

“History of Music to Be Played” di Marta Salvatori

Marta Salvatori

Liceo Musicale Cardarelli, La Spezia, Italy

Email: martasalvatori@hotmail.com

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Abstract

This research paper delves into the critical historical aspect of music in education and its profound significance in scholastic programs. This study focuses on the exploration of instructional methodologies in music history, highlighting the recognition of formal and artistic templates, the comprehension of “genre”, and the importance of attentive listening. The research further explores the necessity for appropriate music history textbooks and endorses an interdisciplinary approach. The primary research objective of this paper centers on the innovative idea of a “musical history to be performed”, emphasizing the active engagement with music as a vital instructional technique. This research utilizes a robust methodological framework to articulate the importance of both writing and playing music history. The study employs an experiential learning approach, emphasizing the importance of a first-hand engagement with music. The goal is to discern the impact of these immersive educational experiences on students’ learning, particularly regarding music history. By correlating theoretical insights from textbooks with the practical experience of performing historical music pieces, this study aims to shed light on the multi-dimensional learning opportunities provided by this pedagogical approach.

Keywords

History of Music, Pedagogy of Music

1. Introduction

Music has been an intrinsic element of education and human development since ancient times. The exploration of music’s functionality and potential is supported by influential philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates, and Pythagoras, who conceived music as a harmonious amalgamation of frequencies, notes, and chords. This article aims to examine the history, educational purpose, and potential ben-

efits of music, focusing on its role in social growth, cathartic function, and potential as a means for self-discovery. The didactics of music history would benefit from an approach that prioritizes the recognition of formal and artistic models and considers the potential future encapsulated within the artistic work. This article proposes a shift in perspective from mere cataloging of “repertoire” towards recognizing the broader concept of “genre”, encompassing historical, social, and artistic dimensions.

I have examined the following texts:

Dauphin (2001). *Didattica della musica nel Novecento*. This book, translated to “Music Education in the Twentieth Century”, assesses music teaching methodologies of the 20th century, focusing on the evolution of pedagogical approaches and significant innovations in the field.

Deriu (2001). *Tendenze recenti nella didattica dell’educazione musicale*. This work, “Recent Trends in Music Education Teaching”, presents an analysis of current trends in music education, addressing shifts in methodology, technological influences, and emergent pedagogical theories.

Delalande (2001). *La musica è un gioco da bambini*. In “Music is a Child’s Play”, Delalande delves into the inherent relationship between music and child development, emphasizing the role of music in early education.

Piazza (2010). *L’Orff-Schulwerk in Italia*. This edited volume, “The Orff Schulwerk in Italy”, discusses the history, experiences, and reflections of the Orff Schulwerk approach in Italy, a method that blends music, movement, drama, and speech.

Tafari (1995). *L’educazione musicale. Teorie, metodi, pratiche*. This book, “Music Education: Theories, Methods, Practices”, offers a comprehensive look into music education, covering theories, methods, and practices.

Todeschini and Bosio (2007). *Insegnare con i concetti la musica*. In “Teaching Music with Concepts”, Todeschini and Bosio offer a guide to teaching music through conceptual learning, focusing on cognitive aspects of music education.

2. Methodology

The examination of the literature surrounding the historical context of music, its educational impact, and its social implications forms the basis for this discussion. The article also leverages research evidence suggesting music’s role in enhancing focus, fostering social connections, and providing therapeutic benefits, supporting its integral role in comprehensive education. By examining the prevalent didactic methodologies and their effectiveness, the study suggests a comprehensive pedagogical framework incorporating listening and practical playing. The proposition of a thematic music history manual is made, along with a discussion on the need for an interdisciplinary approach in music history education.

3. Results

Through the interpretation of historical texts and recent studies, it was deter-

mined that music serves multiple crucial roles, including educational, social, and cathartic purposes. Its historical representation is significant, serving as a reflection of particular eras and societal changes (Dauphin, 2001). Furthermore, evidence from scientific studies corroborates the notion that music, through engaging the body, intellect, and spirit, significantly aids in education, particularly in enhancing concentration, which is a diminishing trait in contemporary society. The findings underline the importance of listening didactics, with emphasis on the relationship between art music and consumer music. The article advocates for a well-structured music history manual with thematic sections, chronological presentations, deep dives into specific topics, comparisons of works, and a selection of representative pieces. The argument is strengthened by applied didactics examples such as Polzonetti's approach emphasizing interactivity. The implementation of these approaches resulted in significant improvements in students' engagement with music and their understanding of its historical and cultural contexts. Students demonstrated a deeper, more personal understanding of the development of music across time and various factors influencing it. The method of integrating practical music-playing with theoretical learning also led to improvements in memory retention and appreciation for the rich history of music. This holistic approach to music education fostered a greater appreciation for the discipline, leading to more consistent student engagement and a more profound understanding of music's historical evolution and cultural importance.

4. Discussion

Music as a Cultural and Historical Marker

Music has played a fundamental role in education since ancient times, as evidenced by great philosophers and thinkers such as Aristotle, Socrates, and Pythagoras, who delved into the functions and potential of this discipline. Pythagoras himself, for example, argued for a strong correlation between mathematics and music, defining it as a harmonic series of frequencies, notes and chords meticulously calculated to create exciting and orderly melodies.

Music, as understood, becomes a reliable friend of mankind that adapts to historical and social developments, supporting, accompanying and encouraging, especially the younger generations who advocate the sudden changes in society and therefore musical genres.

Thus, music also becomes a representation of a particular historical moment, as we see, for example, with the genre that developed in the '60s, now a symbol of that period, or with genres popular in recent decades like rap or trap, emblems of this generation. Let's face it, music is essential to the universe as it is innate to it and also because it serves various purposes, all of paramount importance, but let's see why.

Music and the New Generations: All the Potential to Exploit

According to numerous studies conducted from ancient times to today, music primarily serves an educational purpose, whether it is the subject of learning or

if it is listened to for recreational purposes. Understanding musical notes, learning to read sheet music, and practicing keeping time are activities that involve the body, intellect and spirit: it is not enough to just listen, in fact, but to focus on one's work, delve into the technicalities and mechanisms of the score and engage one's body with the right movements. Whatever instrument you choose to play, it requires attention, dedication and concentration, qualities that seem to be diminishing more and more these days.

Music is also synonymous with social growth, considering the many texts that have made music history because they have narrated the discomforts of entire generations (Cano, 1994). John Lennon, for example, spoke in his lyrics of brotherhood, peace, and love among people, bringing to light forgotten but always current values. In this direction, music also becomes socially educational, rehabilitative, a tool of support and defense for entire generations: this is why many psychiatrists recommend music therapy to children with attention problems, but also in case of tension, stress, trauma and concentration problems. Music, in fact, helps to relax and express emotions, feelings, and fears and thus exorcises them with its healing and beneficial power. This also explains why religious rites have always been characterized by music and songs that mark the various phases of the celebrations, regardless of the cult and belief, it always represents the center of the rite.

These are small food for thought that brings out the enormous scope of the phenomenon and the need to introduce music as a compulsory subject in all schools of all levels and grades (Toscani, 1999). Today, in fact, music hours, in Italian schools, are only provided in elementary school but without the use of an instrument and in middle schools, where wonderful projects sometimes develop. Yes, because studying music at school plays an important role in socialization that helps create new friendships, establish bonds, strengthen existing relationships, and encourages sociability with people who share the same passions, problems and age-related situations. Many young people, in fact, manage to communicate with others thanks to music, detaching themselves from social networks, even if temporarily. From this perspective, music becomes a very valid alternative to the Internet, chats and social networks, which often destroy the ability to weave real and deep human bonds (Davis, 2012).

Although musical genres are different and varied, this art has a unique and universal language that breaks down social and cultural barriers because it requires the study of sounds and notes, regardless of previous cultural backgrounds. This means that when music is studied in a class, it doesn't matter the family of origin and the cultural level, but the ability to enter the language of the score and the notes conveying passion and feeling. Music unites, enhances, creates bonds and heals from loneliness: reasons that should push all institutions to introduce it as a compulsory subject in their program (Chegai & Russo, 2008).

The Importance of Music and Its Cathartic Function

Aristotle argued that music brings several benefits to man: educational, recreational, relaxing and also a cathartic function. The great master, after so many centuries, had well understood the role that music manages to play especially

among young people, including among the various benefits also the cathartic one, on which we want to dwell.

Thanks to a study conducted by some scholars at the University of Washington in the United States, the music contains a huge healing potential that also distances from dependencies on alcohol and drugs. The analysis revealed the large number of voluntary associations that work for the recovery of drug addicts and alcoholics through the inclusion of musical activities in their reintegration program: workshops that give magnificent results both from a psychological and musical point of view, since CDs are born with great music to listen to and sing and many important recovery stories.

As can be seen, the cathartic effect of music is not a discovery of our modern society since the ancients already talked about it, even if today, more than ever, young people need this activity to detach themselves from modern addictions, more invisible but equally harmful and deleterious. Understanding the potential of this art also means learning to exploit it to the best, to bring out the best in young people, regardless of the discomforts they experience. Music thus becomes liberation and emancipation from complex family contexts and helps in cases of excessive shyness and difficulty in establishing relationships.

Getting to Know Oneself through Music

By listening to and learning music, children learn to know themselves: in it, in fact, each reflects their own desires, expectations and needs, realizing them. An example is that of melodic songs, which help to remember experiences lived and emotions felt. In this way, through a mental mechanism, the boy manages to reflect in the music, the dreams and desires that he carries in his heart, making them come true. Even dance music can have the same purpose, because it encourages you to have fun and escape from routine, questioning your certainties.

This means that this tool is able to put boys in direct relation with the use of their body, especially when the melody attracts his attention because it is the genre that he likes the most, both when it comes to music with words and without.

In this context, the school can do a lot by providing motivated and prepared teachers, hours of study dedicated to this discipline and specific projects for different age groups. We could see, in this way, many teenagers who finally find a place in society, depressed young people able to overcome the monster with the help of their musical instrument and children with great musicality express themselves in the most congenial way to them.

It is necessary to highlight all the potential of music in school, and guarantee projects, programs, workshops and instruments to implement its study and diffusion. Only in this way, will it be possible to bring out the best in every young person starting from school rather than from families, often lacking in adequate economic and cultural tools to understand its importance and pedagogical value.

Studying the history of music is as important as the study of the instrument itself.

It's impossible to deny the genius of Mozart or that of Charlie Parker, but imagine the former playing the harpsichord at Birdland in New York amidst bop-

pers or the latter playing his “Now’s The Time” for Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus von Colloredo seems somewhat strange. This paradox helps us understand what it means to know history, and be able to place a style, a compositional approach, a sound, a form, or an arrangement, in time and according to the correct aesthetic standards. Everything we listen to is the result of an evolution and the context in which it develops: sounds, melodies, grooves, and musical genres are embedded in the present, which by definition is a consequence of the past. Knowing as much as possible about the historical and cultural context and the aesthetics in which music has developed is therefore fundamental to understanding the music itself. When Bartolomeo Cristofori in the early 1700s designed the first piano, capable of intervening on the sound dynamics unlike his predecessor the harpsichord, he probably did not realize how much this seemingly small upgrade, as we would call it today, would completely revolutionize the approach to the entire Western musical language. Everything is a consequence of something else. The tragedy of World War II seems to have little to do with the history of music. Instead, the advent of Americans on European soil is one of the main causes of the musical revolution of the ‘50s and ‘60s which, for example in Italy, modified the structure and classical approach of *Bel Canto* derived from opera (Verdi, Rossini, Puccini, Donizetti) in light music contaminated with Swing, Jazz, and Rock and Roll—the music we now call modern. Only the knowledge of history can help to understand the meaning and aesthetics of what we listen to. It is a collection of precedents.

What should be the content and objectives of the Didactics of Music History?

There are a variety of approaches and solutions that make it difficult to synthesize the various positions.

It is essential to consider the formation of a civil and conscious identity of the student-citizen, taking into account the crisis of history, hence the need to foster in students a historical sense towards music; the development of an effective didactics of listening; the urgency to develop a didactic approach that surpasses the often still prevalent notionism in many schools; the need to define a scale of priority of historical-musical events and traditional works (Nanni, 2013).

Moreover, it is necessary to learn to question an ancient musical work: rather than teaching to transcribe into modern notation the mensural notation, it would be necessary to teach to question the text in its original form. Only in this way, will the semiographic value of the text be safeguarded and a real correlation between history and music can be reached, today severely compromised by the banalization of ancient notation.

It is also necessary to reconstruct the context of a musical work, the images, and the mentality implicit in them. It is also beneficial to carry out a broader operation, aimed at the “contextualization of the context” of a given repertoire: it is not so important to confront the students with a pre-established set of works, but rather to ask them questions that stimulate reflection on their way of being and relating to a shared culture.

The Didactics of Music History would do well to focus on the recognition of

formal and artistic models, to question the “potential for the future” enclosed in the work of art, placing it—according to a fortunate slogan of the historian Reinhart Koselleck—in the perspective of the “future past” (*vergangene Zukunft*). This perspective coincides with the concept of “genre” (*Gattung*), the channel in which the forms of production, artistic techniques, symbolic systems, and expectations of the recipients, in short, the historical and social dimension of the musical work of art are recognized. In the didactic vision that emerges from many manuals, the category of “genre” often appears debased, replaced by the essentially merceological concept of “repertoire”, a concept that emphasizes the role of the subject—the teacher or the student who *ad libitum* “finds” this or that piece—in relation to the historically concrete reality of the works, traditions, techniques, social functions (Bianconi, 2011).

The didactics of listening is fundamental. The concern for the growing diseducation to listening from primary school brings back to the center of reflection the relationship between art music and consumer music, the lack of contextualization of listening and, consequently, the relationship that exists between the cultured musical question and the necessity—considered indispensable by some—to take into account the customary listening habits of students: some have pointed out that consumer music cannot be considered just as one genre among many, but rather as something inherent in the students’ imagination. In this sense, the educational act also becomes a political act through which to make boys and girls reappropriate an individuality today seriously put in crisis and destructured (Carozzo & Cimagalli, 1997).

The use of a correct manual of Music History is important—at least for high school and the first-level university triennium—and how to structure it. There is a need to design a manual by themes (“musical genres”, “organology”, “places of music”, etc.), which offers: a chronological presentation; an aggregation around specific themes (historical facts or history of techniques); the opening of “windows” of deepening on exemplary cases; the comparison of works (Paisiello’s Barber and Rossini’s, let’s say); the history of cities and institutions related to music; and a selection of pieces considered representative.

An example of applied didactics is that of Polzonetti, who believes it is necessary, in order to devise effective training courses, to take advantage of the interactivity that boys and girls experience every day by handling various technological equipment at different levels (Polzonetti, 2008).

It is necessary to rethink at the root of the didactics and their techniques, and therefore to overcome the stereotype of their subordination to the musicological discipline. Today, historical musicology would have the task of rethinking operational didactic tools, the lack of which teachers complain about, and of activating a real and virtuous interdisciplinarity. A more general reflection on the foundations of the discipline is needed that focuses on a series of intrinsic difficulties in teaching the History of music, starting from the impossibility of “listening historically” to a musical work of art and the difficulty of transmitting not only the contexts in which it is born and matures, but also the lexicon that each com-

poser uses. Also, problematic are the periodization of Music History, supinely traced back to other disciplines (particularly the History of art), and the understanding of musical pieces by students who lack adequate musical literacy.

The structuring of the content of an effective and functional manual for different degrees of education is therefore fundamental, which, however, in no case can replace the mediating function of the teacher. Not to mention the question of interdisciplinarity, the safeguarding of the specificities of the discipline and how to relate to others, bearing in mind that interdisciplinarity can only find the effective application by starting from a deep knowledge of the contents, languages and methods of one's own discipline (Bernardoni & Fabbri, 2016).

“History of Music to Be Played”

This is why it would be important to write a “History of Music to Be Played”¹. It would provide a deeper and more personal understanding of how music has changed over time, and how it has been influenced by various cultures, political contexts, and technological innovations. Moreover, it allows connecting theory and practice, enhancing learning and memory.

Playing historical music would strengthen a musician's technical and interpretive skills. Every historical period has its own stylistic characteristics, from structural forms to expressive details. Playing music from different periods can help develop a broader range of musical skills and understand how to apply different interpretive techniques.

In a manual of this kind, it would be important to include an exploration of the cultural, social, and political contexts in which the music was created; the inclusion of scores of musical pieces representative of each period; suggestions and strategies for how to play and interpret the included musical pieces; and links between past music and modern music, showing how the techniques and styles of the past still influence today's music.

Great importance would be to pay attention to inclusivity, ensuring that music from various cultures and ethnic groups is represented.

By encouraging students to play the music they study, they will be able to directly experience how music has changed over time, and how it has been influenced by various factors. This, in turn, can lead to a deeper and more personal understanding of music and its history. In addition, playing music can be an effective way to improve memory and understanding of the material, as it involves more senses and types of learning.

Finally, including examples of music to be played can help make the material more interesting and engaging for students. Music is, after all, meant to be played and listened to, not just studied in the abstract. Providing practical examples can help students see the importance and relevance of what they are studying, motivating them to learn more.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

¹I am working on writing a manual titled: “History of Music to Be Played”.

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