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DEVELOPING COMMUNITY MUSIC ACTIVITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: WORKING ON SOUNDED STORIES

Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original Research Paper

Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to present an a/r/tographic research conducted during the growth of the interdisciplinary program *Notes of Love*. The program is implemented as an extracurricular community music activity of the Academy of Music, University of Zagreb, in cooperation with the non-governmental organization *Smile for Everyone*. The program is designed to spread love for music culture and reading culture among those groups in the society who don't have access to the cultural content in that form, as well as to provide the students opportunities for interdisciplinary music pedagogy work which is beneficial to the local community.

Keywords: community music, interdisciplinarity, higher music education

Izvlaček

Razvoj skupnostnih glasbenih dejavnosti v visokoškolskem izobraževanju: delo na ozvočenih zgodbah

Namen prispevka je predstaviti a/r/tografsko raziskavo, izvedeno med razvojem interdisciplinarnega programa *Notes of Love*. Program se izvaja kot obštudijska skupnostna glasbena dejavnost Akademije za glasbo Univerze v Zagrebu v sodelovanju z nevladno organizacijo *Smile for Everyone*. Program je zasnovan tako, da širi ljubezen do glasbene kulture in bralne kulture med tistimi skupinami v družbi, ki nimajo dostopa do kulturnih vsebin v tej obliki. Hkrati tudi študentom nudi možnosti za interdisciplinarno glasbenopedagoško delo, koristno za lokalno skupnost.

Ključne besede: skupnostna glasba, interdisciplinarnost, visokošolsko izobraževanje

Introduction

The role of music teachers in the modern society has changed and expanded in theoretical, practical and contextual sense. Polisi (2016, p. 13) emphasizes the importance of developing the professional identity of musicians as a sociological challenge and says that „there should be no dividing line between artistic excellence and social consciousness“. Therefore, a music teacher today needs to be educated as a good performer and artistic role model, planner and organizer, communicator and pedagogue, facilitator, reflective practitioner, advocate, networker and collaborator (AEC, 2010). The *artist-citizen* dimension makes one of the most important parts of his identity, because it implicates an inclusive engagement with music in different educational contexts (Schmidt-Campbell and Martin, 2006; Elliott, 2015; Elliott, Silverman and Bowman, 2016; Polisi, 2016). Integration of music and music education in all aspects of social life through community music makes culture accessible to all citizens, which can contribute to the cultural development and wellbeing of the whole society. This shift in thinking about musicians' professional identity has affected educational and methodological paradigm of higher education. Music academies are slowly developing their civic mission and becoming places with “open doors” for different audiences.

As the potential and value of the civic engagement through community music in Croatian society are still unknown, the purpose of this paper is to describe *Notes of Love*, one of the community music creative workshops for children, made by students at Music Education Department, Academy of Music, University of Zagreb in collaboration with the non-governmental organization (NGO) *Smile for Everyone*. The activity is based on making sounded stories, adapted mostly from the stories from the classical literature. Every story has a follow-up part made of different artistic activities, which makes these workshops interdisciplinary in many ways. The target group for workshops was originally visually impaired children with developmental disabilities, but soon the program widened the scope to all interested children in different contexts. In the first year of implementation, it expanded to children's libraries, parks and nature in the city of Zagreb, and connected the Academy of Music with many NGO's, schools, hospitals, children's homes and interested students from diverse universities in the local community. The program of sounded stories *Notes of Love* also connected students from various musical programs and their teacher in a transformative process which gives a significant chance to all of them to explore different ways and contexts of music education practice. In two and a half years of existing, the program gathered around 15 students. Using a/r/tography as a methodology, this paper will gather all experiences of the program development, since the beginning in academic year 2017/2018.

Theoretical background

Development of (music) culture in contemporary society implies a change of the pedagogic-didactic paradigm of arts education to the organization of activities addressed to the wider community (UNESCO, 2006 and 2010), which changes the education of future musicians at music academies in the direction of service-based learning. Gaunt and Westerlund (2013) cover this growing need of connecting music education and society

saying that higher education today requires teaching students for flexibility in different social and cultural changing contexts, as well as interdisciplinary work and collaborative teaching and learning. In the World Declaration of Higher Education for the 21st Century (UNESCO, 1998) it is written that one of the core missions of universities, in general, is „to educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens and to provide opportunities¹ for higher learning and for learning throughout life“ (article 2). Furthermore, it is written that higher education institutions should „educate students to become well-informed and deeply motivated citizens, who can think critically, analyse problems of society, look for solutions to the problems of society, apply them and accept social responsibilities“ (article 9). This demand can and should be applied at music academies as places that have to raise future music professionals as responsible citizens which supports the idea of ‘opening the doors’ of the institution to the society. To cover this fact, Polisi (2016, p. 13) says that „there should be no dividing line between artistic excellence and social consciousness“.

The idea that music education can contribute to change social climate and increase social justice explained as ‘activist music education’ by Juliet Hess (2019) is based on empowering voices of youth to be active in the society. Their creative professional engagement in the local community makes a ‘bottom-up’ approach to community engagement, which means that they start to make community-driven projects (shaped by themselves), rather than institution-driven approach. A community-based approach is based on the relationship between people and contexts, which means that the most effective learning happens right in the community itself and it is based on each person’s experience. Thus, musicians should use the potential of music to engage politically in the world, connect with others, share experiences through telling stories and music, connect to the history and various contexts and to think critically about the world (ibid.). This idea has roots in critical pedagogy established by Paulo Freire (1971). According to Abarahams (2005), key principles of critical pedagogy are saying that education is: (1) a conversation where students and their teachers pose problems and solve problems together; (2) expanding students’ and teachers’ mindsets; (3) empowerment (it comes through conscientization); (4) transformative for students and teachers; (5) political because it is questioning issues of power and control. Critical pedagogy puts focus on developing the potential of both teacher and students, who come out from the process deeply transformed. In the context of music education, Abrahams (2005, p. 9) poses several questions that each teacher has to ask himself/herself when planning an instruction: „Who am I? Who are my students? What might they become? What might we become together?“ In the context of learning at the university, these questions are crucial to re-think the curriculum and develop new possibilities to learn which will be connected to the community, because they engage imagination, intellect, creativity and performance. Here it is crucial to mention Freire’s understanding of ‘praxis’ as the combination of action and thoughtful reflection. Partnership between the teacher and students in this process makes teachers become facilitators of the whole process because it removes traditional roles where the learning process is based on the transmission of knowledge

¹ Open spaces (*espaces ouverts*).

from teacher to the student and puts lived experiences in the centre of education (Hess, 2019).

To describe the practical application of critical pedagogy in the university context, notions of service-learning, experiential learning, community music and university civic mission will be represented. Through the interdisciplinary approach to higher education curricula and extra-curricular activities in the community, students and their teachers are developing their own identity as artists-citizens (Schmidt-Campbell & Martin, 2006; Elliott, 2015; Elliott, Silverman and Bowman, 2016), which benefits to the holistic and comprehensive development of both sides (Ravell Barrett, 2016).

Creating of 'connected curriculum' (Fung, 2017), a space at the university for critical dialogue and combination of research, experiential and service-learning, with proactivity of students, teachers and university leaders, makes a significant shift in the context of music academies. Challenges that music academies face nowadays in order to re-articulate their own capacities for the wellbeing of society are numerous. Thus, in order to become reflective conservatoires, all higher music education institutions need to re-define the meaning of musical excellence, encourage research activities, educate not only future musicians, but also audiences, and to implement the 'curriculum of giving', which means that the curriculum has to be connected to the local community and society in general (Tregear, Johansen, Jørgensen, Sloboda, Tolve, Wistreich, 2016). Experiential learning, as a holistic process of learning, becomes important in the education of future musicians. It can be described as the immersion in the experience, with an emphasis on all the senses, inner impressions of the experience, emotional intelligence and communal experience of sharing (Kolb, 2015; Beard and Wilson, 2013).

One of the models of experiential learning is service-learning, which integrates the curriculum and active involvement of students and their teachers in the local community, with the double aim: (1) to ensure their better understanding of the academic discipline, the needs and problems of the community; (2) to encourage their civic involvement (Ćulum and Ledić, 2010). Their transformative and empowering professional, research and practical work is making a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in the community. It is similar to volunteering, but the difference is that service-learning has a strong emphasis not only on the community development but also on the learning process (ibid.). In most cases, service-learning belongs to the non-formal/informal model of university's contribution to the community engagement, because it depends on individual decisions of students and teachers to participate in extra-curricular activities at the university and in the local community. According to Baketa and Ćulum (2015), formal approach means an institutionalisation of the university civic mission, as a blend of theory, research and practice. In that case, interweaving of research and teaching through projects established at the university and pro-active collaboration of teachers, students and leaders of the institution, lead to the empowerment of the institution and the local community itself.

In order to expand their role in the local community, musicians have to create the space and conditions for meaningful musicking² in various, mostly non-formal contexts in the community. Koopman (2007) describes three main characteristics of all community music programs (although there are numerous possibilities and forms): participative collaborative music-making, wellbeing and community development and personal growth. The flexibility of the format can be seen in several ways. First of all, it usually includes going to the places in the local community not typical for concerts and music-making in general. Second, it usually includes using various types of music; usually it is more likely to be popular and traditional, but the classical is very welcomed. It is very often connected to marginalized groups of the society. According to Higgins (2012a and 2012b), what matters the most is a safe, supporting and welcoming environment and invitation, as well as meaningful connections between the people.

Research on community music activity *Notes of love*

Notes of Love are a community music program developed at the beginning of academic year 2017/2018 as an initiative of the non-governmental organization *Smile for Everyone*, whose volunteer Ana Čorić was asked to expand her volunteering practice beyond reading bedtime stories in children's hospitals to reading stories with sound to the residents of *Center for Education of the Visually Impaired Children Vinko Bek*. As a university assistant at the Music Education Department, Academy of Music, University of Zagreb, she decided to include her students in the process, offering them a pedagogical practice with children with special needs not provided in their regular curriculum. Furthermore, it was a good chance to develop the idea of 'sounded' stories that will be performed in the stereo space, where sounds come from various sources in the room so that visually impaired children can enjoy the full surrounding of the story. Each workshop of the program consists of two parts. First one is the story performance (20-25 min), which is usually very interactive and it tries to stimulate different senses. The second part is a follow-up part, usually made of several different activities, depending on the audience. The obligatory part is to teach children to sing song from the story, which is usually combined with playing Orff instruments, while with audiences who can see activities sometimes include visual arts.

Students who want to enrol in the program are aware that it is a task which will not give them grades. Officially, it is not related to any subject in their curriculums, but basically, it is related to everything they learn as a theory at music pedagogy subjects, and usually have no chance to experience in the pedagogical practice (especially working with children with special needs). The only official 'award' they get are volunteer hours from the NGO. In June 2018, after only 8 months of workshops, the program got the *University Rector's Award* for 'valuable work in the community, as well as in the academic society'.

Since the very beginning, the program has no funding, which makes a big challenge and often a barrier to any further growth. All the instruments used in the program are either personal or in the ownership of *Vinko Bek Center*. Several guest workshops organized

² According to Small (1998), *musicking* is a term which describes participation in any way of musical performance – through the performance itself, or active listening, dancing, composing, etc. It observes the term 'music' as a verb ('to music').

outside Zagreb were financed mainly by the organizers and from personal resources. In 2020 the program will be completely moved to the NGO *Smile for Everyone* because the Academy of Music, University of Zagreb, unfortunately, didn't show any possibility to financially support the idea. *Smile for Everyone* has a plan to expand the whole idea including more resources from the civic sector, so it will be interesting to see how the whole story will develop in the future.

Methodology

The main idea of the research process was to follow and explore the process of developing the community music programme at the Academy of Music, University of Zagreb, from artistic, pedagogical and research position (university teacher as an autoethnographer), as well as from the position of students involved in the program. That's why the a/r/tography as a research method was chosen. According to Županić Benić (2016), a/r/tography is a form of action research which gives the possibility for a/r/tographer to make a contribution both in the artistic and educational research field. A/r/tographer's artist, researcher and teacher role are inseparable and interdependent and covers interspace of personal, professional and social, so it demands certain flexibility in the process observing. Besides interaction between personal a/r/t roles, an a/r/tographer needs to observe dynamic of interactions in the process of creation, which makes process and context itself equally or even more important than the result. The specificity of the a/r/tographic method is that it uses autoethnography as an approach both in analysis and presentation of the results. For that reason, as a/r/tographer, from this moment in the text, I will write in the first person. In order to describe collaborative processes, I will use the „we“ formations.

Research questions explored were:

1. How to develop and design a community music program at the university that will:
 - a) be interdisciplinary?
 - b) include different music teaching areas (singing, playing instruments, listening, creative work, learning about music)?
 - c) gain quality both in artistic and pedagogical excellence?
 - d) be inclusive?
 - e) reach a wider audience and connect spaces in the community?
 - f) give students opportunity for collaborative teaching and learning and meaningful additional practice?
 - g) encourage the social engagement of music academy?
2. What do students learn from the process? What I as an a/r/tographer learn from the process?

Data used in the research was diverse. As the autoethnography was crucial for the analysis and presentation of the results, I used my own reflective diary, reports that we had to submit after each workshop to the NGO (written by the students or by myself), interviews with students engaged in the program (N=4), online and live brainstorming meetings, audio-recordings from rehearsals, conversations with colleagues at the open rehearsals (or presentations at the Academy for blindfolded audience), and my own participation in the process. Since it was a completely new and different experience both for my students and

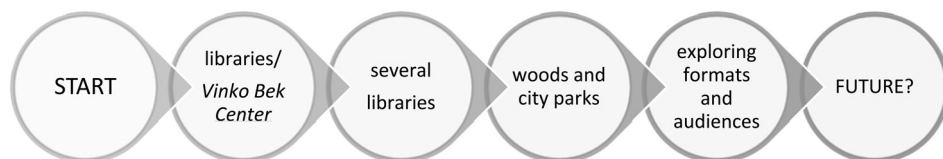
myself, the full participation in the program and collaboration with the students meant a lot for me as a facilitator. Besides the program itself, I went to explore some artistic ideas and workshop formats by myself, volunteering alone in one of the children's libraries. One of the ideas I managed to explore, but we still didn't make to realize in the bigger format, was to develop a story with a concert band, so that children can be on the real stage.³

To conceptualize the process, the further text is divided into several parts: (1) Changing contexts and audiences; (2) Art and Pedagogy; (3) Interviews with students and (4) Research conclusions. Each part is focusing on the different part of the program development. Research conclusions gather all the insights from the process.

Changing contexts and audiences

At the beginning of the program, the initial idea was to make sounded stories for visually impaired children in the *Vinko Bek Center* (institution for education and rehabilitation of visually impaired children, youth and adults). First workshops were organized for visually impaired children with learning disabilities in one of the children's libraries of *Zagreb City Libraries*. Although the space in the library had really good potential, those first gatherings showed a certain impracticability with carriage of children and their assistants from the Center to the library, as well as with the space itself. Since the library is situated at one of the city markets, the noise from outside was too big. Furthermore, since this was the space unfamiliar to the children, we decided to move activities back to the *Vinko Bek Center*, in their home atmosphere where they move freely and where it is not necessary that each child has a personal assistant. One more reason which contributed to our decision was that in the Center we had numerous instruments we could use in our workshops. However, the collaboration with libraries stayed and expanded on audience who can see, which opened numerous possibilities for the community development, as well as music pedagogical development of the program. The dynamics of the program development is shown on the Figure 1.

Figure 1: The dynamics of the program development



In the second phase of the program (winter 2017/2018) we kept working with visually impaired children in the *Vinko Bek Center* as the basis, but we were invited to come back to several children's libraries (*Zagreb City Libraries*) to offer workshops for the children from local schools. Since those children were not visually impaired, it was a challenge to adapt the story for the stage performance, as well as to adapt the follow-up part for the children who can see. The main aim of these workshops was to make school children

³ I tried it with ethno band *Veja* at the *TradInEtno Festival* in Pazin (2018).

appreciate the music and literature and to show them the library as a place where they can go and find interesting books.

Next phase of the program started in spring/summer 2018 in woods and city parks. We performed for the kindergarten children at the manifestation *Blanket for dreams*. It was an initiative of the NGO *Smile for all* which organized volunteers who were reading stories for school and kindergarten children in all city parks and other green areas of the city. It was a good chance for all teachers to apply their class to make a small field trip to the nature enriched with storytelling. After that, we were invited by the organizers of the manifestation *Plants and Gigs*⁴ to set two workshops in the woods of Tuškanac. We adapted *The Night Gardener* for both children and their (grand)parents together, which inspired us to keep this idea for the future (especially for the story *The Dog and the Double Bass*, which is originally written with the idea to include children and their grandparents as audiences).

In the academic year 2018/2019 as a group, we decided to make less workshops mainly because of my absence at the university in the winter semester. However, we decided to present the concept to our colleagues at students forums in the region, in order to encourage students and teachers of music academies to try the same in their contexts. Thus, we performed stories at music academies for blindfolded audiences because we wanted to put the audience in the “shoes” of visually impaired audience. In April 2019 students Mirta Borovac and Barbara Lalić presented the paper⁵ they wrote about the *Notes of Love* at the 5th *International Forum of Music Pedagogy Students* at the Academy of Music, University of Pula. At the same event, we performed *The Night Gardener* and conducted a follow-up workshop for university students and their teachers based on creative artistic and pedagogical tasks related to the story development. After student forum in Pula, the program was presented on the manifestation *Podijelimo znanje* at the Academy of Music, University of Sarajevo in May 2019.

In the academic year 2019/2020, we decided to go deeper into each aspect of the program and explore more formats and audiences. With *The Dog and the Double Bass* we developed original storyline and explored more space and sound solutions that could work with visually impaired and blindfolded audiences. In October and November 2019 we had three workshops. The first one was in the *Vinko Bek Center*. Two workshops were organized⁶ and performed in Ljubljana: one of them was prepared and performed for visually impaired children in *Centre IRIS – Centre for Education, Rehabilitation, Inclusion and Counselling for the Blind and Partially Sighted*. Another one was performed in the same institution for bachelor students of the music education study programme of the Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana. The aim of the workshop with blindfolded students and teachers from the academy was to encourage them to start

4 *Plants and Gigs* (Biljke i svirke) is an interactive music festival which since 2016 transforms green areas of Zagreb into unique concert spots. Organizers of the festival set out pianos in the nature, inviting citizens to come and play. Festival is gathering professional classical, jazz and rock musicians who set their concerts in the nature (https://hr-hr.facebook.com/pg/biljkeisvirke/about/?ref=page_internal, access: 2.1.2020).

5 Lalić, B. and Borovac, M. (2019). *Note ljubavi: učenje zalaganjem u zajednici kroz community music praksu*. In: Drandić, D. and Andrijević, T (Eds.), *Kompetencije studenata glazbene pedagogije – teorijski i praktični aspekti*. Pula: Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli, pp. 44-52.

6 The whole organization was done by Branka Rotar Pance, Academy of Music, University of Ljubljana.

similar programs at their university. Both workshops were a true learning process for both sides since there was a certain language barrier, but the music crossed all the imaginary frames, showing the growing need for interdisciplinary collaborations between teachers, students and academies in general. Besides *The Dog and the Double Bass*, as a facilitator who created the whole program from the very beginning, I decided to start one more group of performers that will gather interested volunteers from the NGO *Smile for All* who have an affinity for music and who can start the same process as me and my students did. The reason why I decided to make two divided groups was to make more possibilities to cover all the places in the community we visit and give them more materials, as well as to share all the experience in order to make the program grow. Also, helping the other group to grow might be a good opportunity for the students, who will graduate from the academy very soon, to enrol new groups as facilitators and spread their own ideas and experiences inside.

Art and pedagogy

This chapter describes the development of the program in an artistic and pedagogical way. The process of work on five different stories will show the growth of the idea in both directions, based on the mutual communication between the students, me as a facilitator of the program and audiences.

The story we started with was *The Wizard of Oz*, a well-known story by L. F. Baum. As a starting template, we used the text adaptation by F. R. Robinson which was published as the children's book with 'finger sounds'⁷ in Croatia in 1994. The first idea was to divide characters between each other and re-write the text for 'the stage'. Since it was the first workshop, we didn't make many changes in the text and there were no interventions in the storyline. For the musical part, we decided to use the song *Over the Rainbow* (Harold Arlen/Yip Harburg) from the famous movie, produced by *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc.* in 1939. In the space where we performed the story (library), we didn't have a piano, so we decided to use only a guitar and some Orff Schulwerk percussions. Since at the beginning of the program we didn't know what to expect and how will visually impaired children react to the workshop we prepared, we decided to start simple. Regarding the usage of the space, only one person who played the guitar was 'static', while the rest of us moved each time when the 'yellow brick road' appeared in the storyline. For that purpose, we composed a small musical pattern for singing and playing, while marching all over the room. There were some 'unexpected', smaller sounds we added spontaneously during the performance (for example, dog bark sound for Toto).

In the follow-up part after the story, we realized that the group of visually impaired children with various developmental disabilities react better to the sounds than to the story itself, especially if the story had too many characters, so we realized that for next stories we have to choose simple plots and add the variety of sounds inside. Children reacted really good on the process of learning by ear that we used for learning the lyrics and melody of the *Over the Rainbow* song. Also, we gave them percussions to try following

⁷ When reading the book, a child can press a certain sound with his/her finger. Sounds are representing each character and the text is suggesting to press the drawing of the figure each time when it appears in the storyline.

the meter and rhythm. For some of them it was quite hard because they have less developed motor skills due to their disability, but since it was a small group, each of us had time for an individualised approach. At the end of the workshop, the children wanted to share songs they know with us, so we made a good connection for further encounters. Teachers-assistants who came with the children gave us some advice on how to work with the specific group we got. We noticed that several children in the group have perfect pitch, although their mental age is not equivalent to the chronological age. Also, students were surprised with the velocity of learning lyrics and melodies, comparing this experience with their experience with the learning by ear in the school with children who can see. Since this was the first workshop in the unfamiliar context for everyone, I was leading the follow-up part. For next workshops, I decided to share follow-up parts amongst each other because we noticed that children attach to certain voices (characters) from stories, so it would be a good chance to increase interaction and give students a chance to practice various pedagogical tasks.

Second story we chose was *The Nutcracker*. For the beginning, we took children's book based on the original story *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* by E. T. A. Hoffmann. We completely simplified the basic text, putting out some characters, in order to adapt the story for the group of children from the *Vinko Bek Center*. As a musical solution, we chose to implement several Christmas traditional and popular songs children can sing with us (we noticed that canons are really interesting for them, especially when we performed it while moving throughout the space), as well as music from the ballet *Nutcracker* by P. I. Tchaikovsky. For that purpose, we made riddles and movement activities for active listening. At the end of the story, children were singing songs and playing Orff percussions. Furthermore, we explored possibilities of making various sounds with everyday objects (for, example, in one part of the story they get candies in hands, so we used candy covers to make some noise). The combination of singing, playing, dancing and listening activities, as well as of classical, traditional and popular music, enriched the workshop and put it at some new level, so we decided to keep the same combination in every story we do.

The Nutcracker was the story we performed every year in the Christmas time, usually in various combinations of students. For example, there were cases when we had only two students who have a workshop with kindergarten children, so then we adapted the story for only two characters: grandma who is telling the story and her granddaughter Clara⁸). Depending on the group of performers, their competences and instruments they play, as well as contexts where we perform, we adjust the text and the music inside. There is a moment in the story when Clara goes to sleep when we usually sing or play a lullaby. Depending on the crew, at some workshops, we had students from the Singing Department who sang some famous lullabies from the Western classical music repertoire (for example, Offenbach's barcarolla *Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour*). In general, in all contexts we performed, both for visually impaired children and children who can see, we noticed that

⁸ Clara is one of the main characters from the story. She is getting the Nutcracker doll as a Christmas present. The doll becomes a real prince afterwards and takes her to the Land of Sweets. On the other hand, grandma is not the character in the original story, but we decided to invent this in the storyline because we had two female students who performed a workshop, so it was more authentic to have a grandmother rather than a grandfather, who is planned in the original story we took.

all of them were listening to the music very carefully. In the conversations with children and their teachers after workshops, we got information that their favourite part of the workshop is the music itself, live performed.

Working on *The Bear and The Piano*, a story by David Litchfield about the bear who is exploring his talent for piano playing which brings him from the woods to the big city concert halls, but also back to his friends and family in the woods, was the first step to the exploration of recording sounds for the story. It was the first workshop where we combined live performance with sounds that we reproduced using small JBL's portable speakers. Since we used our personal two speakers, we tried to explore how the sound "travels" in space, in order to get a more "stereo" sound in the room. For the beginning, we had sounds from the woods and traffic sounds from the city, designed to illustrate two different scenes in the story. Besides the fact that using recorded sounds during storytelling was very surprising for visually impaired children, who were constantly asking us 'how did we do that', it was a good chance to include more students in the program. In this case, we had a student from Theory and Composition Department, who wanted to participate in the program in spite of the fact she can't come to rehearsals, so recording the sounds was her idea for participation.

Working on this story was a meaningful step forward for us because it was the first time we composed songs for the children and we also invented some characters who do not exist in the original story because we had more performers than characters in the story. Even the title of the story was different, *The Bear and the Guitar* because we couldn't use the piano in the spaces where we performed it. It was the first story when we started to think about the meaning of the stage direction because we had to watch on the movement in space during a live performance of songs, reading text and implementing recorded sounds in the performance. Furthermore, since this was the first story which we performed more than two times, in various contexts, we started to think about the importance of the expressive reading of the text and started thinking about the possibility of learning the text by heart. This thought came naturally because we had workshops with children who can see us, and that gives a whole new dimension to the performance. Although we managed to work on expressive reading with the professional radio drama director in future work, we still didn't manage to learn everything by heart. The main reason is the lack of rehearsals where we naturally, as musicians (not actors), always focus more on the musical part. Besides that, we have a lot of workshops in the community, which doesn't let us time to go so deep into the performance level because the focus is on interaction with children and the follow-up activities. However, the question stayed open and we are still working on finding the right balance for our workshops. We encouraged the reflection about our workshops at the Academy of Music in Zagreb when we shared this story with critical friends (students and teachers) who came to our workshop. We asked them to be blindfolded in order to experience the story the same as the visually impaired children approach it. It was interesting and valuable for our future work to observe their reactions and hear their impressions.

The Bear and the Guitar was a meaningful step towards cohesion of the group, as well as the autonomy of each student, who was now ready to work on each aspect on their own. As a facilitator, I could let them be more free in an artistic and pedagogical sense. The first

opportunity to do that was our next story – *The Night Gardener* by T. and E. Fan. It is a story about the town transformation by a mysterious gardener who is sculpting tree tops in the street during the night. A boy named William, who lives in the orphanage in the street, is observing the change that it makes for the people living in this street and the creation of a true community. At the end he finds his purpose by learning how to garden from the gardener. The story carries a message about the importance of the community, participation and respecting the nature, so it was a good chance for us to think carefully about the follow-up part, combining elements of music, art, ecology and citizenship education in it. Considering the fact that this children's book has not much text and there is a lot said by illustrations, we had to develop almost the whole text and several additional characters. As a teacher, I was facilitating the process, but one of the students worked on the text. Also, it was the first time we had a guest expert from 'outside' who wanted to join us. Eva Simona Kulenović, a psychologist with an educational background in art therapy, performed several workshops with us and helped a lot with the artistic follow-up part we did with children who can see. This was the first story we didn't do first with the visually impaired audience, so it was designed originally for the children who can see. We performed it for children and their parents in the woods Tuškanac, because we wanted to share the whole 'community idea' of the story with children and grown-ups together. Nature inspired us to collect leaves and fruits from the woods and bring it to the workshop with visually impaired children, so it was the first time we started to think more about the sense of touch we have to implement more in our workshops.

In each story, we had a moment when children meet the instruments we bring with us when visually impaired children had a chance to touch the instrument and feel the material together with the characteristic sounds. This was the time when we started to think about the value of touch in some other parts of the story, so we performed *The Night Gardener* in the *Vinko Bek Center* on the floor covered with leaves and fruits from nature. Children gave us very positive feedback about that, touching the ground and feeling the nature, which gave them a sense of the place where the story happens. Since we started with more interdisciplinarity with this story, the idea was to make sculptures of their own small trees with clay, but unfortunately, we couldn't realize this due to some material costs we couldn't afford to ourselves. The musical part was covered with songs from the children's album *Mjesto za mene* by duo *Meritas*, as well as some well-known classical pieces (for example, *The Wild Horseman*, op. 68. No.8 by R. Schumann). For additional sounds, we played on various instruments and everyday objects (for example, we sang a canon playing the rhythmic accompaniment on scissors).

The beginning of the academic year 2019/2020 was the time when I decided to have two groups of people to make the program grow. A new one, made of people from the NGO, took *The Nutcracker* as a start and had two workshops – one in the *Vinko Bek Center* and the other one in children's library. An "old" one, had some significant changes because some of the students graduated in the meantime. In the pedagogical sense, there was a shift made by the fact that we got several students from instrumental departments who joined the program, which ensured that all the members of the group play and sing during the performance. Considering the fact that we decided to go deeper into the material and explore every aspect of the workshop, it was extremely valuable that we got a stable group

consisting of students who already have two years of experience in the program and readiness to explore all the possibilities of the story, sound, speech and pedagogy, as well as new students who can approach more into the sound itself. What must be mentioned is that students from the instrumental departments usually have a chance to practice their pedagogical skills in individual classes, so this format of workshops was new and challenging for them in that sense, too.

This time we decided to write our own story and as much music we can. Since I already had some inspiration to do that, I wrote the story *The Dog and the Double Bass*, based just on the idea of the children's book *The Dog and the Fiddle* by David Litchfield, but with a completely different plot. It is a story about two generations and two different musical worlds. On one side we have the grandmother who played jazz, swing and rock in a band when she was young, and on the other side is her grandson who plays a double bass in the music school in a classical way. Grandmother now plays in the classical orchestra and often plays with her grandson, but the situation changes when her friends, musicians from the old band visit her and call her to play with them. It is a moment when her grandson reveals some new sounds, other than classical and when his grandmother realizes that she can still achieve dreams from her youth. Musically, the story also connects worlds of classical and non-classical music. Besides the music we composed for this particular story, we used some of the well known musical pieces from various musical genres: *Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby* (L. Jordan), *Bass Trip* (P. Vasks), *Hallo Django* (U. Fuhre), etc. Although the main aim of the story was to connect various musical worlds, encourage motivation for meaningful musicking and put the double bass 'on the spot' as an instrument with numerous possibilities, on these workshops children have a chance to meet clarinet, tambura and ukulele (besides the piano and guitar, which are familiar to everyone).

The initial idea of the workshop was to be performed to the audience made of children and their grandparents, so the follow-up can be related to the creation of some meaningful conversations and activities for both generations, that will give more quality for their leisure time. Still, we are preparing this workshop for the future, working more and going deeper to each detail of the story. Technically, this was the most difficult story we prepared, due to the fact we decided to go deep into each artistic detail and learn as much as we can by heart. The new moment that happened in this process for both groups and stories is that we got a director of radio drama, who is employed on Croatian National Radio–Television and a volunteer in the NGO *Smile for Everyone*, who worked with both groups on the speech and text, so it gave the program a whole new dimension. Besides that, going deeper into the artistic part required a lot more rehearsals we usually managed to have, so for me as a facilitator, it was very inspiring to see the students who are coming every Saturday afternoon to the rehearsals at the Academy.

Interviews

Although the communication within the group is effective since the very beginning, semi-structured interviews conducted after the first year of the program implementation clarified the value of the participation in the program for students, as well as some needs for future work. I managed to make four interviews out of five students who were in the

program at that time. What can be seen from their answers is that they highly appreciate the fact that they are volunteering in the program (without getting any grades):

I like the idea of trying to make the day beautiful for those who need it more and in general I strongly support volunteer work of any kind. Both tears of joy and mutual connecting we all love – we have to admit it to ourselves!

Participation in the program gave them motivation for implementation and further development of ideas in their future work, as well as sharing stories in their local communities:

It is my desire to spread this way of volunteering further. I have not tried yet, but I plan to visit one of the associations from the town where I come from and make an agreement with the director to cooperate, even if I have to tell stories only by myself. I received the motivation for this at the expressive reading workshop where I had the opportunity to participate this year.

If I'm going to work in school, I'll definitely try to carry out extracurricular activities of this type and I would like to continue working for such workshops for adults, too. Honestly, I think it's more necessary for grown-ups to hear the story than for the kids.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the program, one of the students said that 'the whole program is synonymous for the advantage'. There were no detected disadvantages, but the students noticed some needs for future work, which we tried to cover last year by engaging professionals from the field of dramatic arts:

The advantage of working is certainly an experience in working with children. By participating in such a project new ideas will be created in the future of future teachers who will probably try to do something similar in their future workplace. So far I can not remember the disadvantages. Maybe we need a few diction and acting classes?

As we can see, what students appreciate the most in the program is the opportunity for situated learning directly with the children with special needs:

The most valuable experience for me is working with children with special needs. During the study, such work is rarely mentioned, and teachers meet with such children for the first time on the spot. It's a great deal to me because I met these wonderful children and I've been able to see what their possibilities and constraints are, and I have learned to adapt the program to them and give them some happiness and joy.

I'm learning the most about real contact with children, their reactions and behaviour. On the courses (except in Practice) this is the part that is missing, and that is normal, it cannot be different. But it's not bad to get that experience somewhere else, like for example on our workshops.

The conclusions from the interviews were used as a reference point when thinking about the further development of the program in the academic year 2018/2019, as well as in the process of planning special workshops at universities.

Research conclusions

For me as a teacher, the development of the community music program *Notes of Love* at the Academy of Music, University of Zagreb was a challenge both in artistic and in a pedagogical way, but also in terms of organization of every aspect of it. A/r/tographic research which accompanied the whole process showed that there is a need for finding a balance between artistic and pedagogical demands, and the needs of the community. Besides that, it showed that the process of building community music activities is effective when all sides participate equally in the communication. Thus, students and teachers act as reflective practitioners, using all the knowledge and skills they got from their initial study field, as well as competences needed for the interdisciplinary work, flexibility and openness to learn ‘on the spot’ (generic competences).

As it can be seen from the narrative, the process of creating workshops is very organic and it requires a lot of mutual listening, reflections, conversations and improvisation, especially when there aren’t many rehearsals possible before the workshop. During the process, with each new story students opened themselves more and more towards all the forms of interdisciplinary work and all audiences, we got as a challenge. While observing their progress, I listed what students get from participation in the program *Notes of Love*:

- a) meaningful musical engagement and transformative musical experiences;
- b) a chance for the creative artistic expression;
- c) empowerment, motivation, inspiration;
- d) collaborative teaching and learning (teacher-facilitator and students from different study courses are in the same position; there is no hierarchy);
- e) working with children with special needs (not included in the regular curriculum);
- f) interdisciplinary work (music, literature, drama, dance, etc.);
- g) developing practice in different contexts;
- h) searching for new audiences;
- i) learning how to make creative projects;
- j) developing their competences through the education offered from an NGO (for example, reading workshops with actors, movement workshops, etc.);
- k) volunteering practice and service-based learning;
- l) safe, positive and nurturing environments;
- m) research and sharing amongst the students from other universities (we had some guests during the process, but they couldn’t stay long because of the complexity of schedules of all members).

Not only students benefit from the development of community music activities at the academy. Besides all competencies listed above, as their teacher who fully participated in the program, I got the chance to expand their horizons, giving them an opportunity to practice with various audiences. Besides that, I had a chance to develop teamwork and get lifelong learning in diverse fields: music, art, literature, pedagogy, organization and leadership, community work, reflective practice, etc.

In the artistic and pedagogical sense, it was interesting to observe during the process of how each of the musicians brings something new into the story. During two and a half years of the program, we managed to ‘raise’ four students who participated in almost

every workshop and who will graduate very soon – hopefully, sharing this idea in their communities. The stories we did deserve much more performances and workshops to keep them ‘alive’. Each new workshop and rehearsal makes a significant work on the quality of performance, both in musical and in acting way. Since acting and speech itself is something unfamiliar to most musicians, thinking about further work on that might be a significant step to quality enhancement.

Challenges that always happen in the extracurricular activities with no grades are numerous, but it doesn’t mean it can stop the realization of the initial idea. For example, in the service-learning/volunteer work,⁹ there is always a question of motivation of students, as well as finding the time and adjusting schedules for workshops and rehearsals that fits everybody. The schedule is the reason why most students who want to join the program have to quit at the beginning because the rehearsals can’t be fixed in the initial schedule of the university. Also, in some attempts to mix people from the NGO with the students from the Academy, we had a similar problem. Another thing we noticed as extremely useful for all the students and teachers who join in the future is a database of stories that we make since the very beginning because each story deserves a ‘proper life’ and a chance to be performed numerous times. Besides that, the process of reviving the old story is much easier and faster than going from the very beginning.

Conclusion

As a general conclusion of the paper, I would like to encourage all university teachers who would like to start community music activities with their students, with several practical advice:

- a) start with simple action and enthusiasm;
- b) always plan and reflect;
- c) planning is great, but prepare students to be flexible and able to improvise;
- d) it is an organic process, so go step by step (and build each level slowly);
- e) connect the same workshop (story) in different contexts (in the pedagogical sense, so that students can see how to adapt the same material with various audiences);
- f) as a university teacher, be part of the process (facilitator, not just an observer);
- g) through the program prepare your students for all aspects of community music programs (organization, artistic work, follow-up activities, different audiences, etc.);
- h) make a network of experts from various fields, institutions, NGOs and students (sharing knowledge and experiences as critical friends);
- i) with each new workshop explore something new;
- j) find financial resources for workshop materials and instruments.

Besides these suggestions, I would like to encourage university teachers to develop more interdisciplinary programs in the community and follow the process with some of the practice-based research methods in order to maintain the quality of the program and share

⁹ Although in the theoretical part there is a clear distinction between service-learning and volunteering, in the research part of the paper the term ‘volunteering’ is used just because we get volunteer hours for the workshops, as well as that we use that term in our everyday communication.

the knowledge with the colleagues. For the further research of the community music program *Notes of Love* I would explore more topics of group dynamics, power dynamics and collaborative learning. In an artistic and pedagogical sense, it would be interesting to start working with children who can see, but who will be asked to be blindfolded at least at some short parts of the performance, to see how their visually impaired colleagues approach the story. Of course, it would be great to go deeper into the relationship between text and music, as well as finding some new musical solutions to various scenes. Hope that in the future the Academy will recognize the need for stepping out from its comfort zone into the new experiences in the community, as well as the need for conducting research connected to the community.

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Povzetek

Cikel interdisciplinarnih pedagoških delavnic *Note ljubavi (Note ljubezni)* povezuje literaturo in glasbo prek branja 'zvencečih' zgodb, opremljenih z vključenimi različnimi glasbenimi dejavnostmi. Program se izvaja kot obštudijska glasbena dejavnost Akademije za glasbo Univerze v Zagrebu v sodelovanju z nevladno organizacijo *Nasmeh za vse*, ki spodbuja kulturo branja v otroških bolnišnicah. Izvaja se večinoma v zagrebških mestnih knjižnicah. Namenjen je predvsem učencem *Centra za izobraževanje slabovidnih otrok Vinko Bek*. Program je zasnovan tako, da širi ljubezen do glasbene in bralne kulture med tistimi družbenimi skupinami, ki nimajo dostopa do tovrstnih kulturnih vsebin. Prav tako je namenjen študentom in zanje predstavlja priložnost za interdisciplinarno glasbenopedagoško delo, koristno za lokalno skupnost. Od začetka izvajanja programa v študijskem letu 2017/2018 do danes je bilo organiziranih in izvedenih dvajset delavnic. Pri njihovi izvedbi so sodelovali študenti oddelkov za glasbeno pedagogiko, muzikologijo, glasbeno teorijo, instrumentalno in klasično petje. Prispevek predstavlja a/t/tografsko raziskavo, izvedeno v času razvoja programa, katere namen je bil izboljšati razvoj kompetenc učencev in učiteljev skozi procese in postopke pripravljanja in izvedbe načrtovanih dejavnosti.