blinds the monster and later escapes hidden beneath its sheep, just as Odysseus did in the Homeric episode (Prousalis, 2013).

But let us not travel too far. A folktale recorded on the Greek island of Crete, tells the story of a miller who managed to outwit a *kallikantzaros*, a Greek Christmas elf, in a way that resembles the previously mentioned Homeric episode. Just before the miller could strike the elf on the head, he introduced himself as "myself," concealing his real name. In this tale, the *kallikantzaros* ends up calling upon his brothers for help crying, "I've been struck by myself". Reading this tale, one cannot help but think of the Cyclops calling for aid, shouting: "Nobody has blinded me".

Another instance of a Homeric motif that has travelled through space and time can be found in an Egyptian papyrus dating to around 2000 BCE. In this ancient story, the protagonist, considered by some researchers as a predecessor of Odysseus, is a shipwrecked sailor, who is far from his homeland, struggling against the waves as he longs to return home, driven by the pain of homecoming and the yearning of nostalgia (Maragkos, 1983). He is cast ashore on a distant island, where he receives hospitality from its inhabitants, recounts his story to them, and, after some time, bids them farewell, confident that he will soon return safely and surely to his native land (ibid.). Reading this ancient papyrus, one cannot help but draw a parallel with the final stage of Odysseus' journey on the island of the Phaeacians, where the hospitable King Alcinous welcomes him warmly and sends him on his way laden with gifts, honoring him as a sacred guest.

Homeric traits can therefore be found across cultures, across stories, across different time periods but also across different genres. In a traditional Greek folk song we encounter motifs that strongly evoke the Homeric tradition. In a song recounting the return of an expatriate or long-absent husband, the returning man finds his wife weaving at a golden loom (Petropoulos, Spyridakis & Megas, 1962). When he finally reveals his identity, she tests him, just as Penelope tests the long-awaited Odysseus. In the Homeric Odyssey, the final proof of recognition is the olive tree around which Odysseus had built their marriage bed. Over the centuries, the rhapsodist became the folk poet, Homeric meter transformed into the fifteen-syllable iambic verse of Greek folk poetry, and the olive tree of Homer's episode

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became a mole upon the woman's back—a secret known only to the two lovers and the ultimate proof of the stranger's identity. The striking detail here - one that only Greek speakers can discover - is the fact that the Greek word for both the olive tree and the mole on the body is *ελιά* (elia). It is thus almost unbelievable and difficult to conceive how the symbol managed to travel through time, secretly encoded within a single word.

These are just a few examples found in our research within the folk oral traditions of the world, pointing to the common nucleus of human stories. Folktales are made from the psychic material of humanity itself. Every story is, in essence, the story of an individual's journey through life: the journey toward maturity and autonomy. It is the journey of the hero or heroine.

The hero's journey and the functions of the folktale

This section briefly discusses two of the most widely accepted and studied analyses of the narrative mechanisms found within folktales. Despite the thousands of variations that appear across different places and eras, the journey of the hero or heroine generally follows a fairly recognizable pattern. Vladimir Propp and Joseph Campbell analysed this narrative trajectory, identifying and classifying its various stages and milestones in an effort to decode the underlying structure that guides the hero's journey.

Joseph Campbell (2004) discusses the following stages in the hero's journey:

1. Start: the hero's or the heroine's journey usually starts with a call to adventure. Accordingly, they usually meet a mentor who encourages them, shows the way forward and helps them start their journey from the normal world to the unknown.
2. Crossing the threshold: as the hero or the heroine transcend to the unknown, several trials and failures start equipping them with the skills needed to continue their journey. An essential part of their adventures is the helper they find on the way.
3. Death and rebirth: the hero or the heroine arrive at the death of their old self, often depicted in folktales as descending to the underworld. This leads to a revelation of their new autonomous identity, followed by final changes and leading to the final gifts they get.
4. Return and end: the hero or the heroine return to the normal world, having changed through their adventures.

Vladimir Propp (1991) presented another formalist account of the structure of folktales, focusing on and trying to retrieve what he defined as the functions of the folktale and the dramatic roles of the tale's characters. In his analysis, he presents 31 functions and 7 roles, but for the scope of this article we chose to focus only on a few of them, namely hero, interdiction and violation, villain and false hero, struggle, magical agent, solution. The table below illustrates those six functions/roles through the example of a story almost any reader is familiar with: the Odyssey.

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Propp's functions	Odyssey
Hero	Odysseus
Interdiction and violation	Blinding of Polyphemus/revealing his name
Villain and False Hero	Poseidon/ the suitors
Struggle	The journey home is delayed through a series of challenges (Laestrygonians, Circe, Calypso, etc.)
Magical Agent	Athena/Hermes (Circe, Calypso, Tiresias, Phaeacians)
Solution	Getting back to Ithaca

Using Propp's functions in educational settings

Propp's analysis of the structure of folktales presented above cannot cover the full complexity of the oral literature of the world. But in oral literature —which includes both folktales and epic poetry— these narrative functions appear with particular clarity. For this reason, oral tradition lends itself especially well to educational applications.

Using these six structural "bones", one can construct a story with remarkable ease. This is precisely what the teenage students who participated in our creative writing workshop during the "Young Homeridae" Festival on the island of Chios in September 2025 were invited to do.

During the first part of the workshop, the students listened to three stories. The first was the Odyssey, presented in a condensed form. The second was a story drawn from Greek mythology, the story of Prometheus, and the third was a Greek folktale. We then identified the six narrative functions within each story and discussed both their differences and, more importantly, their shared narrative elements. Although these stories originated in different periods and contexts, they all rested upon the same fundamental narrative framework.

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The "input" phase: listening to the stories of Odysseus, Prometheus and Aslantentes.

The third part of the workshop was the creative phase. The students were invited to create stories of their own through a playful process. Each group imagined one element corresponding to each of the six narrative functions and wrote these elements on separate slips of paper of six different colors, each corresponding to a different function/role. All the slips from every group were then collected together. Each group randomly drew six slips corresponding to the six narrative functions. Using these randomly assigned elements, the groups were asked to create a complete story within a very short period of time. At the end of the activity, each group shared their story with the rest of the workshop by reading it aloud.

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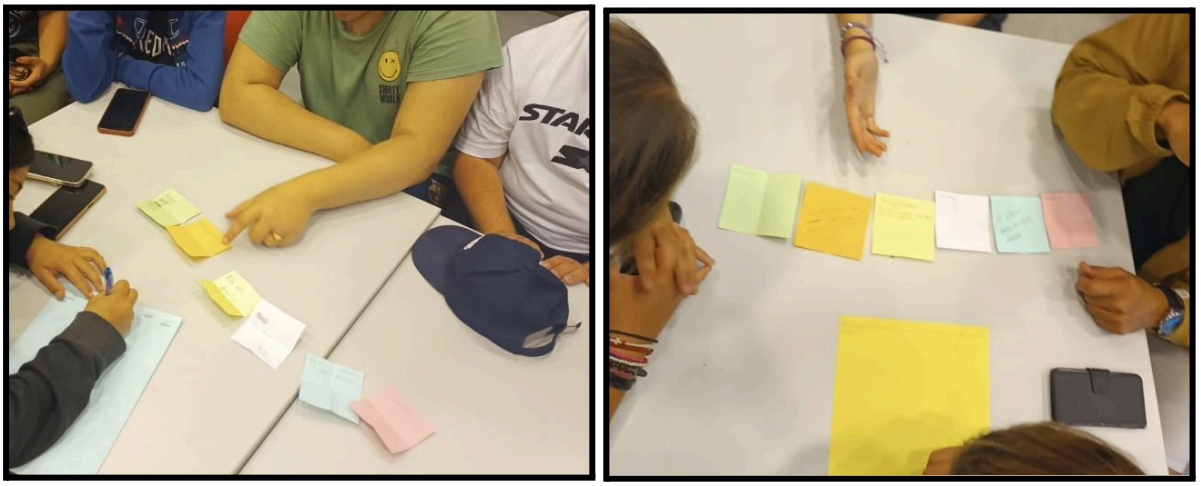

Creating a story out of six randomly selected functions/roles

The students managed to become skilled storytellers within the space of a few hours. Some even composed their stories in verse, perhaps inspired by Homeric meter. At the same time, they experienced firsthand the process of weaving seemingly unrelated pieces of information into a coherent narrative, discovering solutions that often approached the realm of magical realism. In essence, they were doing exactly what the rhapsodists and folk storytellers once did: drawing inspiration from scattered "words with wings" that reached their ears through sailors arriving from distant lands, travelers, merchants crossing borders, and the stories heard between waking and sleeping from grandmothers and neighbours. One particularly significant outcome of the workshop was that many students chose to incorporate elements from their own lived experience into their stories. They transformed aspects of everyday life into narratives filled with humour, unexpected twists, satire, and, above all, a clear structure: a beginning, a middle, and a happy ending.

Another striking example of how oral tradition can provide a language through which contemporary and controversial issues may be expressed is found in a drawing created by a student who participated in the festival mentioned earlier. The drawing depicts Odysseus standing before two burning trains. He holds a placard bearing the inscription:

28/02/2023
23:18
57 victims

Above him appears a speech bubble that reads: "*I do not forget.*"

The image is a clear reference to the Tempi railway crime—the train crash that shocked Greece more than three years ago, for which justice has not yet come and left a profound collective wound, a trauma that remains unresolved in the public consciousness. This student placed the most recognizable hero of Greek mythology —the hero who embodies the longing for return and the hope of a successful homecoming— at the center of a contemporary and still-unfolding story, one that continues to seek justice and collective vindication.

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Odysseus and the Tempi railway crime.

It becomes evident, then, that the oral literature of the world can acquire powerful educational dimensions. It provides students with a framework upon which they can stand as they attempt to tame the chaos of information that surrounds them daily. It enables them to organize that information into meaningful narratives and, in doing so, to imagine the possibility of a positive resolution.

Conclusion

This article attempted to indicate how stories created thousands of years ago and thousands of miles away continue to exert a powerful influence upon the present. They help us interpret contemporary reality and endow it with meaning. Certain themes possess a timeless quality that is continually renewed in each historical moment. The longing of the immigrant or the exiled to return home, and the anxiety of whether the loved ones will still welcome them, remains fundamentally the same from the tenth century BCE, to our own time, and in the centuries to come. Folktales are fictional stories that speak of real-life truths and realities. In other words, they are lies that tell the truth**.** The hero of the folktale is every one of us, each person who must travel alone through the adventure of life. Like the heroes of folktales, we encounter enemies and obstacles. We face trials and hardships. Yet, if our hearts remain true, we always find magical helpers who guide us toward a happy ending. And if the hero of the folktale lived happily ever after, then may we live even better.

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Eleana Chatzaki is a storyteller. She holds a degree in Greek Language and Literature and a diploma in Greek Sign Language. She has worked as a storyteller from 2014, having participated in storytelling festivals in Greece and abroad and performed in schools and other organizations. She designs and gives training workshops on the art of storytelling. Her audiences include both adults and children and she has conducted workshops and programmes for people with disability. In 2019 she co-founded the storytelling duet Sousourades alongside Angeliki Agalianou. She is among the founders of Miliá NPO organizing storytelling performances, training programmes and festivals in Greece and abroad since 2021. She has worked as a researcher and editor of oral history. Eleana has edited many folktales which have been published.

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Παράδοση και Φολκλόρ

George Charonitis

Η λειτουργία, η κατανόηση και η παιδαγωγική αξιοποίηση από τον δάσκαλο/εκπαιδευτικό της παράδοσης, του φολκλόρ και του «έθνικ» προϋποθέτουν, καταρχάς, την αποσαφήνιση των εν λόγω όρων. Η αποσαφήνιση αυτή είναι απαραίτητη, προκειμένου ο εκπαιδευτικός να είναι σε θέση να κατανοήσει την πολυπλοκότητα των εννοιών που αυτοί περικλείουν, καθώς και τα πολιτισμικά, κοινωνικά και ιδεολογικά νοήματα που αντιπροσωπεύουν και αναπαράγουν.

Η ιδιαίτερα επίκαιρη, στις μέρες μας, στροφή προς τις «ρίζες», το πρωταρχικό και το στοιχειώδες δεν μπορεί να περιορίζεται σε μια άκριτη αναζήτηση ή αναπαράσταση του παρελθόντος. Αντίθετα, προϋποθέτει την κατανόηση των διαδικασιών μέσα από τις οποίες η παράδοση συγκροτείται, μετασχηματίζεται, επιτελείται και επανανοηματοδοτείται στο εκάστοτε κοινωνικό και πολιτισμικό πλαίσιο. Υπό αυτή την έννοια, η εκπαιδευτική αξιοποίηση της παράδοσης απαιτεί επίγνωση τόσο του περιεχομένου της όσο και των ιστορικών, κοινωνικών, πολιτισμικών και ιδεολογικών παραμέτρων που συνδιαμορφώνουν την πρόσληψη, τη διατήρηση και την αναπαραγωγή της.

Το παρόν άρθρο ξεκινάει από μια ορολογική και εννοιολογική ιδιαιτερότητα, η οποία αφορά πρωτίστως την ελληνική περίπτωση. Η επισήμανση αυτή είναι αναγκαία, καθώς οι όροι που χρησιμοποιούνται για την περιγραφή της παράδοσης, του λαϊκού πολιτισμού και των συναφών πολιτισμικών πρακτικών δεν διαθέτουν κατ' ανάγκην την ίδια σημασία ή το ίδιο θεωρητικό περιεχόμενο σε διαφορετικά εθνικά και ακαδημαϊκά συμφραζόμενα.
Η χρήση της λέξης folklore αντί για την λέξη tradition επικράτησε στις αγγλοσαξωνικές χώρες τον 19ο αιώνα και αυτό που ονομάζεται ως παράδοση/tradition εμπεριέχεται στο folklore (περισσότερα πάνω σε αυτό μπορείτε να διαβάσετε στα: Bronner, 2000, και Eriksen, 2017). Η εννοιολογική αυτή διάκριση, ωστόσο, δεν μεταφέρεται αυτούσια στην ελληνική επιστημονική και κοινωνική πραγματικότητα. Αυτό που στις αγγλοσαξωνικές χώρες ονομάστηκε folklore στην Ελλάδα αναφέρεται ως λαογραφία (laografia) και τα folklore studies ως λαογραφικές σπουδές (laografikes spoudes).

Υπό αυτή την έννοια, το παρόν άρθρο βασίζεται σε μια ελληνική «παραδοξότητα» ως προς τη χρήση και τη σημασιοδότηση των συγκεκριμένων όρων. Εάν, αντί της «παράδοσης», χρησιμοποιούνταν ο όρος *«φολκλόρ»*, και αντί του «φολκλόρ» ο όρος «*έθνικ»*, οι έννοιες που θα επιχειρηθεί να αναδειχθούν στη συνέχεια θα ήταν, ενδεχομένως, περισσότερο συμβατές με τη διεθνή βιβλιογραφία. Ωστόσο, μια τέτοια μετατόπιση δεν θα απέδιδε επαρκώς την ιστορικά διαμορφωμένη ελληνική χρήση των όρων ούτε τον τρόπο με τον οποίο αυτή έχει επηρεάσει την πρόσληψη και την αναπαράσταση του λαϊκού πολιτισμού στην Ελλάδα.

Για να γίνει κατανοητό, λοιπόν, το παρακάτω άρθρο θα σας ζητήσω να «ασπαστείτε» αυτή την ελληνική ιδιαιτερότητα στη χρήση των όρων που, ίσως, να κρύβει μέσα της και κάτι πιο 'αρχέγονο'.

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Η παρατήρηση αυτή αποκτά ιδιαίτερη σημασία στο σύγχρονο πλαίσιο, όπου ακόμη και ο ίδιος ο όρος «λαογραφία» ή *folklore* φαίνεται σταδιακά να υποχωρεί από τον επιστημονικό λόγο και να αντικαθίσταται από την ευρύτερη έννοια της «πολιτιστικής κληρονομιάς» (*cultural heritage*). Η μετατόπιση αυτή δεν συνιστά απλώς μια αλλαγή ορολογίας.

Αντανακλά μια ευρύτερη μεταβολή στον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι κοινωνίες, οι θεσμοί και η ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα αντιλαμβάνονται, ταξινομούν, διαχειρίζονται και αναπαριστούν τα πολιτισμικά στοιχεία που κληροδοτούνται από το παρελθόν.

Παράδοση (ή «φολκλόρ»)
Όπως αναφέρεται στο Καρύκη & Αγαλιανού (2018, σ. 180) ο Θεοφάνης Σουλακέλλης ως παράδοση ονομάζει "όλα τα στοιχεία του χθες, που ελεύθερα και αβίαστα έχουν ενσωματωθεί στο σήμερα". Από αυτόν τον ρομαντικό ορισμό απουσιάζει η αναγκαία διάκριση ανάμεσα στην «παράδοση» ως επιστημονική κατηγορία και την «παράδοση» όπως γίνεται αντιληπτή από τις κοινότητες που την παράγουν. Για τον ερευνητή η παράδοση είναι αντικείμενο μελέτης και ανάλυσης, ενώ για τους φορείς της αποτελεί βίωμα, ταυτότητα και μέσο κοινωνικής συνοχής (Χαρωνίτης, 2026). Σύμφωνα με την Ewa Dahlig-Turek (2012, σ. 313), "ο Πολωνός κοινωνιολόγος του πολιτισμού Jerzy Szacki προτείνει τρεις πιθανές εννοιολογήσεις της «παράδοσης»:
(1) τη διαδικασία μετάδοσης, (2) το αντικείμενο της μετάδοσης και (3) την αξιολογική στάση απέναντι στο μεταδιδόμενο περιεχόμενο". Και οι τρεις αυτές έννοιες οφείλουν να λαμβάνονται υπόψιν όταν αναφερόμαστε στην παράδοση.

Στην πραγματικότητα η παράδοση δεν ορίζεται, αλλά νοηματοδοτείται. Από την κλασική περιγραφική καταγραφή της παράδοσης έχουμε οδηγηθεί προς πιο ερμηνευτικές προσεγγίσεις. Η σχέση παρελθόντος και παρόντος δείχνει πως η παράδοση δεν αποτελεί ένα στατικό σύνολο αξιών και πρακτικών, αλλά ένα ζωντανό και διαρκώς ανανεούμενο φαινόμενο. Δεν είναι αυθύπαρκτη αλλά αποτελεί μία κοινωνική κατασκευή που τη σημασία της την αντλεί από το κοινωνικό πλαίσιο.

Ο όρος παράδοση έρχεται σε αντιδιαστολή με τους όρους «ήθη» και «έθιμα».
Τα ήθη αποτελούν τις αντιλήψεις που κυριαρχούν στην κοινωνία, τους «άγραφους νόμους», ενώ τα έθιμα συνιστούν τις ενέργειες μέσω των οποίων εκφράζονται αυτές οι αντιλήψεις. Η επανάληψη αυτών των εθίμων από γενιά σε γενιά δημιουργεί τις παραδόσεις. Επίσης, ο όρος παράδοση, αντιτίθεται σε έννοιες όπως ρουτίνα ή συνήθεια, που υποδηλώνουν μία μηχανική επανάληψη. Η παράδοση προϋποθέτει πως κάποιος παραδίδει και κάποιος παραλαμβάνει. Η ελεύθερη επιλογή αυτού που παραλαμβάνει είναι το στοιχείο που διαχωρίζει την παράδοση από την κληρονομιά.

Αυτός ο πολιτισμός "επιλεκτικής παράδοσης", όπως αναφέρει ο Reymond Williams (στο Robinson, 1999, σ. 106) απορρίπτει με το πέρασμα του χρόνου και με τις διάφορες διεργασίες της κοινότητας σημαντικές περιοχές εμπειρίας αυτού που κάποτε ήταν ζωντανός πολιτισμός. Η παράδοση προσαρμόζεται στο σήμερα, δεν προσκολλάται στο παρελθόν, είναι ταυτόχρονα ένα προϊόν του παρελθόντος και μία διαδικασία του

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παρόντος. Δεν αποτελεί μία στάσιμη διαδικασία, στην οποία προσκολλώνται οι κοινωνίες για πάντα. Αποτελεί μία ζωντανή διαδικασία συνεχώς μεταλλασσόμενη και ανανεούμενη. Όπως αναφέρει ποιητικά ο Σεφέρης (1974, σ. 520): "Ένα μέρος του παρελθόντος πεθαίνει κάθε στιγμή και η θνησιμότητά του μας μολύνει, αν προσκολληθούμε σ' αυτό με υπερβολική αγάπη. Ένα μέρος του παρελθόντος μένει πάντα ζωντανό και κινδυνεύουμε καταφρονώντας τη ζωντάνια του". Η παράδοση σχετίζεται με την έννοια των πολιτισμικών πρακτικών, και "μας δείχνει κάτι πέρα από τον εαυτό της" (Pelikan, 1984, σ. 54).

Κατά τη διάρκεια του 19ου αιώνα, όμως, δεν είχε αντιμετωπιστεί με τον τρόπο που, έως ένα βαθμό, την αντιλαμβανόμαστε σήμερα. Είχε προηγηθεί το ευρωπαϊκό κίνημα του Διαφωτισμού του 18ου αιώνα, το οποίο, προωθώντας την ελευθερία, τη λογική και τη δημοκρατία, ώθησε διάφορους φιλοσόφους να θέσουν στο στόχαστρό τους την παράδοση ως εχθρό της λογικής και της προόδου (Adorno 1992, σ. 75). Ο Haxtausen είχε αναφερθεί από το 1818 στη «μανία του Διαφωτισμού» που υπονομεύει τη λαϊκή παράδοση: "Εδώ και τριάντα χρόνια με τη μανία του Διαφωτισμού άρχισαν να εξαφανίζονται από τους Έλληνες, ιδίως του Αρχιπελάγους, πολλές παλιές συνήθειες και έθιμα" (Καραμπελιάς, 2023, παρ. 4). Οι ιστορικοί, από την πλευρά τους, "έδειχναν να μην είναι δεκτικοί σε ερωτήματα που αφορούσαν τις χρονικές συνέχειες-βασικό συστατικό της παράδοσης" (Bronner, 2011, σ. 1). Η παράδοση δεν μπορεί να ποσοτικοποιηθεί, άρα να ενταχθεί σε μία επιστήμη, την χαρακτηρίζει η μεταβλητότητα και όχι η σταθερότητα, ενώ σε πολλούς ερευνητές φαινόταν ως ο εχθρός της καινοτομίας. Πολιτικά, αρχικά, απαξιώθηκε, συνδεόμενη με ρομαντικά εθνικιστικά κινήματα (τα οποία και τη χρησιμοποίησαν κατά το δοκούν), και ανάλογα με την περίπτωση αντιμετωπίστηκε είτε ως αντιδραστικός συντηρητισμός, είτε ως ριζοσπαστικός φιλελευθερισμός (Abrahams, 1993). Στον 20ο αιώνα, όμως, η προσοχή στις παραδόσεις εντάθηκε υπό το πρίσμα της θεώρησης των τεχνών.

Ο T. S. Eliot, αναφερόμενος στην παραγραφή της παράδοσης προς όφελος μίας αναζήτησης της πρωτοτυπίας στην τέχνη, έγραψε χαρακτηριστικά:

> Κανένας ποιητής ή καλλιτέχνης οποιασδήποτε τέχνης δεν έχει πλήρη αξία από μόνος του. Η σημασία του, η εκτίμησή του, εξαρτώνται από τη σχέση του με τους νεκρούς ποιητές και καλλιτέχνες. Δεν μπορείς να τον εκτιμήσεις απομονωμένα· πρέπει να τον τοποθετήσεις, για σκοπούς αντίθεσης και σύγκρισης, ανάμεσα στους νεκρούς. Το εννοώ αυτό ως αισθητική αρχή, όχι απλώς ως ιστορική κριτική. Η αναγκαιότητα να συνδεθεί δεν είναι μονόπλευρη· όταν δημιουργείται ένα νέο έργο τέχνης, κάτι αλλάζει ταυτόχρονα και σε όλα τα έργα που προηγήθηκαν (Eliot 1960, σ. 4-5).

Η παράδοση αποτελεί την «κρυφή πληροφορία» για το πώς οι άνθρωποι "σκέφτονται και δρουν με συνέχεια και σύνδεση σε σχέση με άλλους μέσα από τη βιωμένη εμπειρία. Το πρόβλημα είναι πως η ερμηνεία της παράδοσης μπορεί να αποκαλύψει δυνάμεις και λειτουργίες που οι άνθρωποι θα προτιμούσαν να μην αντιμετωπίσουν" (Bronner, 2011, σ. 5), και αυτό το «πρόβλημα» προσδιορίζει, κατά τη γνώμη μου, σε μεγάλο βαθμό την «απέχθεια», την «αποστροφή» προς την παράδοση ή την «υποτίμησή» της. Η «επιτέλεση», η στιγμή όπου η παράδοση βιώνεται και επαναβεβαιώνεται αποτελεί κάτι τελείως διαφορετικό από την «επινόηση» της

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παράδοσης σε συγκεκριμένες ιστορικές συγκυρίες, που στόχο είχε ανάγκες ταυτότητας, νομιμοποίησης ή κοινωνικής συνοχής (Κάβουρας, 2010). Η συνειδητοποίηση πως η παράδοση δεν αποτελεί κάτι ουδέτερο αλλά εμπλέκεται με εξουσιαστικούς μηχανισμούς, ή ότι, πολλές φορές, αποτελεί μία κατασκευασμένη δομή, οδηγεί το υποκείμενο στο να μη θέλει να αναγνωρίσει τις δομές που αναπαράγονται μέσω της παράδοσης και μέσω αυτής της διαδικασίας, στο να την «απεχθάνεται» ή να την «υποτιμά», αλλά αυτό αποτελεί ένα άλλο, μεγάλο, πεδίο μελέτης και ανάλυσης, στο οποίο οι παρακάτω σκέψεις έχουν κάτι να προσφέρουν.

Φολκλόρ (ή «έθνικ»)

Ο όρος «φολκλόρ» (folklore) χρησιμοποιήθηκε στην Ελλάδα για να δηλώσει την «κακόγουστη αισθητική που βασίζεται στην επιφανειακή μίμηση προτύπων από τον παραδοσιακό λαϊκό πολιτισμό» (Μπαμπινιώτης, 1998, σ. 1917). Πρόκειται για μια καθημερινή χρήση του όρου που επικράτησε στην ελληνική γλώσσα με σαφώς μειωτικό χαρακτήρα και διαφοροποιήθηκε σημαντικά από τη διεθνή χρήση του όρου folklore (Κάβουρας, 2010). Το πλησιέστερο αντίστοιχο στην αγγλική γλώσσα -τουλάχιστον κατά τα πρώτα στάδια χρήσης του όρου και πριν αυτός αποκτήσει μια περισσότερο αυθύπαρκτη σημασία, ιδίως στις τέχνες- θα μπορούσε να θεωρηθεί ο όρος «έθνικ».

Το φολκλόρ συνδέθηκε αρχικά με συντηρητικές αντιλήψεις περί επιστροφής σε ένα εξιδανικευμένο και «αυθεντικό» παρελθόν. Παράλληλα, οι ιδεολογίες της νεωτερικότητας οδηγούσαν σε ένα διαρκώς αυξανόμενο ενδιαφέρον για την «παράδοση» (Κωνσταντινίδης, 2012). Το ενδιαφέρον αυτό, ωστόσο, δεν αφορούσε κατ' ανάγκην την παράδοση ως ζωντανή κοινωνική διαδικασία. Σταδιακά επικεντρώθηκε σε αυτό που αναφέρεται εδώ ως φολκλόρ: σε επιλεγμένα στοιχεία του παρελθόντος, τα οποία αποσπώνται από το κοινωνικό τους πλαίσιο, σταθεροποιούνται, αισθητικοποιούνται και παρουσιάζονται ως αναπαραστάσεις μιας υποτιθέμενης αυθεντικής παράδοσης (Κάβουρας, 20210). Η διάκριση αυτή είναι θεμελιώδης για το επιχείρημα του παρόντος άρθρου. Η παράδοση συγκροτείται μέσα από το βίωμα, τη συμμετοχή, τη μετάδοση, την προσαρμογή και το κοινωνικό πλαίσιο· το φολκλόρ, με την έννοια που εξετάζεται εδώ, αναδύεται όταν αυτά τα στοιχεία αποδυναμώνονται ή εξουδετερώνονται και η παράδοση μετατρέπεται σε αναπαράσταση. Αυτό που παράγεται, επομένως, δεν είναι απλώς μια διαφορετική μορφή παράδοσης, αλλά ένας διαφορετικός τρόπος σχέσης με αυτήν. Δημιουργείται σταδιακά μια «επίσημη» εκδοχή της παράδοσης, η οποία συλλέγει επιλεκτικά ορισμένα πολιτισμικά στοιχεία και τα παρουσιάζει ως αναπαραστάσεις ενός σταθερού παρελθόντος, αποκομμένες από τις κοινωνικές λειτουργίες που αρχικά τους προσέδιδαν νόημα. Μέσα από αυτή τη διαδικασία, η παράδοση στερείται ένα από τα βασικά χαρακτηριστικά της: την ικανότητά της να εκφράζει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο μια κοινωνία σκέφτεται και δρα με συνέχεια και σύνδεση προς τους άλλους, μέσα από τη βιωμένη εμπειρία. Η πρακτική παραμένει, αλλά οι κοινωνικές συνθήκες μέσα στις οποίες αυτή αποκτά νόημα μεταβάλλονται. Η συμμετοχή δίνει τη θέση της στην παρατήρηση, το πλαίσιο στην επίδειξη, η συνέχεια στην επανάληψη και το βίωμα στην αναπαράσταση.

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Η μεταβολή αυτή εξυπηρέτησε τόσο πολιτικές όσο και οικονομικές δραστηριότητες που αναπτύχθηκαν γύρω από το φολκλόρ. Σε πολιτικό επίπεδο, συνέβαλε στη συγκρότηση μιας «επίσημης παράδοσης», η οποία πλέον επιλεγόταν, οριζόταν και νομιμοποιούνταν από θεσμούς και δομές εξουσίας. Σε οικονομικό επίπεδο, κατέστησε την παράδοση διαθέσιμη προς κατανάλωση, μετατρέποντάς την σε πολιτιστικό προϊόν: σε μια αποστειρωμένη εικόνα του παρελθόντος, αποσυνδεδεμένη από το πλαίσιό της και ικανή να αναπαράγεται ες αεί, ουσιαστικά με την ίδια μορφή. Η Ελεονώρα Σκουτέρη (όπως αναφέρεται στο Παπαπαύλου, 2010), υπογραμμίζει ότι οι πολιτιστικές αναβιώσεις δεν συνδέονται πάντοτε με τον φυσικό κύκλο της τοπικής κοινωνικής και αγροτικής ζωής, αλλά, σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις, επηρεάζονται και προσαρμόζονται στις ανάγκες της τουριστικής πολιτικής.

Η σχέση ανάμεσα στη ζωντανή παράδοση και το φολκλόρ αναδεικνύεται χαρακτηριστικά μέσα από την περίπτωση που περιγράφουν η Λητώ Φλωράκη και η Ρένα Λουτζάκη(2010), εξετάζοντας την επιτέλεση του εθίμου «Γαϊτανάκι» από τους κατοίκους της Γραμμενίτσας Άρτας σε δύο διαφορετικά πλαίσια: στο ίδιο το χωριό και στο Μέγαρο Μουσικής Θεσσαλονίκης. Στο πλαίσιο της τοπικής κοινότητας, το «Γαϊτανάκι» αποτελεί μια ζωντανή πολιτισμική πρακτική, ενταγμένη στη συλλογική ζωή. Λειτουργεί ως μέσο κοινωνικής συναναστροφής και ψυχαγωγίας των κατοίκων, ενώ η συμμετοχή παραμένει ανοιχτή και ευέλικτη. Τα όρια ανάμεσα στους συμμετέχοντες και τους θεατές δεν είναι απολύτως καθορισμένα, αλλά μπορούν να μεταβάλλονται ανάλογα με τις περιστάσεις και τα πρόσωπα που συμμετέχουν. Παράλληλα, η εξέλιξη του εθίμου δεν είναι απολύτως προκαθορισμένη, αλλά αφήνει χώρο για αυθόρμητες, μεταβλητές και απρόβλεπτες μορφές συμμετοχής. Με άλλα λόγια, το έθιμο παραμένει ενταγμένο στις κοινωνικές σχέσεις που του προσδίδουν νόημα. Όταν, αντίθετα, το ίδιο έθιμο μεταφέρεται στο πλαίσιο μιας οργανωμένης σκηνικής παρουσίασης, όπως στο Μέγαρο Μουσικής Θεσσαλονίκης, η λειτουργία και το νόημά του μεταβάλλονται. Η παράδοση αποσυνδέεται από το κοινωνικό της περιβάλλον και μετατρέπεται σε οργανωμένο πολιτιστικό θέαμα, το οποίο διέπεται από συγκεκριμένη σκηνοθεσία και σαφή διαχωρισμό ανάμεσα στους ‘ερμηνευτές΄ και το κοινό. Αυτό που προηγουμένως αποτελούσε συμμετοχική κοινωνική πρακτική μετατρέπεται σε αντικείμενο παρατήρησης. Επιπλέον, η αναπαράσταση δεν βασίζεται απαραίτητα στη μορφή με την οποία το έθιμο βιώνεται από τη σύγχρονη κοινότητα, αλλά μπορεί να προκρίνει μια παλαιότερη εκδοχή του και να την παρουσιάζει ως «αυθεντική». Η διαφορά ανάμεσα στις δύο περιπτώσεις, επομένως, δεν είναι απλώς ζήτημα “χώρου”. Αφορά δύο θεμελιωδώς διαφορετικούς τρόπους ύπαρξης μιας πολιτισμικής πρακτικής. Στο χωριό, το «Γαϊτανάκι» αποτελεί μια βιωμένη και εξελισσόμενη παράδοση· στη σκηνή μετατρέπεται σε αναπαράσταση της παράδοσης. Η μετάβαση από τη μία κατάσταση στην άλλη συνιστά ακριβώς τη διαδικασία μέσω της οποίας η παράδοση μετατρέπεται σε φολκλόρ: σε μια «εξωτική» απόδοση της παράδοσης για το βλέμμα του σύγχρονου αστικού/δυτικού πολιτισμού. Μέσω αυτού του μετασχηματισμού, ο πολιτισμικά κυρίαρχος έρχεται αντιμέτωπος με μια εικόνα της παράδοσης που εμφανίζεται ως διαχρονική, επαναλαμβανόμενη και αμετάβλητη. Αυτό που παρουσιάζεται ως «αυθεντικό» είναι, επομένως, ακριβώς εκείνο που έχει αποσπαστεί από τις συνθήκες που το καθιστούσαν ζωντανό. Η αυθεντικότητα παύει να συνδέεται με τη συνέχεια και το βίωμα και συνδέεται πλέον με την επανάληψη και την πιστότητα σε ένα επινοημένο ή εξιδανικευμένο παρελθόν.

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Όταν η πρακτική αποσπάται από το κοινωνικό της περιβάλλον και μεταφέρεται σε ένα θέατρο ή σε μια σκηνή, μεταβάλλεται και η λειτουργία του ίδιου του χώρου. Παύει να λειτουργεί πρωτίστως ως κοινωνικός χώρος συμμετοχής και μετατρέπεται σε χώρο επίδειξης και κατανάλωσης. Η πολιτισμική πρακτική μετατρέπεται, κατ' αυτόν τον τρόπο, σε αντικείμενο-προϊόν για το υποκείμενο-αγοραστή.

Η παράδοση, όπως εννοιολογήθηκε κατά τον 19ο αιώνα, μετασχηματίστηκε σε φολκλόρ: επανεφευρέθηκε ως κάτι στείρο και άκαμπτο, δημιουργημένο σε μεγάλο βαθμό για τη σκηνή ενός θεάτρου, όπου η επιτέλεση δεν αναφέρεται πλέον στο βίωμα, αλλά στην ανάμνηση ενός αυθεντικού, γνήσιου και ρομαντικού παρελθόντος. Αυτό που διατηρείται, μέσω του φολκλόρ, δεν είναι πλέον η ίδια η παράδοση, αλλά μια εικόνα της παράδοσης.

Τελειώνοντας θα επιστρέψω στον ποιητικό λόγο του Σεφέρη, παραφράζοντάς τον: Το μέρος του παρελθόντος που πεθαίνει παραμένει προσκολλημένο επάνω μας. Η θνησιμότητά του μας μολύνει, όχι επειδή ανήκει στο παρελθόν, αλλά επειδή επιμένουμε να το αναπαράγουμε ως ζωντανό, αναλλοίωτο και «αυθεντικό». Την ίδια στιγμή, το μέρος εκείνο του παρελθόντος που παραμένει ζωντανό κινδυνεύει να καταφρονηθεί ακριβώς επειδή μεταβάλλεται. Έτσι, η προσκόλληση σε μια παγωμένη εικόνα του παρελθόντος δεν διατηρεί την παράδοση· αντιθέτως, μπορεί να την απονεκρώνει, μετατρέποντάς την σε φολκλόρ.

Μία υποσημείωση:
Η παραπάνω κριτική δεν αφορά σε καμία περίπτωση -και σε κανένα σημείο δεν θα ήθελα να υπονοηθεί κάτι τέτοιο- την προσπάθεια σύγχρονων δημιουργών από διαφορετικούς καλλιτεχνικούς χώρους, οι οποίοι αντλούν έμπνευση από την παράδοση και δημιουργούν σύγχρονα έργα. Πρόκειται για καλλιτέχνες που στρέφονται προς την παράδοση μέσα από τη δική τους οπτική και την αξιοποιούν ως όχημα για την ανάπτυξη των δικών τους μορφών έκφρασης. Η δημιουργική αυτή σχέση με την παράδοση δεν συνιστά κατ' ανάγκην φολκλορ(-οποίηση). Η κρίσιμη διάκριση δεν βρίσκεται στο αν ένας καλλιτέχνης αντλεί υλικό από την παράδοση, αλλά στο αν η παράδοση χρησιμοποιείται ως πηγή για μια νέα δημιουργία ή αν περιορίζεται σε μια σταθερή αναπαράσταση ενός υποτιθέμενα αυθεντικού παρελθόντος. Πολλές από τις σύγχρονες αυτές καλλιτεχνικές μορφές αναφέρονται πλέον ως έθνικ. Η διάκριση, επομένως, δεν είναι ανάμεσα στον «παραδοσιακό» και τον «σύγχρονο» πολιτισμό, ούτε ανάμεσα στην παράδοση και την καλλιτεχνική καινοτομία. Βρίσκεται ανάμεσα στην παράδοση ως μια ζωντανή, συμμετοχική και διαρκώς μεταβαλλόμενη διαδικασία και στο φολκλόρ ως την αισθητικοποιημένη, αποσυνδεδεμένη και παγιωμένη αναπαράσταση αυτής της διαδικασίας.

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Ο Γιώργος Χαρωνίτης, PhD, είναι μουσικοπαιδαγωγός, ερευνητής και μουσικός, με εξειδίκευση στη μουσική αγωγή στην προσχολική ηλικία και στην παιδαγωγική προσέγγιση Orff-Schulwerk. Γεννήθηκε στα Χανιά Κρήτης. Είναι πτυχιούχος του Εθνικού και Καποδιστριακού Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών (Τμήμα Επιστήμης Φυσικής Αγωγής και Αθλητισμού), κάτοχος MSc στις Επιστήμες της Αγωγής από το Ε.Α.Π. και διδάκτορας Μουσικής Παιδαγωγικής του Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλίας. Είναι απόφοιτος της Σχολής Βυζαντινής Μουσικής Χανίων και έχει σπουδάσει κλασική κιθάρα για εννέα χρόνια με τον Α. Κουστουράκη. Παράλληλα, ολοκλήρωσε μεταπτυχιακές σπουδές στο Orff-Schulwerk στη Σχολή Μωραΐτη (1994–1996). Από το 1999 δραστηριοποιείται στον χώρο της μουσικής εκπαίδευσης, έχοντας διδάξει στην προσχολική και πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, σε ωδεία, καθώς και στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση ως εξωτερικός ακαδημαϊκός συνεργάτης. Παράλληλα, σχεδιάζει και υλοποιεί σεμινάρια, εργαστήρια και εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα με αντικείμενο τη μουσικοπαιδαγωγική, τη δημιουργική μουσική έκφραση και την προσέγγιση Orff-Schulwerk. Η ερευνητική του δραστηριότητα επικεντρώνεται κυρίως στη μουσική εκπαίδευση στην προσχολική ηλικία και σε σύγχρονες προσεγγίσεις της μουσικοπαιδαγωγικής. Έχει παρουσιάσει το ερευνητικό του έργο σε διεθνή επιστημονικά συνέδρια. Παράλληλα, είναι μαέστρος του Orff Ensemble της Ε.Σ.Μ.Α. Εκτός από την ακαδημαϊκή και εκπαιδευτική του δραστηριότητα, έχει ενεργή παρουσία στον χώρο της μουσικής και των παραστατικών τεχνών. Έχει συνθέσει, ενορχηστρώσει, και κάνει παραγωγή και remixes για Έλληνες και διεθνείς καλλιτέχνες, ενώ έχει συμμετάσχει ως ηθοποιός σε θεατρικές παραστάσεις.
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Tradition and Folklore

George Charonitis

The understanding and pedagogical use of tradition, folklore, and the concept of the "ethnic" by teachers and educators presuppose, first and foremost, a clarification of these terms. Such clarification is essential for educators to be able to comprehend the complexity of the concepts they encompass, as well as the cultural, social, and ideological meanings they represent and reproduce.

The particularly topical turn, in contemporary times, towards "roots," the primordial, and the elementary cannot be confined to an uncritical search for, or representation of, the past. Rather, it requires an understanding of the processes through which tradition is constructed, transformed, performed, and re-signified within each specific social and cultural context. In this sense, the educational use of tradition requires an awareness not only of its content but also of the historical, social, cultural, and ideological parameters that shape its reception, preservation, and reproduction.

This article begins from a terminological and conceptual specificity that primarily concerns the Greek case as the terms used to describe tradition, folk culture, and related cultural practices may not carry the same meaning or theoretical implications across different national and academic contexts.

In Anglophone contexts, the use of the term *folklore* rather than *tradition* gained currency during the nineteenth century, and what is referred to as *tradition* is encompassed within the broader concept of *folklore* (see Bronner, 2000; Eriksen, 2017). This conceptual distinction, however, cannot be transferred directly to the Greek scholarly and social context. What came to be referred to as *folklore* in Anglophone contexts is, in Greece, primarily designated by the term *laografia* (λαογραφία), while *folklore studies* correspondingly became established as *laografikes spoudes* (λαογραφικές σπουδές).

In this sense, the present article is based on a Greek "paradox" concerning the use and significance of these particular terms. If, instead of "tradition," the term *folklore* was used, and instead of "folklore," the term *ethnic* was employed, the conceptual distinctions that this article seeks to bring to the fore might arguably correspond more closely to those found in the international literature. Such a terminological shift, however, would not adequately capture the historically shaped Greek usage of these terms, nor the ways in which this usage has influenced the perception and representation of popular culture in Greece.
For the argument that follows to be understood, I therefore ask the reader to embrace, at least provisionally, this particularity of Greek terminology—one that may perhaps conceal something more "primordial" within it.

This observation becomes particularly significant in the contemporary context, where even the term *laografia*, or *folklore*, appears to be gradually receding from scholarly discourse and being replaced by the broader concept of *cultural heritage*. This shift is not merely a change in terminology. Rather, it reflects a broader transformation in the ways in which

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societies, institutions, and the academic community perceive, classify, manage, and represent cultural elements inherited from the past.

Tradition (or "folklore'')

As noted by Karyki and Agalianou (2018, p. 180), Theofanis Soulakellis defines tradition as "all the elements of yesterday that have freely and effortlessly been incorporated into today." This romantic definition, however, lacks the necessary distinction between "tradition" as a scholarly category and "tradition" as it is perceived by the communities that produce it. For the researcher, tradition is an object of study and analysis; for those who embody it, however, it constitutes lived experience, identity, and a means of social cohesion (Charonitis, 2026).

According to Ewa Dahlig-Turek (2012, p. 313), "the Polish sociologist of culture Jerzy Szacki proposes three possible conceptualisations of 'tradition': (1) the process of transmission, (2) the object of transmission, and (3) the evaluative attitude towards the content being transmitted." All three of these dimensions should be taken into consideration when referring to tradition.

In reality, tradition is not defined but rather endowed with meaning. From the classical descriptive recording of tradition, we have moved towards more interpretive approaches. The relationship between the past and the present demonstrates that tradition is not a static set of values and practices, but a living and constantly renewed phenomenon. It is not self-contained or self-evident; rather, it constitutes a social construction whose meaning derives from its social context.

The term tradition stands in contrast to the terms "mores" and "customs." Mores constitute the prevailing perceptions within society, the "unwritten laws," while customs constitute the actions through which these perceptions are expressed. The repetition of these customs from one generation to another creates traditions. The term tradition also stands in opposition to concepts such as routine or habit, which imply mechanical repetition. Tradition presupposes that someone transmits and someone receives. The freedom of choice exercised by the recipient is what distinguishes tradition from heritage.

This culture of "selective tradition," as Raymond Williams describes it (in Robinson, 1999, p. 106), rejects, over time and through the various processes of the community, significant areas of experience that once constituted a living culture. Tradition adapts to the present; it does not cling to the past. It is simultaneously a product of the past and a process of the present. It is not a static process to which societies remain attached for ever. Rather, it is a living process that is constantly transforming and renewing itself. As Seferis (1974, p. 520) poetically observes: "A part of the past dies every moment and its mortality contaminates us if we cling to it with excessive love. A part of the past always remains alive, and we risk disregarding its vitality."

Tradition is related to the concept of cultural practices and "shows us something beyond itself" (Pelikan, 1984, p. 54).

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During the nineteenth century, however, tradition was not understood in the way in which, to some extent, we perceive it today. It had been preceded by the European Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century, which, by promoting freedom, reason, and democracy, led various philosophers to view tradition as an enemy of reason and progress (Adorno, 1992, p. 75). As early as 1818, Haxthausen had referred to the "mania of the Enlightenment" that undermined popular tradition: "For thirty years now, with the mania of the Enlightenment, many old customs and practices have begun to disappear among the Greeks, especially those of the Archipelago" (Karabelias, 2023, para. 4). Historians, for their part, "seemed to be unreceptive to questions concerning temporal continuities—a fundamental component of tradition" (Bronner, 2011, p. 1). Tradition could not be quantified and therefore could not easily be incorporated into a scientific discipline; it was characterised by variability rather than stability, while to many researchers it appeared to be the enemy of innovation. Politically, it was initially devalued, becoming associated with romantic nationalist movements, which themselves used it selectively according to their purposes. Depending on the circumstances, it was treated either as reactionary conservatism or as radical liberalism (Abrahams, 1993). During the twentieth century, however, attention to traditions intensified through the study of the arts.

T. S. Eliot, referring to the neglect of tradition in favour of a search for originality in art, wrote characteristically:

> No poet or artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it (Eliot, 1960, pp. 4–5).

Tradition constitutes the "hidden information" concerning how people "think and act with continuity and connection in relation to others through lived experience".

The problem is that interpreting tradition can reveal forces and functions that people would prefer not to confront" (Bronner, 2011, p. 5). In my view, this "problem" largely determines the "aversion," the "repulsion" towards tradition, or its "devaluation."

"Performance," the moment in which tradition is experienced and reaffirmed, constitutes something entirely different from the "invention" of tradition in specific historical circumstances, which aimed to serve needs of identity, legitimation, or social cohesion (Kavouras, 2010). The realisation that tradition is not something neutral, but is instead entangled with mechanisms of power, or that it often constitutes a constructed structure, may lead the subject to refuse to recognise the structures reproduced through tradition. Through this process, tradition may come to be "detested" or "devalued". This, however, constitutes another broad and significant field of study and analysis, to which the following reflections have something to contribute.

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Folklore (or "Ethnic")

The term "folklore" has been used in Greece to denote a "tasteless aesthetic based on the superficial imitation of models derived from traditional folk culture" (Babiniotis, 1998, p. 1917). This constitutes a vernacular use of the term that became established in the Greek language with an explicitly derogatory connotation and diverged significantly from the international use of the term *folklore* (Kavouras, 2010). The closest equivalent in English -at least during the early stages of the term's use, before it acquired a more autonomous meaning, particularly in the arts - could arguably be considered the term "ethnic."

Folklore was initially associated with conservative perceptions concerning a return to an idealised and "authentic" past. At the same time, ideologies of modernity were leading to an increasing interest in "tradition" (Konstantinidis, 2012). This interest, however, did not necessarily concern tradition as a living social process. Gradually, it became focused on what is referred to here as "folklore": selected elements of the past that are detached from their social context, stabilised, aestheticised, and presented as representations of a supposedly authentic tradition (Kavouras, 2010). This distinction is fundamental to the argument of the present article.

Tradition is constituted through lived experience, participation, transmission, adaptation, and social context; folklore, in the specific sense examined here, emerges when these elements are weakened or neutralised and tradition is transformed into representation. What is produced, therefore, is not simply a different form of tradition, but a different mode of relating to it. An "official" version of tradition gradually emerges, selectively collecting certain cultural elements and presenting them as representations of a stable past, detached from the social functions that originally endowed them with meaning.

Through this process, tradition is deprived of one of its fundamental characteristics: its capacity to express the way in which a society thinks and acts with continuity and connection to others through lived experience. The practice remains, but the social conditions within which it acquires meaning are transformed. Participation gives way to observation, context to display, continuity to repetition, and lived experience to representation.

This transformation served both political and economic activities that developed around folklore. At the political level, it contributed to the construction of an "official tradition," which was increasingly selected, defined, and legitimised by institutions and structures of power. At the economic level, it rendered tradition available for consumption, transforming it into a cultural product: a sterilised image of the past, detached from its context and capable of being reproduced indefinitely, essentially in the same form.

Eleonora Skouteri (as cited in Papapavlou, 2010) emphasises that cultural revivals are not always connected to the natural cycle of local social and rural life but, in certain cases, are influenced by and adapted to, the needs of tourism policy.

The relationship between living tradition and folklore is particularly evident in the case described by Leto Floraki and Rena Loutzaki (2010), who examine the performance of the

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custom of *Gaitanaki* by the inhabitants of Grammenitsa, Arta, in two different contexts: in the village itself and at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall.

Within the local community, *Gaitanaki* constitutes a living cultural practice integrated into collective life. It functions as a means of social interaction and recreation for the inhabitants, while participation remains open and flexible. The boundaries between participants and spectators are not strictly defined but may shift according to circumstances and the individuals involved. At the same time, the development of the custom is not entirely predetermined, but allows room for spontaneous, variable, and unpredictable forms of participation. In other words, the custom remains embedded within the social relationships that give it meaning.

When, by contrast, the same custom is transferred into the context of an organised stage performance, such as at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall, its function and meaning change. The tradition becomes detached from its social environment and is transformed into an organised cultural spectacle, governed by a specific choreography and a clear distinction between performers and audience. What previously constituted a participatory social practice becomes an object of observation.

Moreover, the representation does not necessarily reproduce the form in which the custom is experienced by the contemporary community. Instead, it may privilege an earlier version of the custom and present it as "authentic." The difference between the two cases, therefore, is not simply a matter of "space." It concerns two fundamentally different modes of existence of a cultural practice.

In the village, *Gaitanaki* constitutes a living and evolving tradition; on stage, it becomes a representation of tradition. The transition from one condition to the other constitutes precisely the process through which tradition is transformed into folklore: into an "exotic" rendering of tradition for the gaze of contemporary urban/Western culture.

Through this transformation, the culturally dominant subject encounters an image of tradition that appears timeless, repetitive, and unchanging. What is presented as "authentic," therefore, is precisely what has been detached from the conditions that once made it alive. Authenticity ceases to be associated with continuity and lived experience and instead becomes associated with repetition and fidelity to an invented or idealised past. When the practice is detached from its social environment and transferred to a theatre or stage, the function of the space itself also changes. It ceases to operate primarily as a social space of participation and becomes a space of display and consumption. The cultural practice is thereby transformed into an object-product for the consumer-subject. Tradition, as it was conceptualised during the nineteenth century, was transformed into folklore: it was reinvented as something sterile and rigid, created to a significant extent for the theatre stage, where performance no longer refers to lived experience but to the remembrance of an authentic, genuine, and romantic past. What is preserved is no longer tradition itself, but an image of tradition.

In conclusion, I will return to Seferis's poetic speech, paraphrasing it: the part of the past that dies remains attached to us. Its mortality contaminates us, not because it belongs to the

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past, but because we insist on reproducing it as living, immutable, and "authentic." At the same time, the part of the past that remains alive is at risk of being disregarded precisely because it evolves. Thus, attachment to a frozen image of the past does not preserve tradition; on the contrary, it may render it lifeless, transforming it into folklore.

Footnote

The critique outlined above does not in any way - and I would not wish to imply otherwise - concern the work of contemporary creators from different artistic fields who draw inspiration from tradition and create contemporary works. These are artists who turn towards tradition through their own perspective and employ it as a vehicle for developing their own forms of expression. Such a creative relationship with tradition does not necessarily constitute folklor(isation).
The crucial distinction does not lie in whether an artist draws material from tradition, but in whether tradition is used as a source for new creation or is reduced to a fixed representation of a supposedly authentic past. Many of these contemporary artistic forms are now referred to as "ethnic."
The distinction, therefore, is not between "traditional" and "contemporary" culture, nor between tradition and artistic innovation. It lies between tradition as a living, participatory, and constantly changing process and folklore as the aestheticised, detached, and fixed representation of that process.

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Myth, Music, and Memory: Naqqāli in the Orff Classroom

Farzan Farnia

Introduction: A Question of Cultural Belonging

After completing my Orff-Schulwerk training in Salzburg, an important question gradually emerged in my mind:

How could Orff-Schulwerk be lived within Iranian culture rather than merely imitated?
For me, this question became increasingly important as I returned to Iran and continued my work as a music educator. Orff-Schulwerk gave me a deeply meaningful way of thinking about music education: an approach rooted in participation, creativity, movement, speech, improvisation, and the active involvement of the learner. Yet the question remained: how could these principles find an authentic voice within my own cultural environment?

The challenge was not simply to add Iranian songs or instruments to an existing pedagogical framework. Nor was it to reproduce, in Iran, the educational experiences I had encountered elsewhere. Rather, I became interested in discovering cultural forms that already contained qualities resonant with the fundamental principles of Orff-Schulwerk.

This search eventually led me back to one of the oldest and most powerful elements of Iranian culture: storytelling.

More specifically, it led to *Naqqāli*[1], a traditional Persian form of storytelling in which the narrator brings epic stories to life through speech, gesture, vocal expression, dramatic timing, movement, and interaction with the audience. Traditionally, *Naqqāli* has been closely associated with the stories of the *Shahnameh*, the great Persian epic written by Ferdowsi.
Over the past decade, my colleagues and I, along with my students, have explored ways to bring *Naqqāli* into an Orff-based music classroom. In this process, storytelling became connected with rhythm, body percussion, instrumental music, movement, dance, visual art, improvisation, and, more recently, digital technology.

This article reflects on that journey. It explores the relationship between myth, storytelling, cultural memory, and music education, and considers how a traditional cultural practice can become a living source for contemporary creative learning.

Myth and the Human Need for Stories

Stories may be understood as one of humanity's oldest psychological and cultural refuges. Throughout history, human beings have listened to stories, told them, performed them, transformed them, and passed them from one generation to another. Through stories, communities preserve memories, communicate values, confront fears, imagine the future, and give meaning to experiences that might otherwise remain difficult to understand.

[1] https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/naqqli-iranian-dramatic-story-telling-00535

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The exact origins of storytelling may be impossible to trace. Perhaps they are inseparable from the development of human language itself. Before written language, human knowledge, memory, and imagination were transmitted orally. Sound, vocal expression, gesture, and eventually words became the means through which human beings named the world around them and shared their experiences with others. Long before literature could be preserved on paper, stories, rituals, songs, and myths existed through performance and memory.

The emergence of writing later made it possible to record what had previously depended on oral transmission. Yet even today, every child experiences a similar developmental sequence. Before learning to read and write, children listen, imitate sounds, speak, sing, move, remember, and create their own narratives.

This developmental path has particular relevance for music education.

Orff-Schulwerk similarly begins not with abstraction or notation, but with direct experience. Music is first encountered through the body: in movement, speech, singing, listening, playing, and improvisation. Musical understanding grows from active participation. Notation and other forms of abstraction may eventually become meaningful, but they emerge from lived experience rather than replacing it. In this sense, storytelling and music share a common foundation. Both begin as human acts of communication.

Myths are particularly important within this process. They do not merely belong to the distant past. Mythic stories continue to live because they address fundamental human experiences: courage and fear, loss and hope, conflict and reconciliation, vulnerability and strength. The heroes of myth may change their names and appearances across cultures and historical periods, but they continue to return. From Hercules and Rostam [2] to the superheroes of contemporary popular culture, human beings repeatedly create figures who embody possibilities larger than ordinary life.

For children, myth and storytelling can provide an imaginative space in which powerful experiences may be explored safely. A child may encounter fear through a monster, courage through a hero, loss through a tragic story, or transformation through an impossible journey. At the same time, children do not simply receive these stories. They actively transform them.

A story becomes a game. A character becomes a role. A narrative becomes movement. A battle becomes a rhythm. A mythical world becomes a place in which the child can imagine, perform, and create. This active transformation of stories is one of the reasons myth became such a meaningful foundation for our work.

Storytelling and Cultural Memory in Iran

Iran has a long and deeply rooted tradition of poetry and storytelling. Literature has played an important role in shaping cultural memory, and the oral transmission of poetry and stories has historically connected different generations and social groups.

[2] A legendary hero in Iranian mythology and historical tradition.

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Even today, storytelling and poetry remain central to important cultural occasions. *Yalda Night*, for example—the longest night of the year in the Persian calendar—is traditionally associated with gathering, conversation, storytelling, and the recitation of poetry.
The tradition of professional storytelling in Iran is also ancient. Storytellers known as *Gusans* performed in earlier periods of Iranian history, while centuries of oral and literary traditions eventually contributed to the creation and preservation of major works of Persian literature. These include *Kalila and Dimna*, *One Thousand and One Nights*, Saadi's *Golestan*, *The Conference of the Birds*, and, above all, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.

Many of these works demonstrate that storytelling has never been separate from education. Stories have carried ethical, social, philosophical, and psychological meanings. They have offered warnings, preserved historical memory, transmitted cultural values, and created opportunities for reflection.

The *Shahnameh*, however, occupies a particularly important position within Iranian cultural memory.

Written by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, the *Shahnameh* is a monumental epic containing myths, heroic stories, and historical narratives. Its characters—including Rostam, Zal, Simurgh, Kaveh, Zahhak, and many others—have remained powerful symbols within Iranian culture. For many Iranians, these figures are not simply literary characters. They are part of a shared imaginative world.

Yet the language of the *Shahnameh* is poetic and sophisticated. For much of history, access to written literature was limited, and its literary language was not always easily understood by the wider public. This is where storytelling became particularly important.
Storytellers transformed complex poetic narratives into more accessible spoken forms. Through performance, gesture, vocal expression, and dramatic interpretation, they brought the stories of the *Shahnameh* into public spaces. In this way, storytelling became a form of cultural transmission.

Naqqāli: Storytelling as Performance
In its broadest sense, *Naqqāli s*imply refers to storytelling. More specifically, it is associated with the performance tradition of narrating epic stories, particularly stories from the *Shahnameh*. Historically, *Naqqāli* flourished in public spaces, including coffeehouses. These were not merely places for drinking coffee; they were important social and cultural gathering places where people met, exchanged ideas, and encountered stories.
A *Naqqāl* does not merely read a text aloud. The storyteller performs the story. Through changes in voice, gesture, facial expression, dramatic timing, physical movement, and improvisation, the *Naqqāl* moves between characters and situations. A single performer may create an entire world through the body and voice.

The development of *Naqqāli* also contributed to visual forms of storytelling. Large paintings depicting scenes from epic and religious narratives became part of the storytelling environment. The narrator could point to particular figures or scenes while bringing the story to life through speech and performance.

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Mansour Vafaei: The Battle of Rostam and Sohrab (Persian coffeehouse painting – Wikipedia)

This relationship between story, image, voice, and gesture is particularly significant. *Naqqāli* is not only a literary practice. It is an embodied form of storytelling. The story exists through the interaction of language, movement, imagination, voice, and audience.
For me, these qualities create an immediate connection with the educational principles of Orff-Schulwerk. Here is a cultural form in which speech and rhythm already exist together. Gesture is inseparable from storytelling. Improvisation is central to performance. The narrator transforms words into dramatic action, and the audience participates emotionally and imaginatively in the experience.
The question, then, is not how to import *Naqqāli* artificially into the music classroom. The question became:

What might happen if children are invited to enter this tradition creatively and transform it through music, movement, and their own imagination?

From Tradition to the Orff Classroom
At *Adamak* Institute and within the Iranian Orff-Schulwerk Association, I have been fortunate to work with colleagues who shared an interest in understanding Orff-Schulwerk deeply while also searching for meaningful connections with Iranian culture. As we explored possible cultural resources for lesson planning, *Naqqāli* quickly found its place in our work. Traditional *Naqqāli* is not usually accompanied by instrumental music in the way we might expect from a theatrical or musical performance. However, this absence became an invitation rather than a limitation.

What might happen if rhythm entered the story?

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What if a battle could be expressed through body percussion?
What if a landscape could emerge through the sound of barred instruments?
What if movement could become another form of narration?
What if children could create their own musical, visual, and verbal interpretations of an ancient story?

Gradually, our projects developed into interdisciplinary processes in which storytelling became the central thread connecting different forms of expression.
Over the past decade, I have had opportunities to work with several groups of students using stories from one of the most beloved sections of the *Shahnameh*: Rostam's Seven Labours.

Four collaborators played especially important roles in this journey: the musicians Sanaz Boroujerdian and Arghavan Malekmohammadi, professional storyteller and *Naqqāli* teacher Fahimeh Baroutchi, and theatre educator Olka Hedayat.

Although performances eventually emerged from these projects, the final performance was never the primary educational goal. The most important learning took place throughout the process.

Students listened to stories, explored characters, created rhythms, moved, improvised, painted, discussed, questioned, and gradually developed their own relationships with the material.

Giving the Story a Body and a Voice
Traditional *Naqqāli* often begins with verses praising the Creator. In one of our projects, we explored one of the most famous opening passages of the *Shahnameh* through movement and body percussion. Rather than simply reciting the text, students explored its rhythm physically.

Words became movement.
Speech became pulse.
The body became an instrument.

This kind of process reflects an important principle within Orff-Schulwerk: musical understanding does not need to begin with explanation. It can begin with experience. Students may first feel a rhythm, move it, speak it, and play it before they analyse or notate it. The relationship between speech and music becomes especially powerful when the text already carries a strong rhythmic identity. Persian poetry, with its patterns of meter and sound, provides rich possibilities for this kind of exploration. In our work, the spoken text was not treated as something fixed and untouchable. It became material for musical discovery. Students experimented with dynamics, tempo, articulation, gesture, and vocal colour. Through these explorations, storytelling gradually expanded beyond language alone.

Children as Visual Storytellers
The visual tradition associated with *Naqqāli* also inspired our work. In one project, students worked in seven groups, each creating visual representations of one of Rostam's Seven

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Labours. Their drawings became another way of entering the story. The children were not asked simply to illustrate what they had heard. They had to decide:

What is the most important moment?
Which characters should appear?
What kind of landscape surrounds them?
How can danger, courage, fear, or transformation be represented visually?

Later, these drawings were animated using artificial intelligence (Runway AI) and projected during the performance. The purpose of this technology was not to replace children's imagination. On the contrary, the technology became a means of extending their collective imagination into another medium. The visual images created by the students moved from paper into performance.

In another project, visual artist Nazanin Aygani created paintings live, while students performed the story. Her working process was projected in real time behind the performers, allowing the audience to witness the creation of visual imagery alongside the unfolding of the narrative. These experiences reminded us that storytelling does not have to belong to a single artistic medium.





The Seven Labours of Rostam (2013), featuring live illustrations by visual artist Nazanin Aygani projected behind the performers © the author.

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A story can be spoken.
It can be sung.
It can be played.
It can be moved.
It can be painted.
And, perhaps most importantly, it can be continually recreated.

Rewriting the Story

Traditional storytellers often use handwritten narrative scrolls known as *Tomār.* These texts may reflect the individual language, experience, and artistic identity of the storyteller. This aspect of *Naqqāli* became particularly meaningful in our educational work. We did not want students merely to memorise a story written by adults. Instead, we gradually developed versions of the narratives shaped by the students themselves. Their language, questions, interpretations, and imagination became part of the process.

One particularly important experience emerged when Olka Hedayat invited students to consider the stories from the perspective of Rostam's enemies.

Why did they fight him?
What might their fears have been?
Did they understand themselves as villains?
What stories might they have told about Rostam?

This shift in perspective transformed the educational process.

The students were no longer simply reproducing a familiar narrative. They were questioning it. They were discovering that every story can be viewed from different positions. The mythical hero became more complex. The enemy became a character with a voice. The children became authors as well as performers.

This process revealed another important possibility of storytelling in education: stories do not need to be preserved only by repeating them. They can also be preserved by allowing each generation to enter into dialogue with them.

Movement as Storytelling

Movement gradually became another essential dimension of our work. One section of the Seven Labours describes Rostam and his horse, Rakhsh, wandering through a barren desert. Rather than explaining the emotional quality of the scene verbally, we explored ways in which students could embody the landscape and the journey.

How does exhaustion move?
How does heat affect the body?
How might two characters move differently through the same environment?
How can distance, isolation, or uncertainty be communicated without words?

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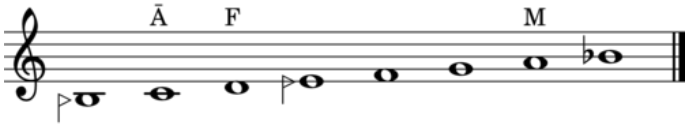
In one performance, the musical material was based on the *Daramad* of the Persian musical mode *Shur*[3]. The exploration of this musical language allowed the students to encounter an important element of Iranian musical culture within the dramatic structure of the story.
Dastgāh-e Šur is one of the seven ***Dastgāh***s of Persian Music. (Here is D Šur)



Again, the cultural material was not presented as information to be memorised. It became something to experience. Movement, sound, and narrative supported one another.

Games, Rhythm, and the Sound of Myth
Games also played an important role in shaping the musical world of our stories. In one project, a familiar tabletop rhythm game became part of the soundscape for a battle scene between Rostam and Arzhang Div. The transformation was simple but meaningful. A game that students already knew was placed within a new dramatic context. The rhythmic structure began to suggest conflict, movement, tension, and action. The students were able to experience how a familiar musical activity could acquire new meaning when connected to a story.

To create an epic atmosphere, we also explored the Persian mode Dashti[4]. In this way, traditional musical material, children's games, body percussion, and mythological storytelling could coexist within the same creative process. This coexistence became one of the most important characteristics of our work.

We were not attempting to reconstruct an ancient *Naqqāli* performance exactly as it might have existed in the past. Nor were we attempting to create a museum version of Iranian culture. Instead, we were asking how cultural memory could become material for new creation.

The Child as Narrator, Musician, and Co-Creator
Traditionally, a *Naqqāl's* reputation depends partly on the storyteller's ability to create emotional intensity. A skilled narrator knows how to use silence, timing, vocal dynamics, gesture, and improvisation to hold the attention of the audience. These qualities became important areas of exploration for our students.

In one performance, a child storyteller narrated the climactic battle between Rostam and the White Demon with such energy that the audience began applauding before the performance ended. For me, this moment represented something important.

[3] Classically, Persian Music is organized into seven ***Dastgāhs*** and five ***Āvāzes***.

[4] ***Dašti*** is one of the fourth domain belong ***Āvāzes*** of **Dastgāh-e Šur**

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The child was no longer simply presenting information that had been taught by an adult. They had taken ownership of the story. The story had become embodied and personal.

Over the years, I have repeatedly observed that mythological storytelling can generate extraordinary enthusiasm among students. Even children who already knew the stories of the *Shahnameh* discovered them again through music, movement, improvisation, and performance. Familiar stories became unfamiliar once more.

Students also appeared to develop a deeper interest in poetry and literature. Some became proud of their ability to perform stories and surprise adults with their expressive and creative capacities. Perhaps this is one of the most important transformations that took place. The child moved from being a passive listener to becoming an active participant in cultural memory.

The student became:

- a storyteller,
- a musician,
- a mover,
- a visual artist,
- an improviser,
- and a co-creator of meaning.

_Naqqā_li as a Living Educational Resource

My experience with *Naqqāli* has gradually changed the way I think about cultural tradition in education. Tradition does not have to mean repetition. Preserving a cultural practice does not necessarily mean reproducing it exactly as it was performed in the past. A tradition remains alive when new generations can enter into a relationship with it. For our students, *Naqqāli* became such a meeting place. It connected them with Persian mythology and cultural memory, while simultaneously inviting them to create something new. Ancient stories became starting points for contemporary musical experiences. Traditional narratives became spaces for improvisation, movement, visual art, collaboration, and experimentation. This process also helped me return to my original question:

How can Orff-Schulwerk be lived within a particular culture rather than merely imitated?

I do not believe there is a single answer. Every cultural environment contains its own stories, games, languages, musical traditions, movements, rituals, and forms of artistic expression. The task of the educator may not be to place these elements artificially inside a pre-existing pedagogical model. Perhaps the more important task is to discover where the fundamental principles of an approach such as Orff-Schulwerk already resonate with the cultural life of a community. For us, *Naqqāli* became one of these places of resonance.

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It brought together speech, movement, imagination, improvisation, performance, and collective participation. It allowed students to encounter their cultural heritage not as something distant or untouchable, but as something they could inhabit and transform.

Conclusion: When Myth Becomes a Living Experience

Throughout the past decade, whenever I have used mythological storytelling and *Naqqāli* as the foundation for lesson planning, I have been reminded of the extraordinary power of stories.

Stories can connect the past with the present.
They can connect language with music.
They can connect individual imagination with collective memory.
Within the Orff classroom, myth can become a living experience.

The story no longer belongs only to the book, the teacher, or the professional storyteller. It moves into the bodies and voices of the students. It becomes rhythm, movement, sound, image, and play.

In this process, the child is no longer a passive listener.
The child becomes a narrator.
A musician.
A performer.
A creator.

And perhaps this is where cultural tradition and creative education meet most meaningfully. *Naqqāli*, in this context, is not simply the recreation of an old Iranian storytelling practice. It becomes a contemporary educational resource—a way of reactivating imagination, participation, and cultural memory through artistic experience.

For me, this journey has also suggested a broader understanding of culturally rooted Orff-Schulwerk. To live Orff-Schulwerk within a particular culture may mean listening carefully to the artistic traditions already present there and asking how they can become starting points for creative exploration.

The goal is not to preserve culture under glass. It is to allow culture to move, change, speak, and create again. When this happens, myth is no longer only something we remember.

It becomes something we live.

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Weaving Stories Together: From Personal Narratives to Collective Theatre

Panagiota-Betty Giannouli

Introduction

Today, there is growing international recognition of and debate surrounding the role of the arts in education. Through its World Conferences on Arts Education and related initiatives, UNESCO, together with the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE)[5] has consistently advocated for the recognition of the arts as an essential dimension of quality education. As stated in the Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education (UNESCO, 2010), a document developed within the framework of the UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education, the arts contribute to social, emotional, and ethical development. They foster dialogue, cooperation, empathy and intercultural understanding, while enabling learners to engage critically with the complex challenges of contemporary society.
It is within this broader educational and social vision that I would like to position the work I am presenting today. In this presentation, I would like to share a process developed within a university course in Theatre/Drama in Education of the Department of Early Childhood Education **/** National and Kapodistrian University in Athens.

Stories are central to this process, but my focus is not storytelling as an isolated technique. Rather, I will discuss how personal narratives become one of the threads through which a group gradually creates a collective dramatic performance.

But I would like to begin with something very simple. We all carry stories. Stories about who we are. Stories about where we come from. Stories about what we have experienced, what we have lost, what we hope for, and what we are still trying to understand.

But stories are never only personal. They are also cultural, they are social, they are educational. They are shaped by the worlds we live in — and by the worlds that have shaped us.

1. **The danger of a single story**

The novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her TED Talk *The Danger of a Single Story* (Adichie, 2009) reminds us of something very important: when we hear only one story about a person, a group, or a country, we risk misunderstanding them. We risk reducing them to something simple, fixed, or stereotypical. And I believe this analysis can be applied in the educational context. Especially when we work with students who are training to become educators.

A future educator will meet many stories in the classroom: stories of children, families, bodies, languages, silences, fears, strengths, and possibilities. So, it is essential to learn how

[5] Organisations of WAAE:
IDEA – International Drama/Theatre and Education Association, InSEA – International Society for Education through Art, ISME – International Society for Music Education, WDA – World Dance Alliance

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to listen without reducing the other to a single story. It is the complexity that matters - the interconnections of the stories.

In the course I will discuss today, we use stories and theatre as part of a learning journey. Not only as techniques. But as a space where stories can be opened, shared, questioned, and transformed. A process where we can feel safe enough to speak. Safe enough to move. Safe enough to listen. Safe enough to create. A process that invites us to go further: to express ourselves artistically, to meet the stories of others, and to discover what connects us.

Why is this important?

Because very often, we believe that the difficulties we face are only personal, only individual. Only ours. We may even believe that we are entirely responsible for them. But when stories are shared, something begins to change. We start to see that what we experience personally is often connected to wider social, cultural and educational conditions. We begin to recognize not only our differences, but also the similarities, tensions and questions that we share.

Stories help us see and feel these connections. They help us communicate across differences—not only those that seem far away, but also those we meet every day: in our own environments, in our classrooms, in our communities. Even in communities that may appear small, familiar or homogeneous, there are many voices. Many experiences. Many stories.

2. Theatre in Education - Participatory Theatre - Applied Theatre

The course I am talking about is entitled *Theatre in Education: Pedagogical and Social Interventions*.

The key word here is *social intervention*—not in the sense of imposing meaning or directing participants towards predetermined messages, but in the sense of creating a space where participants can explore, question, communicate, and engage in meaning making around the social concerns they encounter as human beings and as future educators.
This approach draws on the traditions of Theatre in Education (TIE) and participatory theatre, which over recent decades have increasingly informed the broader field of Applied Theatre, encompassing a wide range of participatory, socially engaged, and often politically informed theatrical practices (Jackson, 1993; Jackson & Vine, 2013; Nicholson, 2005; Prentki & Preston, 2009).

These traditions remind us of theatre's roots in community and of its potential to function also as an educational medium and as a form of social engagement. In this sense, theatre is never merely representation. Following Brecht, theatre can be understood as a way of examining social reality, questioning what appears natural or taken for granted, and imagining how things might be otherwise. Theatre allows experience to be viewed from a critical distance, revisited, reshaped, and shared with others (Brecht, 1964).

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Like all the arts, theatre offers rich opportunities for expression, creativity and meaning making. What makes it distinctive, however, is its capacity to invite us into roles. By stepping into another person's perspective, we are encouraged to experience situations, relationships and dilemmas from within. In this way, theatre does not simply talk about empathy, it allows us to rehearse it. We begin to imagine what it means to stand in someone else's place, to see through different eyes, to question our own assumptions, and imagine different ways of being in the world.

Interestingly, a similar discussion exists within the storytelling community. In exploring the close relationship between storytelling and theatre, Wilson draws attention to the ways in which storytelling and theatrical performance intersect (Wilson, 2006). From a Brechtian perspective, this relationship can be understood not simply in terms of representation or character embodiment, but as a mode of performance that maintains a degree of distance and invites the audience to engage critically with the story being presented.

In a time when education is often reduced to the measurement of skills and the reproduction of dominant norms, theatre offers a different kind of space. Education, then, becomes more than the transmission of knowledge. It becomes a space where students can reconnect with themselves, with others, and with the world. This brings us to education as a human, social and political act.

I believe that the arts have a particular capacity to create such spaces, as I suggested earlier. I can speak especially from the fields of music and dance, drawing on my experience and on the work of colleagues with whom I collaborate closely at the University, such as Olympia Agalianou in our department. I also draw on collaborations in other contexts, including WAAE Congresses and several projects in which I have been involved. While our artistic languages may differ, we share many common concerns: participation, group work, embodied learning, listening, identity, and the creation of meaning through artistic experience.

In our pedagogical approach developed within Theatre and Education, storytelling becomes the starting point for the process of collective artistic creation, critical reflection and social awareness. Rather than focusing on drama techniques themselves, I would like to explore how the design of the process enables students' voices to emerge, meet and be transformed through theatre.

So, the central question of this presentation is:
How can students' personal narratives be transformed, through theatre, embodied and movement-based techniques, into collective dramatic material that cultivates expression, communication, collaboration, empathy and social awareness?
How do we weave a collective performance from personal stories?

3. The weaving process

The final theatrical composition develops gradually through a structured process. This is why I use the metaphor of weaving. A single strand remains a strand. But when many strands meet, when they cross, resist, support and respond to one another, a fabric begins to appear.

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The process unfolds through a series of interconnected stages: building the group, cultivating active listening and communication, introducing stimuli that invite personal material, recognising shared themes, transforming stories into body and image, improvising, testing, selecting, composing, performing and reflecting.

In the same way, the performance is woven from personal memories, objects, gestures, voices, silences, images, social questions, improvisations and reflective responses. Theoretical perspectives are present throughout this process, but they are not separated from practice. Dewey (1933, 1938) helps us understand learning as experiential and reflective: students do not simply talk about stories; they live, shape and reconsider them through action. Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that learning is social and relational, because meaning is created through exchange, voice, listening and response. Bruner (1990, 1991) helps us understand storytelling as a process through which people organise experience and construct meaning. And Freire (1970) allows us to see how learning becomes critical when personal narratives begin to reveal wider social conditions and open possibilities for dialogue and transformation.

3.1. Building the group - the safe space

The first step is building the group. Before personal stories are shared, the group needs a ground. It needs trust, attention, rhythm. A shared space. A sense that one can try, fail, laugh, hesitate, speak, move, and be seen without being judged immediately.

So we begin with games, exercises of trust, rhythm, movement, voice, concentration and collaboration.



Building safe space

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Building the group

The aim is not simply to warm up the body. There are always specific exercises for active listening, empathy and forms of communication. The following are students' own words, reflecting ideas that came up repeatedly over the years, in different forms:

> *"Through the games, we felt more comfortable, and a more collaborative atmosphere began to develop in the class."*

> *"We began to build a relationship of trust and cooperation, which are among the most important things for our course."*

3.2. Objects and imagined/true stories

Gradually, personal material begins to emerge. One powerful stage of the process is the work with objects**.**

Each participant brings a personal object. The object is first given to another participant, who is invited to imagine its story. Only afterwards does the object return to its owner, who shares its real story. The object functions as a mediator. It allows personal stories to be approached without immediate exposure. First, I speak through something. Then, if I feel safe enough, I may speak about myself. The object also becomes a bridge to the other. It carries memory, but it also invites imagination. It encourages us to enter, carefully and respectfully, into a possible world that may belong to someone else[6].

[6] There are several object-based exercises that can be adapted and modified to serve this purpose, provided that they foreground the dimension explored here. What matters is not the specific exercise itself, but the way in which it is adapted to bring this dimension into focus.

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A student wrote:

> *"When the time came to share the true stories, the atmosphere became serious and there was complete silence. Each story was unique, and everyone really wanted to listen."*

Another student reflected**:**

> *"I realised that every object is a treasure of memories."*

Here, storytelling is not simply narration; it becomes an ethical practice of listening. I imagine, but then I step back and receive the story of the other. I begin to understand that my interpretation is never the whole story.

This brings us back to Adichie's idea of *the danger of a single story*. Although each story is unique, many of them evoke shared experiences. What initially appears deeply personal gradually begins to reveal common human concerns and shared social experiences.

3.3. Life maps and personal narratives

One of the most important steps in the process is the creation and sharing of life maps. Through life maps, students begin to organise memory more consciously. They choose significant moments, places, relationships, losses, achievements, questions and turning points. They begin to see what has shaped them.

A life map, when kept private, is a personal document. But when shared with others, it becomes an invitation to listen. It creates a moment where personal memory enters the group space (Pammenter, 2006). Importantly, students retain control over what and how much they choose to share. They decide how many significant moments and how many details they feel comfortable disclosing. They are encouraged to remain attentive to the boundaries within which they feel safe during the activity and to participate only to the extent that they themselves wish to. This allows personal storytelling to become a voluntary act rather than an expectation of personal disclosure. Now storytelling has become a way of meaning making. It allows students to say: this happened, this mattered, this changed me, this is something I still carry.

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Drawing the life map



Life map journey

> *"The activity helped us understand each other better and brought us closer, because we shared personal stories."*

> *"I felt that theatre is a way to share your truth."*

So, personal narratives are not collected to be reproduced. They become material for exploration.

3.4. From story to body, rhythm and image

The next step is crucial: the stories move from words to bodies.
They become still images, gestures, movement patterns, looks, distances, rhythms, repetitions, silences, and spatial relationships. A phrase can become a posture. A memory can become an image. An emotion can become rhythm. Social pressure can become a group formation.

This is the point where stories become embodied storytelling. At this stage, specific theatrical techniques gradually become part of the group's expressive vocabulary. Through image theatre, improvisation, movement and vocal exploration we play, we observe what emerges, we keep what has strength, we reshape it and we try again:

> *"It was as if the first part focused on movement and expression of the body and face, and the second part on movement-emotion and expression of the soul."*

This reflection is particularly important because it captures something central to the process that repeatedly emerged, in different forms, in students' reflective journals: movement is not only physical. It becomes a way of reaching emotion, creating meaning and entering into relationships with others.

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From story to body and rhythm



Improvisation

3.5. From personal narratives to shared themes

Across many individual narratives, the group begins to notice what is needed to be heard; the fear of exposure; family expectations; self-determination; responsibility; gender and stereotypes; vulnerability; resilience; acceptance; social pressure; and the desire to speak and be recognised.

The question is no longer only, “What is my story?” but “What do we want to say together?”

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At this point, a story about family can become a question about expectations and autonomy. A story about silence can become a question about voice. A story about vulnerability can become a question about care, power or social judgement.

Video 1. Excerpt from Salomé Marguet's Documentary, Theatre in Education Course: Exploration and Reshaping.

In this sense, the process does not simply "use" personal stories. It enables participants to recognise how personal experiences are connected to wider social relations and cultural meanings.

One student wrote:

"The activity helped me understand how prejudices affect our decisions, and it gave the group a way to discuss these issues openly."

Another reflected:

"Maybe we become better people when we realise that everyone carries their own story, and that it could also be ours."

This is where the process becomes not only expressive, but also educational and socially aware. The story becomes a doorway to empathy, complexity and critical reflection. We can gain a brief insight into the sharing process, which echoes the experiential learning cycle described by Kolb (1984): doing, reflecting, learning, and applying. In this sense, the sharing process becomes part of a continuous movement between experience, reflection, learning, and the application of new insights.

3.6. Composition

We have formed smaller groups of five to six students. The final composition, developed collaboratively within each group, is woven from fragments: a phrase from one student, a gesture from another, an object, a still image, a shared fear, a silence, a repeated movement, a poem, or a collective question. These fragments are brought together and reworked to create a shared composition that reflects the experiences and contributions of the group.The final performance therefore does not reproduce the personal stories literally. It transforms them. Personal material passes through aesthetic, embodied and collective processing. It becomes a shared theatrical language.

At this stage, individual voices do not disappear. They are held within a collective form. Sometimes one voice speaks. Sometimes many voices speak together. Sometimes the body speaks before words. Sometimes silence carries the meaning.

Video 2. *Group Composition — Rehearsal Excerpt.*

This is why the performance is not simply an artistic expression, but the visible trace of a pedagogical process: from hesitation to trust, from personal memory to collective composition, from private experience to public theatrical expression.

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4. Reflective journals: what changed?

Reflection was present throughout the process, and the reflective journals gave students a structured way to return to their experience.

Through the journals, students could ask:
What happened to me?
What happened to the group?
What did I discover about myself?
What did I begin to understand about others?

What interests me is that the students reflected thoroughly on the whole process itself: trust, listening, hesitation, misunderstanding, vulnerability, collaboration, respect, responsibility and growth.

> *"Through the theatre course, I am beginning to discover aspects of myself that I did not know I had."*

> *"I liked that I could express my feelings freely without feeling that I would be judged."*

> *"We managed to create a space where everyone felt comfortable sharing very personal and moving stories."*

These reflections suggest that the process shaped how students perceived themselves, one another, and the world around them. They began to recognise previously unnoticed aspects of themselves, to encounter their classmates as people carrying memories, struggles and desires, and to understand how personal narratives can open onto wider social realities.

5. Closing: holding many stories in the same room

The synthesis brings together many of the elements described above: a story that emerges from sharing is transformed through collective creation, becoming a shared experience that brings individual voices into dialogue with the social realities of the world we inhabit. A similar process takes place in other courses, where students work with dramatic texts. Whether the story is personal or already written, the task is not simply to reproduce it. Students enter the story, interpret it, question it and bring their own perspectives to it through collective creation. Perhaps this is why, even when the process touches difficult memories, sensitive questions or social tensions, it rarely ends in heaviness. The process often leads instead to connection, relief, joy and hope, because theatre allows us not only to face experience, but also to transform it.

> Video 3. *Synthesis Presentation — Excerpt from Salomé Marguet's Documentary, Theatre in Education Course.*

And perhaps this is the fabric we have been weaving all along: not simply a performance, but a community of people who have learned to listen, to imagine, to question and to create together. A community that begins to understand not only who we are, but who we might become together.

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Μουσικοκινητική Αγωγή Orff στην πρωτοβάθμια Εκπαίδευση: κριτικός αναστοχασμός σε μια μελέτη που πραγματοποιήθηκε 20 χρόνια πριν

Ολυμπία Αγαλιανού

Η αναζήτηση που οδήγησε στο άρθρο

Το κείμενο αυτό αποτελεί μια αυτοεθνογραφική αναφορά που διερευνά τις μεταβολές στην ερευνητική μεθοδολογία, αντιμετωπίζοντας αναστοχαστικά την εμπειρία μου και στην ακαδημαϊκή μου ταυτότητα. Ειδικότερα, πρόκειται για μια επανεξέταση της μεθοδολογίας διδακτορικής μου διατριβής την οποία διεξήγαγα πριν 20 χρόνια. Το αντικείμενό της ήταν η μουσικοκινητική αγωγή στο ελληνικό δημοτικό σχολείο. Εύλογα προκύπτουν ερωτήματα: Γιατί να επιστρέψουμε στο παρελθόν; Γιατί να αφιερώσουμε χρόνο σε μια έρευνα που διεξήχθη σε μια διαφορετική ιστορικότητα πριν η τεχνολογία μεταμορφώσει την καθημερινότητά μας;

Επέλεξα αυτή την έρευνα γιατί πιστεύω πως μπορεί να λειτουργήσει ως σημείο εκκίνησης για μια επιστημολογική συζήτηση, η οποία μπορεί να συμβάλλει στη βαθύτερη κατανόηση του παρόντος. Ήταν η πρώτη μελέτη που διερευνούσε παρέμβαση μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής Orff στο πεδίο και εκπονήθηκε σε μια εποχή έντονης μεθοδολογικής διαμάχης στο χώρο της εκπαιδευτικής έρευνας. Αποτελεί μια από τις πρώτες προσπάθειες στην Ελλάδα να ακολουθηθεί το ποιοτικό ερευνητικό παράδειγμα σε μια εποχή που ο θετικισμός ήταν το κυρίαρχο επιστημολογικό μοντέλο. Η πρόοδος της ποιοτικής ερευνητικής μεθοδολογίας από τότε μέχρι σήμερα είναι μεγάλη. Θεωρώ, λοιπόν, πως μια κριτική αναστοχαστική ματιά στις μεθοδολογικές επιλογές μου, μέσα από σημερινό μου ρόλο ως επιβλέπουσας μεταπτυχιακών διατριβών, θα οδηγήσει σε προσαρμογές που θα έκανα αν διεξήγαγα ή επέβλεπα την έρευνα σήμερα ανοίγοντας μια ουσιαστική συζήτηση.

Αρχικά συμπεράσματα από την βιβλιογραφική ανασκόπηση

Όπως σε κάθε ερευνητική προσπάθεια, τότε ξεκίνησα με βιβλιογραφική ανασκόπηση προσπαθώντας να εντοπίσω έρευνες που μελετούσαν τη μουσικοκινητική αγωγή Orff, δηλαδή το Orff-Schulwerk ή παρεμφερείς προσεγγίσεις. Διαπίστωσα πως η σχετική έρευνα ήταν περιορισμένη και εντόπισα δύο βασικά ζητήματα. Αρχικά, παρά την ευρεία διάδοση του Orff-Schulwerk και άλλων μουσικοκινητικών προσεγγίσεων, τα εμπειρικά δεδομένα ήταν ελάχιστα. Επιπρόσθετα, οι υπάρχουσες μελέτες είχαν περιορισμένη αξία γιατί αντιμετώπιζαν προβλήματα αξιοπιστίας (Hedden & Woods, 1992; Bush, 2002). Εκείνη την εποχή η δημοφιλής ερευνητική τάση στρέφονταν είτε στη σύγκριση εκπαιδευτικών μεθόδων, είτε στην επιρροή παρεμβάσεων σε συγκεκριμένες δεξιότητες. Οι ερευνητές ακολουθούσαν πειραματικό σχεδιασμό, χρησιμοποιώντας πειραματικές ομάδες και ομάδες ελέγχου, με μετρήσεις πριν και μετά την παρέμβαση τις οποίες ανέλυαν με στατιστικές μεθόδους. Δυστυχώς αυτού του τύπου οι μελέτες έχουν δύο βασικά εννοιολογικά μειονεκτήματα. Πρώτον, αποτυγχάνοντας να αναγνωρίσουν τον καθοριστικό ρόλο του δασκάλου στη διαδικασία. Δεύτερον, αντιμετωπίζουν δυναμικές προσεγγίσεις, όπως το Orff-Schulwerk ως αυστηρές μεθόδους, παραβλέποντας την εγγενή τους ευελιξία και προσαρμοστικότητα. Δηλαδή,

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εξαιρούν μια θεμελιώδη παιδαγωγική αλήθεια: είναι σημαντικότερο ποιος/α είναι αυτό/η που διδάσκει από αυτό που διδάσκει (Hattie, 2009), ιδιαίτερα στο Orff-Schulwerk, όπου η ενεργός παιδαγωγική στάση του/της εκπαιδευτικού διαμορφώνει στη ρευστή φιλοσοφία της μεθόδου (AOSA, n.d).

Ωστόσο, εκείνη την περίοδο η «προσωπικής θεωρίας του εκπαιδευτικού» άρχισε να κερδίζει έδαφος και να φέρνει τις αντιλήψεις των δασκάλων στο προσκήνιο της έρευνας (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) υπογραμμίζοντας τη σημασία τους στην εκπαιδευτική πράξη (Schön, 1983). Η προσωπική θεωρία του εκπαιδευτικού είναι το δομημένο σύστημα άρρητων ή ρητών πεποιθήσεων, αξιών και βιωμένης γνώσης που οι εκπαιδευτικοί αποκτούν στην πορεία του χρόνου, το οποίο διαμορφώνει τις αποφάσεις, τις διδακτικές πρακτικές και την παιδαγωγική τους ταυτότητα (Chant, Heafner, & Bennett, 2004). Συντασσόμενος με αυτή τη θεώρηση, ο Carter (1990) άσκησε κριτική στην παραδοσιακή αντίληψη που θεωρούσε τους/τις εκπαιδευτικούς ως απλούς εκτελεστές ενός αναλυτικού προγράμματος τονίζοντας την πολυπλοκότητα της πρακτικής γνώσης που οικοδομούν στο πεδίο.

Θεωρήσεις όπως αυτή, άνοιξαν τον δρόμο για μια ευρύτερη επιστημολογική μετατόπιση στην εκπαιδευτική έρευνα και οι ποιοτικές μέθοδοι άρχισαν να αμφισβητούν την παραδοσιακή κυριαρχία του θετικισμού. Η αντιπαράθεση μεταξύ ποιοτικών και ποσοτικών παραδειγμάτων βρισκόταν σε πλήρη εξέλιξη, αλλά για πρώτη φορά, η κυριαρχία του θετικισμού άρχισε να αμφισβητείται.

Το προσωπικό κίνητρο και η σημαντικότητα της έρευνας

Η διδακτορική μου διατριβή εστιάζει στη μουσικοκινητική αγωγή ως θεματική ενότητα της φυσικής αγωγής, μετά την ένταξή της στο αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα του δημοτικού σχολείου, το 1995. Το περιεχόμενο της ενότητας ήταν αρκετά επηρεασμένο από το Orff-Schulwerk. Την ίδια εποχή, τα δημοτικά σχολεία άρχισαν να στελεχώνονται, για πρώτη φορά, με εκπαιδευτικούς φυσικής αγωγής (Φ.Α.). Το αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα που ακολούθησε το 2003 ενίσχυσε περαιτέρω τη θεματική ενότητα της μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής ενώ παράλληλα του Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο προχώρησε σε έκδοση βιβλίων για το δάσκαλο και το μαθητή που περιείχαν βασική θεωρητική υποστήριξη, παιδαγωγικό και διδακτικό υλικό. Η ανάθεση της συγγραφής έγινε το 2003 και η διανομή τους άρχισε το 2007. Ως μέλος της συγγραφικής ομάδας που ανέλαβε το έργο μετά από διαγωνισμό, συνέγραψα τη συγκεκριμένη ενότητα αξιοποιώντας τη δυνατότατα να ενισχύσω τη φιλοσοφία της μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής Orff.

Αν και είχα την πεποίθηση πως η μουσικοκινητική αγωγή έχει πολλά να προσφέρει στη φυσική αγωγή, ο προβληματισμός μου ήταν έντονος. Ήταν οι εκπαιδευτικοί Φ.Α. που άρχισαν σταδιακά να εντάσσονται στο δημοτικό σχολείο πριν οχτώ χρόνια, έτοιμοι να διδάξουν αυτή τη νέα ενότητα; Γενικότερα, ήταν το δημοτικό σχολείο έτοιμο να υποστηρίξει αυτή τη μετάβαση; Αναστοχαζόμενη το ευρύτερο τοπίο ήρθα αντιμέτωπη με ένα φάσμα προκλήσεων και προβληματισμών. Το ελληνικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα επέβαλε ένα κλειστό αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα το οποίο όλα τα σχολεία ήταν υποχρεωμένα να ακολουθούν. Μπορούσε μια ανοιχτή και δημιουργική προσέγγιση όπως μουσικοκινητική αγωγή να λειτουργήσει και να «ανασαίνει» σε αυτό το πλαίσιο; Επιπρόσθετα, η φυσική αγωγή στην Ελλάδα ήταν ταυτισμένη με γυμναστικές και

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αθλητικές δραστηριότητες με μοναδική εξαίρεση την ενότητα του Ελληνικού Παραδοσιακού Χορού. Τέλος, τα πανεπιστημιακά τμήματα φυσικής αγωγής, μέχρι τότε, πρόσφεραν ελάχιστα εφόδια για να διδάξει ένας/μια απόφοιτός/τή τους στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση και ειδικότερα να υποστηρίξει μια ενότητα που στηρίζεται στην έκφραση και τη δημιουργικότητα.
Οι αλληλένδετοι ρόλοι μου ως εκπαιδευτικού Φ.Α, στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, ως καταρτισμένης και ενεργού δασκάλας μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής Orff και ως συγγραφέα των επίσημων σχολικών εγχειριδίων, μου δημιούργησαν την επιτακτική ανάγκη να ερευνήσω τον τρόπο λειτουργίας και τις εμπειρίες που προκύπτουν από τη διδασκαλία της μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής στο πλαίσιο της φυσικής αγωγής.

Επιλογή μεθόδου

Η επιλογή της μεθόδου υπαγορεύεται από τον ερευνητικό σκοπό, σε συνδυασμό με τα διαθέσιμα δεδομένα που εντοπίζονται στη βιβλιογραφία (Creswell & Creswell 2018, Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Έτσι, η πρόθεσή μου να διερευνήσω το βίωμα και την εκπαιδευτική εμπειρία από τη διδασκαλία της νεοεισαχθήσας μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής στο πλαίσιο της φυσικής αγωγής —δεδομένης της περιορισμένης έρευνας πάνω στο θέμα— με οδήγησε στην αναζήτηση κατάλληλης μεθόδου. Ήταν προφανές πως μια τέτοια διερεύνηση δεν θα μπορούσε να εξυπηρετηθεί από την κυρίαρχη, σχεδόν υποχρεωτική εκείνη την εποχή, θετικιστική παράδοση. Ο πειραματικός σχεδιασμός και η ποσοτική ανάλυση αδυνατούσαν να απαντήσουν τα ερωτήματά μου.

Σήμερα, είναι πλέον κοινά αποδεκτό ότι τα ποσοτικά μοντέλα αδυνατούν να καταγράψουν και να ερμηνεύσουν την πολυπλοκότητα της διδασκαλίας, ιδίως ενός δημιουργικού και καλλιτεχνικού μαθήματος, όπως και την ζώσα πραγματικότητα που καλούνται να διαχειριστούν οι εκπαιδευτικοί. Τότε, υποχρεώθηκα να περάσω μέσα από έντονες επιστημολογικές αντιπαραθέσεις με την επιβλέπουσα επιτροπή μου, ώστε να τεκμηριώσω την επιλογή της εθνογραφικής μελέτης περίπτωσης ως τον ενδεδειγμένο ερευνητικό σχεδιασμό για τη διδακτορική μου έρευνα. Η μελέτη μου πάνω στη μεθοδολογία, με οδηγούσε στην πεποίθηση πως εθνογραφική μελέτη περίπτωσης αποτελούσε την πλέον ενδεδειγμένη προσέγγιση για να αποτυπώσει τη ζωντανή πολυπλοκότητα του πεδίου. Θα μου επέτρεπε να διερευνήσω τις πραγματικές εμπειρίες μαθητών και εκπαιδευτικών από αυτή την εκπαιδευτική καινοτομία με δεδομένη την έλλειψη επαρκούς κατάρτισης και επιμόρφωσης των εκπαιδευτικών, την εισαγωγή των νέων σχολικών εγχειριδίων και την περιορισμένη υφιστάμενη έρευνα (Merriam, 1998, Hammersley, 1990).

Ξεκίνησα την έρευνα, ενώ υπηρετούσα στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση ως εκπαιδευτικός Φ.Α. και φέροντας πολλαπλούς ρόλους: του συγγραφέα των σχολικών εγχειριδίων, της σχεδιάστριας και συντονίστριας της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας και της συμμετοχικής παρατηρήτριας. Εκείνη την εποχή, αυτή η «διασταύρωση ρόλων» αντιμετωπίστηκε ως σύγκρουση ρόλων και ερευνητικός περιορισμός. Σήμερα, αναγνωρίζουμε ότι αυτό δεν αποτελεί σύγκρουση, αλλά δομικό στοιχείο της ερευνητικής θέσης (θεσιότητας/postitionality) του/της επιστήμονα. Η δήλωσή της θεωρείται πλέον απαραίτητη και αν είναι πλούσια, όπως η δική μου τότε, αναγνωρίζεται ως πλεονέκτημα που ενισχύει την αξιοπιστία και το βάθος της έρευνας (Berger, 2015· Holmes, 2020).

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Η ερευνητική διαδικασία

Η μελέτη σχεδιάστηκε το 2004 και υλοποιήθηκε το ακαδημαϊκό έτος 2025-2026. Στην έρευνα συμμετείχαν δύο δημόσια δημοτικά σχολεία, τα οποία επιλέχθηκαν μέσω δειγματοληψίας ευκολίας, οι εκπαιδευτικοί Φ.Α. και οι 85 μαθητές και μαθήτριες της Γ' και Δ' τάξης των σχολείων. Ο σκοπός της έρευνας ήταν η διερεύνηση των εμπειριών μαθητών και εκπαιδευτικών, ο εντοπισμός παραγόντων που διευκολύνουν ή περιορίζουν τη διδασκαλία της μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής και η αξιολόγηση της επίτευξης των στόχων της φυσικής αγωγής. Τα εργαλεία συλλογής δεδομένων περιλάμβαναν συμμετοχική παρατήρηση, ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις και γραπτές αναφορές των εκπαιδευτικών Φ.Α.

Η διάρκεια της έρευνας ήταν ένα ακαδημαϊκό έτος. Περιλάμβανε παρατήρηση και αξιολόγηση των δύο πλαισίων πριν από την παρέμβαση, την ίδια την παρέμβαση —η οποία είχε την διάρκεια που όριζε το αναλυτικό πρόγραμμα— και την παρατήρηση μετά την παρέμβαση. Θα ήθελα να υπογραμμίσω πως η αξιολόγηση δεν επικεντρώθηκε μόνο στις συμμετέχουσες εκπαιδευτικούς και μαθητές/τριες. Συμπεριέλαβε το ευρύτερο εκπαιδευτικό πλαίσιο ως σύστημα. Η φάση πριν την παρέμβαση περιλάμβανε παρατήρηση του εκπαιδευτικού συγκειμένου, σε συνδυασμό με τη διεξαγωγή συνεντεύξεων με τους εκπαιδευτικούς Φ.Α. και με λοιπούς εκπαιδευτικούς της σχολικής μονάδας. Η παρέμβαση διήρκεσε δύο μήνες. Η εργασία πεδίου επιστεγάστηκε από μια μετα-παρεμβατική φάση παρατήρησης και συνεντεύξεων. Επιδίωξή μου ήταν η διερεύνηση του αποτυπώματος της παρέμβασης στο ευρύτερο εκπαιδευτικό συγκείμενο. Επιδίωκα την συν-εργασία με τους δύο εκπαιδευτικούς Φ.Α. και τη σύσταση μιας επιστημονικής και ερευνητικής ομάδας. Στόχευα στην συνδιαμόρφωση της έρευνας, άκουγα προσεκτικά τις τοποθετήσεις και τους αναστοχασμούς τους. Μέσα από αυτή τη διαδικασία, επιχειρούσα στη γεφύρωση του κενού που χωρίζει την εκπαιδευτική πολιτικής, τα αναλυτικά προγράμματα και τα εγχειρίδια από όσα πραγματικά συμβαίνουν σε ένα σχολείο.

Μια από τις σημαντικότερες φάσεις μια ερευνητικής διαδικασίας, ίσως η πιο σημαντική, είναι η ανάλυση των ερευνητικών δεδομένων. Έχοντας επιλέξει την εθνογραφική μελέτη περίπτωσης, οδηγήθηκα στην επαγωγική ανάλυση (LeCompte et al., 1993). Μοιραία, βρέθηκα σε μια πάλη με τον τεράστιο όγκο των πρωτογενών δεδομένων από την παρατήρηση και τις συνεντεύξεις (Burns,2000). Μέσα από κωδικοποίηση και συνεχή σύγκριση, αναδύθηκαν οι κατηγορίες οι οποίες μου επέτρεπαν την απάντηση των ερευνητικών ερωτημάτων. Σήμερα, αναρωτιέμαι κατά πόσο η ανάλυσή μου ήταν επαγωγή δεδομένων όσων γνωρίζω και ισχύουν σήμερα. Σε αυτό θα αναφερθώ στην ενότητα του κειμένου στην οποία εξετάζω τις μεθοδολογικές επιλογές που έκανα τότε με τα σημερινά δεδομένα.

Σε αυτό το σημείο θα παραθέσω σύντομα τα βασικά συμπεράσματα της έρευνας, δεδομένου ότι ανήκουν σε μια διαφορετική εποχή και πλαίσιο. Αξίζει να σημειωθεί πως ήταν από τις πρώτες στην Ελλάδα που ανέδειξαν την επίδραση του ευρύτερου εκπαιδευτικού πλαισίου στα ερευνητικά αποτελέσματα. Η έρευνα προσδιόρισε τους παράγοντες που είτε διευκολύνουν είτε δυσχεραίνουν τη συγκεκριμένη θεματική ενότητα. Επίσης, κατηγοριοποίησε τις προτάσεις των εκπαιδευτικών και των μαθητών—μια πραγματική ερευνητική καινοτομία για την εποχή

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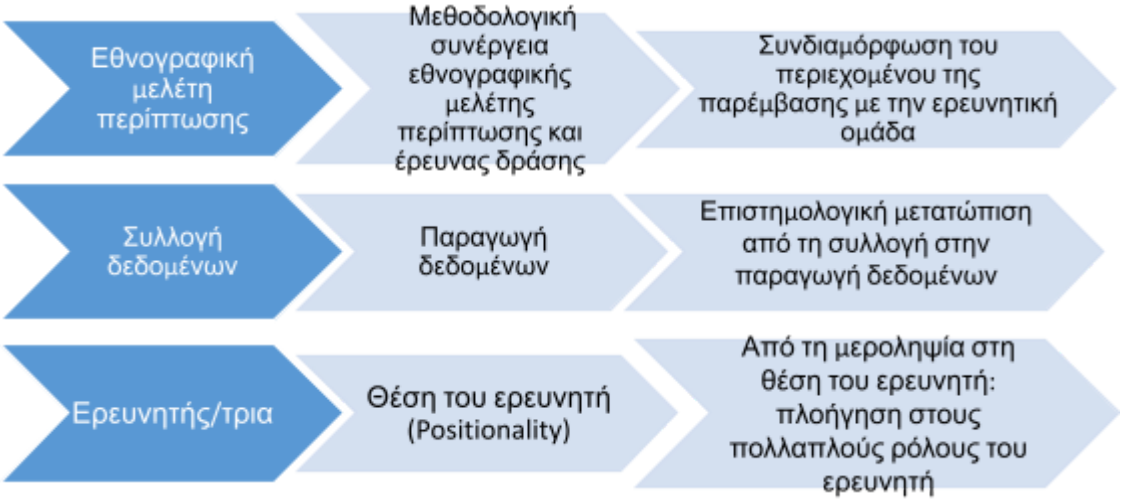
της—χαρτογραφώντας ταυτόχρονα τα βασικά ζητήματα που απαιτούσαν περαιτέρω διερεύνηση. Τα αποτελέσματα είχαν, τότε, τη δυναμική να αξιοποιηθούν στη χάραξη και τον σχεδιασμό εκπαιδευτικής πολιτικής και για πρακτικές εφαρμογές στο πεδίο

Επανεξετάζοντας την ερευνητική διαδικασία: Κριτικός αναστοχασμός

Μια κριτική επισκόπηση της μεθοδολογίας δημιουργεί το ερώτημα σχετικά με το πώς θα σχεδιαζόταν μια τέτοια μελέτη στο σύγχρονο ερευνητικό τοπίο. Αναστοχαζόμενη μέσα από τον σημερινό μου ρόλο ως μέντορα, αναρωτιέμαι σχετικά με τις κατευθύνσεις που θα προσέφερα σε μεταπτυχιακούς φοιτητές/τριες οι οποίοι/ες θα αναλάμβαναν μια ανάλογη ερευνητική πρόκληση. Αρχικά θα έπρεπε να διασφαλιστεί πως τα ερευνητικά ερωτήματα ανταποκρίνονται στις σύγχρονες εκπαιδευτικές και κοινωνικές ανάγκες. Με οδηγό τις γνώσεις και τις εμπειρίες που απέκτησα στα χρόνια που μεσολάβησαν, θα επιχειρήσω μια πρόταση επικαιροποίησης της μεθοδολογίας μου.

Αξιοποιώντας την ευελιξία, την ανάπτυξη και την αποδοχή της ποιοτικής μεθοδολογίας από την ακαδημαϊκή κοινότητα, θα πρότεινα έναν ερευνητικό σχεδιασμό που συνδυάζει την εθνογραφική μελέτη περίπτωσης με την έρευνα-δράση (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Συγκεκριμένα, θα έδινα περισσότερη έμφαση και χώρο στη συνδιαμόρφωση του περιεχομένου με τους εκπαιδευτικούς, ενδυναμώνοντας την λειτουργία μιας ενιαία ερευνητική ομάδα, ενώ ως ερευνήτρια θα αναλάμβανα τον ρόλο της κριτικής φίλης (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Ιδανικά, θα πρότεινα τη συμμετοχή ενός ή δύο επιπλέον κριτικών φίλων. Επιπλέον, θα ζητούσα από τον ερεηυντή/τρια να ορίσει με ακρίβεια τη θέση (researcher positionality), συνθήκη δικαίως απαραίτητη στη σύγχρονη ποιοτική έρευνα (Holmes, 2020). Αν είχα τη αυτή δυνατότητα τότε, θα είχα παρακάμψει πολυάριθμες προκλήσεις και επικρίσεις.

Σχήμα 1. Μεθοδολογικές μετατοπίσεις



Προχωρώντας θα εξηγούσα στους νέους/ες ερευνητές/τρεις και στους/τις εκπαιδευτικούς, γιατί η σύγχρονη μεθοδολογία αναφέρεται σε παραγωγή και όχι συλλογή δεδομένων και θα ενίσχυα τις ικανότητές τους να συμμετέχουν μια τέτοια ερευνητική διαδικασία. Θα εμπλούτιζα, επίσης, τα δεδομένα της συμμετοχικής

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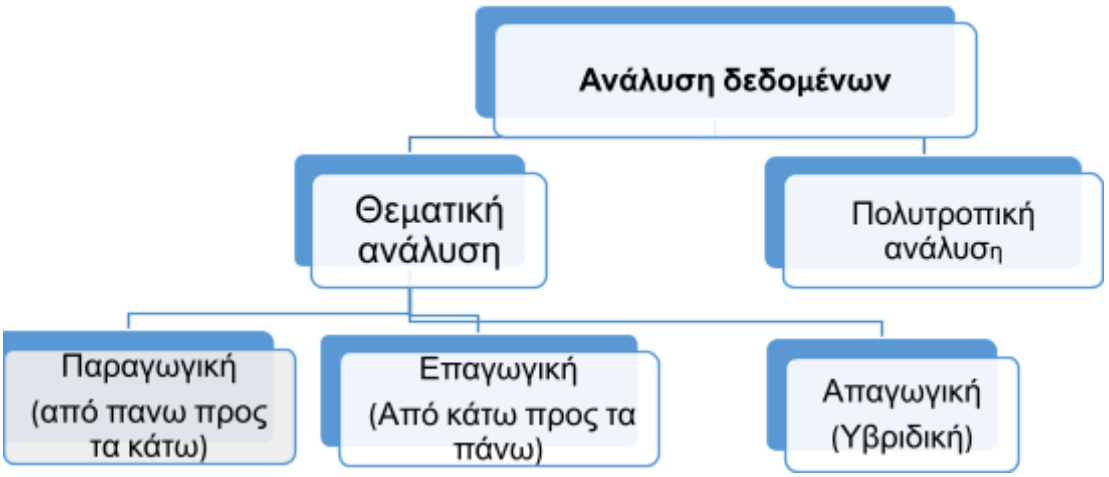
παρατήρησης με πολυτροπικά δεδομένα και ανάλυση (Jewitt, 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Αυτά θα αφορούσαν κυρίως μουσικές και χορευτικές συνθέσεις των παιδιών στην τάξη, καθώς και φωτογραφίες που τραβήχτηκαν όλες και όλους τους/τις συμμετέχοντες/ες. Επιπλέον, θα αντικαθιστούσα τις ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις με τα παιδιά με ομάδες εστίασης, προκειμένου να αξιοποιήσω τη δυναμική της ομάδας για την ανάδειξη συλλογικών νοημάτων (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Θα ακολουθούσα την ίδια προσέγγιση στο υπόλοιπο προσωπικό του σχολείου μετά την παρέμβαση. Τέλος, θα αντικαθιστούσα τις γραπτές αναφορές των εκπαιδευτικών με αναστοχαστικά ημερολόγια επιδιώκοντας μια βαθύτερη κατανόηση (Miles et al., 2014).

Σχήμα 2: Μετατοπίσεις στα μέσα παραγωγής και συλλογής δεδομένων



Σε αυτό το σημείο θα εστιάσω στη θεματική ανάλυση η οποία αποτελεί μια βασική μέθοδο της ποιοτικής έρευνας και αντικείμενου συνεχούς επιστημολογικής συζήτησης. Η φάση της ανάλυσης σε μια έρευνα συνεχίζει να αποτελεί μια πάλη ανάμεσα στον ερευνητή και τα πρωτογενή δεδομένα. Τότε, ταύτιζα τη θεματική ανάλυση με την επαγωγική προσέγγιση, θεωρώντας ότι αποτελούσε τη μοναδική επιλογή. Τώρα συνειδητοποιώ ότι η προσέγγισή μου ήταν περισσότερο παραγωγική παρά επαγωγική. Όμως, υπήρχε ένα στοιχείο απαγωγικής συλλογιστικής, παρόλο που δεν είχα επίγνωση της ύπαρξης και της σημασίας του. Αυτή η μεθοδολογική επιλογή ήταν αρκετά αντισυμβατική για την εποχή εκείνη.

Σχήμα 3: Μέθοδοι θεματικής ανάλυσης



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Σήμερα, αξιοποιώ όπως και πολλοί ερευνητές το μεθοδικό και αναστοχαστικό πλαίσιο των έξι σταδίων που προτείνουν οι Brawn και Clarke (2022, 206). Έχουμε, επίσης, στη διάθεσή μας λογισμικά (CAQDAS), όπως NVivo και το ATLAS.ti, που μπορούν να βοηθήσουν στη διαχείριση των πρωτογενών δεδομένων. Όμως, τα τεχνολογικά εργαλεία δεν μπορούν να υποκαταστήσουν την κριτική κατανόηση του ερευνητή ως προς το ιδιαίτερο πλαίσιο μιας μελέτης.

Coda

Συντασσόμενη με τον W. Edwards Deming (1986), θεωρώ πως η διατύπωση του ερωτήματος αποτελεί την κρισιμότερη φάση της έρευνας. Στην εκπαίδευση, αν και τα θεμελιώδη ερωτήματα παραμένουν ουσιαστικά αμετάβλητα, οι απαντήσεις οφείλουν να επικαιροποιούνται διαρκώς, ώστε να αντικατοπτρίζουν έναν κόσμο που εξελίσσεται ραγδαία. Η επιλογή της μεθόδου πρέπει να υπαγορεύεται από το ερευνητικό ερώτημα και όχι από την επάρκεια του ερευνητή/τριας να την διαχειριστεί ή την αντιλαμβανόμενη επιστημονική εγκυρότητα της μεθόδου, όπως συνέβαινε συχνά όταν επικρατούσε ο θετικισμός. Προς αποσαφήνιση, εκτιμώ βαθύτατα τη σημαντική συμβολή της ποσοτικής έρευνας και της στατιστικής ανάλυσης.

Κάθε ερευνητής/τρια καλείται να εξοικειωμένος/η με ποικίλες μεθόδους ώστε να μπορεί να επιλέξει την καταλληλότερη για την έρευνά του. Ένας στιβαρός ερευνητικός σχεδιασμός απαιτεί εξοικείωση τόσο με τα ποιοτικά όσο και με τα ποσοτικά εννοιολογικά παραδείγματα. Στις περιπτώσεις που ο ερευνητής/τρια αδυνατεί να διαχειριστεί επαρκώς και τις δύο μεθοδολογίες, αναδεικνύεται η σημασία των ερευνητικών συνεργασιών. Πάντα δε, η ερευνητική διαδικασία και οι πιθανές συνεργασίες εξαρτώνται από το ερευνητικό ερώτημα.

Θα ήθελα να ολοκληρώσω με ένα προσωπικό αναστοχασμό. Χαίρομαι με την ανάπτυξη και αποδοχή των ποιοτικών μεθόδων όμως, ταυτόχρονα, διακατέχομαι από μια αυξανόμενη ανησυχία: καθώς οι ποιοτικές προσεγγίσεις πληθαίνουν, κινδυνεύουν να χάσουν τη μεθοδολογική τους αυστηρότητας. Επιπλέον, είναι επιτακτική ανάγκη να απομακρυνθούμε από έρευνες που βασίζονται σε επουσιώδη ερωτήματα, καθώς αυτές αναπόφευκτα οδηγούν σε στερεοτυπικά συμπεράσματα, στα οποία είναι εμφανής η μεροληψία του ερευνητή. Η επιδίωξή μου είναι μια βαθύτερη και ουσιαστική σύγκλιση μεταξύ θεωρίας και πράξης. Υποστηρίζω την έρευνα που προσφέρει ουσιαστικές γνώσεις και απτή υποστήριξη στην εκπαιδευτική πολιτική και στους/τις εκπαιδευτικούς. Αποσαφηνίζω πως, ο στόχος δεν είναι η επιβολή άκαμπτου περιεχομένου ή δογματικών πεποιθήσεων, αλλά η ενδυνάμωση των επαγγελματιών ώστε να διαμορφώσουν κριτικά τη δικό τους τρόπο σκέψης, να δομήσουν μια ευέλικτη προσωπική θεωρία και να ενισχύσουν τις εκπαιδευτικές και διδακτικές τους μεθόδους.

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Ως ενεργή ερευνήτρια και συγγραφέας, έχει δημοσιεύσει μία μονογραφία, κεφάλαια σε 12 συλλογικούς τόμους και πολυάριθμα άρθρα σε επιστημονικά περιοδικά και πρακτικά συνεδρίων. Η επαγγελματική της πορεία της ξεκινά το 1990 έχοντας εργαστεί ως εκπαιδευτικός Φυσικής Αγωγής στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση, δασκάλα μουσικοκινητικής αγωγής και χορού και καλλιτέχνης. Έχει επίσης διδάξει στο Ευρωπαϊκό Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου.

Σήμερα, διδάσκει στο Τμήμα Εκπαίδευσης και Αγωγής στην Προσχολική Ηλικία του Ε.Κ.Π.Α. Παράλληλα, διδάσκει και συνεργάζεται με μεταπτυχιακά προγράμματα σπουδών στο Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας, στο Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης και στο Ε.Κ.Π.Α., ενώ πραγματοποιεί σεμινάρια διά βίου μάθησης. Είναι Επίτιμη Πρόεδρος του Ελληνικού Συλλόγου Carl Orff.

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Elemental Music and Dance Pedagogy in Primary Schools: A Critical Reflection on a Study Conducted 20 Years Ago

Olympia Agalianou

The "Why" Behind This Article

This paper is an autoethnographic account that explores shifts in research methodology while reflectively addressing my experiences and academic identity. Specifically, this reflects on my doctoral study from twenty years ago, on the elemental dance and music pedagogy in Greek Primary Schools. One might wonder: why should we revisit this past study? Why dedicate time to discuss research from two decades ago in a world that feels completely different, especially considering that technology has transformed our reality?

I chose this research as a starting point for an epistemological discussion that may deepen our understanding of the present. It was the first study to investigate an Orff-Schulwerk-based education intervention in the field, and it was conducted during a period of intense methodological debate within the field of educational research. It represents one of the earliest educational research projects to adopt a qualitative approach examining educational interventions conducted in Greece. At that time, positivism was the dominant epistemological paradigm. Since then, qualitative research methodology has progressed significantly. I believe that a critical and reflective review of my past methodological choices— through the lens of my current role as a researcher and mentor — can foster a meaningful dialogue regarding how these choices could be adopted in today's research landscape.

Initial Literature Review Insights

As with any research endeavour, I began my doctoral study by conducting a literature review, attempting to identify studies examining interventions based on Orff-Schulwerk or similar approaches. In this endeavour, I discovered that existing research was limited, and I also identified two key issues. First, despite the widespread use of Orff-Schulwerk and other related approaches, there was a lack of empirical research data. Furthermore, existing studies were of limited value, raising questions about the validity of their experimental findings (Hedden& Woods, 1992; Bush, 2002). At that time, the prevailing research trend focused either on comparing educational methods or on the influence of intervention programs on specific skills. In both cases, researchers utilised experimental designs, employing intervention and control groups, conducting various pre- and post-intervention measurements, and analysing data using statistical methods. Regrettably, these types of studies suffer from two major conceptual flaws. Firstly, they completely marginalise the teacher, failing to recognise their critical role in the process. Secondly, they mistakenly classify dynamic approaches such as Orff-Schulwerk as inflexible methodologies, overlooking their inherent flexibility and adaptability. Such studies failed to recognise a foundational pedagogical truth that who teaches matters far more than what is taught (Hattie, 2009), especially within Orff-Schulwerk, where the educator’s active pedagogical stance is central to the method’s fluid philosophy (AOSA, n.d).

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However, during that period, the concept of the "teacher's personal theory" began to gain ground and bring teachers' perceptions to the forefront of research, underlining the importance of their unique perspectives in educational discourse (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and highlighting the importance of their personal ideas and knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1983). A teacher's personal theory refers to the structured system of implicit or explicit beliefs, values, and experiential knowledge that educators develop over time, and which actively shapes their classroom decisions, instructional practices, and pedagogical identity (Chant, Heafner & Bennet, 2004). In line with this shift, Carter (1990) critically argued against the traditional view of teachers as mere implementers of curriculum, emphasising instead the complexity of the practical knowledge they actively construct.

Ultimately, these types of ideas paved the way for a broader epistemological shift that was taking place in educational research, as qualitative methods began to challenge the traditional dominance of positivism. The debate between qualitative and quantitative paradigms was in full swing, and for the first time, the positivist status quo was being seriously questioned.

Personal Motivation and Significance of the Study

My doctoral research focused on Movement and Music Education, a thematic unit that was introduced into the school physical education curriculum in 1995 and has been influenced by Orff-Schulwerk philosophy. Concurrently, there was a significant change in Greek physical education, as primary schools across the country began to be staffed by university-trained physical education (PE) teachers. In 2003, a new curriculum further consolidated this thematic unit. In parallel, the National Pedagogical Institute initiated the publication of official textbooks and teacher manuals to provide the necessary theoretical framework and pedagogical materials. Additionally, student books were issued for the first time, though their pedagogical purpose and application remained unclear. Although the development of these books commenced in 2003, they were eventually distributed in 2007. Having been selected through a national competition to author and oversee this specific unit in the new books, I had the opportunity to integrate the Orff-Schulwerk philosophy deeply into the fabric.

However, this development raised a critical question when innovation met reality: were these PE teachers, who had started integrating into primary education just eight years prior, genuinely prepared to implement such an innovation? Furthermore, was the Greek primary school system as a whole ready to support this transition? Yet, this investigation was also catalysed by a broader spectrum of contextual challenges. In Greece, at that time, all schools operated under a centralised and rigid curriculum, raising the question of how a creative and expressive approach could successfully thrive and ‘breathe’ within such a framework. Additionally, there was a widespread perception that the school physical education curriculum was primarily dominated by sports, leaving Greek traditional dance as the sole exception. Ultimately, until that period, the university curricula in Physical Education and Sport Sciences departments offered limited training for teaching primary school children, particularly regarding expressive and creative approaches.

Given my interconnected roles as a primary school physical education specialist, a trained and active Orff practitioner, and the author of the official textbooks, investigating the lived

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experiences generated by this curriculum innovation emerged as an essential and imperative path.

Choosing Method

The choice of method is dictated by the research purpose, alongside the available data reported in the literature (Creswell & Creswell 2018, Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). My intention to explore the lived educational experience of implementing elemental dance and music pedagogy as a new thematic unit in Greek physical education—given the limited research on the topic—led me to search for an appropriate methodology. It was clear that this kind of investigation could not be carried out using an experimental design from the positivist, quantitative tradition—even if, at the time, that dominant methodology felt almost mandatory.

Today, we can finally acknowledge that standard quantitative measurements fail to capture the complexity of teaching an artistic and creative subject, as well as the raw friction of teachers' navigation. Back then, I had to struggle through deep epistemological debates with my supervisors to justify choosing an ethnographic case study as the method of my doctoral research. According to my own reflection, an ethnographic case study was the only method that could capture living complexity and allow me to investigate the actual lived experiences of students and teachers facing the innovation gap within physical education, given the lack of adequate teacher training, the introduction of new textbooks, and the limited existing research (Merriam,1998; Hammersley, 1990).

I embarked on this investigation, while serving in primary education as a PE teacher, holding various roles at the time: as the textbook author, research designer, and participant observer. At the time, this intersection was viewed as a potential research conflict. From today's perspective, we recognise this not as a conflict, but as a core element of the researcher's positionality. Today, declaring the researcher's positionality is widely considered essential, and a rich, nuanced positionality is recognised as a powerful asset that enhances the credibility and depth of the research (Berger, 2015; Holmes, 2020).

The Research Process

After the study and its research design in 2004, the fieldwork was conducted during the 2005–2006 academic year. It involved two public primary schools selected through convenience sampling, along with their PE teachers and 85 third- and fourth-grade students. The purpose of the fieldwork was to investigate students' and teachers' experiences, identify facilitating and hindering factors, and evaluate the achievement of PE goals. Data collection tools included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and the written reports of the PE teachers.

Spanning an entire academic year, the research encompassed observation and evaluation of the two settings before the intervention, the intervention itself—which followed the exact duration specified by the curriculum—and post-intervention observation. Critically, the evaluation focused not only on the participating teachers and children, but also on the broader educational context as a whole. The pre-intervention phase lasted two months and comprised context observation along with interviews with both the PE teachers and other school educators. The intervention phase likewise lasted two months. The fieldwork

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concluded with a two-month post-intervention phase, which sought to explore the transferability of the intervention to the broader school context. I intended to work collaboratively with the two PE teachers as a scientific and research team, co-creating content while actively listening to their insights and reflections. My goal was to bridge the gap between educational policy design, curricula, and textbooks, and the actual reality of the school environment.

One of the most important phases of any research process, perhaps even the most important one, is data analysis. Since I was conducting an ethnographic case study, I followed an inductive analysis approach, wrestling with amounts of raw data from hours of observations and interviews (LeCompte et al., 1993). Through constant comparison and coding, I allowed the categories to emerge organically to answer my research questions (Burns,2000). Yet, was it a true inductive analysis by today's standards? The next section of the text examines this issue, alongside a reflective overview of the methodology through the lens of my current role.

Prior to proceeding, I will provide only a brief overview of the findings, given that they belong to a different time and context. Nevertheless, this research was among the first in Greece to demonstrate the significance of the wider educational environment for research results. Specifically, it identified the factors that either facilitate or hinder this thematic unit. It also categorised future recommendations from both teachers and students—a true research innovation for its time—while mapping out the key issues that required further investigation. At the time, the results had the potential to be leveraged for both educational policymaking and planning as well as for practical applications in the field.

Revisiting the Research Process: A Critical Reflection

A critical review of the original methodology prompts a fundamental question regarding how such a study would be designed within the contemporary research landscape. Furthermore, reflecting through the lens of my current role as a mentor, it invites a consideration of the guidance I would offer postgraduate students embarking on a similar academic challenge. First and foremost, this entails ensuring that their research questions are deeply contextualised within contemporary educational and societal needs. Through a reflective lens and guided by the knowledge and experience gained over the intervening years, I will attempt to revise my methodology, conceptualising how this study would be conducted today.

Building on the growth, the openness and the acceptance of qualitative methodology in academia, I propose a research design that combines an ethnographic case study with action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Specifically, I would emphasise the co-design of the intervention's content alongside the teachers, prompting them to function more effectively as a unified research team, while the researcher assumes the role of a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993). Ideally, I would also welcome the involvement of one or two additional critical friends. Furthermore, I would strongly urge them to precisely define researcher positionality. Such transparency is strictly required in contemporary scholarship (Holmes, 2020). Indeed, had the methodology offered me this opportunity at the time, I would have bypassed numerous challenges and critiques.

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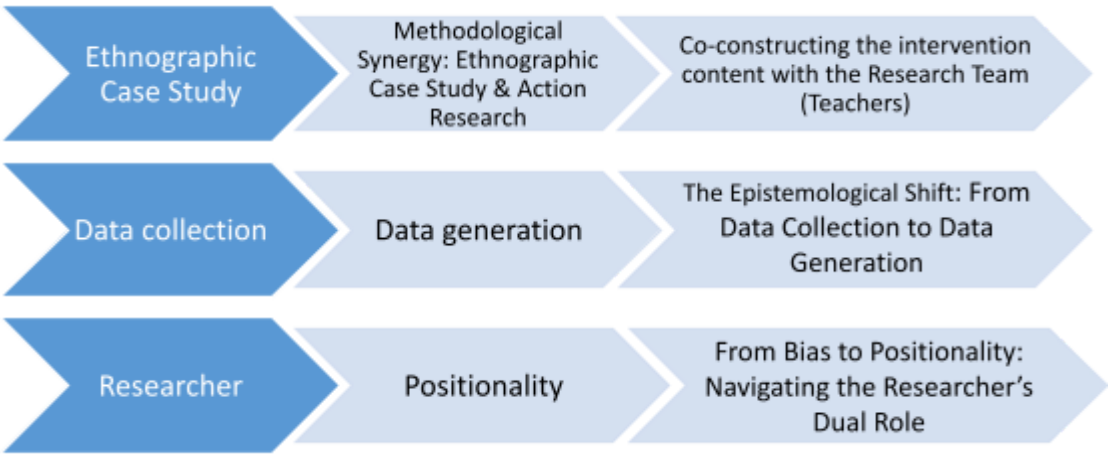
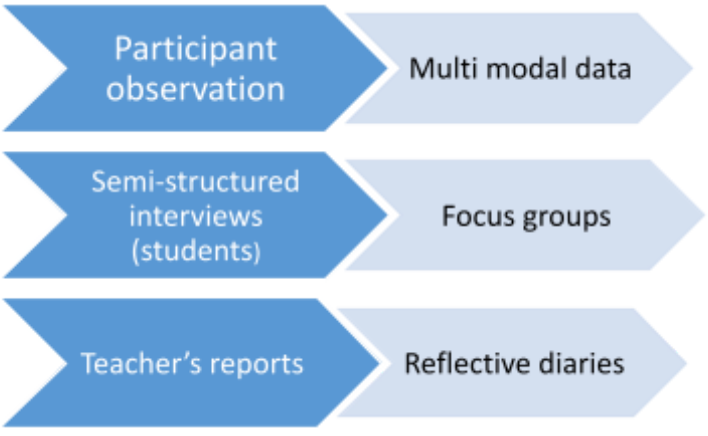
Figure 1. Methodological shifts



Moving forward, I would explain to new researchers and to the teachers why contemporary qualitative methodology refers to data generation rather than data collection, and equip them with the skills to generate rich, high-quality qualitative data. I would also enrich the participant observation data using multimodal data and analysis (Jewitt, 2014; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). This would primarily include children's in-class musical and dance compositions and photographs taken by both students and teachers. Additionally, I would replace semi-structured student interviews with focus groups to leverage group dynamics in uncovering collective meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I would replicate this interview approach with the school staff during the post-intervention phase. Furthermore, instead of standard teacher reports, I would introduce reflective diaries for deeper insights into daily practices (Miles et al., 2014).

Figure 2. Shifts in Data Collection and Production



At this juncture, the focus shifts to thematic analysis, a core qualitative method continually debated epistemologically. This research phase is always an iterative struggle between the researcher and the complexity of the raw data (Polat, 2025). Initially, I equated thematic analysis with an inductive approach, assuming it was the sole method.

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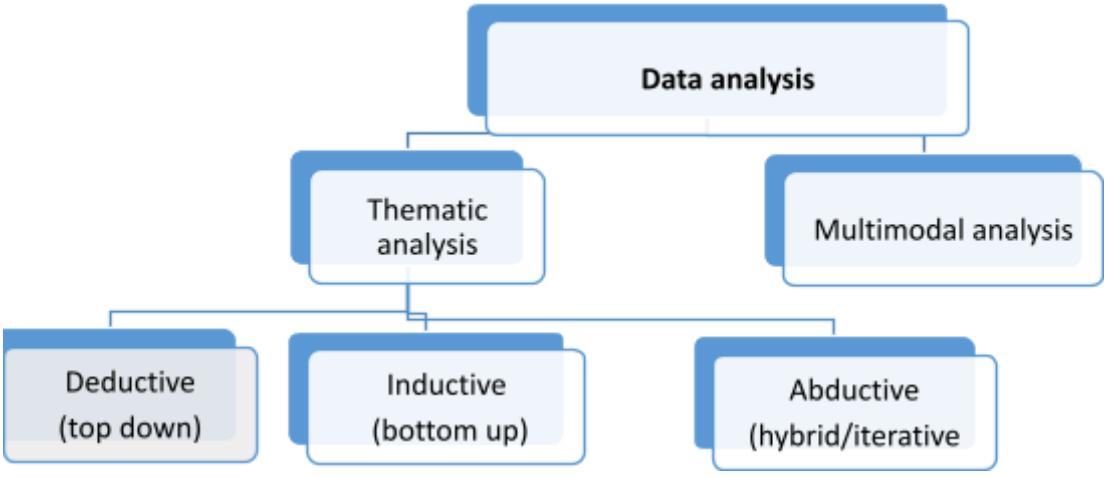
Today I recognise that thematic analysis hinges on three logical reasoning methods: deductive, inductive, and abductive. These methods determine whether a top-down or bottom-up approach is utilised to navigate between data, research questions, and theory (Reichertz, 2014). Reflecting on my earlier work, I realise that my approach was deductive rather than inductive. However, there was an element of abductive reasoning, even though I was unaware of its existence and significance. This methodological choice was quite unconventional for that time.

Figure 3. Thematic analysis methods



Today, Braun and Clarke's six-stage framework offers me and other researchers valuable guidance and emphasises reflexive practices (Braun & Clarke, 2022, 2006). We also have at our disposal specialised Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti, for raw data management. However, in my view, technological tools cannot replace a researcher's critical understanding of a study's unique context.

Coda

Inspired by W. Edwards Deming (1986), I believe framing the right question is the most crucial part of research. In education, although core questions have fundamentally remained unchanged, our responses must be continuously updated to reflect a rapidly evolving world. Ultimately, the choice of method should depend solely on the research question, not on the researcher's proficiency to implement it or perceived scientific validity, as was often the case with the positivist paradigm. To clarify, I deeply appreciate the significant contributions of quantitative research and statistical analysis.

Researchers should be adept in various methodologies to choose the best fit for their inquiries. A strong research design requires familiarity with both qualitative and quantitative conceptual paradigms, highlighting the value of research collaborations when individual scholars cannot perform both analyses independently.

In this case too, the research process and potential collaborations depend entirely on the research question.

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I would like to conclude with my personal reflection. While celebrating the advancement and widespread adoption of qualitative methodologies, I share a growing concern within the academic community. Specifically, as qualitative approaches proliferate, I recognise a lurking risk of delusion and loss of methodological rigour. Additionally, it is essential to shift away from research driven by trivial inquiries, as they inevitably result in formulaic conclusions where researcher bias is evident. My aspiration is to foster a deeper, more meaningful convergence between theory and practice. I advocate for research that offers transferable, actionable insights and tangible support for practitioners. To be clear, the goal is not to enforce rigid content or dogmatic beliefs, but to empower practitioners to critically develop their own professional mindsets, create a flexible personal theory, and enhance their educational and instructional methods.

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Today, she teaches at the Department of Early Childhood Education of N.K.U.A. Additionally, she collaborates with postgraduate programmes at the University of Macedonia, Democritus University of Thrace, and N.K.U.A., while actively delivering lifelong learning seminars. She is the Honorary President of the Hellenic Orff-Schulwerk Association.

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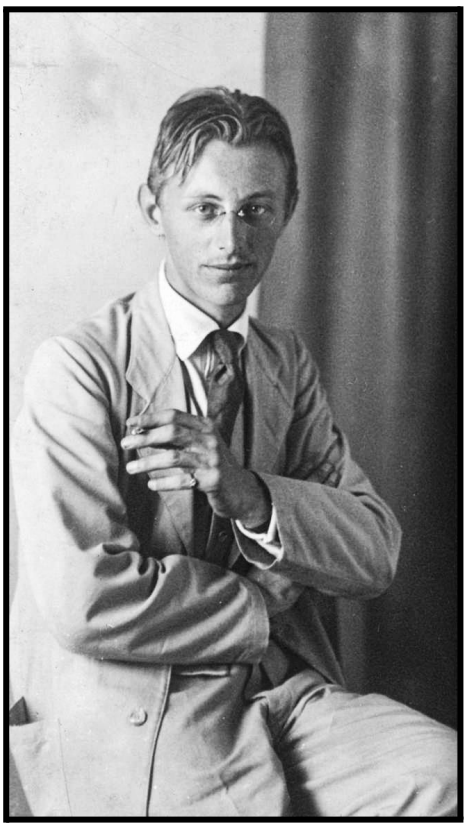
Wagner – Strauss – Orff: Transformations of Greek Tragedy in Music Theatre through Two World Wars

Thomas Rösch

On 4 June 1914, Carl Orff, then just under 19 years old, attended a performance of Richard Strauss's 'Elektra' at the Munich National Theatre, conducted by the composer himself. The occasion was Strauss's 50th birthday; he was then at the height of his career. Orff reacted with a sense of being "moved, captivated and enthralled",[7] yet at the same time he felt irritated, agitated and deeply unsettled. However, the young composer had been familiar with the work for some time – so why did this particular performance trigger such profound unease?



Carl Orff, around 1914
(Carl-Orff-Stiftung/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München)

In June 1914, Carl Orff was on the verge of completing his composition studies at the Academy of Music in Munich. From the very beginning, he had been dissatisfied: 'The whole academy was conservative and old-fashioned.'[8] Working independently and without guidance from his teachers, Orff immersed himself in the works of Debussy, Schoenberg and the sound experiments of the 'Futuristi'. As early as 1913, however, Orff's first stage work, based on a piece from Japanese Kabuki theatre, met with a lack of understanding from his

[7] Orff, C. (1981) *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. VII: Western Music Theatre.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 9.
[8] Orff, C. (1975) *Carl Orff and his Work. Documentation. Vol. I: Early Years.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 44.

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conservative professors. Then, in June 1914, exactly one day after the performance of 'Elektra', Orff's first orchestral work was deliberately and in an extremely humiliating manner brought to a halt by the Academy professor Eberhard Schwickerath during a public rehearsal. The demonstrative rejection of his own works – conceived in a deliberately avant-garde music language – on the one hand, and the overwhelming experience of the impressive musical power of the established Richard Strauss on the other, thus inevitably plunged the young Carl Orff into a deep artistic crisis.

Carl Orff himself describes in detail his immediate reaction to the experience of 'Elektra', by far the most progressive opera of its time: 'For me, this magnificent work represented the pinnacle of all music dramas, a peak that could never be surpassed. […] One thing I knew for certain: everything I had written and created up to that point was nothing but outdated attempts, wrong turns and dead ends. There is no further progression beyond 'Elektra', no way forward. I had to start afresh, find new ground […]. A whole edifice of my plans and hopes – in many cases far too youthful – came crashing down."[9] In the following month of July, Orff completed his studies in composition – shortly afterwards, the First World War broke out. For the young graduate of the Academy of Music, this meant that performances of his works could hardly be expected for the duration of the war. Orff's personal situation was exacerbated by the uncertainty as to whether and when he would be called up for military service. His creative work eventually came to a complete standstill.

In early August 1917, after several deferments, Orff was finally called up for military service. Following a short period of training, he was sent to the Eastern Front. According to his own account, he was buried in a shelter during heavy artillery fire – virtually buried alive – and was only rescued, unconscious, at the very last moment. This was followed by a long period of convalescence in a military hospital. No longer 'fit for military service', he was sent to the National Theatre in Mannheim as a conductor, and immediately afterwards to the Court Theatre in Darmstadt. From the summer of 1919 onwards, Orff lived in Munich as a freelance composer. The crisis that began in June 1914 was only further deepened by his wartime experiences. Triggered by his first-hand experience of the 'primordial catastrophe of the 20th century' – the onset of which also marked the collapse of both the political and cultural structures of the old Europe – he sensed, as a composer, that the development of Western music had reached a dead end.

But let us return once more to the performance of 'Elektra' in June 1914 that triggered the crisis: in his 'Memoirs', Orff describes in great detail what had so deeply irritated him at the time: 'The highly Romantic 'Elektra' orchestra with its polyphonic richness of sound and expressive power, ran the risk of drowning out the singing voices and thus compromising the intelligibility of the text. It was clear to me that a new orchestral ensemble had to be found which would restore the word to its central importance on stage.'[10] And in the unpublished drafts on this subject, he elaborates further: "I believed that only the spoken word on stage would be decisive [,] not the music, [which] would drown out the word through the

[9] Orff, C.: Handwritten drafts for *'Carl Orff and his work '. Documentation. Vol. VII*, Carl Orff Estate, Carl Orff Foundation/Archive: Orff Centre, Munich.
[10] Orff, C. (1981) *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. VII: Western Music Theatre.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 9.

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ever-expanding orchestra. I wanted the word, not the composed one […] but the one illuminated by music."[11]

The oversized late-Romantic orchestra, which threatened the intelligibility of the text: was, or is, this criticism of Elektra' at all justified?



Richard Strauss, 1914
Photo: Rudolf Dührkoop

'Elektra' is Strauss's fourth opera. In his own view, it stands 'alone' within his life's work: in it, he had 'pushed the boundaries of harmony, psychological polyphony […] and the receptiveness of modern ears to their very limits.'[12] Indeed, the composer employs a massive orchestra. The ensemble comprises over 100 musicians and enables the composer to carry out numerous experiments with timbre, as well as to achieve a truly radical expressiveness in the orchestral language.

Throughout the entire work, the music follows a symphonic style, with the singing voices embedded in the symphonic flow without participating in the polyphonic texture. Thus, it does indeed seem almost inevitable that the singers are occasionally drowned out by the

[11] Orff, C.: Handwritten drafts relating to *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. VII*, Carl Orff Estate, Carl Orff Foundation/Archive: Orff Centre, Munich.
[12] Strauss, R. (1942) Memories of the First Performances of My Operas, IN: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memories.* Mainz: Schott Music, 219–246, here 230.

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orchestra, and no one was more aware of this than Richard Strauss himself. Looking back, he wrote about 'Elektra : 'My vocal style […] often comes into conflict with the figuration and polyphony of the orchestra, and only outstanding conductors who themselves understand something of singing can achieve the dynamic and rhythmic balance between the actors and the baton. The struggle between word and sound has been the problem of my life from the very beginning, and ends with 'Capriccio' as a question mark!'[13]

Despite Richard Strauss's awareness of this problem, however, there is no sign of a fundamental departure from the large orchestra in his work. The actual reasons for this are manifold. Strauss's preference for what he termed 'poetic counterpoint' plays an important role. Prompted by a remark from Johannes Brahms, he realised that counterpoint was only justified 'when a poetic necessity compels two or more themes – contrasting not only rhythmically but, above all, harmonically in the strongest possible way – into a temporary union'[14], as Strauss put it. Not least for this reason, his orchestral sound appears so dense and tightly woven, yet also 'so brilliant and evocative, because the […] motifs and melodies insist on their own distinct character and intertwine and interconnect with other motifs in a "ruthless" manner, employing dissonance and polyrhythm.'[15]

Closely linked to this is Strauss's view that there are, and must be, passages in his works where moderating dynamic markings in the score "may be overwhelmed by the orchestra, which builds to its utmost intensity, in favour of a necessary great crescendo by the singers."[16] A subject matter such as that of 'Elektra' does indeed occasionally require more intense clusters of sound or surging crescendos in which individual words may be lost without immediately jeopardising the understanding of the action on stage. One such passage can be found, for example, in the final duet between Elektra and her sister Chrysothemis. The tension that has built up throughout the entire work is released in an increasingly intense passage.

In the following example, Inge Borkh and Marianne Schech are singing. Despite precise pronunciation and the use of microphones during the recording, the words are nevertheless almost impossible to understand. The Staatskapelle Dresden is conducted by Karl Böhm, who had the privilege of witnessing Richard Strauss's own rehearsals of 'Elektra' on several occasions.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksByBZTbadA (as from 1:34:22)

[13] Ibid., 232.
[14] Strauss, R. (1909) 'Memories of Hans von Bülow', in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memories.* Mainz: Schott Music, 183–193, here 190.
[15] Edelmann, B. (2012) Strauss and Wagner, in: Lütteken, L. (ed.) (2012) *The Richard Wagner Handbook.* Stuttgart: Metzler, 66–83, here 69.
[16] Strauss, R. (1924) Preface to 'Intermezzo', in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memories.* Mainz: Schott Music, 140–149, here 143.

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Richard Wagner, around 1877
Historical portrait photography, presumably from the studio Elliott & Fry, London.

Richard Strauss's compositional style is based to a large extent on the musical achievements of Richard Wagner. Strauss, in particular, had boundless and unreserved admiration for Wagner's orchestration. In the summer of 1945, he even wrote: '[…] following the magnificent palaces of Beethoven's symphonies, the dramatic poet and musical philosopher Richard Wagner has finally, in the language of the modern orchestra, […] brought three thousand years of cultural development to a close.'[17] This reference to Richard Wagner even serves to justify the occasional, seemingly inevitable drowning out of the text by the orchestra: "Even our greatest dramatic master succeeded in creating 'ideal recitatives' […] only in 'Lohengrin' and 'Rheingold', whilst , without any dampening of the orchestra in the great polyphonic symphonies of the second 'Tristan' act and the third 'Siegfried' act, he cannot convey to the listener the pleasure of the poet's words."[18]

Of the utmost importance to Strauss, however, was the concept developed by Wagner of an entire opera act as a 'symphonic unity'. In Richard Wagner's essay 'On the Application of Music to Drama', he writes: 'Nevertheless, in order to constitute a work of art as music, the new form of dramatic music must exhibit the unity of the symphonic movement […].'[19] Richard Strauss held fast to this idea throughout his life.

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[17] Strauss, R. (1945) Letter on the humanist grammar school, in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memories.* Mainz: Schott Music, 128–133, here 130.
[18] Strauss, R. (1924) Preface to 'Intermezzo', in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memoirs.* Mainz: Schott Music, 140–149, here 142 ff.
[19] Wagner, R. (1879) 'On the Application of Music to Drama', in: Wagner, R. (1907) *Collected Writings and Poems. Fourth edition, Vol. X.* Leipzig: Siegels Musikalienhandlung, 176–193, here 185.

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Strauss's relationship with Wagner, however, proved more complicated than is generally assumed. In compositional terms, the 'song-poem' 'Feuersnot', composed between 1896 and 1901, marked Strauss's definitive departure from Wagnerian music drama and his breakthrough to his own style of musical theatre. Nevertheless, he continued to show his unreserved respect for the role model he had ultimately outgrown right up to the end. Strauss unreservedly admired the convergence of musician, poet and theorist in Wagner's genius. And so, throughout his life, he studied not only the scores of the Bayreuth master, but also, time and again, his writings. Strauss held 'Oper und Drama', Wagner's principal theoretical work, in particularly high regard. Around 1940, he wrote: "In any case, 'Opera and Drama' is perhaps the most significant scholarly book in world history."[20]

In 'Oper und Drama', Strauss read how Richard Wagner explained the function of the modern orchestra in music drama. Wagner derived the orchestra from the chorus of ancient Greek tragedy; he wrote: 'The chorus of Greek tragedy has left behind, in the modern orchestra alone, its emotionally essential significance for drama […].'[21] The prerequisite for this decisive 'transfer of function' is the concept of the so-called leitmotifs, which can be associated primarily with specific words, but also with objects, images or other associations. When repeated as an 'orchestral melody', this semantically charged musical motif can complement the respective new dramatic situation, comment on it, or even cast it in a different light through the meaning it conveys.

But how, according to Wagner, could the chorus of Greek tragedy be transformed into the modern orchestra? And what consequences did this transformation have for the choir on the opera stage? Wagner observed a 'decline of Greek tragedy'[22] from Aeschylus through Sophocles to Euripides, holding the latter responsible for the expulsion of music from tragedy. The resulting demise of the choir was, of course, a necessary historical development. In Wagner's view, the choir dissolved as a real dramatic collective, on the one hand visibly into the individuals acting as supporting characters, and on the other, as a musical body, into the modern orchestra. If, nevertheless, a choir appears on the opera stage, this, according to Wagner, should be understood as a misguided analogy to Greek tragedy and rejected. He states succinctly: 'Even the choir hitherto used in opera will, according to the significance attributed to it there in the most favourable cases, have to disappear from our drama […].'[23] A look at his late music dramas, particularly 'Die Meistersinger' and 'Parsifal', shows, however, that Wagner does not categorically rule out the use of the choir despite his sharp theoretical verdict. It appears as an active mass wherever the dramatic situation warrants it.

In 'The Ring of the Nibelung', which in many respects comes closest to Greek tragedy, Wagner does indeed dispense with the choir almost entirely. Only in 'Götterdämmerung' does it make a significant appearance as Hagen's 'men'. Interestingly, Wagner even felt obliged to offer an explanation to his wife Cosima on this matter; her diary entry for 28

[20] Strauss, R. (c. 1940) 'Remarks on Wagner's "Opera and Drama"', in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memoirs.* Mainz: Schott Music, 94–97, here 95.
[21] Wagner, R. (1851) 'Opera and Drama', in: Wagner, R. (1907) *Collected Writings and Poems. Fourth edition, Vol. IV.* Leipzig: Siegels Musikalienhandlung, 190 ff.
[22] Ibid., 145.
[23] Ibid., 162.

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August 1871 reads: 'R.[ichard] is composing, whilst telling me that he will by no means assemble a large choir for Hagen's call, but rather individual men who appear as if from the nearby farmsteads.'[24] The choir is thus divided into individual figures, or more accurately: into small groups of two or more voices. At the beginning of the third scene of the second act, Hagen, feigning an enemy raid, alarms the men and summons them to him, armed. Only when everyone has gathered in a state of great agitation does Hagen reveal the purpose of the gathering: a feast is to be prepared in anticipation of the arrival of Gunther and his newly wedded wife Brünnhilde. The tension gives way to merriment and laughter.

The following music example features Gottlob Frick as Hagen, the Vienna State Opera Choir and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Georg Solti.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38t78fj9Iek

Whilst this choral passage can, at best, be explained as a compromise between the theoretical ideal and the demands of the dramatic plot, the third act of the same work does ultimately present the purest form of Wagner's idea of the orchestra as the successor to the ancient chorus. This is the widely known 'Funeral March', which follows immediately on from Siegfried's death. In Cosima's diary, under 29 September 1871, it reads: "'I have composed a Greek chorus,' R. calls out to me in the morning, 'but a chorus that is, as it were, sung by the orchestra; after Siegfried's death, during the change of scene, the Siegmund theme will sound, as if the chorus were saying he was his father; then the sword motif; finally his own theme, at which point the curtain rises, Gutrune enters, believing she has heard his horn; how could words ever make the impression that these solemn themes, newly formed, will evoke, whilst the music constantly expresses the immediate present.'"[25] A purely orchestral piece, then, as a counterpart to the stasimon of Attic tragedy – and by virtue of the leitmotifs previously imbued with meaning, this music 'speaks'; indeed, it tells a coherent story, the story of Siegfried's development, life and death. The rhythmically defined 'death motif' serves to structure the work and thus creates formal coherence. In the following musical example, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra can once again be heard under the baton of Georg Solti.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKbZyfJki8E

Richard Strauss drew his own conclusions from all this. He was familiar with the idea that the modern orchestra was derived from the chorus of Greek tragedy, but felt that this description of the transfer of function was by no means sufficient. Strauss writes: '[Wagner's] fine idea that the chorus of ancient drama, which accompanied the action as a critic, 'explainer' and interpreter, has been replaced by the orchestra created by our classical symphonists, is […] only partly correct. There is no need for further proof that the expressive possibilities of the modern orchestra […] are entirely different from those of the descriptive, explanatory chorus of the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles. The modern

[24] Wagner, C. (1871) Diary entry of 28 August 1871, in: Gregor-Dellin, M. & Mack, D. (Eds.) (1976) *Cosima Wagner. The Diaries. Vol. I,* Munich/Zurich: Piper, 431.
[25] Wagner, C. (1871) Diary entry dated 29 September 1871, in: Gregor-Dellin, M. & Mack, D. (Eds.) (1976) *Cosima Wagner. The Diaries. Vol. I,* Munich/Zurich: Piper, 444.

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orchestra does not merely provide a backdrop, does not merely explain, does not merely remind – it conveys the content itself, reveals the archetype, and conveys the innermost truth."[26]

Whether Strauss truly understood Wagner correctly in this respect is a matter for debate. This quotation is important above all because it once again impressively underlines what had already been hinted at: throughout his life, Strauss was fascinated by the almost limitless possibilities of the modern orchestra. For him, the orchestra always took absolute priority. To put it somewhat bluntly: First and foremost, Strauss wanted to make 'only' music; drama was for him merely a means to an end, namely the unfolding of his brilliantly orchestrated 'poetic counterpoint'.

But let us return to the relationship between the choir and the orchestra. No other work by Richard Strauss comes as close to Greek tragedy as 'Elektra'. How, in this particular work, does the composer shape the relationship between the two ensembles?

In a marked departure from Sophocles, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in his adaptation on which the opera is based, dispenses almost entirely with the chorus, which plays a central role in the original. Hofmannsthal, and with him Richard Strauss, reduce the chorus to the maids' scene right at the beginning and the appearance at the very end, which serves merely to increase the volume. The extent of this intervention becomes particularly apparent when one compares the opening maids' scene with the original Parodos, the chorus's entrance song. In Sophocles, the Parodos consists of a dialogue between Electra and the women of Mycenae, spanning 130 verses; in Hofmannsthal/Strauss, the maids do not speak with Electra but about her, and the chorus is broken down into a total of six individual characters. Strauss thus realises here the form of the chorus on the opera stage that Richard Wagner had only just tolerated, namely its individualisation.

The next musical example features the beginning of the maids' scene. It is performed by the *Staatskapelle Dresden* under the baton of Karl Böhm.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksByBZTbadA (Beginning)

So what does all this have to do with Carl Orff? Let us recall: following his traumatic wartime experiences, Orff retired to Munich in 1919. What he had initially only sensed in 1914, triggered by his experience of 'Elektra', became a certainty to him in the early 1920s: The development of European art music had reached an impasse; to him, 'carrying on as before' in the same direction seemed neither possible nor desirable. He wanted to move away from this protracted 19th century, whose traditions and conventions were still palpable everywhere and paralysed everything new; he wanted to move away from the 'Wagnerian musical armour', away from Strauss's polyphonically overloaded 'poetic counterpoint', away from the hypertrophic expressive aesthetics of late Romanticism, which he found deeply decadent. Orff decided on a complete fresh start. Inspired by Curt Sachs, from 1921 onwards the composer studied early European music from the Middle Ages to the 18th century, in

[26] Strauss, R. (c. 1940) Remarks on Richard Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk and the Bayreuth Festival Theatre, in: Schuh, W. (ed.) (2014) *Richard Strauss. Reflections and Memories.* Mainz: Schott Music, 91–93, here 91.

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particular the works of Claudio Monteverdi, as well as non-European music, especially from Africa, Asia and Indonesia. He also studied early European (percussion) instruments in depth, but even more so their non-European counterparts.

Orff's aim as a composer was the 'regeneration of music through movement, through dance',[27] as he put it himself. He turned away from the highly differentiated polyphony of the late Romantics and developed a linear musical style; he abandoned absolute instrumental music and placed human speech at the centre of his artistic work; he ultimately drew on a rhythmic structure derived from dance and language, which, when translated into gestures and movements, was intended to lead directly to a staged performance. The human being – the singing, speaking, dancing performer – was to be at the centre of his stage works. All other artistic means were to be subordinated to this. The decisive first phase of this long-standing process of stylistic development was completed around 1930 and led, with the premiere of 'Carmina Burana' in 1937, to the composer's widely acclaimed breakthrough; with 'Antigone' in 1949, Orff finally arrived at his characteristic late style.

Orff had come across Sophocles' 'Antigone' in 1917 of all years – a year that proved so ill-fated for him – immediately after his service on the Eastern Front. In a notebook, he recorded all the books he had read during his long convalescence in the military hospital; there is an entry there that reads: 'Sophocles – Antigone – magnificent!'[28] Having been buried alive, he must have been immediately gripped by the punishment imposed on Antigone: to be walled in alive. Yet he was moved at least as deeply by the play's humanitarian message. Just one year later, in 1918, he happened to come across Hölderlin's 1804 translation of 'Antigonae'. Looking back, Orff writes: "That very evening, the book was already in my hands. I threw myself into it. Sleep was out of the question. I read all night. Never before had I encountered a poem of such linguistic power. […] Even on my first reading, it had become clear to me that my task would consist, above all, of taking as my starting point the music already contained within Hölderlin's language."[29] The work premiered in 1949 as part of the Salzburg Festival.

In the meantime, the Second World War had broken out and, after immeasurable suffering, had come to an end within six years. This second, even more catastrophic and bloodier catastrophe of the 20th century led Orff to further radicalise his musical language. At the same time, however, it also sharpened his insight into the content of this very tragedy, which was, on the one hand, timeless and, on the other, had once again become a burning issue of the day. More than ever before, 'Antigonae' appeared to embody Western humanity, devoted love for one's family, and, ultimately, courageous, selfless resistance to state authority. Her antagonist, Creon, on the other hand, embodied more than ever the unyielding representative of state power, the inhuman tyrant, the deluded egoist.

The fundamental humanistic ethos of the 'Antigonae' drama is perhaps most clearly manifested in a particular passage, which at the same time marks the decisive difference

[27] Orff, C. (1978) *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. III: The Schulwerk (M.Murray, Trans.),* New York: Schott, 17.
[28] Orff, C. (1917/18) Notebook 1917/18. Carl Orff Estate, Carl Orff Foundation/Archive: Orff Centre, Munich.
[29] Orff, C. (1981) *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. VII: Western Music Theatre.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 12.

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from the 'Elektra' tragedy: Whilst Strauss's and Hofmannsthal's Elektra think only of bloody revenge and lives solely for that purpose, Antigonae, in her decisive confrontation with Creon, responds to his verdict – 'The enemy, even when dead, is never a friend' – with the indignant exclamation: 'But certainly. I am not for hatred, but for love.'[30]

Following the formative experience – 'up close and personal' in the very best sense of the term – of no less than two devastating world wars, Carl Orff thus draws directly on the original Greek tragedy, and not by chance on the 'Antigonae'. Richard Wagner had categorically ruled out such a recourse. Referring to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's incidental music for Sophocles' 'Antigone', he wrote that Attic tragedy, taken as a whole, was "such a distinctively original product of the Hellenic spirit, its religion, indeed its state […], that the assumption that it could be imitated was bound to lead to the greatest aberrations."[31] Nevertheless, ancient Greece plays a prominent role throughout his entire oeuvre. Wagner himself clearly stated in his 'Letter to My Friends' that, for instance, the 'Dutchman', 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin' are, in their 'basic outline', founded on Greek myths.[32] In the early 1960s, the classical philologist Wolfgang Schadewaldt demonstrated the extent to which Wagner's other works, in particular 'The Ring of the Nibelung', were also influenced by ancient myths and, in particular, by certain Greek tragedies.[33]

Interestingly, Wagner himself refers quite explicitly to 'Antigone' in 'Opera and Drama'. Antigone's act brought about the collapse of the state, embodied in Creon. From Wagner's perspective, the conclusion of the 'Antigone' tragedy is the mythical anticipation of the goal of history, and this goal is the 'downfall of the state'.[34] 'Götterdämmerung', and perhaps even the entire 'Ring', is thus, in a sense, Wagner's 'Antigone'.[35] Wagner therefore did not regard Greek tragedy as a model to be imitated directly, but as a call to create 'something new', whilst remaining fully aware of the historical distance.

Richard Strauss, who held Greek antiquity in the highest regard throughout his life, once described himself as a 'Greek German'. He approached Greek tragedy on only one occasion – namely 'Elektra' – but did so in an explicitly modern adaptation by Hugo von Hofmannsthal. In a series of other operas, ancient Greek myths at least provide the backdrop for questions concerning modern society.

It was not until 1949 that Carl Orff took the decisive step towards the original tragedy. Naturally, he was not concerned with the 'imitation' criticised by Wagner; naturally, he did

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[30] Orff, C. (1959) *'Antigonae'. A Tragedy by Sophocles, adapted by Friedrich Hölderlin,* study score. Mainz: Schott, 117.
[31] Wagner, R. (1871) 'On the Purpose of Opera', in: Wagner, R. (1907) *Collected Writings and Poems. Fourth edition, Vol. IX.* Leipzig: Siegels Musikalienhandlung, 127–156, here 151.

[32] Wagner, R. (1851) A Letter to My Friends, in: Wagner, R. (1907) *Collected Writings and Poems. Fourth edition, Vol. IV.* Leipzig: Siegels Musikalienhandlung, 230–344.
[33] Schadewaldt, W. (1962) 'Richard Wagner and the Greeks', in: Thurow, R. & Zinn, E. (eds.) (1970) *Schadewaldt, W.: Hellas and Hesperia. Collected Writings on Antiquity and Modern Literature, Vol. II,* Zurich/Stuttgart: Artemis, 341–405.
[34] Wagner, R. (1851) Opera and Drama, in: Wagner, R. (1907) *Collected Writings and Poems. Fourth edition, Vol. IV.* Leipzig: Siegels Musikalienhandlung, 72.
[35] See Borchmeyer, D. (1982) *Richard Wagner's Theatre. Idea, Poetry, Impact.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 237.

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not attempt, with naive intent, to reconstruct Attic tragedy. Fully aware of the unbridgeable historical distance, he instead undertook an attempt at a 'contemporary interpretation' of Greek tragedy 'using […] appropriate musical means'.[36]

He found the main point of departure for this in the choir. As a composer, he was drawn to the musical potential of the extended choral pieces; he therefore decided to set the text to music without any abridgements. In doing so, he preserved the original proportions and restored the choruses to their role as the supporting pillars of the entire structure.

How, then, does Carl Orff shape the relationship between choir and orchestra, which is so central to the entire conception? To put it bluntly: by, contrary to Wagner's theory, restoring the Greek chorus – as a mass physically present and active on stage – to its rightful dramaturgical and musical status, whilst assigning a completely newly constituted orchestra merely an accompanying role. This daring approach seemed possible solely through direct recourse to the original, unadapted Greek tragedy. Orff's 'Antigone' thus indeed represents a completely new beginning, rising from the ruins of a Europe devastated by two world wars. Hölderlin's adaptation served as the starting point for Orff's musical setting; it alone was to take centre stage in the work. In order to achieve the clarity of text he had sought since his experience with 'Elektra', the composer developed a recitative style that often remains anchored to a structurally significant central note; interval deviations particularly emphasise weighty words and trace the emotional arcs of the characters. Every note sounded is structurally related to the overall framework, both in the horizontal melodic line and in the vertical harmony.[37] Orff thus created a musical equivalent to Hölderlin's use of language, which allows for the most precise immersion in the respective dramatic situation without overwhelming the language with too much music.

Closely linked to this is the entirely new set of instruments. Orff consistently eschews the traditional symphonic orchestra. Instead, he creates a new ensemble consisting predominantly of percussion instruments, in which the classical-romantic timbres are deliberately omitted. The 'Antigone' orchestra consists of 6 grand pianos, 4 harps, 9 double basses, 6 flutes, 6 oboes, 6 trumpets and 8 timpani; in addition, there is percussion for up to 15 players (including xylophones and drums of various sizes, cymbals, bells, hump gongs, triangles, tambourines and castanets, as well as a lithophone and a small anvil). The sound of this orchestra never drowns out the singing voices, as a polyphonic layering of different melodic lines in the spirit of Strauss's 'poetic counterpoint' is not intended here and would, in any case, be technically difficult to achieve.

Just how consciously Carl Orff implemented all these innovations, and how perceptively he responded to developments in music history – particularly to the orchestras of Wagner and Strauss – is evident from an interview the composer gave in 1965. When asked about the role of music in his musical theatre, Orff replied: 'For me, the human being in his or her most fundamental impulses is the central artistic problem. Thus, all the characters who act on my

[36] Seifert, W. (1970) '… it all comes down to the spirit'. Carl Orff on his 75th birthday. Commentary and interview, in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, Vol. 7/8,* Mainz: Schott, 370–377, here 377.
[37] Rösch, T. (2003) 'The Music in Carl Orff's Greek Tragedies', in: *Münchner Veröffentlichungen zur Musikgeschichte, Vol. 59,* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 127 ff.

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stage rely on acting, singing and speech, and not on the orchestra. The instrumental part is assigned the task of creating a sound space appropriate to the meaning and nature of the piece, within which the experiences of the individual characters unfold. It is therefore a form of 'music' that deviates entirely from the trend of the 19th century and is of a completely different nature. In the 19th century, opera music had, after all, gradually shifted ever more towards the symphonic. In order to bring the person on stage back into the centre of attention, to make them comprehensible in a vivid form and with a fullness of life derived solely from their elementary sensations—and not from the interpretative sphere of instrumental accompaniment—there was simply no alternative but to sacrifice the symphonic orchestra."[38] The orchestra was thus intended, first and foremost, to fulfil an architectural function and to create a sound space into which the performers could sing, speak or move; what Orff thereby takes away from the music, he gives back to the theatre through the freedom it affords for intelligible speech, facial expressions, gestures and movement.

But let us now turn to the work and the music. A case in point is the Parodos of 'Antigone', the entrance song of the chorus of Theban elders. At the beginning, the choreutai – who, for the first time since a bloody war, are able to leave the city safely – jubilantly greet the rising sun. They describe the attacker Polynices, the fierce battles and, finally, the attacker's defeat. Finally, they recall the curse that led to the simultaneous death of the hostile brothers Eteocles and Polynices: they were the product of their father Oedipus's incest. The choral song concludes with a victory celebration and a dance in honour of the god Dionysus, described in Hölderlin's adaptation as the 'Bacchus Roundelay'. The choir, consisting solely of male voices, sings in unison throughout. Orff sets the verses to rhythm in characteristically swaying eighth-note triplets with occasional syncopated transitions. Particularly striking is the extended choral melisma on the word 'Blik (der Sonne)', i.e. 'ray of the sun'. Here, on the one hand, the Thebans' pent-up joy bursts forth; on the other, the composer lends the music a slightly 'Oriental'-sounding accent.

The orchestra comes to the fore only in the prelude, an interlude and the postlude; otherwise, during the choral singing, it confines itself strictly to providing a background accompaniment. Beginning in the high piano registers, suggesting the first rays of the sun at daybreak, the sound space expands ever further from high to low; powerful chords on the six grand pianos accompany the solemn entrance of the choreutai onto the stage. During Verse 1, the orchestra provides sporadic sharp accents that punctuate the depiction of the battle; then, in Antistrophe 1 and Verse 2, regular pulsations start with gradually intensifying instrumentation. Finally, the 'Bacchus Roundelay' is heard before, during and after antistrophe 2, which contains the jubilation of victory; here the choir dances, just as it did in ancient theatre, and instruments such as the tambourine, cymbals, and anvil signal the presence of the god Dionysus.

The architectural function of the orchestra is evident not only in the prelude, interlude and postlude; it is also manifested in the gradual descent, occurring twice in total, from the unison E/E via the second D/E and the third C/E to the fifth A/E – and this is independent of the central notes of the choir and the stanzaic structure of the text. In the following excerpt,

[38] Lohmüller, H. (1965) Carl Orff on Himself, in: *Melos, Vol. 32,* 194–195, here 195.

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members of the Bavarian Radio Choir and Symphony Orchestra can be heard; the musical direction is by Ferdinand Leitner.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI6PqV7JGFY (as from 9:54)

This, then, is how the Greek tragedy 'Antigone' sounds – Orff's alternative to Wagner's music dramas and Strauss's operas.

Does Orff, therefore, dispense with polyphony entirely? By no means, as the 3rd stasimon in 'Antigone' demonstrates. However, where polyphony does occur, it is found solely and exclusively in the vocal parts; consequently, the orchestra remains silent. The third choral song consists of just a single pair of stanzas. The choreutai surmise that Eros, the 'spirit of love', must have clouded Haemon's judgement, as he sought, in an increasingly heated argument, to dissuade his father Creon from having his betrothed, Antigone, executed for her violation of the burial ban. The Thebans, however, place their trust in the reconciling, peace-bringing power of love – entirely in keeping with Antigone's 'I am not for hatred, but for love'. Beginning in three parts, the a cappella movement expands to eight parts before concluding in six parts. The entire musical texture is based on two major and two minor triads. A cadence on the word 'beauty' concludes the stasimon. At the same time – for the first time in the entire work – a solo flute enters; it lends this pivotal choral piece a particularly delicate and hopeful aura. In the following excerpt, members of the choir and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ferdinand Leitner, can be heard once again.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI6PqV7JGFY (as from 1:26:37)

In January 1951, Wieland Wagner, the eminent director and grandson of Richard Wagner, attended a performance of Carl Orff's 'Antigone' in Munich. Enthusiastically, he wrote to the composer: 'For me, your work is a momentous event and the solution to everything that has been endlessly chattered about and debated. […] I am convinced that, with this work, you have succeeded in validly shaping our conception of the essence of both the "Greek" and the "tragic" – valid and therefore lasting.'[39] Five years later, Wieland Wagner staged 'Antigone' himself in Stuttgart. Just one year earlier, on the occasion of Carl Orff's 60th birthday, Wieland Wagner wrote in the 'Tannhäuser' programme for the Bayreuth Festival, addressing Orff directly: '… You have created something new – "new" in the sense of Richard Wagner, who wanted to have all those who "cling to the old" rescued "from the devil of unproductivity". […] With 'Antigone' […] you have achieved the […] miracle of creating, through a completely new soundscape of startling relentlessness, a new interpretation of the phenomenon of 'Greek tragedy' that is relevant to us today. As listeners, we owe you primal rhythmic experiences; as spectators, truly elemental theatrical impressions – but beyond that, the joy of realising that the creative individual, possessed by the idea of theatre, is capable – even in an age of cultural pessimism – of reducing all professional doomsayers to absurdity through the power of his intuition and his knowledge of primordial truths. Continue unwaveringly along your path, far removed from all dogmas,

[39] Letter from Wieland Wagner to Carl Orff dated 31 January 1951. Carl Orff estate, Carl Orff Foundation/Archive: Orff Centre, Munich.

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schools of thought and conventions: it is the right one, for its goal is the same as that which lay before the eyes of all the masters of the past, for whom theatre had not lost its original meaning: theatre as a magical place for the proclamation of spiritual realities […].“[40]

What a statement! Wieland Wagner died completely unexpectedly in the autumn of 1966. His far too early death prevented the world premiere of Orff's third tragic setting, 'Prometheus' based on Aeschylus, which he had already planned – specifically in (as he himself put it) 'his theatre'[41] – by which he could only have meant the *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth. An extraordinary breach of taboo with almost incalculable consequences for everyone involved – even more so back then than today! It is a pity that this plan could not be realised.



Carl Orff on the Akropolis in Athens, 1967
Photo: Werner Schloske, Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Berlin
(Template: Carl-Orff-Stiftung/Archiv: Orff-Zentrum München)

What else is there for me to say in conclusion – here in Athens, where the magnificent works of the Greek tragedians were written and first performed two and a half millennia ago? In September 1967, the Stuttgart Opera was invited to Athens for the 13th International Festival. The company performed Carl Orff's 'Antigone' and 'Oedipus' at the Theatre of Herodes Atticus, dating from the 2nd century AD; not in Wieland Wagner's production, but using the costumes he had designed. Reliable eyewitnesses recount the following event: when Carl Orff stepped onto the upper rear gallery of the theatre shortly before the performance, the five thousand members of the audience spontaneously rose from their

[40] Wagner, W. (1955) 'Carl Orff on his 60th birthday', in: *Bayreuth Festival 1955, 'Tannhäuser' programme*, 31.
[41] Orff, C. (1981) *Carl Orff and his work. Documentation. Vol. VII: Western Music Theatre.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 192.

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seats to cheer him on. Walter Erich Schäfer, then artistic director of the Stuttgart Opera, writes: 'I do not know whether there can be a greater moment for an artist than that when he feels honoured by the people of a nation to which he has devoted a large part of his work and his love. Even today, it is still a profound joy for me to have witnessed that moment and the emotion it stirred in Carl Orff.'[42] I myself believe that this may well have been one of the greatest triumphs in the composer's life, but it was certainly his finest. We can only hope that, in our own time, discerning theatre professionals will recall this event and that they will be brave enough to stage Orff's Greek tragedies once again, particularly in Greece, in Athens.

An abridged version, edited by the author, of a lecture of the same title, which was first delivered on 29 November 2014 as part of the 'Giornate Wagneriane' organised by the *Associazione Richard Wagner di Venezia* in Venice.



Dr. Thomas Rösch, born in Regensburg in 1967, studied musicology, theater studies, and psychology in Munich (LMU) and Los Angeles (UCLA). In 1999, he received his doctorate with a thesis on music in Carl Orff's Greek tragedies. From 1999 to 2002, he worked with Orff collaborator, colleague and Orff-specialist Dr. Werner Thomas in Heidelberg. Since 2002, he has been director of the Orff Center Munich, and since 2008, editor of its publications. He has taught at the Munich University of Music and Performing Arts / Musicological Institute and at the Mozarteum University Salzburg / Orff Institute. Since 2007, he has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Carl Orff Foundation (since 2017, deputy chairman).

[42] Schäfer, W. E. (1981) Carl Orff and Stuttgart, in: Orff, C. (1981) *Carl Orff and his Work. Documentation. Vol. VII: Western Music Theatre.* Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 352–355, here 354 ff.

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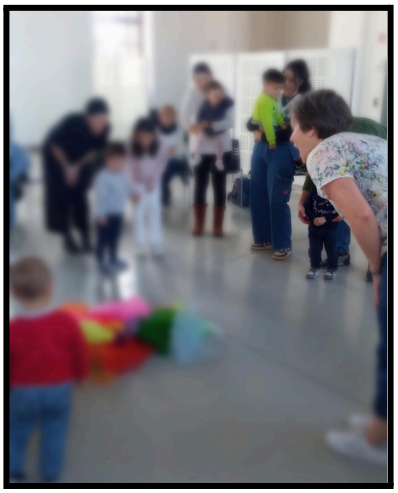
Growing Through Reading and Music: Promoting Well-Being in Families with Children Aged 0–6

Virginia Longo

Introduction



In 2011 I was invited by a local paediatrician to co-lead a workshop for families at a public library. I was asked to lead two sessions: one for children aged 6 to 36 months and another for children aged 3 to 6 years. In both cases, parents were actively involved. Musically, I proposed what could be described as an interactive reading of a children's book, enriched with songs, chants, nursery rhymes, movement, and simple percussion activities. In other words, it was essentially an Orff-Schulwerk music lesson built around a book. Each music session was introduced by a short talk from the paediatrician, who explained to parents the benefits of making music at home with their children. She also gave families informational materials such as flyers and bookmarks.

That was the beginning of my journey into the fascinating world of *Nati per la Musica* (Born to Music) first, and later *Nati per Leggere* (Born to Read). Many family workshops followed that first experience. Before long, I was invited to join a multidisciplinary team of specialists—including paediatricians, librarians, musicians, and music educators—whose role was to promote the two programmes throughout the country and to train professionals who would work directly with children and families.

The Two Programmes

Nati per Leggere (Born to Read) was established in Italy in 1999 through a partnership between the Italian Library Association, the Cultural Association of Paediatricians, and the Centre for Child Health. It is a national programme that promotes reading aloud within families with children from birth to six years of age, supporting their emotional, cognitive, and social development.

In 2006, *Nati per la Musica* (Born to Music) was launched, bringing together musicians and music educators alongside the original partners. Today, professionals increasingly integrate the two programmes into their daily work with children and families.

Both programmes rely on the commitment of trained professionals as well as dedicated volunteers.

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Nurturing Care for early Child Development

Now you might be asking yourselves: Why should we invest so much effort in promoting shared reading and active music-making within the family from such an early age?

According to the 2018 document *Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development: A Framework for Helping Children Survive and Thrive to Transform Health and Human Potential*, published by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the World Bank Group, the foundations for lifelong health, learning, and well-being are established in the earliest years of life. '*What is one of the best ways a country can boost shared prosperity, promote inclusive economic growth, expand equitable opportunity, and end extreme poverty? The answer is simple: Invest in early childhood development'*(p.1)

The period from pregnancy to a child's third birthday is a unique and highly sensitive stage of development. During these first 1,000 days, children are especially responsive to the influences of their environment. The experiences they have during this time lay the foundations for lifelong health, learning, emotional well-being, and productivity, while also shaping the health and well-being of future generations. In fact, although brain development follows a genetically programmed pathway, it is profoundly shaped by the child's experiences.

Research has identified several major threats to healthy early childhood development. These include extreme poverty, insecurity, gender inequality, violence, environmental toxins, and poor mental health. Such challenges affect not only children directly but also their caregivers—parents, family members, and others responsible for their care. When caregivers face these difficulties, their ability to provide the protection, support, and nurturing that young children need is significantly reduced.

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According to this document, the components of Nurturing Care are

1. Good Health
2. Adequate Nutrition
3. Opportunities for Early Child Development
4. Responding Caregivers
5. Security and Safety

Both Born to Read and *Born to Music* contribute to Component 3: Responsive Caregiving and Component 4: Opportunities for Early Learning of the Nurturing Care Framework.

Component 3: Responsive Caregiving

During the first years of life, infants and young children rely entirely on their caregivers to recognize and respond to their needs. These needs go well beyond food and safety. Children also need warm social interactions, cognitive stimulation, emotional support, and reassurance.

Responsive caregivers carefully observe their child's signals, understand what the child is communicating, and respond consistently, appropriately, and with affection. Everyday exchanges—making eye contact, following the child's gaze, talking, listening, and taking turns in communication—lay the groundwork for early learning. When caregivers are sensitive, predictable, and loving, they foster secure attachment, support social and emotional development, and provide the conditions children need to learn and thrive.

To strengthen responsive caregiving and provide opportunities for early learning, professionals working across many settings, including healthcare, education, nutrition, childcare, emergency services, and social and family support programmes, should be trained to recognize and reinforce caregivers' strengths, strengthen their confidence, and encourage them to communicate more with their children; suggest enjoyable activities families can share at home, using everyday objects and homemade toys, as well as talking, singing, and sharing books; promote high-quality parent–child interactions through age-appropriate play and communication activities; and encourage parents to spend more meaningful time with their children.

Component 4: Opportunities for Early Learning

Children do not begin learning only when they enter kindergarten or pre-primary education at around age 3 or 4, when they are introduced to colours, shapes, and letters. Learning is instead an inherent human capacity, necessary for adapting to an ever-changing environment. It begins at conception and initially develops through a biological process known as epigenesis.

In the earliest stages of life, learning occurs through relationships with others. It develops through everyday interactions such as smiling, making eye contact, talking, singing, imitation, and simple games such as waving goodbye. Children also learn through play with ordinary household objects—such as cups, empty containers, and cooking pots—which allow them to explore texture, function, and possible uses.

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Even caregivers with limited time can be supported and encouraged to talk with their child during routine activities such as feeding, bathing, and other daily tasks. These seemingly simple exchanges offer powerful opportunities for learning, helping children understand people and the world around them.

***Both Born to Read* and *Born to Music* today**



Nowadays, out of 6,000 paediatricians in Italy there are around 1,700 that support the two programmes. The family paediatrician is responsible for monitoring a child's health and development through scheduled well-child visits at key developmental stages. These visits provide an ideal opportunity to conduct a comprehensive health assessment, monitor physical growth, evaluate psychomotor development, and assess the achievement of age-appropriate cognitive, linguistic, and sensory milestones. Paediatricians can explain to parents the importance of shared reading and family music-making, encouraging them to introduce books, nursery rhymes, songs, and musical activities into their daily interactions with their children from the very first months of life.

Public libraries also play a fundamental role in promoting both *Born to Read* and *Born to Music*. Although the distribution of the programmes is not uniform across Italy, there is an extensive network of officially recognised *Born to Read* and *Born to Music* Centres that coordinate and deliver activities at the local level. However, for both programmes, activities can be offered in a variety of locations, including libraries, health services, nurseries, preschools, family centres, music schools, and other community venues where appropriately trained professionals are available. These centres work within local interdisciplinary networks involving paediatricians, librarians, educators, healthcare professionals, and musicians.

One of the defining characteristics of both *Born to Read* and *Born to Music* is that all activities are offered free of charge to participating families. This reflects the principle of universality, one of the core values of the Italian National Health Service and one of the guiding principles of both programmes.

The Evidence Supporting *Born to Read*

Over the past three decades, a substantial body of research has demonstrated the benefits of shared reading during early childhood. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses consistently show that reading aloud to young children has significant positive effects on language development, particularly on receptive language (language comprehension), one of the strongest predictors of later academic achievement.

The benefits extend beyond cognition. Research consistently shows that shared reading enhances the quality of parent–child interactions, strengthens parental confidence and self-efficacy, and supports children's emotional well-being. Importantly, these cognitive and socio-emotional benefits are greatest among children growing up in socioeconomically

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disadvantaged families, making shared reading one of the most effective early interventions for reducing educational and social inequalities before school entry.

Reading aloud therefore focuses not only on the child but also on the unique environment created by the interaction between the book and the parent. In shared reading, the parent is regarded as a valuable teacher who adapts their support to the level of competence the child is able to achieve at that particular moment. This teaching process, described by Jerome Bruner as scaffolding, provides a foundation built not only on affection but also on the parent's ability to recognise the child's current level of understanding. Supported in this way, the child can progressively develop language and early literacy skills through shared book reading.

This process takes place within what Lev Vygotsky defined as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the developmental space in which a child can learn or solve a problem only with the guidance and collaboration of a more knowledgeable adult. The parent's sensitivity lies in recognising what the child is ready to learn at that specific stage of development and providing appropriate support.
Dialogic Reading (DR) differs fundamentally from the traditional way adults read to children. The change in roles is crucial. In conventional shared reading, the adult reads while the child listens. In dialogic reading, however, the child gradually becomes the storyteller. The adult progressively assumes the role of an active listener, asking questions, adding information, encouraging the child to elaborate on the story, and prompting increasingly rich language use.

An important aspect related to Dialogic Reading is the crucial role of the mother tongue reinforced in Italy by the project *Mamma Lingua*. The Mother Tongue Manifesto has been translated into 19 languages and widely distributed to libraries, schools, paediatric clinics, and community organisations across Italy to promote the value of multilingualism and encourage both immigrant and Italian families to share stories and read together.

The Evidence Supporting *Born to Music*
Born to Music is a programme dedicated to exploring the value of shared musical experiences within the family. The main goal is to promote early listening and family music-making as powerful means of communication that strengthen the emotional bond between parents and their children while fostering both cognitive and socio-emotional development.

According to the *Born to Music Manifesto*, the beneficial effects of music—including instrumental performance, singing, and listening—have long been recognised. Over the past decades, however, rigorous scientific research (e.g.Hallam, 2016) has demonstrated that musical experiences, beginning during the prenatal period and continuing throughout childhood, stimulate children's cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development while providing outstanding opportunities for high-quality interactions between parents and their children. Research has also shown that early musical experiences enhance communication skills and the core cognitive functions required for non-musical learning.

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Evidence from longitudinal studies (e.g. Paquette & Mignault Goulet, 2014) comparing individuals who have received musical education with those who have not, indicates that music has positive effects not only during the earliest stages of human development but throughout the lifespan, extending into adulthood and old age. For these reasons, it is essential that everyone who is directly or indirectly responsible for the education and care of children—including parents, teachers, healthcare professionals, school administrators, policy makers responsible for educational programmes, and those involved in extracurricular activities—promote the adoption of good early musical practices, both at home and in educational settings.

Informal Education

In terms of suggested activities, parents, caregivers and educators are invited to refer to *informal education* that is understood as a series of stimuli, experiences, and opportunities for learning provided by the family and by those within the child's immediate social environment. These include teaching songs, nursery rhymes, movement games linked to sound and music, rhythmic and melodic imitation activities, and, more simply, fostering attentive listening through the regular practice of storytelling and reading aloud traditional tales and folktales.



This educational approach closely resembles the philosophy of active music making promoted by the Orff-Schulwerk.

One of the main aims of *Born to Music* is to help adults reconnect with their own innate musicality—their "inner musical child"—and to develop the confidence to sing, play, and make music naturally with their babies and young children. The programme seeks to restore music-making as a spontaneous, joyful, and meaningful part of daily family interactions rather than as an activity reserved for professional performers.

Music educators and musicians need to take particular care when planning activities for family workshops. While they should always offer high-quality musical experiences, chants, songs, movement activities, and musical games they propose must be accessible and easy for parents and caregivers to reproduce at home. The aim is to help adults feel confident, competent, and empowered to incorporate similar musical interactions into their everyday family life.

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Virginia Longo holds a Master of Arts (MA) in Violin and Literature and later specialized in Music Education through training in Italy and abroad. In 2008–2009, she completed the Postgraduate Course in Music and Dance Education at the Orff Institute in Salzburg. Since 2011, she has worked as a music teacher and Coordinator of the Arts Department at the International School of Bergamo, an IOSFS Associated School since 2018.

Among her many professional interests, education and music education for children aged 0–6 hold a particularly important place. She has explored this specific age group through Music Learning Theory, developed by Edwin E. Gordon, attending training courses offered by AIGAM and *Musica in Culla*/Music in Crib, as well as workshops and seminars at the Reggio Children Centre. For the past 15 years, she has also collaborated with paediatricians and librarians through the national *Born to Read* and *Born to Music* programmes. She also works as a teacher educator and has served on the IOSFS Board since 2021.

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Convention 2026 Presentations of Associated Schools and Institutions

Die Kunst der Verbindungen in Schulmusicals

Ramona Schulz

Einleitung

Vor Jahren haben wir im Rahmen meines Masterstudiums am Orff-Institut mit Prof. Sonja Stibi einen ihrer Artikel analysiert, den sie 2010 anlässlich des 20-jährigen Bestehens des Studienfaches Elementare Musikpädagogik an der Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität geschrieben hat.[43] Sie geht darin auf die vielfältigen Verbindungen ein, die durch die Elementare Musikpädagogik entstehen. Die Verbindung zwischen Mensch und Musik, zwischen der Musik und anderen Künsten, zwischen Mensch und Mensch, und nicht zuletzt die Verbindung zwischen dem Menschen und seinem Selbst. Diese Verbindungen zu erkennen und zu ermöglichen ist gerade auch das Besondere am Orff-Schulwerk. In der Vorbereitung meiner Präsentation über unsere jährlichen Schulmusicals für die IOSFS *Convention* 2026 in Athen zum Thema „Storytelling" sind mir die vielfältigen Verbindungen aufgefallen, die durch die Erarbeitung und Aufführung der Musicals an unserer Schule entstehen. Bevor ich näher darauf eingehe, möchte ich die Tradition des Geschichtenerzählens anhand von Musicals an der Grundschule der deutsch-tschechischen Verständigung in Prag kurz vorstellen.

Was bedeuten die jährlichen Musicals für unsere Schule?

Am Ende jedes Schuljahres führen wir ein selbst geschriebenes oder von uns adaptiertes Musical auf, an dem die ganze Schule teilnimmt. Außerdem kommen noch Erasmus Schüler[44] hinzu und alle zwei Jahre auch Kinder von unserer Partnerschule in Heilsbronn/Deutschland[45]. Es nehmen ungefähr 280 Schüler teil und das bedeutet nicht nur viel Arbeit und Organisationsaufwand, sondern vor allem ist es Ausdruck einer großen Gemeinschaft sowie Teamwork. Es entstehen positive bleibende Erinnerungen, bei denen die Schüler nicht selten über sich hinauswachsen. Das Musical ist ein geteiltes Erlebnis, ein kollektiver Lernprozess, in dem jedes Kind seinen Raum findet.

Bei so vielen Akteuren ist eine klare Struktur notwendig, in der aber auch Platz für kreative Freiheit entstehen soll. Das bedeutet, dass die Fünftklässler, die unsere Schule am Ende des Schuljahres verlassen werden und weiterführende Schulen besuchen, die Hauptrollen bekommen. Es ist ihre Abschiedsvorstellung vor dem Schulwechsel und ermöglicht, dass jeder von ihnen einmal im Rampenlicht steht und Teil einer großen gemeinschaftlichen Erfahrung wird. Manchmal schreiben sie eigene Szenen, beteiligen sich an Kostümen oder Bühnenbild und bringen ihre Ideen mit ein. Alle anderen Klassen, genauso wie unsere

[43] Stibi, Sonja (2010): Mittendrin…EMP-Kunst der Verbindungen, *AGMÖ Musikerziehung Jänner/Februar/März 2010,* S.16-25

[44] Erasmus ist ein Programm der Europäischen Union zur Förderung von interkultureller Bildung, Jugend und Sport. In unserem Fall wird ein Austauschprojekt zwischen unserer Prager Schule und einer Berliner Schule gefördert.

[45] Diese Projekte werden seit Jahren durch den Deutsch-Tschechischen Zukunftsfond unterstützt und ermöglichen immer wieder wunderbare gegenseitige Aufenthalte mit nachhaltigen positiven Eindrücken.

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Gruppen der Partnerschulen, studieren jeweils ein Lied, einen Tanz oder eine Szene ein, mit dem sie als Gruppe auftreten und so ihren Beitrag zum größeren Ganzen beisteuern.
In dieser Art Baukastensystem liegt auch die Möglichkeit, individuelle und kreative Ideen der Kinder in der gemeinschaftlichen Erarbeitungsphase aufzugreifen und in das Musical zu integrieren. Doch welche Verbindungen werden nun konkret geknüpft im Entstehungsprozess eines Musicals?

Zwischenmenschliche Verbindungen
Ich möchte mit der Verbindung von Mensch zu Mensch beginnen, da es mich jedes Jahr aufs Neue freut, wie unsere Schulgemeinschaft zusammenwächst und gemeinsam an einem Strang zieht. Sei es von Kollegin zu Kollegin, die flexibel ihre Schüler für die Proben freistellen, aktiv den Erarbeitungsprozess durch Wiederholungen in ihrem eigenen Unterricht unterstützen, Choreografien oder Szenen entwickeln, immer ein offenes Ohr für die Lösung von Problemen haben und mit Rat und Tat zur Verfügung stehen. Oder auf der anderen Seite die Verbindungen, die unter den Schülern entstehen. Sie werden Teil einer Gruppe, die etwas gemeinsam auf die Beine stellt, mit Freiheiten, aber auch der Notwendigkeit der Integration im gemeinsamen Entstehungsprozess. Gerade hier bietet sich oftmals die Chance für Kinder, Talente und Fähigkeiten mit einzubringen, die im Schulalltag manchmal verborgen bleiben und somit auch eine andere Perspektive in der Verbindung zwischen Lehrer und Schüler ermöglicht. Der unruhige und oft störende Schüler in Mathematik bekommt beim Musical eventuell die Möglichkeit seine Ideen zu kanalisieren, seinen Bewegungs- und Ausdrucksdrang einzubringen und so eine Bereicherung für die gesamte Aufführung zu werden. Oder der zurückhaltende und kaum sprechende Schüler zeigt plötzlich ganz andere Seiten. Lehrer und Schüler begegnen sich auf einer anderen Ebene, was dauerhaft zu einem Perspektivwechsel führen kann.

Verbindung zur Musik
Zu einem Musical gehören selbstverständlich auch Musik und Lieder. Unser Schulorchester probt einmal wöchentlich im ganzen Schuljahr und entwickelt unter anderem in den Proben nach und nach die Ouvertüre zu unserem Stück. Hier ist viel Raum für prozessorientiertes und kreatives Gestalten und vor allem auch dafür, die Fähigkeit zu entwickeln, nicht nur auf sich selbst zu hören, sondern auch auf die Mitspielenden. Die Verbindung zur Musik wird auch in den oftmals selbstkomponierten Liedern deutlich. Die Schüler haben schnell Lieblingslieder, die in den Pausen immer wieder durch unsere Gänge hallen. Dies ist insofern besonders erwähnenswert, da wir eine tschechische Schule sind und unser Musical zum größten Teil auf Deutsch aufgeführt wird. Daher bilden die deutschen Liedtexte eine Brücke zum Deutschunterricht und das führt uns zur nächsten Verbindung, dem fächerübergreifenden Lernen.

Verbindungen zu anderen Fächern
Das Thema des jeweiligen Musicals ist kein isoliertes Projekt, sondern spiegelt sich auf unterschiedliche Weise auch im Schulalltag und in anderen Fächern wider. Es schafft den Raum für fächerübergreifendes Lernen, wobei Musik, Sprache, naturwissenschaftliche Fächer, Kunstunterricht oder auch die Schulpsychologin zusammenkommen. Hier einige Beispiele:

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„Schiff Ahoj“ („Ship Ahoy“ 2026) Das Fernweh zieht einen Jungen in die weite Welt hinaus. Er geht auf Weltreise und kommt mit einem tieferen Verständnis für seine Wurzeln und in seinem Wesen gestärkt zurück. Im Naturkundeunterricht erstellten Schüler dazu Modelle der verschiedenen Vegetationsformen der Erde. In Ethik reflektierten sie über Grenzen und Möglichkeiten moderner Technologien.



Beispiele der von den Schülern erstellten Vegetationsformen, © Ramona Schulz

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„Neboj se“ (“Don´t be afraid” 2024) Ein Musical über Ängste und mentale Gesundheit. Über das gesamte Schuljahr hinweg begleitete unsere Schulpsychologin die Klassen und entwickelte mit den Schülern Strategien zur Angstbewältigung und lieferte Informationen zu möglichen Hilfsangeboten. Im Deutschunterricht schrieben die Fünftklässler ihre eigene Szene zum Medienkonsum.

Jedes Jahr beteiligen sich die Schüler am Bau der Kulissen und nehmen am schulweiten Wettbewerb zum offiziellen Plakat teil. Aus dieser Fülle der im Kunstunterricht entstandenen Plakate werden dann ein paar ausgewählt, die zu Werbezwecken veröffentlicht werden.



Beispiele zu von den Schülern gestalteten Plakate zu *„Schiff Ahoj“* © Ramona Schulz

Verbindung zur eigenen Persönlichkeit

Der Ansatz der Elementaren Musik- und Tanzpädagogik bemüht sich stets, eine innere Verbindung, eine Möglichkeit des individuellen Ausdrucks herzustellen. Sei es durch die eigene Stimme, die Bewegung des eigenen Körpers, im Spiel auf einem Instrument oder auch in der Interaktion mit diversen Materialien. Unabhängig von unserem Musical und den regelmäßig stattfindenden Chor- und Orchesterproben, haben alle Klassen über das Schuljahr verteilt Projekte mit Musik und Tanz, in denen die Schüler sich individuell und kreativ ausdrücken können und an eine entsprechende Arbeitsweise herangeführt werden.

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Daran lässt sich in der Probenphase zum Musical anknüpfen und es fällt den Schülern meistens leicht, ihre Ideen an bestimmten Stellen beizusteuern.



Tanz und Musik in die Schule bringen, © Kristyna Jindrová

Die intensive spielerische Stimmbildung und das Einstudieren der Lieder bringen die Kinder schließlich direkt in Verbindung mit ihrer eigenen Stimme. Sie machen in der Regel schnelle Fortschritte und erfahren, dass ihre Stimme zählt. Diese Selbstwirksamkeit, an etwas teilzuhaben, das mich und andere berührt, bringt uns zur letzten, aber nicht weniger wichtigen Verbindung.

Verbindung zu gesellschaftlich oder für die Schüler relevanten Themen

In der Retrospektive der letzten 12 Jahre hat sich gezeigt, dass wir mit der Themenauswahl unserer Musicals immer wieder gesellschaftliche Fragen aufgreifen und uns bemühen, den Kindern eine Sprache dafür zu geben. Sie sollen die Möglichkeit bekommen, sich in eine Figur und eine Geschichte hineinzuversetzen und so ihre Perspektive zu ändern und Empathie zu entwickeln. Werte werden durch die Auseinandersetzung mit einem Thema vermittelt, das die Kinder betrifft. Dabei kommen die Vorschläge manchmal direkt von den Kindern, entstehen in praktischen Abwägungen zusammen mit unserer Partnerschule in Heilsbronn oder liegen für uns gewissermaßen „in der Luft“, da sie aktuell, bedeutsam und berührend für unsere ganze Schulgemeinschaft sind. Wichtig ist für uns, dass sie lebensnah und zukunftsorientiert sind. Die Themen sollen den Horizont der Kinder erweitern, Perspektiven verbinden und ihnen eine Botschaft mitgeben, mit der sie sich auseinandersetzen und an der sie aktiv mitgestalten können. Dabei ist uns besonders

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wichtig, dass die Kinder sich nicht als passive Zuschauer der Welt erleben, sondern als aktive Mitgestalter. Über die Jahre hinweg haben sich einige Themenblöcke herauskristallisiert:

Frieden und Demokratie Die Konferenz der Tiere; Europa ist meine Heimat; Das waren Zeiten	**Psychische Gesundheit und Mut** Neboj se – Hab‘ keine Angst
Vielfalt und Inklusion Der graue Planer; Die Vorstadtkrokodile; Jeder ist anders	**Erinnerung und Geschichte** Oma, Opa, erzähl mal! Das waren Zeiten
Das Wesentliche im Leben Emil und die Detektive; Der kleine Prinz; Schiff Ahoj	

Es ist besonders schön zu sehen und zu erleben, wenn ein Musical nicht nur die Kraft hat, bleibende Eindrücke bei den Schülern, in unserer Schule und der Gemeinschaft zu hinterlassen, sondern manchmal auch weit darüber hinausreicht. 2016 wurde nach der Vorstellung von „Oma, Opa, erzähl mal“ als Reaktion auf unser Musical der Deutsche Fußball Club Prag wieder gegründet. Der DFC Prag war ein Verein, der 1896 gegründet wurde und in dem Juden, Tschechen und Deutsche gemeinsam Fußball spielten. Franz Kafka war ein Fan dieses Vereins, der 1940 aufgrund eines Spielverbots für die jüdischen Spieler aufgelöst wurde. Die Tschechen und die dort spielenden Deutschen entschieden sich, ohne ihre jüdischen Freunde auch nicht mehr zu spielen. In diesem 2016 durch eine Elterninitiative wieder ins Leben gerufenen Verein spielen bis heute tschechische und deutsche Kinder gemeinsam Fußball.

Diese vielfältigen Verbindungen und Aspekte zeigen, dass es letztlich nicht nur um eine Musical-Vorstellung geht. Wenn Kinder ihre eigenen Geschichten erzählen dürfen und dafür ihren eigenen Ausdruck in Sprache, Musik und Bewegung finden, ist das mehr als eine Aufführung. Es ist Bildung.



Szene aus „Neboj se“ © ZŠNČP

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Reference
Stibi, S. (2010) Right in the thick of it…EMP-The art of connections. *AGMÖ Music Education, January/February/March,*16-25.



Ramona Schulz wurde in München/Deutschland geboren und studierte dort am Richard-Strauss-Konservatorium und an der Hochschule für Musik Klavier und Musikpädagogik. Von 2014 bis 2016 absolvierte sie ein Master Studium am Orff-Institut Salzburg.
Seit dem Jahr 2000 lebt und arbeitet sie in Prag/Tschechien. Sie arbeitet mit verschiedenen Altersgruppen und allen Niveaustufen. Neben Elementarer Musikerziehung, Schulmusik am Thomas Mann Gymnasium und Konzerten für Kinder, leitet sie das Schulorchester, wie auch die gesamtschulischen musikalischen Projekte an der Grundschule der deutsch- tschechischen Verständigung.

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The Art of Connections in School Musicals

Ramona Schulz

Introduction

Years ago, as part of my Master's degree at the Orff Institute, we analysed one of Prof. Sonja Stibi's articles with her; she had written it in 2010 to mark the 20th anniversary of the Elemental Music Education programme at the Anton Bruckner Private University. In it, she explores the diverse connections that arise through elemental music education. The connection between people and music, between music and other arts, between people and people, and, last but not least, the connection between a person and their own self. Recognising and facilitating these connections is precisely what makes the Orff-Schulwerk so special. Whilst preparing my presentation on our annual school musicals for the 2026 IOSFS Convention in Athens on the theme of 'Storytelling', I noticed the many connections that arise through the development and performance of the musicals at our school. Before I go into more detail, I would like to briefly introduce the tradition of storytelling through musicals at the Primary School for German-Czech Understanding in Prague.

What do the annual musicals mean for our school?

At the end of each school year, we stage a musical – either written by us or adapted by us – in which the whole school takes part. We are also joined by Erasmus pupils[46] and, every two years, by children from our partner school in Heilsbronn, Germany[47] . Around 280 pupils take part, and whilst this involves a great deal of work and organisational effort, above all it is an expression of a strong sense of community and teamwork. It creates positive, lasting memories, during which pupils often surpass their own expectations. The musical is a shared experience, a collective learning process in which every child finds their place.

With so many people involved, a clear structure is essential, whilst also allowing room for creative freedom. This means that the Year 5 pupils, who will be leaving our school at the end of the school year to move on to secondary school, are given the leading roles. It is their farewell performance before they move on, and it enables each of them to take centre stage and be part of a great shared experience. Sometimes they write their own scenes, help with the costumes or set design, and contribute their own ideas. All the other classes, as well as our groups from partner schools, each rehearse a song, a dance or a scene, which they perform as a group, thereby contributing to the bigger picture. This kind of modular system also offers the opportunity to take up the children's individual and creative ideas during the collaborative development phase and integrate them into the musical. But what specific connections are forged during the process of creating a musical?

Interpersonal connections

I'd like to begin with the connection between people, as it delights me anew every year to see how our school community grows closer and pulls together: between those colleagues

[46] Erasmus is a European Union programme designed to promote intercultural education, youth and sport. In our case, it supports an exchange project between our school in Prague and a school in Berlin.

[47] These projects have been supported for years by the German-Czech Future Fund and consistently enable wonderful reciprocal visits that leave a lasting positive impression.

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who flexibly allow their pupils time off for rehearsals, actively support the creative process by incorporating practice sessions into their own lessons, develop choreography or scenes, and who are always willing to listen, to help solve problems, offering both advice and practical support. On the other hand, there are the connections that form amongst the pupils. They become part of a group that puts something together, with freedom, but also the need to integrate into the shared creative process. It is precisely here that children often have the chance to contribute talents and skills that sometimes remain hidden in everyday school life, thereby also enabling a different perspective on the relationship between teacher and students. The restless and often disruptive pupil in maths may, in the musical, be given the chance to channel their ideas, to contribute their urge to move and express themselves, and thus become an asset to the entire performance. Or the reserved pupil who hardly ever speaks may suddenly reveal a completely different side to themselves. Teachers and students interact on a different level, which can lead to a lasting shift in perspective.

Connection to music

Of course, a musical also involves music and songs. Our school orchestra rehearses once a week throughout the school year and, amongst other things, gradually develops the overture to our production during these rehearsals. This provides plenty of scope for process-oriented and creative expression and, above all, for developing the ability to listen not only to oneself but also to one's fellow musicians. The connection to music is also evident in the songs, many of which are composed by the pupils themselves. They quickly develop favourite songs, which echo through our school hall time and again during break times. This is particularly worth mentioning as we are a Czech school and our musical is performed largely in German. The German song lyrics therefore form a bridge to German lessons, which brings us to the next connection: cross-curricular learning.

Links to other subjects

The theme of each musical is not an isolated project, but is reflected in various ways in everyday school life and in other subjects. It creates space for cross-curricular learning, bringing together music, language, science subjects, art lessons and even the school psychologist. Here are a few examples:

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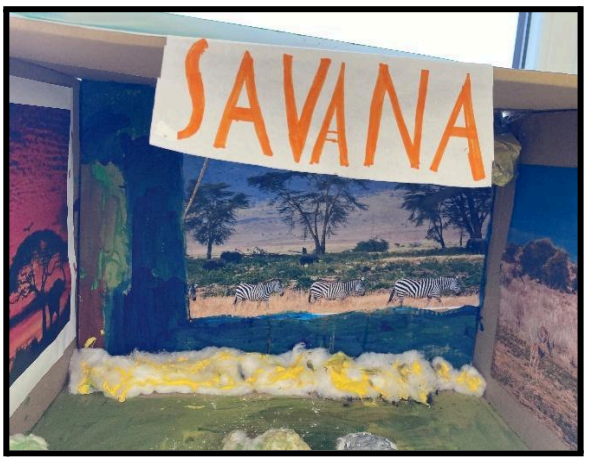
'*Schiff* Ahoj' ('Ship Ahoy', 2026) A boy's wanderlust draws him out into the wider world. He sets off on a round-the-world trip and returns with a deeper understanding of his roots and a renewed sense of self. In natural history lessons, pupils created models of the Earth's various types of vegetation. In ethics, they reflected on the limits and possibilities of modern technologies.









Examples of the vegetation types created by the pupils, © Ramona Schulz

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"Neboj se" ("Don't be afraid", 2024) A musical about fears and mental health. Throughout the school year, our school psychologist worked with the classes, developing strategies with the pupils to manage anxiety and providing information on available support services. In German lessons, the Year 5 pupils wrote their own scene on media consumption. Every year, the pupils help build the sets and take part in the school-wide competition to design the official poster. From the wealth of posters created in art lessons, a few are then selected for publication for promotional purposes.



Examples of posters created by pupils for *'Schiff Ahoj'* © Ramona Schulz

Connection to one's own personality

The approach of elemental music and dance education always strives to establish an inner connection and provide an opportunity for individual expression, whether through one's own voice, the movement of one's own body, playing an instrument or interacting with various materials. Apart from our musical and the regular choir and orchestra rehearsals, all classes undertake music and dance projects throughout the school year, in which pupils can express themselves individually and creatively whilst being introduced to appropriate working methods. This can be built upon during the rehearsal phase for the musical, and pupils usually find it easy to contribute their ideas at specific points.

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Bringing dance and music to schools, © Kristyna Jindrová

The intensive, playful voice training and the rehearsing of the songs ultimately bring the children into direct contact with their own voices. They usually make rapid progress and realise that their voice matters. This sense of self-efficacy – of being part of something that moves me and others – leads us to the final, but no less important, connection.

Connection to topics relevant to society or to the students

Looking back over the last 12 years, it has become clear that, through the choice of themes for our musicals, we repeatedly address social issues and strive to give the children a language with which to discuss them. They should be given the opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of a character within a story, thereby changing their perspective and developing empathy. Values are conveyed through engagement with a topic that affects the children. Sometimes the suggestions come directly from the children themselves; sometimes they arise from practical considerations in collaboration with our partner school in Heilsbronn; and sometimes they are, so to speak, 'in the air', as they are topical, significant and moving for our entire school community. It is important to us that these themes are true to life and forward-looking. The themes should broaden the children's horizons, connect perspectives and provide them with a message they can engage with and actively help to shape. In doing so, it is particularly important to us that the children do not see themselves as passive observers of the world, but as active contributors. Over the years, a number of thematic areas have emerged:

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Peace and democracy The Animals' Conference; Europe Is My Home; Those Were the Days	**Mental Health and Courage** Neboj se – Don't Be Afraid
Diversity and Inclusion The Grey Planner; The Suburban Crocodiles; Everyone Is Different	**Memory and History** Grandma, Grandad, tell me a story! Those Were the Days
The essentials in life Emil and the Detectives; The Little Prince; 'Ship Ahoy'	

It is particularly wonderful to see and experience when a musical not only has the power to leave a lasting impression on the pupils, our school and the local community, but sometimes also reaches far beyond. In 2016, following the performance of 'Grandma, Grandad, tell me a story', the German Football Club Prague was re-established in response to our musical. The DFC Prague was a club founded in 1896 where Jews, Czechs and Germans played football together. Franz Kafka was a fan of this club, which was disbanded in 1940 due to a ban on Jewish players taking part in matches. The Czechs and the Germans playing there decided they would no longer play without their Jewish friends. In this club, revived in 2016 by a parents' initiative, Czech and German children continue to play football together to this day. These diverse connections and aspects show that, ultimately, this is about more than just a musical performance. When children are allowed to tell their own stories and find their own means of expression through language, music and movement, it is more than just a performance. It is arts education, it is culture.



Scene from "Neboj se" © ZŠNČP

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Reference
Stibi, S. (2010) Right in the thick of it…EMP-The art of connections. *AGMÖ Music Education, January/February/March,*16-25.



Ramona Schulz was born in Munich, Germany, where she studied piano and music education at the Richard Strauss Conservatory and the University of Music. From 2014 to 2016, she completed a master's degree at the Orff Institute in Salzburg.
She has been living and working in Prague, Czechia, since 2000. She works with different age groups and all levels. In addition to elemental music education, teaching music at the Thomas Mann Gymnasium, and concerts for children, she conducts the school orchestra and leads school-wide musical projects at the Primary School of German-Czech Understanding.

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COMPILASCÌON
Autobiographical Storytelling and Collaborative Scriptwriting Blending Theatre, Music and Dance

Marta Gilmore & Ersilia Prosperi

"Soar above dogs, cats and birds,
the odds and ends of the past, friends and dreams."
— Wisława Szymborska, *Writing a CV*
"*We are young people dancing with the moon and the stars*."
I Tempestosi, *Compilascìon*

Introduction

Compilascìon is the result of a deliberately slow process of collective research, developed within a theatre, music and movement workshop with a group of adults with disabilities resulting from neurodevelopmental disorders. At the heart of the project lies a process of collective creation based on memory and autobiographical storytelling, explored through various artistic languages and the continuous interplay between theatre, music and movement.

This article follows the structure of the presentation we gave at the IOSFS Convention in Athens in July 2026, addressing the same experience from two different yet interconnected perspectives. In the first part, Marta Gilmore traces the process through which memories and autobiographical material took shape in a collective script. In the second part, Ersilia Prosperi focuses on the musical process, tracing the group's development as a choir and the way in which individual and collective musical skills emerged and developed within this narrative framework. The conclusions are co-authored.

PART I — *Compilascìon*: a mixtape of our lives

Marta Gilmore

Who we work with: Polo Lumière and Casaletto

Our association, the Centro Didattico Musicale e Teatrale (CDMT) is active in music, dance and theatre education, and rooted in the Tufello neighbourhood and Rome's Municipality III. Since 2021 we have been collaborating with the Polo Lumière, a centre dedicated to promoting the health and socio-cultural inclusion of people with disabilities; and a well-established organisation in our local area, recognised by local residents as an open and accessible space. The Polo, established through a memorandum of understanding between Roma Capitale and the local health service, is aimed at adults with disabilities resulting from neurodevelopmental disorders, in particular intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, and integrates social, health and socio-cultural interventions through various programmes.

In the neighbourhood, everyone knows it simply as *Il Casaletto*, named after the residential facility where some of the people taking part in our workshops live: an old country cottage

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around which the city has grown and which today stands out like a small farm amidst the neighbourhood's social housing blocks.

Over time, our collaboration with the Centre has grown, alongside the mutual respect and trust we share with its team. Today we run various programmes, including the theatre, music and movement workshop at the heart of this article, led by the authors together with Eleonora Tregambe, who specialises in creative movement and *DanceAbility*.

The long-term commitment and teamwork

The first thing we wish to emphasise is that this workshop has been a space of immense professional and personal growth for us, in which to experiment with methodologies and approaches no different from those we would have adopted with a group of neurotypical people, save for a few differences that have made it a rare and precious space.

Crucial to this was a different pace; a veritable ode to the slowness of processes, certainly necessary given the group's great neurodiversity, but which may perhaps offer food for thought regarding the pace of work to which we are normally accustomed, dictated by the rhythms of the school year. By contrast, with this group we had both the need and the privilege of being able to manage our time free from the pressure of an annual deadline. This meant that the production of the final presentation – which itself was divided into two stages, an initial launch in the form of a workshop and a theatre debut almost a year later – coincided with a lengthy process of skill development on many levels, allowing us to experiment with different approaches, to proceed with great care and to navigate various points of friction between the realms of research and practice.

Two further elements helped to make this experience unique. The first was the teamwork, which enabled ongoing dialogue between us, the Polo's educators and the various professionals involved in the project, offering invaluable support in guiding the group, managing any crises and identifying needs and resources. The second was the opportunity to share experiences with the group outside the weekly workshop, organising outings and trips to encounter other organisations within the Italian theatre scene. Among these, the most significant was attending the performance of *Don Chisciotte ad Ardere* by Teatro delle Albe, as part of the Ravenna Festival , which enabled our group to take to the stage in a major international production and to experience the excitement and wonder of this occasion.

Where we come from: Inside *The Tempest* and *The Tempestosi*

We began working with this group in 2021. They were introduced to us as adults diagnosed with moderate-to-severe or severe neurodevelopmental disorders, with an average age of around forty-five, including three younger women and girls. Many of them had known each other all their lives, having navigated the local support services together since their school days. Four of them live together in the group home within *Casaletto*.

We therefore joined a group of around 8–10 people (the composition has varied slightly over time) with a very long history behind them: friendships, romantic relationships, break-ups, conflicts, alliances and sub-groups. It was an extremely lively but also very conflict-ridden group: the first meetings were characterised by outbursts of anger, mutual rejection, crying,

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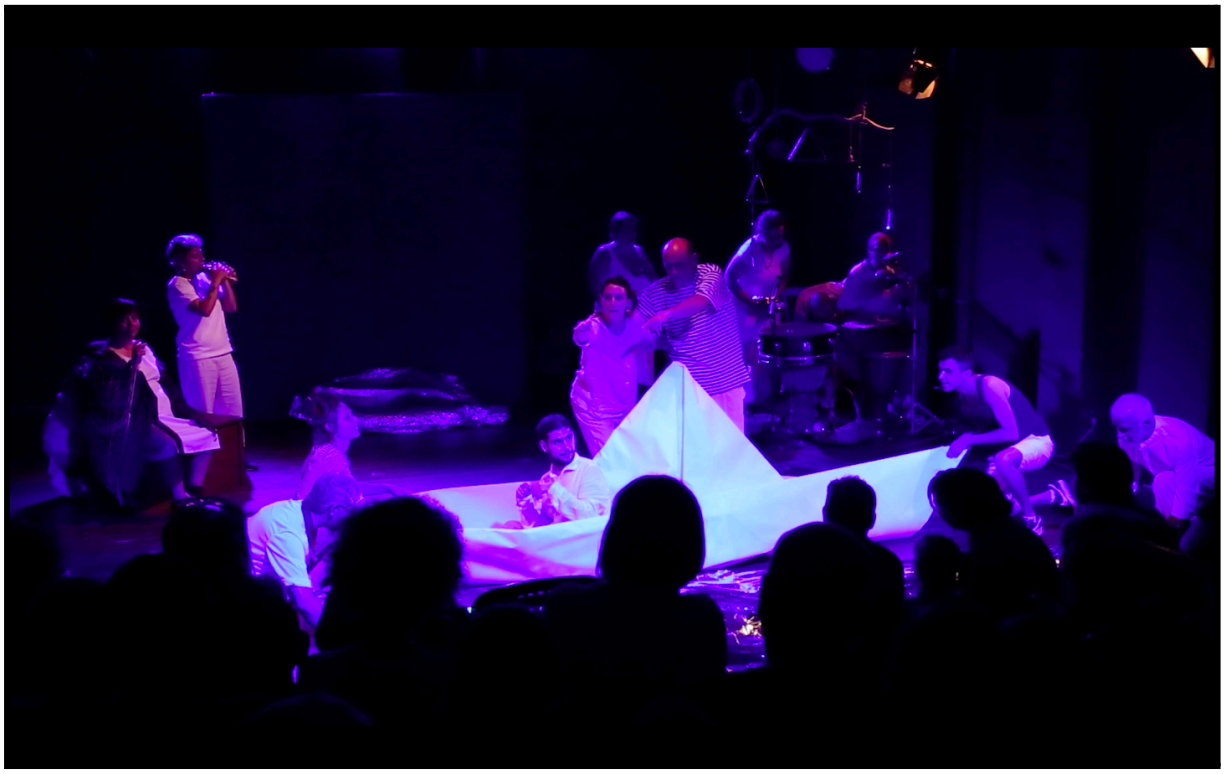
shouting, and stubborn silences. It was no coincidence that we decided to begin by rewriting William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which we then called *Dentro la Tempesta***.** Since then, the group has been known as the Tempestosi.



Dentro la Tempesta, staged at the *Teatro Fortezza Est* in Rome in June 2023

At the end of that two-year experience, we asked ourselves: where do we want to go from here? That's when we decided to move towards an original collective writing process centred on self-narration.

We felt that this tempestuous galaxy, where every person was a world unto themselves, was something worth trying to tell – as a human experience, as a wealth of lived experiences, beyond the lens of disability. In short, to try to create a narrative framework in which each person could share their own life story, so that the audience might see themselves reflected in it.

Stage dramaturgy as a process of collective writing

Whilst this was the starting point, we had absolutely no idea – nor did we feel we needed to have one from the outset – as to how we would go about creating this theatrical, narrative and, above all, poetic framework. The approach we adopted was that of *devising theatre* or collective stage writing, where, starting from a set of questions, material is gradually produced through a process of improvisation and shared creation, centred on the performer's authorship. This means constantly seeking, together with the actors and actresses, a space of connection and resonance between themselves and the themes or stories being explored, encouraging them to experiment independently, to produce their

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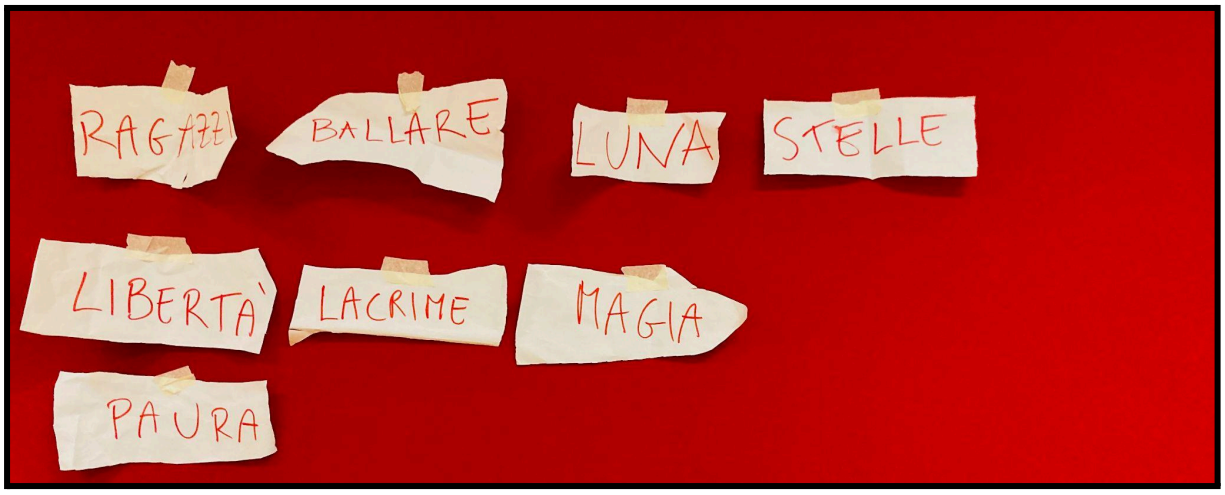
own material and content, and, on a more subtle level, to inhabit those spaces of uncertainty, stumbling and 'crisis' where one gently shares a little of one's own fragility. Thus began an initial phase of very open exploration. We proposed short solos, brief autobiographical accounts, improvisations and moments of sharing in a circle, without yet knowing what form the material gathered would take. The primary aim was to bring certain themes to the surface, in the belief that, in the early stages of undertaking a project of this kind, something very precious can emerge instinctively.

During this initial phase, a number of recurring themes emerged: memories of school and relationships with classmates, both in terms of camaraderie and friendships as well as conflicts – there were many accounts of fights, both giving and receiving, but also episodes of bullying and exclusion – the cruelty and, sadly, the violence suffered; and then the first loves of childhood and early adolescence; but also the courtyards and neighbourhoods of Rome, group games in the local parks, friends from the neighbourhood and those met on holiday, seaside homes, and pets, especially dogs. And since this is a rather 'stormy' group, we've also explored the intense emotions of a storm: fury, anger and fear – the things that make us angry and those that frighten us.

How *Compilascìon* came about

At the same time, I was keen to experiment with poetic language and verse. I thought that an accessible way to approach writing in verse would be to start with song lyrics, so I asked the participants to bring along their favourite song. A wide variety of songs were brought in: theme tunes from 1980s Japanese cartoons, Italian singer-songwriters, Mina, and Måneskin. We printed out all the lyrics and asked everyone to choose a few words they liked. We cut out the words and ended up with a pile of them scattered across the floor, which could be picked up and rearranged freely. Playing with this jigsaw puzzle, the chorus of our song emerged:

We're young people dancing with the moon and the stars
Tears of freedom
We're the most beautiful actresses in the universe
La- la- la – lalala!



Detail of the word puzzle from which the song's chorus was born

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With this chorus and other verses scattered here and there, along with all the notes I'd jotted down during our initial explorations, Ersilia composed the melody during an afternoon we spent together at the piano. Initially, our only aim was for it to be 'singable' enough so that they could sing it together without sounding too out of tune. We had no idea how far they would go from then on! With the melody ready, I was then able to write the rest of the lyrics, drawing on the notes taken during our explorations and taking care to ensure there was at least one verse that told a story about each of us.

And so our song came into being, becoming the actual *title track* of our album; an album that took the form of a sort of theatrical 'concept album', where each person telling their story is a track on the track list, and all of them converge and are contained within its final track: *Compilascìon*. This was a tribute – deliberately written in phonetic form – to the track lists we used to write by hand on audio cassettes back in the 1970s and 1980s, the years in which many of us (students and teachers) grew up.

Returning to the song, what we didn't realise was that it would become the dramatic thread running through the show, the element that held together the collective dimension of 'us' – that first-person plural that recurs in every verse – and the individual dimension of the stormy supernovae who, within this community, find a space to tell their stories.

To give an idea of just how much this song underpinned the storytelling, and how much this meta-musical dimension – which emotionally connects the song to memory, to nostalgia and to the emotions experienced – has permeated and facilitated the subsequent process of writing the script, we have included the full lyrics here, and from this point on I will use them as a starting point to give some examples of how we explored the various theatrical languages to drive the narrative forward.

We are young people dancing
with the moon and the stars,
tears of freedom.
We are the most beautiful actresses in the universe,
la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la.

We're brave; we no longer worry
about the nasty things people might say about us.
We're different, we're all diverse,
we're different, we're made of verse.

We're angry, furious, tempestuous,
lightning and thunderbolts against injustice.
We are encounters, greetings and smiles,
we are different, never to be mocked again.

We are the emotion that suddenly overwhelms us,
we are the fear inside the lift,
trains of thought like a song…
We are wonderful, wonderful thoughts!

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We're young people dancing
with the moon and the stars,
tears of freedom.
We're the most beautiful actresses in the universe,
la-la-la, la-la-la, la-la-la.

We are young people dancing



A dance piece for two performed in space

If the refrain stems from this image – the young people dancing beneath the moon and stars – the first key to unlocking the dramaturgy is precisely that of dance, which runs through the entire work as a practice and is here made the central theme. From memories of the carnival celebrations of Massimiliano's childhood, we arrive at Floriana's shame at having been caught in a sudden bout of bleeding during the secondary school camp party, just as she was dancing with the boy she was madly in love with – the very same boy who used to defend her from the bullies who would put pins under her chair and crumble her snack. And from these stories – who amongst us doesn't remember the first slow dances in secondary school? Who hasn't felt, at that age, that they wanted the ground to swallow them up in shame? – we move on to Aureliana's solo, as she dances wildly alongside the whole choir. And as she hurls every word towards the audience, the choir behind her repeats it, amplifying it: thus returning that 'we' which allows us to say 'I' and be heard.

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Here are Aureliana's words.

My name is Aureliana
I like dancing
I don't get anxious
I don't get stressed
And who cares about the others?

Aureliana's protest dance is abruptly interrupted by a fake power cut, which, after a brief bit of hidden theatre, allows us to move on to another dance in the dark, holding small torches, whilst Cristiana sings the song's chorus, accompanied by Ersilia on the trumpet.

We're the most beautiful actresses in the universe – La la la, lalala
One day Matteo wrote on a sheet of paper: "Once upon a time there was the knight Lancelot who fought a dragon. Richard Gere." So we tried to give Matteo a space for fulfilment – whilst at the same time seeking an aesthetically satisfying way to express his imagination. Initially, we tried to stage the clash between Lancelot and the Dragon by forming the dragon's body with the chorus members: a single, huge serpentine dragon battling Matteo, happily dressed as a knight and armed with a wooden sword. The scene was visually striking, but in the end we felt we were infantilising the group.

One of our objectives was precisely to move away from a certain form of belittling: the disabled person – all the more so if they have cognitive and relational disabilities – being treated as an eternal child. Instead, we placed great emphasis both on creative and performative autonomy – from the music to stage presence – and on fully embracing one's own age and the years of life lived. For this reason, a long snake making dragon sounds – whilst amusing – did not strike us as the right approach, so we experimented with a shadow play: Eleonora manipulated the coloured silhouette of the dragon, and Matteo fought against this shadow whilst the rest of the group illuminated the two silhouettes with the same fairy lights they'd used for the dance.

We're different, we're all diverse, we're different, we're made of verse
To transform the following verses into stage material: 'We are brave, we no longer worry/ about the nasty things people might say about us/ **We're different, we're all diverse, we're different, we're made of verse**' – we drew on childhood memories and created a piece combining music and movement based on *tableaux vivants*. We wanted to convey the sense of this poetic diversity: we are made of – verses. But also of a past in which diversity was sometimes the subject of discrimination, to be brought back to a simpler dimension – that of having all been, actors and audience alike, children dressing up for carnival, or youngsters going on a school trip.

We asked the participants to bring photos from when they were young, both individual and group shots. Here too, personal histories and family circumstances – having parents or siblings still alive, and other factors – shaped the diversity of the material we received: some brought entire albums, others two photos taken from Facebook or a single photograph, perhaps not even from their childhood, still framed and taken from their bedside table.

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These photos gave rise to some very heart-warming moments. At the same time, we introduced an exercise on *'tableaux vivants'*, starting with reproductions of famous paintings featuring particularly interesting compositions, depicting individual figures or group scenes. By studying the postures and details of the paintings and working to bring those still images to life – what happens just before the moment is frozen by the painter? And what happens immediately afterwards? – we introduced the possibility of telling a story through a dialogue between the body and the projected image.

This gave rise to a sequence of choreographed movements accompanied by Ersilia playing the trumpet live, using just a few symbolic props: Zorro hats, sticks and Barbie dolls. Each moment of the free-form dance in space, characterised by a different musical energy and a different use of the props, ends with a pause in which the whole group strikes the pose seen in a photograph of one of the protagonists, which is simultaneously projected onto the backdrop. The photographs initially form a sequence of close-ups, but their reproduction is echoed by the chorus, which multiplies them, with every member of the group repeating the posture and expression of the person in the photograph.



On the left, a photograph of Matteo as a child; on the right, the group recreating it in space during the preview held in November 2025

To create this sequence, we had to draw on a wide range of skills, from listening to the piece of music and the different qualities of movement it might evoke, to the balance of the bodies in space, the precision of the reproduced image, and the spatial orientation required for the reproduction of the group photographs. Added to this is the fact that there are two

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performers: Nicole and Giulio, who, during the sequence, accompanied the sound of the trumpet and their fellow performers' movements on percussion and the piano respectively. It is one of the most complex moments, exploring other dimensions of autobiographical storytelling and, in its own way, touching upon the mystery that every person embodies – much like the image of these little girls and boys in yellowed photographs, smiling at the camera or, rather, looking away with a sulky expression.

We're angry, furious, tempestuous

From the last group photo, a dance of rage unfolds in which the group seems to hurl something at the audience, like participants in a riot. Short, dialogue-driven scenes with a vaguely comic flavour then take shape, in which, in turn and with the support of their peers, each person acts out what infuriates them, almost always linked to the violation of personal boundaries: entering without knocking, invading private spaces, talking over others, preventing them from singing, touching personal belongings. There are also lighter moments, such as teasing *la squadra della Roma* [the football team *Roma*], but the recurring theme always centres on respect for one's personal space. This leads into a musical interlude – which Ersilia will discuss – that perhaps represents one of the most significant achievements of the entire journey.

We are encounters, greetings and smiles – we are the emotion that suddenly overwhelms us

Cristiana has a beautiful voice and is a natural singer. At the microphone, she speaks of her love for singing, the online lessons she took during the Covid pandemic – when we couldn't even hug one another – and how much she likes herself just the way her mum made her, before bidding farewell to the audience by singing her favourite song, *At Last* by Etta James, whilst her companions move around the space, hugging one another at every encounter: *We are encounters, greetings and smiles...*

Giulio and Francesco are then left alone, each telling two juxtaposed stories that do not interact directly, yet constantly resonate with one another, as if this too were a form of narrative polyphony. Francesco recounts episodes from his own childhood that relate to the way he observes and interprets the emotions of others. The theatre, his great passion, becomes an emotional grammar made up of glances, laughter and small details. Francesco always wants to make people laugh and is obsessed with jokes, which he rattles off one after another; and so, almost without giving it a second thought, he recalls an episode from his childhood, when he managed to make his father laugh.

At the same time, interspersed with the sound of a triangle, Giulio also tells a mirror-image story: *the emotion that suddenly overwhelms us*. During rehearsals before going on stage with *Dentro la Tempesta*, Giulio would sometimes find himself so overwhelmed by emotion that he would burst into tears, thinking he wouldn't be able to carry on. It was very difficult for him to accept the idea that there is no such thing as the 'wrong' emotion on stage, especially when it is so overwhelming. We haven't yet fully grasped this possibility: that of being moved in front of an audience and feeling not only entitled to it, but right at the heart of what we're doing. It's an issue that concerns the whole group, from various points of view: learning to be present with what's happening, without shying away from the emotion but also without flaunting or manipulating it.

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We are fear…
Talia's solo, on the other hand, introduces the theme of mourning. Talia grew up in Mexico and recounts her memories of *the Día de los Muertos*, a festival which she describes as 'sad and happy', during which loved ones who are no longer with us return to celebrate alongside us. The group joins in her story by singing *México lindo y querido*, whilst Talia and Giulio dance a *pas de deux* at the centre of the stage – a moment that brings them immense joy and helps them overcome the emotional strain of the previous scene. The scene concludes with a group moment in which everyone enters carrying a small candle representing the gift they would like to give to a loved one: a pack of cards for Dad, a plate of pasta with sardines for Mum.

Death is an important theme for our group, made up of adults who, in most cases, have already lost one or both parents. For those of us who are not fully independent in an ableist world, the loss of those who look after us is an enormous blow, as are illness and our own fragility.

This scene, which is somewhat the dramatic climax of the piece, leads us towards the finale, where Nicole initially entered the scene, asking to speak to the doctor because all this darkness had made her anxious. I play the 'doctor' – a key figure for users of a service such as the Polo: I engage in dialogue with Nicole, initially to listen to her anxieties, gradually to share my own, and finally to prompt the audience to reflect on their own. This very contemporary theme, 'total anxiety', as Nicole calls it, allows us to share our anxieties with one another – from delays on public transport to utility bills and unpaid fines, from the hoover to the future.

Until Aureliana steps in to list the final source of anxiety: 'the fear of the lift'.

Inside the lift
The whole group steps into an imaginary lift, confined within a small area: a square marked out with tape in the centre of the stage. A choral movement sequence begins, led by Eleonora, in which each person, pressed up against the others, repeats the gesture of the person next to them, like a rippling echo, whilst I, at the microphone, mark the ascent, imitating the voice of an artificial intelligence or a loudspeaker in a public space. At times, the lift comes to a standstill. The group goes through various states: anxiety, shortness of breath, boredom, being too close to others, waiting, fear, the need to go to the toilet.
For many of our students, the lift is a real-life experience, linked to accessibility, independence and even claustrophobia. But in the performance, it gradually becomes something else, until it shatters an imaginary glass ceiling and we find ourselves on top of the world. From there, it's a short step, and each of us takes it in the direction we choose, breaking through the imaginary walls of the lift and scattering in every direction. We finally take up all the space we're entitled to and dance on a stage that has become the sky, as light as dragonflies.

Here we are: we are young people dancing with the moon and the stars, tears of freedom. Ready to sing our song, *Compilascìon* – which until that moment had emerged in fragments along the way – from start to finish, all together, with a collective voice that encompasses them all, bringing the journey to a close right where it began.

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PART II — *Compilascìon*: from a song to the birth of a choir
Ersilia Prosperi

The musical journey – the first steps
Whilst so far we have mainly described the process through which autobiographical material took shape in the script, I would now like to revisit this same journey from another perspective: the musical one. The creation of *Compilascìon* coincided, in fact, with a gradual shift in the group's relationship with music and, in particular, with their own voices.
At the start, my aim was relatively simple: to learn, memorise and sing the song *'Compilascìon'* together, whilst managing to incorporate it into the performance without losing the theatrical focus. But little by little, as new scenes, new memories and new material emerged, the musical work also expanded, and new objectives and possibilities came to the fore.

When we started, singing together presented several challenges: shifting from one tonal context to another, simultaneously repeating the same melodic pattern at the same pitch, and waiting for the precise moment to start singing or playing. Over time, the group has developed a greater ability to breathe in unison, follow the conductor's cues, respond to dynamic instructions and use their voices to express different musical intentions and styles.

Learning to sing together
Our initial work on the song began with 'Macchia', a puppet the group was already using in their theatre work to memorise their parts. Sitting in a circle, Macchia was passed from one person to another, and whoever caught it would sing their line of the song; we then repeated the same game, adding the melody. This simple exercise allowed me to observe how confident each person felt using their voice and what their relationship was with timing and waiting.



Singing the verses of the song whilst passing the Macchia puppet

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We then began to sing whilst walking freely around the space, without a set direction. The aim was also to make the act of singing feel more effortless, seeking the same naturalness with which one might walk down the street humming or whistling a familiar tune.

The work developed from a set of practices linked to the Orff-Schulwerk idea, using rhythmic and melodic patterns, movement through the space, *stop and go* exercises, and following the piano, trumpet or percussion. Gradually, we delved deeper into vocal work on arpeggios and melodic patterns introduced by the piano or a solo voice and then repeated by the choir. It was precisely during this work that I began to recognise musical abilities and skills that had hitherto been largely unexpressed, upon which it was possible to build further.

Listening before singing

A significant change took place when I introduced an exercise inspired by Edwin Gordon's concept of *'audiation'*, asking the group to mentally visualise a melodic phrase before singing it.

The melody would be presented and then left in silence for a few seconds, with each person asked to continue hearing and visualising it in their mind before reproducing it. Sometimes we used neutral syllables, at other times the names of the notes; only later did we return to the song's lyrics. For several months, every *Compilascìon* rehearsal was preceded by ten minutes of this exercise.

Alongside the collective work, there were also very brief individual moments – almost like micro-vocal lessons within the workshop – which allowed us to devote a few minutes of specific attention to each person and the characteristics of their voice, their difficulties and their strengths.

Silence thus became part of the musical work: a time to listen inwardly before producing a sound, to let the ear rest, to clear the mind of other sounds and intrusive thoughts, and to prepare the breath.

The individual voices within the choir

This process was not the same for everyone. Aureliana, for example, tended almost always to come in early at the start, beginning to sing a few seconds before the rest of the group. It was essential to learn to follow the conductor's cues, keeping the attention on my gestures and waiting for the right moment to come in without rushing ahead. In the finale of *Compilascìon,* when we sing the song that gives the show its title, this process becomes particularly evident: I stop playing and let silence fill the space for a few moments, until I have the attention of the whole group; then, after a collective breath, we all start again together.

Giulio, on the other hand, has a lovely voice and good intonation, but at the start he sang very little. As the work progressed, not only did he begin to use his voice more, but instrumental skills we didn't know he possessed also came to the fore. In the sequence of *tableaux vivants*, he joins the small musical ensemble on the piano, keeping the beat whilst the trumpet improvises phrases of varying speed and duration, adapting to the interruptions required by the scene. Nicole also joins the ensemble, playing the snare drum and cymbals

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with her sticks, demonstrating a natural ability to alternate between her right and left hands and to slot into the musical flow.

Building the choir also meant creating the conditions for different skills to emerge and find a practical role within the show.



The group explores the song using the instruments

From individual singing to collective vocals

Another significant milestone was the work on *México lindo y querido*, which accompanies Talia's account of *the Día de los Muertos*. Her autobiographical recollection led the group to grapple with a different language, a 3/4 time signature and a musical world new to the one they had explored up to that point.

The scene begins intimately as I accompany Talia's story on the guitar with short melodic fragments inspired by ranchera music; then Cristiana, the group's most confident soloist, joins in, and the song initially emerges from the dialogue between our voices and the guitar. Subsequently, the whole choir joins in, producing a marked shift in energy. The individual voice does not disappear into the collective one: the two dimensions alternate and support one another.

Within the choir, some members – such as Francesco, Floriana and Massimiliano – possess particular vocal confidence and a remarkable ability to memorise lyrics. Their presence therefore provides support for the rest of the group at times when shyness or insecurity arise.

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Towards polyphony

Over time, the work has begun to extend beyond its initial musical objectives. One of the most significant developments arose precisely from the *Anger Blues*, the musical segment that follows the scenes in which each person acts out what makes them furious. From that work, we subsequently moved on to *Tempestosi*, a new song in which we began to experiment with three-part parallel polyphony, using simple harmonisations built on major, minor and dominant seventh chords.



The choir at the piano

Our music

At the end of this journey, I believe that the most significant change does not concern a single musical skill, but the group's relationship with music. The voice, singing and, gradually, the instruments have become languages through which they express themselves and recognise their own abilities. As Aureliana says: 'I've learnt to modulate my voice', demonstrating that she can recognise and name her own musical achievements.

Today, music is something that belongs to them, it is their music. Sometimes I think the group resembles a rock band more than a class: a space where teachers and the *Tempestosi* share music, memories, cultural references and fragments of a shared generational history, and where roles can constantly be redefined. We are all *Tempestosi* and, at different times, we can all teach and learn something from one another.

This familiarity with music and with one's own voice continues to open up new possibilities. Recently, at Marta's suggestion, we went through the entire script of the show in the form of a *recitative*, and everyone freely improvised a melody to their own lines, with a naturalness that would have been unthinkable at the start of the journey. Even *the name gesture* – a warm-up exercise in which each person says their name whilst making a gesture that the group repeats – has evolved into a *sung name gesture*: today, everyone sings their name to an improvised melody, which the choir then takes up. Building on this practice, we have

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recently been able to work with ease on the pentatonic scale, using the gestures from the *Kodály* method.

Conclusions
By Marta Gilmore and Ersilia Prosperi

Since we presented this educational programme at the Athens Convention, the *Tempestosi* group has taken on the challenge of staging a more fully realised version of the work. Thanks to the support of the local authorities, we were able to make our debut in a local theatre before an enthusiastic audience, who laughed, applauded and wept at every moment. On the one day of a particularly stormy downpour during a sweltering summer, our *Compilascìon* celebrated its success and also marked its conclusion.

This final phase, too, had its share of small and big victories and setbacks. When we resumed work after the holidays, Nicole refused to return, following yet another row that had flared up during the summer break. Despite our efforts, we were unable to persuade her, and her dialogue scene with the doctor was taken over by Aureliana, who turned it into a hilarious and lively performance. It was only then that we realised Aureliana should have been given more of a role earlier on, and that what had started out as a stopgap for a withdrawal we'd deeply regretted allowed us to recognise something we'd failed to see until then. At the same time, through the *Tempestosi* project, Nicole – who we hope will return soon – was able to express her musical talents, which led her to join *Le Zebre*, Ersilia's music workshop, which she has not left.

One of the starting points for us was the desire for this group to find a way to tell their stories beyond the lens of disability. After the performance, many people from the audience told us they had recognised themselves in those stories: they had grown up in the same neighbourhoods, belonged to the same generation, had experienced the same feelings of shame, the same teenage crushes, and were living with the same inevitable anxieties. Throughout the process, we repeatedly came up against what we perceived as a form of 'diminishment': the adult with a disability treated as an eternal child, defined primarily by their needs and what others do for them. We were faced with people who had many years of life behind them, lived to the full with passion and resilience, and we wanted to work with them to find a way to bring these life stories to life within a collective creation of which they were the full authors.

Linking the development of new skills to our own life experiences and to the things we hold dear can spark and consolidate learning, anchoring it in deep roots. For everyone, being the authors of their own narrative, learning by connecting collective experience to their inner world, and ultimately being able to convey this complexity to the outside world whilst feeling seen and heard, can be a source of wellbeing and personal growth.

Taking the Orff-Schulwerk as our starting point, the learning space was the group that gradually became a choir. The choir as a character/community in ancient theatre and as a musical entity, where each voice joins the others without any one prevailing or being drowned out. It is no coincidence that the dramatic threads emerged from the anthem-like song *Compilascìon*, from which the various solo voices branched off to recount a part of

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their own lives. And it is within the choir – understood also as a polyphony of voices that do not necessarily converge on the same melodic or narrative line – that each solo finds the opportunity to occupy its own space.

All this brings to the fore a tension that has run continuously through our work: that between caring for people and the pursuit of an artistic and aesthetic quality that would drive the narrative forward. In theatre, as in music and dance, we have continued to set real challenges, without determining in advance which possibilities were or were not accessible to each individual. For us, this has also meant seeking to move away from the still widespread notion that artistic activities aimed at adults with disabilities are primarily recreational, entertainment-based or socialising opportunities.

One thing we would like to emphasise is just how important, throughout this process, the interplay between theatre, dance and music has been, as well as the ongoing collaboration amongst the teachers. Music, by reclaiming its narrative function within the broader dramatic framework, returns to that ancient connection whereby it forms part of a whole that gives it meaning and amplifies its impact; at the same time, theatre draws on the music and dance not as embellishments or ancillary languages, but as forms capable of condensing, transforming and communicating experience.

Exploring one's own musicality, discovering the ability to sing in tune, to sing and play together, but also to express feelings through the body, movement, silence and play, means acquiring new languages and new means of communication. In some cases, we felt that it was not only what the *Tempestosi* were capable of doing that changed, but also their perception of their own potential, as if each individual and the group itself could push their boundaries and gain a new sense of self.

To maintain this complexity whilst respecting specific needs, individual paces, health issues and the practical limitations of a twice-weekly workshop, the slow pace at which we began was a fundamental element, alongside our work as a team. A process that brings together the complexity of people's lives, the quality of artistic research, and the opportunity to continue learning which requires a different timeframe from that dictated by the need to produce a result to be showcased by fixed deadlines. Not having an annual showcase as our end goal allowed us to let certain possibilities emerge and then to have the time to recognise and develop them. It also required a community of teachers, educators, practitioners and coordinators capable of jointly supporting both the artistic process and the people participating in it.

The proverb says that it takes a village to raise a child. Our experience tells us that it also takes an entire community to nurture a poetic and artistic creation – a community that accompanies it, protects it and allows it to spread its wings.

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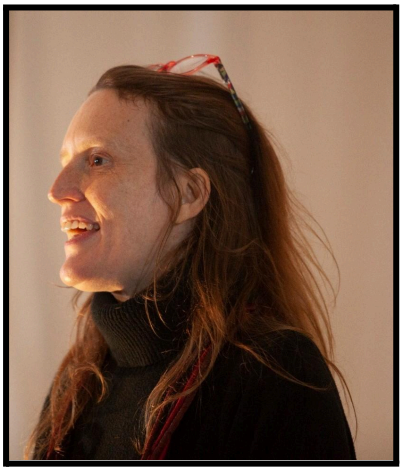

Marta Gilmore, trained in Acting and Directing at the Centro Internazionale La Cometa in Rome (2004), is a theatre director, playwright, dramaturg, and translator with over 20 years of experience in professional theatre and performing arts education. In 2004, she founded the independent theatre collective *Isola Teatro*, directing and devising productions presented at national and international theatres and festivals. She has also translated plays by authors including Brian Friel, Caryl Churchill, Martin McDonagh, and Athol Fugard, for both stage productions and publication.

Since 2023, she has been Educational Coordinator of CDMT – Centro Didattico Musicale e Teatrale, overseeing music, theatre, and performing arts projects that combine artistic and pedagogical research in collaboration with schools, cultural institutions, and local communities. Since 2022, she has led theatre projects at Polo Lumière (ASL Roma 1), including *Compilascìon*. She is also co-artistic director of AllezEnfants!, a theatre festival for secondary school students in Rome, and has collaborated with Teatro delle Albe on Non-scuola educational theatre projects for nearly twenty years.



Ersilia Prosperi is a trumpeter, composer, and music educator. She holds a degree in Sociology from Sapienza University of Rome, a degree in Jazz from the Conservatorio Licinio Refice in Frosinone, and an Orff-Schulwerk Certificate from the University of Rome Tor Vergata and CDM Onlus. Her musical training also includes classical and jazz trumpet studies in Italy and Cuba.

She has performed and recorded internationally, collaborating with artists including Amy Denio, Meklit Hadero, Antonella Ruggiero, and Calibro 35. She founded the experimental jazz group OU, composing and arranging three albums released and presented in the United States and Europe. Her artistic work also includes music for theatre, film, and interdisciplinary performances.

Since 2023, she has taught trumpet and ensemble music at CDMT – Centro Didattico Musicale e Teatrale in Rome, where she directs several brass and youth ensembles and leads interdisciplinary music workshops. Her educational practice combines improvisation, collective composition, and ensemble work with people of different ages and backgrounds. She also collaborates with Polo Lumière (ASL Roma 1), where she leads music workshops and oversees the composition and musical direction of Compilascìon.

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Convention 2026 Research Sessions

Research Sessions at the 2026 IOSFS Convention in Athens

Manju Durairaj and Werner Rohrer

The Research Committee of the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum Salzburg (IOSFS) was established in 2025 as one of the organization's newer bodies. The primary purpose of the committee is to curate scholarly literature and develop a global network among researchers specializing in Elemental Music and Movement Education. The committee maintains three responsibilities:

- Research curation in the field of Elemental Music and Movement Education;
- Scholarly exchange through hosting quarterly online sessions that provide international students and researchers an opportunity to present methodological approaches and empirical findings to a global audience of Orff-Schulwerk practitioners and scholars; and
- Coordinating dedicated research sessions at the annual IOSFS conventions.

Building upon the successful integration of research sessions at the 2025 IOSFS convention in Salzburg, which featured presentations from Singapore, Slovenia, and Austria, alongside a global online forum, the 2026 convention in Athens expanded its programming. The committee extended presentation timeslots and increased the volume of accepted peer-reviewed proposals to accommodate increasing international scholarly interest.

The **IOSFS 2026 Convention** centred on the theme of *Storytelling: Finding and Making Meaning through Orff-Schulwerk*. The convention's research committee hosted two dedicated sessions focusing on broader topics within elemental music and movement. These sessions were co-chaired by Manju Durairaj (Vice President of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access for the American Orff-Schulwerk Association [AOSA]) and Werner Rohrer (Assistant Professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna).

The initial session highlighted advanced research projects presented by Dr. Olympia Agalianou and Dr. Raquel Pastor Prada. The subsequent session utilized a roundtable format to showcase the work of 11 graduate researchers—comprising master's and doctoral students who were either currently enrolled or recent graduates. This roundtable included three virtual presentations and eight in-person presentations.

Dr. Agalianou presented a thought-provoking analysis of the current relevance of both the methodical approach employed and the current implications of the findings of her doctoral study conducted twenty years ago. Titled *Elemental Music and Dance Pedagogy in Greek Primary Schools: A Critical Reflection on a Study Conducted 20 Years Ago*, this ethnographic case study investigated an Orff-Schulwerk-based education intervention within Greek primary school physical education. Dr. Agalianou proposed that if the study were to be replicated today, a research design that combined ethnographic case study with action research would be efficacious.

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Dr. Prada's thesis *Visual Arts and Dance: Proposal for Interdisciplinary Teaching* combined historical, artistic, and action research that led to the development of a formal curriculum proposal with ten educational experiences based on creative educational dance methodology and the Orff-Schulwerk approach. Findings suggest that creative processes related to the visual arts can be transformed into highly meaningful and personal experiences when embodied learning is evoked. Prada concludes that artistic integration in education fosters more inclusive and pluralistic learning spaces that allow for understanding and learning about the arts in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives.

The research round table session featured researchers from around the world who presented a 10-minute overview of their research in Orff-Schulwerk and Elemental Music and Movement Pedagogy. Presenters included researchers who had recently completed their doctoral programs, and graduate students pursuing masters and doctoral work with a university advisor. These presentations are summarized as follows:

Zhengchang Cheng, masters student of the Orff-Institut, Mozarteum University, Salzburg / Austria, explored how Chinese music teachers' past learning experiences influence their creative self-concept and their engagement with improvisation in Orff teacher training. The study *Creativity in Orff Pedagogy and Chinese Teachers' Educational Experience: A Cross-Disciplinary Inquiry into Improvisation, Self-Concepts, and Adult Learning* used a mixed-methods design. The findings indicated that many teachers educated in environments that emphasised correctness, and model-based learning exhibited uncertainty in open-ended tasks. Nevertheless, embodied musical activities, reflective dialogue, and non-judgmental feedback in Orff workshops supported teachers in reflecting on their past experiences and developing a broader understanding of creativity.

Kelly Grace, doctoral student from Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York / USA, examined how three elementary music teachers experienced effectiveness in their teaching in a qualitative single case study *Elementary Music Teachers' Lived Experiences of Effective Teaching.* Grace reported three emergent themes. First, teachers perceived themselves as effective when they observed student success. Second, pedagogical training was a key factor in their perceived effectiveness. Third, participating in an Orff-Schulwerk association with other elementary music teachers contributed to their perceived effectiveness.

BethAnn Hepburn, recent doctoral graduate from Kent State University, Kent / USA, outlined a qualitative Generic Descriptive-Interpretive study (Elliott & Timulak, 2021). The doctoral research *The Nature of Peer Collaboration during Orff Schulwerk Rhythmic Composition Groups* examined peer-to-peer teaching strategies within cooperative learning groups during fourth-grade general music classes using the Orff-Schulwerk approach. The study design centred on student voices and demonstrated that students valued opportunities to work with peers and create their own compositions. Findings suggested peer learning can strengthen students' understanding of rhythmic notation and improve performance.

Tadeja Mraz Novak, masters student and her supervisor Dr. Petra Brdnik Juhart from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, jointly presented *Music Heals: Elementary Music-Making as a Supportive Practice in a Paediatric Waiting Room.* The mixed-methods research design explored the role of elemental music-making in supporting children's experiences while

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waiting for medical appointments. Zdravoglaski visual cards based on elemental forms such as breath, movement, sound exploration, simple rhythmic actions, and attentive listening invited children and adults to engage in quiet, non-invasive musical activities involving music creation, performance, and listening. Preliminary findings suggested that the activities effectively engaged children, encouraged caregiver involvement, and fostered positive child–caregiver interaction.

Joy Reeve, doctoral candidate from Teachers College, Columbia University, New York / USA presented her ongoing pilot research study on examining ways a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) framework could facilitate teacher expertise to expand and develop SEL opportunities in the music classroom. A music-based SEL curriculum framework, Social Emotional Education through Music Education (SEE in ME) was developed as a tool where rhythmic entrainment and emotional contagion are leveraged to create embodied SEL experiences for student well-being.

Werner Rohrer, professor at the University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, Austria, in his study *Methods of Elemental Music Pedagogy (EMP) in Instrumental Lessons for Beginners* analysed teaching sequences for children in early instrumental music classes using video-based research. The qualitative content analysis examined the EMP methods used in instrumental lessons for beginners in small groups of children aged four to eight, with a focus on violin, piano, or theatre.

Cassiano Santos, a postdoctoral researcher financed by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, detailed a qualitative action research project *Curricular Repertoires in Undergraduate Music Teacher Education: A Study on the Mediation of a Licentiate Course based on the Triangular, Orff, and C(L)A(S)P Approaches.* The study outlined contemporary challenges in Brazilian Music Teacher Education and investigated how teacher education can move beyond transmission models toward reflective and collective curricular mediation.

Ezgi Tatar from the Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur / Turkey described a study that developed from her Master's thesis *The impact of Orff-Schulwerk-based movement and dance activities on the musical skills of preschool children.* The findings of this intervention study of 15 preschool children aged five to six, showed significant gains in several areas: pitch, rhythm, tempo, musical memory, form, and rhythmic and melodic improvisation tasks.

Marina Varouta, masters student of the Orff- Institut, Mozarteum University, Salzburg / Austria, offered an exploratory qualitative study of primary school children's emotional responses to new music composed after 1990. The study examined what children aged seven to eight in second-grade class in Germany feel when listening to selected works, and how they express these emotions in writing, drawing, or speech. The study *Children's Emotional Responses to New Music: The Role of Elemental Music and Dance Pedagogy* explored how preparatory strategies such as perception games, language games, and sound and movement improvisations related to emotions may help deepen and differentiate these responses.

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Laura Wiedenfeld, recent doctoral graduate from Kent State University, Kent / USA, conducted a phenomenological study as a participant observer during an Orff-Schulwerk level 1 teacher preparation course. Her dissertation titled *Finding My People: Value Creation in Orff-Schulwerk Level One* examined the process of becoming part of a learning community through a levels course. All participants generated value along a continuum during the course of the study, with five participants who found the experience incredibly valuable and one who did not feel particularly connected to the approach or the group.

The research sessions hosted by the IOSFS Research Committee at the IOSFS Convention revealed the depth of interest in ongoing scholarly research and the wide breadth of research topics in Orff-Schulwerk. The animated and profound dialogue that took place during and after the research sessions brought to light the need for frequent meetings and opportunities for academic discourse, specifically around research methodologies and applications of research to practice.

Acknowledging the need for opportunities for dialogue, the research committee will host quarterly online meetings to provide an open forum for (a) sharing or re-sharing current research in Elemental Music and Movement Education, (b) identifying collaborative research opportunities, (c) networking with peers who share similar research interests, (d) offering support and guidance for novice researchers planning to present or submit their work for publication, and (e) discussing the implications of research on practice.



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Project Report and Proposal

FARE PER CAPIRE (Doing to Understand): When Music Becomes Encounter

Checco Galtieri, Dario Balleggi & Sonia Russino



Bethlem, occupied territories (2010)
Music lesson in a Christian school

Orff-Schulwerk Italiano (OSI), has undergone a profound process of transformation in recent years, marked by the pandemic and by the death of our founder, Giovanni Piazza. Among the most significant elements of this journey are the establishment of the "Polo di Formazione Continua" (Continuing Education Hub), together with the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia* and the *Musica in Culla* network, and the creation of new opportunities for research and exchange.

While the OSI series founded by Giovanni Piazza, now guided by his daughters Laura and Sara, is approaching its fiftieth and final volume, the Hub's space for discussion has given rise, thanks to its collaboration with *Gesualdo Edizioni,* to a new publishing project: the educational series *Fare per Capire*.

The series is conceived as a place for exchange and reflection, a space in which to explore the reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation that emerge from concrete experience.

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All the attachments to the books in the series can be viewed free of charge on our platform: https://formazione.donnaolimpia.it/pages/collana-editoriale-fare-per-capire

A PROPOSAL FOR OSAs and ASIs

Alongside the books already published, a proposal is currently underway that we are sharing with Orff-Schulwerk teachers:

We would like to produce, together with other interested OSAs and ASIs, an international volume of educational proposals inspired by the Orff-Schulwerk, written in English (with original texts in Arabic and possible translations into the languages of the participating countries), dedicated to the valorisation of Palestinian musical heritage and dialogue between cultures.

The idea is to build a collective project, involving teachers and trainers from different countries, so that music can become a concrete instrument of mutual understanding and peace.

Those interested in a Zoom session are invited to write to didattica@orffitaliano.it.



Bethlehem, occupied territories (2004)
Meeting and playing with children during a visit to the Aida refugee camp

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To date we have published two books:

1 – From Palestine to the School: Music as a Tool for Encounter

The first book, published in the second half of 2025, is *Musical Landscapes from Palestine*.

Why?
During the most dramatic phases of the massacres in Gaza, the Italian Orff community asked itself: what can we do? What can our part of the Hummingbird be?[1]
We decided to create a collection of music-educational proposals from Palestine, designed for all age groups, with three objectives:

- To fill an existing gap in educational proposals in Italy and beyond, offering opportunities to make music and grow together.
- To draw closer to Beauty — and to the right to Beauty — through songs and dances that come from a world too often represented in partial and stereotyped ways.
- To raise funds to support an organization that creates Beauty, such as the Jericho Mosaic Centre, a Palestinian non-governmental association combining the craftsmanship of mosaic-making with ethical and social values. The centre currently employs twenty-five young Palestinians, mainly women.

Why propose a book of educational and musical activities inspired by the Middle East?
For too many years, the images returned to us by the media have been images of tragedies, bombs and massacres. Distorted and divisive associations have become rooted in the collective imagination, such as the equation linking Palestinians with fanaticism, creating confusion between religions and nationalities, between peoples and governments.

With this work, we want to help tell a different story: the smiles of children in a refugee camp, artists rediscovering their own cultural traditions, and the courage that this process requires. *Musical Landscapes from Palestine* is not a historical, cultural or political pamphlet. Its aim is to tell personal stories and seek beauty through music.

As Tano D'Amico writes in a recent photographic publication (*Under the Walls of Jerusalem*, Mimesis, 2023): "Without these images, without the sounds and songs connected to them, without the poems […] truth will no longer have anyone to defend it or seek it. It will no longer have anyone to find or create it."

Ilan Pappé, a former Israeli university professor from Haifa, writes (*A History of Modern Palestine*, Einaudi, 2005): 'Most histories of Palestine and Israel are histories of a conflict. […] Yet life is not determined by conflict alone. […] I refuse to see conflict as the essential element of life in Palestine.' Palestinian composer Rima Nasir Tarazi, author of two of the proposed songs, expressed these thoughts:

> If we were a free people, we could be a great people… I have always loved children, ever since I was very young. In them I have always seen everything that is truly life. […] I have always felt that caring for children and being responsible for their education is a sacred mission that must be taken very seriously. I have tried to draw their attention to the beautiful

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things in their country and in their lives: a fruit, a flower, an olive tree, the moon, the sun and the stars.

Above all, I felt it was important to keep hope and joy alive in their sensitive hearts, offering them a respite from the traumatic experiences of everyday life.

I pray that the miraculous healing power of music and songs may bring comfort to all children whose lives are marked by indescribable suffering, lifting them from their pain and enabling them to feel the warmth of hope and appreciate the joy of being part of this wonderful world.



Italy (2008)

The Qanun is one of the most technically demanding acoustic instruments in the Middle East. It is a large, plucked table zither featuring multiple courses of strings and numerous brass levers—known as 'mandals'—that allow for the adjustment of pitch in microtonal intervals in real time, while playing.

What it contains

After a year of study and research, the collective project produced a series of Schulwerk-style educational proposals for all age groups, usable in Italian schools from nursery school through secondary school.

The pieces, some traditional and some by contemporary Palestinian composers, around which the educational proposals were developed, are:

- **NINI YA MOUMOU** – a lullaby from the Maghreb;
- **ANA TIFL FILESTINI** (*I Am a Palestinian Child*) – Rima Tarazi [2];
- **TIK TIK TIK YA UM SULEIMAN** – Assi and Mansour Rahbani [3];
- **WEIN A RAMALLAH** (*Going to Ramallah*) – traditional;
- **HALA LALA LAYYA** – traditional;

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- **AL-MOQUADEMA** (*The Prelude*) – Suhail Khoury [4].

The pathway also includes connections with *Teleat Ya Malha Nourha* and with a French lullaby.

The book contains a transliteration table, accompanying audio and video, choreographies, musicograms, body-percussion activities and simple arrangements, rhythmic patterns, proposals for the use of voice and Orff instruments, onomatopoeia and spaces for improvisation, conceptual maps, and other educational activities that can be adapted to different needs.



Bethlehem, occupied territories (2011)
Music lesson in a kindergarten

Who

The volume is edited by Checco Galtieri, with a preface by educationalist Mario Piatti, and is the result of the work of eleven musicians, teachers and educators from across Italy, from Cuneo to Palermo, united by their Orff-Schulwerk training:

Paola Anselmi, President of the International Association *Musica in Culla*, Rome; Professor of Pedagogy at the Conservatory of Vibo Valentia.
Maria Grazia Bellia, Director of the Choir of the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*, Rome; Professor of Pedagogy at the *V. Bellini* Conservatory in Catania.
Luca Dalmasso, primary school teacher, Cuneo.

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Eliana Danzì, secondary school teacher, PhD in Technologies and Methods for University Education, Palermo.
Mascia Dionisi, primary school teacher, Amelia (Terni).
Checco Galtieri, President of OSI Orff-Schulwerk Italiano; Director of the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*, Rome.
Michela Miccio, music educator, Naples.
Ciro Paduano, Vice-President of OSI; Educational Coordinator of the Junior Department of the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*, Rome.
Gianni PeTa, music educator, Turin.
Alessandro Piacentini, primary school teacher, Amelia (Terni).
Sonia Russino, 0–6 educator, *Musica in Culla*.

2 – When Two Methodologies Meet: A New Idea of Music Education Emerges

The second book, published in July 2026, is *Music Is a Serious Game. Musical Thoughts and Synaesthetic Activities for Preschool and the First Cycle of Primary School*.



Rome (2025)
Music lesson Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia. Musica è Gioco (‘Music is Play’)

Why did we write this book?
This book grew out of the practices and reflections of a working group that, over the years, asked itself how to bring the Orff-Schulwerk approach and the *Musica in Culla* methodology together, with the strong intention of developing a musical intervention profile specifically dedicated to children aged 4–6.
Every content needs a container, a frame to inhabit, and for the authors of this collection it was no different. We were fortunate to find the place where all our educational

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imaginations could meet, recognize one another and take shape, where they could begin speaking to one another for the first time and never stop.

Both approaches teach us how to inhabit a community to such an extent that we can no longer do without it, and their methodological principles develop from the premise that the individual — in this case, the child — is the subject, not the object, of educational action.
We have always been deeply connected, and we remain absolutely convinced that teamwork is a *conditio sine qua non*: through close collaboration and continuous exchange, we have enriched one another, building a collective understanding of music education.

We believe that the primary objective of pedagogical activity is not the transfer of knowledge, but the cultural, human and social development of an individual, enabling them to take active and responsible roles in society through the acquisition of skills in the three dimensions of knowing, knowing how to do, and knowing how to be.

Every action directed towards children, even the simplest, is always an educational act. The developmental stage between the ages of 3 and 6 has distinctive characteristics: on the one hand, children progressively move towards autonomy and horizontal relationships; on the other, their view of the world is still free from fixed representational categories.

The pathway called *Music Is Play*, offered by the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*, educates children in the language of music by proposing music as a serious game, made up of rules without which the game loses its authenticity and risks ceasing to be enjoyable.
Hence the following perspective: **music is play and play is music**.

Play is therefore not a device for learning the language of music, but the very substance of music itself.

All activities always begin with the group. Whether an idea comes from a child or from an adult, there must always be room for intervention, creation and personalisation of the musical experience, and this necessarily has to be collective because music is social: it is made together. The activity itself cannot be a recipe to be administered; it must always be adapted and modified according to the group with whom we make music, while keeping the objectives clear.

This book does not aim to be a manual of ready-to-use activities, but rather a text from which to draw methodological ideas — a way of doing music education — in the hope of sparking the reader's curiosity.

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Rome (2025)
Music lesson in the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*. *Musica è Gioco* ('Music is Play') class.
Activity: The Pinwheel

What it contains

The nine activities proposed in the book focus on the conscious use of the body, voice, rhythm, instruments and compositional aspects. They provide stimuli, possible ways of structuring the pathway, and tools for independently creating further, countless pathways. Some activities are accompanied by a QR code linking to explanatory videos and digital support materials.

We have collected our own experience, so these are all pathways we have actually carried out with our classes: rhythmic nursery rhymes that can be dismantled and recombined, body percussion, songs from the Italian oral tradition, melodies on which to build structured movements, or to explore expressive movement in space. Some activities focus on the quality of movement, while others focus on construction and therefore on children's ability to organise themselves in order to give shape to structures within which they can invent a game.

The music is original, and for each piece we provide a score and guide tracks recorded by us. Children's abilities at this age need to be nourished by providing creative stimuli close to their experience. From these stimuli, we can build a creative language together with them, as part of a shared pathway. The educator's role is to create the conditions for this to happen and to guide children in learning music, starting from their resources and contributing to the development of their overall personal growth.

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The ingredients

- **Imagination and fantasy**, the driving forces behind every action.

- **Motivation**: the pleasure that comes from realizing that one is already capable of doing and creating (self-esteem), from sharing these creations with others (sociality), and from giving concrete form to creativity (performance, understood as the collective construction of an activity rather than an act of demonstration).



Rome (2025)
Music lesson in the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia. Musica è Gioco* ('Music is Play').
Activity: Nature Blues

Who

The authors are four OSI trainers, people connected by a deep friendship and a profound interest in music education in early childhood.
They are certified OSI trainers, in the tradition developed by Giovanni Piazza, and have training in the *Musica in Culla* methodology, founded by Paola Anselmi. All have more than ten years of experience in music education for young children.

Emanuela De Bellis — pianist, trainer in the national *Musica in Culla* courses, and psychotherapist specializing in developmental age.
Sonia Russino — singer, music educator for the International *Musica in Culla* Network and OSI trainer.
Marzia Mencarelli — pianist, trainer in national courses on the methodology and practice of Orff-Schulwerk in Italy.
Dario Balleggi — double bassist, music education teacher at *IC Savio-Alfieri* in Naples and OSI trainer.

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Dario Balleggi Music Education teacher at *IC Savio-Alfieri* in Naples since 2023. Certified Expert and Trainer for Orff-Schulwerk Italiano since 2020.
He has taught at the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*.
He graduated in double bass at the *Istituto Superiore di Studi Musicali L. Boccherini* in Lucca and obtained a second-level Academic Diploma in Training for the Communication and Dissemination of Musical Cultures and Practices at the *Santa Cecilia* Conservatory in Rome.
His project *I Colori della Musica* was selected for the INDIRE platform *Musica a Scuola*, Ministry of Education and Merit, in the good-practice section.



Checco Galtieri Pianist, President of OSI and Director of the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*, graduated from the Conservatory of Frosinone.
He studied interpretation of the Baroque repertoire, Schenkerian analysis, improvisation, new technologies, folk music, pedagogy and educational methods, group management and management.
He has collaborated with numerous journals and coordinated the City of Rome project *Note di Pace in Medio Oriente*; founder, spokesperson and president of numerous local and national networks for music education, and member of the National Committee for Practical Music Learning of the Ministry of Education.



Sonia Russino Singer and actress, Master's degree in theatre literature from *Roma Tre University*, diploma in Jazz Singing from the *Saint Louis College of Music* in Rome.
Teacher of contemporary singing, choral singing and music education for early childhood; OSI trainer since March 2023.
She teaches in the Zerosei department of the *Scuola Popolare di Musica Donna Olimpia*.
She recently had the opportunity to contribute, together with wonderful colleagues, to the writing of *Musical Landscapes from Palestine* and *Music Is a Serious Game*, both published by *Gesualdo Edizioni.*

NOTES

[1] An ancient environmental fable widespread among the Quechua (Andes) and Guaraní peoples (South America) and in sub-Saharan Africa. It was brought to wider attention in Europe by Pierre Rabhi.

[2] Born in 1932 in Jaffa, Palestine, she is a prominent figure in Palestinian culture and activism. Pianist, composer and social activist, she was one of the founders of the *Edward Said National Conservatory of Music.*

[3] Both originally from the suburbs of Beirut, Assi, born in 1923, and Mansour, born in 1925, the two brothers were a milestone in Middle Eastern culture. They composed songs, plays, films and poetry.

[4] President of the *Edward Said National Conservatory of Music* of Palestine, he composed the piece for the Palestinian folk-dance company *El Funoun*, as an introduction to the 1989 production *Marj Ibn 'Amer*.

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